

BOROUGH OF

WATCHUNG

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER - FALL/WINTER 2025



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MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Resiliency of a Community – This year the weather created many challenges to the Borough and our residents alike. The spring weekends were so cold and rainy, it felt like as if summer might never arrive. Regrettably, we had to cancel our Community Picnic and many backyard barbecues switched to indoor gatherings. Then came July, bringing unprecedented rains—and an equally powerful response. A storm on July 3rd wreaked havoc for many residents when trees and utility poles were snapped like twigs. The holiday weekend was no fun as many were without power for the entire weekend. Many wondered “Could it be any worse?”. That question was quickly answered when the rains of July 14th arrived. This second unprecedented weather event came a mere 11 days later when over 7 inches of rain fell in a few hours. This “once in a 500-year event” overwhelmed the storm water control systems where many of the small creeks transitioned from babbling brooks to swift waters and our streets became deep fast water rivers.



Mayor Jubin

Community resilience during severe weather events reveals the profound strength that emerges when people come together in times of crisis. When the floods surged through our neighborhoods, trees crashed across roads and yards, and power lines failed, leaving entire areas in darkness, communities often discover their greatest asset is not infrastructure or technology—it is each other.

Neighbors helping neighbors forms the backbone of disaster response and recovery. In the immediate aftermath of the storms, residents helped remove debris from driveways so elderly neighbors can access medical care. Those with generators shared power to keep medications refrigerated or phones charged. Families with intact homes opened their doors to those stranded by the storm, offering shelter and comfort. Local knowledge becomes invaluable as neighbors guide each other to safe routes around flooded streets or share information about which stores remain open.

First responders—police, firefighters, EMTs, and emergency management personnel—demonstrated remarkable fortitude as they work tirelessly through dangerous conditions. They navigated treacherous roads, responded to fast-evolving emergencies, putting their own safety at risk to rescue others from floodwaters, and opening their headquarters to stranded motorists. Their dedication provides the professional backbone that supports community recovery efforts.

This combination of grassroots mutual aid and professional emergency response creates a web of resilience that helps communities not just survive challenging weather, but emerge stronger. The bonds forged during these difficult times often persist long after the power is restored and debris is cleared, creating more connected and prepared neighborhoods for future challenges.

In closing, I want to welcome our children back to school for another exciting year. To all my fellow Watchungers – please come to our Rescue Squad Annual Tree of Lights celebration in December that will be even more special as it's their 75th anniversary! Also, we will use the date as our “official” kick-off to begin our year-long festivities celebrating both the Borough's 100th anniversary and the USA 250th anniversary too! There is so much to celebrate and it is even more special when we celebrate together.

Ronald Jubin, Ph.D.
Mayor

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TAX OFFICE

FRIENDLY REMINDER . . .
Taxes are due quarterly on: November 1st

Any accounts delinquent as of December 2024 including Special Assessments will be included in our Tax Sale this fall. Balances can be viewed and paid online at www.watchungnj.gov.

Please note that if you use Bill Pay through your bank, it may take a week or more for the Tax Office to receive the payment. Even though your bank account shows the money being withdrawn on the date that you initiate the bill pay, the bank prints and mails a check to the Borough which delays the process. For this reason, we recommend using the payment process provided on our website or dropping a check off at Borough Hall. If you leave a payment in the drop box outside of the Tax Office, the payment will be credited to your account the next business day.



Thank you.



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Watchung Municipal Building

15 Mountain Boulevard, Watchung, New Jersey 07069

Phone: 908-756-0080 • Fax: 908-757-7027

www.watchungnj.gov

Mayor Ronald Jubin, Ph.D.

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Christine B. Ead, Council President
Curt S. Dahl, Paul Fischer, Paolo Marano,
Sonia Abi-Habib, Robert Gibbs

Administration

James Damato, Administrator
908-756-0080
JDamato@watchungnj.gov

Borough Clerk

Edith Gil 908-756-0080 ext. 213
EGil@watchungnj.gov

CFO/Tax Collector

William Hance 908-756-0080 ext. 216
BHance@watchungnj.gov

Engineering Office

Mostafa Razzaghamanesh 908-756-0091 ext. 225
engineer@watchungnj.gov

Watchung Fire Official

Thomas McNulty 908-756-0091 ext. 235
fireofficial@watchungnj.gov

Police Department

Chief Scott Anderle 908-756-3663

Emergency 911

Non - Emergency 908-756-3663

Fire Department

Chief Albert DeSandolo 908-756-0080 Ext. 250

Volunteer 908-585-1272

Emergency 911

Non - Emergency 908-756-0091

Emergency Management

Carolyn Solon 908-756-0080 ext. 239

CSolon@watchungnj.gov

Municipal Court (N. Plainfield)

263 Somerset Street, N. Plainfield, NJ 07060

Court Administrator, Jodi Mack 908-769-2265

Tax Assessor

Ed Kerwin 908-756-8333 ext. 224

ekerwin@watchungnj.gov

Tax Clerk

Kathy Vilarino 908-756-8333 ext. 223

taxclerk@watchungnj.gov

Construction Official

Robert Lacosta 908-756-0080 ext. 228

RLacosta@watchungnj.gov

Carolyn Taylor, Zoning Officer/TACO

908-756-0080 ext. 219

CTaylor@watchungnj.gov

Public Works Manager

Anthony Nappe

dpw@watchungnj.gov

908-756-0080 ext. 214

Watchung Arts Center

For information call 908-753-0190

18 Stirling Road, Watchung, NJ 07069

(Closed Saturdays during July and Aug.)

SC Public Library - Watchung Branch

Temporary Location

20 Stirling Road, Watchung, NJ 07069

908-458-8456

Watchung Seniors

Tony Perrucci: 908-963-1748

Mary Osborne: 908-625-8959

SCHOOL DISTRICT

Watchung Hills Regional High School

Grades 9 through 12

108 Stirling Road, Warren, NJ 07059

908-647-4800

Valley View Middle School

Grades 5 through 8

50 Valleyview, Road, Watchung, NJ 07069

908-755-4422

Bayberry Elementary School

Kindergarten through 4th Grade

113 Bayberry Lane, Watchung, NJ 07069

908-755-8184

Sunday Morning Worship
10:00 AM
or online at
wilsonmemorialchurch.org

Wilson Memorial Church
7 Valley Road, Watchung
on the corner of Valley Rd. & Hillcrest Rd.
908-755-5020
All Are Welcome! All Belong!

CALENDAR
October 4 Annual Fall Gala
October 25 Enchanted Forest
December 6 Advent Supper & Tree Lighting
Children's & Youth Programming
Registration Online

Wilson Memorial is a vibrant, interdenominational, community-focused church.
We aspire to be the Light on the Hill, reflecting God's love and sharing the message of Christ.

UPCOMING FALL EVENTS

OCT
18

HARVEST FESTIVAL

1:00pm-4:00pm *Mobus Field*
Join us for a day of family fun! Bouncy Houses, Games, Live Music, Food and so much more!

NOV
11

VETERANS DAY CEREMONY

9:30am *War Memorial at Texier House*
Join us in expressing our gratitude for those who served and sacrificed for freedom.

NOV
21

PEACE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

6:00pm-7:30pm *Watchung Lake*
Join us for an evening of hope and peace. Write a personal message on your individual lantern to launch onto Watchung Lake.



FOR DETAILS ON THE EVENTS AND MORE,
PLEASE VISIT WWW.WATCHUNGNJ.GOV



Watchung Centennial Celebration Countdown



watchungnj.gov/centennial-celebration

Visit the website to share your Watchung:

- Stories
- Photos
- Suggestion for the Centennial Celebration!

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As we communicate various updates for the Fall/Winter 2025 season, we are currently in the summer month of August. As Council Members, we are all working on different Standing and Community Committees. The biggest challenge we face at present is the weather. The Borough has had to cancel numerous events, programs in the park, several days of the Farmer's Market, and other. The July 4th storm caused strong winds that knocked down trees and power lines, resulting in widespread outages and street debris. The July 14th storm set a record with almost 7 inches of rain in under 3 hours, leading to numerous water rescues and significant infrastructure damage. No one was seriously injured due to the prompt actions and extensive training of the first responders for which we are eternally grateful.

Many residents did however experience flooding in and around their homes which is upsetting and a painful reminder how weather can impact so many so quickly. Although these weather events pose challenges, we assure the community that we will actively collaborate with the Borough, Administrator, committees, departments, and relevant state and local agencies to help provide any support available. Safety, infrastructure repairs, cleanup, community events and services are all up and running and will be the continued hallmark for the Watchung community. As autumn begins, we look forward to upcoming events and programs such as: The wonderful Farmer's Market every Tuesday, Movie Night, the 9/11 Memorial Service, The Anti Cyberbully Program, The Scarecrow Stroll and Contest, the Fishing Derby, the Peace Throughout the World Lantern Launch, the Harvest Festival, Project Daffodil Planting, and more. If the weather has taught us anything it is strength, resilience, and that Watchung is a community that cares and bounces back. As a Council proud to serve this Borough, we all stand united in getting the work done on behalf of all who call Watchung home.



MIDDLE-BROOK REGIONAL HEALTH COMMISSION

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission

111 Greenbrook Road, Green Brook, NJ 08812, Kevin G. Sumner, Health Officer/Director
732-968-5151 x 1 | 732-968-5331 (fax) | mbrhc@middlebrookhealth.org (e-mail) | www.middlebrookhealth.org

THE WATCHUNG BOARD OF HEALTH IS REMINDING CAT OWNERS TO LICENSE THEIR PETS!

Rabies is caused by a virus which can infect both people and animals and is almost always fatal. While the majority of rabies cases in the state have been in wild animals such as bats, raccoons, skunks, and foxes, cats are also a relatively common victim of rabies. These cases can pose a significant threat to unvaccinated domestic animals, which can contract the virus from wild animals and transmit the infection to humans. For pet registrations, residents can stop by the Clerk's Office on the 2nd floor or find the application online at: www.watchungnj.gov/departments/clerk/animal-control-services.

You will need to provide proof of rabies vaccination.

Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission plans to offer several rabies clinics in the fall to ensure the availability of free rabies vaccines for our cat and dog owners.

Here is the **Tentative** Schedule:

- November 1, 9am - Green Brook, NJ
- November 15, 9am - Bridgewater, NJ
- December 6, 9am - Watchung, NJ



As we are still working to coordinate all the moving pieces to make these clinics happen, residents are asked to call the Health Commission at **732-968-5151** or **scan the QR code** to view the Commission's Calendar in late September/October to confirm the dates, times, and locations. All cats must be held in a carrier and all dogs must be leashed.

DON'T WAIT. VACCINATE!



Vaccines protect ourselves and others from infectious disease. When vaccinated, it is less likely that we will get sick and make others sick. They also protect us against severe illness when we do get sick. This upcoming holiday season, do your part and get vaccinated!

The Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission and Green Brook Family Medicine will be offering Community Flu Vaccination Clinics this fall for ages 5 years and older and senior flu vaccines for those ages 65 years and older. Check our website for finalized clinic dates and locations at middlebrookhealth.org or call the Commission at (732) 968-5151.

Staying up to date on vaccinations is an effective way to protect ourselves, others, and those most at risk of severe illness. Talk with your healthcare provider to make sure you are caught up on all immunizations you need.

If you are planning to travel, check your destination on CDC's Travelers' Health page for location-specific health risks and safety concerns. You may need to take additional steps to protect yourself and your loved ones.

For more information, visit: nj.gov/health/vaccines/

Connect with Us!





FROM THE DESK OF THE BOROUGH CLERK

New Agenda Management System Now Available

Earlier this year, our office launched a new agenda management platform—Civic Clerk—designed to make it easier for residents to stay informed and engaged. This system provides convenient access to Borough Council meeting videos, agendas, and voting items, all in one centralized location.

If you subscribe to our borough emails or follow us on social media, you may have already seen announcements about this new tool. If not, don't worry—you can find instructions on how to access Civic Clerk below.

Introducing... **Civic Clerk**
 Mayor & Council Meeting Agenda, Minutes, and Video all in one place!
<https://watchungnj.nortal.civicclerk.com/>

As of Jan 2025 M&C agendas will be posted on Civic Clerk!

How to subscribe:

Step 1: Visit <https://watchungnj.nortal.civicclerk.com/>

Step 2: Click "Sign In" on the right side of the screen

Step 3: Create an Account

Step 4: After signing in, on the Home Page, click **SUBSCRIPTIONS** to turn on email notifications!

Then you will receive an email every time an Agenda is published!

Civic Clerk Meeting Page

On the individual meeting page, you can view/download all meeting documents (Agenda, Minutes, Supporting Documents) and the meeting's video!

Get Involved: Board, Committee & Commission Applications Opening Soon

We'll soon begin accepting applications for upcoming vacancies on the Borough's various boards, committees, and commissions. Serving is a great way to get involved and make a meaningful impact in our community. Last year, we introduced a convenient, fillable application form—no need to print, scan, or mail it back. It's part of our ongoing efforts to modernize and streamline our application processes, and we look forward to continuing this progress across other areas as well!



Mark Your Calendar: Upcoming Important Dates

- **September 30 – Rental Property Registration Due**
Landlords must register rental properties by the end of September each year. The annual registration and inspection fee is \$150.
- **October 14 – Voter Registration Deadline**
Last day to register to vote in the upcoming General Election.
- **October 28 – Deadline to Apply for a Mail-In Ballot**
Be sure to submit your mail-in ballot application by this date to vote by mail.
- **November 4 – General Election Day**
Polls will be open from 6:00 AM to 8:00 PM. Make your voice heard!
- **December 31 – Dog License Expiration**
Dog licenses expire annually on this date. State law requires renewal every year. Subscribe to our borough emails to receive renewal reminders! Renewals begin January 2026.

Behind the scenes, I'm fortunate to work with an outstanding team of dedicated staff who keep everything running smoothly and always go the extra mile. Whether it's staying ahead of deadlines, assisting residents, or keeping operations on track, their commitment truly makes all the difference. We're proud to serve our community—and we're always here to help, answer questions, and point you in the right direction whenever you need us.





YY Beauty Spa

*Your Journey in Renewing
Your Skin's Natural Beauty*

Established in 1991, YY Beauty Spa is the ideal place to go for those wishing to rejuvenate and restore their skin. It is not just for the fancy and high-end person, but for anyone looking for a relaxing experience. The environment at our spa is friendly, while maintaining a homey look.

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New Client Specials



- **Basic Facial (60 min) \$59**
- **Couples Massage (1 hr) \$139**
- **Hot Stone Massage (1 hr) \$69**
- **Swedish Massage (1/2 hr) \$39**

- **Ultrasonic Lift Facial (60 min) \$69**
- **Oxygen Facial (60 min) \$89**
- **Microdermabrasion Skin Peel Facial (60 min) \$100**
- **Deep Pore Detox Facial (60 min) \$110**
- **Teen Facial (30 min) \$45**

28 Johnston Drive • Watchung, NJ 07069
(Between Watchung Ave & Somerset St)
Tel: 908.756.3502

Hours: Mon-Sun 9:30am-7:30pm
www.yybeautyspa.com



WATCHUNG VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT



The Watchung Fire Department is a 100% volunteer organization that is constantly in need of new members. Beginning at 16 years old, Watchung residents can join our Junior Firefighter program, which allows them to respond to emergencies under the guidance of experienced firefighters, as well as learn about the fire service and gain valuable knowledge and life skills. Our Active Firefighters

and Associate Members are over 18 years old and come from Watchung and neighboring communities. Active Firefighters attend basic Firefighter training as well as other training courses, all paid for by the Department. Associate Members assist with non-firefighting activities such as Membership Recruitment and Retention, Fund Raising, and other administrative duties. The Borough also offers an incentive plan as well as numerous other benefits to our Volunteer Firefighters, most importantly, the ability to be one of the heroes who helps their neighbors in a time of need. If you or someone you know has a desire to be a hero in our community, please visit our website at www.watchungfd.org, follow us on Facebook @WatchungFD, email at recruitment@watchungfd.org, or pick up information at Borough Hall! As always, we appreciate the support from our community of Watchung.



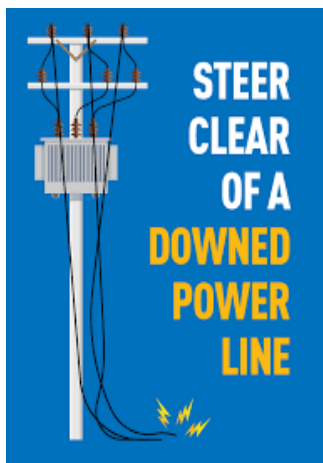
“Turn Around...Don’t Drown”

A flash flood is a rapid rise of water along a stream or in a low-lying urban area. Flash flooding can result from slow-moving thunderstorms, from numerous thunderstorms which develop repeatedly over the same area, or from heavy rains associated with tropical cyclones. These floods may develop within minutes, depending on the intensity of the rainfall, the topography, soil conditions, and ground cover.

Flash flooding is the number one storm-related killer in the United States. Why? Most people fail to realize the power of water. Too often, people decide against finding a detour and attempt to pass over a flooded roadway because they believe they can safely make it. Drownings of this nature are 100% preventable simply by not driving or walking onto flooding roads. Most vehicles will become difficult to control in as little as six inches of water and can be swept away in 18 to 24 inches of water. The national 30-year average for flood deaths is around 127 people per year. National Weather Service data also indicates that nearly half of all flash flood fatalities are vehicle-related. The majority of victims are males, and flood deaths affect all age groups.



Important reminder If You See a Downed Power Line, You Should Always:



STOP: Stay At Least 30 Feet Away

- Assume any downed or low-hanging power line is energized and dangerous. An energized line may not spark, smoke or make any noise.
- Stay at least 30 feet away from downed distribution lines
- Stay at least 100 feet away from downed transmission lines.

LOOK: Survey the Area for Objects that May Be Energized

- Carefully survey the area. Downed lines can energize the ground and nearby objects.
- Keep the same distance from anything else that could be energized, instruct others to stay away.

LIVE: Call 911 to Report the Downed Power Line

- The 911 operator will report the downed line to FirstEnergy. Never approach or attempt to move a line under any circumstances.
- Customers with a communication disability can report a downed wire using the appropriate



Watchung Rescue Squad

This could be you!
We are looking for eager individuals 16+ to join our squad! No experience is necessary.

**Want to Apply?
Have Questions?**
Visit: watchungems.org

Follow Us!
 Watchung Rescue Squad
 @watchungems



LEAF PICKUP - The 2025 Leaf Pickup will commence on October 27, 2025 and continue through December 21, 2025. All leaves must be in **BIODEGRADABLE PAPER BAGS** and placed on the grass area close to the road. **NO PLASTIC BAGS WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR PICK UP.** Pickups will not be scheduled for any specific time or location. Leaf pickup is limited to high density areas: Brookdale, Stirling and Hillcrest Roads North to Evergreen Lane; Mountain Blvd. from Washington Drive to Rock Ave.; Johnston Drive to the water tower including Upper Drive and Johnston Drive Extension. All residents are urged to utilize their leaves as compost; however, should any resident in a rural area desire pickup of leaves in **BIODEGRADABLE BAGS ONLY**, call the office of **Public Works at 908-756-0080, ext. 214.** Due to the State's Stormwater Regulations, the Borough has an ordinance prohibiting placement of leaves in the street.



SNOW REMOVAL Residents: Please remember to comply with snow removal regulations. Snow removed from driveways or any other place shall not be placed on any public street or right-of-way! §Chapter 17-3.3, §Chapter 14-45.1

Snow and Ice Removal from Sidewalks and Driveways

The owner or tenant of real property abutting, adjoining, or bordering any public street shall remove all snow and ice from the abutting, adjoining, or bordering sidewalk and driveway within the public right-of-way, of said public street, within 24 hours of the snow having fallen or the ice having formed thereon.

Check the borough's website for full regulations or call our **Public Works Dept. with any questions, 908-756-0080 ext. 214.**

Check the borough's website for full regulations or call our Public Works Dept. with any questions, 908-756-0080 ext. 214.





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WATCHUNG HISTORICAL COMMITTEE

Hello Neighbors,

Greetings from the Watchung Historical Committee!

WE ARE CLOSER THAN EVER TO WATCHUNG'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2026!

The Watchung Historical Committee is hard at work preparing for this milestone, and we hope that our community is just as excited about celebrating this incredible Anniversary. We'd love for you to get involved and visit the museum to see new displays and exhibits. purchase your own.

Exciting Museum & Website Updates

Display on Watchung's Earliest Industries: Thomas Schaefer has created an incredible display highlighting Watchung's earliest industries, and we hope that you visit the Museum to explore this detailed and fascinating display. It is one of the largest displays we have added to the Museum in years and truly covers such a wide range of history, some of which we learned throughout the development of the display. We want to thank all those who were involved in helping to make this a reality.

Watchung History Website: We strongly suggest you visit watchunghistory.org to see our ever growing website of all things Watchung History! Maureen Greenbaum has worked tirelessly on building, from the ground up, this wonderful and impressive database. While we will need to continue to refine it over the years, the website already includes so many photos, links, and information that we believe will be an important part of Watchung's fabric for years to come.

Reflections of Watchung/YouTube Channel: We are so happy to announce that the Watchung Historical Committee has completed the long-term video project, Reflections of Watchung. This video project has been overseen by Chris Vander Fliet and explores a wide range of topics. These videos include rarely seen photographs, exclusive interviews, and never before seen historical video footage coupled with voiceovers which help to tell different stories. Links to these videos can be found on watchunghistory.org and on YouTube under the "Watchung History" channel. Be sure to check out the different custom playlists which include original content as well as links to videos from others. All videos are related to Watchung and the surrounding community!

God's Acre: If you have not walked around Watchung Lake recently, we encourage you to view the new sign that is outside of the God's Acre Cemetery. This new sign, designed by the Historical Committee, and inspired by Matt King's Eagle Scout Project, blends the rustic design of the old sign with the new modern look of the Watchung signs. It also includes updated information on the inhabitants of the cemetery. The original sign that was at the cemetery is now showcased at the Texier House Museum.

Watchung Trivia: As you walk around Watchung Lake, we hope you are enjoying the new trivia questions provided by the Committee on the digital sign outside of Borough Hall! We will continue to update the sign with new questions next year and we encourage you to participate with friends and family in this activity!

Display on the Watchung Police: We now have a brand-new display showcasing never before artifacts from the Watchung Police Department!

Brook Hill Sign: The sign that was at the entrance to Brook Hill was saved and restored. Please come visit the Museum to see the newly restored sign as well as the original sign!

Artifact Photography: We plan to once again photograph prominent artifacts throughout the Texier House Museum later this year and share these photos online! This project also helps with our ongoing preservation efforts in digitizing artifacts that are not in frames.

Holiday Ornament Program: Resident Laurie Wood, owner of Woody Signs and Designs, will be designing and selling holiday ornaments again this year! Each year she showcases a building or landmark in Watchung. We encourage you to be on the lookout for the 100th Anniversary ornament which will be sold at the end of this year!

Celebrate our 100th Anniversary with Custom Watchung T-Shirts!



Our committee, alongside dedicated outside volunteers and residents, continue to work behind the scenes categorizing and digitizing hundreds of historical photos, articles, and documents at the Texier House Museum. This is no small task, and incredibly labor intensive. We are excited to share these photos for viewing very soon with the public. Once again, we thank those who have been helping with this monumental task —your contributions make history come alive!

Show your Watchung pride with our Anniversary T-shirts! Choose from three unique designs featuring iconic landmarks including the Texier House, Wilson Memorial Church, and the Watchung Arts Center.

Cost: \$10 (Reduced Price)

Sizes: Youth M & Adult S, M, L, XL, XXL

Where to Buy: Borough Hall, Texier Museum Open House events, or the Fall Harvest Festival.

Get creative!

Customize your shirt with fabric markers available at the Texier House, at special events, or purchase your own.

Exciting Museum & Website Updates

Our committee, alongside dedicated outside volunteers and residents, continue to work behind the scenes categorizing and digitizing hundreds of historical photos, articles, and documents at the Texier House Museum. This is no small task, and incredibly labor intensive. We are excited to share these photos for viewing very soon with the public. Once again, we thank those who have been helping with this monumental task —your contributions make history come alive!

Visit the Texier House Museum

Located at the heart of the Watchung Circle, the Museum is open the first and third Sundays of each month. Check www.watchunghistory.org or the Borough website for updates, special guests, and events. We hope that you can join us for **Weekend Journey Through the Past** on **October 11th** (10 am to 5 pm) and 12th (12 noon to 4pm).

Additional Information

Want to volunteer or learn more about the 100th Anniversary? Email us at historic@watchungnj.gov or visit our webpage to find volunteering opportunities and support our mission.

Have historical photos or artifacts? Contribute to the Museum's collection and help preserve Watchung's legacy! We also encourage you to visit the Borough Website and search "centennial celebration" to share your stories, photos, and suggestions for the 100th Anniversary!

The Watchung Historical Committee
Christopher Vander Fliet, Chairperson



The Valley Players was a Watchung community theater group that performed plays and musicals in and around the Borough of Watchung. It was established on February 9th 1933. Its mission statement was "To promote the community interest in plays and to study the art of the drama". The Valley Players, in their later years, would accept a format where a comedy or drama was performed in the spring and a musical would be performed in the fall. The first musical ever performed by the group was Oklahoma – performed in 1970. The Valley Players proudly celebrated their 40th Anniversary on May 17th 1974 at Fiddlers Elbow. While not exactly known, the Valley Players ultimately dissolved in the late 1970's.



The area where Best Lake resides today was originally a stream and marsh area until about 1880 when Col. John Farmer Wilson established the Natural Ice Company and built a dam in the location where the current dam at Best Lake resides today. Wilson's intention was to cut ice in the winter and sell that ice in the more temperate months – this is how food was kept cool before the advent of the refrigerator. With the construction of the dam, the stream and marsh areas filled up, increasing the surface area of the lake which allowed for an increased yield of ice in the winter. This was one of the first major industries that utilized Watchung's natural resources, with the exception of farming.



Girl Scout trips and activities in and around Watchung included camping and participating in activities at Camp Endeavor, hiking along Old Somerset Road, overnights at Skytop Pavillion in the Watchung Reservation, and hiking from Bayberry School to Best Lake both along Valley Road. In the 1960's & 1970's girl scouts would visit the Hyde Mansion in Watchung as well as the Lyons VA Hospital in Lyons, NJ and sing Christmas Carols to the patients at these facilities. In the 1980's, the Watchung Girl Scout troops prepared candy baskets and also sang Christmas carols for the nuns who resided at the Villa Maria. The girl scouts also created Christmas ornaments for the patients at the Bonnie Burn Sanatorium, a facility originally used to treat tuberculosis patients.

It is believed that the original Watchung Easter Egg hunts held in Watchung were hosted by Wilson Memorial Church and later sponsored by the Watchung Lions Club. As of 2025, the annual Easter Egg Hunt is hosted by the Borough of Watchung Recreation Committee. Wilson Memorial Church, the grounds at Bayberry School, Mobus Field, the fields south of the Connell Corporate Park in Berkeley Heights, NJ and Phillips Field have all been locations where the Watchung Easter Egg Hunts have been held.

The Pratt home, now the Watchung library, once had a sign in front of it with the text "Four Sisters" making reference to the daughters of the Pratt family –Jane, Laurens, Deborah and Virginia.



TRAFFIC AND BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION

What a summer! It's amazing our flowers around the circle held up as well as they did with all the rain, heat and humidity. Thanks to the DPW water patrol, flowers continued to beautify Watchung throughout the summer.

The blooming of the cherry trees along Somerset Street was again a welcome sight in May. There are new plantings on the ends of the islands. These perennial dwarf fountain grasses will grow 2-3 feet in height and provide green foliage with silvery white flower spikes.

Operation Pride once again found townspeople volunteering their time and effort to keep Watchung clean and beautiful. They picked up trash around our lakes, schools, and roadways. Everyone who participated received an Operation Pride T-shirt and a certificate of thanks from our Mayor. There were refreshments and clean-up gear available for all. What a wonderful way to instill pride in our town!

As summer wanes, we will once again see scarecrows on the Village Green for Watchung's Annual Scarecrow Stroll. People enjoyed strolling and taking pictures of the creations made by school children, families and local groups. Prizes were awarded in a variety of categories and participation was enthusiastic.

In October, T&B will be participating in the planting of Daffodil Bulbs all around town. Watchung will then be able to welcome Spring in a burst of yellow!

Traffic and Beautification looks forward to decorating for Fall with pumpkins, bright colored mums, and wreaths around the Watchung Circle.

COME JOIN US WHEN WE DECORATE OR PLANT! EVERYONE IS WELCOME!



WATCHUNG POLICE DEPARTMENT

Introducing the Watchung Police Department Drone Program

I'm pleased to announce that the Watchung Police Department has officially launched a new drone program, a significant addition to our efforts to modernize law enforcement tools and improve public safety across our community. The addition of this program reflects our continued commitment to using technology responsibly and effectively to protect our residents, enhance emergency response, and support the safety and well-being of everyone in Watchung.

The drone—also known as an Unmanned Aircraft System, or UAS—gives us a reliable aerial perspective in situations where visibility and access may be limited. Whether we are looking for a missing child in a wooded area, responding to a natural disaster, or documenting the scene of a serious crash, the drone provides an extra set of eyes in the sky. This capability allows officers to gather critical information quickly, safely, and without delay, helping us make better-informed decisions during emergencies.

One of the most important uses of the drone is in search and rescue operations. In missing person cases, particularly those involving children, elderly individuals, or persons with special needs, time is of the essence. The drone can be deployed rapidly and cover large areas that might take hours for officers to search on foot. With thermal imaging capabilities, the drone can even detect heat signatures at night or in low-visibility conditions. This can mean the difference between life and death in time-sensitive situations.

In addition to search and rescue, the drone is useful in law enforcement operations involving fleeing or hiding suspects. If someone runs into a wooded area or other hard-to-see location, the drone gives officers a bird's-eye view that can locate the individual without putting officers or bystanders at unnecessary risk. It also assists in natural disaster response—such as during heavy storms, floods, or other large-scale events—by allowing us to assess damage, prioritize resources, and coordinate with emergency services more efficiently.

The drone will also be used to assist with documenting crime and accident scenes. High-resolution aerial photography and video can help investigators reconstruct events more accurately and provide clear, detailed perspectives that aren't always possible from the ground. This technology also offers valuable support during large public events or emergency situations by providing real-time views that help commanders coordinate personnel and ensure public safety.

Just as important as how we use the drone is how we don't use it. The Watchung Police Department has a clear and strict policy in place to ensure that this tool is used responsibly and in compliance with all local, state, and federal laws. Our drone will never be used for random surveillance, and it will never be equipped with any kind of weapon. Its purpose is to support public safety missions—nothing more.

Only officers who have completed all necessary training and federal certification are permitted to operate the drone. This includes passing the Federal Aviation Administration's Part 107 exam, which covers flight regulations, airspace rules, and operational safety. Our officers must also complete hands-on flight training and successfully pass supervised flight tests before they are authorized to use the drone in the field. To maintain these skills, operators undergo annual refresher training and must demonstrate continued proficiency in emergency scenarios, legal updates, and advanced flight techniques.

Every drone flight is carefully documented, with records that include the date, time, location, weather, flight purpose, and names of the involved personnel. These records are reviewed regularly, and the entire program is audited each month to ensure compliance and accountability. In addition, we compile an annual report outlining all drone activity for public review to maintain transparency.

The drone program will be supervised by a designated UAS Program Supervisor, who is responsible for ensuring the program runs safely and legally. Any requests from other agencies to use the Watchung Police Department's drone must be reviewed and approved by either the Chief of Police or the UAS Program Supervisor.

We know that new technology can raise questions, and we welcome them. This program was built on a foundation of transparency and trust, and we want our residents to feel confident that it is being used in a way that benefits the community while respecting your rights and privacy.

We are proud to bring this forward-thinking tool to Watchung. Whether it's saving a life, locating a suspect, or supporting emergency crews during a disaster, our drone is here to serve the public good. We will continue to keep you informed and remain open to community feedback as we move forward.

Thank you for your continued support.



WATCHUNG LIBRARY, A BRANCH OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY

The Watchung Library is currently operating at 20 Stirling Rd., (formerly Valley Furniture Store) while the building at 12 Stirling Rd. is undergoing extensive renovations. Any questions about the library may be directed to watchung@sclibnj.org. The Watchung Library offers open hours (Monday - Friday from 10 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m.-2:00 p.m.,) a full calendar of events and a well curated in-house collection for all ages. If you haven't been in, don't miss your chance to see the temporary library before we move back once the renovation is complete.

LearningExpress Library The Somerset County Library System offers LearningExpress Library, an eLearning solution that provides support to students and professionals for academic skill-building, standardized test prep, career certification test prep and more.

LearningExpress offers guided support and preparation to help those looking to earn a high school equivalency credential, college admission test preparation, skill building resources for high school students and more. To locate this resource just type LearningExpress Library into the search bar at SCLSNJ.org

Value Line and Morningstar Investment Research Center

For investors, or those looking to start investing, SCLSNJ provides access to two great resources. SCLSNJ card holders may access these databases online, free of charge at SCLSNJ.org. Just type the name of the database in the search bar to explore these resources.

Value Line provides investment information and analysis on stocks, mutual funds, options and convertibles, and no-load mutual funds. Whether you're a beginning or skilled investor seeking high-impact ideas, Value Line provides reliable, unbiased information using the latest data and sophisticated tools to provide expert analysis and guidance.

Morningstar Investment Research Center is a comprehensive stock database that includes financial data on companies traded on the New York Stock Exchange, NASDAQ®, and the American Stock Exchange; in-depth research reports on companies; data on mutual, closed-end, and exchange-traded funds; analysts' reports on funds; exclusive investment tools and engaging educational features, including interactive training on basic and advanced stock, fund, and portfolio techniques.

HIGHLIGHTED FALL PROGRAMS: *Unless otherwise noted, programs will be held at the 20 Stirling location.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS:

Family Painting Afternoon: Spooky Tree - (families with children)
Tuesday, October 7 • 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Discover how to paint step-by-step using watercolors. Pre-packaged snacks and drinks will be served. Parents/guardians and their children must sign up individually.

STEAM: Dino Dig (grades K-5)

Tuesday, October 14 • 4:30 - 5:15 p.m.

Dig for dinosaur fossils.

Music with Miss Donna (ages birth - 5 years and caregivers)

Monday, October 27 and Monday, November 17 • 10:30 - 11:00 a.m.

Hosted at Wilson Memorial Church

Take time to bond with your children while making music in this interactive session. Enjoy music, fingerplays, and playing instruments.

Family Painting Afternoon: Leaf in the Water

(families with children)

Tuesday, November 04 • 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Discover how to paint step-by-step using watercolors. Pre-packaged snacks and drinks will be served. Parents/guardians and their children must sign up individually.

Improv Workshop

(grades 5-8)

Friday, November 14 • 5:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Hosted at Wilson Memorial Church

Discover improvised fun with a variety of improvisation games. Who knows what we will make up! But one thing is certain...laughter is guaranteed!

FOR ADULTS:

Autumn Lima Bean Wreath

Friday, October 3 at 1:30-3:00 p.m. and
Saturday, October 4 at 10:30 a.m. - noon

Decorate a straw wreath for Halloween using painted lima beans.

Qijong and Meditation

October 9, 16 and 23 • 11:00 a.m. - noon

Patty Barron will lead gentle sitting and standing Qigong exercises/meditation focusing on body/mind connection. Benefits include learning new ways to de-stress and enhancing coordination and balance. This program will be hosted at Wilson Memorial Church.

Art That Screams: Anxiety and Expression in Art History - Part 1 (Lecture)

Saturday, October 18 • 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Explore how artists give visual voice to grief, anxiety, and collective unrest. Presented by Jennifer Santa Maria.

Art That Screams: Anxiety and Expression in Art History - Part 2 (Guided Drawing Activity)

Saturday, October 18 • 11:30am - 12:30pm

Participants will re-imagine one of the featured works using colored pencils. Presented by Jennifer Santa Maria.

Passport Services

Wednesday, November 12 • 2:00 - 5:30 p.m.

SCLSNJ is an officially-designated passport application acceptance facility with passport processing hours set for your convenience. By appointment only. Schedule at <https://sclsnj.org/passports/>.

Job Seeker Series Presented by Jan Goodman, Community Outreach Specialist / Greater Raritan One-Stop Career Center Training Services:

Mastering the Interview

Thursday, October 23 • 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Participants will explore how to prepare for an interview and become familiar with the types of questions to expect, as well as the questions they should think about asking. They will learn how to prepare for second interviews, testing, and shadowing, as well as how to follow up on their interview sessions.

Business Etiquette for Jobseekers

Thursday, November 6 • 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Learn how to make your first impression memorable, review the rules and protocols for polite job-hunting behavior, and cultivate the art of portraying a poised, self-confident image in today's demanding business atmosphere.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Watchung Receives “River Friendly - Community Partner” Certification

In June of 2025, the Best Lake Riparian Buffer Restoration project was certified by the Watershed Institute under the prestigious “**River Friendly - Community Partner program**”. The Borough received this certification due to the project’s environmental benefits in the areas of Water Quality Management, Conservation, Wildlife Habitat Enhancement and Education, and Outreach. The Best Lake project was certified following a multi-year review and is one of only three projects in the state that have been certified under the “River Friendly – Community Partner” category.

By way of background, the Environmental Commission, with help from community volunteers, has planted and maintained over 200 native trees and shrubs along a 300 ft stretch of stream east of Best Lake. The project was developed to improve water quality entering Best Lake. Specifically, the buffer filters stormwater runoff entering the stream, reduces erosion, and shades the stream, which keeps water temperatures low enough to support a healthy fish population. In addition, the stream buffer helps provide a much-needed level of flood control by absorbing excess water during storm events. The buffer also serves to enhance habitat for wildlife and pollinators. To further enhance the natural habitat provided by the buffer, bird boxes were added along the buffer as part of an Eagle Scout project. Residents are encouraged to visit the area to enjoy the native plantings and diverse wildlife. Any residents that are interested in volunteering to help the



Environmental Commission maintain and improve the buffer should contact us @ environmental@watchungnj.gov.

To expand the environmental benefits of this project, the Environmental Commission encourages residents to practice sustainable land care on their own property. To assist residents with this objective, the Watershed Institute has established a “River Friendly-Resident” program that identifies a series of best practices that residents can implement and gain their own River Friendly Certification. Residents can learn more about this program here: <https://www.njriverfriendly.org/resident>



New Recycling Option Available

The Environmental Commission has recently added another recycling option for residents beyond those offered by Somerset County. Residents may now recycle Clothing/Textiles in addition to Styrofoam and Books. The Clothing/Textile and Styrofoam recycling bins are available during normal business hours at the Department of Public Works facility located at 880 Somerset Street. The Book bin is located at the Fireman’s Exempt Hall at 57 Mountain Boulevard. In addition to the environmental benefits and the convenience of the bins, the book and clothing bins also provide revenue to the Borough. In addition, Watchung receives an annual recycling grant from the state that is calculated on the volume of materials that are recycled each year. The more we recycle, the larger the grant. The Environmental Commission is continuing to explore ways to increase our recycling rate, including by making additional innovative recycling options available for residents in the future.



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*Thank
you*

Watchung Borough would like to thank the businesses that appear in this newsletter and to recognize them each as supporters and cornerstones of our community. For it is with their contributions that this newsletter has been produced at no charge to our residents. The Borough would like to further request that citizens, in response, patronize these businesses first when given a choice as these businesses are saving each citizen tax dollars.

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FALL/WINTER 2025



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