

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
MINUTES
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING
APRIL 10, 2010
11:00 AM.

MAYOR'S STATEMENT: Acting Mayor Tom Franklin called the meeting to order at 11:15 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 special notice to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, and Star Ledger, and posted at Borough Hall.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG, SILENT PRAYER, AND ROLL CALL

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

Although not present at Roll Call, Councilman Black arrived at 12:15 PM. Also present was Deputy Clerk Michelle DeRocco.

2010 MUNICIPAL BUDGET DISCUSSION

Councilman Franklin who serves as Finance Chairperson thanked all for coming and announced that the presence of only 3 Council members does not warrant a quorum, therefore, no official business can take place. He said the meeting will still proceed as an informal discussion of the 2010 Municipal Budget.

Councilman Franklin explained that this is the third of a series of Special Budget Workshop meetings, and provided a brief synopsis of the reason for the meetings and what has been discussed to date. He said the recent reduction of State aid to the Borough, along with a drastic reduction of revenue, has put the Borough's budget in a crisis situation. He explained that over the past two years a million dollars had been borrowed from the Borough's surplus in an effort to keep the property taxes low. He explained that normally the surplus regenerates itself from revenues, however, the current state of the economy has caused the return on our investments to be low, and revenues have just not been coming as in the past. Councilman Franklin said all departments heads have been told everything is on the table - salary freezes, layoffs, and furlough's. He also explained that by State law a municipality cannot exceed a 4% tax levy cap and that he anticipates this cap to be even lower next year. He said drastic cuts are going to be made to the 2010 Municipal budget, and the purpose of this meeting is to get the public's input for suggestions.

PUBLIC PORTION

Phil Whitting, Fawn Lane, asked if the Governing Body has considered terminating the Deer Management program, and Councilman Franklin said the 2010 program is already done for the year, however, anticipates it being cut for next year. Councilman Nehls said the option of the hunt club can be revisited. Mr. Whitting also suggested that the Police explore the possibility of using the hunt club's range for training; and that the monuments be placed by GPS to save the expense of implementation by Maser.

Bob Butkocy, Valley Road, asked what the Borough does for geese control, and Councilman Franklin said the Borough had a program at one time but not sure if it is still in place.

Bob Scalera, Park Place, said he requested, received and reviewed 314 pages of a detailed line item report of the Borough's 2009 expenditures, and had some highlights for discussion. Some of the items that Mr. Scalera thought should be reviewed or scrutinized were as follows: copier expenses, food, travel reimbursements, classes, NFPA registration fees, dues for part time employees, Medicare Part B reimbursements, bottled water expenses, dog waste bags, fire department badges, convention expenses, helmet lettering, flower bills, Police Department Rotary Club expenses, uneven distribution of Recreation funds, health services, cell phone expenses, consolidation of stationery vendors, security and exterminator expenses, animal control expenses, community service salaries, dental insurance coverage, and unnecessary number of fire hydrants and the cost of their maintenance. Mr. Scalera also suggested that a consultant be brought in to make sure all of the Borough's employees are doing their jobs. He asked how many cars the Police Department has, and suggested that the officers who take vehicles home (24/7 vehicles) use lights on their personal vehicles.

Mr. Butkocy questioned the use of Police for security at the shopping malls, as he spoke to the presidents of two large mall complexes along Route 22 who said they pay the Borough money twice a month, however, they were not sure why. Councilman Franklin said they are "extra duty" services and when an officer is driving through the mall parking lot, he is doing so because that is his assigned patrol area and not because the mall owners are paying him. If our officers are used specifically for security, it would be as "extra duty". Councilman Black said he would ask Mrs. Heilman in the Finance Department to provide a spreadsheet of police security duties. Mr. Butkocy provided a handout to the Governing Body on his suggestions for privatization.

Ian Gilmore, Robin Glen Road, said he was here today because of some issues in regard to the school board and their budget and Councilman Franklin explained to Mr. Gilmore the Governing Body's role in the school budget process. Mr. Gilmore spoke of a situation near his home in which a dead deer lay rotting on the side of the road for about two weeks and said there should be some reasonable logic behind cost cutting. He said this is not a good lesson in respect for children. He said shared services means less services and can't imagine if our Public Works Department was not plowing during the last few snow storms. He said he lives on a small street and would probably have been waiting for a plow for days. Councilman Franklin explained the system used for deer carcass pick up and agreed that the Borough's Public Works Department know the streets inside and out, and do a great job plowing.

There being no one else from the public desiring to be heard, Councilman Franklin closed the meeting to the public and thanked all for coming. He said the next budget meeting will be the regular budget hearing with the Department Heads, although a date has not yet been set. He noted the public is welcome to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Chair, this meeting was adjourned at 1:20 PM to the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Mayor and Council be held at 7:30 PM on Thursday, April 22, 2010.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle DeRocco, RMC
Deputy Clerk