

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
MAYOR AND COUNCIL
MINUTES
JANUARY 16, 2020 - 7:30 P.M.**

OPENING STATEMENT: Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 7:38 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 Special Meeting Notice to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, and Star Ledger, and posted at Borough Hall.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG and a MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN, SERVING HOME AND ABROAD.

ROLL CALL:

Robinson [P] Black [P] Goodloe [P] Eisenberg Knegten [P] Jubin [P] Martino [P]

Also present were Administrator James Damato, Attorney Denis Murphy, Clerk Michelle DeRocco, and Deputy Clerk Regina Angelo. Also present was Bond Counselor Lisa Gorab.

There were 45 members of the public present.

PROCLAMATION:

Radon Action Month – January 2020

Mayor Balla read a Proclamation honoring January as Radon Action Month. (copy attached)

Mayor Balla explained the specifics of the Bond Ordinance on tonight's agenda for the new library. He said the library grant application came out last Monday with a short timeline to respond. He explained what the grant application entails. He said our architect Mr. Iovino put plans together for a two story library and explained it was necessary for the Council to move the bond ordinance forward so we have everything in place for the library grant application. He said it is very important for us to try and have the best grant application. He explained to the public the process of how a Bond Ordinance works.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance – Councilman Jubin had no report. Councilman Martino asked if the Administration and Finance committee could put together a budget policy training session. Councilman Jubin said fiscal responsibility is important for everyone and feels this session is a good idea for all.
2. Police – Council President Robinson said the Committee met for its first meeting and discussed the budget, certain promotions, and also advised the next sergeant's test is scheduled for February 11th. She commented that our Police Department is accredited which reduces our insurance premium. She said they also discussed the possibility of having a School Resource Officer present at the schools.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds - Councilman Black said the repairing of sink holes on Carrar and Elsinore Drive were discussed. He also said the radio tower on the Weldon property was discussed as there is a pad there they are looking to build on. He said this application will need to go in front of the Board of Adjustment for a variance and thanked Weldon for all their help with this project. He said they also discussed the dredging project on the lake and a hydro rake which could be used in the shallow end to filter out debris. He said this process would cleanse some of the lake and save the community a lot of money. Councilman Martino said Knightsbridge Road was paved last month and asked if we are following and utilizing the DOT spec. He asked who was overseeing the job and questioned if the road was inspected properly due to the very cold weather conditions. He also asked for the report which includes the summary of the renovations that took place at the Firehouse and how the overages came into play. Mayor Balla said he would meet with Councilman Martino to discuss his questions and the report.
4. Public Affairs: Councilwoman Goodloe had no report.

Environmental – Council President Robinson had no report and said the first meeting is scheduled for January 27th. Councilwoman Goodloe commented on the plastic bag recycling program and said the program is going strong. She reported that to date, we've collected about 400 of the 500 lbs we

need by April 1st to get a free bench for the town. She thanked everyone who's participating. Councilwoman Goodloe noted that there has been a lot of plastic put in the bins that is not acceptable, and to avoid the whole bag being thrown out, here are some tips: ALL PAPER must be removed, like any labels or stickers of any kind, any shipping envelope (like from Amazon or UPS) or any bag with stickers or labels on it will be thrown away, and only soft, stretchy plastic bags should be included. No shiny, crinkly or thick plastic bags are acceptable unless they have a Recycling #2 or #4 on the bottom. She explained a good way to know if it's acceptable is if you can bunch it up and it fits in your hand (like a ShopRite bag or the bag a newspaper comes in). Also not accepted are thick bags that had food in them, like the ones candy, nuts, pretzels, or frozen vegetables come in. No big bags that had pet food, bird food, mulch or firewood, etc. in them. She added that all bags must be clean and if you're in doubt, leave it out.

Recreation – Councilman Black said the Easter Egg Hunt is scheduled for April 11th, Little League opening day is April 18th, and Operation Pride is scheduled for April 25th. Councilman Black said the Borough now offers six community events including a full-time summer camp program, travel and recreation basketball, tennis program, women's volleyball and a men's basketball program just to name a few. He thanked Linda Monetti for all her hard work in organizing all of these wonderful events and programs.

Historical – Councilwoman Goodloe said the Committee will hold its first meeting of the year on January 22nd at the Texier House and encouraged all to attend.

Board of Health - Councilman Jubin said the Board held their reorganizational meeting yesterday. He said they wished recently retired Board of Health Secretary MaryAnn Hance farewell and thanked her for all her years of dedication to the Board. He said he is actively looking forward to improving health and wellness in the community and he is taking the initiative to head more activities to promote this cause, under the Mayors Health and Wellness campaign.

5. Fire – Councilman Martino said the Fire Committee had an informal meeting on January 9th. He asked the status of the delivery of the new fire engine. He also said he was forwarded an email from the Fire Department and they are asking for another piece of equipment which will need to be budgeted for. He said the Fire Department dropped off the monthly report, and announced that in the month of December they responded to 25 calls and 218 man hours of service. He said OEM was given a questionnaire in order to get the Council up to speed on how the Department functions. He also said regarding Fire Prevention, he met with our regional representative from the Department of Community Affairs, the Division of Fire safety on January 15th.

6. Laws/Ordinances - Councilwoman Eisenberg Knechten reported the committee met on Friday January 10th and our new Borough Attorney, Denis Murphy from Weiner Law Group, who was appointed only 12 hours earlier, was in attendance, along with our Administrator, Jim Damato. She thanked Attorney Murphy and said he jumped-in feet first and is an incredible addition to our team. She said they discussed beginning the large project of going through the code book to update the online version with the most currently enacted material, and that they hope to comb through years and years of resolutions, make them public, and look for inconsistencies that need addressing. She said this will likely take us the better part of this year, but we are committed to having an accurate and accessible code book and index of resolutions. Councilwoman Eisenberg Knechten said she intends to invite Zoning Officer Carolyn Taylor to our next meeting to get her input on many items, like impervious coverage, outdoor signage, and specific types of sheds.

REPORTS - OTHER:

7. Engineer- No report.

8. Police Chief – No report.

9. Fire Department – No report.

10. Rescue Squad – Council President Robinson read the following report provided by Squad Member Dorothy Addario, who was unable to attend.

"Our first general business meeting of the year was on January 14th. Lysandra Plotkin, President, presented a year-end report for 2019. Some points from the report included, recognizing the handful of members who moved up in ranking from driver to active EMT, the great sense of camaraderie among new members, and the handful of members who have stepped up to hold officer positions in the new year. At the end of December 2019 our strategic plan was reviewed. Some of the completed goals included: Give people the option to apply for membership directly through our website, establish a probationary member checklist, address small renovations such as replacing broken ceiling tiles, lights and perform generator maintenance, and establish method for online donations. Goals that we touched upon but will look into further for 2020 include, Implementing patient surveys to provide statistical feedback Refine and develop policies and procedures and assess areas relating to member retention that can be improved. We would like to thank everyone who attended and supported our Tree of Lights ceremony. A post mortem report was presented by the President to evaluate areas of success and what needs to be

changed for this year. Congratulations to Victor Bowman for passing the National EMT exam and becoming our newest EMT probationary member. And to Chris Monroy who became our newest driver member. Top responder Matthew King was elected for the position of Operations Sergeant. Squad liaison Wendy Robinson attended our last business meeting. We are looking forward to working with her in the future. Our annual awards dinner will be held next Friday 1/24 at Stage House in Scotch Plains."

11. Emergency Management – No report.

12. Attorney – Mr. Murphy gave a brief background on himself and also said he is looking forward to working with everyone in Watchung.

13. Clerk – Ms. DeRocco said our Health Officer Kevin Sumner gave the Clerk's Office a supply of radon testing kits available for our residents at no charge. She advised everyone they can be picked up in the Clerk's office if anyone is interested in testing their radon.

14. Administrator – Mr. Damato had no report. He said we will be holding our first Administration and Finance meeting of the year tomorrow.

Wildlife Committee- Councilman Jubin had no report.

Youth Services – Council President Robinson had no report.

Planning Board – Councilman Martino had no report.

Board of Education – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten congratulated student Isha Gidwani who was the winner of the Bayberry Spelling Bee. She explained that Isha is a 4th grade student who beat out 21 other 3rd and 4th graders to win and that Isha will represent Bayberry Elementary School at the Somerset County Spelling Bee in March. She reported that Cynthia Deegan was announced as the Bayberry Educator of the Year. Mrs. Deegan is a 4th grade teacher at Bayberry.

Board of Education Liaison Joseph Barbella was present and reported that their annual reorganizational meeting was held last week and welcomed a new president Dora Harvey and new vice president Jen Scharf. He said they are also reorganizing their sub-committees and he will communicate that information once complete. He also said he is coordinating with Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten on ways to collaborate to save the town some money on cost sharing for resources between the school and community.

Municipal Alliance – Councilman Black had no report.

Library Advisory Board – Councilwoman Goodloe said the Library Advisory Board Meeting was held on January 8th at 3:30 pm and it was their first meeting of the year, as with many of the committees, they were reluctant to entertain a full agenda of items due to the pendency of volunteer appointments. She reported administrative items were discussed and that the the Board is eager to become more involved with plans for the new library."

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PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

Mike Santucci, Mountain Boulevard, questioned what would happen if the construction plans for the library go over the budgeted amount, are we allowed to resubmit to be reimbursed for extra costs. Mayor Balla said he would get back to him with an answer.

Bill Nehls, Brookdale Road, asked the Mayor to explain why the engineering contract costs were so high. Mr. Damato said the engineering fees are maximum amounts and they do not mean the Borough needs to spend up to those amounts. He also said he thinks the amounts listed for the engineer costs are the same as last year's numbers. Mr. Nehls said the appropriated amounts for last year were \$121,000 dollars and now we are increasing the amount to \$400,000. Mr. Damato stated again that the amount listed is not the amount the Borough is obligated to pay. Mr. Nehls asked what a conflict counsel was defined as. He also questioned if the firm Shain Schaffer was the Democratic Chairperson's firm for Somerset County and why they were hired to work as the Borough's conflict counsel.

Catherine Leigh, Guinard Drive, asked is there anyway the resolution for the bonding of the library can state that if we don't get grant funds the bond will not be taken. Ms. Leigh said once you pass the bond ordinance the funds can be appropriated to something else and asked the council to agree if we don't get the grant from the state then we don't do the bond ordinance. She asked if the resolution could state that the bond ordinance could only be used for the library purpose. Mayor Balla confirmed this bond ordinance can only be used for the library purpose. Mayor Balla asked Lisa Gorab from our Bond Counsel to come forward and explain in further detail the process of how a bond ordinance works.

Sondra Fechtner, Cardinal Drive, said we are hoping to receive the grant money from the State but what happens if we do not get offered any State funding? Ms. Gorab explained the grant would reduce the authorization but if the Borough doesn't receive the grant it is up to the Mayor and Council how they want to proceed.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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NEW BUSINESS

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The Consent Agenda items, were unanimously adopted following a motion by Council President Robinson and a second by Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten, and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Black, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye.”

The Mayor and Council all took turns in thanking Michelle DeRocco for her dedicated services as Clerk to the Borough for all these years.

Approval of the following Council minutes:

December 10, 2019 – Regular Session

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Planning Board Minutes – November 19, 2019
Board of Adjustment Minutes – November 14, 2019
Board of Health Minutes – September 18, 2019
Police Activity Report – November, 2019
Building Department – November, December, 2019
Library Advisory Committee – November 6, 2019
Recreation Minutes – October 23, 2019

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #1 Borough of North Plainfield 12/8/19 Notice of Adoption 12/16/19, Land Use Ordinance No. 19-09, re: An Ordinance Revising the Provisions of the “Historic Preservation Ordinance”
C: M& C, JD, Pl. Board
- #2 Borough of Garwood 12/17/19 Resolution Calling for Study Commission to Review Open Public Records Act Adopted 11/14/19 C: M & C, JD
- #3 Township of Bernardsville, 12/17/19 Resolution in Support of Increasing Compensation of Election Workers C: M & C, JD

Acknowledgment and Acceptance of the following letter of Resignation:

- #4 Michelle DeRocco 1/9/20 Letter of Notice of Retirement as Borough Clerk, effective May 1, 2020
M & C, JD

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CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS: Council President Robinson moved the following resolutions, with a second by Councilwoman Goodloe and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Black, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye.”

Councilman Martino asked for more clarification on the cost and specifics for the Mural Conservation. Mr. Damato said the restoration of the mural was being handled by the Historical Committee and he believes the restoration itself will cost \$6,300.00.

- R1:01/16/20 Purchases Over \$2,000 – J & J Art Conservation Service (Mural Conservation)
OSI Technology (PD –Phone System)
Caffrey Tree & Landscape (PW – Tree Removal)
Finne Building & Investment (PW – Drainage Inlet Repair /
Carrar Drive)
Zetron (PD – Computer Warranty)
JH Reid Recycling Inc (PW – Tub Grinder)
- R2: Confirming the Borough of Watchung’s Continued Participation in the Somerset County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan
- R3: Clarification of Resolution Authorizing Continued Shared Serviced with the Borough of North Plainfield / Court Administrator
- R4: Authorize Clerk to Issue (3) Raffle Licenses - Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
- R5: Authorize Clerk to Issue Bingo License - Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
- R6: Authorize Revocable License Agreement – 40 Oakridge Road
- R7: Appointment to Fire Department - Junior Members / Adam Moszczynski, Soraia Almeida

- R8: Award of Contract – Diesel Fuel and Motor Gasoline / Allied Oil
- R9: Award of Professional Services Contract – Prosecutor / Richard J. Guss, Esq.
- R10: Award of Professional Services Contract – Risk Manager / Reliance Insurance Group
- R11: Award of Professional Services Contract – Consulting Engineer / CME Associates
- R12: Award of Professional Services Contract – Labor Counsel / Chasan Lamparello Mallon & Cappuzzo
- R13: Award of Professional Services Contract – Auditor / Samuel Klein and Company
- R14: Award of Professional Services Contract – Tax Appeal Attorney / Martin Allen, Esq.
- R15: Award of Professional Services Contract - Arcari + Iovino Architects, PC/
Continued Conceptual Library Plan
- R16: Award of Professional Services Contract – Special Projects Engineer/ Maser Consulting
- R17: Award of Professional Services Contract – Special Counsel, Conflict Counsel /
Shain Schaffer
- R18: Authorize Appointments - Boards, Committees, Commissions

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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.

Councilman Martino recused himself and stepped down from the dais.

Councilman Jubin moved the following Resolution with a second by Council President Robinson and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Black, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, “aye.”

R19:01/16/20 Adoption of 2020 Temporary Capital Budget

Introduction of Bond Ordinance OR:20/01 entitled: **“BOND ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND EQUIPPING OF A NEW LIBRARY, BY AND IN THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, IN THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET, STATE OF NEW JERSEY; APPROPRIATING \$5,900,000 THEREFOR AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$5,619,000 BONDS OR NOTES OF THE BOROUGH TO FINANCE PART OF THE COST THEREOF”**

R20: Introduction of Bond Ordinance – Construction & Equipping New Library
Arts Center

Councilman Jubin moved the ordinance be given its first reading. So Ordered. Councilman Jubin 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 Council President Robinson and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Black, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, “aye.” Public Hearing to be held on January 27, 2020. (Special Meeting)

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

R21: Resolution Re-appropriating Excess Bond Proceeds OR:01/10 - \$400,000. / Library

Councilman Martino returned to his seat on the dais.

Councilman Jubin moved the following Resolution with a second by Councilman Black and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Black, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye.”

R22: Payment of Bills

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PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

Michelle Posehn, Johnston Drive Ext., said since May of 2018 she has attended every Board of Education meeting and said there has been a lot of discussion about the financial situation of our schools. She wished the amount of people here for the Council meeting would come to the Board of Education meetings. She feels the children and schools of Watchung are an investment. She mentioned as being the PTO

president she wants our schools to be fun and exciting places for our kids to attend and we shouldn't have to rely on private monies for something as basic as curriculum. She encouraged everyone to keep the children of Watchung and their needs in mind.

Virginia Hartmann, Ellisen Road, said she feels the public library system is one of the most amazing American institutions. She said she understands that the schools also need funding but the library has waited years to finally be put first.

Paul Fiorilla, Washington Drive, thanked the Council for acting on the library bond. He feels the public has spoken on this issue and they do in fact support having a library in town. He said he understands that residents do not want their taxes raised however towns need services to appeal to home owners and feels having a library is important to the future of Watchung.

Stuart Homer, Sherwood Drive, said he is very excited the Council made this move to support the library and feels a new library will be a wonderful edition to our community.

Sondra Fectner, Cardinal Drive, asked what was going on with the collection of money for the bricks regarding the 911 Memorial and asked who has taking the role on this project now. She suggested the Mayor and Council put together a group of residents who could fundraise for the community and follow through on these types of projects.

Councilman Martino asked if the police could move the orange construction signs sitting on the Village Green in order to enhance our Village Center better.

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Council President Robinson moved the following Resolution with a second by Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Black, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino "aye."

R23:01/16/20 Executive Session: Contract Negotiations

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 at 10:31 P.M. all Councilmembers previously present, except Councilman Martino were in attendance.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 10:32 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council will be a Special Meeting scheduled for January 27, 2020 at 7:30 P.M. and the next regularly scheduled meeting to be held on February 6, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Regina Angelo
Deputy Clerk