

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
MAYOR AND COUNCIL
MINUTES
APRIL 18, 2019- 7:30 P.M.

OPENING STATEMENT: Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 7:33PM 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.

ROLL CALL:

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

Also present were Administrator Tom Atkins; Attorney Albert Cruz; Clerk Michelle DeRocco, and Administrative Assistant Regina Angelo.

There were 25 members of the public present.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Mr. Mike Bange, Manager of Operations of New Jersey American Water, presented a check to the Watchung Chemical Engine Company for \$971.00 for an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) unit. He said NJ American Water is happy to present the fire company with this award.

Chief Pivnichny said this check will help the Fire Department replace one of their aging AED's. He said the Rescue Squad has passed down their older units as they purchased new ones.

Council President Gibbs said he appreciates the grant program that helps small communities able to purchase this type of equipment.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance - Councilman Sopko said there is an Administration and Finance Committee meeting scheduled for Monday, April 22nd and he will have a full report at the next meeting.

2. Police – Council President Gibbs spoke of the police statistics for the month of March. He said the shoplifting category is still a driver of our crime index. He said we are trying to advocate at the Federal level regarding these statistics.

3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Council President Gibbs gave a report in Councilman Nehls absence. Council President Gibbs reported there was a Public Works meeting held on April 5th. He said the shade design for Mobus Field has been put on hold for now and they are seeing if a sprinkler system is a more cost-effective way to go. He said the fountains have been installed in the lakes, but a few needed repairs and they need to start preparing for replacements since the fountains have exceeded their warranty life. Mr. Burns is getting quotes prepared for the replacement of the roof at the Police Department which has exceeded its life expectancy. He said they are getting quotes for starting demolition on the last house at the Ness property. He also said the salt storage building down on New Providence road is progressing. He said the Borough will replace the lightning detector at Phillips Field. He said the Little League put in a request for 50 tons of infield mix down for Grant Field. He said they plan to reach out to Warren to inquire about cost estimates of alternate material they could use.

4. Public Affairs:

Environmental - Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten had no report but asked everyone to send good vibes to Councilwoman Goodloe on delivering her baby.

Recreation – Councilman Black thanked Linda Monetti on a successful Easter Egg Hunt event. He reminded everyone the Community Picnic is scheduled for May 18th with a rain date of May 19th at Mobus field.

Historical – Councilman Black thanked the Mayor for his eloquent speech at the grand opening of the Cinemark Theater. He also said Amber Murad gave a nice explanation of the history of the mural displayed as a picture version in the hallway of the theater. He reminded all of the car show coming up on Sunday April 28th at the Texier House from 11:30 to 2:30 P.M in support of the “Save the Mural” cost.

Board of Health – Councilman Sopko had no report but said the next scheduled Board of Health meeting will be on June 19th.

5. Fire – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten congratulated the Fire Department and Chemical Engine department on receiving the NJ American water grant.

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

REPORTS - OTHER:

7. Engineer – Administrator Tom Atkins spoke in the absence of Tom Herits, reporting the \$322,000 grant received from the DOT was submitted for a number of roads but the roads specifically identified for work were Wildwood Terrace, upper Carrar Drive and Glen Eagles Drive. He said the Council Public Works Committee has been asked to continue to evaluate the list of roads. He also said the Phillips field bridge inspection report came back with no major issues.

8. Police Chief – No report.

9. Fire Department- Chief Pivnichny said in the month of March the Fire Department responded to 24 calls for service. He said some of those calls included a structure fire, cooking fire, hazardous conditions, and faulty alarm system calls. He mentioned that training classes and drills were also held for the Department.

10. Rescue Squad – Dorothy Addario said the 2019 Annual Fund Drive mailer is scheduled to go out during the first week of May. She commented there will be a spring cleanup Saturday, May 4th to coincide with the Borough's Operation Pride cleanup. She also said there will be a cardiac training class coming up.

11. Emergency Management – No report

12. Attorney – Attorney Cruz had no report but asked permission to address the Mayor and Council before the two affordable Housing Resolutions were considered.

13. Clerk – Mrs. DeRocco said, after every re-organization meeting, massive amounts of information is sent to our web master to update our webpage. New names, new terms of office, new contact numbers, new meeting dates – not just for the Mayor and Council but for every Committee & Commission, and Board. Several times a year, all departments are reminded to go to the webpage to ensure that all the information that is posted is correct and up-to-date. She explained the reason for her mentioning this is to let the public know, that if they see information missing, or posted incorrectly – to please pick up the phone and call the Clerk's office, or send an email and it will be looked into. She said there is no need to blast the Borough on social media, and that if a call is made to the Clerks' Office and it is not addressed, then feel free to complain on social media.

14. Administrator – Mr. Atkins reminded the Mayor and Council to please complete the MEL training by April 30th. He said that there will be an A & F meeting on Monday. He mentioned that the recruitment for a new Construction Official has been very difficult. He said there have not been an abundance of qualified applicants for the position, and that if it comes down to one specific candidate, he may have to disqualify himself due to a conflict. He said he will discuss this in more detail during the meeting on Monday.

Wildlife Management Advisory Committee – Council President Gibbs said the drone survey has been completed for the deer count, the results are being analyzed and will be submitted shortly. He asked Administrator Atkins if he has heard back from Raritan Valley. Mr. Atkins said they are plotting out their facts and figures and he anticipates a submission within two weeks.

Youth Services – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said the budget was reviewed at the last meeting. She said there are remaining funds left and the Commission is deciding on different possibilities on ways to utilize them. She mentioned a yoga class for children or social media awareness for parents as a few possibilities.

Planning Board – Councilman Sopko said the Planning Board met on April 16th and a presentation by Marcia Shiffman was given regarding the Housing Element and Fair Share plan.

Board of Education – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said she attended the meeting on Wednesday, April 10th. She said the budget for the 2019 school year was reviewed in full and there has been an increase since last year. She encourages everyone to come to the next Board of Education meeting with questions, comments and suggestions for the Board.

Administrator Atkins said there was a communication received today from the Board of Education's Acting Business Administrator acknowledging the help and support from our Borough Engineer and Public Works Manager. He said the Board of Education has some capital improvement work they want to do in the parking lots at Bayberry and Valley View schools and they hope when the budget is adopted there will be funds for those projects.

Municipal Alliance – No report.

Library Advisory Board – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said the Library Advisory Subcommittee report is now available for review on the Borough website and the next Library Advisory meeting will be held on May 1st.

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PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

Pete Martino, Sunbright Road, asked for further information regarding R6 on tonight’s agenda. He questioned what the test pits were for. He said all he knows is that he is the guy digging the pits but he does not know what he is digging them for and he has not received a specification for the project yet. Council President Gibbs questioned if Mr. Martino should be the one digging the pits if he does not know what they are for. Mr. Martino asked for a specification and an answer on why the Council is doing this. Council President Gibbs asked if there is a stated purpose in the negotiated documents. Attorney Cruz read Resolution R6. Attorney Cruz said he thought these questions were worked out through the Public Works Committee and he suggested this matter not be considered tonight since there isn’t a firm understanding between both parties of what is to occur.

Council President Gibbs suggested Mr. Martino speak with Councilman Nehls and the rest of the Public Works Committee regarding some of his questions.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A Public Hearing of Ordinance OR:19/04 entitled: **“AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ORDINANCE OR:18/19, AMENDING AND SUPPLEMENTING CHAPTER XXVIII, ENTITLED “LAND DEVELOPOMENT REGULATIONS OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG” TO ESTABLISH MANDATORY AFFORDABLE HOUSING SET-ASIDE”** was held.

R1:04/18/19 Adoption of OR:19/04 – Amend Code / Affordable Housing Set-Aside

Councilman Black moved a public hearing be held with a second by Council President Gibbs and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Gibbs, Black, Sopko, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye.”

Attorney Cruz commented on Ordinances 19/04 and 19/05. He said that these Ordinances are amendments to Ordinances adopted on December 6, 2018 as part of the Affordable Housing Plan and settlement reached earlier in the year. He said OR:19/04 is a technical correction to point to the correct cross references in the Ordinance. He said Ordinance OR:19/05 incorporates the recommendations of the Planning Board into the Redevelopment Plan. Attorney Cruz also said these are new ordinances and are part of the overall Affordable Housing Plan.

With no one from the public wishing to be heard, Councilman Black closed the public hearing with a second by Council President Gibbs, and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Gibbs, Sopko, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye;” Black, “nay.”

A Public Hearing of Ordinance OR:19/05 entitled: **“AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ORDINANCE OR:18/20, ADOPTING A "REDEVELOPMENT PLAN" FOR A NON-CONDEMNATION AREA IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT CONSISTING OF BLOCK 7402, LOTS 19.01 AND 19.02 AND BLOCK 7403, LOTS 5 AND 10 AND FURTHER IDENTIFIED AS THE “BONNIE BURN ROAD REDEVELOPMENT AREA”, AS SHOWN ON THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG TAX MAP IN ACCORDANCE WITH N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-7.”** was held.

R2:04/18/19 Adoption of OR:19/05 – Amend Redevelopment Plan / Bonnie Burn Road
Redevelopment Area

Councilman Black moved a public hearing be held with a second by Council President Gibbs and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Gibbs, Sopko, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye.” Black “nay”

With no one from the public wishing to be heard, Councilman Black closed the public hearing with a second by Council President Gibbs and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Gibbs, Sopko, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye;” Black “nay.”

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NEW BUSINESS

The Consent Agenda items, were unanimously adopted following a motion by Council President Gibbs and a second by Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten, and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Gibbs, Black, Sopko, Eisenberg Knegten “aye.”

Approval of the following Council minutes:

April 4, 2019 – Special Meeting and Regular Session

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Police Activity – March 2019
Planning Board Minutes – March 14, 2019

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #15 - Township of Warren 3/21/19 Notice of Public Hearing on two (2) Land Use Ordinances, #19-30 / Affordable Housing Unit Regulations; and #19-33 / Affordable Housing Development Fees; on May 9, 2019 c: M & C, TEA, Pl. Board
- #16 - Township of Bridgewater 4/16/19 Notice of Non-Adoption of Proposed Land Use Ordinance #19-10, after Scheduled Public Hearing on April 15, 2019 c: M & C, TEA, Pl. Board

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS: Council President Gibbs moved to table R6, Councilman Sopko seconded the motion and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Gibbs, Black, Sopko, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye.”

Attorney Cruz mentioned that Resolution R5 is a result of a recommendation from the Laws and Ordinance Committee and Resolution R7 is a follow up to the special presentation given two weeks ago in which the Weldon Representative spoke to the Governing Body regarding the proposed change in truck traffic route in Scotch Plains.

Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said she is very pleased to see Resolution R5 on tonight’s agenda and thinks it’s a good step towards providing our residents with transparency.

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

- R3: 04/18/19 Purchases Over \$2,000 – PowerDMS (PD – Accreditation Software Subscription)
Thor Guard (Cap Improve - Lightning Detector)
- R4: Authorize Payment of Tax Sale Certificate # 18-00005/ 116 Johnston Drive
- R5: Authorizing Posting Agendas, Ordinances and Resolutions on the Website
- R6: Authorize Test Pits at Municipal Complex – Pietro Martino/Peter Martino
Construction, LLC (**TABLED**)
- R7: Resolution of Opposition of Diverting of Truck Traffic from Park Avenue/Martine
Avenue to Terrill Road in the Township of Scotch Plains
- R8: Authorize Return of Overpayment / Certified Copy

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.

Council President Gibbs encouraged the public to go online and review the budgets. He said if anyone has any questions to please come forward and ask for answers. He said the other taxing authorities have a significant amount of control over what residents pay for their taxes. He said the oversight has to be on all three taxing entities and hopes this is a concern for everyone.

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

- R9: Payment of Bills

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

Margaret Ellis, Valley Road, read a letter from the Green Team to the Mayor and Council. The letter recommends the new library be built with sustainability in mind. She said the Green Team hopes the Council will strive for a green community and a green future.

Alan Haveson, New Providence, asked for the Councils support in having New Jersey transit provide better public transportation through Watchung. He asked if the Council would have any interest in supporting his efforts due to the affordable housing coming soon on Bonnie Burn Road.

Pete Martino, Sunbright Road, said he has a concern regarding the library construction process. He said countless years and money have been wasted on proposed designs and there is still no plan in place. He asked where we are in this process and why other towns have fundraised and are ready to apply for the matching funds from the State of New Jersey. He asked how many architects were interviewed for doing this job. He suggested the Buildings and Grounds Committee focus on the buildings we already have that need repair. He commented that the new Library building is going to be used by the residents of Watchung and suggested the residents have some input. He asked the status of the Exempt Hall site as a location for the new library building. He quoted Councilman Black from a Library Advisory Board meeting from October 2018. He asked for an explanation on what happened with the negotiations and the acquisition of the Exempt Hall. He asked what the Exempt Fireman’s Club do for the members of Watchung.

Amber Murad, Glen Eagles Drive, reminded everyone about the Car Shown fundraiser on Sunday, April 28th. She thanked Fire Official Chris Czuba for being professional and going into detail to help her understand and fulfill the required documentation for the vendor applications. She also thanked the Mayor and Council for coming out to the grand opening of Cinemark Theater.

Pete Martino, Sunbright Road, questioned what the Exempt Firemen do for Watchung. He said the new lease takes us into the year 2038. He also said he finds it hard to believe six men can hold a Borough hostage over a building. He said the needs of the many should always outweigh the wants of a few. He suggested the members of the Exempt Fireman’s Club come to a Council meeting and answer some of the resident’s questions.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next scheduled meeting of the Mayor and Council to be held Thursday, May 2, 2019 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Regina Angelo, RMC
Administrative Assistant