

## BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG

### MINUTES

MARCH 11, 2004

**MAYOR'S STATEMENT:** Mayor Ellis called the meeting to order at 7:35 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, The Messenger-Gazette and Star Ledger, and posted at Borough Hall

#### SALUTE TO THE FLAG and SILENT PRAYER

#### ROLL CALL

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

Also present were Administrator/Clerk Laureen Fellin, Borough Attorney Albert Cruz and Deputy Clerk Michelle DeRocco.

There were 12 members of the public present.

#### **PRESENTATION - Watchung Hills Regional High School 2004 - 2005 Proposed Budget**

A special presentation was given by Superintendent Gary Reece and Business Administrator John Murray. Mr. Reece announced that the upcoming School Election will be held on April 20th and the School's goal is to become the best in its world and explained that their task is to make a large school feel small. He announced that they are experiencing an increase of 150 students per year and by September of 2004 total enrollment should be about 1,840. He explained that they have expanded their programs of studies and talked about the other program enhancements which have been added. Mr. Reece talked about the need for a staffing increase due to the added programs and increased enrollment, as well as the cost of equipment and maintenance. Mr. Murray explained the transportation costs and said that the law requires them to accommodate all residents, which includes the transportation of one child out of district at a cost of \$56,000. per year. Councilman Harding questioned the capacity of the school as far as increasing enrollment. Mr. Reece said that they cannot look at anything more than 5 years, however, the school feels it could handle up to 3,000 students before they have to think about another school. Emi Havas asked what the budget was for 2003 and Mr. Reece said it was \$23.4 and this year its is \$25,470,864. This comes out to \$274. per \$100,000 of assessed value for the residents of Watchung or an increase of \$106. per the average home of \$600,000. Mr. Murray and Mr. Reece spoke about the fact that the High School gets only 5% state aid and the rest of the budget is municipally funded. Former Mayor Addario said that the Governor is promoting regionalization, however, the tax payers are being penalized for sharing services. He said we are driving our seniors out of town. Mayor Ellis thanked Mr. Reece and Mr. Murray wished Mr. Murray success in his new job in Bernards Township.

#### **REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:**

1. Administration & Finance - Councilman Franklin reported that the Personnel Committee met this week and discussed questions from Kerrin Malatesta regarding the personnel manual. He also announced that they will be making a recommendation on the hiring of the new secretary soon and added that the pool of applicants was outstanding. Councilman Franklin reported that the deer culling total was 116 as of today and the last day will be one day next week. He said the sites are petering out and being used up, as the deer will not return to them. He said another problem is that some residents are feeding the deer.
2. Police - Councilman Black announced that Chief Frosoni will be attending the budget meeting on Saturday morning. He also was happy to report that the number of false alarms received have gone down and this alleviates a lot of headaches.
3. Public Works - Councilman Mobus said the Committee has met and are prepared to make their budget presentation on Saturday. Last Friday he met with the people promoting the GEO Plan; he said the Borough is definitely interested in what they have to offer.
4. Buildings and Public Affairs

Public Affairs - Councilman Harding said he attended an Open Space Committee meeting and announced that they have received a grant application. The Board of Health has received a revised tobacco ordinance from Kevin Sumner and the only real change pertains to the person who is allowed to sell the tobacco, however, this will have to go before the Laws and Ordinances Committee.

Buildings - Councilman Otto said he attended meetings with the Buildings and Grounds Committee and the Historical Committee and they were both routine.

5. Fire - Councilman Harding reported that Chief Reddington is working on a grant application for 2004 received from Congressman Ferguson's office, which is due by April 1st. Councilman Otto stated that the department applied for this grant last year and was overlooked.

6. Laws/Ordinances, and Recreation - In Councilwoman Joren's absence, Councilman Otto said the grease trap ordinance has been forwarded to the Building Department for their review. He said the proposed driveway ordinance will be part of the Land Use Ordinance and feels that the full Council should meet asap to discuss it, and suggested a planner attend. Mayor Ellis agreed. Mayor Ellis said he had met last week with several Mayors and Congressman Ferguson and submitted an application request for radio equipment for the Police Department in the amount of \$175,000.

#### REPORTS - OTHER:

7 Engineer - Mr. Moody was not present.

8 Attorney - Mr. Cruz said that he has something for Executive Session

9. Administrator - Mrs. Fellin announced that an internal e-mail program has been implemented and is up and running. Councilman Otto asked if the Borough has an internet policy and Mrs. Fellin said yes and will provide him with a copy of it.

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#### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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#### NEW BUSINESS

CONSENT AGENDA: CONSENT AGENDA: The Consent Agenda listed below was unanimously accepted on roll call following a motion by Councilman Black and a second by Councilman Franklin.

Approval of the following Council minutes:

Workshop Meeting - February 19, 2004

Approval of the following Borough Reports:

Environmental Commission Minutes - January 26, 2004

Historical Committee - February 4, 2004

Finance Department Revenue Report - December 2003

Treasurer's Cash Report - January 2004

Building Dept. Report - February 2004

Tax Collector's Report - February 2004

- #24- Somerset County Office of Emergency Management, 2/26/04 Mandating all municipalities to develop hazard mitigation plan by Nov. 1, 2004 c: A. Ellis, W. Otto, C. Gunther, S. Whelan
- #25- Elizabethtown Water Co., 1/5/04 Notification of name change to New Jersey American Water c: Mayor and Council, R. Moody
- #26- New Jersey American Water, 2/23/04 Regarding rate increase c: Mayor and Council, W. Hance
- #27- Township of Bordentown, 2/24/04 Resolution opposing the State's actions concerning the "Property Tax Reimbursement Program" c: Mayor and Council
- #28- Joseph Lane, 3/3/04 Supporting the Deer Hunt c: Mayor and Council, L. Fellin, A. McCoy
- #29- Board of Chosen Freeholders, Somerset County, 3/4/04 Resolution authorizing Participation of Somerset County in the State Development and Redevelopment Plan and Submission of a 2004 Cross-Acceptance Grant Application c: Mayor and Council

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CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS: The resolutions listed below were adopted on roll call following a motion by Councilman Black and a second by Councilman Mobus with all voting in favor.

- R1:2/12/04 Purchases over \$2,000 00 - Pinto Brothers
- R2: Approval of Raffle Application #509 for the McAuley School for Exceptional Children
- R3: Approving participation with the State of New Jersey in a Safe and Secure Communities Program
- R4: Amending and Ratifying the approval to provide portable bathrooms at Phillips Field
- R5: Authorizing the execution of grant application from the Department of Environmental Protection
- R6: Authorize Tax Appeal Stipulation of Settlement - Block 5602, Lot 4
- R7: Authorize Tax Appeal Stipulation of Settlement - Block 6903, Lot 22
- R8: ~~WITHDRAWN Authorize Interlocal Agreement with North Plainfield - Radio Repeater System~~
- R10: Appointment of Alternate Representative to Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority
- R11: Appointment of new member to the Fire Department

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**NON-CONSENT AGENDA**

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**NON-CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS**

The Resolution below was offered by Councilman Black with a second by Councilman Franklin. Upon roll call the vote was unanimously carried.

- R9:03/11/04 Executive Session: Acquisition of Property - Block 3.02 Lot 3

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**PUBLIC PORTION**

Emi Havas, Valley Road, asked the amount of the grant the Fire Department is applying for. Councilman Otto said we requested \$25,000 last year. Councilman Harding said he thinks it will be a little more this year

Anthony Addario, Rock Avenue, said that the Greenbrook Flood Commission, as of this September 1st, will not issue any more engineering contracts. On a different note, he said that he feels if there is a sign ordinance in town, it should be enforced to the full extent of the law and he said he feels there is selective enforcement, especially in relation to the deer hunt signs. He said he is aware of a resident whose tires were slashed because of the sign he had on his lawn. Former Mayor Addario also asked the Governing Body to carefully consider what is put into the budget for the deer hunt, as he has heard about double digit increases coming this year between the school, the county and the municipality. Mayor Ellis said the Governing Body is prudently aware of budget increases this year and said our preliminary numbers look good. He said he has met with Code Enforcement Officer Ed Bennett, who said he will be checking signs and fences around town. Mayor Ellis thanked Mr. Addario for the reminder with regard to the Army Corps of Engineers and, said he is not sure how this will affect the Green Brook Flood Commission. Mr. Addario said congress has denied any new contracts for the Army Corps and although it will not affect Watchung, it will affect the lower communities.

Mrs. Havas said she sees the signs from the "liquidators" put up all weekend around town when the officials are not in. She said she feels the people putting the signs up should be fined.

Michelle Stuart, Valley Road, asked for a breakdown of the deer hunt to date with regard to maturity. Councilman Franklin explained that they do not record maturity, only gender

Marilyn Goldstein, Hill Hollow, asked why the Borough was proceeding with the hunt if there are not enough sites and, in the future, will a minimum number of sites be required. Councilman Franklin explained that the Borough will proceed until the budget is expended. As far as a minimum number of sites, he said this is not a science and of course the more sites the Borough has, the more deer will be culled.

No one else from the public desiring to be heard, Councilman Black offered R9:4/08/04 authorizing an executive session, with a second by Councilman Franklin and unanimously approved. Upon return to regular session at 10:14 PM all members previously present were again in attendance.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 10:15 PM to the call of the Chair or the next scheduled meeting of Thursday, March 25, 2004.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle DeRocco  
Deputy Borough Clerk