

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG

MINUTES

WORKSHOP MEETING

6:30 P.M. – JUNE 12, 2008

MAYOR'S STATEMENT: Mayor Ellis called the meeting to order at 6:37 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 special 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

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

Also present were Administrator/Clerk Lauren Fellin, Borough Attorney Albert Cruz, Chief Finance Officer William Hance, and Deputy Clerk Michelle DeRocco.

There were 5 members of the public present.

DISCUSSION:

Proposed Municipal Budget - 2008

Mayor Ellis announced that CFO William Hance personally met this week with Joseph Doria, Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs in Trenton to discuss the amount of State aid the Borough will be receiving and the effects the Governor's cuts will have on our 2008 Budget.

Finance Chairman William Nehls gave an overview of the breakdown of how a tax dollar is spent, and explained that a very large percentage goes to the school system and the County, leaving only 22.8% percent for the Borough.

Mr. Hance distributed a comparison sheet he had prepared, listing the highlights of the proposed budget and the differences from 2007. He reported that Mr. Doria said Watchung's financial position is better than 80% of the municipalities in the State. Mayor Ellis thanked Bill, saying that his tenure is one of the reasons for the Borough's financial stability over the years. Bill explained the proposed budget is basically the same as the budget discussed in March, with the exception of \$27,000 removed from the Fire Department's budget and moved to their capital budget.

Councilman Nehls discussed several items he believed could be cut from the Capital portion of the budget. It was discussed and among the items agreed to be removed included monies allocated for the purchase of a "hot box" for Public Works, monies allocated for a future Fire Department vehicle, and the need for repairs to the tennis courts at Camp Endeavor will be discussed in regard to how that property could be better utilized for a wider or different range of recreational activities, and also the long term need for a shed on the Library's property will be reconsidered.

Mayor Ellis opened the meeting to the Council for questions and comments, and Councilman Nehls thanked all for participating this evening and said it is the Governing Body's obligation to scrutinize this and all budgets.

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RESOLUTIONS

None

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PUBLIC PORTION

Lynda Goldschein, Sherwood Drive, said believed the Borough should have a vehicle replacement program, and vehicle repairs should be monitored. She asked about the Borough's contribution to the Rescue Squad's utility bills.

Doyle Hunsinger, Valley Road, asked about the amount cut from State aid this year and Mr. Hance said as of now \$174,687.00 was cut. Mr. Hunsinger questioned the increase in pensions and Mr. Hance explained that the pensions have been on a "phase-in" program and the Borough is now 100% current for the police and 80% for the employees.

Anthony Addario, Rock Road, questioned how the Ness property affects the tax rate and Mr. Hance explained that the Borough held a tax sale last year which increased our debt service by \$531,000. and the Ness property debt was included. Former Mayor Addario asked why it did not come out of Open Space Funds and Mayor Ellis explained that we must wait until our COAH obligations are determined, as the County has pledged a million dollars to the Borough on the condition that the property remains as Open Space.

Mayor Ellis announced that the 2008 Municipal Budget will be introduced at the June 26, 2008 MEETING, and the public hearing and adoption will be held on July 24, 2008

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 P.M. to the call of the chair and the next scheduled meeting to be held at 7:30 P.M. on June 26, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle DeRocco, RMC
Deputy Clerk