

# WATCHUNG BOROUGH COUNCIL

## MINUTES

JANUARY 1, 2006

12:00 Noon

**MAYOR'S STATEMENT:** Mayor Ellis called the Reorganization meeting to order at 12:00 noon 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 the Star Ledger by way of annual notice.

### SALUTE TO THE FLAG AND ROLL CALL

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

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

There were approximately 45 people in the audience.

### INVOCATION - Rev. Barbara Peters

Mayor Ellis welcomed dignitaries who were in the audience: Governor Donald DiFrancesco, Senator Thomas Kean, Assemblyman Eric Munoz, Assemblyman Jon Bramnick, Freeholders Peter Palmer, Rick Fontana, Bob Zaborowski, and Somerset County Clerk Brett Radi.

### OATH OF ALLEGIANCE AND OFFICE

Municipal Judge Richard Sasso administered the Oath of Allegiance and Office to Councilman Black. He was sworn into office and renewed his Oath. His colleagues wished him well and congratulated him on his re-election.

Judge Sasso administered the Oath of Allegiance and Office to Councilman Mobus as his daughter-in-law Patti held the Bible and his granddaughters Jessica and Victoria stood at his side. Councilman Mobus said he was especially proud to be here today with his new daughter-in-law and his family. He said in 2004, he and his wife celebrated their 40th anniversary and became "empty nesters", and shortly after that their lives were then blessed with a new daughter-in-law and recently adopted granddaughters who have brought great joy to their lives. He thanked all in attendance for coming today and said he will continue to do what he set out to do, and that is to serve the residents of the Borough.

Mayor Ellis announced that Chief Peterson could not be present due to work scheduling.

Judge Sasso then administered the Oath of Office to Assistant Fire Chief Robert Pittenger, Jr., as his three daughters and son stood by his side. Rescue Squad First Lieutenant Adam B. Wexler took his oath as his daughter Emily held the Bible. Rescue Squad Captain Paul Sosman were unable to attend.

### NOMINATION FOR COUNCIL PRESIDENT

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

### NOMINATION FOR LIAISON TO PLANNING BOARD

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

**RESOLUTIONS**

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

		<u>Offered</u>	<u>Seconded</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
R1:1/01/06 -	Adoption of Rules of Order	Joren	Mobus	
R2:	Designation of Official Newspapers	Pote	Black	
R3:	Designation of Depositories	Franklin	Black	
R4:	Appointment of Officials - 1-year term	Black	Franklin	Joren
R5:	Appointment of Officials - 1-year term	Joren	Black	
R6:	Appointments	Mobus	Black	
R7:	Re-establish Petty Cash Funds	Black	Franklin	
R8:	Temporary Budget	Franklin	Black	
R9:	Payment of Property Taxes	Pote	Black	
R10:	Appointment of JIF Commissioner and Alternate	Mobus	Pote	

**APPOINTMENT OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

Mayor Ellis said the Committees would stay the same as last years, as they are functioning well.

Administration and Finance: Chairman Franklin, Mobus, Pote

Public Works: Chairman Mobus, Franklin, Pote

Laws and Ordinances: Chairman Joren, Black, Franklin

Buildings and Grounds: Chairman Pote, Mobus, Harding

Public Affairs: Chairman Harding, Black, Franklin

Police: Chairman Black, Joren, Mobus

Fire: Chairman Harding, Black, Joren

**RECOGNITION OF EMPLOYEE SERVICE**

Council President Black read into the record the following list of employee service anniversaries occurring during 2005:

TWENTY YEARS

- Gary P. Greves, Fire Prevention
- Ronald Lacaillade, Patrolman
- Timothy A. Faust, Sergeant
- Edward Sugalski, Patrolman/Safe & Secure

FIFTEEN YEARS

- Robert J. Burns, Public Works

## TEN YEARS

Richard Lyons, Patrolman  
William J. Hance, CFO/Purchasing Agent  
Thomas H. Locke, Public Works

## FIVE YEARS

Victoria L. Rousseau, Ass't./Public Works  
James Kimock, Patrolman  
William S. Stanken, Patrolman  
Arlene W. McCoy, Ass't. Engineer  
Andrew M. Baldassarre, Public Works

## **MAYOR'S ADDRESS**

*As we gather today I'm pleased to announce the state of our Borough is good. We have had a very productive year that included several changes in personnel which has enhanced our day to day dealings with our residents. Each and every employee of our town has grown to understand the importance of understanding the needs of our residents. Have we made every resident with a problem happy? Perhaps not. However, my goal to all employees is to listen and bring the concerns to the appropriate Council members and their committees. And, I have no objection being asked about any question at any time. Our responsibility is to provide a forum where concerns can be heard.*

*I think the completion of Washington Rock Road is a good example. You may recall I was opposed to the final plan, yet the plan went forward and I believe the result has shown to be positive. Four months ago, when the Belgian block was put in place just 6 inches below the series of mail boxes, everyone wondered how this would work? There were many questions and I called upon all involved to be patient, listen and understand the concerns of the residents directly affected by the road change (as well as the residents on Reynolds Road). We maintained a steadfast calm and worked through the problem with trust and understanding.*

*The greatest challenge a governing body has is to present to the public a cost of a project and when it will be completed. We have tried to meet this goal and it is truly a learning experience. I am pleased with the Public Works Committee and the efforts they are making to hold informative meetings with the residents who will be directly affected by a project. I know the residents of our next sewer project including Corey Lane, Sunbright, Old Somerset, Eaton, Valley & Orchard Roads, have to be pleased that a meeting has been scheduled on January 11<sup>th</sup> to review the final project. It has been too long in development and I am pleased we have finally arrived at this stage.*

*We made a dramatic change this year in replacing our engineer with a firm, as many other municipalities have done. I believe this has been a positive step and we shall see many more projects completed this year. The team of Tom Herits of Maser Engineering, along with our employee engineer Arlene McCoy and secretary Maria Fittipaldi have responded to my challenge – "we have got to do better". We are not finished with the complete organization of all the files, however, we are well on the way to meeting that goal. Let me also add my great pleasure with Tom and his ability to apply for and secure grants for our Borough. This past year we have secured close to \$800,000. in grants for many projects.*

*I want to give special thanks to our County Freeholders who have continued to supply grants for our recreational programs and planning board projects and I am pleased to announce they will be supporting our most recent Open Space project. That special project is the purchase of the Ness Farm, 20 acres in Watchung. Our goal is to provide our residents with a recreational area of several multi-purpose fields and trails for hiking. We are in the final stages of an environmental evaluation and should have those results by the end of this month. My plan is to appoint a committee to evaluate the site which will include all interests of our Borough. This project will be as dramatic as the Watchung Lake Project was several years ago. I expect the same success. The Ness Property carries a COAH (Council On Affordable Housing) element and I want to thank our Planning Board Chair Don Speeney and Board of Adjustment Chair Dan Cronheim, along with Borough Attorney Albert Cruz and Administrator Reenie Fellin, for the many meet-*

*ings put forth in order to meet our third round obligations. This is not a simple task and I am grateful for their efforts along with our planner, Heyer and Gruel.*

*The Best Lake Dam project is moving ahead and we will be reviewing bids for replacement and dredging this spring. I feel we should also evaluate a review of Watchung Lake and the upper portion which may require a maintenance dredging of the upper part of the lake.*

*I want Spratford Park to become a reality this year and my review of the plans seem to indicate that will happen. I believe we can move ahead without any conflict from the County and their plans to re-do Somerset Street.*

*My understanding is the Library Committee will be making a report to the Council by the end of January. I had hoped that report would have been in place by now. I welcome your feelings on the idea of remodeling the old or building a new. I believe a connection with Warren is not possible since a prediction of future growth has accounted for full capacity of their new addition. We will put the Library Committee report on our web page and ask for your comments.*

*Tom Franklin and I were part of a dozen parents who interviewed the final candidates for new Superintendent of our K through 8 program. I appreciate the Board reaching out to the Council, and Tom and I believe they have chosen a very good person. I look forward to working with the school in promoting our reverse e-mail service and our student's understanding of the functions of our governing body. Speaking of education, I have been in contact with the attorney who handled the case of a north Jersey regional system who challenged their regional agreement because the town felt its per pupil cost had become overbearing. It is my understanding, our agreement going back to 1957, was based on a per pupil cost and I am researching the archives to come up with the question on the ballot. It seems that the NJ Legislature in 1974 changed all these agreements to formulas based on the value of real estate in each town. Much later, in 1993, the Legislature created a new formula for new towns entering a regional agreement based on a percent of real estate value and per pupil cost. I believe Somerset Hills operates under this formula. I have asked former Mayor Tony Addario to investigate this situation in the hope of reducing our current per pupil cost of \$21,941.*

*You may have noticed several cameras in and outside the building. We are part of a pilot program to develop several key applications for video surveillance specific to Watchung and specific to the issues at hand in the protection of the community. This video pilot will initially focus on a number of key areas including:*

- *Surveillance of basic policing functions within the police station, including the courtroom*
- *Watchung Borough's school system and the protection of the children and teachers*
- *Municipal facilities and the protection of employees and infrastructure*

*The police system "tapped" into other video surveillance systems already in place including the Sears retail store perimeter cameras and the Watchung Square Mall parking lot cameras. New surveillance capability is installed at Borough Hall. Plans are underway to extend this intelligent feature into police cars.*

*We had a great Watchung Family Pancake Breakfast this past year and my thanks to the Police Department, Fire Department, Rescue Squad, along with the Council. I'm hopeful this event can repeat each year and any "profits" will be extended to other citizens in our Country who have suffered as the result of flooding, fires or storms.*

*I am very pleased with the Recreation Commission and the way they enhanced the "Mayor's Regatta." It was a great event that took much planning and participation by the members. May I suggest we set the first Sunday after Labor Day as the annual date. Congratulations to the Watchung Hills Youth Benevolent Association on their win. And a big thank you to that group for the wonderful fireworks display at the Tree of Lights event this year.*

*Finally, a word about our staff. It has been very rewarding to me to see growth in all areas. Reenie has truly established herself as an administrator. I asked her to serve as our representative to our Joint Insurance Fund and they too have seen her talents and have voted her their secretary. She is learning a great experience in this position and her knowledge will benefit our Borough. Michelle keeps me on track as she monitors my calendar and does special research and requests as needed. Vickie, MaryAnn, and Dottie all respond to the requests of the public. I want to make a note of a card they received from a person assigned to us as a part of the com-*

*munity service program thanking them for the wonderful help and cheery nature she found while dealing with our staff. Bill does a great job as CFO and Paula dots every "i" and crosses every "t".*

*I want to thank the Council for all their effort above and beyond their duties. Of all my requests and demands they have all responded with a positive attitude and we have moved forward with the prime focus of what is in the best interest of the Borough.*

*I want to thank all of you who gave donations at our Holiday Party. We collected \$244.25 which was distributed to the Salvation Army and the American Red Cross. If you missed the opportunity, we are still taking donations.*

*I am proud to serve as Mayor, and Fran and I wish all of you a very healthy, happy and prosperous New Year.*

## **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilman Black thanked the governing body and residents for their support and commended Mayor Ellis on doing an outstanding job. He said it was an honor to serve the Mayor and the Borough. He said the portable radar device he had previously collected funds for would become a reality in 2006, hopefully within the first six months. Councilman Black said he was proud to represent the Police Department and gave a "hats off" to the Chief and the Officers in the department, commenting that the officers are doing a maximum job with a minimum number of personnel.

Councilman Franklin welcomed the members of the public and said he was glad to see a nice size crowd. He said all is being done to reduce the tax levy and assured the residents that the Borough always looks for bargains when purchasing, and always try to regenerate surplus. He said despite astronomical increases in line items which could not be controlled, such as fuel costs, the Borough is in very good financial shape. He thanked CFO Bill Hance and Assistant Treasurer Paula Heilman for doing a great job. Councilman Franklin explained that last year, Bill Hance received his Qualified Purchasing Agent certification which allows the Borough to use a higher threshold when going out to bid and gives the Borough more flexibility. He wished everyone a happy and healthy New Year and thanked his colleagues saying it was great to work with them. He said Mayor Ellis is a great leader, and the Borough is fortunate to have very dedicated employees, and very dedicated volunteers.

Councilman Mobus said when the Mayor had first appointed him to the Public Works Committee, he promised many changes. He said since then the Engineering Department has been streamlined, and thanked Victoria Rousseau and Maria Fittipaldi for their extra efforts in organizing the office. Councilman Mobus explained that the Borough outsourced the engineering position and hired Tom Herits from Maser Consulting. He said he knew once he found out that Tom volunteered his time as a firefighter in his home town of Metuchen, that he would be good for the Borough. He has expedited many projects that have long been in the slow lane. Councilman Mobus said along with increasing fines and penalties for violations, bids have been received for sanitary sewer projects, and the Planning Board is working diligently on the revision to the Master Plan. He said he knew Councilman Pote since he was a teenager, was a member of the Optimist Club with the Mayor, enjoys working with Councilwoman Joren, has a lot in common with Councilman Black and said Councilman Franklin is a classy guy. He thanked Mr. Albert Cruz and Mrs. Lauren Fellin for their efforts and Mrs. DeRocco for her assistance with the Governing Officials' meetings. He thanked all the volunteers and all the departments. Councilman Mobus then read a holiday card the Borough received from a family who were unhappy with a borough project, however, when it was completed, were very pleased with the outcome.

Councilwoman Joren congratulated Steve Black and Jerry Mobus on their re-elections, and especially wanted to thank all the Borough employees who she said do a great job. She offered a special thank you to Borough Attorney Albert Cruz who she said was her "right hand" during the Laws and Ordinance Committee meetings, keeping them legal. She acknowledged the hard work and efforts of Public Works, adding that they are one of the very many slices of the Borough that make it what it is. Councilwoman Joren said that as Chair of the Laws and Ordinance Committee, she feels as though they have had a very busy and productive year, most of which was spent on revising the Land Development Ordinance. She said she, along with Councilman

Black and Franklin spent many hours reviewing changes, in addition to reviewing the Master Plan. She said she the Committee will continue to meet not only among themselves, but with other boards within the Borough for interaction and input. As Chair of the Recreation Commission, Councilwoman Joren said Maria Bachert continues to do a wonderful job as Director, along with the other members and added that Maria Fittipaldi does a great job as secretary. She said a Recreation Commission is a very important part of any community and Mrs. Bachert is not afraid to take anything on. She said this is her second year being involved in the Youth Services Commission and wished to thank those members for their dedication and devotion to the program. She said she is very proud of the two \$5,000. grants this program has received, as this means \$10,000.00 for our children. Councilwoman Joren said she is looking forward to continuing as Chair of this commission.

Councilman Pote wished all a happy New Year and said his first year as a Council person has been very productive. He said the energy of the many volunteers has been inspiring and he has a new appreciation for what goes on in the Borough after seeing things from the other side of the table. He said he would like to thank Councilman Mobus for overseeing Public Works, adding that Charles Gunther and his staff do a fine job. He also thanked Reenie and her staff for their assistance. He reported progress with the Ness property and said the Buildings and Grounds Committee will be taking on the Best Lake Dam project, as well as the Library Bridge. He said although the Library has gotten some much needed repairs, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done. Councilman Pote urged the residents to get involved. He said he was happy to be the liaison to the Rescue Squad and appreciates all they do for the community. He said it has been fun being the liaison to the Historical Commission and he has learned a lot from them. As liaison to the Village Center Preservation Commission, he is sorry to see Gren Bunker resign as Chair, however, he wishes him well in his retirement. Councilman Pote said all of the governing body has been a joy to work with and thanked Mrs. Fellin for her patience and guidance. He said he really loves this job. He had a special thank you to his daughter, Jenny Pote, for her patience.

Mayor Ellis also thanked Ronnie in the Tax Office and Marie and Cathy in the Building Department for their hard work though out the year. He announced that he is planning a Department Head meeting in the near future, and will be looking for input on how things are working out.

#### **PUBLIC PORTION**

No one from the public desired to be heard.

Mayor Ellis thanked all for coming today and said he was very proud to be the Mayor of Watchung.

**BENEDICTION** - Rev. Brian Nolan

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 1:17 PM to the call of the Chair or the next regularly scheduled meeting of January 12, 2006 at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle DeRocco  
Deputy Borough Clerk