

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG  
MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
RE-ORGANIZATION MEETING MINUTES**

**JANUARY 1, 2016  
12:00 Noon**

**OPENING STATEMENT:** Mayor Stephen K. Pote called the meeting to order at 12:00 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.**

**INVOCATION** – The Invocation was given by Reverend Barbara Peters, Wilson Memorial Church.

Mayor Pote welcomed the dignitaries who were present: Assemblyman Bramnick, Assemblywoman Munoz, Freeholder Pat Walsh, Mayor Al Ellis, Bob Swisher of Suplee-Cloney, and former Councilmen Tom Franklin and Bruce McCumber.

**OATH OF ALLEGIANCE AND OFFICE**

Debra Joren - Councilmember

Assemblyman Bramnick administered the Oath of Office to Debra Joren, as daughter Sara Beth held the Bible.

Dave Mobus - Councilmember

Mayor Pote administered the Oath of Office to Dave Mobus as his children Ryan and Jessica held the Bible.

**ROLL CALL**

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

**OATH OF ALLEGIANCE AND OFFICE**

Mayor Pote administered the Oath of Office to the following Borough Officials:

Fire Chief – Jon Erber

Assistant Fire Chief – Charles Pivnichny

Rescue Squad Captain – Alison Diecke

Rescue Squad First Lieutenant – Charles Pivnichny

**NOMINATION FOR COUNCIL PRESIDENT**

Councilman Nehls nominated Councilwoman Joren for the position of Council President, with a second by Councilman Black. No other nominations were made. Nominations were closed and the motion carried unanimously on roll call. Council President Joren thanked the Mayor and Council.

**NOMINATION OF CLASS III PLANNING BOARD MEMBER**

Councilman Nehls nominated Councilwoman Joren as a Class III member of the Planning Board, with a second by Councilman Black. No other nominations were made. Nominations were closed and the motion carried unanimously on roll call.

**APPOINTMENT OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

Mayor Pote announced the following Committee assignments:

Administration & Finance:

Chair Gibbs  
Mobus  
To be appointed

Public Works:

Chair: Nehls  
Joren  
Mobus

Laws & Ordinances:

Chair: Joren  
Black  
Gibbs

Public Affairs:

Board of Health (Black)  
Environmental Commission (To be appointed)  
Recreation Commission (Mobus)  
Historical Committee (Mobus)  
Open Space (To be appointed)

Police

Chair: Joren  
Nehls  
Gibbs

Fire

Chair: Black  
Nehls  
To be appointed

Special Liaison to Rescue Squad: To be appointed

Youth Services Commission: To be appointed

9/11 Memorial: Gibbs

Library Advisory Committee: Black

**CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS**

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

- R1: Adoption of Rules of Order
- R2: Designation of Official Newspapers – Star Ledger, Echoes Sentinel, Courier News
- R3: Adoption of Annual Calendar of Meeting Dates
- R4: Re-establish Petty Cash Funds – Borough Clerk, Police Chief
- R5: Payment of Property Taxes and Establishing Payment Procedures
- R6: Appointment of Judge, 3-year term / John Richardson
- R7: Appointment of Tax Collector, 4- year term / Raymond Murray
- R8: Appointment of Professional Service Officials, 1-year terms /
  - Auditor – Suplee, Clooney & Co.
  - Bond Counsel – Rogut & McCarthy, LLC
  - Engineer – Maser Consulting PA
  - Labor Attorney – Ruderman & Glickman, P.C.
  - Public Defender – James Loewen

- R9: Appointment of Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief / Jonathan Erber, Charles Pivnichny
- R10: Appointment of JIF Commissioner and Alternate / Tom Atkins, Shelini Parikh
- R11: Designation of Depositories – TD Bank, PNC Bank, Haven Savings Bank

**NON CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS**

- R12: Introduction of Ordinance OR:16/01 entitled: “BOND ORDINANCE TO AUTHORIZE THE 2015 ROAD RESURFACING PROGRAM IN, BY AND FOR THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, IN THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY, TO APPROPRIATE THE SUM OF \$1,150,000 TO PAY THE COST THEREOF, TO MAKE A DOWN PAYMENT, TO APPROPRIATE A STATE GRANT, 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 introduced.

Council President Joren moved the ordinance be given its first reading. So Ordered. Council President Joren moved the ordinance be adopted on first reading and the Clerk be directed to publish the ordinance and notice of public hearing. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gibbs and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Black, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, “aye”. Public Hearing to be held on January 21, 2016.

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

- R13: Appointment of Official, 1-year term / Borough Attorney – Albert E. Cruz

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

- R14: Appointment of Official, 1-year term / Municipal Prosecutor- Richard Guss

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

- R15: Authorize Borough Attorney to file Tax Appeals and Petitions on behalf of the Borough for 2016

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

- R16: Appointments - Boards, Committees, Commissions

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

- R17: Authorize Contract - 2016, 2017 Banking Services and Designation of Depository / Investors Savings Bank

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

- R18: Authorize 2015 Budget Transfers

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

- R19: Temporary Budget

## RECOGNITION OF EMPLOYEE SERVICE

Mayor Pote read the following employee milestones and congratulated all:

25 Years: Joann Estrella, Police Administrative Assistant

15 Years: Brad Sporer, Police Department

10 Years: Bill Nehls, Governing Body

5 Years: Kody Hamrah, Police Department

## MAYOR'S ADDRESS:

The following is Mayor Pote's 2016 address:

*Happy New Year to everyone.*

*We really do appreciate you being here with us today, at the start of another new year; a new beginning for all of us! I know I look at the changing of the years as a time of reflection, and a time of renewal. A lot was accomplished we can be proud of; a lot to think about; and a lot to prepare for as we look forward to the year ahead.*

*This past year 2015 was a busy year in town. We continue to invest locally in our roads, having repaved Ridge Road from Hillcrest to High Tor, as well Jared Court, Kristy Lane, OakRidge Road, Tall Timbers, and the Texier House parking lot. In 2016 we will pursue road work on Knollwood and Deer Run, and Valley Drive, to start.*

*In 2015 we made progress on understanding what needs to be done to improve the Fire Department, both in terms of building structure and in terms of internal operations. We received two very comprehensive reports from the Rodgers Group, a well-known and respected consultant on fire-related issues. We will be going through the contents of these reports and will be discussing them in Council meetings to come. From a different perspective and review, we separately will be inviting the architect to discuss with us her potential renovation designs of the fire house.*

*In 2015 we also brought in a structural engineer to examine the library, who while indicating the existing structure was safe, indicated that we were somewhat limited in our options with the existing structure and size. A well renowned architect of libraries, Mr. Iovino confirmed that, and early in the New Year at a Council meeting he will be providing his ideas on what the best course of action is regarding renovation and/or reconstruction and expansion of the library. In 2016 I look forward to working with the Council to finalize plans and take action here as well.*

*I am very pleased that we have reinvigorated our 9/11 Memorial Committee, and I am thrilled that we will have a memorial in place this year. We have reconfirmed with a few changes the memorial design, and we have finalized a physical location on the North part of the Green near the Watchung Lake spillway. We are intensifying efforts to raise funds, so I encourage the public to donate to help us pay for this memorial. There are envelopes in the back of the room. We appreciate your support to make this happen.*

*In 2015 we completed the implementation of generators at the fire house, Borough Hall, and Police Station. With a \$100,000 generator grant from the State, we will possibly install a generator at the DPW and East End fire house in 2016.*

*In 2015 a great deal of time was spent ensuring that your tax dollars were not only being watched and well spent, that they were being protected and better secured. In 2015 we budgeted under the 2% cap; I am very pleased with the results; it was a very tight budget and there were some tough choices to be made, and I appreciate everyone's help in getting us there.*

*In 2016 we could be looking at a bond issue, the first since 2007, which will both reorganize our existing debt to save money, provide us an approach to continue wisely investing in Watchung's future, all the while keeping stable our debt service over time, as we have done in the past. We will be looking for leadership from the Council Admin/Finance/Personnel Committee and professional staff.*

*During the 2015-2016 deer management season we have thus far taken 22 deer. As you have requested through your strong survey response, we need to do more – the number of deer at this point continue to grow well beyond the culling performed. The incidence of related car accidents throughout the state, in Somerset County, and in Watchung, on average over the last five years continues to grow. I suggest again to the Council, and*

want to work with the Council, to come up with a better solution that improves the current perceived imbalance between man and nature.

In 2016 we will face some challenges. Not only the decisions to be made on budgets, the deer, the library, and the fire house, but other decisions which also will have a long-term impact on the borough.

One issue for sure will be our response to the Affordable Housing Mandate. With the dissolution of COAH (Council on Affordable Housing) in 2015, after three decades of what I consider to be State bureaucracy and waste, decisions on affordable housing are now back in the hands of the courts – the courts now will again decide the degree to which Watchung will need to expand its lower and lower moderate income housing. We have worked very hard in the past year – for over a decade for that matter – to continue to protect, preserve, and maintain the current zoning character of Watchung. You can expect that a lot of time will be spent on this issue in 2016 – we will be depending on both the Planning Board and the Council to do what it can to both limit the impact and still abide by any judicial decisions. It is expected that we will be developing the East Drive Property, approved last year by the Planning Board, in anticipated response in part to what the courts will mandate. But make no mistake about it; the wrong decisions, or court decisions not favorable to Watchung, could have a dramatic impact on our borough; its schools, its roads, its services, and its residents, and your taxes.

As noted in the past, another challenge which is heating up is the Pilgrim Pipeline construction issue, which threatens to force two highly volatile 16”-24” oil pipelines to be constructed in town, cutting through the eastern part of Watchung right along the PSEG power lines. Those who own the Pilgrim Pipeline have very deep pockets, political pull, and great financial incentive to continue this project; in response, I have met several times this past year with mayors from over half of the 32+ towns in NJ affected by this. Our first step is to prevent Pilgrim Pipeline from becoming a regulated utility; our second goal is to keep Public Service honest in its original intent not to allow the Pilgrim Pipeline to run alongside its powerlines. The third goal, if required, is to litigate as a united front of towns. We must give this our best shot. We will put more information on our website to encourage you to write to Public Service and our utility regulatory agency to prevent this development.

In 2016 we will continue our Planning Board and Council discussions with Weldon Materials, on how it in the future will define its borders, to ensure that we both continue our strong working relationship with an extremely important business partner in town, while making sure that our town’s rural/suburban character is maintained.

In 2016 I believe we also need to look into the erosion taking place on the southern banks of the Watchung Lake. It might be time to start planning to re-dredge the lake, at which time we might consider what to do to better preserve and reinforce the landscape on this side.

In 2015 our employees and volunteers have been busier than ever. I can’t thank our Watchung Borough employees enough for their heads-down, no nonsense work ethic. I am very proud of our Administration, our Department of Public Works, our Police, police staff and Dispatchers, our Tax, Engineering, and Building Departments. You all did GREAT work this past year. And it starts with our leadership: Tom Atkins our Administrator, Michelle DeRocco our Municipal Clerk, Bill Hance our CFO, Bob Burns our DPW Lead, and our Police Chief, Joe Cina. Finally, we would like to thank Al Cruz, our Legal Counsel, and our borough engineer from Maser, Tom Herits.

As I stated at our employee and volunteer holiday dinner a few weeks ago, I could not be more proud of our volunteers, who continue to be counted on to make a significant difference, working hand in hand with our Borough employees and Council.

Volunteerism in many respects starts with our Borough Council, who at this time I would like to personally thank for your time, hard work, and results. I look forward to working closely with all of you in this next year.

The Rescue Squad, Fire Department, Office of Emergency Management, and CERT Team know how very proud I am of these incredibly passionate and dedicated volunteers, who continue to impress others with their talent and responsiveness. A special thanks at this time to the Rescue Squad for the incredible 25<sup>th</sup> annual Tree of Lights ceremony which was attended by probably 300-400 people. The Fire Department also had a good year, demonstrating some strong leadership and changes in the making, adding a number of new members, including daytime coverage by our DPW workers. Our CERT team continues to make itself available, and is actively contributing in county drills and local events taking place.

Our volunteerism in town extends beyond these groups to our other committees and commissions who provide thousands of volunteer hours to make things happen. Please continue to come forward and encourage others to do the same – we can always use more volunteers for committees where we have openings.

While there are MANY volunteers I could single out, there are four I believe I should recognize today. The first is Don Speeney, who stepped down this year as Chairman of the Planning Board after serving so gracefully for over two decades. Don after 23 years of service on this Board continues to serve on the Planning Board under

*our new Chairwoman Tracee Schaeffer, and we look to Tracee and Don to guide us successfully through several challenges. Don, thanks for both preparing Watchung for the future, all the while protecting our Master Plan.*

*Kim Otto steps down from the Municipal Alliance Committee after 16 years, a very important committee creating awareness and providing school education programs regarding alcohol and drug abuse prevention. Thank you Kim for your service.*

*On another committee, I would be remiss if I didn't point out that Sandy Fechtner accepted my invite to sign up for another four years on the Board of Adjustment! This year will be her 39<sup>th</sup> year on this Board. Sandy, thank you for your dedication and commitment to this Borough.*

*And finally, I want to personally thank Tom Franklin for his long service as a Councilman here in Watchung. For 15 years, my fellow Councilman, neighbor, and friend served with dignity and passion and, always jumping in with both feet, at some point during the 15 years Tom worked on every council manic committee. As Chairman of the Finance/ Administration/ Personnel Committee for the last 10 years among his other responsibilities, Tom played a key role in the great many successes we have had as a borough. Thank you Tom, you will be missed!!*

*So it was a very busy 2015. And we have a new year ahead of us and are excited to get started! The current six of us -- Mayor and currently 5 Council are ready to go, and we look forward to bringing on a sixth Council person to put us at full strength. Our employees are ready to serve. Our volunteers have recommitted themselves to provide support. And I am very proud and ready to lead!! We have a great Borough; let's never lose sight of what we are fighting to preserve and improve upon for future generations.*

*I appreciate your confidence in me to serve, and I love this town and its residents! God bless this Borough and all of you. Happy New Year – a happy and healthy year to everyone in 2016!*

## **COUNCIL COMMENTS:**

Council President Joren there will be a robust agenda this year and the Council will work diligently to accomplish as much as possible. She also thanked the many volunteers and staff and wished all a very Happy New Year.

Councilman Black thanked everyone for being here this morning and wished all a Happy New Year. He said the volunteerism in this community is unbelievable. He thanked our Police Department, Fire Department and Rescue Squad for their service to the community keeping us safe. Councilman Black also thanked the entire Borough staff for all their work.

Councilman Nehls wished all a Happy New Year and said he is looking forward to working with the Mayor and Council on all the projects this year. He wants to continue to keep the budget under control and lower taxes. He thanked all volunteers and said he is very proud of Chief Cina and Bob Burns.

Councilman Gibbs wished all a Happy New Year and said he is looking forward to chairing the Administration/Finance Committee and will continue to be smart and judicious with the Borough's finances. He expressed the importance of resident input and encouraged members of the public to come to the meetings and voice their opinions, or reach out to him or any Governing Body member if they have a question or concern.

Councilman Mobus thanks all for coming today and wished them a Happy New Year. He thanked his family- his wife Lisa, son Ryan and daughter Jessica, and his mother Mary for allowing him to take time away from them to serve the community. He especially thanked his Dad, Jerry, for instilling his love of service to the community and teaching him by example honesty and integrity. He thanked Tom Franklin for his service.

## **PUBLIC PORTION**

No one from the public wished to speak.

## **BENEDICTION**

The Benediction was given by Reverend Barbara Peters, Wilson Memorial Church.

Mayor Pote reminded all that Mary Mobus and the Mobus family again invited all for refreshments and to celebrate the reorganization at their home.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the council the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 P.M. to the Call of the Chair and to the special meeting scheduled for Tuesday, January 5, 2016 at 8:00 A.M. and the next regular meeting scheduled to be held on January 21, 2016 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

*MaryAnn Hance*  
*Deputy Clerk*