

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG**  
**COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

**APRIL 11, 2020 - 5:30 P.M.**

*(THIS MEETING WAS A VIRTUAL MEETING)*

**MAYOR'S STATEMENT:** Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 5:36 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 Special Virtual 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 uncertainty of the COVID 19 outbreak we are having our meeting conducted via conference calling to best protect our residents, employees and elected officials. All information about signing on to the meeting has been posted on the Borough website. If you experience problems with the transmission please be patient and communicate the issues by email to the Borough office so that future virtual meetings may be better.*

**SALUTE TO THE FLAG and a MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR RESIDENTS WHO HAVE DIED FROM COVID 19 COMPLICATIONS, AND OUR FIRST RESPONDERS, DOCTORS, NURSES AND GROCERY STORE WORKERS SERVING IN THIS PANDEMIC.**

**ROLL CALL:**

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

Also present were Administrator James Damato, Attorney Denis Murphy, Clerk Michelle DeRocco and CFO Bill Hance. Also present was OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon.

There were 16 members present virtually.

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**DISCUSSION / COVID-19 UPDATES**

Mayor Balla said our flyer to residents regarding the helpline contact number is being mailed out on Monday. Mayor Balla asked Carolyn Solon our Office of Emergency Management Coordinator for updates on PPE supplies, food donations, storage of food and finally procedures for spontaneous volunteers. He also asked for any current stats and updates on the Employee Assistance Program.

Carolyn Solon said food donations are still being received at Police Headquarters. She advised residents to continue to drop off any donations to the Police Station. She said she is notified of the food donations as soon as they are received and then a CERT team member wipes them all down with Lysol wipes and they are stored in the trailer outside of the Police Department. She brought up a concern regarding the warmer weather approaching so as a result an alternate place to store the food in a climate-controlled environment is being discussed. Ms. Solon said in reference to the PPE we are currently still missing full face shields and gowns. She said the State is now requesting daily updates from the long-term care facilities in terms of number of COVID positive patients and any staffing issues. She said this information is reported to the County and then forwarded to the State on a daily basis. Ms. Solon also advised all departments of a major weather alert for Sunday night into Monday with heavy rain and high wind. She said the mental/emotional support information for employees has been distributed to all departments by our Borough Clerk. She also suggested employees utilize the Human Services portion of the Somerset County website.

Administrator Damato said there are six new cases of COVID-19 in Watchung today for a total of 42 cases and a total of two deaths.

Mayor Balla asked the status on the procedures regarding the spontaneous volunteers. Ms. Solon said the reference policy is with the Laws and Ordinance Committee and our legal counsel for review and update. She also said a rough draft will be created for editing and approval. She mentioned that obtaining PPE has been a major issue and part of the delay with the spontaneous volunteers is the lack of PPE for our volunteer's safety.

Administrator Damato said Somerset County is planning to team up with Hunterdon County to open a test site at Raritan Valley Community College however the lack of adequate protective equipment for the workers and the lack of test kits is holding this process up. He said he will keep the Council updated on the opening status of this test site. He also stated the mailer to residents is anticipated to go out Monday morning.

Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten thanked the Rescue Squad for escorting the Easter Bunny around town on Saturday.

Councilman Martino asked if the Board of Education would allow us to utilize the schools as a storage facility for donated food items. Mayor Balla said we spoke to the Superintendent and it was recommended to us that we use Valley View School gymnasium or the Texier House. Mayor Balla also said

he asked the Superintendent if they had a 3-D printer available the Borough could utilize for the production of face shields. Councilman Martino recommended a site inspection be done of both schools. Carolyn Solon said a site inspection has already been completed at Valley View School.

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**PUBLIC PORTION**

Amy Fiorella, Washington Drive, said last meeting there was some conversation about identifying elderly or needy residents and trying to get in touch with them by phone. She recommended the Council use the voter rolls because they include our residents age and some do provide phone numbers. Mayor Balla said we are using voter rolls, school lists and tax rolls to compile a list of data. He also said the lists will be digital.

Councilman Martino asked if we have done any Reverse 911 or Nixle alerts in regards to the information we are requesting our residents send back to us. Mayor Balla said he believes a Nixle went out yesterday to all residents regarding the Register Ready Program. Carolyn Solon said she said she is not sure why but the Reverse 911 capability has stopped. Councilman Martino asked if we could look into getting a summary on why this has stopped as it was an instrumental way of communication to our residents during Hurricane Sandy. Mayor Balla said we will follow up with this concern.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 5:58 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next Special Meeting of the Mayor and Council is scheduled to be Virtually held on April 13, 2020 at 5:30 P.M.

Mayor Balla thanked all residents for adhering to the safe distancing practices and stay at home orders until such time that we can safely congregate. He wished everyone a happy and healthy holiday and prays that our faith, hope and love will be strengthened and carry us through these trying times and that our love for one another will be abundant.

Respectfully Submitted,

Regina Angelo, RMC  
Deputy Clerk