

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

MAY 2, 2024

MAYOR’S STATEMENT: Mayor Ronald Jubin called the meeting to order at 7:31 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 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 [Absent] Fischer [P] Marano [P] Abi- Habib [P] Gibbs [P]

PROCLAMATION

Mayor Jubin read the following proclamation onto the record.

❖ Municipal Clerk’s Week [May 5 – May 11]

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

1. Administration & Finance – Councilman Gibbs reported there was no update since the last meeting.
2. Police – Councilman Marano deferred to Chief Anderle at this time. The Chief advised that the departments totals would be on the next agenda as the month had just finalized and reports were still being assembled. He added that today was the final installation and transition of Axon on the mobile video recorders, he thanked Council for this and noted this was a huge investment. Chief Anderle also advised that on April 30th Watchung Hills Regional High School received a non-credible threat and Warren Police were immediately on the scene, followed by Watchung PD.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Council President Ead reported the PSE&G work continues and information relating to times, dates, locations and any road closures is posted on the Borough website and social media. She mentioned the 2024 road project is being completed and in its design phase and will go to the DOT shortly. She provided updated information on the Hometown Heros program and advised the Memorial Day ceremony will take place Monday, May 27th at 9:30 A.M. at the Texier House. She provided additional updates such as the submission of the camp endeavor grant application, upcoming updates to the two gazebos on Mountain Blvd, the Ness Farm testing is in its final phases, updated signage will be placed around the Borough and improvements to Borough landscaping, plantings and tree removals are underway.

Councilman Gibbs inquired on PSE&G’s process and asked if they would be responsible for paving roads that they are currently working on. He noted Valley Road was very bumpy because of the gas main replacements they are doing.

Administrator Damato noted that PSE&G and the Borough have been in communication regarding the projects, they are expected to pave the roads.

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

MAY 2, 2024

4. Public Affairs:

Environmental – Councilman Marano reported on a special guest that the Commission had at their last meeting who spoke on the green initiatives. He said the Commission is most focused on the importance of keeping the trees alive in Watchung. He also commented on the success of Operation Pride.

Mayor Jubin thanked the Environmental Commission and the Green Team for their efforts in making Operation Pride a success.

Recreation – Mayor Jubin advised the community picnic is scheduled for May 18th and he expressed his thanks to the Committee for the great opportunities for activities within the Borough.

Historical – no report provided.

Board of Health – Councilwoman Abi-Habib reported on the Mayors Wellness Campaign initiatives taken that would be incorporated during the Community Picnic. Amongst them were healthy food demonstrations, health screenings, yoga and exercise activities in the park.

Green Team – Councilwoman Abi-Habib reported on the May 10th application that the Team is doing for Sustainability, the Farmers Market 1st Tuesday of June will remain at Best Lake for now,

5. Fire – no report provided

6. Laws/Ordinances – Councilman Gibbs advised that there were no updates but there are four additional ordinances being worked on that would soon be shared.

REPORTS OF BOROUGH OFFICERS

7. Fire Official – Fire Official McNulty reported on April's activities, he noted there were 41 inspections including commercial buildings, no fire investigations and no new permits issued.

8. Rescue Squad – no report provided

9. Emergency Management – OEM Coordinator Solon reported on last months activities, noted CERT completed 2 county emit exercises and touched upon the borough's post for the May 16th public forum taking place in Hillsborough by Somerset County Office of Emergency Management. OEM also held multi-town meeting and held a potluck at their last meeting, amongst the trainings provided were stop the bleed modules for CERT Teams.

10. Attorney – Borough Attorney Sordillo address inquiries that he has recently received on the distinction of a public body vs an advisory body. He explained the differences in terms, the ability to expend funds and the ability to affect public interest, the distinction of statutory bodies like Board of Health, Zoning, and Planning, etc.

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

MAY 2, 2024

He proceeded with discussing the borough's several advisory committees like Traffic & Beautification, the Green Team and the Library Advisory Committee and noted how they are different. He affirmed that they are all intended to give recommendations to the Governing Body, that they cannot expend funds, do not comply with Open Public Meetings Act, noted they did not have to be open to the public or hold a public comment section.

Attorney Sordillo proceeded to speak on Roberts Rules of Order and how they wouldn't apply to advisory board, only if the Governing Body were to require this via an ordinance. He clarified that an advisory committee cannot establish its own set of bylaws or establish officers on its own unless an ordinance provides for it.

11. Finance – Chief Financial Officer Hance reported that now that the budget is over, it is tax season. He reminded all that taxes were due May 1st and have until May 10th, as a grace period. He advised July 1st is the sewer tax bill and those would soon go out.
12. Clerk – Borough Clerk Gil reminded Officers of the requirements to file a Financial Disclosure and noted the deadline was April 30th, she reminded that the State would issue fines if they are not submitted. She proceeded to advise residents that cat renewals are due and residents have until the end of this month to renewal. Finally, she reminded residents of the May 14th voter registration deadline for the June primary.
13. Administrator – Administrator Damato reported that NJ American Water assisted the resident that was at the meeting last month and fixed the problem he was having getting water to his home at no cost to the homeowner. He expressed his thanks to New Jersey American Water for all their assistance during this process.

Mayor Jubin thanked Mr. Damato for all his work throughout the Borough.

14. Youth Services – no report provided
15. Planning Board – no update since the last meeting
16. Municipal Alliance – no update since the last meeting
17. Library Advisory Committee – Councilman Fischer advised that there were no additional updates. Mr. Damato added that work had started on the temporary library space donated by MAHA and it would soon be ready.
18. Traffic and Beautification – Council President Ead reported on Arbor Day planting that occurred at Bayberry School, and the wonderful Operation Pride event that occurred on May 27th. She noted shoutouts to our Department of Public Works, Mr. Damato and Councilman Dahl for the wheelbarrow work done.
19. Engineer's Report – Engineer Jason Cline reported on multiple items such as the submission of the local Recreation improvement grant for Camp Endeavor, the design phase for the 2024 DOT trust fund project, storm water mapping services, Ness Farm additional sampling and lastly the demolition

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

MAY 2, 2024

on the library bridge is scheduled to begin the week of May 20th.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

No one appeared

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

ORDINANCES ON PUBLIC HEARING & FINAL ADOPTION

OR 24/05: ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING REGULATIONS ON THE PRIVATE STORAGE OF SALT THROUGHOUT THE BOROUGH IN COMPLIANCE WITH NJDEP STORMWATER REGULATIONS

Councilman Gibbs moved to open the public hearing; no one appeared to speak on the ordinance and the public hearing was closed.

Motion to Adopt the above by Gibbs/ Second by Marano

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

OR 24/06: ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES TO BE KNOWN AS THE GREEN TEAM

Councilwoman Abi-Habib moved to open the public hearing; no one appeared to speak on the ordinance and the public hearing was closed.

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

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

OR 24/07: ORDINANCE AMENDING APPENDIX A OF THE BOROUGH CODE TO UPDATE AND AMEND THE RULES OF THE COUNCIL WITH REGARD TO COUNCIL MEETINGS.

Councilman Gibbs moved to open the public hearing; no one appeared to speak on the ordinance and the public hearing was closed.

Motion to Adopt the above by Gibbs/ Second by Abi-Habib

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

OR 24/08: ORDINANCE AMENDING THE RECREATION COMMISSION FEES FOR THE BOROUGH'S SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM

Councilman Fischer moved to open the public hearing; no one appeared to speak on the ordinance and the public hearing was closed.

Motion to Adopt the above by Fischer/ Second by Gibbs

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

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

MAY 2, 2024

OR 24/09: ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING REGULATIONS ON ILLEGAL DUMPING THROUGHOUT THE BOROUGH.

Councilman Gibbs moved to open the public hearing; no one appeared to speak on the ordinance and the public hearing was closed.

Motion to Adopt the above by Gibbs/ Second by Abi-Habib

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

OR 24/10: ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BOROUGH'S REGULATIONS AND PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE IMPORTING AND REMOVAL OF SOIL AND FILL IN THE BOROUGH

Councilman Gibbs moved to open the public hearing; no one appeared to speak on the ordinance and the public hearing was closed.

Motion to Adopt the above by Gibbs/ Second by Ead

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

NEW BUSINESS

REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Mayor and Council Special Meeting Minutes	February 15, 2024
Environment Commission Meeting Minutes	March 25, 2024
Plainfield Area Sewerage Authority Minutes	April 4, 2024
Planning Board Meeting Minutes	January 31, 2024

Motion to Adopt the above by Ead/ Second by Gibbs

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

CONSENT ITEMS

R1: Authorizing a Tax Refund and Granting a Tax Exemption for Our House, Inc. under N.J.S.A. 54:4-3.6.

R2: Authorizing Bill List

R3: Authorizing a Refund to Bettina Germain for Cancellation of Summer Camp Applications

Motion to Adopt the above by Ead/ Second by Fischer

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

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

MAY 2, 2024

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

No one appeared

EXECUTIVE SESSION

R4: Authorizing an Executive Session for Contract Negotiation/ Attorney-Client Privilege Matters

Motion to Adopt the above by Ead/ Second by Fischer

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

Mayor and Council entered into executive session at approximately 8:50 P.M. – 9:27 P.M.

Motion to return to open session by Ead/ second by Gibbs

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

ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business the meeting ended at 9:28 P.M. to the call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council will be Thursday, May 16, 2024 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Regina DeLeonibus
Deputy Borough Clerk

Approved: May 16, 2024