

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
MAYOR AND COUNCIL
MINUTES
MARCH 7, 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 [P] Eisenberg Knegten [P]

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

There were 25 members of the public present.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance – Councilman Sopko had no report. He said CFO Bill Hance has distributed the 2019 draft budget to every for their review.
2. Police – Council President Gibbs had no report. He mentioned a report of a “luring” incident in town but it said after investigation it had been determined to be a a misunderstanding since the person was a family friend. There was no threat to the community. However, he said all parents should be vigilant and teach their children about not speaking or going with strangers.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Councilman Nehls had no report, however, he did announce that he this will be his last year on the Council, he will not run again but will complete his term. He thanked all residents for their support and said it has been an honor and privilege to be on the Council all these years.

Councilman Nehls noted that there is a Purchase Order over \$2,000.00 on the Agenda for the inspection of the Bridge on Brookdale Road, by Acrow Bridge Corp. of America. He said the County has requested this be done and he hopes it will be completed very soon.

4. Public Affairs:

Environmental – Councilwoman Goodloe reported the Committee met on February 28th at which time they discussed simplifying the process for tree removal. She also said the organization who has previously accepted all bottle caps will only accept specific types. The Committee is still discussing the possibility of getting dumpsters for styrofoam and locations for same.

Recreation - Councilman Black reported the Recreation Commission will be using Round Top Swim Club in Warren for the Summer Camp program. He said the Commission is adding a new event this year, Music in the Park, June 29th with a rain date June 30th, 4-7 pm. He reported the Commission is looking for options to provide shade at Mobus Field and also either repairing or replacing the lightening detector. Other future events coming up are the Easter Egg Hunt on April 13th rain date April 14th and the Community Picnic on May 18th, rain date May 19th. Councilman Nehls questioned the cost to hold the summer camp at Round Top and Councilman Black did not have the figures. Councilman Nehls also said they should definitely look into replacing the lightening detector system. Mayor Balla questioned bus transportation for the summer program. Mr. Atkins said there will be less bus travel.

Historical – Councilman Black reported Matt King’s Eagle Scout project at God’s Little Acre Cemetery will be presented Sunday, May 5th at 1 pm and Matt and Troop 32 will be there. He Announced that Historical is planning a fund raiser to “Save the Mural” which will be held on April 28th. This will be a car show and food-truck event. Applications for memorial pavers for the 9-11 walkway are still being accepted.

Board of Health – Councilman Sopko reported the Committee met on February 27th. Councilman Sopko also said reported the Committee would like to improve their section of the Borough website and possibly add additional links on it for health issues. The next meeting is scheduled for March 20th at 7 pm.

Councilman Nehls said Middle Brook was the first shared service in the Borough and it has saved us an enormous amount of money over the years, and we receive excellent services from both the Health Officer and Health Specialists.

5. Fire – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten reported the Committee met on March 4th she, along with Mayor Balla, and Councilwoman Goodloe attended. The Departments newest member, Christopher Hoffman was sworn in. She announced that the Department responded to 25 calls in February, and that there will be a Memorial Service for former fireman and long-time resident Fred Malchow on Saturday, March 16th at 12 pm at Wilson Memorial Church.

Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten also reported Mayor Balla has formally requested a collaboration with the Firemen Exempts and asked for their cooperation to allow the new community building to be built in the Municipal Complex on the land between Borough Hall and the Fire House. He said this act of good-will to the community would be memorialized in the Community Center space with a permanent exhibit about the volunteerism and heroic acts of the Firemen and women of Watchung.

Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten then read a letter that former Mayor Pote sent to the Watchung Fire Department Exempt Members, care of Paul Ost and Gary Greves, which echoed Mayor Balla's thoughts.

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

REPORTS – OTHER:

7. Engineer- Mr. Atkins reported Mr. Herits came in today to review with Bob Burns some of the roads to discuss for work to be done. Councilman Nehls said Mr. Herits did email him the list which includes 1.3 million dollars in road improvements that he is recommending. It does not include the DOT Grants. Councilman Nehls suggested all Council members should ride the roads in the Borough and come up with priorities. He also said drainage projects would be an additional \$82,000.

Mr. Atkins said Mr. Herits and Mr. Burns will be assisting the Board of Education staff to assess their needs. Council President Gibbs said this demonstrates the Borough is working with the School Board which will also help keep costs down.

8. Police Chief – No report
9. Fire Department – No report
10. Rescue Squad – No report
11. Emergency Management – Mr. Atkins reported we are waiting to hear back from Somerset County regarding some answers for shared services for OEM.
12. Attorney – Mr. Cruz had no report and no Executive Session. He said he would give a brief explanation of Ordinance 19/01 prior to opening the public hearing.
13. Clerk – Ms. DeRocco had no report but she wanted all to know soon it will be time for Financial Disclosure forms to be submitted. You will receive notices and instructions. She said if anyone needs assistance in completing this please let her know. The forms are due to the State by April 30th.
14. Administrator – Mr. Atkins commented on the Financial Disclosures being mandated to require volunteers to complete. Mr. Atkins asked if any Council members would like to comment on the upcoming March 18th meeting with the Traffic and Beautification Committee, Environmental Committee and Historical Committee. Councilwoman Goodloe asked if residents have anything they would like to input they should email her or Councilman Black. She said these Committees are meeting to discuss ways to make the town better. Mr. Atkins said budget information has been given to everyone on the Council and if there are any questions please contact either him or Mr. Hance. He said he is pleased with the document but only the Mayor and Council can adopt the budget. Mr. Atkins then reported on January 28th Mayor Balla, Council President Gibbs, and Councilwoman Eisenberg-Knegten met with Warren Township to discuss their Park and Ride program. He said it was learned there may be an opportunity for Watchung to participate in their program. He said he has been asked by the Mayor, Council President, and Councilwoman to reactivate that discussion with Warren and maybe get a specific proposal from them.

Mayor Balla asked the Council liaisons to the various Committees to give reports.

Wildlife Management Advisory Committee – Council President Gibbs had no report.

Youth Services – Councilwoman Eisenberg-Knegten reported the Youth Services Commission met on February 19th at 4 pm. She said the funds originally allocated for the Girls on Track program will now be utilized for the “Pursuit of Excellence” program which provides after school resources for students who need additional help raising their test scores in English/Language Arts and Math. Remaining funds will be used to run the TREPS Club at Valley View and the Kindness Club.

Planning Board – Councilman Sopko had no report, the next meeting is scheduled for 19th.

Board of Education – Councilwoman Eisenberg-Knegten reported the Board of Education met on February 27th which included training on Superintendent evaluation and strategic planning guidance from the State Board Association. Curriculum updates have been completed for English/Language Arts and Math and we are now in compliance with State standards. It was announced that Principal Mary Nunn will retire after 38 years in the district and the Valley View music teacher has also retired. She said the Operations Committee reported the district’s expenses have exceeded their revenue and they now have major facilities repairs needed including HVAC systems and roofs on both schools. The next meeting is scheduled for March 13th at 7 pm.

Municipal Alliance – Councilwoman Goodloe had no report.

Library Advisory Board – Councilwoman Eisenberg-Knegten reported grant applications for State matching funds will likely be pushed until the fall. The next steps for the Borough would be to engage an architect to begin developing these plans. Councilman Nehls said he would coordinate the architect meetings with the Public Works Committee. The next meeting will be held May 1st at 330 pm at the library.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

No one from the public wished to speak

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A Public Hearing of Ordinance OR:19/01 entitled “AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING A DEVELOPER’S AGREEMENT AND PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT, AND ACCEPTING AN AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEED RESTRICTION AND DRAINAGE FACILITIES EASEMENT AND AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND CLERK TO SIGN EACH” was held.

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

Prior to opening to the public Mr. Cruz said this Ordinance is for the O’Connor property and is required by the Board of Adjustment. He also said there is a separate document which was received today for an amendment to the Developers Agreements and a separate Resolution will be on the next Council meeting of March 21st.

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

R1 :03/07/19 Adoption of Ordinance OR:19/01 – Authorizing Developer’s Agreement and Deed Restrictions / 708 Mountain Boulevard

NEW BUSINESS

CONSENT AGENDA: Council President Gibbs removed #9 for a separate vote, and moved the adoption of the Consent Agenda Items listed below were unanimously accepted as amended. Councilman Sopko seconded the motion and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Gibbs, Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye.”

Approval of the following Council minutes:

February 21, 2019

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Police Activity Report – January 2019
Planning Board Minutes – January 15, 2019
Environmental Commission Minutes – November 26, 2018
Board of Health Minutes – November 28, 2018
Building Department Report - February 2019

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

#8 - Township of Scotch Plains 2/20/19 Notice of Public Hearing on 3/5/19 re: An Ordinance Amending “Redevelopment Plans” to Renumber Subsection Entitled “Parker Greenhouse Redevelopment Plan” c: M& C, TEA

Council President Gibbs recused himself and stepped down from the dais. Councilman Sopko moved Correspondence #9 with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye.”

#9 - PSE&G 2/25/19 Notice of Public Hearing for Approval of its Clean Energy Future- Energy Efficiency Program on a Regulated Basis c: M&C, TEA, Post

Council President Gibbs returned to the dais following the vote.

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS

Council President Gibbs moved the following resolutions with a second by Councilman Sopko and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Gibbs, Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye.”

R2: 03/07/19 Purchases Over \$2,000 – Acrow Bridge Corp. of America- (B&G – Bridge Inspection Brookdale Road)

R3: Authorize Payment of Tax Sale Certificate #18-03 / 134 Lakeview Avenue

R4: Authorize Treasurer to Issue Refund – Certified Copy / C. Jones

R5: Award Professional Services Contract / CGP&H – Affordable Housing Administrative Agent Services

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.

Introduction of Ordinance OR:19/03 entitled: “**AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG AMENDING AND SUPPLEMENTING SECTION 24-6 ENTITLED “APPLICATION AND TREE REMOVAL/REPLACEMENT;” SECTION 24-8 ENTITLED “DESIGN CRITERIA;” AND SECTION 24-11 ENTITLED “FEES AND BONDS” OF CHAPTER XXIV ENTITLED “TREE PRESERVATION” OF THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG.**” Public Hearing March 21, 2019.

Councilman Black moved Ordinance OR:19/03 be given its first reading. So ordered. Councilman Black moved the Ordinance be adopted on first reading and the Clerk be directed to publish the ordinance and notice of Public Hearing.

Councilman Black moved Ordinance OR:19/03 be given its first reading. So Ordered. Councilman Black moved the Ordinance be adopted on first reading and the Clerk be directed to publish the ordinance and notice of public hearing. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Goodloe and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Black, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye.” Public Hearing to be held March 7, 2019.

Councilman Black moved the following resolution with a second by Councilwoman Goodloe and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Gibbs, Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye”.

R6:03/07/19 Introduction of Ordinance OR:19/03 –Amend Code – Tree Removal Fees

PUBLIC PORTION-GENERAL DISCUSSION

Margaret Ellis, Valley Road, stated people do not know the Library is still open, and asked if we can get the word out utilizing the electronic sign.

Virginia Hartmann, Ellisen Road, said Library programs should be on the electronic sign since it was told it is very easy to program, and that the employees can do this from home, on their cell phones, in their pajamas.

Wendy Robinson, Hill Hollow Road, said people looking at possibility of purchasing homes in the Borough would see what the library has to offer.

Pete Martino, Sunbright Road, said he wanted to clarify some of his comments from the last meeting regarding renovations to the firehouse. He said his comments only dealt with the construction process not the planning. One example of overruns was the fire suppression exhaust system which was installed in the kitchen and was not in the original plan and was not required by the New Jersey Uniform Construction Code. He said the Council was presented a letter from the New Jersey Community Affairs that this was not needed. Councilman Nehls responded that he was at several meetings with three separate people who are certified by the State of New Jersey who stated this was a requirement. Councilman Black stated the firehouse needed the renovation and a truck was definitely needed.

Brad Leigh, Guinard Drive, suggested there should be discussion on different scenarios for the library with some type of analysis. Council President Gibbs said he invites everyone to talk to all of the Council about the library.

Victor Garber, Scott Drive, questioned the disparage regarding the cost of the firetruck, and asked where is the accountability. Councilman Nehls said he will look into this and the Fire Committee should take this up also. Council President Gibbs said he would like to see purchase orders from other towns.

Amber Murad, Glen Eagles Drive, said she spoke to the State Library Commission regarding the Library Grant application and asked about regulations. She was told this is going to the Governor first then to other agencies after that. Ms. Murad questioned the number of towns who have inquired but no records have been kept. She also said she was told the Borough would be required to hire a building consultant. Mayor Balla said he spoke to Brian Auger and was told the only towns looking for full amount are Watchung and Montgomery. Mayor Balla also said he will be meeting with Mr. Iovino tomorrow. Council President Gibbs said the Library Advisory Committee has done many years of research and investigation of exactly what Borough services are needed. The next step will be to work with an Architect.

Corey Haveson, Maple Street, said there as been talk on facebook about putting the resolutions on the website earlier. Councilman Black said this was discussed at the last Laws and Ordinance meeting.

Margaret Ellis, Valley Road, said the Library grant criteria is not out yet and doubts that a building consultant would be a requirement.

Virginia Hartman, Ellisen Road, said the Borough should look into putting some type of sprinkler system at Mobus Field playground instead of looking options to provide shade. Council President Gibbs that option previously but it can be looked at again.

Brad Leight, Guinard Drive, said the Borough needs an analysis of the library/warming center and what the benefits are.

Victor Garber, Scott Drive, asked why the Borough could not combine the Watchung Arts Center and the Library. Mayor Balla said there have been thoughts to combine these.

With no other public wishing to speak the public portion was closed.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 P.M. to the Call of the Chair and to the next scheduled Council meeting Thursday, March 21, 2019 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

MaryAnn Hance
Deputy Clerk