

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

JANUARY 18, 2024

MAYOR’S STATEMENT: Mayor Ronald Jubin called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. and made the following 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 proclamation onto the record.

❖ Mental Wellness Month

SPECIAL RESOLUTION

Councilman Marano read a brief biography on Timothy Searfoss, who is graduate of Watchung Hills Regional High School and York College in Pennsylvania. After graduating college, Timothy returned to Watchung as a middle-school wrestling Coach.

R1: Authorizing the Appointment of Patrol Officer Timothy Searfoss

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

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

The Mayor and Council Members congratulated Mr. Searfoss and welcomed him to Watchung.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE

Mayor Jubin administered the oath of office to Officer Searfoss.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

- No one present

NEW BUSINESS

Council Member Gibbs advised that he must recuse himself from acknowledging correspondence #2 listed tonight because of his financial interest in PSE&G.

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REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Animal Control Services	Annual Report 2023
Construction Monthly Report	December 2023
Environmental Commission	Year End Report 2023
Green Team Meeting Minutes	November 29, 2023
Library Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes	July 19, 2023 September 13, 2023
Mayor and Council Meeting Minutes	December 21, 2023
Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority Regular and Executive Session Minutes	December 7, 2023
Planning Board Meeting Minutes	November 14, 2023
Police Activity Report	December 2023
Traffic & Beautification Meeting Minutes	November 6, 2023

#1: Notice of Retirement from Officer William Stankan, recv'd 1/05/24, cc: M&C, JD, EH

Motion to Accept above by Ead/ Second by Gibbs

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

The Mayor and Council Members congratulated and thanked Officer Stankan for his service and dedication to Watchung.

Councilman Gibbs temporarily stepped off the dais to recuse himself from the below item.

#2: Notice of Petition filed from PSE&G with the NJ Board of Public Utilities requesting an increase in the charges for electric and gas service, recv'd 1/08/24, cc: M&C, JD

Motion to Accept above by Ead/ Second by Marano

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

CONSENT ITEMS

R2: Authorizing Redemption of Tax Lien #23-00010

R3: Authorizing Refund for Payment of Dog License Late Fee

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R4: Authorizing 2024 Recycling Agreement with Somerset County

R5: Authorizing Submission of a Strategic Plan for the Watchung Hills Regional Municipal Alliance Grant on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

R6: Authorize Clerk to Issue Raffle License #676 to Mercy Guild of Mount Saint Mary Academy

R7: Appointments of Volunteers to Boards, Committees, Commissions

R8: Establishing a Strong Anti-Idling Policy

R9: Establishing a Green Purchasing Policy

R10: Endorsing the Adoption of Green Building Practices for Civic, Commercial and Residential Buildings

R11: Authorizing Bill List

Councilman Gibbs commented he was glad resolutions R8-R10 were being adopted and encouraged residents to seek out sustainable practices they could implement on their own.

Council President commented on R7 and thanked all the volunteers who serve on the various committees and for choosing to dedicate their time to the betterment of Watchung. She also echoed Councilman Gibbs and thanked Bill Hance and Councilwoman Abi-Habib for their efforts in the Green Team.

Councilwoman Abi-Habib and Mayor Jubin echoed in these sentiments and thanked all the residents for volunteering and the Green Team for their hard work in working with Sustainable Jersey to obtain re-certification.

Motion to Adopt above by Ead/ Second by Gibbs

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

NON- CONSENT ITEMS

R13: Authorizing the Contract Expansion of Remington Vernick Engineers to Provide Survey Services to Create & Update GIS As-Built Stormwater System Mapping for NJDEP MS4 Compliance

Council President Ead informed all that this mapping was a requirement of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection and it needed to be done withing a certain timeframe. However, doing this would ultimately save money and time for the borough.

Motion to Adopt above by Ead/ Second by Gibbs

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

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R14: Authorizing the Appointment of Volunteers to the Fire Department

Councilman Dahl thanked those volunteering for their desire to serve. He noted that at a time when most other volunteer squads are lacking members, Watchung's is thriving.

Councilman Fischer added that coming from a family of firefighters, this was near and dear to his heart. He thanked those wishing to volunteer.

Motion to Adopt above by Dahl/ Second by Fischer

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

R15: Authorizing the 2023 Stipend for Fire Department Volunteers

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

No one appearing

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Councilwoman Abi-Habib announced that on January 27th we would be welcoming a new business to Watchung Soma Physio and Wellness Center and on March 14th the Borough would be having its 2nd annual Women in Business event at the Watchung Arts Center.

R16: Authorizing an Executive Session to Discuss Attorney-Client Privilege Matters and Contract Execution on 18 Drift Road and North Plainfield Shared Services

Motion to Adopt above by Ead/Second by Gibbs

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

At approximately 7:57 p.m. Mayor and Council entered closed session and returned to open session at approximately 8:53 p.m.

Motion to return to open session by Gibbs/Second by Abi-Habib

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

NON- CONSENT ITEMS (CONTINUED)

R12: Designating the Property Identified as Block 7010/ Lot 5.01, 5.02, and 5.03, 18 Drift Road, as a "Non-Condemnation Area in Need of Redevelopment" Under the NJ Local Redevelopment and Housing Law

Councilman Gibbs clarified that this resolution meant that the property has met said conditions under the redevelopment law and nothing is being committed at this time to a particular redeveloper or any particular

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use.

Council President Ead asked the Borough Attorney to briefly explain the steps that came before tonight's R12.

Attorney Sordillo explained that under the redevelopment process, this Governing Body asked the Planning Board to conduct a preliminary investigation as to whether these properties met the criteria to be redeveloped. He further elaborated that there were 12 criteria identified and at least 1 of these had to be met by the property. Therefore, under the direction of the Council, the Planning Board had a Professional Planner prepare a report, that report had a public hearing and was advertised and presented back to the Board. The Planning Board then adopted a resolution and made a recommendation to the Council. Which is where we are now.

Motion to Adopt above by Gibbs/Second by Ead

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

ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business before Council, the meeting ended at 8:57 p.m. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council will be Thursday, February 1, 2024 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Edith G. Gil
Borough Clerk

Approved: 3/7/2024