

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG  
SPECIAL MEETING – MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
MINUTES  
MARCH 9, 2017  
5:00 PM**

**OPENING STATEMENT:** Mayor Stephen K. Pote called the meeting to order at 5:00 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 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.**

**ROLL CALL**

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

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

There were 2 members of the public present

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**RESOLUTIONS**

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, Sopko, “aye.”

R1:03/09/17SP      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

Contract Negotiations with RPM Development, LLC.

Upon return to regular session, all Council members previously in attendance were again present.

Mr. Cruz said as advertised there will be no action taken this evening and the topics that were discussed in Executive Session were the pending litigation involving the Borough’s Third Round Housing Element and Fair Share Plan along with contract negotiations with RPM Development LLC. At this time the Mayor and Council have given him and the Administrator direction on how to proceed forward between now and the next Council meeting, March 16, 2017 when the matter will be revisited by the governing body. Mr. Cruz said the Council reached a consensus on that after the March 16<sup>th</sup> meeting the Affordable Housing Sub-committee will be reconstituted to re-examine the Borough’s plan. Specifics of the Executive Session should not be discussed at this point.

**PUBLIC PORTION**

Pastora Simao, Lakeview Terrace, said she is representing several residents who were unable to attend this evening. She said the Council must try to come up with other alternatives to the plans discussed at the last meeting and suggested looking further into a 55+ community plan since this would not bring so many children into the school system. She said no one is happy about low income housing and everyone knows this is going to be disastrous and the town cannot just open the door and allow it to happen. Ms. Simao also said the residents understand it is a State mandate but know this will not work for them as the school system cannot handle this especially without funding. She also stressed residents do not want this PILOT program because the town and school system will get very little return. Ms. Simao said the residents would rather the Borough be sued and see what happens. She asked for a clarification in regard to the unit credits. Mr. Cruz said the 55+ units only count for one unit but the family units would get one credit plus additional bonus credits. Ms. Simao said it might be better for the town to only get the one credit because in the long run it will save taxpayers money. She said if the Borough would need to build another school to accommodate additional students it would be very expensive and taxes would increase dramatically. She said she sees the struggles in the schools and the problems that occur, and it is sad to say but the problems we have in our schools and what our children are subjected to comes from the low income housing. She said the teachers have daily struggles dealing with children whose behavior is bad takes away from those children who do the right thing. She said she works in the school, and it is sad to say, but it is the truth that the majority of the problems in the school come from low income housing. She said what our children are exposed to in school, from the low-income children, saddens her. She said if this low-income housing comes in, it’s going to have a negative effect on our children and their daily lives. Ms. Simao said our teachers are wonderful, and have to spend so much time managing bad behavior that the good kids do not get the attention they deserve. She said the reality is that the bad kids are all coming from the same place and it is a really

scary thought to think that a teacher may have to be alone in a classroom with these kids. She said she does not mean to sound insensitive, but this is the reality and the truth. She said she does a lot of research and this is really mandated integration, and this is backfiring because those bad kids are not turning miraculously good by going to school with the good kids. Ms. Simao said she appreciates the thought of finding another direction and going another way.

Council President Joren explained that if the Borough would get sued, we would lose and then there could be many more units built, four market and one low income so there would still be low income units.

Ms. Simao said she understands and has explained this to other residents who are very frustrated, but her personal attitude is to find another way, a way that this can be done that would be less painful.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the council, the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM to the Call of the Chair and to the next scheduled Council meeting Thursday, March 16, 2017, at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

MaryAnn Hance  
Deputy Clerk