

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG  
MAYOR & COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

**OCTOBER 19, 2023**

**MAYOR'S STATEMENT:** Mayor Ronald Jubin called the meeting to order at 7:31 P.M. and stated the following: *"This meeting is being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. 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 the Annual Meeting Notice to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, the Star Ledger, posted at Borough Hall and on the Borough's website."*

**SALUTE TO THE FLAG and MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN, SERVING HOME AND ABROAD**

**ROLL CALL**

Ead [ P ] Dahl [ P ] Fischer [ P ] Marano [ P ] Abi- Habib [ P ] Gibbs [ P ]

**PROCLAMATION**

Mayor Jubin explained that every month a proclamation is done to honor the diversity of Watchung's community or to bring attention to a health matter. He explained that today's resolution was focused on an event that happened October 7, 2023 and as the events unfolded, he reflected that just three weeks ago Mayor and Council held the 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony and it was necessary to acknowledge and share in the grievance of those who are lost from the incidents that day and the innocent who were attacked. He proceeded to read the following proclamation onto the record:

❖ **Condemning the Attacks on Israel**

Councilwoman Abi-Habib made the following statement in response to the Mayor's proclamation: *"I condemn Hamas' horrendous attack on Israel on October 7<sup>th</sup> including the mass killing and abduction of Israeli citizens. Israel's subsequent imposition on Gaza in response to the terrorist attack must also now stop. It endangers the lives of innocent civilians by depriving them of goods essential for their survival and compounds an already dire humanitarian situation. I urge both parties to deescalate the situation by among other measures, ceasing hostilities and releasing hostages and prisoners. We call on all parties to respect international law."*

She also noted that she had discussed with Monsignor Benwell, of St. Mary's, the possibility of holding an Interfaith prayer service in Watchung that would be in-line with the National Day of Prayer being called on October 27<sup>th</sup> by Pope Francis throughout the nation. Clergy of all houses of worship are being invited to participate and she urged all to attend the event. Lastly, Councilwoman Abi-Habib also highlighted a recent private event in which 23 countries were represented by residents who gathered in unity and Watchung served as an example for all to follow.

Councilman Gibbs thanked Mayor Jubin for the proclamation and made the following statement: *"No one can justify the horrific carnage brought except through a twisted and evil mind. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is complex and spans thousands of years in the making, and I certainly won't attempt to parse it down into just a few words. However, Israel has an absolute right to defend her citizens and territorial integrity against all terrorist groups that seek to murder and sow chaos, period. And just as it has the right to defend itself Israel must do all that it can to protect innocent non-combatants from harm. Although innocents have died on both sides of this horrific conflict, we must fight the misinformation to the contrary being propagated on social media and unfortunately, at our own college campuses across the country. As the war enters its second week, may we all pray that peace be restored and that both Israelis and Palestinians find a path towards a secure and prosperous future together and for the region. I also ask that we acknowledge the blatant antisemitism that has*

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*reared its ugly head even higher since the conflict began from ordinary citizens being assaulted on subway platforms simply because someone thinks they look “Jewish”, self-important influencers using their social media platforms to call Jews and Israelis, pigs and savages, college campuses failing to protect Jewish faculty and students’ sense of security in the name of robust debate the ideologically dangerous individuals ripping down posters of innocent civilians taken hostage by Hamas. These are, but a smattering of the countless and horrific incidents of hatred towards Jews that have persisted since the Roman era. As a proud American Jew who loves my country, I ask our community to reject all forms of hatred to stand firm against those that would spew hatred towards anyone, simply because they are different. Thank you.”*

Councilwoman Ead offered prayers for all who are suffering due to the attacks on Israel, she hoped for the return of all hostages and hoped that everyone could come together in peace and prayer for all those that may be missing their loved ones.

Councilman Marano also commented and noted that he did not believe one side was more right than the other and that this has been going on for a long time. However, it was necessary to take a stance as a human being against these acts and realize that some things just can’t be allowed. It is at a time like this when we reassess what kind of person we want to be.

**PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY**

No one appearing

**DISCUSSIONS**

❖ Best Practices Inventory

CFO Bill Hance appeared on Zoom and noted that there were 69 questions this year and provided a brief summary of the borough’s score, which was 39.5.

Council President Ead inquired on the areas in which a “no” was responded to and asked if the Borough was implementing any changes.

Mr. Hance noted that most of those questions did not apply to the borough and therefore the “no” would not be scored. He explained that in some instances the borough does not have ordinances on certain topics and on others he noted that the Borough will be implementing changes. He noted that he reviewed the lead inspection requirements with the Borough Administrator and the Clerk and a mailing was discussed.

Mayor Jubin also asked Councilman Marano to discuss the lead inspections and the requirements with Middle-Brook since they served as our Health Officer, in order to establish best practices.

❖ Boards, Commissions and Committee Renewals

Mayor Jubin started by thanking all the Volunteers and noted that the borough progresses because of the dedication of the volunteers we have. He proceeded by asking Volunteers to ensure that they fill out the volunteer forms if their term was expiring at the end of 2023 so that timely review could be made of anyone wishing to be re-appointed or any new interested Volunteers. Mayor Jubin asked that everyone

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submit their forms by November 15<sup>th</sup>, so that all the decisions can be made by mid-December so that the appropriate appointments are made at the Inauguration meeting. He called upon all Volunteers to try to be present at all meetings, and to be engaged as each year was not “the same old, same old,” to be respectful of each others differences, and encouraged the committee/boards to do an annual review of what did or did not work that year so that the proper budgetary appropriations could be made.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:**

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Board of Adjustment Meeting Minutes	September 14, 2023
Mayor and Council Meeting Minutes	September 7, 2023
Watchung Rescue Squad Monthly Report	October 2023

**#23:** Notice of Public Hearing on Nov. 13 for Redevelopment Plan in Scotch Plains, recv'd 10/16/23, cc: M&C, JD, TV

Motion to Accept the above by Ead/ Second by Fischer

RC: Ead [Y] Dahl [Y] Fischer [Y] Marano [Y] Abi- Habib [Y] Gibbs [Y]

**CONSENT ITEMS**

R1: Authorizing POs over Allowed Threshold – Dell, Inc. (*server/computer equipment*)  
ASL Group, LLC (*Island landscape design*)

Motion to Accept the above by Ead/ Second by Marano

RC Ead [Y] Dahl [Y] Fischer [Y] Marano [Y] Abi- Habib [Y] Gibbs [Y]

**NON- CONSENT ITEMS**

R2: Authorizing Side Bar Agreement to the Watchung Local No. 193 PBA Agreement

Motion to Accept the above by Marano/ Second by Ead

RC Ead [Y] Dahl [Y] Fischer [Y] Marano [Y] Abi- Habib [Y] Gibbs [Y]

**PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION**

- 1) Lynda Goldschein, Resident, provided comments on Camp Endeavor, she noted that a decision had been made to make the place a nature center and that tennis courts removed. She has inquired on the costs to be removed, she has previously paid for a survey and sat with Kim DiDonato and Mr. Damato regarding this, she ended up with stating that she does not know what the Committee is waiting on.

Mayor Jubin advised that Mr. Damato was not the decision maker of what would occur at Camp Endeavor and explained that he had spoken with Mrs. Goldschein about the plans and noted that this

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was the first year in a while that any kind of work was done on Camp Endeavor.

- 2) Assemblywoman Matsikoudis – provided comments and noted that Legislative District 21 works closely with Watchung, that Trenton was in recess until Nov, but that they have been working diligently. Amongst the recent items is A-2722, which allows Veterans to use their medical credit to become nurses, A-2770 allows victims of stalking an easier process to be granted stop orders, lastly, they were able to secure \$229,450 in increased school funding. She concluded by informing all that Senator Bramnick has an office in Westfield, Assemblywoman Muñoz has an office in Summit, and she has an office in New Providence where they are all available for constituent services, and assist with items ranging from ANCHOR filing, disability assistance and notarizing services.

Councilman Marano thanked Assemblywoman Matsikoudis' office for coming out and called upon all residents who were interested in volunteering to step up, he explained that no one should feel intimidated as you did not need a certain kind of background to sit in any board as everyone brings in their fresh perspective.

Council President Ead informed all that the 2023 Road project was moving forward, which included Washington Rock Road, Meadowlark Road, and Renolds Road off Washington Rock. This would start around October 30<sup>th</sup>, door hangers will be going out as well as alerts via social media and nixle.

- 3) Ophir Marko, Resident, commented on the Mayor's proclamation. He stated he was born in Israel and is a patent attorney whose job is to explain complex materials in a simple way. He noted that while he was afraid to speak, he was even more afraid to remain silent. There were no flags or other signs of support for fear of retaliation and he expressed these same sentiments to Dr. Glazier, School Superintendent. He noted that the past weekends event was evident of the diverse and inclusive vibrant community that Watchung has. He stated that as Leaders, this body's duty was to use its voice to be heard, as they have done so tonight.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Upon there being no further business before Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:18 P.M. to the call of the chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council is Thursday, November 2, 2023 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted:

Edith G. Gil  
Borough Clerk

Approved: November 20, 2023