
BOROUGH OF WASHINGTON, WARREN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

WASHINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL MINUTES

DATE: February 20, 2024

The regular meeting of the Borough Council of Washington, Warren County, New Jersey was held in councils chambers at 6:00 P.M.

Roll Call: Brown, Cox, France, Gorshkov, Infinito Musick and Conry

Also Present: Erik Peterson Attorney
Borough Manager, Brian Bond
Laurie A. Courter, Borough Clerk

Absent:
Mayor Conry led everyone in the flag salute.

Mayor Conry read the following statement into record:

The requirements of the Open Public Meetings Law, P.L. 1975, Chapter 231 have been satisfied in that adequate notice of this meeting has been published in the Express-Times (Warren County Edition and Star Ledger) and posted on the Boroughs website stating the time, place and purpose of the meeting as required by law

2024 Budget Discussions

Brian Bond, Manager started the 2024 budget discussions. There will be an increase of \$98,000.00 in total in budget. Taxes have not been increased since 2015. Manager Bond reported on increases for the police shared services and health insurance. Borough has been utilizing \$800,000 to expend without raising taxes since 2014. Discussions of reducing sewer bills ensued along with lengthy discussions on the infrastructure of the sewer plant. Solid Waste and options for the future were discussed. CFO, Turchan discussed the statutory timeline of introduction of the budget to be in March with the adoption being in April.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Josh Ellis-discussed holding a Class 5 cannabis license and stated he sent in his application recently and wanted to let everyone aware that he is highly interested in the second license that is currently available in the borough to open a business similar to Dank Poet.

Mel Theil-BID, Executive Director, gave the following updates:

- The Business recognition dinner was great and thanked everyone who came.
- Sent an email to mayor and council regarding ribbon cuttings for new businesses scheduled for Saturday March 2nd for Hunterdon PC, Dank Poet, and the Chuckling Cow.
- Thanked Manager Bond for removing old out of business signs -there are 3 signs left and added that it has been great to work with Brian since they both have the same vision for downtown.

Dominic Mathew Recardo(sp)-discussing trains that were left on tracks containing chemicals and inspections of the contents of the train. Discussed about doing a dye test and stated his opinion of the budget and the discussions from earlier..

Captain Kaufman gave an update on train; officials contacted the railroad authority, an email was received, and that they would follow up with resident. Warren County Hazmat and Fire Company inspected the train.

Fire Chief Ron Hartrum stated he received a call that same day sent the Assistant Chief over, there were no placards on the train car and added that if there are no placards its not hazardous. It's a bulk tank they don't haul liquid.

Captain Kaufman gave the police report for the month of January.

Chris Bauknight, Lenape Trail, stated that when we are here, we may not agree with what people say but there needs to be respect to the elected officials. Mr. Bauknight added that when someone comes up here it should be in a respectful manner.

Ruban Moreno, Washington Township resident, discussed his appearances once again before council and his application to open a cannabis business. Attorney Peterson explained why the application cannot go forward, its not a permitted use. The Redevelopment Plan would need to be amended. Peterson stated that are no guarantees in any of these processes and with a limited number of licenses, council has some discretion.

Marco Matteo-Railroad Avenue, mentioned that there is a huge pile of debris from the railroad culvert and its blocking the pedestrian sidewalk and asked if someone can remove it so pedestrians can have access. Stated that it's the borough's 156th anniversary today and he wants to do the best to preserve its history. Discussed the possibility of having apartments allowed to be built above the theatre.

Hearing no further public comment, motion made by Cox and seconded by Gorshkov to close the public portion all were in favor.

MINUTES

Motion to approve the February 6, 2024 minutes made by Cox and seconded by Gorshkov:

Roll call: Brown, Cox, France, Gorshkov, Infinito, Musick and Conry.
Ayes: 7 Nays: 0
Motion passes.

REPORTS

Committee Reports:

Recreation- Infinito reported on Thursday, the manager and him will meet with an organization for operating the pool and added that the resolution on agenda today is about changing fees for the pool.

Green Team-France-reported on attending the meeting and added they are a good group that is very organized and have active participants.

Shade Tree-France inquired about the trees that were removed from the parking lot for the new CVS.

VOUCHERS-Approval of Claims

Motion made by Cox and seconded by Gorshkov to approve the vouchers and claims.

Roll call: Brown, Cox, France, Gorshkov, Infinito, Musick and Conry.
Ayes: 7 Nays: 0
Motion passes.

NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Firefighter application for : Jason Roldan

Motion made by Cox and seconded by Gorshkov to approve the foregoing application.

Roll call: Brown, Cox, France, Gorshkov, Infinito, Musick and Conry.
Ayes: 7 Nays: 0
Motion passes.

ORDINANCE
2024-03 1st Reading

Discussions regarding the language of “control over all lands” preceded motion to approve. Attorney Peterson explained the past control of the commission and now with this ordinance the control will go to the council.

Motion made by Cox and seconded by Gorshkov to approve on first reading Ordinance 2024-03

Roll call: Brown, Cox, France, Gorshkov, Infinito, Musick and Conry.
Ayes: 7 Nays: 0
Motion passes.

ORDINANCE 2024-03
An Ordinance of the Borough of Washington Amending Chapter 64 Parks, Borough Article 1, Section 64-1 entitled, “Control of Parks”, of the Ordinances of The Borough of Washington

WHEREAS, on September 1, 2020, the Mayor and Borough Council of the Borough of Washington, County Warren adopted Ordinance 2020-12 amending Article VIIIA §3-55.1 to §3-55.9 of the Borough Code eliminating and dissolving the Board of Recreation Commissioners and establishing the Borough of Washington Recreation Committee in its place: and

WHEREAS, upon review of the Borough Code it was discovered that Chapter 64, Article I, Section 64-1 had not been amended to reflect the elimination and dissolution of the Board of Recreation Commissioners.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED, by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Washington, County of Warren, that the Code of the Borough of Washington be amended as follows:

Section 1. Section 64-1 of the Code of the Borough of Washington is hereby amended as follows (additions noted in bold italic *thus* and deletions noted in strikethrough ~~thus~~):

The ~~Board of Recreation Commissioners~~ ***Mayor and Council*** shall have full control over all lands, playgrounds and recreation places acquired or leased in the name of the Borough of Washington, ~~except the Borough pocket park located on Block 24, Lot 24, of the Borough,~~ and may adopt rules, regulations and bylaws for the use thereof and the conduct of all persons while on or using the same, ~~subject to the review and approval of the Mayor and Council.~~

Section 2. All ordinances or parts of ordinances inconsistent herewith are repealed as to such inconsistencies.

Section 3. If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase or portion of this Ordinance is for any reason held invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, such portion shall be deemed a separate, distinct and independent provision, and such holding shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions thereof.

Section 4. This Ordinance shall take effect upon final passage and publication according to law.

Public Hearing/Adoption: March 19, 2024

2nd Reading:

ORDINANCE 2024-01 Tabled to next meeting of March 5, 2024

An Ordinance of the Borough of Washington Amending Section 94-62 entitled, “Signs,” and the Downtown Redevelopment Plan Regarding Freestanding Signs on Sidewalks in Certain Zones

RESOLUTIONS

Motion made by Cox and seconded by Gorshkov to adopt Resolution 2024-48

Roll call: Brown, Cox, France, Gorshkov, Infinito, Musick and Conry.
Ayes: 7 Nays: 0
Motion passes.

**BOROUGH OF WASHINGTON
RESOLUTION 2024-48**

WHEREAS, various 2023 bills have been presented for payment this year, which bills represent obligations of the prior fiscal year, and were not covered at the time of transfers between the 2023 budget in the last two months of 2023; and

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 40A:4-59 provides that all unexpended balances carried forward after close of the fiscal year are available, until lapsed at the close of the succeeding year, to meet specific claims, commitments or contracts incurred during the preceding fiscal year, and all transfers to be made from unexpended balances to those which are expected to be insufficient during the first three months of the succeeding year:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Washington, County of Warren, and State of New Jersey that the transfer in the amount of \$3,500.00 be made between the 2023 Budget Appropriation Reserves as follows:

Description	Category	From	To
General Government:			
Tax Assessor	Other Expenses		\$3,000.00
Mayor and Council	Other Expenses	\$3,500.00	
Judicial			
Public Defender	Other Expenses		\$ 500.00

Total:		\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00

Motion made by Cox and seconded by Gorshkov to adopt Resolution 2024-49

Roll call: Brown, Cox, France, Gorshkov, Infinito, Musick and Conry.
 Ayes: 7 Nays: 0
 Motion passes.

RESOLUTION 2024-49
A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A MUNICIPAL
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR AND
DEPUTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey Office of Emergency Management requires each municipality to appoint an “Emergency Management Coordinator” pursuant to N.J.S.A. App. A9-40.1 and Directive Number 102 Issued by the State Office of Emergency Management March 15, 1990; and

WHEREAS, the Municipal Emergency Management Coordinator, Office of Emergency Management for the Borough shall serve a term of three years, and

WHEREAS, the Municipal Emergency Management Coordinator is responsible for the planning, activating, coordinating and the conduct of Emergency Management operations with the municipality; and

WHEREAS, it is the intention of the Mayor and Borough Council of the Borough of Washington to comply with the requirements set forth under provision N.J.S.A. App. A:9-40.1 of the State Disaster Control Act and Directive Number 102;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE BOROUGH OF WASHINGTON, THAT Ron Hartrum is hereby appointed as the Emergency Management Coordinator, Joe Fox Sr, as Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator for a term expiring December 31, 2026.

Motion made by Cox and seconded by Gorshkov to adopt Resolution 2024-50, 51, 52 and 53.

Roll call: Brown, Cox, France, Gorshkov, Infinito, Musick and Conry.
 Ayes: 7 Nays: 0
 Motion passes.

RESOLUTION 2024-50
A RESOLUTION FOR REDEMPTION OF TAX CERTIFICATE

As per N.J.S.A.54:5

KNOW ALL PERSONS BY THESE PRESENTS THAT, WHEREAS, lands in the taxing district of Washington Borough, County of Warren, State of New Jersey, were sold on October 7, 2021 to FIG CUST FIGNJ19LLC & SEC PTY, PO BOX 669507, DALLAS, TX 75266-9507, in the amount of \$652.90 for taxes or other municipal liens assessed for the year 2020 in the name of WONG, DANIEL as supposed owners, and in said assessment and sale were described as 226 W WASHINGTON AVE, Block 2.03 Lot 11, which sale was evidenced by Certificate #21-00004 and

WHEREAS, the Collector of Taxes of said taxing district of the Borough of Washington, do certify that on 2/7/2024 and before the right to redeem was cut off, as provided by law, CORELOGIC claiming to have an interest in said lands, did redeem said lands claimed by FIG CUST FIGNJ19LLC & SEC PTY by paying the Collector of Taxes of said taxing district of Washington Borough the amount of \$3,141.80 which is the amount necessary to redeem Tax Sale Certificate #21-00004.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, on this 20th day of February, 2024 by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Washington, County of Warren to authorize the Treasurer to issue a check payable to FIG CUST FIGNJ19LLC & SEC PTY, PO BOX 669507, DALLAS, TX 75266-9507 in the amount of **\$5,641.80** (This consists of \$3,141.80 Certificate Amount redeemed + \$2,500.00 Premium).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Tax Collector is authorized to cancel this lien on Block 2.03 Lot 11 from the tax office records.

RESOLUTION 2024-51
A RESOLUTION FOR REDEMPTION OF TAX CERTIFICATE
As per N.J.S.A.54:5

KNOW ALL PERSONS BY THESE PRESENTS THAT, WHEREAS, lands in the taxing district of Washington Borough, County of Warren, State of New Jersey, were sold on November 9, 2023 to CHANGSHENG LU, 628 N BUTRICK ST, WAUKEGAN, IL 60085, in the amount of \$978.39 for taxes or other municipal liens assessed for the year 2022 in the name of GELLER, CRAIG H as supposed owners, and in said assessment and sale were described as 270 WYOMING AVE, Block 2.05 Lot 19, which sale was evidenced by Certificate #23-00002 and

WHEREAS, the Collector of Taxes of said taxing district of the Borough of Washington, do certify that on 2/7/2024 and before the right to redeem was cut off, as provided by law, Investors Bank claiming to have an interest in said lands, did redeem said lands claimed by WELLS FARGO by paying the Collector of Taxes of said taxing district of Washington Borough the amount of \$2,004.40 which is the amount necessary to redeem Tax Sale Certificate #23-00002.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, on this 20th day of February, 2024 by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Washington, County of Warren to authorize the Treasurer to issue a check payable to CHANGSHENG LU, 628 N BUTRICK ST, WAUKEGAN, IL 60085 in the amount of **\$4,304.40** (This consists of

\$2,004.40 Certificate Amount redeemed + \$2,300.00 Premium).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Tax Collector is authorized to cancel this lien on Block 2.05 Lot 19 from the tax office records.

RESOLUTION 2024-52
A RESOLUTION FOR REDEMPTION OF TAX CERTIFICATE
As per N.J.S.A.54:5

KNOW ALL PERSONS BY THESE PRESENTS THAT, WHEREAS, lands in the taxing district of Washington Borough, County of Warren, State of New Jersey, were sold on November 9, 2023 to SMYRNA GROUP, LLC, PO BOX 845, TENAFLY, NJ 07670, in the amount of \$177.70 for taxes or other municipal liens assessed for the year 2022 in the name of MUGHAL, ALI & AGHEEM, RUKHSAR as supposed owners, and in said assessment and sale were described as 45 ALVIN SLOAN AVE, Block 2.11 Lot 19, which sale was evidenced by Certificate #23-00004 and

WHEREAS, the Collector of Taxes of said taxing district of the Borough of Washington, do certify that on 2/1/2024 and before the right to redeem was cut off, as provided by law, ALI MUGHAL claiming to have an interest in said lands, did redeem said lands claimed by SMYRNA GROUP, LLC by paying the Collector of Taxes of said taxing district of Washington Borough the amount of \$189.70 which is the amount necessary to redeem Tax Sale Certificate #23-00004.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, on this 20th day of February, 2024 by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Washington, County of Warren to authorize the Treasurer to issue a check payable to SMYRNA GROUP, LLC, PO BOX 845, TENAFLY, NJ 07670 in the amount of **\$789.70** (This consists of \$189.70 Certificate Amount redeemed + \$600.00 Premium).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Tax Collector is authorized to cancel this lien on Block 2.11 Lot 19 from the tax office records.

RESOLUTION 2024-53
A RESOLUTION FOR REDEMPTION OF TAX CERTIFICATE
As per N.J.S.A.54:5

KNOW ALL PERSONS BY THESE PRESENTS THAT, WHEREAS, lands in the taxing district of Washington Borough, County of Warren, State of New Jersey, were sold on November 9, 2023 to BALA PARTNERS LLC, P.O. Box 303, Pottersville, NJ 07979, in the amount of \$2,176.81 for taxes or other municipal liens assessed for the year 2021 & 2022 in the name of CONKLIN, SANDRA J & JAMES V as supposed owners, and in said assessment and sale were described as 36-36.5 E CHURCH ST, Block 24 Lot 7, which sale was evidenced by Certificate #23-00017 and

WHEREAS, the Collector of Taxes of said taxing district of the Borough of Washington, do certify

that on 2/14/2024 and before the right to redeem was cut off, as provided by law, NEW JERSEY HOUSING AND MORTGAGE FINANCE AGENCY claiming to have an interest in said lands, did redeem said lands claimed by BALA PARTNERS LLC by paying the Collector of Taxes of said taxing district of Washington Borough the amount of \$3,728.67 which is the amount necessary to redeem Tax Sale Certificate #23-00017.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, on this 20th day of February, 2024 by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Washington, County of Warren to authorize the Treasurer to issue a check payable to BALA PARTNERS LLC, P.O. Box 303, Pottersville, NJ 07979 in the amount of **\$5,828.67** (This consists of \$3,728.67 Certificate Amount redeemed + \$2,100.00 Premium).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Tax Collector is authorized to cancel this lien on Block 24 Lot 7 from the tax office records.

Motion made by Cox and seconded by Gorshkov to adopt Resolution 2024-54

Roll call: Brown, Cox, France, Gorshkov, Infinito, Musick and Conry.
Ayes: 7 Nays: 0
Motion passes.

RESOLUTION 2024-54
RESOLUTION TO EXTEND THE GRACE PERIOD
ON THE 2024 FIRST QUARTER SEWER AND GARBAGE INSTALLMENT

WHEREAS, the 2024 first quarter sewer and garbage payments are due on March 1, 2024,
and

WHEREAS, the grace period as set by resolution is for ten days, and

WHEREAS, there is a delay in mailing the sewer and garbage bills, and

WHEREAS, New Jersey statutes require 25 days from the date of mailing the tax bills before interest can be charged,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Washington, County of Warren, State of New Jersey that the grace period for the 2024 first quarter sewer and garbage installment is extended to March 29, 2024.

Resolution 2024-55 was tabled.

RECAP

Borough Manager Bond recapped the following:

The borough received a \$40,380.00 grant funding for the fire department. Manager Bond discussed the extra hours that Katrina, who works in the recreation office, stepped up big time when the accounts payable clerk was dismissed for the months of January and February. She did a lot more than her recreation job and Manager Bond stated he would like to compensate her for the \$2 difference to her recreation clerk hourly wage for those months she worked in the finance department. Manager Bond explained he will get the exact dollar number in order for council to approve. A sink hole has occurred at Beethoven Avenue near a storm water easement. The issue is that there is a 36-inch corrugated pipe that runs through the easement. They tend to rot, which we are finding. This stems back to the 60's. This took two days to fix one area. It's a patch for now but it's something that will need to be on our radar. Looking to get a camera to see how bad it is. Replacing the line was discussed.

Gorshkov inquired about when the website will be updated. Manager Bond responded by end of May and beginning of June. The website company will be here at a meeting in April to go through the design. Cox inquired about new microphones, Manager Bond stated that the budget needs to pass first.

COUNCIL REMARKS

Councilman Brown gave the following remarks:

- Thanked everyone for coming out.

Councilwoman Cox gave the following remarks:

- Stated that the fire department has done a great job in their report listing what they have done and showing how their time is spent. Cox stated that they do want to help Marco when we can, but it has to go through proper channels.
- Stated her appreciation for the Fire, Police and EMS departments.

Councilman France gave the following remarks:

- Thanked everyone for coming. Inquired about DPW workers who are also volunteer firemen and what happens when a fire call comes in.
- Stated that the appointments of Hartrum and Fox are good appointments.

Councilman Infinito gave the following remarks:

- Infinito voiced his frustrations and stated that everyone came here an hour early for a budget session and didn't accomplish or do anything. More time was spent chatting in circles and with nothing in particular. Everyone should have come prepared to discuss the budget and have their questions to ask. Having the CFO here in person to answer any

questions but she sat for 55 minutes here. Jonathan was also here to answer questions. Infinito stated that they need to be moving forward with the budget timeline. Infinito stated that he felt like they wasted a lot of people's time and its unacceptable.

- Infinito turned over his remarks to hear from DPW Supervisor Jonathan James and asked his opinion of the borough doing trash, with using the DPW to do it and was it a mistake. Infinito also asked how the other workers feel about it.
- Jonathan James addressed the council and stated that from day one of this four years ago they never wanted to do this, but it was given to them by the governing body. Mr. James went into more detail on the intricacies of the department and what they are responsible for, citing that the shortage in staff has had a great impact on the department and the workers. Workers are dealt with the brunt of the garbage and being in trucks and often they are working four hours straight in hot and cold, but they are scrutinized constantly, socially, and politically. Mr. James gave examples of work schedules when a snowstorm occurs.

Councilwoman Gorshkov gave the following statements:

- Thanked everyone.

Mayor Conry gave the following remarks:

- Stated that she appreciates all of the workers here in the borough. Need to respect all of our workers. Respect everyone, but don't disrespect council with cursing. With respect to one another we have to work with each other.

ADJOURN

Hearing no further business to come before Council, motion made by Cox and seconded by Gorshkov to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 PM, all were in favor.

Laurie A. Courter, RMC
Borough Clerk