

WATCHUNG BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES

JANUARY 1, 2007

12:00 Noon

MAYOR'S STATEMENT: Mayor Ellis called the Reorganization meeting to order at 12:00 P.M. 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 has been posted and sent to the Courier News, the Echoes Sentinel, Messenger-Gazette, and the Star Ledger by way of annual notice.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG AND ROLL CALL

Mayor Ellis led the Salute to the Flag and requested a moment of silence for President Ford, as well as for our service men and women.

Black [P] Franklin [P] Mobus [P] Joren [P] Pote [P] Nehls [P]

Also present were Administrator/Clerk Laureen Fellin, Engineer Tom Herits and Deputy Clerk Michelle DeRocco. Mayor Ellis welcomed former Governor Donald DiFrancesco who was standing in for Borough Attorney Albert Cruz who was unable to attend today's meeting.

There were approximately 43 people in the audience.

INVOCATION - Rev. Barbara Peters

Mayor Ellis welcomed dignitaries who were in the audience: Senator Thomas Kean, Assemblyman Jon Bramnick, Freeholder Bob Zaborowski, County Clerk Brett Radi, and the newly elected Mayor of Warren Township, Vic Sordillo.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE AND OFFICE

The Honorable Frank Gasiorowski, Superior Court Judge, administered the Oath of Allegiance and Officer to Mayor Albert Ellis. He was sworn into office and renewed his Oath, as his wife Fran and four of his grandchildren held the Bible.

Judge Gasiorowski administered the Oath of Allegiance and Office to Councilman Thomas Franklin, as his wife Lynn held the Bible.

Judge Gasiorowski administered the Oath of Allegiance and Office to Councilwoman Debra Joren as her daughter Sara and husband Sandy held the Bible.

Judge Gasiorowski administered the Oath of Allegiance and Office to Councilman William Nehls, as his wife Georgia and daughters Savannah and Scarlet held the Bible.

Judge Gasiorowski then administered the Oaths of Office to Assistant Fire Chief Robert Pittenger, Jr. as his wife Betty Ann and children held the Bible. Rescue Squad Captain Adam B. Wexler took his oath as his wife and daughter Emily held the Bible. Rescue Squad First Lt. Robert Winston took his Oath of Office as Mrs. Wexler held the Bible. Fire Chief Steve Peterson was unable to attend.

NOMINATION FOR COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Councilman Black nominated Councilman Franklin for the position of Council President, with a second by Councilman Mobus. Nominations were closed and the motion carried unanimously on roll call.

NOMINATION FOR LIAISON TO PLANNING BOARD

Councilman Mobus nominated Councilman Pote for the position of Liaison to the Planning Board, with a second by Councilman Black. Nominations were closed and the motion carried unanimously on roll call.

RESOLUTIONS

The following resolutions were unanimously adopted on roll call, with offering and seconding as indicated:

	<u>Offered</u>	<u>Seconded</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
R1:1/01/07 - Adoption of Rules of Order	Joren	Black	
R2: Designation of Official Newspapers	Pote	Black	
R3: Designation of Depositories	Franklin	Black	
R4: Appointment of Officials - 1-year term	Black	Franklin	Joren
R5: Appointment of Officials - 1-year term	Joren	Black	
R6: Appointments	Mobus	Black	
R7: Re-establish Petty Cash Funds	Nehls	Black	
R8: Temporary Budget	Franklin	Black	
R9: Payment of Property Taxes	Pote	Joren	
R10: Appointment of JIF Commissioner and Alternate	Mobus	Black	

APPOINTMENT OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Mayor Ellis announced that there will be a few small changes in the standing committees and will be announced at the next Council meeting on January 11th.

RECOGNITION OF EMPLOYEE SERVICE

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

John Frosoni, Police Chief

TWENTY YEARS

Paula Heilman, Deputy Treasurer/Payroll
Loretta Shpunder, Assistant Violations Clerk

FIFTEEN YEARS

Lauren Fellin, Administrator/Clerk
Joann Estrella, Police Secretary

FIVE YEARS

Brad Sporer, Police Officer

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

As I look back at 2006, my first thought is the loss of police officer Matt Melchionda in March. Not only was it a tragic loss for our Borough being our first officer lost in the line of duty, it was a dramatic loss

for Somerset County. The service that police, fire and rescue provide always carries the possibility of injury and the loss of life. We too often take those who perform these services for granted as they carry them out every day. These men and women have earned our highest praise. We honor their service.

Also in the month of March we completed the purchase of the Ness property; this 20 acre farm will become an outstanding recreational area for our residents. I have appointed a committee who have already begun to evaluate the recreational possibilities that can be created. We were held up getting started with the clean up of the site as the residents rejected our offer to leave. That legal action was completed in November and a clean up process has already begun under the direction of Don Scottie and Jim Boyd. I am told we have already removed 23 automobiles and plans are going forward to remove other structures and vehicles. The committee continues to meet and will prepare a first phase plan to define the wetland area in order to complete our request for a one million dollar grant from Somerset County. That plan will be completed by March.

I have appointed a committee to review a new library project. We held several workshops discussing the report of the library committee and we included comments received via e-mail. The committee has begun and they have been busy reviewing all the information. I am confident we will see a plan this year.

Regarding Best Lake, I had hoped we would be into construction by now, however, we do have final plans and work on reconstruction of the dam and dredging will begin this spring. A conceptual plan is here for your viewing. I am pleased the style fits the site and the area.

Spratford Park is now a reality and after much planning and review I want to thank the Traffic and Beautification Commission for their tireless effort in bringing it forward. There are some final electrical items to be completed and I have spoken to Carol Spratford about a dedication ceremony and she plans to have her family here some time this April. It will be a fitting remembrance to a fine gentleman who served our community in so many special ways.

This past year we have received grant awards totaling \$497,923.02 which are displayed on the chart outside our chambers. We continue to seek grant money and look forward to increasing that amount this year. We have increased our shared services savings in Somerset County by \$47,996. for a total of \$271,996. Watchung School Board shared savings has grown \$27,000 to \$68,500. Watchung Hills School Board shared services has grown \$19,800 for a total of \$59,800.

We have completed a new lease agreement with the Watchung Arts Center and have secured a \$50,000. grant for them to build a new handicap bathroom. This improvement will be a great advantage to them as they will be in a much better position to apply for grants from the County and State programs.

We honored long time resident and baseball great Bobby Thomson and placed a plaque on the walk around Watchung Lake opposite the firehouse. It was a pleasure to welcome Bobby home for the dedication. I would also like to personally thank the Historical Committee and Barbara Diem for seeing this through.

We have new windows in this building and the firehouse, thanks to the very generous offer of Mr. and Mrs. Ken and Claudia Silverman. They are longtime residents and wanted to give something back to the Borough. We are very grateful and from a personal viewpoint it is a pleasure to have heat remain in my office.

On a personal note, I attended the N.J. National Guard program call "Educate the Legislators" at the Homeland Security Center in Lawrenceville and learned of the great partnership between the Guard and the State Police. The Blackhawk helicopter flight continued to Ft. Dix where we were given a "hands on" tour of the Guard facilities. We are fortunate in our state to have this unique cooperation between the Guard and the State Police for any and all emergencies as we face additional terrorist threats. In addition, Councilman William Nehls and I took the Incident Command System National Training Curriculum Module #1 through 6. This program helped educate us in connection with our own emergency management program and plans are being formulated to have our police, fire and rescue people participate in a "hands on" drill this year. I continue to serve on the League of Municipalities Land Use Environment and Community Development Committee. There are 41 members on our committee and we review proposed legislation in this area. There are three additional committees. General Legislation, Pension, Personnel & Elections and Taxation & Finance who also review proposed legislation in these areas. Needless to say, the NJ Legislature keeps us busy. I was privileged to be a member of the Somerset Leadership Class this past year. This is an outstanding program that meets once a month for a year. It is a program that in depth explores communication, team building and facilitation, win-win negotiation, flexibility and innovation, risk taking and seeing the big picture. It gave me a greater understanding of how the parts of our community, Somerset County, contributes to the whole, and how the community links with others and contributes to the evolving future of the larger community. Each class has a project and ours is the updating and promotion of "211".. You can call this number and connect with a caring professional who knows community services. It is free and confidential help – 24/7. You can find a brochure on our counter.

In closing, let me say what a pleasure it is to work with such a dedicated council. Every one of them is committed to give you the best represented governing body they can. They have tirelessly accepted the tasks at hand and gone above and beyond the duties called for. I am very proud of their performance and it is my pleasure to work with them. Last but certainly not least is the service of our staff. In my mind there is none better. They have responded to all my requests with a positive "can do" attitude keeping in focus of what is in the best interest of the Borough. I am looking forward to the completion of the "bonus room" behind the engineering department and moving those departments from the Texier House here. We then can complete our plans for the new use of the Texier House.

I am proud to serve as Mayor, and Fran and I wish you all a very healthy, happy, and prosperous New Year.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Franklin said he and his wife Lynn would like to wish all the residents and his colleagues a happy and healthy New Year. He thanked the Council members for his election as Council President and pledged to do his best to fulfill the duties of the position. He reported the Borough is in very financial standing and spoke about the \$497,923.03 in grant monies received this year, explaining that every grant dollar received is a dollar less that the taxpayers must pay. Council President Franklin also explained that the Borough collects the taxes for the County, the County Library, the Board of Education and the Watchung Regional Board of Education and the municipal share is a very small portion.

Councilman Black wished all a happy New Year and explained that he and the Mayor are in unison with the decision to diversify the position of Council President. He said it is an honor to work with all of his colleagues and wished to thank all of the volunteers who donate so much of their time for the Borough. He announced that a new police officer, Brian Smith was sworn into office at the last meeting and will begin work today. Reflecting on the tragic loss this year of Officer Melchionda, Councilman Black said he believes the police department is stronger and better than ever.

Councilman Mobus said 2006 was a busy year for the Public Works Committee and introduced Borough Engineer Tom Herits, thanking him for the amount of projects that were able to be completed this past year and for all of the grant money he was able to obtain for the Borough. He announced that in the hallway is an artist's rendition of the improvements planned for Best Lake. He thanked Tom Franklin and Steve Pote for their time on the Committee, and congratulated the Mayor on his second term. He said the Council is a great team, due to having a great coach. He wished all a happy New Year.

Councilwoman Joren thanked all of the Borough staff saying they do a great job, adding that she calls upon Reenie, Michelle and Carolyn often and said Charlie is amazing. She said the Police, having to deal with Route 22, do an incredible job, as do all of the emergency services, boards, and volunteers who so generously give back to the community. She said the past three years have gone very fast and is honored to be able to serve for another three. Councilwoman Joren explained that she chairs the Laws and Ordinances Committee, which when dealing with State mandates, is a constant process, and thanked Councilmen Franklin and Black for their assistance. She said their biggest task was the revision to the Land Development Ordinance, on which they have spent a year and a half. She said she is also the liaison to the Recreation Commission and said they do a great job, and there are programs available for all of the residents, not just the kids. Councilwoman Joren said she is also involved in the Youth Services Commission, who receive a grant from the County in the amount of \$5,000. which enables them to fund programs for students. She said she was appointed to the Ness Committee with Councilman Mobus and is looking forward to seeing that project come together. She said it has been a busy three years and is very happy to be able to serve the Borough for another three. She thanked her family, in particular her husband and daughter and also thanked her dad, Jack Penn, who she said has been her mentor. Councilwoman Joren wished all a happy New Year.

Councilman Pote wished all a happy and healthy New Year. He welcomed his daughter Jen, his friend Gloria, and her daughter Anastasia. He said he was pleased to be a part of the Finance and Administrative Committee, and thanked Councilmen Mobus and Franklin for their leadership. He said in regard to the Buildings and Grounds Committee, he believes Watchung is well maintained, and would personally like to thank CPWM Charles Gunther for all that he has done. He thanked Assistant Engineer Arlene McCoy for her work with the plans for the renovation of Best Lake, and the Silverman family for their generous donation of new windows for the Fire House and Borough Hall. Councilman Pote said he looking forward to the renovation of the bonus

room, as he has seen the preliminary plans and they are full of good ideas. In regard to the to the Historical Commission, he said he was proud to be the liaison to this young and energetic group who have had a busy year. He said, not only did they oversee the Bobby Thomson Memorial Ceremony and sign dedication, but had the Watchung Book reprinted along with note cards that are prints of the paintings seen on the walls in the Council Chambers. He said he is also the liaison to the Rescue Squad who are tremendous in what they do, answering 433 calls in 2006, 160 of them requiring advanced life support. He announced that the Watchung Rescue Squad was awarded the Outstanding EMT Award in the State. Councilman Pote said the Rescue Squad has also completed Phase I of their building renovation and announced that this year's Tree of Lights was held in memory of Matthew Melchionda, Jim Richardson, and Matty Kovacs. He thanked Reenie and Mayor Ellis for their guidance and thanked all of the volunteers on all of the boards and commissions for their time and dedication.

Councilman Nehls said he was the rookie of the team, and his first year went very fast. He thanked the Mayor and the Council, as well as his wife Georgia and his two daughters, for their support. He said this has been an amazing year for him, and he has learned a lot. He said he is the liaison to the Environmental Commission and the Board of Health, in addition to being the Fire Commissioner. He said he is extremely proud of the volunteers in the Fire Department who together volunteered over 2300 man-hours last year. He said he is looking forward to serving the residents for another year.

PUBLIC PORTION

No one from the public desired to be heard.

Mayor Ellis thanked all for coming.

BENEDICTION - Rev. Brian Nolan

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at PM to the call of the Chair or the next regularly scheduled meeting of January 11, 2007 at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle DeRocco
Deputy Borough Clerk