

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
COUNCIL MINUTES**

APRIL 3, 2014 - 7:30 P.M.

MAYOR'S STATEMENT: Mayor Pote called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM and made the following statement: Under the provisions of N.J.S.A.10:4-6 et seq., notice of the time and place of this meeting was given by way of annual notice to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, and Star Ledger, and posted at Borough Hall.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG and a MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN, SERVING HOME AND ABROAD

ROLL CALL

Nehls [P] Black [P] Franklin [A] Joren [P] Gibbs [P] Beck-Clemens [P]

Also present were Administrator Tom Atkins, Clerk Michelle DeRocco, Deputy Clerk MaryAnn Hance, and Attorney Albert Cruz

There were 4 members of the public present.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance – In the absence of Councilman Franklin, Councilwoman Beck-Clemens gave his report. She said the Committee will be meeting on April 14th with Mr. Atkins and Mr. Hance to continue discussions on the budget. She also reported the Committee is still discussing the possibility of combining the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment, and possibly the creation of a sewer utility. The Committee will continue to review the comp time issue, and continue to discussion with Borough Tax Assessor Ed Kerwin the rezoning of some areas of the Weldon Quarry. She said the Committee will also be discussing the job description for Brian Townley and salary ranges for any new position. Mayor Pote asked if a date has been set for the first public budget meeting and Councilwoman Beck-Clemens said not yet.
2. Police – Council President Nehls referenced a resolution on the agenda authorizing submission of the SFY2014 Safe and Secure Community Grant. He explained this is an annual grant and the Borough has been fortunate enough to receive approximately \$60,000 each year towards Police salaries. Mr. Nehls also said there is a meeting scheduled with the Police Department April 16th to finalize their budget.
3. Public Works/Buildings and Grounds - Council President Nehls reported the Public Works Committee has comprised a list by importance of projects needing to be done in the Borough. He said the most important project is the rock wall remediation. Council President Nehls asked Mr. Atkins for the actual cost for this project and he said it is estimated to be \$902,000. Council President Nehls said the netting will only cover a portion of the rock wall. Councilman Gibbs asked once this is completed if there is a chance of this happening again and Council President Nehls said there are no guarantees. Council President Nehls then gave an additional list of projects as follows: the Mobus Field drainage around the playground and the replacement of playground equipment, He said JIF (Insurance Company) inspected the playground and came up with some deficiencies. Mr. Atkins said the JIF will be providing a written report. Council President Nehls continued with other items on the list: Allen Pond, Camp Endeavor, improvements to the Fire Department, painting of the Municipal Building, and repairs to the concrete around the building including some steps. He said the Texier House needs painting and repair of gutters and the Historical Committee would like the outhouse raised and put on a concrete slab. He also said Acorn and Glen Eagles Drive have ground water issues and Sunlit Drive has a ponding problem, and all these need to be addressed. Councilman Gibbs asked if the problem on Sunlit Drive has been caused by any resident and Council President Nehls said Mr. Herits is looking into this. Council President Nehls also reported they are trying again this year to obtain a grant from the State DOT for Knollwood Drive improvements. The total project will cost \$750,000 so the Borough would have to come up with \$500,000., if a grant of \$250,000. were awarded. He said there are many other projects that will have to be discussed and the largest one is the Ridge Road sewer project which is being put off indefinitely. Councilwoman Beck-Clemens asked to add the goose problem to the list of items to be addressed. Mayor Pote requested that Public Works look at the stream along Somerset Street where there are a lot of trees and plants that should possibly be removed.
4. Public Affairs:

Open Space – Councilwoman Beck-Clemens reported she is working on setting up a meeting with Patricia Walsh and Ray Brown of Somerset County to discuss the Ness Property, Camp Endeavor and Best Lake which are all open space properties. Councilman Black said the

County has a process where each year they review properties that may participate in helping to fund, etc. He said he feels the Ness Property is a much more substantial site and there is the hope for some type of partnering. Mayor Pote said the County has been very helpful in the past.

Environmental – Councilman Gibbs reported the Commission is exciting about their upcoming showing of the film “Queen of the Sun” which will be held on Wednesday, April 30th, from 7:30 to 10 PM at the Watchung Hills Regional High School in the South Auditorium. Julie Jurusz a bee keeper and member of the New Jersey Bee Keepers Association will be there to do a post-film discussion. Mayor Pote asked if this is open to children as well and Councilman Gibbs said it was. Mayor Pote hopes we will be able to do an insert in the newsletter that will be going out shortly. Councilman Black asked if this information could be sent out through the school system and Board of Education President Mr. Jim Rhyner said the school could send it out in the electronic back packs on Friday if someone could get the information to them. Councilman Gibbs said he will ask Jean Forlano do this.

Recreation – Councilwoman Beck-Clemens reported the Recreation Commission met last evening and they discussed the Mobus Field Playground. She said Linda Monetti will be meeting with Engineer Tom Herits to discuss the playground and the needed drainage improvements around it. Councilwoman Beck-Clemens also reported there is a software program called Grant Station and noted it could be beneficial for the Borough to look into this. She asked for a consensus from the Council on the Eagle Scout Project Jeff Isaac wishes to do and all members were in agreement. Jeff’s project involves improvements to the Mobus Field Pavilion, including painting and the installation of shelving, as outlined on his proposal provided to the Council in the agenda packets. Mayor Pote said he would like to meet with Mr. Isaacs prior to him starting the project. Councilwoman Beck-Clemens also said she had an email from Mr. Greg Policano regarding possibly have a winter sports program on Sundays and Mayor Pote thought this is a good idea. She said opening day for Little League is Saturday, April 5th, a baseball trip is scheduled for May 12th, and the Community Picnic is scheduled for May 17th. Letters were sent to over 100 businesses for donations and Weldon did send the Commission a \$1,000. donation.

Historical – Councilwoman Beck-Clemens reported Operation Pride was held on Saturday, March 30th with more than 30 attending and at the same time the Historical Commission held an open house and offered coffee and hot chocolate. She said the day was a huge success. Councilwoman Beck-Clemens also said Caldwell Banker is going to do a “Care Day” project which is spring clean up and planting.

Board of Health- Councilman Black had no report with the next meeting being held April 16th at 7 PM.

5. Fire – Councilman Black reported he and Councilman Gibbs attended a meeting on Monday evening, along with Chief Carlucci and Captain Ryan Valentino. He said budget concerns were discussed and the need to consolidate equipment. Chief Carlucci would like to have a membership drive and also possibly have the Council consider a new sign which could include information regarding volunteering. Councilman Black also discussed the radio station 1610 and the other radios used for Borough Communications. He also mentioned a fire hydrant located on Route 78 that is not accessible by emergency vehicles. The Fire Department asked if the Borough could contact the State regarding this with a possible solution being a gate installed. Mayor Pote asked Councilman Black to have put in writing exactly what the Fire Department would like to have done. Councilman Nehls said regarding the vehicle consolidation, he suggests an outside firm be used to review overall before purchasing a vehicle which could cost between \$750,000 and \$1,000,000. Councilman Black said the Borough has approximately \$250,000 set aside toward a new vehicle and they should be putting aside \$50,000 more each year.
6. Laws/Ordinances – Councilwoman Joren reported that the Committee met on March 31st and continued discussions on parking on certain streets-Washington, Lakeview and Rock Avenue and they are recommending no parking on Washington to Scott and all of Lakeview Terrace and they also would extend the no parking on Stirling Road. She also said there was a question regarding the Historical Committee and if their responsibilities officially include the operation of the museum. She said the Committee is also waiting for recommendations from Engineer Arlene McCoy on the tree ordinance. The Committee will be meeting with our Health Officer, Kevin Sumner, to further discuss the grease trap ordinance. Councilwoman Joren also said Bob Burns has contacted several landscaping companies about the possibility of them doing the Borough triangle plantings on a volunteer basis and allowing the company to have a small sign on the site. She said Mr. Burns is still waiting on quotes. She also reported there is no ordinance that codifies the OEM (Office of Emergency Management) duties and regulations. They discussed combining the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment and will be getting figures from CFO Bill Hance regarding potential cost savings, and said she will be reviewing her files from previous discussions. Mayor Pote said he wants to be part of that discussion. Councilwoman Beck-Clemens mentioned an email she received about some properties in town that are in disrepair or overgrown and Councilwoman Joren said that the Borough has a very good property maintenance code and she suggested this person advise the Borough of particular properties. Mayor Pote

suggested meeting with Ed Bennett to discuss this issue and the process for following up and enforcement.

REPORTS - OTHER:

7. Engineer – No report was submitted. However, Councilwoman Beck-Clemens said in her daily mail she received a copy of the notice for a request for a variance to situate the generator in front of the Fire House. She would like Council President Nehls to see if the generator could be moved to a different location. Councilman Nehls said the Fire Department requested this placement as it must also be in close proximity to the gas main, noting any change will increase the cost. Mayor Pote said he would like to see the cost differential to move it. Councilman Gibbs said to change a gas line you must trench and cut and it is very costly.
8. Police- No report was submitted.
9. Fire Department – No report was submitted.
10. Rescue Squad- No report was submitted
11. Emergency Management – No report was submitted.
12. Attorney–Mr. Cruz had no report other than there is one item for discussion in Executive Session.
13. Clerk – Ms. DeRocco reported she attended the Municipal Clerk’s Conference at no cost to the Borough, since she won the free registration. She said she attended many seminars and noted that Elections were one of the topics and announced they are looking into "early voting" for New Jersey. Ms. DeRocco also reported the process for filing Financial Disclosure forms is again being changed this year and advised more details will be forthcoming, after she participates in a webinar next week. She congratulated Councilwoman Beck-Clemens for being appointed to the Board of Directors of the Girl Scouts of America. Councilwoman Joren noted said there would have to be Legislation on the "early voting" issue before it could be implemented.
14. Administrator- Mr. Atkins reported the Finance Committee and CFO Bill Hance are hard at work on the budget. He said job interviews for the position for the construction/tax office would be concluded early next week. He also reported that JIF supervisor training will be May 6th. He reminded the Council to complete their JIF Training on line as soon as possible. Mr. Atkins wanted to clarify the information regarding the sewer budgeting and said it would be a sewer utility not an authority.

Mayor Pote said he is working on the annexes and has reviewed six to date. He said he attended the “Meet the Mayors” event on Wednesday at Twin Brooks Country Club and thanked Laurie from the Echoes and Councilman Franklin and his wife Lynn for attending. Mayor Pote said he was pleased the number of people who attended. He said Operation Pride had about 50 in attendance along with Public Works members and he thanked Councilman Black for attending also. He also reported he attended the Round Table meeting at the County on Monday, along with CFO Bill Hance and Green Team member Heidi Rubino, and Environmental Commission member Don Pote, and the discussion was on Sustainable New Jersey. He explained the Borough fell short on attaining their Bronze Status and he is hoping to find additional ways to achieve this recognition.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

With no members of the public wishing to be heard Mayor Pote closed this public portion.

NEW BUSINESS

CONSENT AGENDA: The Consent Agenda Items listed below were unanimously adopted following a motion by Council President Nehls and a second by Councilwoman Joren and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Nehls, Black, Joren, Gibbs, Beck-Clemens, “aye.”

Approval of the following Council minutes:

- March 20, 2014 – Regular Session
- December 20, 2013 and January 9, 2014 – Executive Session

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

- Finance Department Revenue Report – January, February, 2014
- Environmental commission Minutes – February 24, 2014
- Village Center Preservation Commission Minutes – March 14, 2014
- Tax Collector’s Report – December 2013 (Revised); January, February 2014

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

#8 - Borough of North Plainfield 3/25/14 Notice of Public Hearing on April 9, 2014 for the proposed adoption of their 2014 Master Plan c: M & C, TEA, TH, Pl. Board

Councilwoman Joren asked Mr. Cruz if the Village Center Commission has authority to make decisions regarding signage and Mr. Cruz said they can give recommendations to the Planning Board or Board of Adjustment.

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS: The Consent Agenda resolutions listed below were unanimously adopted following a motion by Council President Nehls and a second by Councilwoman Joren and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Nehls, Black, Joren, Gibbs, Beck-Clemens, "aye."

R1:04/03/14 Urging the NJ Legislature to Adopt and the Governor to Sign an Amendment to the Fair Housing Act

R2: Urging the NJ Legislature to Support A-1021/S-268 – Energy Receipts Property Tax Relief Initiative

R3: Purchases over \$2,000. – S.E. Rose Trucking

R4: Authorize Submission of SFY2014 Safe and Secure Community Grant

Councilwoman Beck-Clemens asked if Resolutions 1 and 2 will be passed on to Senator Kean and she was told they will be.

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

D.J. Hunsinger, Skyline Drive came forward to urge that the Phillips Field Lease be approved this evening.

Councilwoman Beck-Clemens asked Mr. Cruz if it is true, that if the lease is not approved tonight that the Little League could not have opening day on Saturday and Mr. Cruz said he did not know. Mayor Pote said the Board of Education owns this property. Councilman Black asked if Little League has been informed by the Board of Education of any decision about opening day.

Jim Rhyner, Sequoia Drive, President of the Board of Education, came forward and Councilman Gibbs asked him if the Borough does not pass the lease agreement this evening if it is true that Opening Day will not happen, and Mr. Rhyner responded that he believes that it is, yes, and that the Board of Education does not want to be involved in running Borough Recreation programs.

Being no other members of the public wishing to be heard Mayor Pote closed the public portion.

Council President Nehls moved the following resolution with a second by Councilwoman Beck-Clemens and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Nehls, Black, Joren, Gibbs, Beck-Clemens, "aye."

R5:04/03/14 Executive Session: Contract Negotiations/Regarding the Lease of Phillips Field with Watchung Board of Education

Upon return to regular session, all Council members previously in attendance were again present.

Councilwoman Beck-Clemens moved the following resolution with a second by Councilman Gibbs and upon roll call as follows: Nehls-No, Black, Joren, Gibbs, Beck-Clemens, "aye".

R6: Lease of Phillips Field with Watchung Board of Education

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 10:40 P.M. to the Call of the Chair, and to the next scheduled Council meeting to be held on April 17, 2014, at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

MaryAnn Hance
Deputy Clerk