

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL
MINUTES
FEBRUARY 15, 2017
7:30 P.M.**

OPENING STATEMENT: Mayor Stephen K. Pote called the meeting to order at 7:36 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 A PRAYER FOR THE TRAGEDY IN PARKLAND FLORIDA, AND FORMER FIREMAN AND COMMITTEE PERSON JOHN GAUSZ WHO PASSED AWAY RECENTLY, AND A PRAYER FOR FRAN ELLIS WHO IS RECOVERING.

ROLL CALL:

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

Also present were Administrator Tom Atkins, Attorney Albert Cruz, Chief Financial Officer Bill Hance, Borough Engineer Tom Herits, Clerk Michelle DeRocco, and Administrative Assistant Regina Angelo.

There were 7 members of the public present.

NOMINATIONS TO FILL VACANCY – COUNCIL MEMBER

Mayor Pote said our first piece of business tonight is to have nominations come forward to fill the vacancy of Council Member. He said it's his understanding from our Borough Clerk that the Municipal Chairman for the Republican Party has, based on a meeting with the Republican Committee, selected three names for consideration to fill the vacancy of Council Member. He explained that this was a position vacated by former Councilwoman Deb Joren, who retired from work and was forced to resign as a Council Member, so as not to jeopardize her pension. The replacement names are Maria Alberto, Tracey DeFrancesco and David Nunn. The Mayor said due to conflicts of schedules, they cannot be here this evening.

Councilman Gibbs moved the following Resolution with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Gibbs, Black, Nehls, Mobus, Sopko, "aye"

R1: Authorize Council Candidate Interview and Selection Process and Authorize Executive Session – Personnel

At 7:40 P.M. the Mayor & Council left the dais and conducted Executive Session in the room behind Council Chambers.

At 7:58 P.M. the Mayor and Council returned to the dais for public session.

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

R2: Appointment of Councilmember – Maria Alberto

Mayor Pote said that R2 is now approved and Maria Alberto is our new Council person. Mayor Pote said we look forward to working with her.

Republican Party Chairman D.J. Hunsinger was present and said he spoke with Maria Alberto and she was unable to attend this meeting due to prior scheduling conflicts. He also said she has cleared her calendar and will be in attendance for all future meetings.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance – Councilman Mobus reported the Committee met on February 12th and a majority of time was spent on the 2018 Municipal Budget. He said Recreation summer camp is planned to continue and included in the Budget. He said the Budget books will be distributed by the end of next week. He said we intend to introduce the Budget on March 15th and hold the public hearing to adopt on April 19th. He explained that the Committee spent time discussing the purchase of Fire apparatus and had a discussion on the surplus policy. Mayor Pote replied that he appreciates all the hard work that is going into the Budget and he would also like to thank Mr. Hance and Mr. Atkins for their hard work.

2. Police – Council President Gibbs reported a letter of retirement from Sargent Dan Lorimar was received effective March 1. He said we currently have two openings that the Police Department is interviewing for and now this makes three. Mayor replied this puts a strain on the Police Department and we need to fill those positions right away.

3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Councilman Nehls reported the Public Works Department completed 28 service calls and 26 work orders. The Christmas tree removals have been completed. He said there was a snow storm on January 17th, a salting event on February 5th and salting of ice spots on February 7th and 8th. He reported that the department worked on pothole repairs, the cleaning of catch basin tops and had numerous dead trees removed. Councilman Nehls also reported that the foyer by Engineering has been repainted, the generator installation has begun at the Public Works Garage. Lastly, Councilman Nehls discussed the remediation of the oil leak at Spratford Park from the Getty Station.

4. Public Affairs:

Open Space – Councilman Sopko said there was no meeting for the Open Space Committee and they are looking to have a meeting by the end of March.

Environmental – Councilman Sopko reported the Environmental Commission held a meeting on January 22nd and discussed recycling. He said Rachael Funcheon continues to take the initiative to implement different recycling programs.

Recreation – Councilman Mobus said the Recreation Committee was unable to meet in the month of February. The next scheduled event is the Easter egg hunt on March 24th.

Historical – Councilman Mobus reported the Historical Committee was unable to meet but they are still getting things done. He said Diddy has completed a nice article for the newsletter highlighting the accomplishments of the Committee for the year. Councilman Mobus said their goal is to have a recommendation of placement of the mural to the Mayor and Council before September. He said the Committee is in need of members and they are currently interviewing some potential members. He also thanked two scouts, Matthew King and Alexandra Benc, who volunteered with some projects in Watchung and extended appreciation for their efforts.

Board of Health – Councilman Black had no report.

5. Fire – Councilman Black said Fire was expanded on earlier by Councilman Mobus with a rundown financially on how they are going to move ahead with the Fire truck. He asked if Tom Herits could cover the building updates in his report.

6. Laws/Ordinances – Council President Gibbs said once we get our membership settled we will have a report. Mayor Pote explained he will be making some changes in terms of who is on the standing committees and will be contacting everyone about it.

REPORTS - OTHER:

7. Engineer – Mr. Herits reported that he finished the County's Hazard Mitigation plan worksheets and they were sent back for review. The documentation was submitted for reimbursement of Washington Drive project and he said they are putting paper work together for Valley Drive reimbursement. He reported updates on the Firehouse renovation. He also reported they are back filling the trench at Spratford Park as part of the remediation process. He said Bob Burns has arranged to have the sprinkler system in that section of the park redone at the Gas Station's expense. He said the Sears site is in the process of completing their compliance review.

8. Police Chief – Mr. Atkins reported the Police are down to four finalists to consider recommending for appointment. Mayor Pote said we appreciate all the hard work Sgt. Lorimar has done in his career. Council President Gibbs said from a process stand point the Police Chief will submit the names of the recommended officers to the Police Committee for approval and then we will submit the final recommendations to the full Council and yourself for the final action.

9. Fire Department – No report submitted.

10. Rescue Squad – Diddy Addario reported the Rescue Squad responded to 21 calls in January. She said the top responders for the month were Mike Vala and Amy Narakornpichit. She said five of their members started EMT school. She also said they have received bids to start some much needed renovations to their building. She explained a setback they encountered on the move to electronic charting, adding that the new system is going to be a learning curve for everyone.

Council President Gibbs asked if the contracts for the Rescue Squad building renovations have been awarded yet and advised her of someone to contact at PSE&G for the lighting upgrades.

11. Emergency Management – Mr. Atkins reported that Gary is working on the OEM plan and that process will take about six months.

12. Attorney – Attorney Cruz had no report.

13. Clerk – Ms. DeRocco said on Friday, February 2nd we had our ‘Go Red for Heart Health Day’ and it was a very successful event. Cardiac Registered Nurse Joan Helfman came and took our blood pressure and discussed healthy eating habits. She thanked Linda Monetti for organizing the session, adding that we raised a substantial amount to donate to the American Heart Association.

14. Administrator –Mr. Atkins reported their will be a need for a transfer of funds to finance the Fire truck. In regard to the new Councilwoman, Mr. Atkins said the staff employees will be happy to help her with all the years of experience.

Mayor Pote said the Fire Installation dinner was a very nice event, local and neighboring town firemen were in attendance. He said many awards went out to our firemen for different scenarios such as walking into fires in neighboring towns, and Jaws of Life Usage.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

Wendy Robinson, Hill Hollow Road, said she wanted to thank the Council for taking up the resolution to ban fracking and all related activities in the Delaware River Basin. She said she has been on this campaign for nine years and has yet to see any events of fracking being done safely. She said the waste water disposal is a dramatic problem. She asked if she could have some more information on the bee keeping resolution.

Mr. Atkins elaborated on the bee keeping resolution. Council President Gibbs said he asked the Clerk to pull the fracking resolution from consideration to address some concerns of the Council members.

Ms. Robinson said she has a lot of knowledge on this topic and would like to offer her expertise to the Council. Council President Gibbs advised he would reach out to her on this subject.

Diddy Addario, Rock Avenue, asked if Maria Alberto was going to step down from the Republican Committee since she is now a member of the Council. Republican Chairman, D.J. Hunsinger said many elected officials serve on both committees but Maria personally would like to not be on the Republican Committee. Mrs. Addario said has heard criticism from the citizens about being on the Committee and the Council.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

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

Approval of the following Council minutes:

February 1, 2018 / Regular Meeting

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Building Department Report / January, 2018
Police Activity Report / January, 2018

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #1 - NJ Transit 2/9/18 Notice of Public Hearings / Scotch Plains-Newark/ Proposed Discontinuance of Bus Route No. 95 c: M & C, Post
- #2 - Township of Bridgewater 2/8/18 An Ordinance Amending Chapter 126-248 Entitled "Improvement Guaranties to Conform to Amendments to the Municipal Land Use Law c: M & C, TEA, TH, Planning Board
- #3- JCP&L 2/12/18 Notice of Public Hearing of proposed Increase in Remediation Adjustment Clause c: M&C, TEA, Post
- #4- Sgt. Daniel P. Lorimor 2/12/2018 Letter of Resignation as a member of the Police Department c: M&C, TEA, Personnel

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS:

Council President Gibbs pulled R6 from the Consent Agenda Resolutions for further consideration.

The Consent Agenda Resolutions listed below, with the exception of R6 were unanimously adopted following a motion by Council President Gibbs and a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Gibbs, Black, Nehls, Mobus, Sopko, "aye."

- R3:02/15/18 Purchases Over \$2,000. - WB Mason (Building and Grounds – Supplies)
Communications Specialists (PD- Radio Maintenance)
Behavioral Medicine Consultants (Insurance- Employee Assistance Program)
- R4: Authorize Clerk to Issue Raffle License – PTO Warren Township
- R5: Opposing the New Jersey Department of Agriculture Bee Keeping Regulations and Requesting Legislation and Regulations to Protect Bee Keepers and Non-Bee Keepers
- R6: Supporting the Delaware River Basins Commissions Efforts to Enact a Permanent Ban on Natural Gas Development and Fracking **PULLED**
- R7: Ratify Motion from Meeting of February 1, 2018 – Authorize Revision to Change Order #1/ Cypreco, Fire House Renovation
- R8: Authorize Change Order #1 and Final Payment – Stilo Excavating, Inc. / Improvements To Valley Drive and Various Roads

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 Sopko and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Gibbs, Black, Nehls, Mobus, Sopko, "aye."

R9: 02/15/18 Payment of Bills

Council President Gibbs asked the residents to review the other taxing authorities besides the Borough such as the local schools and the County budgets. He asked all residents to please look at their tax bills, as only a small portion is Municipal.

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

Margaret Ellis, Valley Road, questioned why Warren PTO would get a Raffle License in Watchung referring to R4. Clerk Michelle DeRocco replied and explained that a license is obtained in the town where the event is being held.

Stuart Homer, Sherwood Drive, asked if the residents could be filled in on where things stand with the library. Mayor Pote said they are researching some items and hoping to schedule a meeting in the near future to discuss it as a full Council. He said we are looking to make some decisions around the library within the next two or three meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:58 PM to the Call of the Chair. The next scheduled meeting of the Mayor and Council to be held Thursday, March 1, 2018 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Regina Angelo, RMC
Administrative Assistant