

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG  
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

**SEPTEMBER 3, 2020 - 7:30 P.M.**

**(THIS MEETING WAS A VIRTUAL MEETING)**

**OPENING STATEMENT:** Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM and stated the following: 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 the Annual 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 [ A ] Goodloe [ P ] Eisenberg Knegten [ P ] Jubin [ P ] Martino [ P ]

**REPORT OF AD HOC COMMITTEE**

Council President Robinson reported that the WIDER Committee has held all 5 district committee meetings as planned. There will be a last session planned for September 30<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 at Borough Hall for anyone that was unable to attend the previous meetings. The last meeting was on August 26<sup>th</sup> and discussed the progress thus far as well as short- and long-term goals and priorities. The committee now has all of the information regarding the incident at the camp and a report will be presented to the Mayor and full Council. While proper investigating took some time, it is their goal to prevent a similar future occurrence. The Board of Educations anti-bullying policy was also discussed in addition to the voluminous police reports to identify areas of expansion and improvement. A training is expected for Council Members and they will investigate any additional classroom training that may be offered as covid restrictions are lifted. A meeting with the Board of Education is still being worked out as they prepare to start classes.

**REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:**

1. Administration & Finance – Council Member Jubin reported that the Committee recently met and instructed CFO Hance to begin working and collection budget requests 1 month earlier to begin planning for 2021. Committee Members are also working on a strategic plan for collecting grant information and call upon all Committees to do the same.
2. Police – Council President Robinson reported that the Police Department is working closely with the Board of Education on ensuring traffic flow in anticipation of the upcoming school year.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Council Member Martino reported that interviews for the foreman position are still taking place and thanked the Public Works Department for their response during the last storm. Administrator Damato informed the Council that a recommendation would be before Council for their next meeting.
4. Public Affairs – Council Member Goodloe reported that the Welcome to Watchung signs are being installed throughout the Borough next week.

Environmental – Council President Robinson reported that 203 dead or diseased trees and 111 live trees were removed from June through August, not including those damaged by the storm. The commission would also like to bring attention to the spotted lanternfly and the damage they cause. More information is posted on the Borough's website and they urge residents to follow any suggestions. The commission would like to recognize Arlene McCoy's contributions to the Borough, she has been an asset for her diligence and dedication to tree preservation. Karen Pennett reported on the Planning Board's review of the Master Plan and recommendations are being discussed to be made to the Planning Board from the Environmental Commission. Council President Robinson reported that the bottle cap and plastic bag recycling is still on hold; but they are looking to move forward with the next steps of the Styrofoam recycling program. Lastly it was recommended that the Public Works Committee discuss the funds in the tree bank fund as well as the next phases of the Styrofoam recycling program.

Recreation – Administrator Damato reported that some events for the fall are in the works, Mr. B's fishing camp is being extended for an additional week since it was a popular event. The Little League obtained a covid plan and were issued a permit to start.

Historical – Council Member Goodloe reported that the next meeting is on September 9<sup>th</sup>, at which time new updates will be provided. However, there will be a 9/11 ceremony and commended the Historical Committee for finishing up with the 9/11 memorial project.

Mayor Balla spoke on the upcoming 9/11 ceremony to be held on September 11<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm, he invited everyone to attend with masks and following appropriate distancing guidelines, weather permitting.

Board of Health – Council Member Jubin reported that restaurants and movie theaters were now eligible to open and that the Board and OEM were in contact with these businesses to ensure appropriate guidelines are followed.

5. Fire – Council Member Martino reported that the committee had not met recently, however a vehicle fleet management list is being reviewed. He mentioned that there might be a workshop on September 26<sup>th</sup> at 10am at Borough Hall so that an assessment could be made on the economic impact to all departments.
6. Laws/Ordinances – Council Member Eisenberg Knechten had no report

## **REPORTS – OTHER:**

7. Engineer – Engineer Koch reported that the 2020 Municipal Aid was received and the announcement for the 2021 grant would be forthcoming. Mr. Koch reported on the status of the Elsinore Drive culvert repair, the Carrar Drive drainage repair, and the DOT Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program grant opportunity.
8. Police Chief – no report
9. Fire Department – Chief DeSandolo reported that there were 40 calls for the month of August, the mounting and fabrication work was completed, several members were trained on the operation of the new apparatus. Additionally, during the hurricane several members staffed the fire house and answered several calls for service. The Fire Department recently submitted information on new volunteers and are waiting on the Council's resolution appointing said volunteers.
10. Rescue Squad – no report
11. Emergency Management – OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon reported that the CERT Team is putting their second donation to the Somerset County Food Bank which should be delivered on the next Tuesday. She reported that the County did not meet the threshold on the recent round of FEMA funding. Additionally, the rain gardens were successfully installed and executive order 183 will be going in effect tomorrow, limiting indoor capacity to 25%. The COVID plan was reviewed in coordination with the Board of Health for the Watchung Little League and revisions are pending.
12. Attorney – Attorney Denis Murphy clarified that the Bonnie Burn property owners had filed an action against the Planning Board, not the Borough. In this regard the Planning Board filed an answer and this case was assigned to Judge Miller to be heard on September 25<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Murphy also reported that the same judge is handling the Borough's Affordable Housing litigation which is scheduled on September 28<sup>th</sup>.
13. Clerk – Clerk Edith Gil reminded residents that the Borough still has radon kits available and spoke on the Governor's executive order regarding the upcoming election, the increase of drop box locations, and the two polling sites that Watchung will have on Election Day, the Firemen's Exempt Hall and Wilson Memorial.
14. Administrator – Administrator Damato reported one new COVID case since the last meeting and urged residents to fill out their census. Watchung's response rate is currently low so the Borough is making attempts to reach out to residents to fill their census. He also reported on the Bonnie Burn tower.
15. Wildlife Committee – no report
16. Youth Services – Council President Robinson reported that the Commission met on August 25<sup>th</sup> to address the grant monies that remain unused and to review program proposals. The next meeting is on September 15<sup>th</sup> and hope that the Bayberry School Principal can be appointed to the commission.
17. Planning Board – no report
18. Board of Education – Council Member Eisenberg Knechten reported that the Board met on August 24<sup>th</sup> and members were voted in; funding and expenses relating to COVID were discussed as well as funding through the Cares Act and possible reimbursement from FEMA. The BOE also noted a recent generous donation from the Bisignano Family. It was also reported that students would be returning back to school on September 9<sup>th</sup> and about 30% of students in the district opted to remain fully virtual and explained the cohort schedules. Council Member Martino discussed his position with regards to the Philips Field lease that was previously voted on.
19. Municipal Alliance – no report

20. Library Advisory Board – Council Member Goodloe reported on the virtual programs being held by the library, on November 5<sup>th</sup> the library will be celebrating its 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and a celebration is expected to be announced.

**PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY**

No one from the public appeared

**DISCUSSION**

Preliminary recommendations from the Recreation Commission: *Music in the Park*  
*Movie Night*

Council President went over the proposed details of the Music in the Park event; Council Members weighed in on the pros and cons of holding the event during this time. It was determined that Recreation should move forward with planning out this event.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Council Member Jubin discussed the breach of confidential information that was discussed at the Council’s previous meeting and called for a resolution of this matter. Council Member Jubin called for a motion to open up a formal investigation onto this breach of executive session, second by Council President Robinson. Upon a roll call the votes were as follows: Council President Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin and Martino “aye”, Council Member Black was absent.

Council Member Martino expressed his position on this matter.

**NEW BUSINESS**

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

Approval of the following Council minutes:

- July 16, 2020
- July 30, 2020 Special
- August 20, 2020

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Board of Health Meeting Minutes	June 17, 2020
Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes	June 22, 2020
Planning Board Meeting Minutes	July 21, 2020
Wildlife Management Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes	August 10, 2020
Building Department	August 2020

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

- R1: Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – Nelson Construction (PW- Repair / Paint Municipal Court)  
Idemia (PD- Annual Maintenance Contract)  
Pinto Brothers (PW – 2020 Bulk Pickup)
- R2: Authorizing Borough Clerk to Sign Checks

**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.

R3: Authorize renewal of Liquor License 2020-2021 – Buffalo Wild Wings,  
Twin Brooks Lounge

Council Member Jubin moved the above resolution second by President Robinson and upon a roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino, “aye”, Black was absent.

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**PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION**

1. Deb Joren, Sterling Road, inquired on the investigative process of the breach which occurred from an executive session and asked if said matter would go before the Local Finance Board since there is no Local Ethics Board. Attorney Murphy explained that an outside Counsel would have to do said investigation and report findings to the Governing Body.
2. Marianne Campbell, Nottingham Drive, spoke of a council meeting in which Council Member Eisenberg Knegten spoke of Council Members having clandestine meetings. Ms. Campbell called for a swift investigation onto this matter.

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R4: 09/03/20 Executive Session: Legal Matters and Matters of Attorney-Client Privilege

Council President Robinson moved the above resolution second by Council Member Goodloe and upon a roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino, “aye”, Black was absent.

Upon return to regular session all Council Members previously present virtually, with the exception of Council Member Back, were in attendance.

Council Member Goodloe made a motion to return to public session, second by Council Member Jubin and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino, “aye”, Black was absent.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 P.M. to the Call of the Chair.

The next Regular meeting of the Mayor and Council is scheduled to be held on September 17, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Edith G. Gil  
Borough Clerk