

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

**FEBRUARY 1, 2024**

**MAYOR’S STATEMENT:** Mayor Ronald Jubin called the meeting to order at 7:30pm 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 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 THE THREE US ARMY RESERVE SOLDIERS, SGT. WILLIAM RIVERS, SPC. KENNEDY SANDERS, and SPC. BREONNA MOFFETT , and PLAINFIELD FIRE FIGHTER MARQUES HUDSON WHO ALL LOST THEIR LIVES IN ACTIVE DUTY, PLEASE KEEP EACH OF THEM AND THEIR FAMILIES IN YOUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS.**

**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.

❖ Recognizing January as Muslim Heritage Month

**SPECIAL RESOLUTION**

R1: Authorizing the Promotion of Lieutenants and Sergeants of the Police Department

Councilman Marano read a short bio on Lt, LaVecchia, Lt. Kimock, Sgt. Cuevas, Sgt. Pero, and Sgt. McLaughlin.

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

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

**ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS OF OFFICE**

Mayor Jubin administered the oath of offices to Lt, LaVecchia, Lt. Kimock, Sgt. Cuevas, Sgt. Pero, and Sgt. McLaughlin.

He thanked each officer for their service and dedication to Watchung.

**REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

1. Administration & Finance – Councilman Fischer advised the Committee met and discussed upcoming budget meeting dates and noted there were no other additions to the submitted written report.
2. Police – Councilman Marano had nothing additional to report.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Council President Ead provided a PSE&G update regarding upcoming roadwork beginning Monday, February 5<sup>th</sup>. She mentioned Public Works has been out and about cleaning and clearing debris as a result of recent rains. She also stated street sweeping services

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have been requested through the Shared Services agreement with Somerset County. She reported there are many wonderful upcoming projects for the Spring.

Council President Ead clarified the process of reporting a pothole in Watchung.

Mayor Jubin requested Clerk Edith Gil update the website with this information for residents.

**4. Public Affairs:**

Environmental – Councilman Marano mentioned one of the members had an unfortunate incident with a family member so the meeting was rescheduled.

Green Team – Councilwoman Abi-Habib advised the Green Team met and discussed the recertification process for Sustainable NJ and the upcoming Farmers Market.

Recreation– Councilman Dahl stated the Committee is scheduled to meet on February 6<sup>th</sup>.

Historical – Councilman Fischer stated the Committee met for their Re-Organization meeting and the written report was submitted.

Board of Health– Councilwoman Abi–Habib advised the Board of Health has not yet met but stated there are many plans underway building on the Mayor’s Wellness Campaign. She also provided comments relating to National Wear Red Day which raises awareness about heart disease as a leading cause of death amongst Americans.

Mayor Jubin echoed Councilwoman Abi-Habibs comments on the importance of heart health.

5. Fire – Councilman Dahl stated a full written report was submitted but briefly discussed highlights of his report.
6. Laws/Ordinances – Councilman Gibbs advised there are two Ordinances on the agenda for consideration.

**REPORTS OF BOROUGH OFFICERS**

7. Engineer – Borough Engineer Cline provided an update on the application filed for the Resilient Communities grant program. He mentioned there was a pre-construction meeting in November with the Department of Transportation and they are starting to do paving and surface preservation work on Route 22 in late February. He spoke on a few highlights including the work scheduled to be completed on Meadowlark Road, proceeding forward with the mapping services proposal and finally they submitted a recommendation of award for the Library Bridge repair / replacement bid.
8. Police Chief – Clerk Edith Gil advised the Police Department report will be submitted at the next Council meeting.
9. Fire Chief – no report.

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10. Fire Official – Fire Official McNulty commented about 97 inspections were completed in December and January. He provided detailed comments on an incident that occurred on December 27th and a structure fire that occurred on January 4th.
11. Rescue Squad – Councilman Gibbs advised a written report was submitted.
12. Emergency Management – Clerk Edith Gil advised OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon had no updates to report.
13. Attorney - Atorney Sordillo advised he’s been working alongside the Laws and Ordinance Committee on a number of Ordinances and has no further report.
14. Finance – Clerk Edith Gil stated CFO Bill Hance is working on finalizing the budget hearing dates.
15. Clerk – Clerk Edith Gil commented on this year’s successful pet licencing renewal campaign and hopes to renew pet licenses more on time every year going forward. She also provided updates relating to Civic Clerk software and hopes to implement the new system in April.

Mayor Jubin questioned if more residents renew their pet licensees online or in person and Clerk Edith Gil responded its about a 50/50 ratio.

16. Administrator – Administrator Damato provided detailed updates relating to the Shared Services agreement with North Plainfield Fire Department. He mentioned North Plainfield has accepted the terms and will be instructing their attorney to put the agreement together. Administrator Damato also stated details of the agreement will be presented to the public at one of our upcoming meetings. He mentioned that Fire Official McNaulty was asked to be on the Somerset County arson squad and strongly recommends adopting a resolution for approval.

Mayor Jubin is in agreement with Administrator Damato and fully supports Fire Official McNaulty’s resolution for approval.

17. Youth Services – Councilman Dahl advised a written report was submitted.
18. Planning Board – Councilman Gibbs stated the Committee held their Re-Organization meeting last night and passed the resolution for the amended Bonnie Burn application which was submitted to the Somerset County Planning Board for approval.
19. Municipal Alliance – Councilman Marano had no report.
20. Library Advisory Committee – Councilman Fischer mentioned the Committee met for their Re-Organization meeting and appointed new members. Mayor Jubin mentioned on February 7<sup>th</sup> the Library is doing an opening for Virginia Hartmann’s exhibit and congratulated her on her service.
21. Traffic and Beautification – Council President Ead stated the Committee met on January 8<sup>th</sup> and discussed upcoming projects, plans for Spring plantings, replacement of Cherry Trees, and adding lights to the windows in front of Borough Hall. She also mentioned the Committee created the

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Wetumpka Falls magnet and proceeds of these sales will go to towards the lighting of the Gazebo on Mountain Blvd. Lastly, Council President Ead provided details about the upcoming Operation Pride event scheduled for April 20<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 A.M and welcomed two new members to the Committee.

**PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS**

- No one appeared

**DISCUSSIONS**

Councilwoman Abi- Habib announced on March 14<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M the Women of Watchung event will be held in the Watchung Arts Center. She said she is looking forward to celebrating the accomplishments of these inspirational women.

Councilman Marano mentioned he is in support of the Fire Official learning a new skill and certification.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:**

Annual Debt Statement	2023
Fire Prevention Bureau Monthly Report	January 2024
Green Team Advisory Committee Minutes	December 20, 2023
Historical Committee Meeting Minutes	December 13, 2023
Library Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes	November 15, 2023
Mayor and Council Meeting Minutes	January 4, 2024
Plainfield Regional Sewerage Authority Minutes	January 4, 2024
Rescue Squad Monthly Report	January 2024

#3: Notice of Public Hearing/Final Adoption for Zoning Ordinances 2024-5 and 2024-7, Amending Regulations Regarding Garage Requirements and Permitting Signage, recv'd 1/29/24, cc: M&C, JD, TV

Motion to Accept above by Ead/ Second by Marano

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

**CONSENT ITEMS**

R2: Authorizing Pos over Allowed Threshold - Absolute Fire Protection (*FD – Equipment*)

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R3: Authorizing Grant Application to the NJDCA Clean Energy Program for Community Energy Planning

R4: Authorizing Raffle License #677 to Mercy Guild of Mount St. Mary Academy for Activities on March 22, 2024

R5: Authorizing Raffle License #678 to Sisters of Mercy, Mercy Ministry Inc., Mount St. Mary House of Prayer for Calendar Raffle on Multiple Dates

R6: Authorizing a Grant Application to DCA for the FY24 Local Recreation Improvement Grant to Renovate and Update Camp Endeavor

Council President Ead referenced R6 and explained the importance of pursuing grants.

Motion to Adopt above by Ead/ Second by Dahl

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

**NON - CONSENT ITEMS**

R7: Authorizing the Temporary Appointment of Colleen Lange as Board Clerk

Mayor Jubin expressed his appreciation towards Ms. Lange for stepping in and taking on these extra responsibilities.

Motion to Adopt above by Fischer/ second by Ead

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

**INTRODUCED ORDINANCE**

**OR 24/01: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 27A ENTITLED “SHORT-TERM RENTAL PROPERTY” OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, TO UPDATE AND AMEND THE REGULATION OF SHORT-TERM RENTALS THROUGHOUT THE BOROUGH**

Councilman Gibbs explained in detail the amended changes to the Ordinance as a result of complaints received regarding short term rentals of pools, sheds and other structures in town.

Motion to Introduce and Adopt above by Gibbs/ second by Ead

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

**OR 24/02: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 20, NOISE, ENTITLED “NOISE” OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, TO UPDATE NOISE REGULATIONS WITH REGARD TO CONSTRUCTION HOURS OF OPERATION.**

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Councilman Gibbs stated the amended Ordinance would not allow commercial construction on Sundays, any Federal or State holiday or on Saturday between the hours of 6:00 P.M. through 9:00 A.M. the next morning.

Councilman Marano questioned if there will be any reasonable exceptions for homeowners and Councilman Gibbs advised the Ordinance permits homeowners to do work as well as emergency work if required.

Motion to Introduce and Adopt above by Gibbs/ second by Fischer

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

**PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION**

- No one appeared

**ADJOURNMENT**

Upon there being no further business before Council, the meeting adjourned at 8:44 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council will be on Thursday, February 15, 2024 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted:

Regina DeLeonibus  
Deputy Borough Clerk

*Approved: 3/7/2024*