

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 2, 2020 - 7:30 P.M.

(THIS MEETING WAS A VIRTUAL MEETING)

OPENING STATEMENT: Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 7:35 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.

Mayor Balla said: *Due to the COVID-19 crisis we are conducting this meeting via conference call mode to keep everyone apart and safe. Borough officials have been planning and coordinating over the last few weeks in response to the Coronavirus. We have declared a State of Emergency in Watchung and ask that all residents take the precautions when leaving their homes by avoiding contact with others. I encourage everyone to visit the CDC website and the Borough website for daily updates. If you experience problems with this transmission please communicate those issues by email to the Borough office so we can improve for future Virtual Meetings.*

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]

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance – Councilman Jubin had no report.
2. Police – Councilwoman Robinson had no report but said Chief Cina continually updates the Committee with daily COVID-19 reports.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Councilman Black said Charlie Gunther, our Public Works Manager has been working very efficiently together with our Public Works Department. He said the Public Works vehicles are constantly being disinfected on every shift. He also said the Borough Hall offices have been and are currently being disinfected daily. He stated he is very impressed by the way each department is coming together through this difficult time. He mentioned that hazardous tree removal and curb side pickup for our residents have begun for the month of April. He also said storm water remediation has been temporarily resolved at Carrar Drive. He said the spring cleanup is also taking place as well as potholes still being repaired. Lastly, he said the lighting at the top of Borough Hall walkway has been completed.
4. Public Affairs – Councilwoman Goodloe encouraged all residents to follow the Borough's Facebook page for daily updates and also to sign up to receive emails and text messages for communication purposes. She said the Somerset County Food Bank network is organizing an emergency food drive and advised residents to check the Borough's Facebook page for more information. She asked Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten to discuss the helpline in further detail. Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said the helpline was setup to assist residents in this time of crisis. She mentioned if anyone has any questions or concerns regarding the virus to please contact the helpline at 908-745-2111.

Environmental – Councilwoman Robinson had no report.

Recreation – Councilman Black said the Recreation Department has some great new contests underway thanks to our Coordinator Linda Monetti. He mentioned that the signs of spring photo contest program has begun. He also said there were other ideas discussed such as a physical fitness program and a music program. He said Linda Monetti has also put together a very impressive fun things to do list for our residents. He asked the Mayor and Council for guidance on how they would like to move forward running these programs. Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said in addition to Councilman Black's comments, every week the photo contest will have a new theme and winners for all age group categories will be announced every Friday. Mayor Balla said he feels the fitness challenge along with the art and music contest are all great ideas and he will have the flyers for each program distributed to the Council for review. He believes all these programs are wonderful for our residents and will bring smiles to the community.

Historical- Councilwoman Goodloe has no report.

Board of Health – Councilman Jubin said the Board of Health meeting has been cancelled due to the pandemic. He commended everyone on the Board, Bruce Ruck and Kevin Sumner our Health Officer for working round the clock. He read a letter from the Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission sent to Kevin Sumner in regards to COVID-19. He said during these times of crisis Boards of Health are essential as they help establish policies and procedures to keep us safe. Councilman Jubin said he is very proud to have Kevin Sumner as our Health Officer. He also thanked Charlie Gunther for stepping up and leading a great team. Councilman Jubin encouraged residents to walk in their neighborhoods

instead of around Watchung Lake. He advised everyone that this disease is community and readily spread.

5. Fire – Councilman Martino agreed with Councilman Jubin that everyone needs to stay home and shelter. He said the Fire Committee has no report.

6. Laws/Ordinances – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten had no report.

REPORTS - OTHER:

7. Engineer – No report.

8. Police Chief – No report.

9. Fire Department – No report.

10. Rescue Squad – No report.

11. Emergency Management – Carolyn Solon, OEM Coordinator, said the County is providing her with daily updated reports regarding the coronavirus. She mentioned that the first responders are running low on supplies and asked that if anyone was willing to donate they can do so at the Police Station. She said in regard to the supplies first priority was given to the hospitals and everything left was divided amongst the municipalities. She stated that information regarding the Meals on Wheels program was posted on Facebook and is available primarily to our seniors. She said if someone other than our seniors meet the criteria all they have to do is call the phone number attached to the posting, speak with the office of aging and they can have nice hot meals delivered to their homes. She said she has been in contact with our long-term care facilities in Watchung and has a better understanding of what their needs are. She also said the Borough is working on a logistics plan or food distribution to assist residents. She said the CERT team is providing lunches for the students eligible for the reduced lunch meal program. She was proud to announce members of our CERT team have volunteered with the New Jersey Poison Control center to assist with the high demand of incoming phone calls. Mayor Balla asked Ms. Solon to clarify what supplies our first responders are in need of. Ms. Solon said some supplies they are looking for are N95 masks, full face shields, disposable tie back suits, Lysol wipes and hand sanitizer. Ms. Solon explained that the call volume for the CDC has increased dramatically since the State authorized them as the main point of contact for COVID-19 questions. She said the CERT volunteers are screening the incoming calls to find out whether it's a COVID-19 question or whether it should actually go to the poison control center.

12. Attorney - Attorney Murphy said on April 13th at 7:30 PM. there is a hearing scheduled before the Zoning Board on the determination to locate or relocate the Communications Tower. He said the meeting will be conducted as a virtual meeting and also said notices to property owners within 200 feet were sent out in the mail and the notice will be in the paper either today or tomorrow.

13. Clerk – No report.

14. Administrator – Mr. Damato thanked everyone at all levels of the government for all their cooperation during this difficult time. He said Congressman Malinowski is trying to get a testing site open in Somerset County by the end of next week. He said now right there are not enough people trained to administer the test however, they are trying to get this test site open soon to serve Somerset County and Hunterdon County. Mr. Damato thanked Kevin Sumner and all the Middle Brook officials for their continuous hard work. He mentioned that Borough Hall is still closed to the public unless it is by appointment. He said the Building Department is also still issuing permits and conducting inspections by appointment. He also said we are planning to have a boat day for Watchung in the Spring and advised everyone to keep checking the website and Facebook for more information. Mr. Damato also stated that Borough Hall has now put up hand sanitizing machines throughout the building and we have implemented a new procedure of taking temperatures of all employees that come into work. He said we are trying to purchase a UV light sanitizer so we can reuse some of our protective equipment.

Wildlife Committee- Councilman Jubin said there have been no meetings due to the COVID-19 outbreak. He said even though Raritan Valley Community College is shut down the Committee is still looking into other sources to provide assistance with the deer count. He also said the Goose Stoppers next application was supposed to be today but the company was unable to make it due to health issues.

Youth Services – Council President Robinson had no report.

Planning Board – Councilman Martino had no report except that the next Planning Board meeting has been cancelled.

Board of Education – Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said the next Board of Education meeting is scheduled for April 20th.

Municipal Alliance – Councilman Black said all Municipal Alliance programs have been suspended as of March 23rd until further notice.

Library Advisory Board – Councilwoman Goodloe said the Library Board has not met due to the COVID pandemic but asked Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten who has been communicating with our Grant Writer about the new library for an update.

Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said we got word from our architect we will be receiving revised elevations on Monday and also the grant deadline has been extended out until June 5th.

Councilman Martino asked if we had an amount we have spent with the architect so far to date?

Mr. Hance said he will send the figure out via email to everyone tomorrow.

Mayor Balla thanked everyone who has stepped up to help during this emergency. He also thanked our local business for the donations and supplies they set aside for us. He also extended thanks to Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten for managing the help line on a daily basis for the last few weeks. He thanked Kevin Sumner, our Board of Health Director for all his help and knowledge during this crisis. Mayor Balla also said he met with our Business Administrator and CFO to look toward making recommendations for modifications to our budget. He feels due to the COVID-19 outbreak our anticipated revenues and some of our expenditures should be re-evaluated before the budget is introduced.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

No one from the Public desired to be heard.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

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, Martino “aye.”

Approval of the following Council minutes:

February 29, 2020 – Special Budget Workshop Meeting
March 5, 2020 –Regular Meeting

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Building Department Report – March, 2020

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #13 Township of Berkeley Heights 3/26/20 Notice of Planning Board Hearing on April 1, 2020 for Site Plan Approval / Lockhern Associates 428-432 Springfield Avenue / Renovation exterior façade Shopping Plaza c: M & C, JD, PL.
- #14 Township of Scotch Plains 3/3/20 Notice of Introduction of Ordinance; #2020-6 and Public Hearing on June 16, 2020 Re: This Ordinance will Rezone 2650 Route 22 from an R-2 Residential Zone to the B-3 Highway Zone. Public Hearing to be held on March 24, 2020 C: M & C, TEA, Pl. Board (Previously Tabled due to Health Crisis)
- #15 New Jersey General Assembly 3/9/20 Resolutions (2) Urging Counties and Municipalities to Create 2020 Census Complete Count Committees and Designating week of March 12th as “Get Out the Count Week” c: M & C, JD

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS: The resolutions listed below were submitted to the Governing Body for review and will be adopted by one motion.

None

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.

Items for Discussion:

- Website Improvements

Mayor Balla said he would like to have a general discussion on items that should be included in our website and how they can be included. He also would like to come up with a plan to improve the website as well as putting an RFQ together. Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said she has been involved in several meetings so far in regard to improving the Borough website. She said when speaking with the Mayor he suggested they go out and get additional proposals. Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said she did reach out to three different vendors for proposals. Spatial Data Logic, a company who already work with us, did submit a proposal and they also designed a sample website. She hopes the additional proposals come in soon to be passed along and reviewed by the Administration and Finance Committee. Mayor Balla asked if all the companies who submitted proposals provide support for website services to other municipalities. Councilman Eisenberg Knegten said the companies do have various municipal clients already. Mayor Balla said he is a big proponent of putting information out on the website for the public to have access. Councilman Jubin agrees updating the website is necessary and needs to be

thought through. Attorney Murphy asked if he could follow up regarding the proposals and the procedure we are utilizing. He asked if we are in the process of putting together a request for proposals to put out to the public or if we are we just asking companies for proposals. He said from a legal standpoint we should have a document that has everything that we are looking for and receive proposals based upon that. Attorney Murphy said the cost will also play a factor regarding the proposal process we utilize. Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said our CFO Bill Hance recommended we not go through the formal RFP process but said we are open to discussion.

=====

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

No one from the Public desired to be heard.

=====

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 8:32 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council is scheduled to be held on April 16, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Regina Angelo, RMC
Deputy Clerk