

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG

COUNCIL MINUTES

APRIL 21, 2016 – 7:30 P.M.

MAYOR'S STATEMENT: Mayor Pote called the meeting to order at 7:30 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, AND IN MEMORY OF CLAIR OHL, AND FOR JON ERBER AND HIS FAMILY FOR THE LOSS OF HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

ROLL CALL:

Joren [P] Black [A] Nehls [P] Gibbs [P] Mobus [P] Sopko [P]

Also present were Administrator Tom Atkins, Attorney William Robertson was present for Mr. Cruz, Clerk Michelle DeRocco, Deputy Clerk MaryAnn Hance, CFO William Hance, and Engineer Tom Herits.

There were 6 members of the public present

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance – Councilman Gibbs had no report. The next meeting is scheduled for May 2, 2016. He said the Council will be voting on the 2016 Municipal Budget this evening.

2. Police – Council President Joren reported the two new officers have been doing their field training and should be completed in approximately one month, and that all officers are in the process of completing the spring fire arms certification. She also reported milling and paving has been scheduled for next Wednesday/Thursday from Mountain Boulevard at the circle to Stirling Road up to Brookdale Road.

3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Councilman Nehls reported the granite block curbing has been repaired at the triangles on the circle and catch basins repaired. He also said the Ridge Road has been repaired after the electric line burned the pavement and repaired berms damaged during the winter. Councilman Nehls said Public Works employees completed the spring cleanup at various Borough properties, and repaired the split rail fence by the spillway. With the assistance of Eric Schwartz of the Board of Education, and Kris Byk, the ruts at Phillips Field were repaired. Councilman Nehls gave a brief report regarding the meeting held at the Ness property prior to this meeting and said he will be getting quotes for the clean-up. He also gave an update on the library and said Mr. Iovino hopes to start work on schematics for the design and an inspection will be setup.

Councilman Gibbs said there have been comments about the lack of color around the Watchung Lake and asked if money from the tree fund could be used for purchasing flowering trees. Council President Joren said the condition of the trees along the Mountain Boulevard side of the lake is in need of work and possibly combine plantings in that area.

4. Public Affairs:

Open Space – Councilman Sopko had no report but said they are waiting for a time line and guidance on the Ness property remediation.

Environmental – Councilman Sopko said a meeting is scheduled for April 25th and they will be discussing the Weldon buffer, the Pilgrim pipeline and the Ness property. He said he will not be able to attend the meeting because he is going to the Warren Planning Board meeting to get some insight on their proposal for the Ness property they own. Mr. Atkins asked how many units is Warren considering for the site and Councilman Sopko said 10 units.

Recreation – Councilman Mobus said the next meeting is scheduled for May 11th.

Historical – Councilman Mobus reported the Historical Committee’s hosted a Seniors’ luncheon on April 13th and 36 members attended and had a tour of the Museum. He said the Committee’s biggest concern is the ceiling lighting and he suggested this be discussed at the next Buildings and Grounds meeting. Councilman Mobus also reported there may be a problem with the Building’s foundation.

Board of Health – No report was submitted

5. Fire – In Councilman Black’s absence, Councilman Nehls reported there was a meeting Friday, April 15th and they discussed their priorities. The Department requested movement on the purchase of the fire truck and continuing discussion on the renovations to the building as well. Engineer Tom Herits said he will review the building plans with the Council.

6. Laws/Ordinances – Council President had no report but mentioned that Mr. Cruz is working on a few drafts.

REPORTS - OTHER:

7. Engineer- Tom Herits reported he has some old concept plans and ideas for the Ness property. He also reported the Planning Board went over the Master Plan for the buffer regarding the Weldon property buffer from Bonnie Burn Road. Mr. Herits said he will be getting plans ready for the Valley Drive project to go out to bid. After some discussion it was decided that Mr. Herits would lead the discussion on the fire house plans at the May 19th Council meeting.

8. Police Chief – No report submitted.

9. Fire Department – No report submitted.

10. Rescue Squad – No report submitted.

11. Emergency Management – Mr. Atkins reported Mr. Greves is finalizing details for possible reimbursement from winter storm Jonas. CFO Bill Hance had also attended a FEMA information session.

12. Attorney – No report was submitted.

13. Clerk – Ms. DeRocco reported the Watchung/Warren Green Fair is scheduled for April 30th at Bayberry School from 10 AM to 1 PM and the shred event is the same day starting at 9 AM to 1 PM.

14. Administrator – Mr. Atkins reported the Public Works Committee authorized contacting the residents on Ellison Road about Belgian block and he will send a follow up letter. He also said the County did return the First Responder Memorandum of Understanding to us and it meets all of the concerns the Borough had. Mr. Atkins also reported on correspondence regarding a property maintenance issue and said Mr. Bennett will be meeting with the new owner possibly Tuesday evening and maybe someone from the Council could also attend. Councilman Nehls said he would be happy to attend.

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PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

Rachel Funcheon – Cedar Road thanked the Mayor and Council for Resolution R6, authorizing a retainer for legal services and joint defense agreement with some of the other effected municipalities. She said there is a need for 15 towns to join this in order to have it fully funded.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Gibbs moved the following resolution with a second by Council President Joren and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko, “aye.”

R1A:04/21/16 Determining Budget to be Read by Title

Prior to the vote Councilman Gibbs thanked the Administration/Finance Committee and Administrator Tom Atkins and CFO Bill Hance for all the work put into this budget with an increase of only 1.8% over the last budget. Councilman Nehls thanked the Committee and said the communication with the Council was good.

Discussion was open to the public. With no one from the Public wishing to speak Councilman Gibbs closed the public hearing and moved the following resolution with a second by Council President Joren and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko “aye.”

R1B: Adoption of 2016 Municipal Budget

R2: A Public Hearing on Bond Ordinance OR:16/04 – “**BOND ORDINANCE TO AUTHORIZE THE MAKING OF VARIOUS PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS AND THE ACQUISITION OF NEW ADDITIONAL OR REPLACEMENT EQUIPMENT AND MACHINERY, NEW COMMUNICATION AND SIGNAL SYSTEMS EQUIPMENT, NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY EQUIPMENT AND A NEW AUTOMOTIVE VEHICLE, INCLUDING ORIGINAL APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT, IN, BY AND FOR THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, IN THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, TO APPROPRIATE THE SUM OF \$708,400 TO PAY THE COST THEREOF, TO APPROPRIATE A STATE GRANT, TO MAKE A DOWN PAYMENT, TO AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS TO FINANCE SUCH APPROPRIATION AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF SUCH BONDS**” was held.

Council President Joren said the Planning Board met Tuesday night and passed a resolution recommending the capital improvements since there is no negative impact.

Council President Joren moved a public hearing be held with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko, “aye.”

With no one from the public wishing to be heard Council President Joren closed the public hearing and moved the resolution with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko, “aye.”

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NEW BUSINESS

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

Approval of the following Council minutes:
April 7, 2016 Regular and Executive Sessions

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:
Police Activity – March, 2016
Planning Board Minutes – January 19, February 23, 2016
Board of Adjustment Minutes – February 25, March 10, 2016
Historical Committee Minutes – January 13, February 10, March 9, 2016

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

#13 - NJ Transit 4/11/16 Notice of Public Meeting to present preliminary Disadvantaged Business Enterprise goals and other procurement contracts for FY 2017, 2018 & 2019 c: M & C, TEA, Post

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CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS: The Consent Agenda Resolutions listed below were unanimously adopted following a motion by Council President Joren and a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko, “aye.”

R3:04/21/16 Authorizing Payment to Municipal Group and Authorizing the Borough to Join a Local Municipal Group / Declaratory Judgment Action - Affordable Housing

R4: Appointment to Committees – Library Advisory Board / Annette von Brandis
Green Team / Sandra Hopkins

R5: Authorize Appointment of Fire Sub-Code Official – Bill Donnerstag

R6: Authorize the Borough to Join Municipal Pipeline Group and enter into a Retainer for Legal Services, and Joint Defense Agreement / John M. Scagnelli, Esq.

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NON-CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS: Items listed below will be individually addressed and acted upon accordingly. Council reserves the right to refer an item to Committee for further review and discussion.

Councilman Mobus moved the following resolution with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko “aye.”

R7:04/21/16 Waive Chapter 2-25.10 of the Code – Gray’s Florist and Greenhouse

Councilman Gibbs introduced Resolution R8, and made the following statement: “I am voting in the affirmative for all items on the Bill List, but recusing myself on the purchase of energy commodity, due to my employment with an energy commodity supplier...” Council President Joren seconded the motion and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Joren, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko, “aye.”

R8: Payment of Bills

Councilman Gibbs said he encourages residents to analyze not only the Borough portion of tax payments but also the County Government and both Boards of Education since only twenty-six cents of every tax dollar goes to the Borough and the balance goes to County and Boards of Education.

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PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

Carl Bellerio, Birchwood Lane, asked if there would be any possibility the Borough could assist paying toward the paving of this road since it has become increasing impossible for the five residents to maintain? Noting that it is a “private road,” Councilman Gibbs asked who subdivided the property and Mr. Bellerio said it was the original owner and Councilman Gibbs said there would have been easements on those properties which would document the responsibility of maintaining the road, but Mr. Bellerio said there was no written agreement. Councilman Nehls explained that the Borough cannot do repairs since this would set a precedent for all private roads in Watchung.

Fred Hayeck, Sunbright Road, said he would like to organize a “TARS” (Teenage Republican Club) in Watchung and asked if there would be anyone interested in being an advisor and also asked if there are any available rooms/places on where in town they could meet. Mayor Pote said being he and the Councilmembers represent all residents, not just Republicans, they would not be able to be advisors. Council President Joren suggested speaking to Doyle Hunsinger, Republican Municipal Chair directly. Possible meeting locations could be the Library or if not available, Wilson Memorial Church. Councilman Gibbs suggested he speaks with the Library first and said it is a wonderful way for youth to get involved.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM to the Call of the Chair and to the next scheduled Council meeting 7:30 PM, May 5, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,

MaryAnn Hance
Deputy Clerk