

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG  
MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 20, 2020 - 7:30 P.M.**

**OPENING STATEMENT:** Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 7:37 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 a MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN, SERVING HOME AND ABROAD.**

The Mayor called forward two new inducted Eagle Scouts and asked them to lead the Flag Salute. Mayor Balla congratulated Alex Ruta and Michael Mattiassi and commented that Scouts are trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, and brave. He said we are very honored to have them with us this evening.

**ROLL CALL:**

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

Also present were Administrator James Damato, Attorney Denis Murphy, Clerk Michelle DeRocco, Engineer Bruce Koch and Deputy Clerk Regina Angelo.

There were 15 members of the public present.

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION:**

**PROCLAMATION / Building Safety Month – May 2020**

Mayor Balla read a Proclamation honoring May as Building Safety Month. (copy attached)

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:**

1. Administration & Finance - Councilman Jubin had no report.
2. Police - Council President Robinson said Chief Cina is having officers posted at the top of Hillcrest Road during off-peak hours. She said the Chief feels during high-traffic times, officers need to be at the bottom of the hill to optimize the response time to other corners of the Borough and reduce the likelihood of an accident from an officer having to respond from the top of the hill while the traffic is backed up. She also reported that since the DOT placed signs on the overpass with arrows indicating the truck route, not heading down Hillcrest Road, there has been a substantial reduction in truck traffic.

Council President Robinson said the Chief believes that the most effective means of addressing the problem would be to post signs on 78 that identify an alternate route for trucks to follow such as Exit 41, because they are being directed through Watchung by the GPS systems. Council President said she contacted the League of Municipalities to participate in their Lobby Days so that she can bring attention to this problem. She also has been continuing the discussion with the Board of Ed and the Chief regarding the posting of officers on Bayberry Lane and Valley Road, as well as at Valley View School. She mentioned the Police Committee will meet before the next Council meeting and hopefully have a recommendation at that time. Council President Robinson also mentioned concerns with children crossing at Stirling Road because the sidewalk ends at the crosswalk that leads to Verona Place where there is no sidewalk. She said the children are walking on the street where buses turn onto to drop off or pick up students. She spoke with the Chief about this problem, and we will be discussing the feasibility the Board of Ed will look into the feasibility of a crossing guard.

3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds - Councilman Black reported that we are going through a transition period with our Public Works Manager. He said we are starting somewhat of an internship with Charlie Gunther on a part-time basis. He said Mr. Gunther will help the Borough on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays. He feels Mr. Gunther is a perfect candidate for this internship.
4. Public Affairs- Councilwoman Goodloe had no report.

Environmental - Council President Robinson said we have achieved the collection of 500 pounds of plastic bags so we have earned a bench, however, the Environmental Commission is urging residents to continue to collect them as we can earn additional benches. She said the Commission is meeting Monday and should have a recommendation after that about placement of the bench that will be delivered soon.

The Commission has also ordered seedlings that will be handed out at the Green Fair, to be held on May 16 at Watchung Hills Regional High School. The Commission has ordered re-usable shopping bags and will be discussing the best way to distribute them to our residents. Council President Robinson also announced that the Borough will be receiving our Salem Oak sapling, part of the State's initiative to extend the life of a giant oak that fell after standing for over 500 years in the town of Salem. She said the history of the oak is quite storied, and in celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the DEP and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day, the State arranged for every municipality to receive one of the saplings that was grown from that giant and historic tree. She said we are looking to ramp up the Green Team with two primary initial goals, preparing for and staffing the Green Fair and restoring our certification as a Sustainable Jersey municipality. She hopes more people volunteer as it will be an effort that will need organization and teamwork. Somerset County Green Leadership Hub may be able to help us and she is meeting with the County Director of Planning on Monday.

Recreation – Councilman Black reported that the sponsorship letter for donations and tables regarding the Community Picnic will go out to businesses before the next meeting. He said the Municipal Alliance contributed to the Harvest Festival and said they may also have funds to go towards this event. He said the Community Picnic is scheduled for May 16th. Councilman Black said the Municipal Alliance is in need of more volunteers. He mentioned information on the Municipal Alliance in the newsletter to try and get more parents involved. Councilwoman Goodloe suggested that it be added to our Volunteer form..

Historical – Councilwoman Goodloe said the Committee is continuing to work on creating videos for the town and documenting the lives of long-time residents. She said the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Watchung is coming up in six years and the Committee would like to begin planning festivities now. She said she feels a joint committee to plan such a large event is necessary.

Board of Health - Councilman Jubin thanked our Board of Health President for providing everyone with updates on the Coronavirus.

5. Fire – No report, however, Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten commented on the structure fire that occurred over the weekend and commended the Fire Department and Rescue Squad for helping our community. Councilman Black thanked the Fire Department and Rescue Squad for their quick response time but also thanked Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten for taking the family into her home.

6. Laws/Ordinances - Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten had no report but mentioned starting this Monday the Mayor and Council will be keeping office hours every Monday evening from 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. at Borough Hall. She said this is just to keep our doors open to residents who can't make it out to Council Meetings.

## **REPORTS - OTHER:**

7. Engineer – Borough Engineer Bruce Koch thanked Administrator Damato for holding a transition meeting with himself, Arlene McCoy, and Mr. Herits. He gave the Mayor and Council copies of a synopsis he put together regarding the \$300,000.00 DOT grant the Borough received which shows the roads and estimated cost for each. He told the Council he will provide them with a proposal once they chose a direction to proceed in.

8. Police Chief – No Report.

9. Fire Department – No Report.

10. Rescue Squad- Vice President Katrina Dumapit reported the Rescue Squad will be hosting an Open House on March 1<sup>st</sup>. She said both ambulances went through inspections and passed with flying colors. She said this month the Squad responded to a total of 24 calls. Rescue squad member Denise Wilson commented on the structure fire occurring over the weekend and said it was a collaborative effort of everyone coming together to help and she is very proud of our Fire Department.

11. Emergency Management- No report.

12. Attorney – No report.

13. Clerk – Clerk Michelle DeRocco said our new codification company has been working to get us updated with all of the 2019 ordinances and if you go to our on-line Code Book, you should see a new, more user-friendly program. Referring to the appointment this evening of Shannon Long, Mrs. DeRocco thanked the Mayor and Council for the additional help in the Clerk's Office.

14. Administrator – Mr. Damato reported a few Council members and himself attended incident command training and we are now in compliance with that aspect of Emergency Management. He also said he attended a seminar on the 2020 Census and they are seeking Census workers in specific areas. He also said the deer hunt has concluded and the final count culled this season was 24.

Wildlife Committee- Councilman Jubin had no report.

Youth Services – Council President Robinson said the Superintendent of Schools, the Administrator and two teachers have requested membership and Linda Monetti is trying to schedule a meeting.

Planning Board –In Councilman Martino’s absence, Council President Robinson reported the Planning Board met on February 18<sup>th</sup> and heard final testimony from the BNE engineer and began to hear testimony from their architect. Testimony will be continued at a Special Meeting scheduled for March 10 at 7:30 PM. The next regular Planning Board meeting will be on March 17 at 7:30 PM.

Board of Education – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said the Sweetheart Dance was a wildly successful PTO event. She said on Tuesday, February 25<sup>th</sup> from 6 – 7 PM our new Valley View Principal, Karen Kidd will be available to meet with residents. She also mentioned Kindergarten registration has begun. Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said she is working with SEPAG on the Watchung Family Walk scheduled for Saturday April 18<sup>th</sup> at 11 AM. She said the next Board of Education meeting is scheduled for March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7:30 P.M.

Municipal Alliance – Councilman Black had no report.

Library Advisory Board – Councilwoman Goodloe had no report.

---

---

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

Dorothy Addario, Rock Avenue, reminded all the centennial celebration, while five years away, will be here before you know it. She said it needs to be a very well thought-out event and we need to start planning now as this should be Watchung’s biggest event ever. She asked the Mayor and Council to be proactive in the planning of our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and said it should be a Borough- wide endeavor.

Rachael Funcheon, Cedar Road, asked about the goose control product that was on tonight’s Agenda and if someone could explain the goal. Administrator Damato explained a local company will treat the grassy areas and walking paths around Watchung Lake and Best Lake, with an environmentally friendly and non-toxic solution, making the grass repugnant to them. He said the treatment is primarily rosemary oil, and the goal is to eliminate the goose droppings so families can walk and children can play on the greens. Ms. Funcheon asked if information could be sent to the Environmental Commission so they could read up on the product.

Lynda Goldschein, Sherwood Drive, said the light at the top step of the parking lot needs to be replaced. She said she didn’t get this meeting’s agenda through our email system and Clerk DeRocco said she would look into it. Ms. Goldschein also questioned why everyone is resigning from the Planning Board.

---

---

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

---

---

### **NEW BUSINESS**

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

Approval of the following Council minutes:

January 16, 2020 – Regular Session  
January 30, 2020 – Special Meeting, Regular & Executive Session

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

None

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #7 Township of Scotch Plains 2/10/20 Notice of Public Hearing on 2/25/20 re: OR 2020-2 allowing certain entities to store above ground fuel containment systems to operate fuel generators in emergencies c: M & C, JD, Pl. Board
- #8 Edward Lauerman 1/30/20 Letter of Resignation as a member of the Board of Adjustment C: M & C, JD, Bd of Adjustment
- #9 James Clemens 2/1/10 Letter of Resignation as a member of the Board of Adjustment C: M & C, JD, Bd of Adjustment
- #10 Andrew Baldasarre 1/14/20 Letter of Resignation as a member of the Planning Board C: M & C, JD, Pl. Bd.

---

---

**CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS:** Prior to Council President Robinson moving the Consent Agenda Resolutions, Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten asked if R1 went through the Public Works Committee. Councilman Jubin said he did bring this recommendation to the Committee and he also used his knowledge as a scientist and through his own research he is confident this is the most cost effective and environmentally safe way to control the goose population.

There being no further questions, Council President moved the following Consent Agenda Resolutions, with a second by Councilman Black and upon Roll Call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Black, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin “aye.”

R1:02/20/20 Purchase Over \$2,000. – Messinas (B & G – Goose Control)

R2: Authorize Payment of Accumulated Benefits – MaryAnn Hance

R3: Authorize Appointment of Interim Part-Time Public Works Manager / Charles Gunther

R4: Authorize Appointment of Administrative Assistant

R5: Authorize Execution of Agreement with Somerset County / Certified Recycling Professional (CRP)

R6: Endorsing the Submission of the Recycling Tonnage Grant Application to the State of New Jersey

=====

**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.

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

R7: Certify the Dedication of Block 1604, Lot 15 as Public Library Use

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

R8: Certify that Permission has Been Granted to Apply for the Project entitled  
New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act

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

R9: Payment of Bills

=====

**PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Lynda Goldschein, Sherwood Drive, said she was walking around the lake and due to the large numbers of geese she wasn’t even able to see the water. She asked why the Council is so against culling the geese.

=====

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on March 5, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Regina Angelo, RMC  
Deputy Clerk