

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG

MAYOR AND COUNCIL

MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 18, 2017

7:30 PM

OPENING STATEMENT: Mayor Stephen K. Pote called the meeting to order at 7:33 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 annual notice to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, and Star Ledger, and posted at Borough Hall.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG and a MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN, SERVING HOME AND ABROAD, AND ALSO FOR THE VICTIMS OF HURRICANE HARVEY AND MARIA.

ROLL CALL:

Joren [P] Black [P] Nehls [P] Gibbs [P] Mobus [P] Sopko [P]

Also present were Administrator Tom Atkins, Attorney Albert Cruz, CFO Bill Hance, Clerk Michelle DeRocco, and Deputy Clerk MaryAnn Hance.

There were 18 members of the public present

PROCLAMATIONS:

Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy Awareness

Mayor Pote read the Proclamation (copy attached) for Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy awareness and presented a copy to Vikas and Limca Jhaveri whose child is afflicted with this disease.

Mr. Jhaveri thanked the Mayor and Council for their support in bringing awareness to all about this terrible disease.

Councilman Gibbs wished the Jhaveri family the best of luck with their child.

Constitution Week

Mayor Pote read the proclamation recognizing September 17th through September 23, 2017 as Constitution week.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration/Finance – Councilman Gibbs reported the Committee met on September 12th and discussed the summer camp program which was very successful and fell just short of breaking even. He said the Committee would recommend the program continue next year. He also reported there is a resolution on this evenings' agenda for the hiring of an Administrative Assistant for the Clerks' office, and he announced the Committee is considering cleaning service options. Councilman Gibbs congratulated Maryann Amiano on passing her tax collectors exam and said she will be taking over that position in January 2018. He reported that on an average, tax payers in Watchung received a decrease of 3.34%. Councilman Black gave some statistics on revenue vs expenses and Councilman Gibbs said the vast majority of the debt is for the Ness Property. Councilman Nehls said he applauds the Finance Department and Committee for all they have done to keep tax increases at a minimum but they can always do better. Councilman Gibbs then reported the electric charging station will be installed shortly at Borough Hall in the lower parking lot area.
2. Police – Council President Joren said the Committee met on September 13th and they spoke to Chief Cina about the residents' concerns about speeding on the Borough roads. The Chief had given some statistics on Hill Hollow Road, Valley Road at Knightsbridge, Johnston Drive, Mountain Boulevard and High Oaks, from data collected from the machines we have. She said the Committee feels there should be more enforcement of the speeding and suggested something be put in the next newsletter. Councilman Joren also said they discussed commercial vehicles being parked at properties which the Laws and Ordinance Committee will look at. She said this is something which is very difficult to enforce and certain vehicles are exempt from the ordinance such as utility vehicles, etc. Councilman Gibbs suggested looking at the Department of Transportation for classes of vehicles. Council President Joren said the County has applied the slip resistant material on Hillcrest Road and Chief Cina has actually stepped on the surface and said it is excellent and Councilman Gibbs suggested asking the County to apply this to other roads such as Bonnie Burn Road.

3. Public Works/Buildings and Grounds - Councilman Nehls reported Crestwood Drive, Acorn Road, Glenview Drive and parts of Winter Lane and Scott Drive have been milled and paved and through the Somerset County line painting program the center yellow lines were repainted on one mile of Johnston Drive, all of Bayberry Lane and Brookdale Road. The Public Works Department prepared the Village Green for the 9/11 Ceremony and repaired the flat roof on the Texier House and a new roof has been installed on the carriage house. Councilman Nehls also said the gutters at the library have been cleaned and repaired and the split rail fence has been installed along the brook by the Texier House and the air handler at the Court has been repaired by vendor (KCG).

4. Public Affairs:

Open Space – Councilman Sopko said there was no meeting and had no report.

Environmental – Councilman Sopko reported the Committee met on August 28th and the main focus was on the upcoming deer forum which is scheduled for September 28th at 7 P.M. He said the other item discussed was the Emerald Ash Borer which is a major issue for all ash trees. Councilman Gibbs said approximately 25% of the trees in Watchung are ash and they are very large trees. He recommended that the Public Works Department identify these trees and possibly replace those which are in our right of way. Councilman Nehls said possibly have someone from the Department of Environmental Protection come to a meeting to discuss this issue.

Recreation – Councilman Mobus reported the Commission met on September 6th and they did a recap of the summer camp program and agreed they definitely would like to have the camp again next year. He also said the fishing derby was this past Saturday. Mayor Pote said it was well attended. Councilman Mobus said the Harvest Festival is scheduled for October 28th, 1-4 P.M. with a rain date of October 29th.

Historical - Councilman Mobus reported the Contractor has started phase one for the removal of the Mural at the Sears location and the Committee is looking at where to put the Mural once it has been restored. Mayor Pote asked if the contractor did any preparation prior to removing the Mural from the wall and Councilman Mobus said it will be brought to their lab to clean and restore. He then said the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 20th and the Weekend Journey through the Past is scheduled for Saturday, October 14th – 10:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M and Sunday, October 15th – Noon – 4:00 P.M.

Councilman Mobus then reported on the 9/11 Memorial Service

Board of Health – Steve Black had no report and the next meeting is scheduled for November 29th at 7:00 PM

5. Fire – No report

6. Laws/Ordinances – Council President Joren had no report but said a meeting is scheduled for September 26th.

REPORTS - OTHER:

7. Engineer – Councilman Nehls reported for Mr. Herits. He said Valley Drive and Washington Drive are complete and the miscellaneous milling and paving has also been completed. He also said the high friction surface treatment on Hillcrest Road is complete and the 9/11 Memorial has been completed. Councilman Nehls also reported the generators for the DPW garage and the East End Firehouse are in manufacturing and firehouse renovation are in progress. He also said FY2018 DOT application resolutions are on the agenda, and a quote for asbestos monitoring and remediation for the Ness farmhouse has been received and the Weldon Salt Storage in in the hands of the attorneys. Mr. Atkins said they want an environmental study prior to agreement.

8. Police Chief – No Report.

9. Fire Department – No Report

10. Rescue Squad – Denise Wilson reported the Squad has received incorrect information regarding the electronic charting system but they would like to be up and running and in compliance with the regulations but the New Jersey EMS Counsel has not given any guidance. She also said as of October 1st there will be schedule changes in the squad coverage with coverage Saturday and Sundays from 6 PM to 6 AM being discontinued and Atlantic will be covering for that time frame. Councilman Black asked how many members were lost for those who have gone back to school and Ms. Wilson said about 4 and she said the squad needs more adult members. Training for new members requires a minimum of nine months. Mayor Pote asked if there was anything the Borough can do to make people aware of the situation and need for volunteer members. Ms. Wilson said it is very difficult to get volunteers because of the time involved and commitment necessary. Mayor Pote then said it was very moving to see the Squad members at the 9/11 memorial service standing at attention and remain through the entire ceremony.

11. Emergency Management – Administrator Atkins reported that Gary Greves has been getting updates from the County on Hurricanes Jose and Maria and another potential with Lee. Mr. Atkins said there was much destruction from Harvey in Texas and Florida and the Islands from Irma.

12. Attorney- Mr. Cruz had no report but said there is one item for Executive Session this evening.

13. Clerk – Ms. DeRocco said the Clerk’s office has become increasingly busy with all the new regulations for Registrars for marriage licenses, death certificates, certified copies, OPRA requests, etc. She thanked the council for authorizing the hiring of a new Administrative Assistant for the office.

14. Administrator – Mr. Atkins said at the October 19th Council meeting there will be a discussion on the State of New Jersey Best Practices which is mandatory by the State.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

Rachel Funcheon, Cedar Road, said she was glad to hear the Borough is installing a charging station and suggested they look into installing solar panels in the parking lots. She asked Council President Joren about the speeding statistics and asked why speeding is not enforced more often. Councilman Gibbs said the prosecutor would have to prove that the radar equipment is properly calibrated each day.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

CONSENT AGENDA: The Consent Agenda items listed below were unanimously adopted following a motion by Council President Joren and a second by Councilman Nehls.

Prior to the vote Councilman Gibbs requested Correspondence #48 be pulled for separate vote.

Council President Joren moved to adopt as amended with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Black, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko, “aye.”

Approval of the following Council minutes:

August 17, 2017 – Regular Session

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Bd. of Adjustment - 2016 Annual Report
Building Department Report - August, 2017

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #42- Township of Warren 8/21/17 Notice of Public Hearing on August 28, 2017 in regard to a proposed Amendment to the Redevelopment Element of the Master Plan c: M & C, TEA, TH
- #43- Somerset County Planning Board 8/24/17 Final Draft and Notice of Public Hearing on the Updated Housing Element of the County Mater Plan on 9/19/17 c: M & C, TEA, Pl. Bd.
- #44- Township of Bridgewater 8/29/17 Notice of Final Adoption in regard to a Land Use Ordinance Amendment #17-19, compliance Requirements Pursuant to a Settlement Agreement between the Fair Share Housing Center and the Township of Bridgewater c: M & C, TEA, AC
- #45- Township of Warren 9/8/17 Notice of Public Hearing and Adoption of four (4) Land Use Ordinances re: Redevelopment Plans for Areas in Need of Redevelopment: #17-18 Lindberg Avenue; #17-19 King George Inn; #17-20 Flag Plaza; #17-21 Mt. Bethel Redevelopment Area, on October 5, 2017 c: M & C, TEA, Pl. Bd
- #46- Township of Berkeley Heights 9/12/17 Notice of Introduction and Date of Public Hearing on September 19, 2017 on Proposed Land Use Ordinance #24-2017 Establishing Residential Density Regulations in the Downtown Zoning District c: M & C, TEA, Pl. Bd., SW
- #47- JCP&L 9/13/17 Notice of Petition and Public Hearing Basic Generation Service Costs c: M & C, TEA, Post

Council President Joren moved correspondence #48 be adopted with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Black, Nehls, “aye,” Gibbs, “abstain,” Mobus, Sopko, ‘aye.’”

#48- PSE&G 8/21/17 Two (2) Notices of Petition and Public Hearings / (1) 2017/2018 Annual BGSS Commodity Charge for Residential Gas Customers; (2) Basic Generation Service Charges and Proposed Recovery from Statewide Auction for Basic Service c: M & C, TEA, Post

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS: The Consent Agenda Resolutions listed below were unanimously adopted following a motion by Council President Joren and a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Black, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko, "aye."

- R1:09/18/17 Purchases Over \$2,000. - Brook Hill Swim Club (Rec / Summer Camp)
Fred Dealaman Bus Service (Rec/Camp Transportation)
Stavola (2017 Road Resurfacing)
L-3 Communications Mobile-Vision Inc. (Camera, In-car Video System)
- R2: Waive Chapter 6-2.11 of Code / Rescue Squad Tree of Lights Fireworks Display
- R3: Authorized Appointment Part-Time Clerk - Construction/Zoning Office /
Joanne Bowden
- R4: Authorize Appointment Administrative Assistant - Clerk's Office / Regina Angelo
- R5: Authorize Tax Sale Redemption / Certificate #16-14 - 182 Ellison Road
- R6: Authorize Tax Sale Redemption / Certificate #15-06 - 20 Templar Drive
- R7: Authorize Tax Sale Redemption / Certificate #16-13 - 875 Johnston Drive
- R8: Authorize Tax Sale Redemption / Certificate #16-05 - 41 Schmidt Circle
- R9: Authorize Return of Tax Duplicate Payment / 940 Johnston Drive
- R10: Authorize Return of Tax Duplicate Payment / 80 Glen Eagles
- R11: Authorize Submission of NJ DOT Grant Application / MA-2018 High Tor Drive
- R12: Authorize Submission of NJ DOT Grant Application / MA-2018 Scott Drive
- R13: Authorize Grant Application Submission / Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission - for Mural Preservation

NON-CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS: Items listed below will be individually addressed and acted upon accordingly. Council reserves the right to refer an item to Committee for further review and discussion.

Ordinance OR:17/10 entitled "AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG AMENDING SECTION 28-706G.3 OF THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG TO TRANSFER THE REVIEW OF COMMERCIAL OR NONRESIDENTIAL SIGNS WITHIN THE "VILLAGE CENTER HISTORICAL OVERLAY ZONE" FROM THE VILLAGE CENTER HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION TO THE ZONING OFFICER." was introduced.

Council President Joren moved Ordinance OR:17/10 be given its first reading. So ordered. Council President Joren moved the Ordinance be adopted on first reading and the Clerk be directed to publish the ordinance and notice of public hearing. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Black, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko, "aye." Public Hearing to be held October 5, 2017.

R14:09/18/17 Introduction of Ordinance OR:17/10 - Amend Code /Village Center Preservation Comm.

Mr. Cruz explained that this Ordinance changes the duties of the Village Center Preservation Committee and transfers these duties for reviewing commercial/nonresidential signs within the Village Center Historical Overlay Zone to the zoning officer. This is being done in order to expedite the approval or denial of a sign. Mr. Cruz asked for permission to inform the zoning officer as soon as this ordinance has been finalized and all members of the Council were in agreement for this.

Councilman Gibbs moved the following resolution with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Black, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko, "aye."

Councilman Gibbs explained the "100 dollar bill" printout which shows the breakdown for tax dollars. He said only 29% is for Borough expenditures with 71% going to schools and County.

R15: Payment of Bills

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PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

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Lynda Goldschein, Sherwood Drive, said she wrote a letter to the Council but since these are no longer shown on the correspondence list she was not sure if it had been received. She also questioned the library and mentioned the Referendum which will be on the November Ballot regarding State grants for libraries. Mayor Pote said a library discussion will be part of the October 5th meeting and research should be done on this. Ms. Goldschein also said when public works employees do their weed wacking around trees they are cutting into the bark and these trees will die. She then asked if any of the buildings at the Ness property are being saved. Mr. Atkins said the Borough is still looking at the barn.

Dorothy Addario, Rock Avenue, thanked Ms. DeRocco and the office for assisting her with getting the grant forms together. She did the best she could and said the deadline for the application is September 27th.

Lynda Goldschein said getting volunteers for the Rescue Squad is very difficult and the training is unbelievable.

Dorothy Addario said some of the most rewarding times in her life was while she was on the squad. She also said volunteerism is down all over the United States not just in Watchung.

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Council President Joren moved the following resolution with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Black, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko, "aye."

R16:09/18/17 Executive Session:

Litigation – In the Matter of the Borough of Watchung for a Judgment of Compliance of its Third Round Housing Element and Fair Share Plan, Docket No. SOM-L-902-15

Upon return to regular session all Council members, with the exception of Councilman Mobus, attendance were again present.

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 11:21 PM to the Call of the Chair. The next scheduled meeting of the Mayor and Council is the Special Deer Forum meeting to be held Thursday, September 28, 2017 at 7:00 P.M. and then the regular scheduled meeting to be held on Thursday, October 5, 2017 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

MaryAnn Hance
Deputy Clerk