

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG

MINUTES

JANUARY 22, 2009 - 7:30 P.M.

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, and Star Ledger, and posted at Borough Hall.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG and SILENT PRAYER

ROLL CALL

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

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

There were 49 members of the public present for the Police Department promotion, and 19 people remained for the balance of the meeting.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE AND OFFICE

Andrew P. Hart - Sergeant

Council President Gerald Mobus administered the Oath of Office to Detective Andrew Hart, who was promoted to Sergeant in the Police Department. Sergeant Hart took his oath with the family Bible, as his wife Jennifer and sons Jason and Alex stood by his side. Sergeant Hart thanked the Administration and said he will do the very best job possible for the Borough and its residents.

PRESENTATION

Jersey Professional Management / Shared Services Feasibility Study Report

Jim Roberts of Jersey Professional Management was present to report on the Shared Services Feasibility Study Report his company was contracted to provide as a result of a State grant to study the possibility of sharing fire department and rescue services among the towns of Green Brook, North Plainfield, and Watchung, he said the report proved two very significant conclusions. One, that all three towns have very strong volunteer participation and that second, it would be feasible to have a new arrangement for improved service and efficiency. He described the different scenarios in the event that Green Brook did not wish to participate, explaining why it would still be feasible for Watchung to combine services with North Plainfield. He explained how volunteers would still be needed, and said he felt the conversion would take about 2 years to implement, with the cost to the Borough being approximately \$50,000. a year for two years, with the money going to assist North Plainfield with the hiring costs associated with new members of their paid department needed to bring it to full complement. Much discussion ensued, with Mr. Roberts fielding questions from the Governing Body, the public and the firefighters who were present. Paul Ost explained that he continues to represent the Borough in talks with Green Brook and North Plainfield as they further review the findings of the study and continue to seek ways to share services such as training, incentives, and apparatus maintenance. North Plainfield Fire Chief Eaton spoke in regard to the situation all fire departments are in, whether they are paid or volunteer, saying they are all understaffed. Mayor Ellis thanked all for coming and for their comments.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance - Councilman Franklin reported the Administrative and Finance Committee will be meeting to discuss compensation and benefits for non-union personnel, explaining that unfunded mandates are a difficult burden for municipalities, especially in these difficult economic times.

2. Police - Councilman Mobus reported the main topic of the Police Committee's meeting this week was the budget. He explained a large part is controlled by collective bargaining, however, they are looking at an 8% reduction in operating costs. He said that Andrew Hart's promotion to Sergeant replaces the vacancy left by Jeffrey Skibenes' retirement, and that the department consists of 29 officers and the Chief makes 30.

3. Public Works - Councilman Nehls took this opportunity to read a statement regarding a recent experience with his daughter Scarlett, having had to be rushed to the hospital with an allergic reaction that could have been fatal, had it not been for the quick response time by the Police Department and the Rescue Squad. He thanked Officers Mike Sugalski and Brian Smith of the Police Department, and Rescue Squad members Mel Isidro, Lelia Garcia, and Jeff Gornstein, all to whom he credits with saving Scarlett's life. He went on to say that this is a perfect example of the necessity of having local control over our emergency services. In regard to Public Works, he said Tom Herits and Charles Gunther have put together a 6-year plan for the roads. Councilman Nehls reported the following highlights from the Public Work's report: the Department addressed five winter events this month, using approximately 370 tons of salt; the delivery of the shared (with Warren Township) catch basin cleaner is expected in late February or early March; the curbside holiday tree pickup is underway; and the Brookdale Road walkway restoration is complete.

4. Buildings and Public Affairs

Buildings - Councilman Pote said Public Works continues to do a fine job in maintaining the Borough's buildings, and that finishing touches are being done to the Bonus Room, anticipating the offices moving from the Texier House in February. He said the Historical Committee is busy planning their move to the Texier House. Councilman Pote was happy to report that the Planning Board met this week and voted to support the new Land Use Ordinance.

Public Affairs - Councilman Nehls reported he has stepped down as president of the Board of Health after 9 years, and announced the new president is Robert Riedinger, and Harriet Stambaugh is Vice President. He said at the last meeting the peanut butter- salmonella issue was discussed, as well as ways to get the word out to the faster to the public in the future.

5. Fire - Councilman Black said it is important to promote volunteerism in the Borough, and he welcomes suggestions for stipends for both the Fire Department and Rescue Squad.

6. Laws/Ordinances, and Recreation - Councilwoman Joren said she has met with Recreation Director Maria Bachert to discuss the budget, and will be having a Laws and Ordinance meeting on February 4th at which time they will be discussing engine braking, term conformity, and charitable bin regulations.

REPORTS - OTHER:

7. Engineer - Mr. Herits announced that he has been working on a six (6) year program for road improvements, and that the Borough has received grant money for improvements to Bayberry and another portion of Johnston Drive. He said he is doing the preliminary work for improvements to Stanie Glen, and working on obtaining the easements needed to proceed with the Gateway project, as well as reviewing the plans for the bridge replacement

8. Police Chief - Chief Whelan was not present at this time.

9. Fire Department - No report was presented.

10. Rescue Squad - Captain Mike Vala reported a summary of the Squad's events for 2008 as follows:

The Squad responded to 478 calls, provided mutual aid 56 times, received mutual aid 4 times, assisted in two Medevacs, 2 CPR saves, and clocked 7000 miles on Rig 81 and 82, mostly due to the closing of Muhlenberg forcing longer travel to JFK and Somerset Hospitals. He added that the Squad building was renovated with enlarged bays, new utilities and an emergency generator and said the Squad is expecting delivery of a new ambulance in February, funded totally by donations. He said the Squad installed a new base station, donated by the Borough, that will allow them to dispatch for the Squad building in the event that the Police dispatch is down. Mr. Vala, on behalf of the Squad, said they appreciate the cooperation they receive from the town, especially Mr. Gunther and the Public Works Department, noting that during a call that took place during a snow event, Public Works met them at the site and plowed the driveway for the ambulance. He added that there will be a wetdown for the new ambulance in the spring.

11. Attorney - Mr. Cruz had nothing to report.

12. Administrator - Mrs. Fellin reported that she attended a Paris Grant meeting and was informed that six towns will be receiving grant monies for electronic documentation and is hoping Watchung is one of them. She said the deer management program is underway and reported 18 sites total. She announced a Department Head meeting will be held on February 6th, and that she received a very nice phone message from a real estate agent complimenting the Building and Engineering Departments.

Mayor Ellis said the Council meeting scheduled for February 12th will be conflicting with another event, and several members will not be able to attend. Councilman Mobus made a motion to cancel the scheduled meeting of February 12th and move all scheduled business to the meeting of February 26th. Councilman Black seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved upon roll call vote. Mayor Ellis announced that the Borough received the County's Land Development Award for the Best Lake Dam Improvement Project and congratulated Assistant Engineer Arlene McCoy, along with Tom

Herits and Jerry Mobus for their work. He announced the Borough Emergency Services will be holding a Pancake Breakfast on March 21st as part of the Spring kick-off.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

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

Approval of the following Council minutes:
January 8, 2009

Approval of the following Borough Reports:
Police Activity - December, 2008
Building Department - December, 2008

- #2 - Township of Warren 1/7/09 Notice of Public Hearing on January 22, 2009 on two (2) proposed Zoning Ordinances: 09-01 - Amends general ordinances to delete Chapter pertaining to Swimming Pools; and 09-02 - Updates all General and Zoning Ordinances to comply with the NJ I
- #3 - Gail Bennett Tafaro 1/8/09 Thanking and complimenting the Governing Body, the Contractor, and Charles Gunther for the improvements done on Beechwood Place c: M & C, LBF, Eng., CG
- #4 - Township of Bernards 1/14/09 Resolution supporting Assembly Bill #A3570, urging legislators to abolish COAH and its State mandates, and create a rational, workable housing policy c: M & C, LBF, AC
- #5 - Sean Whelan, Police Chief 1/5/09 Letter to Mrs. Fellin commending Victoria Rousseau for her work in arranging ICS-300 training for the Police Department c: M & C, VR

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS: The Consent Agenda listed below, with the exception of R6, was unanimously accepted on roll call following a motion by Councilman Mobus and a second by Councilman Black.

- R1:1/22/09 Authorize Appointment of Police Sergeant - Andrew P. Hart
- R2: Purchases Over \$2,000. - Atlantic Salt Company, Kone Inc., Archonix Systems LLC, Partner's Equity Capita, Warnock Fleet Sales
- R3: Authorize Contract Renewal - Conner Strong Risk Control / CDL Drug & Alcohol Testing
- R4: Supporting Amendment to N.J.S.A. 40:54-8 regarding Tax Levies for Free Public
- R5: Appointment of Part-Time Administrative Assistant to Zoning Officer/Code Enforcement Official - Suzanne Walczak

Councilman Black asked that R6 be removed from the Consent Agenda and the Borough Attorney award be removed for a separate roll call vote.

- R6: Award of Professional Services Contracts - Attorneys, Auditor, Bond Counsel, Engineers

Councilman Mobus made a motion to amend R6, removing Attorney Albert Cruz for a separate vote, Councilman Black seconded the motion and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Mobus, Black, Franklin, Joren, Pote, and Nehls - YES

Councilman Mobus made a motion to authorize a contract for Albert Cruz as Borough Attorney, Councilman Black seconded the motion and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Mobus, Black, Franklin, Pote, and Nehls - YES; Joren - ABSTAIN

- R7: Authorize Clerk to Issue Raffle Licenses - Woodland School PTO, Children's Tumor Foundation
- R8: Temporary Capital Budget

=====

NON-CONSENT AGENDA

Introduction of Proposed Bond Ordinance OR:09/02 entitled "BOND ORDINANCE TO AUTHORIZE THE RECONSTRUCTION OF PORTIONS OF BAYBERRY LANE AND JOHNSTON DRIVE IN, BY AND FOR THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, IN THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, TO APPROPRIATE THE SUM OF \$1,590,000 TO PAY THE COST THEREOF, TO APPROPRIATE STATE GRANTS, TO MAKE A DOWN PAYMENT, TO AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS TO FINANCE SUCH APPROPRIATION AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF SUCH BONDS." Councilwoman Joren moved the ordinance be given its first reading. So ordered. Councilwoman Joren moved the ordinance be adopted on first reading and the Clerk be directed to publish the ordinance and notice of public hearing. The motion was seconded by Councilman and unanimously carried on roll call. Public Hearing to be held on February 26, 2009.

Proclamation - Wear Red Day for Women

Mayor Ellis proclaimed February 6, 2009 as "Wear Red Day for Women" in an effort to bring awareness to the magnitude of cardiovascular diseases that effect women.

=====

NON-CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS

The resolutions listed below were unanimously adopted on roll call with offering and seconding as follows:

		<u>Offered</u>	<u>Second</u>
R9:1/22/09	Introduction of Bond OR:09/02 - Reconstruction of Portions of Bayberry Lane and Johnston Drive	Joren	Black
R10:	Payment of Bills	Franklin	Black

=====

PUBLIC PORTION

Lynda Goldschein, Sherwood Drive, questioned if this meeting was being recorded and Mayor Ellis explained that the Borough is still surveying other municipalities at the present time and anticipates a decision by early March. Mrs. Goldschein asked Councilwoman Joren if the Laws and Ordinance Committee will be addressing house rentals and Mrs. Joren replied that the Committee is waiting for information from Ed Bennett. Mrs. Goldschein then suggested the Public Works Department plow all sidewalks when they are done clearing the streets.

=====

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting adjourned to the call of the Chair at 9:55 P.M. to the next meeting regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, February 26, 2009.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle DeRocco, RMC
Deputy Clerk