

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
RE-ORGANIZATION MEETING MINUTES**

JANUARY 4, 2024

MAYOR’S STATEMENT: Mayor Jubin called the meeting to order at 6:30 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 2023 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**

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE AND OFFICE

The Honorable Donald DiFrancesco administered the following oaths of office.

Sonia Abi-Habib	Council Member
Robert Gibbs	Council Member

Mayor Jubin administered the following oaths of office.

Jeiner Betancourt	Rescue Squad Captain
Matthew King	Rescue Squad First Lieutenant

INVOCATION

Reverend Monsignor William Benwell of St. Mary’s – Stony Hill Church led the invocation.

ROLL CALL

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

NOMINATION FOR COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Motion by Abi-Habib to nominate Ead as Council President/ Second by Fischer

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

Council President Ead thanked the Mayor and Council Members for their continued support. She provided comments about serving as an elected official and the commitment it requires from each Council Member. She expressed how honored she is to work alongside a wonderful group of individuals who understand the required commitment and is looking forward to working with everyone to deliver more services, events, improvements, and quality of life opportunities. She expressed her gratitude to Mayor Jubin for his continued dedication to Watchung. Council President Ead also noted she was excited to start 2024 with the focus on continued progress for the community that we all love and call home.

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APPOINTMENT OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Mayor Jubin made the following appointments:

Administration & Finance

Chair: Fischer
Gibbs
Abi-Habib

Fire

Chair: Dahl
Marano
Gibbs

Laws & Ordinances

Chair: Gibbs
Marano
Fischer

Police

Chair: Marano
Dahl
Ead

Public Affairs:

Chair: Abi-Habib
Gibbs
Fischer

Public Works

Chair: Ead
Abi-Habib
Dahl

Board of Health Liaison:	Abi-Habib
Environmental Commission Liaison:	Marano
Green Team Liaison:	Abi-Habib
Historical Committee Liaison:	Fischer
Library Advisory Committee Liaison:	Fischer
Municipal Alliance Member:	Marano
Planning Board, Class III Member:	Dahl
Recreation Commission Member:	Dahl
Rescue Squad Liaison:	Gibbs
Traffic & Beautification Liaison:	Ead
Youth Services Commission Liaison:	Dahl

**Not the final list*

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CONSENT RESOLUTIONS

- R1: Designation of Official Newspapers – Echoes Sentinel, Courier News, Star Ledger, and TAP into Watchung (Electronic News Source)
- R2: Adoption of Annual Calendar of Meeting Dates
- R3: Authorizing the Adoption of the Cash Management Plan for 2024
- R4: Adoption of 2024 Temporary Budget
- R5: Payment of Property Taxes and Establishing Payment Procedures
- R6: Appointment of JIF Commissioner
- R7: Appointment of Fire Chief and Assistant Chief

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

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

NON-CONSENT RESOLUTIONS

- R8: Awarding Professional Services Contract for Tax Appeal Attorney to DiFrancesco Bateman
Kunzman, Davis, Lehrer & Flaum, P.C.

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

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

- R9: Awarding Professional Services Contract for Prosecutor to DiFrancesco Bateman
Kunzman, Davis, Lehrer & Flaum, P.C.

Motion to Adopt above by Ficher / Second by Marano

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

- R10: Awarding Professional Services Contract for Labor Counsel to Ruderman & Roth, LLC

Motion to Adopt above by Ficher / Second by Ead

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

- R11: Awarding Professional Services Contract for Borough Attorney to DiFrancesco Bateman, Kunzman,
Davis, Lehrer & Flaum, P.C.

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

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

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R12: Awarding Professional Services Contract for Professional Engineers to Remington & Vernick Engineers

Council President Ead commented she was glad they could continue to work and advance the borough's projects with Remington & Vernick Engineers.

Motion to Adopt above by Ficher / Second by Ead

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

R13: Awarding Professional Services Contract for Bond Counsel to Archer & Greiner P.C.

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

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

R14: Awarding Professional Services Contract for Auditor to Suplee, Clooney & Company

Motion to Adopt above by Ficher / Second by Ead

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

R15: Awarding Professional Services Contract for IT Consultant to Marmic Associates

Motion to Adopt above by Ficher / Second by Marano

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

R16: Awarding Professional Services Contract for Risk Managers to Risk Strategies: Meeker Sharkey & Hurley

Motion to Adopt above by Ficher / Second by Ead

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

R17: Awarding Professional Services Contract for Affordable Housing Planer to Mark Healey

Motion to Adopt above by Ficher / Second by Marano

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

R18: Appointments of Volunteers to Boards, Committees, Commissions

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

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

R19: Awarding a Contract for Snow Removal Services to ASL Group, LLC

Motion to Adopt above by Ead / Second by Gibbs

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

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RECOGNITION OF EMPLOYEE SERVICES

Mayor Jubin congratulated and recognized the following individuals for their years of dedicated service to Watchung.

- 20 Years: Maria Fittipaldi, Eng. Dept.
- 15 Years: Sherif Zaiton, Captain of Police Dept.
- 10 Years: Kyle Poulsen, Police Dept.
Anthony Nappe, DPW
- 5 Years: Daniel Niro, Construction Dept.

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor Jubin, thanked Congressman Kean, Senator Jon Bramnick, Assemblywoman Matsikoudis, former Mayor Keith Balla and former Councilman George Sopko, for their attendance. Mayor Jubin also thanked his wife and family for all their support. He commented on Administrator Jim Damato as Watchung's leader and advised he was unable to assist due to a death in the family. Mayor Jubin expressed his thanks to Borough employees and first responders. He provided comments relating to improvements done at Mobus Field, Best Lake parking lot, and beautification throughout the Borough. Mayor Jubin spoke on the three C's: communication, collaboration, and celebration. He spoke on improving our Borough newsletter and suggested residents sign up for all the alerts to stay informed. He spoke on celebration and expressed how proud he is of the Boroughs accomplishments. He noted the Little League building was falling down two years ago but now the area is in great condition thanks to Councilman Dahl and other Little League members. Mayor Jubin also expressed his excitement that Anthony Volpe's hometown is Watchung and adding challenges as a 4th C. Mayor Jubin provided comments on the connection between challenges and opportunities. He discussed what a challenge it's been getting residents involved in the Mayor's Wellness Campaign and encouraged residents to suggest ideas for upcoming events. Mayor Jubin also touched on challenges relating to Hillcrest Road but promised residents the Council will not stay silent and will work towards improvements. He discussed a few other challenges such as Borough lakes filling in, improvements to the existing Library building, 2025 future housing obligations and the potential eroding tax base. Mayor Jubin ended with "ideologies separate us, but dreams and anguish bring us together" and encouraged all of us no mater what our backgrounds are to come together as a family.

COUNCIL'S ADDRESS

Council President Ead stated 2023 was a busy year for Public Works with numerous larger project involvement along with the steady flow of every day work. She thanked Administrator James Damato, Borough Engineer Jason Cline and his team as well as the Department of Public Works and the Committee for all their amazing work. Council President Ead also thanked her husband and son for their continued support. She defined the word progress and highlighted examples of progress made throughout the Borough such as culvert repairs, repairs to Phillips Field bridge, improvements to numerous borough properties and infrastructure, improvements to Camp Endeavor amongst many others. Council President Ead expressed many thanks to the Traffic and Beatification Committee for all their efforts to make Watchung more beautiful than ever. She commented on the progress of all the great community events that occurred over the past year. She expressed her thanks and appreciation for all the continued confidence while serving as part of the Governing body where her goal is always to get things done.

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Councilman Gibbs thanked his family for their continued support, the Boroughs first responders, Borough employees and the residents of Watchung. He encouraged residents to review the School District and County budget to stay informed regarding their tax dollars. He spoke on the challenges with Hillcrest Road but was pleased to announce the Department of Transportation will be issuing a signed work order to install additional signage to better alert truck traffic starting at end of January 2024. He provided comments on future affordable housing needs and assured residents Watchung stands united against all forms of hate. Councilman Gibbs feels grateful to serve his community and looks forward to a productive year ahead.

Councilwoman Abi-Habib stated she was honored and humbled to serve the Watchung community and feels blessed having the support of her friends and family. She spoke on starting the first Women of Watchung event, honoring women who have made a contribution to Watchung. She also spoke on the different accomplishments as liaison to the Environmental Commission as well as the Green Team. She discussed her involvement in animal shelter efforts, the Watchung Chamber of Commerce and the Department of Public Works Committee. Councilwoman Abi-Habib expressed how grateful she felt for all of those wonderful privileges.

Councilman Marano provided Police Department updates and expressed the importance of support for the department. He spoke on the departments many improvements within the past year such as of the 6 new officers hired as well as a new chief and captain. He also commented on the upcoming promotions, the added School Resource Officer position and updates to equipment, cameras and other items. He also discussed last years total calls for service, summons written for Hillcrest Road, motor vehicle stops and provided a comparison to last years department numbers.

Councilman Fischer thanked his family and stated it's a true honor to serve the Borough of Watchung. He thanked the Administration and Finance Committee for their hard work and dedication and discussed their accomplishments such as maintaining a steady tax rate, a 99.5 % tax collection rate, no new debt and other accomplished financial goals.

PUBLIC PORTION

No one appeared

BENEDICTION

Reverend Monsignor William Benwell of St. Mary's Stony Hill Church led the benediction.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business before Council, the meeting ended to the Call of the Chair at 7:50 P.M. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council is scheduled on Thursday, January 18, 2024 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Regina Angelo
Deputy Clerk

Approved: February 1, 2024