

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG  
MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
MINUTES  
JUNE 6, 2019 - 7:30 P.M.**

**OPENING STATEMENT:** Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM and made the following statement: Under the provisions of N.J.S.A.10:4-6 et seq., notice of the time and place of this meeting was given by way of annual notice to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, and Star Ledger, and posted at Borough Hall.

**SALUTE TO THE FLAG and MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN SERVING HOME AND ABROAD, AND REMEMBER THE 75<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY AND ALL WHO SERVED OR LOST THEIR LIVES ON THAT DAY. MAYOR BALLA ASKED ANYONE WHO HAS SERVED IN THE ARMED SERVICES WHO ARE HERE THIS EVENING TO PLEASE RISE. HE THANKED THEM FOR THEIR SERVICE. MAYOR BALLA ALSO WISHED TO REMEMBER THE VICTIMS OF THE VIRGINIA BEACH SHOOTING ON MAY 31<sup>st</sup>.**

**ROLL CALL**

Gibbs [ A ] Black [ P ] Nehls [ P ] Sopko [ P ] Goodloe [ P ] Eisenberg Knegten [ P ]

Also present were Administrator Tom Atkins; CFO Bill Hance; Attorney Albert Cruz; Clerk Michelle DeRocco; and Deputy Clerk MaryAnn Hance.

There were 45 members of the public present.

**SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS:**

Councilman Sopko read and moved the following resolution with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, "aye"

R1:06/06/19 Profiles of Positive Aging Recognition: Fran Ellis, Sondra Fechtner, Lynn Franklin, Helen Rebmann

Mayor Balla and Councilman Sopko presented Fran Ellis, Sondra Fechtner, and Lynn Franklin with framed copies of the resolution and congratulated each of them. Mrs. Rebmann was unable to attend.

Councilman Nehls read a brief bio on Officer Dan Peltack.

Councilman Nehls moved the following resolution with a second by Councilman Black and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, "aye."

R2:06/06/19 Appointment of Probationary Police Officer - Dan Peltack

Mayor Balla administered the Oath of Office to Officer Dan Peltack as his brother held the Bible.

Mayor Balla announced his appointment of Carolyn Solon as Emergency Management Coordinator. He administered the Oath of Office to Carolyn Solan as her daughter held the Bible and her husband stood by her side.

Carolyn Solan - Emergency Management Coordinator for a three-year term expiring June 5, 2022.

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**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:**

1. Administration & Finance – Councilman Sopko reported interviews for vacancies have been in progress and those for Construction Official have been completed and recommendations should be forthcoming. He also said the Committee is actively interviewing for both the Administrator's position and the Tax Clerk.
2. Police – Councilman Nehls reported the Committee met on June 4<sup>th</sup> and discussed the radios and 911 upgrades. The radios will be installed in the police vehicles next week and they are waiting for the new equipment for the 911 communication system. Councilman Nehls also reported new signs have been placed on Ridge Road (no left turn onto Hillcrest Road) and one on High Oaks (no right turn onto Hillcrest Road). The Committee also discussed the request Chief Cina made to the County to divert truck traffic on Route 78 to exit 41, however, the Chief has not had a response to date. Councilman Nehls also said they discussed Weldon's request to move the radio tower as soon as possible so they may proceed to work in that area. Councilman Nehls stated Chief Cina's contract was up in December and this will be discussed with the Administrative/Finance Committee. Councilwoman

Goodloe added to the report stating there have been concerns with the traffic on Valley Road and Bayberry during drop off and pick up of children at the school and the Police will be looking at ways to control the traffic during those times.

3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Councilman Nehls announced Bob Burns reported that the Right to Know (RTK) inspections have been completed with only minor issues and these have been corrected as of June 3rd and the Borough is now in compliance. Councilman Nehls also stated he will be scheduling a Public Works Committee meeting next week and they will be discussing the Beautification Program.

Councilman Nehls then gave a report for Engineering stating Mr. Herits sent him an email regarding the soil testing on the property behind the Exempt Hall, and based on the results of the test the lot is buildable. This will be discussed at the next Public Works Committee meeting and then will go to Mayor and Council for review. Mr. Atkins said it has been suggested having the soil company come and discuss this on June 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:30. Mr. Atkins also said he has informed Bob Burns and Tom Herits there will be approximately \$950,000 available for roadwork this year. A Bond Ordinance may be introduced for this on June 20<sup>th</sup> with adoption on July 18<sup>th</sup>.

4. Public Affairs:

Environmental – Councilwoman Goodloe reported the Committee met on May 20<sup>th</sup> and continues to work on many of their initiatives including developing a styrofoam recycling program, finalizing the details of the Trex plastic recycling program, and working on simplifying the tree removal application. Councilwoman Goodloe said the next meeting will be held on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 PM at Borough Hall.

Recreation - Councilman Black reported the Commission has scheduled a “Music in the Park” event for June 29<sup>th</sup>, 4-7 PM at Phillips Field with a rain date of June 30<sup>th</sup>. He also reported the Community Picnic was well attended with many young families and it has been suggested to have more games and other events for the much younger children to enjoy in future years. Administrator Tom Atkins added there will be a resolution on the June 20<sup>th</sup> agenda to appoint the Summer Camp Counselor staff.

Historical – Councilman Black had no report.

Board of Health – Councilman Sopko reported the Board of Health will meet on June 12<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM and he will have a report for the next Council Meeting.

5. Fire – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten reported she and Mayor Balla attended the monthly meeting on June 3<sup>rd</sup> and it was announced that two Watchung Seniors received a scholarship from the Department and the names will be given to the Borough toward the end of the month.
6. Laws and Ordinances – Councilman Black had no report, however, there is a meeting scheduled for June 7<sup>th</sup> at 8 AM.

#### **REPORTS – OTHER:**

7. Engineer- Councilman Nehls reported for Engineering during his Public Works report.
8. Police Chief – No report was submitted.
9. Fire Department – No report was submitted.
10. Rescue Squad – No report was submitted.
11. Emergency Management – Carolyn Solan reported she will be reaching out to the Police Department, Fire Department and Rescue Squad to get emergency contacts so she has someone to contact in the event of a disaster event. Ms. Solan will be trying to recruit volunteers from those organizations so the Borough EOC will be fully staffed when it is needed. Ms. Solan is also in the process of recruiting residential volunteers as long as they have the appropriate ISC training for the EOC. Ms. Solan asked if anyone had any questions regarding the Shared Services Agreement which is on the agenda this evening. Mr. Atkins said on the OEM structure it was felt that the Council should do a resolution appointing the Borough employees who will act as staff during an emergency so it is clear to the that those employees during an emergency will be OEM. Mr. Atkins also stated Ms. Solan, as OEM coordinator has the authority to appoint volunteers and Ms. Solan is encouraging anyone interested in helping should contact her. Mr. Atkins also asked if a person does not have the training would the Borough help them getting this and Ms. Solan said this could be discussed and she has no problem training individuals. Councilman Black then asked about communications with radios and walkie talkies. Ms. Solan responded the radios for the CERT Team will have to be reprogrammed and she spoke with the Fire Chief who will be trying to obtain an OEM radio which would communicate with everyone. Ms. Solan said she cannot use her work radio in Watchung. Mr. Atkins asked about the radio for Watchung and this would allow communications to the Police, Fire, and Rescue Squad and

those volunteers under her and Ms. Solan it would. Mayor Balla said he has some volunteer information which he will forward to Ms. Solan. Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten asked for clarification that if there is an emergency in Watchung would the County allow her to handle the situation in Watchung. Ms. Solan said she would absolutely be in Watchung when there is an emergency here.

12. Attorney – Mr. Cruz had no report but stated there is one item for Executive Session this evening.
13. Clerk – Mrs. DeRocco congratulated the ladies who were recognized for Profiles of Positive Aging. Ms. DeRocco thanked all the poll workers for their work at the June 4<sup>th</sup> Primary, saying that the election went well and the poll workers did a great job keeping things in order when they returned everything to the Clerk's office that evening. It was a long day for everyone starting at 5 AM. Mrs. DeRocco said there should be stronger security in the Borough buildings, saying that this has been discussed previously and always put on the back-burner. She asked that this be discussed again. Councilman Nehls said this brought up this week at the Police Committee meeting and will be discussed at the Public Works Committee meeting. He asked Mr. Hance if there had been appropriation for this. Mr. Hance said the only appropriation was for the door locks. Councilman Nehls asked Mr. Hance to revisit whatever he has on security and get it to him before the Public Works meeting next week.
14. Administrator – Mr. Atkins congratulated Ms. Solon and said she has worked very closely with the staff and CERT Team over the past several years and has assisted Gary Greves, our former OEM Coordinator, on a variety of tasks. Mr. Atkins clarified that although the OEM Team is being officially appointed this evening, since January 1, 2019 those same people have done everything necessary to protect the Borough in case of an emergency. Mr. Atkins then mentioned Item #21 on the agenda, the resignation of Judge Richardson, effective July 1<sup>st</sup> and stated it is very important to take action at the June 20<sup>th</sup> Council meeting to appoint a Judge and the Borough should work with North Plainfield since we have an inter-local agreement with them, however Watchung appoints the Judge. Mr. Atkins noted that the Ordinance being introduced this evening does not incur any new debt, it is a cash Ordinance.

#### Wildlife Management Advisory Committee –

Youth Services – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten congratulated Watchung resident Anthony Volpe, a Senior at Watchung Hills who was drafted by the New York Yankees. Ms. Eisenberg Knegten reported the Youth Services Commission \$5000 Grant Applications is due June 14<sup>th</sup>.

Planning Board – Councilman Sopko reported the Planning Board met on May 21<sup>st</sup> and the Board approved a dumpster enclosure at The Point, and also Paul Fiorilla was appointed as an Alternate member of the Board and all members are looking forward to working with him. The next meeting is scheduled for June 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 PM.

Board of Education – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten reported the playground at Bayberry was officially opened at a ribbon cutting on Tuesday, June 4<sup>th</sup> with many residents attending. Speakers included Mayor Balla, basketball hall of famer Nancy Lieberman, Superbowl Champion Billy Ard, and former SNL star Joe Piscopo, and of course, the Bisignano family. Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten publicly thanked Frank, his wife Tracey, and children Henry, Morgan and Alexa for their generosity to our schools. Even though the playground is on school grounds it is open to all after school hours as well as weekends. Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten also reported there was a Board of Education meeting on May 22<sup>nd</sup> and Joseph Barbello was sworn in for a term to expire at the end of this year. A committee has been formed to find a Principal to replace Mary Nunn when she retires at the end of the calendar year. The next Board of Education meeting will be held June 12<sup>th</sup> at Valley View School at 7 PM. Councilmen Black and Sopko said the event and the playground were and are very impressive and they also thanked the Bisignano family for their generosity. Mayor Balla also thanked the Bisignano family and said this was the most impressive event he has attended.

Municipal Alliance – Councilwoman Goodloe reported there was a meeting on June 5<sup>th</sup> and they had their annual meeting with school administrators in our partnering towns, Green Brook, Warren, Watchung, Long Hill, to discuss and understand the current problem with substance abuse in our schools and what could possibly lead to substance abuse such as mental health and bullying. Municipal Alliance would like to sponsor events to help bring awareness to and prevent substance abuse. Councilwoman Goodloe reported that Municipal Alliance would like to join with neighboring towns to sponsor a 5K run the morning of the Watchung Harvest Festival.

Library Advisory Board – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said she is encouraged tonight that Council will be introducing an ordinance appropriating \$50,000 toward the beautification of the Borough and is hoping the painting of the library is included in that budget. The next meeting of the Library Board will be July 10<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 PM.

Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten then stated she and Councilwoman Goodloe have consistently requested any input regarding the results of the soil testing and they were told it was not received. Mr.

Herits told them it had been received. She asked why they were not given the report when it could be given to someone from the public if they were to OPRA it.

Councilman Nehls responded that he has not seen the report either. However, Mr. Herits received it and it was being reviewed by Maser Consulting and once this is completed it will then be discussed at a Public Works Committee meeting with recommendations to Mayor and Council to follow with a copy of the report. Councilman Nehls stated this has always been the procedure followed, it goes through the Chair of a Committee for discussion first and this process should be followed.

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### **PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY**

Virginia Hartmann, Ellisen Road, said she attended the Somerset County ceremony for the Profiles of Positive Aging and there were four winners from Watchung and only three from the rest of the County. She said Watchung was well represented. Mr. Atkins thanked Ms. Hartmann and said the person who worked with the Mayor and was the catalyst was Ms. DeRocco, the Borough Clerk. Ms. Hartmann then asked why the Borough is now spending and wasting money for painting the library. Councilman Nehls agreed with Ms. Hartmann but stated the Library Board asked that the building be painted. Councilman Black said he has been a proponent of painting and maintaining the building since there could be other uses for it when it is no longer the library. Councilwoman Goodloe also agreed that it is important to maintain the building.

Cori Haveson, Maple Street, said there are many different opinions on the library. She mentioned there had been some flooding in the Community Room at the library and she is concerned that beginning to have a moldy smell, the carpet should be removed. Councilman Nehls said this is the first he has heard about this and Mr. Atkins said he will speak with Bob Burns about this.

Diddy Addario, Rock Avenue, congratulated the ladies who are the recipients of the Profiles of Positive Aging. She said throughout the years that Somerset County has presented these awards Watchung has been very well represented. Ms. Addario also said the Texier House Museum has many World War II artifacts.

With no further public wishing to speak the public portion was closed.

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### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

A Public Hearing of Ordinance OR:19/08 entitled: "AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG CH. 5-12-12.76 ET. SEQ., THEREOF AND TO FIX AND DETERMINE MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM SALARIES AND COMPENSATION TO BE PAID TO CERTAIN EMPLOYEES" was held.

Councilman Black moved a public hearing be held with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, "aye."

With no one from the public wishing to be heard, Councilman Black closed the public hearing and moved the following resolution with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, "aye."

R3:06/06/19 Adoption of OR:19/08 – Amend Code / Min Max Ordinance

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### **NEW BUSINESS**

**CONSENT AGENDA:** The Consent Agenda Items listed below were unanimously accepted as amended, following a motion by Councilman Black and a second by Councilman Nehls and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, "aye."

Approval of the following Council minutes:

May 16, 2019 – Regular Session

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Planning Board – April 16, 2019  
Traffic and Beautification Committee Minutes – May 6, and May 28, 2019  
Police Activity Report – April, 2019  
Traffic and Beatification Committee Minutes – May 28, 2019  
Building Department Report – May 2019

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

#21 - John F. Richardson, Esq. 5/17/19 Letter of Resignation as Municipal Court Judge,  
effective July 1, 2019 c: M & C, TEA, WH

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**CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS**

Councilman Black moved the following Resolutions, with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye.”

R4: 06/06/19 Purchases Over \$2,000 – Winner Ford (PD-Two (2) Vehicles)  
Gentilini Chevrolet (PD –One (1) Vehicle)  
Spatial Data Logic (PW-Work Order Software)

R5: Interlocal Services Agreement for Emergency Management Services with Somerset  
County

R6: Appointment of OEM Deputies and Staff

R7: Extension of Interim Agreement / Construction Official – Vince Gerald

R8: Authorize Appointment of Summer Intern – Christina Tillinghast

R9: Authorize Renewal of Towing Licenses – Majestic Towing & Transport, Inc.

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**NON-CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:** Items listed below will be individually addressed and acted upon accordingly. Council reserves the right to refer an item to Committee for further review and discussion.

Proposed Ordinance OR:19/14 entitled “AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR LANDSCAPING IMPROVEMENTS, SIGNS, AND OTHER PROPERTY BEAUTIFICATION IMPROVEMENTS IN THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, IN THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY AND APPROPRIATING \$50,000.00 THEREFOR FROM THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND.” was introduced.

Councilman Black moved Ordinance OR:19/14 be given its first reading. So Ordered. Councilman Black moved the Ordinance be adopted on first reading and the Clerk be directed to publish the ordinance and notice of public hearing. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Black, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye.” Public Hearing to be held June 20, 2019.

R10:06/6/19 Introduction of OR:19/14 – Capital Improvements/ Beautification

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**PUBLIC PORTION-GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Dorothy Addario, Rock Avenue, asked how the Borough was able to get the Summer Intern who is being appointed this evening. Ms. DeRocco responded that the young lady had approached the Borough that she was interested, and said that after an interview, she felt she could be a big help, as there is a need downstairs in the Tax/Construction Department while we search for a new Tax Clerk. Mrs. Addario said they could use a person at the Historical Museum since there is much work still to be completed.

Wendy Robinson, Hill Hollow Road, questioned if Hill Hollow will be one of the roads on the list for milling and paving. Councilman Nehls said Mr. Burns and Mr. Herits will be preparing a priority list of roads to be completed. Ms. Robinson then asked about the Police report given earlier, regarding the turns onto Hillcrest? Councilman Nehls said there are now no left turn signs from Ridge Road and no right turns from High Oaks onto Hillcrest Road.

Karen Graboyes, Carrar Drive, said she was appalled by the disrespect and treatment toward other Councilmembers and the Administrator, displayed by Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten. She said this should never be done publicly. She said Councilman Nehls had clearly stated the committee process that has always been followed. Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten responded that the Council should be entitled to receive what they request. Ms. Graboyes said there clearly is a process and that should be followed as was stated by Councilman Nehls. Councilwoman Goodloe said there was no disrespect meant and they just want more transparency.

Councilman Nehls then said if more transparency is wanted, he announced a Special Meeting on being held on June 13<sup>th</sup> with the Board of Education and the Council, and said the public should be allowed to attend this meeting since it would be considered under the Open Public Meetings Act.

Cori Haveson, Maple Street, said she did OPRA the soil report and that Mr. Herits received it about a week and a half ago to review it. She said the public should have the right to review since it is public information. Mr. Cruz proceeded to explain that there are exceptions to the OPRA Law and that some of the content of the report could be redacted and not every document is “OPRA”able. Mr. Cruz further explained that the Borough works as individual Committees to discuss and make recommendations to the Council. Councilman Nehls said the public will see the report before the June 20<sup>th</sup> Council meeting as will the Councilmembers.

With no other public wishing to speak the public portion was closed.

Councilman Nehls reported there is a beaver in the Lake again and if anyone does see it to please let him know so Public works can address the issue.

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Councilman Black moved the following resolution with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Black, Nehls, Sopko, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, “aye.”

R11:06/06/19            Executive Session:    Contract Negotiations-Crown Castle Consent to Sublease

The Borough Council may take official action on those items discussed in executive session upon completion of the executive session.

Upon return to regular session all Council members previously in attendance were again present.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 P.M. to the Call of the Chair and to the next scheduled Council meeting Thursday, June 20, 2019 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

MaryAnn Hance  
Deputy Clerk