

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

MARCH 21, 2024 - 7:30 P.M.

MAYOR’S STATEMENT: Mayor Jubin called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM 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 [Absent] Fischer [P] Marano [P] Abi- Habib [Absent] Gibbs [P]

PROCLAMATION

Mayor Jubin expressed how important this topic was, especially given recent events that occurred for 2 young individuals. He did not elaborate out of respect to the families, but noted just how important this subject was because we never know when something like this can occur. He then proceeded to read the following proclamation:

❖ Brain Injury Awareness Month

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

- No one appeared

NEW BUSINESS

REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Animal Control Solutions Monthly Report	February 2024
Annual Financial Statement	2023
Historical Committee Meeting Minutes	January 24, 2024
Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority Meeting Minutes	February 1, 2024
Rescue Squad Monthly Report	March 2024

Motion to Accept the above by Ead/ Second by Gibbs

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

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CONSENT ITEMS

R1: Authorizing a Field and Facility Permit Application for Mr. B's Fishing Camp

R2: Authorizing a Field and Facility Permit Application for the Garden Club of Watchung

R3: Authorizing Refund for Overpayment on Building Permit #24-0078

R4: Certifying Compliance with the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's "Enforcement Guidance on the Consideration of Arrest and Conviction Records in Employment Decisions Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964"

Council President thanked Mr. B for giving kids a great camping experience, she also added that the Garden Club's plant sale would be held on May 11th and invited all.

Motion to Adopt the above by Ead/ Second by Gibbs

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

NON- CONSENT ITEMS

R5: Authorizing a Professional Services Contract to Potter Architects, LLC for Proposed Design Development Services (Phase 2) in Connection with the Rehabilitation of the Watchung Library

Motion to Adopt the above by Fischer/ Second by Ead

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

R6: Authorizing the Appointment of Catherine Furlan as Part-Time Land Use Board Clerk

Council President Ead welcomed Catherine onboard and expressed the wonderful person she was.

Motion to Adopt the above by Fischer/ Second by Ead

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

R7: Awarding a Professional Service Contract to Appraisal Systems, Inc for Appraisal Inspections and Related Services in Connection with the 2025 Borough-Wide Reassessment Program

Councilman Gibbs explained that every 10 years a municipality is required to do a full re-evaluation, but in the borough every year we do a quarter of the town in order for residents to not see a tremendous sudden jump.

Mayor Jubin thanked him for the explanation and asked the Administration & Finance Committee to invite our Tax Assessor to the next meeting in order to provide an overview of assessments to our residents.

Motion to Adopt the above by Fischer/ Second by Ead

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

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R8: [Introduction of the 2024 Municipal Budget](#)

Hyperlink to Budget – Public Hearing on April 18, 2024

Councilman Gibbs clarified that this was one of many budgets, he's talked previously about the \$100 bill and thanked our CFO Hance for putting that together. He encouraged residents to always look at all the other budget that go into their tax bill component: local district school, the high school, the county, etc. Councilman Gibbs further elaborated that while the borough has lowered the tax rate further than what was originally estimated, residents would still see an increase in their taxes, and that was because the value of homes has gone up. He once again encouraged all residents to look at all the other budgets of the school and the county.

Council President Ead also clarified that the borough had no control over the county and state taxes, in addition to the school budget.

Motion to Adopt the above by Fischer/ Second by Ead

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

R9: Authorizing a Self-Examination for Budget Year 2024

Motion to Adopt the above by Fischer/ Second by Gibbs

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

ORDINANCE ON FIRST READING

OR 24/04: AN ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK WHEN THE COLA IS EQUAL TO OR LESS THAN 2.5 PERCENT (N.J.S.A. 40A:4-45.14) FOR CY 2024

Council President Ead asked CFO Hance to elaborate on this ordinance. CFO Hance explained that this was the appropriations cap and this meant we could only increase our budget appropriations up to 2 ½ % from the prior years budget. He also explained what could be excluded and noted that if we were under that amount, the borough is allowed to bank that difference for the next two years.

Motion to Introduce the above by Fischer/ Second by Gibbs

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

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

- No one appeared

Councilman Jubin spoke on Police Officer Mathew J. Melchionda, who died while on duty on March 8, 2006. He acknowledged that the Police Committee came up with the idea of honoring Matthew by naming the street of the roadway that goes up into the police headquarters. He noted these things take time, but finally this was able to be accomplished. A recent ceremony took place on March 8th to honor his memory, he asked Chief Anderle to speak about the event.

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Chief Anderle began by thanking Mayor and Council for moving forward with the street naming. He thanked them on behalf of the family, who was deeply touched, and confirmed that this was a great way to honor his memory. Chief Anderle noted there were few officers left in the department that knew Michael, and this way his memory would go on forever. He also thanked the Garden Club for placing a beautiful garland the day of the ceremony.

Councilman Marano also took a moment to reflect on the day he met Michael's mother.

He also invited the public to the Police Department's open house on April 3rd.

Council President Ead spoke on the Senior's Luncheon that the borough would be hosting and urged those interested to RSVP by April 30th. The senior luncheon will be held May 8th.

Mayor Jubin closed by wishing those that celebrate a Happy Easter, he spoke on the Ramadan ceremony, and the women's event held at the arts center.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business, the meeting ended at 8:03 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council will be Thursday, April 4, 2024 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted:

Edith G. Gil
Borough Clerk

Approved: April 4, 2024