

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG

MAYOR AND COUNCIL

MINUTES

MAY 4, 2017

7:30 PM

OPENING STATEMENT: Mayor Stephen K. Pote called the meeting to order at 7:34 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 ALSO FOR BOROUGH EMPLOYEE JESSICA JOHANSON.

ROLL CALL

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

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

Mayor Pote said earlier this week we lost one of our Borough Employees, Jessica Johanson. This was a terrible loss.

Ms. DeRocco said Jessica’s sudden death over this past weekend shocked all of us at Borough Hall. When she came to work for us in 2011 she was a wonderful addition to our family. She was motivated, innovative, helpful, and professional and was always picked up the slack when and where needed including taking over the farmers market, and improving our volunteer appreciation dinner and up until this April she was our Easter Bunny for the annual Easter egg hunt. Ms. DeRocco said Jessica was an active member of the Somerville Elks where she ran many fund raisers to help families in need and also many hours as a volunteer for the Rogers Rescue finding homes for those unfortunate pets. There are no words to express how sad we are and how much she will be missed.

Mr. Atkins said Jessica turned 40 in February and had the world in front of her. She wanted to become a certified finance officer and had already completed several courses through Rutgers. She always gave her best and always had a smile and happy to see everyone. Mr. Atkins said Jessica loved animals, dogs in particular and she had several of her own which she had to put down at separate times. She always joked that she loved dogs more than people because they were more honest and loyal. Mr. Atkins said Jessica was a pleasure to work with. It has been a very difficult week at Borough Hall but all the employees worked through it as best as they could. Mr. Atkins thanked Reverend Barbara Peters at Wilson Memorial Church who said she would help anyway she could and gave her Cell phone number for anyone who wished to contact her.

There were 18 members of the public present

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REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance – Councilman Gibbs reported a meeting was held Monday with the Auditors and Bond Counsel and they discussed the possibility of recommending a formal policy on the Borough surplus. Discussions will continue into June to make recommendations in the fall. Councilman Mobus said it makes sense to do this. Councilman Gibbs also reported discussions are still ongoing with the County with regard to the salt storage agreement. He said the electric charging station will be installed at Borough Hall. Councilman Gibbs also said the Borough will be taking advantage of the States’ Direct Install program and replace the lighting at both the Borough Hall and the Police Department through the Clean Energy program. Councilman Gibbs said PBA negotiations are ongoing.

2. Police – Commissioner Joren had no report.

3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Councilman Nehls said there is a meeting scheduled for May 9th.

4. Public Affairs:

Open Space – No report.

Environmental – Mayor Pote said Operation Pride was held on April 29th and the Traffic and Beautification Committee and he as well as Council President Joren and Councilman Gibbs were there to help.

Recreation – Councilman Mobus reported interviews were held and the position of Camp Director was offered to Desiree Sommerville, and she accepted. The program will run from June 26 to August 19th. Interviews will now be held for counselors for the program. Councilman Mobus said the Community Picnic is scheduled for May 20th from 12 noon to 3 pm, with a rain date of February 21st.

Historical – Councilman Mobus reported progress is being made on the 9-11 Memorial and Phase II, the foundation pit, will begin on Monday.

Board of Health – Councilman Black reported the next meeting is scheduled for June 21st at 7 PM.

5. Fire – Councilman Black reported a meeting was held on May 2nd. The Committee discussed insurance, and the use of the Exempt Hall. They also discussed needs the Chief has requested. Councilman Black also mentioned that bids for the Fire House renovation will be received on May 12th.

6. Laws/Ordinances – Council President Joren said the Committee met this evening and they discussed some Ordinance changes. She will have a detailed report at the next Council meeting.

REPORTS - OTHER:

7. Engineer – Mr. Atkins reported the bids for the Fire House renovation will be received next Friday. He also said there is a pre-bid meeting for the Valley Drive project on May 15th at 10:00 AM.

8. Police Chief – No Report.

9. Fire Department – No Report.

10. Rescue Squad – No Report

11. Emergency Management – Mr. Atkins said he may be asking Gary Greves and Carolyn Solan to attend one of the Council meetings to discuss the new requirements that are coming down from the Federal Government for regulations for CERT teams.

12. Attorney – Mr. Cruz had no report except there is an item for Executive Session.

13. Clerk – Ms. DeRocco – No Report.

14. Administrator – Mr. Atkins reported there was 100% participation by the Mayor and Council in the MEL training and the Borough will receive a \$2,000 credit on the premium. He also reported the aerial deer survey report is on the Borough website. He said he would like the Wildlife Management Committee to give their input on this. Mr. Atkins said he will be requesting a resolution be prepared for the May 18th Council meeting to appoint a special tax counsel, since there is a conflict of interest for our Borough Attorney regarding a particular property requesting a reassessment. Mr. Atkins said a request was sent to PSE&G field staff regarding the Somerset Street lighting on what we want.

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PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY
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No public wished to speak.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS
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A Public Hearing of Ordinance OR:17/07 entitled: **“AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG AMENDING SECTION 2-43, TITLED “HISTORICAL COMMITTEE”, OF THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, SUBSECTIONS 2-43.1 TITLED “ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEE; MEMBERS; APPOINTMENTS”, 2-43.2 TITLED “TERMS OF OFFICE” AND 2-43.3 TITLED “ORGANIZATION” TO ADD TWO (2) ALTERNATE MEMBERS, ALTERNATE NO. 1 AND ALTERNATE NO. 2, AND TO DESCRIBE THE ALTERNATES’ AUTHORIZATION”** was held.

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, Black, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, “aye.”

With no one from the public wishing to be heard Council President Joren closed the public hearing and moved the following resolution:

R1: Adoption of Ordinance OR:17/07 – Amend Code / Addition of 2 Alternate Members to the Historical Committee

Councilman Nehls seconded the motion and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Black, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, “aye.”

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, Black, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, “aye.”

Approval of the following Council minutes:

April 20, 2017 Regular Session

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Board of Health Minutes – January 18, 2017
Tax Collector’s Reports – January, February, March, 2017
Environmental Commission – March 27, 2017
Youth Services Commission Minutes – February 28, 2017
Finance Department Revenue Report – January, February, 2017

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #21- Township of Berkeley Heights 4/20/17 Notice of Public Hearing of Four (4) Land Use Ordinances regarding Redevelopment c: M & C, TEA, Pl. Bd.
- #22- Township of Scotch Plains 4/27/17 Notice of Public Hearing on Proposed Zoning Ordinance on May 16, 2017 c: M & C, TEA, Pl. Bd.

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, Black, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, “aye.”

- R2:05/04/17 Authorize Treasurer to Refund Homestead Rebate – 289 Mountain Boulevard
- R3: Appointment of Recreation Camp Director / Seasonal – Desiree Somerville
- R4: Appointment of Temporary Clerk / Finance Department - Joanne Bowden
- R5: Appointment to Volunteer Fire Department / Johnathan Christian
- R6: Authorize Treasurer to Issue Duplicate Tax Payment Refund / 1025 Johnston Drive
- R7: Authorize Redemption of Tax Sale Certificate #15-05 / 99 Tuttle Road
- R8: Authorizing Participation with State of NJ / Safe and Secure Communities Program

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.

None

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

Prior to opening discussion to the public Mayor Pote welcomed everyone and briefly explained that the Watchung School System and the Watchung Board of Education are a separate entity from the Borough of Watchung. All members of the Board of Education are elected and the Mayor and Council are elected. However, each are elected separately. He continued to explain that the Council may not be able to answer questions since the Borough has no jurisdiction over the Watchung Board of Education it is a completely separate budget.

Mayor Pote then invited members of the audience to speak and advised them that each person would be allowed to speak for three minutes.

Dorie Harvey, Johnston Drive, said she is here to bring awareness of her concern. She said she and other parents attended the Board of Education meeting and learned they are making many staff changes in the district among them both the Spanish and Special Education teachers have been given notice that their contracts would not be renewed among other changes. She also asked why the Board of Ed-

ucation has to go out to bid for Special Education when they have been satisfied and using the same one for ten years.

Ji Sook Kim, Parlin Lane, said she wants quality education for her children and asked how the Board of Education could be pushed to go above the 2% CAP. She also said she would be willing to pay more taxes in order to have quality education in the schools.

Mayor Pote said the Borough is also under the 2% CAP. Mr. Atkins explained that the Board of Education is much different than the Borough Governing Body, since they have to follow the rules of the State Department of Education and the County Superintendent. Council President Joren said before the laws were changed residents voted on the School Budget and she suggested contacting the State Legislators in the 21st district. The State Legislators are the ones who do the formula to determine what each municipality gets for their school funding. Councilman Black mentioned the Regional High School Board of Education was at our last Council meeting and he explained the cost per student is \$20,000 per year and their debt is approximately forty seven million dollars.

Pete Martino, Sunbright Road, suggested there should be more communication between the Borough and the Board of Education. Mayor Pote and Council members responded there is always communication between the Board and the Borough. He questioned why the Borough does not have a cash management plan. Mr. Atkins said the Borough does have one but it has to be updated and more formal. Mr. Martino then asked if Public Service was going to be replacing gas main replacements in the Borough and if they are they only repair roads where they have disturbed them. Mr. Martino also wanted to know why the Fire Department did not submit a grant application to the NJ American Water Company. Mr. Martino said the Borough should look into possibly doing a survey for a park and ride site, like Warren did.

Mayor Pote thanked everyone for their comments and concerns and to continue with open dialogue. He also said there should be continued discussions on ways to control spending and saving money.

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

R9:05/04/17 Executive Session: Litigation – In the Matter of the Borough of
Watchung for a Judgment of Compliance of
its Third Round Housing Element and Fair
Share Plan, Docket No. SOM-L-902-15

The Borough Council may take official action on those items discussed in executive session upon completion of the executive session.

Mr. Cruz said an update of the status of the Affordable Housing litigation and pending cases that may have impact the Borough’s decision was discussed.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 9:42 PM to the Call of the Chair and to the next scheduled meeting of the Mayor and Council to be held on Thursday, May 18, 2017 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

MaryAnn Hance
Deputy Clerk