

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG  
MAYOR & COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

**NOVEMBER 2, 2023**

**MAYOR’S STATEMENT:** Mayor Ronald Jubin called the meeting to order at 7:31 P.M. and made the following opening statement: *“This meeting is being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. 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 the Annual Meeting Notice to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, the Star Ledger, posted at Borough Hall and on the Borough’s website.”*

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

**ROLL CALL**

Ead [P] Dahl [P] Fischer [P] Marano [P] Abi- Habib [P] Gibbs [P]

**PROCLAMATION**

Mayor Jubin read the following proclamations onto the record.

- ❖ Native American Heritage Month
- ❖ Diabetes Awareness Month

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

- ❖ Birdhouse Project  
Eagle Scout Service Project Proposal by Joshua Cheng

Joshua Cheng stated he would like to build bird houses for the blue birds and purple martins in Watchung. He discussed benefits of the project and also stated the project will help protect the wildlife in Watchung. He discussed the locations of the birdhouses and mentioned they will all have predator guards attached.

Councilmembers thanked Joshua for all his efforts and his desire to protect the Watchung wildlife. Council Member Abi – Habib thanked Joshua for stepping up to take on this project recommendation by the Environmental Commission and also thanked Sue Tucker for her help with coordinating this project.

**REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

1. Administration & Finance – Councilman Fischer advised the Committee met last week and there were no additions to the written report provided.
2. Police – Councilman Marano commented on a possible upcoming open house at the Police Department in the Spring for families in Watchung. He mentioned discussions occurred in relation to upcoming promotions and addressing some officer safety concerns and improvements. He also mentioned there is a cardiac workup available to all first responders and their families.

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3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – In addition to the report submitted, Council President Ead reported the 2023 DOT Road pavement is complete on Washington Rock and Reynolds roads. She provided detailed comments on the cleanup at Camp Endeavor and its soon to be opening. She mentioned the winter lights will go on starting Friday, November 24<sup>th</sup> and encouraged everyone to get their winter holiday display applications submitted to Borough Clerk Edith Gil.

4. Public Affairs:

Environmental – Councilwoman Abi-Habib highlighted items on the written report such as the bird boxes, more native plants added to the stream restoration project and stated a new informational sign will soon be installed. She also mentioned a letter will soon go out to residents who remove live trees to remind them the trees need to be replaced. She commented on the overall success of the Farmers Market and thanked Bill Hance for all his continued time and dedication to this event. She also thanked the Library, Friends of the Watchung Library and the Arts Center for making the Farmer's market interesting and fun even for the little shoppers. She mentioned November 21<sup>st</sup> as an additional pop-up date for the Farmers Market.

Recreation – Councilman Dahl reported on the huge success of the Harvest Festival. He thanked Damaris Gray, Recreation Coordinator and Edith Gil, Borough Clerk for all their help with organizing and facilitating this event.

Mayor Jubin also spoke on the greatness of the event and the positive impact the pickleball courts have had on surrounding neighbors. He spoke on how humble he feels sitting on the dais with such esteem councilmembers.

Historical – Councilman Ficher encouraged everyone to come down to the open house scheduled for Sunday, November 5<sup>th</sup> at the Texier House from 2:00 – 4:00 P.M.

Board of Health – Councilman Marano provided no update.

5. Fire – Councilman Dahl stated the Committee is scheduled to meet next week and discussed two upcoming fundraisers.
6. Laws/Ordinances – Councilman Gibbs stated the Committee met on October 19<sup>th</sup> and in addition to his report submitted he highlighted the possible upcoming legal dumping ordinance as well as the creation of a possible new board.

**REPORTS OF BOROUGH OFFICERS**

7. Engineer – Borough Engineer Jason Cline informed Council that notification from the Department of Transportation was received for municipal local aide for road work on various roads. He mentioned the grant award came to a total of \$337,210.00 and is a significant chunk of the estimated cost for this project.

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Councilman Gibbs wanted to highlight that the Borough is actively pursuing grants as much as possible and the amount in grant money the Borough has received. Mayor Jubin provided detailed comments in support of the Borough applying for these grants.

8. Police Chief – Chief Anderle reported on the October calls totaling 1,705 requiring police action, of which 11 were shoplifting investigations, 43 summons were issued to overweight trucks and he proceeded to further break down his report. He advised there is an officer who is a trained child safety seat technician available if any residents need assistance.
9. Fire Chief – no report submitted.
10. Fire Official – Mr. McNulty was present before Council and advise he expects the transition from Mr. Czuba to him to be completed by the end of the week with the NJ Division of Fire Safety. He also reported that 26 inspections were completed in the last month of which \$1,141.00 in revenue was received.
11. Rescue Squad – Clerk Edith Gil advised the Rescue Squad submitted their October report during the last council meeting.
12. Emergency Management – OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon provided updates regarding the October tabletop exercise meeting. She also mentioned she is working with New Jersey OEM and FEMA to close out completed projects from IDA damage. She also spoke on items discussed at the municipal coordinators meeting. She provided detailed updates relating to the increase in demand at the Somerset County food pantry.

Councilman Gibbs congratulated Ms. Solon and her team for all their continued hard work and dedication in building the organization into a role model for other communities. Mayor Jubin encouraged community involvement and volunteering.

13. Attorney – Borough Attorney Sordillo had no report.
14. Finance – CFO Hance clarified the Farmers Market scheduled for November 21<sup>st</sup> would be held from 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. He mentioned an electronic recycling event that was also being scheduled for that date and the information would be posted on the Borough website. He also mentioned that the RFP process for professional services had started and advertisements were sent out, he reminded all that the next tax sale was scheduled for November 30<sup>th</sup>.
15. Clerk – Borough Clerk Gil reminded all that the last day for early voting is Sunday, November 5<sup>th</sup> and Somerset County has six locations in which voters can participate. She also mentioned Election Day is scheduled for Tuesday, November 7<sup>th</sup> and polls will be open from 6:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. She advised all that Borough Hall will be closed tomorrow from 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. for a mandatory employee training. Lastly, she mentioned emails were sent out to the Committees and members of the public for any new volunteers wishing to join the boards and applications are due on November 15<sup>th</sup>.

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16. Administrator – Administrator Damato provided comments on the mandatory employee training being held at Borough Hall. He also provided detailed comments on steps the Borough has taken to increase cyber security. He advised the Borough is taking steps to implement the Best Practices relating to cyber security. Lastly, Administrator Damato discussed the policy and procedure manual being voted on tonight that is a requirement of the Joint Insurance Fund.
17. Youth Services – Councilman Dahl advised Colleen Lange will now be serving as secretary to the Commission and they are working on identifying a future meeting date.
18. Planning Board – Councilman Gibbs reported that at the last meeting of the Planning Board discussions occurred relating to the application in regards to the redesigned ingress and egress out of the proposed complex. He advised the Planning Board is looking to hold a special meeting sometime in December.
19. Municipal Alliance – no update.
20. Library Advisory Committee – no update.
21. Traffic and Beautification – Council President Ead mentioned the Committee met on October 2<sup>nd</sup> and advised the fall decorations were successfully placed around the Borough and look fabulous. She discussed the winners of the second annual Scarecrow Stroll contest and advised the scarecrows will all be coming down on November 5<sup>th</sup>. Council President Ead discussed the upcoming changes and repairs to the two Gazebos and displayed a magnet for purchase created by the committee. She added that the proceeds from the project will go towards solar lighting at the gazebo on Mountain Blvd.

**PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY**

1. Kristy Hartman, Resident, asked for clarification regarding the change in Council rules dealing with the public comment portion mentioned in the summary by the Laws and Ordinance Committee. She also asked for clarification regarding the Phase 1 and Phase 2 sidewalk projects mentioned in the Public Works Committee report. Lastly, Ms. Hartmann inquired on what changes were done to the island at the base of Hillcrest Road.

Councilman Gibbs advised the Committee is looking to make the meetings the most efficient for everyone and to clarify the number of public portions there will be. Council President Ead explained in detail the different phases of the sidewalk project and also noted there was an additional island at the base of Hillcrest Road.

2. Lynda Goldschein, Resident, expressed her disappointment that there was no Ordinance pertaining to illegal dumping and she inquired on any formal plan to create a nature center at Camp Endeavor.

Administrator Damato stated there are more discussions that need to occur regarding Camp Endeavor. He advised the only things the Council decided to do was clean up Camp Endeavor, get rid of the asphalt, plant grass and stabilize the area. He also mentioned the Council is open to pursuing grants and suggestions on what to do with the property.

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**DISCUSSIONS**

None held

**NEW BUSINESS**

**REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:**

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes	September 18, 2023
Fire Prevention Office Monthly Report	October 2023
Historical Committee Meeting Minutes	September 20, 2023
Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority Minutes	October 5, 2023
Planning Board Meeting Minutes	September 19, 2023

**#24:** Notice of Public Hearing/Final Adoption for Zoning Ordinances 2023-23 and 2023-24, Replacing Official Maps of Twp of Scotch Plains, recv'd 10/23/23, cc: M&C, JD, TV

Motion to Accept above by Ead/ second by Gibbs

RC: Ead [ Y ] Dahl [ Y ] Fischer [ Y ] Marano [ Y ] Abi- Habib [ Y ] Gibbs [ Y ]

**CONSENT ITEMS**

R1: Authorizing POs over Allowed Threshold – Spatial Data Logic (*Annual website management service*)

R2: Authorizing Final Payout of Accumulated Benefits for Kenneth Boyle

R3: Authorizing Bill List

R4: Accepting Donation of Roof Replacement for 2 Gazebos from Penyak Roofing Co.

Council President Ead thanked Penyak Roofing for their generous contribution and donations.

Councilman Dahl thanked Lieutenant Kenneth Boyle for his dedicated service to the Borough.

Motion to Adopt above by Ead/ Second by Marano

RC: Ead [ Y ] Dahl [ Y ] Fischer [ Y ] Marano [ Y ] Abi- Habib [ Y ] Gibbs [ Y ]

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**NON- CONSENT ITEMS**

R5: Authorizing the Appointment of Joseph Pizzigoni as Public Works Laborer/ Driver Probationary

Motion to Adopt above by Fischer/ Second by Ead

Council President Ead expressed how much of a wonderful addition Joseph has been to the Public Works team.

RC: Ead [ Y ] Dahl [ Y ] Fischer [ Y ] Marano [ Y ] Abi- Habib [ Y ] Gibbs [ Y ]

R6: Adopting Revised Personnel Policies and Procedure Manual

Motion to Adopt above by Fischer/ Second by Marano

RC: Ead [ Y ] Dahl [ Y ] Fischer [ Y ] Marano [ Y ] Abi- Habib [ Y ] Gibbs [ Y ]

R7: Accepting Proposed Service Project by Eagle Scouts of America on Creation of a Birdhouse Project

Motion to Adopt above by Abi- Habib / Second by Fischer

RC: Ead [ Y ] Dahl [ Y ] Fischer [ Y ] Marano [ Y ] Abi- Habib [ Y ] Gibbs [ Y ]

R8: Authorizing the Appointment of Daryl Miller as Fire Volunteer

Motion to Adopt above by Dahl/ Second by Fischer

RC: Ead [ Y ] Dahl [ Y ] Fischer [ Y ] Marano [ Y ] Abi- Habib [ Y ] Gibbs [ Y ]

**PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION**

- 1) Lynda Goldschein, Resident, inquired on what is done with the volunteer applications that are submitted if there is no room on a particular board. She mentioned her neighbor applied last year to be considered for the Board of Health but did not hear anything back. She also suggested making it more clear to volunteers to resubmit their applications every year if they want to be considered.

Mayor Jubin stated they will consider adding that language to the volunteer forms.

- 2) Kristy Hartman, Resident, commented on the water fountain that was replaced at Mobus Field.

Administrator Damato advised the fountain was not working any longer and was way beyond its useful life. He also mentioned the plaque was carefully removed and preserved by DPW and a suitable granite stone was picked. He stated he was unaware of the family's whereabouts and did not have a means to reach them even after requesting to contact them through Ms. Harman, who denied their information. As a result, Mr. Damato advised he went on the internet, searched and located the family and feels all the steps taken to contact them were sufficient and there was no disrespect to the family.

Councilwoman Abi-Habib advised the fountain went bad and needed to be replaced. The memorial was removed carefully and kept safely until it could be re-established. She advised once they were

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able to get in contact with the family there was communication in regards to all decisions relating to the memorial every step of the way. She also mentioned the family agreed with everything discussed. Mayor Jubin also noted that the memorial looked great and everything done was in a professional and courteous manner to the family.

Kristy Hartman questioned again what the hurry was to fix the fountain since it was broken for quite some time; this sparked additional remarks from all parties.

- 3) Lynda Goldschein, Resident, commented that the Borough should have a grant writer.

Mayor Jubin advised the idea was under consideration as well as a possible grant committee.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Upon there being no business before Council, the meeting was adjourned at 9:09 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council will be Monday, November 20, 2023 at 7:30 P.M.

Submitted:

Regina Angelo  
Deputy Clerk

Approved: December 6, 2023