

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG

MINUTES

JANUARY 1, 2009

12:00 noon

MAYOR'S STATEMENT: Mayor Ellis called the Reorganization meeting to order at 12:05 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 has been posted and sent to the Courier News, the Echoes Sentinel, The Reporter and Star Ledger by way of annual notice.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG and SILENT PRAYER

ROLL CALL

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

Also present were Administrator/Clerk Lauren Fellin, Borough Attorney Albert Cruz, Police Chief Sean Whelan, Borough Engineer Tom Herits and Deputy Clerk Michelle DeRocco.

There were 57 members of the public present.

INVOCATION

The Invocation was given by Reverend Barbara Peters, Wilson Memorial Church

Mayor Ellis welcomed Assemblyman Jon Bramnick, Freeholder Pat Walsh, and Freeholder Bob Zaborowski.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE AND OFFICE

Stephen Black - Councilmember

Assemblyman Jon Bramnick administered the Oath of Allegiance and Office to Stephen Black.

Gerald Mobus - Councilmember

Assemblyman Jon Bramnick administered the Oath of Allegiance and Office to Gerald Mobus, as his wife Mary stood by his side, and his grandchildren Ryan, Jessica, and Ava held the Bible.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE AND OFFICE

Assemblyman Jon Bramnick administered the Oath of Allegiance and Office to the following newly elected officials:

Fire Chief - Robert "Skip" Bell

Assistant Fire Chief - Thomas Carlucci, Sr.

Rescue Squad Captain - Melissa Isidro

Rescue Squad First Lieutenant Adam Wexler was unable to attend today's meeting.

NOMINATION FOR COUNCIL PRESIDENT

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

NOMINATION FOR LIAISON TO PLANNING BOARD

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

RESOLUTIONS

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

		<u>Offered</u>	<u>Second</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
R1:01/01/09 -	Adoption of Rules of Order	Joren	Black	
R2:	Designation of Official Newspapers	Pote	Black	
R3:	Designation of Depositories	Nehls	Franklin	
R4:	Appointment of Officials - 1 year term / Attorneys		Franklin	Black Joren
R5:	Appointment of Officials - 1 year term / Professional Services, Fire Officials	Joren	Black	
R6:	Appointments - Boards, Committees, Commissions	Mobus	Franklin	
R7:	Re-establish Petty Cash Funds	Black	Franklin	
R8:	Temporary Budget		Nehls	Black
R9:	Payment of Property Taxes	Pote	Black	
R10:	Authorize Borough Attorney to file Tax Appeals and Petitions on behalf of the Borough for 2009	Franklin	Black	
R11:	Appointment of JIF Commissioner and Alternate	Black	Franklin	

APPOINTMENT OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Mayor Ellis announced the following Councilmanic Committees:

Administration & Finance: Franklin- Chair, Pote, Joren

Public Works: Nehls- Chair, Mobus, Franklin

Laws & Ordinances: Joren- Chair, Black, Franklin

Buildings & Public Affairs

Buildings and Grounds: Pote- Chair, Mobus, Nehls

Public Affairs: Nehls- Chair, Black, Pote

Police: Mobus – Chair, Joren, Franklin

Fire: Black – Chair, Mobus, Joren

Special Liaison to Rescue Squad: Pote

RECOGNITION OF EMPLOYEE SERVICE

Mayor Ellis thanked the following employees for their years of service to the Borough:

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Bruce Egnasko, Police Lieutenant

TWENTY YEARS

Anita J. Nappa, Police Aide
Andrea D. Meyer, Police Secretary

George L. Fuentes, Public Works Assistant Foreman

FIFTEEN YEARS

Joseph R. Cina, Lieutenant

TEN YEARS

Kenneth J. Boyle, Police Officer
John McDonald, Board of Adjustment Attorney
Scott C. Mitzner, Public Defender
Catherine M. Hammel, Zoning Secretary

FIVE YEARS

MaryAnn Hance, Administrative Secretary
Michelle L. DeRocco, Deputy Clerk

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

2008 has been an interesting year with many changes and the completion of many projects. I won't mention all of them, as I'm sure each councilperson will comment.

First of all let me congratulate Councilmen Steve Black and Jerry Mobus on their re-election. I believe Steve knocked on so many doors he had to bandage his hand. They, along with many others worked very hard on the campaign and I am very grateful to the community in returning them to this administration. We have a dedicated hard working council. Each member has one focus in mind and that is "decide what is the best direction for our Borough and leave personal egos at the door".

All this is possible and only possible by the performance of a talented hard working staff that many times, go above and beyond their official duties following the lead of the council to do what is best for the Borough.

As you can see, we completed the refurbishing of these council chambers, and I want to thank all for their input.

One of the projects I want to touch on is the new bonus room and I invite you to take a tour of the new area after this meeting. You can see we will be moving those in the Texier House into this new area early this year. This move will allow the Historic Committee to evaluate the space in the house in order to display the unique history of Watchung.

Another project completed is the spillway and dam at Best Lake. The result is outstanding. It is simply beautiful and peaceful. Although the project was completed last year, the planning started after Hurricane Floyd arrived. When the State stepped in to offer low interest loans, I talked with Arlene McCoy and started a plan that would put us in the top ten for a low interest loan that would be available and that is what we did. Plans for two aerators, benches, trees and pavers are available and we are accepting donations for all items. You can pick up a flier on our counter and they will be posted on our web site.

The Library Committee continues its hard work interviewing candidates for the architectural services needed for the new library. A firm will be selected and a conceptual drawing for review should be available later this year.

Somerset County continues its great support. We thank them for lending us a Bailey Bridge, which enabled us to move the fill from Best Lake to Phillips Field. Plans are being finalized for the boulevard changes to Somerset Street and we could see that project begin this year. The County did a wonderful job of repaving Valley Road, and the Water Company followed with a horrible repair of their work. They are committed to repave the complete width of the road and we will be pushing them to get it completed soon.

We continue to work with Vito Gagliardi, the attorney we have hired to do a feasibility study of the Watchung Hills Regional High School District. When this study is ready, we will share it with our local Board of Education.

I believe it is time to have another newcomers picnic and I am looking for a date in early May. It has been 5 years since our last picnic so we will be sending invitations to those who have moved into town since then.

We continue to fight for traffic improvements at Route 78 and Diamond Hill Road. I have sent the following letter to Governor Corzine in an effort to continue this project and will keep you posted.

Dear Governor Corzine:

It was a pleasure to share with you the outstanding standing ovation for the Marine Color Guard and the Atlantic City Police Officers who sang the National Anthem at the N.J. League of Municipalities luncheon last month. Everyone put their political feelings aside and joined in supporting America as one nation. It is in this spirit that I am writing this letter asking for your support.

Watchung and Berkeley Heights have been working in good faith since 1996 in developing a plan for improvements to the interchange of Interstate Route 78 and Diamond Hill Road in Union County. Thirteen resolutions on this issue have been approved between our towns, Scotch Plains, and the Union County Freeholders over the years.

Governor, \$5,000,000. in federal funding has been spent on this project and it was ready to go out for bid when the project was halted. In light of the current economic conditions, I am asking you to direct NJDOT to move this project to the top of the list, using the anticipated federal stimulus funds that will be available from President Obama's administration. This project will provide hundreds of jobs for New Jersey, as well as improve a very congested regional traffic condition.

It is my opinion that recent changes in the "political climate" have caused the "not in my backyard" approach which caused the cancellation of this project. Proposed project changes supported by recent traffic studies can bring back this project and the use of federal funds for review and bid preparation would reflect the real spirit of shared services in our state.

My best wishes to you and your family for a healthful and happy holiday season.

*Sincerely,
Mayor Albert S. Ellis*

Fran and I have enjoyed sharing in the 100th year celebration of Mt. St. Mary's Academy. All of the events were inspirational and entertaining. Sister Lisa Gambacorto has become a great friend.

Friends, we are indeed in very trying times. None of us has experienced the economic situation we face today. President-elect Obama and the new congress have a daunting task ahead of them and we wish them all the best.

I want to close with the following quote from Albert Schweitzer:

"Seek always to do some good, somewhere. Every man has to seek in his own way to realize his own true worth. You must give some time to your fellow man. Even if it's a little thing, do something for those who need help, something for which you get no pay but the privilege of doing it. For remember, you don't live in a world all your own. Your brothers are here, too."

Fran and I wish you all a very happy, healthy, prosperous New Year.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Franklin said he has served as Police Commissioner for the past two years and that it has been a great learning experience. He said almost a year ago, Sean Whelan was promoted to the position of Police Chief and under his leadership the department underwent a reorganization, resulting in increased productivity throughout the whole department. He said he and his wife Lynn would like to wish all a Happy New Year.

Councilman Black wished all Happy New Year. He said he learned during this past election that most of the residents have a sincere appreciation for all that the Governing Body does, including tax control. He said he heard many residents are experiencing problems staying in the Borough due to economic conditions. Councilman Black said he will make several suggestions for the betterment of the residents, which will include the taping or televising of meetings, combining the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment, and having more liaisons for the many community organizations in the Borough. He said he would like to thank the volunteers, in particular the many new Firemen and Rescue Squad cadets, for selflessly dedicating their time and services.

Councilman Mobus, speaking of the Public Works Committee, said he was only one of three members, and that it was a great Committee that met and left in unison. He said he met with

Tom Herits and Charles Gunther and put together a five-year plan. He thanked his family for their support and the public for their confidence. He thanked Tom Franklin for his leadership as Council President and said he is looking forward to working with the Police Department, Fire Department and the Rescue Squad. He said he will work to bring back the line of communication, and will work closely with the Mayor to ensure Watchung is our main focus. He thanked Tom Herits, Charles Gunther and all of the Engineering Department including Arlene McCoy, Maria Fittipaldi, and Administrator Lauren Fellin.

Councilwoman Joren wished all a happy New Year. She said the Borough had faced some tough issues this past year, and all worked hard together to get through them. She said they do argue at times, but do compromise for the good of the Borough. She said she enjoys hearing from residents and finds being able to work for them to be very rewarding. Councilwoman Joren said she looks forward to working on her new committees. She said the revision to the Land Development Ordinance has been a massive undertaking and will be ready for introduction this month.

Mayor Ellis thanked Engineer Tom Herits and CFO Bill Hance for their assistance in being able to obtain over \$400,000. in grant money for the Borough last year.

Councilman Pote welcomed all and wished everyone a happy New Year. He thanked Councilman Franklin for his leadership as Council President, and Councilman Mobus for his leadership of Public Works, adding that it was a tough committee and he appreciated all that he had learned. He thanked Charles Gunther and his team, and explained that it is this group of seven people who mark the lines on the playing fields and maintain all Borough buildings and grounds. He thanked the Rescue Squad and its members, saying he was very proud of all that they do, and that he looks forward to again being the liaison. Councilman Pote said the expansion to the Rescue Squad building is now complete, and along with the new ambulance that will be arriving soon, was made possible entirely by donations. He thanked Gemmy Siegel and Mel Isidro and all of the members who throughout the year provided assistance to more than 500 calls. He said the Historical Committee cannot be more thrilled with the anticipation of moving into the Texier House. In regard to the Library, he said the Committee will be making a recommendation to the Council sometime in March and said they will work together to find the right formula for public funding. Councilman Pote said he and his wife Gloria wish all a happy New Year.

Councilman Nehls expressed his gratitude to the public for their support, and to the volunteers in town for donating their valuable time. He said he has worked with a lot of great people, with the Board of Health, the Environmental Committee, and the Administrative and Finance Committee, thanking Lauren Fellin and Bill Hance for all that they do. He said he is looking forward to his new assignments, and that 2009 will be a difficult year. He thanked the Mayor and Council for their support. On behalf of himself, his wife Georgia, and daughters Savannah and Scarlett, he thanked the residents of Watchung.

PUBLIC PORTION

No one from the public desired to be heard.

BENEDICTION

The Benediction was given by Father Brian Nolan, St. Mary's Church

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned to the call of the Chair at 1:05 P.M. to the next scheduled meeting of January 8, 2008 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle DeRocco, RMC
Deputy Clerk