

## BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG

### MINUTES

#### WORKSHOP MEETING OF FEBRUARY 19, 2004

**MAYOR'S STATEMENT:** Mayor Ellis called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM and made the following statement: 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 annual notice to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, Messenger-Gazette and Star Ledger, and posted at Borough Hall.

Mayor Ellis waived the start of the meeting until 7:30 PM as he was waiting for the arrival of two Councilmembers who said they were going to attend.

Mayor Ellis resumed the meeting at 7:45 PM.

#### **SALUTE TO THE FLAG, SILENT PRAYER, AND ROLL CALL**

Black [ A ] Franklin [ P ] Otto [ A ] Mobus [ P ] Joren [ P ] Harding [ P ]

Also present were Borough Attorney Albert Cruz, Borough Administrator Laureen Fellin and Deputy Borough Clerk Michelle DeRocco. There were 28 people in the audience.

#### **DISCUSSION**

**Deer Management Program** - Mayor Ellis said that it is his intention to have a complete review of the program followed by a discussion with the full council. He said that once that is done, he would like to have another resident survey done but this time by a professional survey company. He said he hopes to have this accomplished by May. He is also recommending another aerial survey on the deer population.

At this point, Mayor Ellis deviated from the regular agenda to open the meeting to the public, explaining Councilman Black was running late from a previous meeting and opened the meeting to the public.

#### **PUBLIC PORTION**

Mayor Ellis accepted a letter from resident K. Onufreiczuk who was unable to stay for the meeting, in support of the deer hunt to be placed on the next agenda.

Tony Addario, Rock Avenue said he was embarrassed by the fact that two council people did not show up for this important meeting and said that it showed disrespect. He said that assuming the governing body is working on the budget, he hopes they will be putting more money in the budget to continue the hunt. In reference to Mayor Ellis' previous statement, he said that if the anti-hunt people do not want Borough money spent on a deer hunt, they will not want money spent on another survey. Mr. Addario said that a decision was made and the governing body has a responsibility to the majority of the voters.

Mayor Ellis said that it was important to note that he was aware that Councilman Black would be late this evening. He added that they are working on the budget and wants to have a Deer Workshop meeting because he needs to know where the Council wants to go in the future.

Councilwoman Joren asked if we would be having the Deer Workshop meeting before the budget meeting. Mayor Ellis said the first budget meeting is scheduled for March 6th and he should have an idea of what the dollar amount needed will be, even if it is not possible to have the Deer Workshop prior to the budget meeting.

Councilwoman Joren questioned how it would be possible to have a dollar amount if the Deer Workshop is not held prior to the budget meeting. Mayor Ellis said the dollar amount can be put into the budget after the meeting.

Ray Miller, Valley Road, asked if the public would be welcome at the Deer Workshop meeting. Mayor Ellis said they would be.

Dick Wellbrock, Tall Timbers Road, said that he has always been a scout and concerned with the environment. He said it aggravates him when he hears the passion in the anti-deer hunt people's arguments. He said Councilman Franklin needs more support and the governing body needs more backbone.

Emi Havas, Valley Road, asked if the approved program revision from the State has been received. Councilman Franklin said that we received it yesterday, which did not give us sufficient time to give 24 hour notice to the residents. He announced that the hunt will resume next week, however, he was still not sure as to which days. When he knows, the residents will be notified properly. Mrs. Havas urged the Mayor and Council to be courageous and protect our environment. She said if there was a better way to do this, it would be done. She urged the Governing Body to continue the program, while at the same time, continue to explore other possible options. She asked the residents to come forward with their suggestions.

7:55 P.M. Councilman Black arrived.

Maria Perez, Hill Hollow, said she agreed that there are a lot of deer, however, this is an issue of safety and said many people are afraid of having people shooting guns in their backyards. She urged the Mayor and Council to take a step back as shooting deer will not solve the problem. She said that deer only live 3 to 4 years and this is a short term problem. Mrs. Perez said that the fact that there are only 6 sites is a sign that the people are talking and the governing body should listen to them.

Mayor Ellis said that this is a very emotional issue and the Deer Workshop is needed as the governing body is looking for more answers. He said that certainly if a solution arrived he would do it tomorrow.

Councilman Franklin said the fact that there are only a few sites is not a sign. He explained that sites are difficult to get because, as an example, one site needed approvals from 9 homeowners and although 1 dropped out, the 8 other wanted it very badly.

Jerry Brooks, Knollwood Drive, said he was very much in favor of the hunt and did offer his property as a site, however, it was unacceptable. Mr. Brooks told a story of when he was on the Rescue Squad in 1996 and was out on a squad call on Valley Road. When he arrived at the scene he found a deer in the back seat of a car. What had happened was the driver had stopped to let a herd of deer cross the street but another vehicle was coming and did not see them. He hit the deer which went flying into the back seat of the other car and there were many injuries. Mr. Brooks said that 53% of the people surveyed were in favor of the hunt and that should be a clear mandate.

Mr. Arthur Kern, Glen Eagles Drive, said that it was his understanding that no one in the United States was ever injured in a deer hunt. He said the professional hunters are expert marksmen and added that more people were injured in deer-car accidents. Mr. Kern said that when the hunters are set up and ready to go, the anti-deer people interfere and asked whose job it is to call the police. Mayor Ellis explained that the police were called and the people he referred to were removed.

Mitch Jablons, Timberline Way, said that he felt it was incumbent upon the Council to give the residents clear information. He said it was time to get the passion out of the issue and protect the environment.

Richard Becker, Johnston Drive, told the Mayor and Council that they must deal with the reality of the issue which is that the opponents do not approve of killing deer. He said this panel cannot sit here and say the environment is not being harmed. He suggested that this is a state wide problem and the governing body should meet with State officials and ask for their help for a long-term solution.

Mr. Miller said this will not be a one year solution, as the hunting will not affect the number of deer. He said we must demand the State find a means of contraception. Mayor Ellis said this was an intelligent request and said he has reached out to them but he feels like he is talking to deaf ears. Councilman Franklin explained that the State agency's objective is different, as they promote recreational hunting. He said he has no problem reaching out to the State but feels they will not want to help. He added that, of course it would be a more manageable problem if the State stepped in and took it out of our hands.

Don Pote, Sherwood Road, said there are 2 essential issues to address. He said sufficient funding is needed to have an effective hunt. He said when the survey came back, it was reported that residents spent over \$1,700,000. of their own dollars on damage replacement and control which could have been better spent on effective control. He said an optimum number of sites are needed. Mr. Pote said, in his opinion, the net and bolt method is the best. Mayor Ellis said that Mr. Pote has touched on several items he would like to discuss further.

Mrs. Perez said that only 57% of the surveys were returned and out of that only 73% said they had a deer problem. Councilman Franklin explained that 73% said the deer were overabundant and 16% said they did not support the hunt. Mrs. Perez said everyone did not receive a survey as she knows that the people who have been in town less than two years did not receive one.

Councilman Franklin said that anyone who pays taxes in Watchung received a survey adding that

it was a good sampling. Mrs. Perez said that it is not true that no one is getting hurt during the hunts because the hunters shoot themselves. The town will not cover a hunter if he gets hurt. Councilman Franklin said no one has been shot, ever. Mrs. Perez pointed out that we are the first town to do the shooting in resident's back yards. She asked the governing body to lay back and see what other towns are doing.

Steve Pote, Wildwood Terrace, said he was not sure of what the objectives would be in doing another survey.

Mr. Addario said there are many places in Watchung that could have been used as sites instead of backyards, however, the anti-hunt people have undermined them.

Paul Michaelis, High Tor Drive, said that our Governor said he would like to centralize all decisions. He said we must face up to this problem and cannot pawn it off on Trenton. He said we need to get busy and keep in mind you will never make everyone happy.

**RESOLUTIONS:** Councilman Black apologized for being late as he was attending a Somerset County Park Commission meeting which he said was very interesting. He said he would like to share some of the information he received there, in particular regarding the Bernards' Deer Hunt. He said that last year Deer Management culled 234 on only 3 sites, and this year only 84 were culled. He said there were many things that had to be looked at, such as, are the herds really smaller, or were last years sites prime. He said these are among the questions that will be asked at the workshop. He said it was in the Council's best interest to go forward with this tonight and the workshop will help to move forward in the future.

Councilwoman Joren asked if we are using money from 2003 or 2004 and if it will have to be paid back. Mayor Ellis explained it is unused money from 2003. Mr. Cruz added that it was appropriated for workers comp insurance last year and not used. Councilwoman Joren asked what else this money could have been used for. Mr. Cruz said it would have gone into surplus.

Councilman Franklin commented on the number of sites needed to be effective. He said that on the first day of the hunt, Deer Management culled 33 deer from 6 sites, which is the biggest number for that many sites. He added that they took more deer in 2 days in Watchung than they have on 12 sites in Mountain Lakes.

The following resolution was offered by Councilman Mobus and seconded by Councilman Franklin. Upon roll call the vote was as follows: Black, YES; Mobus, YES; Franklin, YES; Joren, NO; Harding, YES.

R1-2/19/04            Budget Appropriation Transfer

The following resolution was offered by Councilman Franklin and seconded by Councilman Mobus. Upon roll call the vote was as follows: Black, YES; Mobus, YES; Franklin, YES; Joren, NO; Harding, YES.

R2-                    Change Order #1 - Deer Management Systems

Councilwoman Joren said she did not see the need to spend \$8,000. now, prior to the deer workshop meeting. She said if we wait until the workshop, maybe we can allocate \$100,000. and kill a lot more deer. Mayor Ellis explained that there is a time frame we have to work with. He said we have to have some numbers of how much it will cost to cull so many more deer. Councilman Black explained that they didn't plan on being as successful as they were and more sites will be needed to continue, however, to get an accurate reading, we need to proceed and this \$8,000. is what is needed to proceed. He added that 2 years ago he was not a proponent of the cull for safety reasons, however, there are only a few days left and we really need to see the numbers. Councilman Franklin said we have expended 2/3's of the appropriated funds and, keeping in mind that feeders have already been hung, it is incumbent upon the hunt to take as many deer as possible and not pack up early.

#### UPDATE ON CURRENT PROJECTS AND ISSUES

None

**ADJOURNMENT** There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM to the call of the Chair until the next scheduled meeting on February 26, 2004 at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle DeRocco  
Deputy Clerk