

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG

MINUTES

WORKSHOP MEETING OF DECEMBER 22, 2004

7:00 P.M.

MAYOR'S STATEMENT: Mayor Ellis called the meeting to order at 7:00 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 special notice to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, The Messenger-Gazette and Star Ledger, and posted at Borough Hall.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG, SILENT PRAYER, AND ROLL CALL

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

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

DISCUSSION:

Proposed Ordinance - "Fences and Walls"

Councilwoman Joren gave a brief history in regard to the reason the current fence ordinance is being revisited. She explained that the Board of Adjustment has recently received a substantial increase in fence applications and has requested that the ordinance be revised. She said that early in the 1970's, the Borough ordinance allowed for 4' fences, and a lot has changed since then. She said it is the general feeling that the Borough should remain rural but people now want to shield their properties from deer, turkeys, etc. Councilwoman Joren said the Laws and Ordinances Committee has worked with Board of Adjustment Chairman Dan Cronheim and the Board's Attorney John MacDonald and have come up with the proposed Ordinance she is presenting tonight. She explained that in addition to the 4' fences which are already allowed, the Ordinance will allow for "estate" fencing; board on board or stockade would be prohibited. Deer fences cannot exceed 8' above the ground, and are allowed as long as they are shielded by natural buffers. She said a construction fence is considered temporary and tennis courts have been addressed in their own section. Councilwoman Joren explained that the opportunity to go before the Board of Adjustment is always an option. She said she is personally in favor of these changes. She said she has lived in Watchung all of her life and feels estate-type fences are attractive. Mayor Ellis asked her for a definition of an "estate" fence and she explained that it is more of the design of the fence rather than what it is made of. Councilman Mobus said if you restrict the materials that a fence can be made of, it may cause the homeowner to go before the Board of Adjustment anyway and then it costs them more money. Councilman Otto commended Chairwoman Joren for moving on this ordinance and bringing it to a work session.

PUBLIC PORTION

Lee Ehrenworth, Canterbury Lane, suggested that the governing body consider what a berm is for, as it can be used to block sound.

Lynda Goldschein, Sherwood Drive, recommended that metallic or nonmetallic fences be defined in the new ordinance, as right now the town allows metallic as long as it is coated. She also said she feels tennis courts need to be defined because currently if you have a tennis court you are allowed to have a 10' fence around it and some people say they have a tennis court but really don't.

Steve Pote, Wildwood Terrace, asked if there would be any changes to the setback and Mr. Cruz replied there would not. Mr. Pote said he believes a 10' setback is not enough and he agrees that berms need to be addressed as some people use them to extremes. Mr. Pote said he also believes the issue of maintenance needs to be written into the ordinance, as some fences are dilapidated.

Mrs. Goldschein said she feels a metallic deer fence looks better and Councilman Otto said it will be hard to craft an ordinance that complies to all.

Mr. Ehrenworth asked how a 2' fence made out of stone would be defined and Mayor Ellis replied that he would call that a wall. Mayor Ellis said he is reluctant to make definitions so strict as they will not be workable.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the workshop meeting was adjourned at 7:29 PM to the call of the Chair to the next scheduled meeting of December 22, 2004 at 7:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle DeRocco
Deputy Borough Clerk