

*The following is a new feature to our website. Following each meeting, the Clerk's Office will post a short synopsis of the highlights for the convenience of residents who may be interested. This should not, in any way, shape or form be used as the official minutes of the meeting.*

*Meeting in Review  
3/10/05*

Mayor Ellis began the meeting by reading a proclamation in honor of Michael Page, a Watchung resident and Pingry High School student, who was recognized for developing a free "on-line" lending library called "Talking Pages, Inc." which provides audio books for people with impaired vision. Michael was one of New Jersey's top honorees in the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program for his volunteerism and community service.

Watchung Hills Regional H.S. - Presentation of proposed 2005 - 2006 Budget

Superintendent Gary Reece and Business Administrator Donald Sternberg made a presentation of the District's goals, and explained the factors that went into preparing this budget. He provided a proposed statement of revenues and an expenditure summary. Mr. Reece explained the estimated tax impact on the average home, in particular Watchung who will experience an \$19. per \$100,000 , or 13.7% tax increase. He attributed the increase to higher standards with lower state aid, skyrocketing health care costs, increased enrollment and an increase in square footage. Mr. Reece reminded all that a good education yields a high return on investment in terms of our youth, property values and the quality of life. The governing body had many questions for Mr. Reece, prior to his presentation, such as an explanation of the increase in construction costs and the amount of change orders to the original plans. Residents questioned the need for some of the extra curricular courses being offered and asked for clarification on some things Mr. Reece deemed were just not true, such as the school is operating with a shortage of books and paper, while ordering chandeliers for the library.

Mayor Ellis thanked Mr. Reece and Mr. Sternberg for their presentation.

**\*\*Councilman Franklin** said the employee evaluation forms have been distributed and are also available on the Watchung website. He announced a budget meeting for Saturday, March 19th at 8:30 AM and said the public was invited to attend. He said he will be attending a Library Board meeting on March 22nd.

**\*\*Councilman Black** reported that the Police Department has answered 2,691 calls so far this year, with 1171 in February alone. The department has issued 286 motor vehicle summonses for the month bringing the total for the year to 690. Councilman Black said he was happy to see a reduction in the amount of false alarms. He read letters of commendation from Chief Frosoni for Officers David Melchionda and Maria Hamlin for their efforts in saving the life of a 79 year old man after the defibrillator failed. Councilman Black reported that he attended the Somerset County Governing Officials dinner and there was a presentation by Somerset County Crime Stoppers. He explained that this program involves citizens making arrests and said Watchung is one of the frontrunners in supporting this program. He noted former Councilman Wayne Otto was one of the speakers and he did a great job.

**\*\*Councilman Mobus** said the Department has been busy with snow removal. He said he attended a JIF breakfast where the Borough's Safety Committee - Charles Gunther, Sean Whelan and Victoria Rousseau - was commended for completing 100% of the Safety Incentive Program and for reducing their Lost - Time Frequency by 10% over the past 3 years. This resulted in a \$1,800.00 check for the Borough. Councilman Mobus announced that the Borough will be appointing an engineer this evening.

\*\*Councilman Pote said the Buildings and Grounds Committee has been busy discussing needs of the Library and the \$30,000. grant they have received from the State for an upgrade to the HVAC system. He said the Committee is reviewing conceptual design changes for restoration of the Best Lake Dam. Councilman Pote said he had a great meeting with the members of the Rescue Squad and received a lot of input in regard to their needs. He said he and the Mayor met last night with the Historical Committee and discussed the Santucci House.

\*\*Councilwoman Joren said the Recreation Department is gearing up for their summer programs and announced that the appointment of two new members is on the agenda. She said the Laws and Ordinances Committee will be meeting soon with Construction Official Ed Bennett.

\*\*Mayor Ellis said there will be a blood drive on Sunday at the Fireman's Exempt Hall. He announced that bone marrow is needed for resident Brian Reagan and a drive will be held on Saturday, March 19th, also at the Exempt Hall. Mayor Ellis also announced that the Girl Scouts will be holding a blood drive in the Senior Room on April 9th, from 9 AM to 2:30 PM. He also announced that he has invited representatives from several Borough Committees to join him on a "walk through" of the Ness property.

The following Official Business was acted on:

-A Resolution approving the appointment of two new members, David Chemidlin and Phillip DiRosa, to the Recreation Commission, was approved

-A Resolution appointing Maser Consulting as the Engineer for the Borough was approved

- Mayor Ellis read a Proclamation designating March 2, 2005 as "Read Across America - NJ" Day

The following Ordinance was introduced, and a public hearing will be held on March 24, 2005:

OR:05/01

"AN ORDINANCE AMENDING AND SUPPLEMENTING ARTICLE 7-15 ENTITLED 'PARKING PROHIBITED AT ALL TIMES ON CERTAIN STREETS' OF CHAPTER VII ENTITLED 'TRAFFIC' OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, ADOPTED 1971, AS HERETOFORE SUPPLEMENTED AND AMENDED"

This Ordinance amends Chapter VII "Traffic" to prohibit parking on the south side of Park Place from its intersection with Cedar Road West to its dead end terminus.

The meeting was opened to the public and a resident asked the governing body to consider taping the Council meetings and another resident had negative comments regarding the reconstruction of Washington Rock Road/ Rock Road East.