

## BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG

### MINUTES

#### WORKSHOP MEETING OF MARCH 13, 2004

**MAYOR'S STATEMENT:** Mayor Ellis called the meeting to order at 8:35 AM 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

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

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

Also present were Administrator Fellin, CFO Bill Hance and Auditor Bob Swisher. Department Heads and Board/Commission representatives arrived at scheduled times during the workshop

#### WORKSHOP DISCUSSION: Review of 2004 Department Budget Requests

Judge Richard Sasso, standing in for Court Administrator Pam Steves, said in terms of revenue, the numbers are going up and the Court is looking for some small household type items. Judge Sasso recommended that \$236,000 be budgeted for the Court.

Police Chief John Frosoni appeared before the governing body to discuss the Police budget. He said their budget is pretty much fixed year after year, with the exception of Police vehicles which is the largest item in the budget. Councilman Otto asked the Chief if there is more of a demand for training as the years go by and the Chief replied that there was, as each year more training is mandated. He explained that the department tries to take advantage of any free training that is offered and most of the time, he sends Lt. Sean Whelan, who will bring what is needed back to the department. He said they were concerned with Haz Mat and said the County will be giving everyone in the department a low-level suit and mask. Chief Frosoni went over the line items for repairs and maintenance and explained that included in it are items needed for the cars such as paint, car markings, towing, and car washes. He also said that the department averages about 4 vehicle accidents a year and each would have a \$1,000. deductible. Councilman Otto asked if the vehicles were being replaced as per the schedule and the Chief replied that they were, however, each year that the vehicles get older the repairs are more costly. He said the schedule previously called for a replacement of 4 vehicles per year, then they cut it down to 3 vehicles a year, and now they are at 2. He said next year there will be 3 cars in service that will have over 100,000 miles on them. He said he has one unmarked car that is really worn out that he would like to trade in. He said he is working on a 5-year plan for replacement of vehicles and would like to replace 4 this year and 3 next year. Chief Frosoni said he would also like to purchase the vehicles instead of leasing them because, if they were leased, the Borough would have 9 leases at one time. Councilman Otto asked if the vehicles were subject to the 0% financing and Chief Finance Officer William Hance said they are purchased usually at 4%. Chief Frosoni said the problem is that usually after 4 years they are ready to be traded in. Borough Auditor Bob Swisher explained that the cars are not a part of the cap. Councilman Otto said that if the fleet is aging it will eventually catch up with you. He said productivity in the department is up and feels this would be a wash. Mayor Ellis said that it was a good analysis and we have grown in our maintenance program and are more in tune with it. He said the Council will consider the request. Chief Frosoni said another request is replacement of the in-car video system which is outdated and said if you are looking at productivity, that is the heart of the system. He said their last request is an ID Creator so a professional ID card can be produced, explaining that this would be very helpful in the schools or to anyone in the Borough. He said they are hoping for grant monies from Walmart and Target. Councilman Black said if we do not have one for the municipality, we should. Mayor Ellis asked Chief Frosoni for an update on recruiting and Chief Frosoni said he went to the academy last week to try to get a pool of candidates

Gary Greves, on behalf of Fire and Safety explained that the department is basically self sustained with revenue from fines and violations collected, most of them coming from Blue Star Shopping Center. He said that false alarms generated fines of \$14,000 to Blue Star, however, they settled on \$10,000 and split the money with the Fire Department. Mayor Ellis asked if the alarms have stopped and Mr. Greves said that once they are hit in the pocketbook they stop. Councilman Otto asked if CO's are required for residents and Mr Greves said they were mandated by the state. Councilman Otto asked if Fire Prevention was getting an extra fee for that and Mr Greves said he would like to increase the overhead to \$40 which would enable him to get a much needed laptop. He explained that the NJ Fire Code is merging with National Fire Code and this will bring about modifications and a lot of changes sometime this year. Mayor Ellis asked how rentals are handled and Mr Greves said that there is an agreement with Crystal Ridge that they have to notify the Borough every six months of any changes. Councilman Mobus thanked Mr Greves for his work at the Art Center.

Charles Gunther, Public Works Supervisor, said that there are a lot of problems with the HVAC System at the Police Department and a lot of money is being spent on the new building. He said he has called in three different vendors, including a consultant who provided an extensive report, but had no suggestions. He has contacted PMK Engineering and is hoping to hear from them this week. Mr. Gunther said the Fire Department still wants to raise the door at the East End; when getting some estimates it was determined that a header will have to be moved. Councilman Otto asked if the apron can be lowered as an alternative and Mr. Gunther said they did look into that and it can not. Mr. Gunther said the Texier House will be painted as soon as the weather breaks and he would like work on a plan to start replacing the windows. They are getting prices on a new roof also. Mr. Gunther also requested a new boat for the department which is needed to do maintenance on the lakes, such as animal removal or turning the aerators on and off and OSHA has requirements. He also said that he needs to replace truck #1. He had asked for its replacement last year and has spent over \$7,000 on repairs, adding that it will need another \$10,000 worth of repairs. Mr. Gunther said he would like to purchase a jet router truck in the future, explaining that the catch basins are very deep and filled about 80% with debris. He said that the County has large multifunctional trucks which convert with attachments to a salt spreader or a bucket truck. Mr. Gunther said Watchung has over 260 catch basins, some of which have never been cleaned. Councilman Mobus asked if the sharing of services was considered and Mr. Gunther explained that the County will help only in an emergency. Councilman Otto said since we do not have the equipment, the catch basins are not being properly cleaned, causing emergency situations. Councilman Otto asked if there is enough room to house the equipment at the yard, and Mr. Gunther said there was not, that some of the equipment is kept outside and it is not good to have them exposed to the elements and vandalism. He said we do need to add space to protect our investments. Mayor Ellis said that this was good insight into the future and he would like to see a plan for replacing the truck and equipment.

Richard Moody, Borough Engineer, said his operating budget is straight forward. He said he is requesting \$5,000 for file cabinets and software for calculations, and \$500 for vehicle repair. He said other than that, his budget is the same as last year. In regard to his capital budget, Mr. Moody said he has asked Bohler Engineering to do the second part of Anderson Road; he is trying to get the Watchung Square Mall to Johnston Drive sewer extension project going, however, the problem is getting a 300 ft. extension through a 60 ft. slope and is waiting to hear from Vornado if they will provide the easement. In regard to the reconstruction of section II of Johnston Drive, he said he needs to work with North Plainfield. Mr. Moody said he has a new list of roads for road overlay. He said he is discussing with Titus Engineering, the stability of the Philips Field bridge, as it has settled slightly. He said Somerset County is not willing to look at it or help in anyway. Mr. Moody said he would like to widen the road at the same time. With regard to the GEO Plan, Mr. Moody said \$7,500 is needed for the first workstation, \$9,000 for the Borough License, and \$11,000 for training and startup costs. He said he is requesting a copier that will enable him to copy everything he needs in all formats, with the exception of color. This will cut some of his work time from 3 to 4 days down to 5 minutes. Mrs. Fellin asked Mr. Moody if he will be doing sewer and overlays and he explained that is a separate module and needs auto cad.

Pocket Parks - Mayor Ellis invited Sue Forton to discuss proposed plans for the Pocket Parks program. She explained some of the possibilities they are considering, and showed some designs.

Mayor Ellis asked for a short recess.

When the meeting resumed after a 5 minute recess, Councilman Otto was no longer present.

Construction Official Ed Bennett said that his budget request was unchanged from last year, and the number of inspections are the same, if not a little more. He said he is very much interested in the GEO plan, as it would help his department also. He said that although the work for the inspectors has pretty much leveled off, he would like to request a little above the normal stipend for his two office employees as their work load has increased. There was some discussion as to the enforcement of illegal signs which are becoming an eyesore and Mr. Bennett said that he will take care of them. He explained that when he takes them down, he puts them in the garage and if the people want them back, they have to talk to him. It was suggested that extra attention can be given to this from Public Works and even community service workers

Bob Butkocy represented the Recreation Committee in the absence of Maria Bachert. He said the Committee is requesting to upgrade the pavilion at Mobus Field, which would include increasing the size, fixing the floor and upgrading one bathroom. He said they will hold more concerts at Mobus Field and this year they are expecting an increase in picnic costs as there are more children in the program. Mr. Butkocy said they would also like to replace the bleachers at all three fields because they have no backs on them and it is a safety issue. Mayor Ellis said that he believes the grant money they hope to receive will cover the bleachers.

Dolores Kresge said her budget request for the Environmental Commission is the same as last year. Mayor Ellis asked if she knew if she was going to receive grant money and she replied yes, explaining that they need a community forestry plan and must hire a forestry consultant.

Kevin Sumner, speaking for the Board of Health, said his budget request is essentially the same from last year. Mayor Ellis commended Mr. Sumner and the Middlebrook Regional Health Commission for doing a great job. Mr. Sumner said they are planning some special projects in the near future.

Tax Assessor David Gill said that he would greatly benefit from the GEO Plan as it will provide digital tax maps and reassessment evaluations. He said that he is in need of a new computer

Tax Collector Catherine Park said she has reduced her office supply line item by \$100. She said the collection rate is down 1/10th because of the Subramanian property. She said her department is seeing an increase in activity as the State is requiring more forms for the Seniors to fill out.

Planning Board Chairman Don Speeney said the biggest item in their budget is for professional planners who are needed, especially for assisting in the finalization of the Land Development Ordinance which will generate additional costs.

Fire Chief Kevin Reddington said that after the budget requests were submitted, the radio system came up. He explained that the Fire Department no longer uses the sirens at night, in response to the public complaints and to reserve its use for hometown security. A different frequency must be used to alert members for fire calls, and with this new frequency, the radios do not work. Therefore, the department must replace about ten pagers at a cost of \$400 each. Councilman Mobus said that it appears that other towns are getting grant money with the exception of Watchung. Chief Reddington said that he did not apply in 2002 but is applying this year and Councilman Mobus said he can get help on line for filling out the application. He said they are also looking for a compressor and air packs.

Robert Winston, speaking on behalf of the Rescue Squad, said they are seeing an increase in calls and are asking for a first response vehicle. He said mass tragedies are a concern since September 11th, this vehicle is needed. He explained that this would also lighten the load on vehicle 80 which is unable to make it up some hills. Mr. Winston said the State of New Jersey requires 1 EMT and 1 person certified in CPR who can also be the driver, however, the bare minimum is one EMT. Mayor Ellis asked where they are planning on storing this vehicle if they were able to get it and Mr. Winston said that they are working on expanding the building. Mayor Ellis asked when the last time the Rescue Squad purchased a vehicle and Mr. Winston said in 2001 with

delivery in 2002. He explained he would like a Ford Expedition which is available on State Contract for \$29,000 without the extras. Mayor Ellis said that he understands the value of 4 wheel drive vehicles, however, he is not convinced of the need. Mr. Winston said that if someone had a cardiac arrest on the top of Johnston Drive, he could not guarantee that the vehicle they currently use would make it there. Mayor Ellis said he would think about it.

Chief Finance Officer Bill Hance, spoke about the tax rate which was \$.36 per \$100. Mayor Ellis asked Mr. Hance if the budget was up this year and he said it was. Auditor Bob Swisher said the number is not always valid as it can vary due to grants. Mayor Ellis said part of the reason is the increase in insurance costs and police vehicles. Councilman Black asked if we can rectify the health insurance increase and suggested that the employees pay into it. Mr. Swisher said that this would amount to a small savings overall. Mayor Ellis said that he will be looking into the option of providing a waiver for employees who have duplicate coverage to be able to opt-out for a financial reimbursement.

Mayor Ellis said it would behoove the borough to put a number into the budget for deer management. He suggested \$100,000 was a realistic number, explaining that there may be a need for another survey, this time by a professional, and said we will still need the money to be able to move forward. He said we have spent \$25,000 for the culling of 120 deer and need more than that to make a difference. Mr. Hance explained that an increase of \$160,000 is the equivalent of \$.01 in a tax rate, and Mr. Swisher added that an amount of \$80,000 or \$100,000 doesn't make a difference. Councilman Franklin said that the money will depend upon who we hire, explaining that for Deer Management Systems, you can put in a number, but if the Borough chose the net and bolt method, it is an hourly rate. He added that you always get more deer in the beginning and as the herd starts to thin out, the longer it takes and the more expensive it becomes. Mayor Ellis said it will be important to have a workshop meeting just for deer management. Councilman Black said that he is a proponent of the bow hunt. It was agreed that the amount budgeted for the deer management would be \$100,000.

#### **PUBLIC PORTION**

No one from the public was present.

#### **CURRENT PROJECTS UPDATE**

None

**RESOLUTIONS:** The following resolution was offered by Councilman Black and seconded by Councilman Franklin and unanimously carried upon roll call.

R1-3/13/04 - Executive Session - Personnel

Upon return to regular session at 1:10 PM, all members previously present were again in attendance.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 1:15 PM to the call of the Chair or the next scheduled meeting of Thursday, March 25, 2004.

Respectfully submitted,

*Michelle DeRocco*

Michelle DeRocco  
Deputy Borough Clerk