

BOROUGH OF NETCONG

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF NETCONG HELD APRIL 13, 2023 AT THE NETCONG MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 23 MAPLE AVENUE, NETCONG, NEW JERSEY COMMENCING AT 7:30 PM.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Nametko at 7:30 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

STATEMENT OF OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

The Borough Clerk read the following statement:

Adequate notice of this meeting as defined by the Open Public Meetings Act has been provided by:

1. Posting a notice of said meeting in the space provided for
Such announcements at the Borough Hall on January 6, 2023.
2. Publishing a notice in the Daily Record, the official newspaper
of the Borough of Netcong on January 11, 2023 and emailing a
copy to the Star Ledger on January 6, 2023.

ROLL CALL

Those in attendance this evening were Councilman Hathaway, Councilman Laureys, Councilman Morton, Councilman Sylvester, and Mayor Nametko. Also present was Mr. Blakeslee, Borough Administrator and Mrs. Eckert, Borough Clerk

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

None presented.

PUBLIC PORTION OF MEETING

Mr. Steve Lazzaro of Stanhope NJ, he wanted to thank the Council for all the support they have given the Lakeland Little League. He is inviting them to opening day April 22, 2023 at 10:00 am. He invited the mayor to say a few words and throw the first pitch. He thanked the Council for their time

A Motion to Close the Meeting to the Public was made by Councilman Sylvester and seconded by Councilman Hathaway.

Roll Call: 4 Yes

PRESENTATION

HIGHLANDS COUNCIL- Ben Spinelli and Judy Thornton

Mr. Spinelli and Ms. Thornton stepped forward. Mr. James Humphrey was present as well. Mr. Spinelli thanked the Council for their time. He is here to discuss the advantages of the Highlands Council and dispel some misconceptions. He provided the background in detail of the Highlands Council and its history. The Highlands Act was developed to protect the water supply and natural habitats. The goal of the highlands is to keep the area a livable place. He showed a map of how far the highlands cover NJ. He explained how Netcong and the Highlands Council can work together very well. He stated the Highlands Council is not here to take over Netcong but to enhance it. Natural resources available in Netcong are an asset that many do not have. He explained how they will be able to help support many projects and changes to the town. Many of the planning of these projects will be paid by the Highlands Council. If at any time the borough feels this plan is not for them, they can withdraw without paying back funds used. He then showed a map showing the Highland area in Netcong. They are going to help manage our center designation. If it is approved under the Highlands, it is permanent, instead of having to renew every 10 years. They would also be able to manage the lake as well. They will be there to help work with state agencies if there are conflicts or difficulties with them. They have a planning fund available for redevelopment, downtown improvements, etc. Ms. Thornton gave examples of some of the funded projects they have done. The mayor stated our original master plan was completed in 1978 and is updated periodically. It is time to redo this plan. Would they assist with this? Mr. Spinelli said "absolutely." It would be done by the borough professionals. The borough would pay upfront and be reimbursed by the Highlands. Many projects can be phased as well if need be. Ms. Thornton gave details on grant programs. Mr. Spinelli gave further details on this subject. She then gave the potential next steps. She suggested redevelopment plans should be added to the existing report. Adopt a resolution of intent, submit a grant funding request, prepare Highlands Center Designation Package. The center designation comes with certain benefits. The mayor asked 'if all the planets aligned,' he knows what it takes to become a center designation, he would like to have a time frame for success on this. Ms. Thornton stated it would depend on adopting the resolution and getting professional working. The mayor wanted to know if we will lose our current center designation if this process takes longer than the deadline. Mr. Spinelli stated the current designation would not be lost. He offered details on that. The mayor asked if the Council had any questions. Councilman Sylvester stated it is intriguing and needs to be looked at. The permanent designation is enticing and our new master plan needs to be done as well. Mr. Spinelli stated the new stormwater rules are coming soon and will cost money. Mr. Humphrey commented on hazard vulnerability assessment which is a new requirement for master plans. There is also round 4 for affordable housing that they can help with also. He gave detail on the issues and long-term future of the town for affordable housing. The importance of managing the resources in the highlands is paramount. Councilman Laureys had a question about the water usage which Mr. Spinelli answered. Councilman Laureys asked why the Highlands Council wanted to work with Netcong. Mr. Spinelli stated Netcong has an important function in preserving the Highlands in that it has a town center. He stated

he wants Netcong to be the best town center in the area. This will be driven by the town, public and professionals not the Highlands. The Highlands will be there to assist. Councilman Laureys does not see the benefit. The mayor stated that things forced upon us by the state will cost money. The Highlands are willing to assist in that area. The borough would be able to rescind this agreement at any time. Mr. Spinelli explained they are not a regulatory body; they are a planning body which can provide expert advice and funds to accomplish these goals. Ms. Thornton gave details on the Highlands master plan. Ms. Thornton has seen in our current plans that the borough is very concerned about keeping this area beautiful and forward moving. The Highlands and Netcong seem to have similar goals. This would be beneficial for both sides. The mayor thanked them for coming. Mr. Spinelli thanked the Council for their time. Mr. Spinelli stated the highlands are very scientific. The mayor asked the administrator how much the re-exam cost the borough; Mr. Blakeslee stated approx. \$10,000.00. Councilman Laureys stated he is very cautious about giving up town control, but he is concerned there is a catch. He does understand the issues that the mayor discussed. Councilman Hathaway gave details on the resolution that is on the agenda for adoption this evening. Ms. Thornton provided additional details on the advantages of this program. Mr. Spinelli added information as well. Councilman Laureys gave reasons for his concerns. Mr. Spinelli stated he was a mayor for 9 years so he has been in his shoes. There was further discussion among the Council on the particulars of this issue. Councilman Hathaway reviewed possible next steps.

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE 2023 SID ASSESSMENT

A Motion to close the Public Hearing was made by Councilman Hathaway and seconded by Councilman Sylvester.

Roll Call: 3 Yes No: Councilman Laureys

Resolution #2023-38- Approving the Property Assessments for the Netcong Community Partnership Special Improvement District of the Borough of Netcong.

A Motion was made by Councilman Hathaway and seconded by Councilman Morton to approve this resolution.

Roll Call: 3 Yes No: Councilman Laureys

Resolution #2023-39 – Approving the Introduction of the 2023 Budget of the Netcong Community Partnership Special Improvement District and Authorizing a Public Hearing to Be Held Thereon.

A Motion was made by Councilman Hathaway and seconded by Councilman Morton to approve this resolution.

Roll Call: 3 Yes No: Councilman Laureys

ORDINANCE ADOPTIONS

None presented

CORRESPONDENCE

None presented

BOROUGH ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Update: Mr. Blakeslee did not receive the community development block grant but Netcong was awarded \$76,000.00 from the state of NJ via the Recreation Grant

The state is checking websites to check to make sure they are ADA compliant. We will be checking to make sure we comply.

We also received information on changes with risk management.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance & Insurance: E. Still J. Sylvester

For the month of March 2023, the Borough had a total income of \$89,077.84 as compared to \$103,629.75 in March 2022

For the month of March 2023:

Miscellaneous Revenue Not Anticipated (MRNA):

In 2023 the Borough received \$6,461.00 compared to \$2,263.50 in 2022.

Other Licenses/Borough Clerks Fees:

The Borough received \$34,872.69 in 2023 compared to \$6,447.24 in 2022.

State Aid:

There was no state aid in either 2022 or 2023.

Grants in Aid:

There was \$1,578.53 received in Grants in Aid for 2023 and \$11,544.58 in 2022.

Taxes Collected:

The Borough collected \$46,165.62 in 2023 compared to \$83,374.43 in 2022.

Income Total Year to Date:

The Total Income Year to date for 2023 is \$2,971,109.20 as opposed to \$2,689,742.52 in 2022.

Economic Development: R. Hathaway E. Still

Councilman Hathaway stated the committee met with the Highlands Council and the resolution is on the agenda this evening. He provided details regarding the benefits for this and the funding that would be available to the borough. He reviewed the resolution passed on the area of rehabilitation.

Public Safety: J. Sylvester T. Laureys
(Police, Fire, Rescue)

Councilman Sylvester read the police, fire, fire prevention and ambulance reports. There was a traffic report performed by the police department on Flanders Rd. which included the number of cars traveling that road and the speed at which they travel. There will be a police officer and firefighter who will be honored at the 200 club later this month for their heroic actions with the ice accident by Koclas Dr. Fire Prevention has been successful in collecting fees from previous years that were unpaid.

Fire Department, May 2023

Total Calls: 7
Drills: 5
Administrative Details: 10
Total Members: 46
Total Time Volunteered: 417 Hours & 15 Minutes.

Ambulance Corps:

Total Calls: 46 (4 out of town)
Total Patients: 30
Total Hospital Trips: 25
Mile Traveled: 769
Hours Volunteered: 212 hrs. 39 min.

Police Department:

Radar: 80
Traffic Enforcement/Stop: 176
Building/Property Check: 60
Community Policing: 63
Total Calls for Service: 710

Dept. of Public
Works & Utilities: J. Albensi R. Hathaway

Councilman Hathaway read the DPW report.

Road Department: Performed weekly curb line cleaning on Main St and Maple Ave.... Installed 6 ton limit signs at Lake St, Water St, Kings Rd, Highland Ave, and Center St.... Fixed broken Stop sign on Lake St at Allen St.... Placed concrete barrier at NJ Transit access on Britton St....

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

None

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR TO THE COUNCIL

Councilman Hathaway wanted to bring a situation to the Council's attention: We have an ordinance on dog feces. He had a need to file a complaint. The court will not see complaints on this ordinance because the state has a conflicting ordinance. Mr. Bucco stated if the state has a statute that prohibits the similar issue, why can't the police not go and issue a summons? Mr. Bucco had questions about this. Councilman Hathaway offered that he is just bringing this to the Council's attention. Mr. Bucco stated he can take a look at this. He said he should be able to file a complaint that complies with the state statute. Mr. Bucco provided details on how this could be corrected. Mr. Bucco stated we can change our ordinance to match the state statute and provided the details. There was discussion on the quality-of-life statutes and ordinances. Mr. Bucco explained the difference between local ordinances and state statutes and how they have to be followed.

Councilman Sylvester provided the following statement:

Last month I was accused of misleading the public by stating there are twice as many rental vs single family homes, stirring up the residents and a statement that we are becoming a bedroom community. Let me set the record straight.

Nowhere publicly or on social media did I ever say that rentals were twice that of single-family homes. I challenge anyone to show otherwise. My statement was that the number of rentals far outnumber single family homes. My comments on social media were basically answers to residents' questions who by the way had no idea what was happening in their neighborhood. Connecting with residents to address their concerns via social media or face to face is why we are here.

Unless there is a new meaning for a bedroom community that is exactly what we are becoming. It's people who live in a community who go to work and come home, without any ambition to become part of the fabric of the community.

As far as the numbers quoted last month are concerned, they were apparently wrong. I went back to where I got my most recent data, and that did represent my position of those numbers. I only had to look at our most recent Master plan review, completed in 2022.

Here are those figures:

In 2019 there were 666 single family homes, 4 less than 2009 representing 43.8% of the housing stock. There were 752 rental properties, 27 more than 2009 representing 49.3% of the housing stock.

Neither Crown Walk nor Crown point are in those numbers. If you add the 124 from Crown Walk and the 80 from Crown Point you get a total of 956 rental units representing 59% of the housing stock making the single family only 41% of the total.

Why the discrepancies? Maybe the supporters of uncontrolled development are sharing inaccurate numbers to support the narrative that we are going broke which is far from reality.

Are we approaching a tough patch? Yes.

Will we weather this as we have in the past providing the essential services the residents expect? Yes.

Now shared services: As I said and will continue to say that any municipality that doesn't seek out shared services where appropriate is doing a disservice to their residents. To compare the value of the Police Dept. to the Building Dept. is disingenuous at best. Again, are we ginning up the development at any cost narrative because we're broke, supposedly?

Our professionals who have created a sound borrowing plan in the past with all the State can throw at them will provide a sensible plan for the future, today.

As far as the number of students and the mismanagement of the school we cannot be beholden to their practices. That school used to house grades K-12 and in the area of 400+ students. There have been changes since then, I will admit, but to say that building at approximately 290 students is at capacity is just plain wrong.

Planned spending and borrowing has been a strength of this Borough has employed and always will. It is responsible and necessary to provide the services the residents need and want. The Borough is autonomous and will remain so for many years to come with smart and controlled development.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS

The mayor had no comments at this time.

RESOLUTIONS

Mr. Bucco commented on one of the resolutions: the lead-based paint inspector resolution is not correct. He also noticed there is a resolution for the contract for water testing. There is a 5-year hold regarding awarding a contract. The contract must be taken in the aggregate as opposed to each year for the threshold.

1.Resolution 2023- 37-Transfer Resolution for Current Fund

A Motion to approve this resolution was made by Councilman Sylvester and seconded by Councilman Hathaway.

Roll Call: 4 Yes

2.Resolution 2023-40 – Authorizing the Award of a Contract for Professional Services for a Financial Advisor

A Motion to approve this resolution was made by Councilman Sylvester and seconded by Councilman Hathaway.

Roll Call: 4 Yes

3. Resolution 2023-41 - Authorizing the Sale of Municipal Surplus Property

A Motion to approve this resolution was made by Councilman Sylvester and seconded by Councilman Hathaway.

Roll Call: 4 Yes

4. Resolution 2023-42 – Resolution of the Netcong Borough Council Expressing Intent to Align the Borough Planning Program with the Highlands Regional Master Plan

A Motion to approve this resolution was made by Councilman Sylvester and seconded by Councilman Hathaway.

Roll Call: 4 Yes

5. Resolution 2023- 43- Authorizing the Award of a Contract to Northeast Water Technology to Perform Water Leak Detection in the Borough of Netcong Over a 5 Year Period

Carried to the May meeting.

6. Resolution 2023-44- Authorizing the Purchase of a New Pierce Pumper Fire Engine, Including Original Apparatus and Equipment, through the Houston-Galveston Area Council ("HGAC") Cooperative Pricing Program

A Motion to approve this resolution was made by Councilman Sylvester and seconded by Councilman Hathaway.

Roll Call: 4 Yes

7. Resolution 2023-45 – Authorizing the Award of a Contract for Professional Services to Perform Lead-Based Paint Inspection for the Borough

Carried to the May meeting.

Councilman Laureys made a comment on Resolution 2023-45 as to why we need to maintain control over our town. The state is always mandating things on us that are a waste of time and money. He feels this is another example of that.

ORDINANCE INTRODUCTIONS

1. Capital Ordinance 2023-5-Authorizing the Purchasing of a Vehicle and Related Equipment for the Netcong Police Department, Appropriating Therefore the Sum of \$63,000.00 from the Reserve for Police Outside Duty.

A Motion to Introduce Capital Ordinance #2023-5- and Read by Title Only was made by Councilman Sylvester and seconded by Councilman Hathaway.
Roll Call: 4 Yes

A Motion to Pass Capital Ordinance #2023-5- on First Reading was made by Councilman Sylvester and seconded by Councilman Morton.
Roll Call: 4 Yes

REPORTS

A Motion to Incorporate All Reports into the Minutes was made by Councilman Morton and seconded by Councilman Hathaway.
Roll Call: 4 Yes

BILLS

A Motion to Pay All Bills When Funds are Available was made by Councilman Sylvester and seconded by Councilman Morton.
Roll Call: 4 Yes

PUBLIC PORTION OF MEETING

A Motion to Close the Meeting to the Public was made by Councilman Sylvester and seconded by Councilman Hathaway.
Roll Call: 4 Yes

CLOSED SESSION

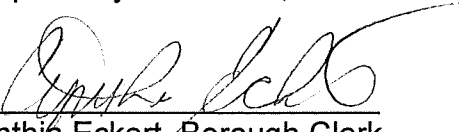
None

The mayor wished Mr. Bucco a happy birthday and mentioned that more than half his life he has been our borough attorney.

ADJOURNMENT

A Motion to Adjourn the Meeting was made by Councilman Hathaway and seconded by Councilman Morton at 8:58PM.
Roll Call: 4 Yes

Respectfully Submitted,


Cynthia Eckert, Borough Clerk