

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
MAYOR AND COUNCIL
MINUTES
DECEMBER 10, 2019 - 7:30 P.M.**

0031631

OPENING STATEMENT: Mayor Keith S. Balla 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 Special Meeting 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 a MOMENT of SILENCE FOR THE VICTIMS OF TODAYS TRAGEDY IN JERSEY CITY.

ROLL CALL:

Black [P] Nehls [P] Sopko [P] Goodloe [P] Eisenberg Knegten [P]

Also present were Administrator Jim Damato, Attorney Albert Cruz, Engineer Tom Herits, Clerk Michelle DeRocco, and Administrative Assistant Regina Angelo.

There were 20 members of the public present.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION:

Council President Black moved the following Resolution with a second by Councilwoman Goodloe and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, "aye."

R1:12//10/19 Recognizing William Nehls for his Service as Council Member

Council President Black moved the following Resolution with a second by Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, "aye."

R2: Recognizing Robert Gibbs for his Service as Council Member

Council President Black moved the following Resolution with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, "aye."

R3: Recognizing George Sopko for his Service as Council Member

Council President Black thanked all three councilmen for their service to the town. He also spoke on how important volunteerism is in Watchung and feels Watchung is one of the best communities in Somerset County. He thanked all the residents for volunteering and dedicating their time and feels they are the backbone of this community.

Councilman Nehls thanked all the employees for their hard work.

Councilman Sopko thanked his family for their support throughout his term. He said he is honored to have served the Borough and appreciates all the Borough employees. He thanked former Councilman Rob Gibbs and Councilman Nehls for their years of service and all the knowledge they have taught him. Councilman Sopko reassured everyone as he leaves office the Borough is in good financial shape and he is proud of the financial strength in Watchung. He thanked the residents for the honor to serve them.

Councilwoman Goodloe thanked each of the Councilmen for all their lengthy hours of service and sharing their wisdom with her.

Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten thanked each Councilmen for the hours and years of service they have given to the town. She also said the best part about serving in the town you live is walking out of your door and still being neighbors. She said she is looking forward to sharing that quality with her former Councilmen.

Mayor Balla thanked former Councilman Rob Gibbs for his experience and wisdom he provided to the Council. He thanked Councilman Nehls for his fortitude and responsibility when examining the Boroughs budget. He also thanked Councilman Sopko for his gift of real estate knowledge that he brought to the Administration and Finance Committee. He thanked all of the Councilmen for exemplifying what it takes to be a true public servant.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance – Councilman Sopko said the Administration and Finance Committee met on December 6th and discussed the new policy on alcohol and drug free work place. He also said the Committee discussed personnel adjustments, the budget and expanding the Foveonics contract.
2. Police – Councilman Nehls had no report.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Councilman Nehls said the leaf bag pickup has been completed, and announced that we have approximately 700 tons of road salt on hand. He also mentioned that notice was received from the State that the Borough has received \$300,000 dedicated to road grants for next year. Councilman Nehls read a formal letter of retirement from Mr. Burns effective February 29, 2020. Councilman Nehls thanked Mr. Burns for his dedication to the Borough but especially for the dedication he showed to our residents during super storm Sandy. Councilman Nehls said the Public Works Committee met and discussed a truck currently being repaired, however said it will need to be replaced in the future. Mr. Nehls also commented on the importance of the salt dome. He said the gate to the salt dome has been damaged and is being replaced. He thanked Watchung Schools' Principal Mary Nunn for her dedicated service throughout the years to the school system and wished her the best of luck in her retirement.

4. Public Affairs:

Environmental - Councilwoman Goodloe said the Environmental Commission met and they are in the process of planning for the Green Fair. She said they have recycled a total of 255 pounds of plastic out of the 500-pound goal needed towards the bench. She also said the Commission would like to be involved with the planning of the rain garden.

Recreation - Councilman Black had no report.

Historical – Councilman Black had no report.

Board of Health – Councilman Sopko had no report.

5. Fire – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said in the month of November the Fire Department responded to 29 calls for service. She also said the Fire Department members performed 261 man-hours of service.

6. Laws/Ordinances- Councilman Black had no report.

REPORTS - OTHER:

7. Engineer – Mr. Herits said the Borough has been awarded a \$300,000 grant from the Department of Transportation for various road improvements for the year 2020. He said he are in the process of completing the permit process for the dredging of Watchung Lake. He also said the soils report should be completed by the end of the week regarding the EMS tower. He mentioned the DOT contacted him asking for any traffic reports from developers in the area because they are working on a signal optimization for Route 22 to start coordinating the signals to move traffic better.

8. Police Chief – No report.

9. Fire Department – No report.

10. Rescue Squad – No report.

11. Emergency Management – No report.

12. Attorney – Attorney Cruz had no report.

13. Clerk – Ms. DeRocco had no report but wished everyone a happy holiday and a happy New Year.

14. Administrator – Mr. Damato said the deer hunt is scheduled to begin this Thursday and Friday. He said dates have been published online and all notices necessary were sent out in the mail and posted. He wished everyone a happy and healthy holiday season.

Youth Services – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten had no report.

Planning Board – Councilman Sopko had no report but said the Planning Board will meet next on December 17th.

Board of Education – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten had no report but said the next meeting will be held on December 11th.

Municipal Alliance – Councilwoman Goodloe had no report but said the next meeting is scheduled for tomorrow.

Library Advisory Board – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday January 8th.

Mayor Balla attended the Watchung annual Volunteer Appreciation Holiday dinner at the Forest Lodge and said it was a wonderful event and thanked all of the volunteers throughout the community. He mentioned that the Rescue Squad held their 29th annual Tree of Lights ceremony on December 7th. He thanked all the volunteers from the Fire Department and the Rescue Squad for their years of service. He said on December 8th and 9th the Hearts of Watchung collected clothing, toys and household items for families in need which were distributed to various service organizations throughout the county. He thanked everyone for their participation and community involvement.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

Tina Kelly, Dogwood Lane, thanked Councilmembers Nehls, Sopko and Gibbs for all their hard work and dedication to the community.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

CONSENT AGENDA: The Consent Agenda Items listed below were unanimously adopted following a motion by Council President Black and a second by Councilman Sopko and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye.”

Approval of the following Council minutes:

November 25, 2019 – Regular and Executive Sessions

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Wildlife Management Advisory Committee Minutes – August 20, 2019
 Library Advisory Committee Minutes – July 10, 2019, September 18, 2019
 Environmental Commission Minutes – June 24, 2019, August 26, 2019, September 23, 2019
 Police Activity Report – December 10, 2019
 Traffic & Beautification Minutes – November 12, 2019

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

#41 Robert Gibbs 11/25/19 Letter of Resignation as a member of the Council, effective November 25, 2019 c: M & C, JD

Acknowledgment and Acceptance of the following letter of Resignation:

#42 Robert Burns 12/2/19 Letter of Resignation as Manager of the Public Works Department, effective February 29, 2020 c: M & C, JD

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS

Council President Black moved the following Consent Agenda Resolutions, beginning with R4 through R8, with a second by Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten. Councilman Nehls made a motion to remove R7 with a second by Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye.”

Council President Black made a motion to move the amended Consent Agenda Resolutions, beginning with R4 through R8 excluding R7, with a second by Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye.”

Councilman Nehls explained he feels R7 is a policy decision regarding the DOT policy and alcohol drug free work place policy and he doesn't feel he should be voting on this resolution as he will not be a part of the council next year.

Councilman Sopko asked Administrator Damato if delaying the vote would result in any penalties to the Borough. Administrator Damato advised there would be no penalties. Councilman Black asked if adopting this resolution was standard procedure. Mr. Damato advised the resolution was standard procedure and explained why the Joint Insurance Fund recommended the Borough adopt the resolution.

Council President Black moved R7 be voted on with the Consent Agenda Resolutions, R4 through R8, with a second by Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Black, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye.” Nehls, “abstain.”

R4:12/10/19 Purchases Over \$2,000 – Thyssenkrupp Elevator (B&G – Service Contract)
 Challenger Fence Inc. (Cap- Salt Storage Bin)

- R5: Authorize Insertion of Special Item of Revenue (Chapter 159) / 2019 Budget:
Youth Services Grant
Body Armor Grant
- R6: Authorize Salary Adjustment – Carolyn Taylor / Zoning Officer
- R7: Authorize Amendments to the Personnel Manual – Revised DOT Policy
Alcohol and Drug-Free Workplace
- R8: Authorize Council Members Elect to attend the Executive Session

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 Sopko moved the following resolution with a second by Councilman Nehl and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, "aye."

R9:12/10/19 Payment of Bills

At this time, Mayor Balla deviated from the Agenda and moved forward with R10 and R13:

Council President Black moved the following resolution with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, "aye."

R10: Authorize Candidate Interviews / Council Member Vacancy

Mayor Balla announced the Council would now start the candidate interviews.

Mayor Balla read a letter received from the Republican Party Committee Chairwoman, Debra Joren, submitting the names of three candidates for the position of Councilmember. They are as follows: Ron Jubin, Amber Murad and Freddie Hayeck.

Freddie Hayeck was not present to participate in the candidate interviews.

Mayor Balla thanked the three candidates for their interest in serving the Borough. Each candidate will be interviewed individually and the other will be asked to step out in the hall. Candidates will be interviewed in alphabetical order beginning with Ron Jubin.

Council Candidate Interviews:

Mayor Balla requested Mr. Ron Jubin step forward and give a brief synopsis of his background. Mayor Balla then asked each member of the Council if they had any questions for Mr. Jubin. Upon completion of the interview, Mayor Balla thanked Mr. Jubin and asked him to step out in the hall.

Mayor Balla then requested Ms. Amber Murad enter the Council Room and step forward and give a brief synopsis of her background. Mayor Balla then asked each member of the Council if they had any questions for Ms. Murad. Upon completion of the interview, Mayor Balla thanked Ms. Murad.

Councilman Nehls apologized that Freddie Hayeck could not be at the Council Meeting to attend the interviews this evening.

Councilman Nehls made a motion to approve Ron Jubin as the replacement Councilmember for Rob Gibbs, with a second by Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, "aye."

R13:12/10/19 Appointment of Council Member

Councilman Black and Councilman Sopko said Mr. Jubin will be a great asset to the community and also a great asset as a Councilman.

Councilman Nehls asked Councilman Jubin to take his seat on the dais.

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

Rachael Funcheon, Cedar Road, said the Environmental Commission met and spoke about the styrofoam collection and said everyone is on board with the special recycling programs discussed. She questioned if anyone in Watchung had a shed to donate so they do not need to buy one to hold the collection of styrofoam.

Councilman-elect Pete Martino, Sunbright Road, thanked Councilmen Nehls, Sopko and Gibbs for their service to the community. He said it is very difficult to stand in front of an entire town and put yourself out there and run for a position. He wants everyone to respect one another and hopes now everyone is at peace.

Wendy Robinson, Hill Hollow Road, commented to Mr. Nehls that his expertise on the Council will be sorely missed. She thanked Councilman Sopko for running an honorable and respectful campaign. She also stated she is looking forward to serving with Councilman Black and Councilman Jubin and thanked Councilman Gibbs for his prior service.

Mayor Balla administered the Oath of Office to Councilman Ron Jubin as his wife, Karen Jubin held the Bible. Councilman Jubin took his seat on the dais.

Council President Black moved the following Resolution with a second by Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin "aye."

R11:12/10/19 Executive Session: Personnel

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

Upon return to regular session at 9:46 P.M. all Councilmembers previously present were still in attendance.

Councilman Sopko moved the following resolution with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin "aye."

R12:12/10/19 Appointment of Deputy Clerk

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next scheduled meeting of the Mayor and Council is our Annual Re-Organizational meeting to be held on Thursday, January 2, 2020 at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,


Regina Angelo, RMC
Deputy Clerk



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