

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG

MINUTES

WORKSHOP MEETING OF APRIL 8, 2006

8:30 A.M.

MAYOR'S STATEMENT: Mayor Ellis called the meeting to order at 8:35 A.M. 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, Messenger-Gazette and Star Ledger, and posted at Borough Hall.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG, SILENT PRAYER, AND ROLL CALL

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

Also present were CFO William Hance, Administrator/Clerk Lauren Fellin, and Deputy Clerk Michelle DeRocco.

There was no one from the public present.

WORKSHOP DISCUSSION:

Review of 2006 Department Budget Requests

Pam Steves, Court Administrator, said in her Capital budget she will be asking for new furniture. She explained most of the needed equipment is provided for by the State. Mayor Ellis congratulated her on doing an outstanding job and for bringing the Watchung Court to the forefront. Councilman Pote asked if the department had any security needs and Ms. Steves said the only thing they have to do is provide an emergency plan to the County by September/October.

John Frosoni, Chief of Police, said he is requesting three new vehicles this year, and 2 new copiers. He explained that although he has a decrease in the uniform line item, most others have gone up, such as conferences. He is also requesting 2 new weapons, as spares. He said the department is working on a grant to upgrade their radio system. Councilman Pote asked if it is possible to install side air bags in the current vehicles and the Chief explained that it cannot be done. Councilman Pote asked if we have sufficient coverage for the Route 22 area and the Chief said it is very busy, especially in the Detective Bureau and he would like an additional detective.

William Hance, Finance Department, said his department incurs basically the same expenses every year, however, this year the cost of the checks has increased \$50.00. In regard to the overall municipal budget, Mr. Hance cited increased insurance costs. Mrs. Fellin noted that the Borough will be changing dental plans and this will save the Borough \$12,000. Councilman Nehls noted a big increase in the Worker's Comp, and Mayor Ellis said that our experience is up this year due to injuries. Mr. Hance said the bond interest went down and one bond is paid off completely. He explained that although the Borough paid a little more on BAN's, it is not necessarily a bad thing as the increase is mostly principal. He said what is not reflected is the Ness purchase, however, we will be receiving a Somerset County Open Space grant. Mr. Hance explained the major increase is due to pensions which cost \$250,000 this year and may be \$450,000 next year. Mr. Hance said the surplus is very healthy, and he is always looking to save on utility costs. He said he will be looking into a new phone system. Councilman Franklin said the Borough's finances are very well managed. Mayor Ellis said Assemblyman Munoz will be coming to a council meeting to discuss the governor's budget. He said Bill and Paula do a wonderful job and are a great team.

Tom Herits, Borough Engineer, said that most of his budget has stayed the same, and his conference attendance is covered by Maser. He said he is able to do most things in-house and escrow covers most of his extra work.

Bob Butkocy, representing the Recreation Commission in Maria Bachert's absence, said there is an increase of \$1,500. for new programs being added, such as youth golf and men's softball and

the expense of fingerprinting and background checks for the coaches. He added that the department is anticipating bigger increases with the purchase of the Ness Property.

Dolores Kresge, Environment Commission, said her budget is basically the same and covers conferences, membership and training. She said two members attended a course at Rutgers and although it was expensive, it was well worth it. Mayor Ellis said the training they've received will help when the Borough develops the Ness property. Mayor Ellis said Mrs. Kresge has been successful in obtaining grants and said she is doing a wonderful job.

Susan Feibush, Historical Commission, thanked the Council for funding this year's projects, such as the reprinting of the Watchung book. She said they are planning to add names to the memorial plaque and will be attending conferences in Trenton. Councilman Mobus asked Mrs. Feibush if the Historical Commission was to have a place to call home, what would the plans be, and Mrs. Feibush replied that a home is needed to store and preserve historical items and they would open the home to the public, maybe one day a week.

Kevin Sumner, MiddleBrook Regional Health Commission, said the changes in his budget this year are in the Registrar's line item for the cost of safety paper and classes, and as everyone else is experiencing, the rising cost of insurance. Councilman Nehls spoke about the benefits of shared services saying that the services that are provided to the Borough by Middle-Brook, would not be affordable to the Borough if we had to have our own.

David Gill, Tax Assessor, explained the critical part of the budget is inspections which have increased \$40,000. Mrs. Fellin explained that we are not doing reassessments but are doing inspections and asked Mr. Gill if the \$40,000. only covered 50% of the inspections and he said it did. Mayor Ellis said the ideal percentage is to do 25% each year, and Mr. Gill agreed, however, said the Borough needs to catch up from last year.

Albert Cruz, Borough Attorney, was available for any questions or comments from the governing body, however, there were none.

Charles Gunther, Public Works Manager, noted that the increase of salt costs impacted the budget greatly, as well as the increase in the cost of asphalt. He requested additional moneys for annual pump maintenance, and said again he would like to request the expansion of the public works garage with an additional two bays. Mr. Gunther said this year he is requesting the purchase of a asphalt hot box/reclaimer and trailer, as it would save many man-hours that are currently wasted waiting in line at Weldon. He said he is requesting the purchase of a jet vac and is looking into sharing this purchase with another town. Mr. Gunther also requested the purchase of a athletic field groomer to be shared with Ponytail League and Board of Education.

Don Speeney, Planning Board Chairman, said 2005 was the year for the Master Plan reevaluation and this year additional Planning Board projections still need to be done, as COAH certifications need to go back to the Planners and the Board is still working with the Laws and Ordinance Committee on the revision to the Land Use Ordinance, explaining that this is an ongoing process and will never be finalized.

Steve Peterson, Fire Department Chief, explained that the Department is asking to replace the Suburban and will be considering shared services, as new State mandates require at least 14 members on the scene for even the smallest of fires. He said the Department depends on its neighbors and they are looking to expand on that.

Don Monetti, Rescue Squad, said he was only asking the Borough for the same annual donation of \$5,500. and \$8,000. which they want to use for radios and pagers. He advised the Council that the Department has enough money put aside for a new rig, however, they are waiting for a new one to come out. He said they take very good care of their equipment, and Mayor Ellis told Mr. Monetti his request will be approved.

Ed Bennett, Construction Official, said the days of large malls being built in Watchung are over for now and explained malls are built in ten year cycles, however, homeowners continue to ex-

pand and/or make improvements, so the department is still very busy. He said the GIS system should be covered by engineering and he is requesting a new camera.

Mayor Ellis, on behalf of the Administration, said he is proposing an increase in the stipend for the governing body.

PUBLIC PORTION

No one from the public was present.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the workshop meeting was adjourned at 11:55 AM to the call of the Chair or the next scheduled meeting which will be held at 7:30 PM on April 13, 2006.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle DeRocco
Deputy Clerk