

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

MARCH 4, 2024

MAYOR’S STATEMENT: Mayor Jubin called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. and stated the following: *“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 Special 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]

DISCUSSIONS

Review of the 2024 Budget Requests:

CFO William Hance was present and provided an overview of the budget sections to the departments below:

- ❖ Buildings and Grounds – This department’s budget details were on page 18 of the budget packets. Mr. Hance explained that tree maintenance came out of these lines, overall, this part of the budget has remained pretty flat and has not gone up by much.

Mayor and Council made some inquiries on lines 266, the janitorial contract, and some fixing and renovations that had to be made to other borough buildings.

- ❖ Engineering – This section of the budget had increases due to the number of hours that the Borough Engineer has put in. Mr. Damato elaborated that the borough has done a lot more project than in years past. Mr. Hance noted that work on road jobs comes out of the capital budget and any work for the library would come out of the anticipated bond ordinance.
- ❖ Road Repairs & Sewers – Mr. Hance explained that this budget section primarily covers snow items; we currently have about \$25,000 in there for an average snow storm cleanup. This part of the budget led to several discussions between Mayor and Council and Administrator Damato. Amongst the discussed items were the borough’s supply of salt, pothole repairs, training aid programs to DPW Laborers, and PARSA projects that caused an increase.
- ❖ Mayor and Council – CFO Hance noted that this budget section stayed the same from last years budget. An inquiry was made on the last time that this section of the budget increased. CFO Hance noted it had remained the same since approximately 2005, the last increase at the time was about \$15,000.

Mayor and Council commented that the general expenses are not included in there and certainly the cost of living has gone up. Mayor Jubin asked CFO Hance to look into at least meeting minimum wage requirement.

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

MARCH 4, 2024

❖ Boards, Commissions and Committees

- Historical – Chair of Historical Committee Chris Vanderfliet was present to speak to the Mayor and Council.

The Committee is working on archiving photos that have been stored in boxes for a long time, there is not much of an inventory of what is at museum. The second part of the increase request is to do a video tour of the Texier House leading up to the 100th anniversary – something that could go on YouTube for all to enjoy. This would also help archive and understand everything that is there. Chris mentioned there are a lot of projects in the pipeline leading up to the 100th anniversary and funding will certainly be needed for those projects.

Mayor and Council thanked Chris for presenting to the Council and all of his dedication on the historic videos he has worked on thus far. The mayor expressed his appreciation for all of the work done and expressed his vision for the upcoming projects.

- Board of Health – CFO Hance noted that this section primarily contained charges for Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission. Mayor and Council made a few inquiries on the members of the Commission and the rates assessed.
- Environmental – The budget line here has also stayed the same for the last 4-5 years, they wish to buy a plaque for the oak tree that was purchased, this will be 2nd year, plantings by best lake have been great. Mr. Damato informed Council that the Commission wishes to replace the ash trees that were removed, he noted that the funds would come out of the tree bank.
- Planning/ Zoning – CFO Hance noted that the majority of these expenses are for consulting and advertising services, most of the items charged here are for what escrow won't cover.
- Recreation – CFO Bill Hance noted that the salary & wage line under this section are primarily for the Camp counselors. Administrator Damato informed the Governing Body that Round Top proposed a 500% increase for camp this year; there is a strong possibility that camp may be held at Mobus, but details have yet to be worked out. He advised that he intends to meet with the Recreation Commission at their next meeting and after that, the Administrator would make a formal recommendation to Council.
- Traffic & Beautification – CFO Hance informed that he increased their budget this year because it has increased lately; the commission has been doing a lot more planting work. Mayor Jubin commended them for their work and noted that he has received a lot of compliments on how beautiful the town looks. Councilman Gibbs noted this was close to his heart as that is how he got started in Watchung, he would be out there planting too.

CFO Hance wrapped up by providing an additional complete overview of the entire budget, he informed Council that he was notified today that he is able to anticipate \$73,000 additional in state aid. He informed Council that the request from the rescue squad was for about \$24,000 more than usual, which could be offset by the state aid.

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

MARCH 4, 2024

Mayor and Council discussed the borough's contribution to the Rescue Squad. Councilman Gibbs noted that the Rescue Squad has always supported the town in many functions, they are a very much self-supporting organization and are always there 24/7. He advocated in favor of providing them with the necessary funding. After additional discussions, all were supporting of moving forward with this allocation.

CFO touched upon the assessment rates and wrapped up with the state aid allocations from prior years. Mayor Jubin thanked the Administrator and the Borough Hall team for their hard work on putting the budget together.

PUBLIC PORTION

No one appearing.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business to come before Council, the meeting ended to the Call of the Chair at 8:40p.m. The next scheduled meeting of the Mayor and Council is Thursday, March 7, 2024.

Respectfully Submitted,

Edith G. Gil
Borough Clerk