

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

MARCH 7, 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 [Absent] Marano [P] Abi- Habib [P] Gibbs [Absent]

PROCLAMATION

Councilman Fischer arrived at 7:34 P.M.

Mayor Jubin read the following proclamation onto the record.

❖ Woman’s History Month

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

1. Administration & Finance – Councilman Fischer had no report.
2. Police – Councilman Marano had nothing additional to report.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Council President Ead provided additional updates regarding the PSE&G gas line replacement work. She commented on some of the related non-consent items on the agenda. She mentioned the construction of the Library Bridge is coming soon and is a FEMA related project. Council President Ead also advised as the weather warms up the fountains will be installed.
4. Public Affairs:
 - Environmental – Councilman Marano provided highlights from the February meeting such as the new officers, updates to the Styrofoam recycling program, updates regarding Operation Pride and advised the next meeting is scheduled for March 25th.

Recreation – Councilman Dahl advised the Recreation Commission met and discussed the upcoming Easter egg hunt and mentioned they are looking for volunteers. Councilman Dahl stated the location where the Watchung summer camp was held last year has increased their fees significantly from \$10,000 to \$50,000.

Mr. Damato advised there is a scheduled zoom call with the director of the Round Top Organization, the Mayor and himself to discuss the proposed summer camp fee increase.

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

MARCH 7, 2024

Historical – Councilman Fischer stated the Committee is preparing for the 150th year anniversary.

Board of Health – Councilwoman Abi-Habib advised the Board of Health met Tuesday and discussions occurred relating to the Mayors Wellness Campaign, discussions occurred relating to upcoming CPR and AED CPR classes. She also provided information regarding an online virtual program designed to assist those who suffer from substance abuse and said more information can be found on the Middlebrook Health Commission website.

She spoke on the Green Team and provided updates regarding the upcoming Farmers Market location. She also provided detailed comments on the upcoming March 14th Women of Watchung event.

Councilman Marano thanked Jennifer Principato for joining as a new member of the Environmental Commission.

5. Fire – Councilman Dahl stated there was no meeting held but a full written report was submitted.
6. Laws/Ordinances – Attorney Sordillo advised the Committee is working on new Ordinances and there are some pending.

REPORTS OF BOROUGH OFFICERS

7. Engineer – Borough Engineer Jason Cline provided an update on the public hearing and application regarding the DCA Resilient Communities grant. He advised the Watchung lake dam inspection is complete and mentioned they will be submitting an application to the DCA for Camp Endeavor improvements. Lastly, he said the 2024 DOT Trust Fund project is on the agenda for approval this evening as well as the Phillips Field Bridge project.
8. Police Chief – Police Chief Anderle provided statistics regarding the February monthly report. He also mentioned 61 summonses were issued for overweight vehicles, 356 hours of in-service training was conducted and advised the speed sign enforcement program is still in effect.
9. Fire Chief – Clerk Edith Gil advised a written report was submitted.
10. Fire Official – Fire Official McNulty advised there were no fire investigations in February, 5 fire safety permits were issued a total of 48 inspections conducted.
11. Rescue Squad – Mayor Jubin advised a written Report was submitted.
12. Emergency Management – OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon advised on April 18th they will be working on a state mandated functional EOC exercise. She said Watchung CERT will be participating in the St. Patrick's Day parade and she mentioned an upcoming CERT workshop in the planning stages. She also mentioned a few programs offered by Somerset County within the last month for OEM.
13. Attorney – Attorney Sordillo had no report.

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

MARCH 7, 2024

14. Finance – CFO Bill Hance advised the annual financial statement has been completed and submitted to the State and the budget document has been sent to the Auditor for review.
15. Clerk – Clerk Edith Gil reminded all residents to please subscribe to the Boroughs email system.
16. Administrator – Administrator Damato provided details on the library access bridge renovation and mentioned after four to six weeks there will be no access from Best Lake lot to the library on the walking path. He estimates the project to take around a month to complete.
17. Youth Services -Councilman Dahl advised a written report was submitted.
18. Planning Board – Mayor Jubin advised the last meeting was cancelled and the March meeting has been postponed.
19. Municipal Alliance – Councilman Marano had no report.
20. Library Advisory Committee – Councilman Fischer had no report.
21. Traffic and Beautification – Council President Ead stated the Committee is in full planning mode for Operation Pride scheduled for Saturday, April 27th starting at 9:00 A.M. She also mentioned the Committee plans to plant flowers throughout the Borough in the month of May.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

- No one appearing

DISCUSSIONS

❖ Our House Generator Installation

Mayor Jubin provided some background information on the Our House facility and said the facility is requesting a generator be installed and applying through the Community Development Block Grant funding. Mayor Jubin opened the floor for discussion.

Council President Ead advised the people who run the organization and the women who attend are wonderful and lovely people.

Councilman Dahl asked Mr. Damato to speak on the affordable housing credits associated with Group Homes.

Administrator Damato advised you get bonus credits for having group homes based off the number of beds. He said the Borough has received six credits as a result of the Our House facility.

Mr. Hance provided details on the affordable housing trust fund.

Councilwoman Abi-Habib echoed Council President Eads sentiments. She encouraged everyone

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

MARCH 7, 2024

to visit the facility and was blown away by the beauty of the home and joy and happiness amongst the women's faces.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Motion to open Public Hearing – Second Reading on below by Fischer

OR 24/03: BOND ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR VARIOUS 2024 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS BY AND IN THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, IN THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET, STATE OF NEW JERSEY; APPROPRIATING \$7,429,000 THEREFOR AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$5,379,000 BONDS OR NOTES OF THE BOROUGH TO FINANCE PART OF THE COST THEREOF

Public hearing was opened.

No one appearing.

Motion to close Public Hearing and Adopt above by Fischer, second by Ead

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

Mayor Jubin thanked all the administrative staff and professionals for working together on this Ordinance for the betterment of Watchung.

NEW BUSINESS

REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Board of Adjustment Meeting Minutes	November 9, 2023
Board of Health Meeting Minutes	July 19, 2023 October 18, 2023
Construction Department Monthly Report	February 2024
Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes	December 4, 2023
Fire Prevention Bureau Monthly Report	February 2024
Green Team Meeting Minutes	January 29, 2024
Mayor and Council Meeting Minutes	January 18, 2024 February 1, 2024
M&C Executive Session Minutes	January 18, 2024

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

MARCH 7, 2024

Police Department Monthly Activity	February 2024
Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes	December 6, 2023
Rescue Squad Monthly Report	February 2024

#5: New Jersey American Water, Notice of Public Hearing scheduled for 3/13/2024, Petition of NJ-American Water Company Inc. for Recovery of Regulatory Asset Established for Incremental Covid-19 Related Expenses , recv'd 2/26/24, cc: M&C, JD

Motion to Accept above by Ead/ Second by Dahl

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

Councilman Marano left the meeting at 8:13 P.M.

CONSENT ITEMS

R1: Authorizing Purchases over Allowed Threshold - Axon Enterprise, Inc., (*PD – year one axon fleet*)
Glenwood Office Furniture (*PD improvements*)

R2: Authorizing Bill List

R3: Authorizing use of Gazebo for Wedding Ceremony on June 22, 2024

R4: Authorizing Tax Lien Redemption of Tax Certificate #23-00016

Motion to Adopt above by Ead/ Second by Fischer

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

NON- CONSENT ITEMS

R5: Awarding Professional Services Contract for Municipal Advisor to Phoenix Advisors, LLC

Motion to Adopt above by Fischer/ Second by Dahl

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

R6: Authorizing the Submission of a 2024 CDBG Grant Application by Our House, Inc. to Install a Whole-House Generator

Motion to Adopt above by Dahl/ Second by Ead

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

R7: Authorizing Person to Person Transfer of Liquor License – Tocci Restaurant Inc. to Stirling Hospitality Group LLC

Motion to Adopt above by Fischer/ Second by Dahl

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

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

MARCH 7, 2024

R8: Authorizing Participation in the Update of the Somerset County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan

Motion to Adopt above by Dahl/ Second by Fischer

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

R9: Authorizing a Contract to Remington & Vernick Engineers for Design, Inspection and Construction Administration Services for the FY 2024 NJDOT Municipal Aid Program Grant for Road Improvements

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

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

R10: Authorizing a Contract to Remington & Vernick Engineers for Test Pit, Geotechnical Investigations, and Civil/Site Design for the Proposed Watchung Library Additions

Motion to Adopt above by Ead/ Second by Fischer

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

R11: Authorizing a Contract to Remington & Vernick Engineers for Environmental Permitting Services Associated with the Phillips Field Bridge Abutment and Stream Bank Stabilization Project

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

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

R12: Awarding a contract to Westchester Environmental, LLC for Environmental Consulting Services for the Watchung Library Branch

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

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

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Kristy Hartman, Resident, asked for further clarification on the New Jersey American Water Project mentioned. Clerk Edith Gil clarified the correspondence referenced is New Jersey American Water advising they are increasing their rates.
2. Virginia Hartmann, Resident, expressed her concerns in regards to the Watchung library not currently scheduled to have a generator. Mayor Jubin advised a generator could be added on within the plans developed and stated there is one potentially available. Mayor Jubin also emphasized the importance of offsetting costs.

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

MARCH 7, 2024

Administrator Damato clarified the potential cost of adding on a generator and feels it can easily be done after the building is complete.

Councilman Dahl mentioned it's a great fundraising idea for the Borough

Ms. Hartmann questioned if there are naming opportunities for the new building and Mayor Jubin stated it's a wonderful idea to think about for the future. She also suggested Mayor Jubin include Peggy Ellis when expressing his thanks for all her hard work and dedication towards saving the library.

Mayor Jubin publicly thanked everyone who has contributed in every way to the Watchung Library.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

R13: Authorizing an Executive Session to Discuss Pending or Anticipated Litigation on a Tax Appeal

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

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

At approximately 8:31 P.M. Mayor and Council entered closed session and returned to open session at approximately 8:48 P.M.

Motion to return to open session by Dahl/Second by Ead

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

ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business before Council, the meeting ended at 8:49 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Regina DeLeonibus
Deputy Borough Clerk

Approved: May 16, 2024