

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
BOARD OF HEALTH
MINUTES

April 28th , 2021

Special Virtual Meeting 7:00 pm

In order to comply with all NJ executive orders and to protect members of the public, this meeting will be held virtual for all parties. Public comments will be accepted through zoom.

To call into the meeting, dial +1 646 558 8656 . It will prompt you for a meeting ID. Type 942 3405 9374#. You will then enter the passcode 507843.

To access the meeting using a smartphone or computer, you can download the Zoom app from the app store for free. You must type in the meeting ID 944 6747 2284 or click <https://zoom.us/j/94234059374?pwd=QjhOKzQySXhkQ3RiQ3VPY2swektvUT09>. Please enter your full name when entering the meeting.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 pm.

President's Statement

Under the provisions of N.J.S.A 10:4-6 et seq., notice of time and place of this meeting has been posted and sent to the official newspapers.

Roll Call

Present: Bruce Ruck (President), Julia Gunther (Vice President), Diana Logan, Fran Ellis, Meghana Anandarangam, and Kimberly Brown.

Absent: Francesca Escaleira and Charlene Virgilio.

Also present were Middlebrook Regional Health Commission, Health Officer Kevin Sumner and Council Liaison Ronald Jubin and Council President Wendy Robinson.

New Business

Health Officer Kevin Sumner explained the owner of Stress Solutions Spa has requested the 2021 license renewal fee be waived. He advised her to submit a request to the Board as this is already part of the Board of Health Ordinance. In her request she explained after paying the 2020 renewal fee the establishment soon after had to close due to COVID and did not receive much revenue. He advised the Board to remember they are setting precedent for other establishments. He suggested another alternative would be to cut the 2021 license fee in half.

Kimberly Brown agrees with prorating the fee for the length of time the establishment was not open but questioned what waiving the entire fee would do to other business owners. Councilman Jubin said he agrees with prorating the fee.

Julia Gunther asked if the Board could put in writing that prorating the fee was just a one time occurrence. She also asked if the owner had to show any evidence of burden on her behalf. Kevin Sumner stated he feels it's appropriate for the Board to show good faith efforts for the businesses in town.

Bruce Ruck moved and Frances Ellis second, motion to reduce the 2021 license fee to \$100 dollars specifically for Stress Solutions Management. All unanimously approved.

Kevin Sumner said there was another request made asking the Board to waive the Health License fee for LeShack. Kevin Sumner explained the Ordinance authorizes the board to waive licenses fees for nonprofit organizations. He also added the LeShack license fee has been waived for 35 plus years.

Bruce Ruck explained LeShack is run by Watchung Little League and the money earned is used to fund their equipment.

Bruce Ruck moved and Frances Ellis second, motion to waive fee for LeShack as a non-profit. All unanimously approved.

Cannabis Discussion

Bruce Ruck asked the Board to take their ethical, personal and religious views out when discussing the topic of Cannabis and mainly focus on the health related issues.

Council Liaison Ronald Jubin spoke about the importance of educating people on public health.

He questioned the Board on all the different health effects related to Cannabis.

Bruce Ruck advised all that Council President Robinson was listening in on the call and asked her to contribute any thoughts or suggestions she may have.

Health Officer Kevin Sumner gave his opinion on the sale of Cannabis.

He mentioned public health does not focus on individual health and little research has been done at the Federal level which creates a lot of unanswered questions. He doesn't

think the Board of Health focus should be on the sale or not sale in Watchung but feels the Board should focus on the messages they want to make people aware of.

Bruce Ruck discussed the Cannabis related documents distributed to the Board for their review.

He said smoking Cannabis in public is not allowed as it follows the tobacco laws.

He also said there is no specific level in the State of New Jersey law written that defines driving while intoxicated for Cannabis.

Bruce Ruck asked Board members to give their individual opinion on the health related issues of Cannabis.

Meghana Anandarangam agreed with all points made regarding enforcement issues.

Kimberly Brown questioned what feedback the Council was looking for from the Board.

Council Liaison Ronald Jubin suggested if it were possible to have members of the Board of Health attend the upcoming Council meeting to answer any questions. He said the Mayor and Council is trying to gather the most information they can in order to make the best and most informative decision.

Kimberly Brown agrees that providing information to the Mayor and Council is the only thing the Board can do relating to this topic. She personally feels as a whole our main concern in regards to Cannabis needs to be protecting and figuring out how to monitor our young people.

Diana Logan said her primary concern is educating our children on this topic. She asked Bruce Ruck to consider holding another presentation at the high school to better educate the students and faculty.

Kevin Sumner feels the Board of Health should focus on relaying to the Mayor and Council the importance of education, resources, and advocating for more funding for such resources. The Board of Health ultimately wants the Council to be aware of the childhood issues, marketing, and the potential psychological impacts of Cannabis.

Julia Gunther believes the goal of the Board of Health is the protection of the health and safety of the community and its residents. She also agrees boosting the education in the schools is important.

Fran Ellis feels we need to also protect our pets from accidentally ingesting these edibles.

Council President Robinson agrees with the importance of more education and would also like residents to have access to facts. She feels it is important not to ignore the potential revenue Cannabis would bring which could help the town with some costs for education and resources.

Council Liaison Ronald Jubin asked Health Officer Kevin Sumner how other Boroughs are handling this situation from a public health perspective. Kevin Sumner advised he has not been involved in those conversations at this time.

Diana Logan recommended educating the public on certain statistics to help them understand the negative effects of Cannabis. Council Liaison Ronald Jubin asked the Board of Health to put together some suggestions regarding the issues surrounding Cannabis.

Bruce Ruck asked the Board how they would like to proceed with advice for the Mayor and Council.

Kevin Sumner cautioned the Board to put out certain studies that the average person may not understand. He also advised he would not be able to attend the upcoming Council Cannabis meeting due to a prior meeting commitment.

Bruce Ruck suggested putting together a one or two page FAQ with Health Officer Kevin Sumner to condense the key points for the Mayor and Council to be aware of. He advised once written the document would be circulated to the Board of Health members for comments.

Bruce Ruck reiterated the Board of Health is not making a decision whether Cannabis should or should not be sold based upon health effects because it is legal State wide. He feels the Council should hear what the Boards concerns are or are not.

Council Liaison Ronald Jubin thanked the Board for their time and feels the more information we provide our residents with on this topic the better.

Public Portion

Council President Robinson commented on the different levels of THC in edibles. She asked if literature could be distributed to the residents describing the effects of the different percentages of THC.

Adjournment

Bruce Ruck moved and Frances Ellis second, motion to adjourn at 8:35 pm. The next scheduled Board of Health meeting will be held on May 19th, 2021 at 7:00pm. In order to comply with all NJ Executive Orders and to protect members of the public, current meetings will be held virtually for all parties until such time when in-person meetings can safely resume while complying with all NJ Executive Orders. When in-person meetings resume, they shall be held at Borough Hall, 15 Mountain Boulevard, Watchung, New Jersey.

Respectfully submitted,

Regina Angelo

Approved: 5/19/2021