

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG  
MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
MINUTES  
SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING  
April 25, 2019 - 7:30 P.M.**

**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 annual notice to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, and Star Ledger, and posted at Borough Hall.

**SALUTE TO THE FLAG and MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN, SERVING HOME AND ABROAD.**

**ROLL CALL**

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

Also present were Administrator Tom Atkins; CFO Bill Hance; Clerk Michelle DeRocco; and Deputy Clerk MaryAnn Hance.

There were 3 members of the public present.

**PUBLIC HEARING 2019 MUNICIPAL BUDGET**

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

R1:04/25/19SP                      Determining Budget to be Read by Title

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

Discussion was open to the public.

With no one from the public wishing to be heard Councilman Sopko closed the public hearing and made the following statement.

*As the Chair of the council Administration/Finance/Personnel Committee I move to approve the 2019 municipal budget in the amount of \$15,336,000. This budget presented many challenges but we are able to move forward without reducing any municipal services. Our public safety staffing levels in our Police Department will be continued which was a personal priority of mine and also of the Mayor and Council. Our capital improvement fund will have bonding capacity of roughly \$9 million which will be available as Capital Improvement budget decisions are finalized this year through funding ordinances. I am excited about moving forward on the library/community center opportunity as details become more readily available for decision making. Funding is there to do so once more specific determinations on this policy decision are made. The Council has also included an additional \$100,000 in the Capital Improvement Fund that will be earmarked for beautification improvements along roads entering Watchung and around our public buildings. I look forward to working with the Council, Public Works/Buildings and Grounds Committee, and T&B along with a few other Borough Committees to effectuate some of these beautification goals and priorities. Capital Improvement funding will also be available for roadway work. There are many roads to address so the Council Public Works Committee and professional staff will soon make their recommendations for implementation. Certainly, a lot will be accomplished. I was also pleased to find out that the Borough was awarded an NJDOT Trust Fund grant in the amount of \$322,000 which will be utilized this year. Major work was completed on High Tor in 2018 as we received \$496,000 in grant funds from NJDOT for this large project. We will always seek out grant funding to achieve some of our roadway improvement goals and objectives.*

*A final comment about the 2019 Municipal Budget ---our surplus (fund balance) is now at a level of over \$4 million which is viewed extremely favorably by the bond rating agencies like Standard and Poors (S&P). Another priority of this Council through the Administration/Finance/Personnel Committee has been to have our bond rating brought to the AAA level from our present rating of AA+ and we continue placing ourselves in a position to do that. This will translate into better interest rates when funds are borrowed for the capital improvement needs that we have. In closing I would like to thank Council President Rob Gibbs for all his work as former Chair of Admin/Finance and getting us to where we are now. His years of experience, input and guidance on the Admin/Finance Committee speaks to our current substantially stronger financial position in Watchung. The recommended budget presented by Borough Administrator Tom Atkins and CFO Bill Hance*



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## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 P.M. to the Call of the Chair and to the next scheduled Council meeting Thursday, May 2, 2019 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

MaryAnn Hance  
Deputy Clerk