

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 22, 2020 - 7:30 P.M.

(THIS MEETING WAS A VIRTUAL MEETING)

MAYOR'S STATEMENT: Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 7:30 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 Special 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 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 [P] Goodloe [P] 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 19 members present virtually.

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DISCUSSION / COVID-19 UPDATES

Mayor Balla asked Carolyn Solon our Office of Emergency Management Coordinator to provide an update on COVID-19, procedures, food, supplies and any area in need of improvements.

Carolyn Solon reported there were no food or PPE donations made today. She said the PPE picked up yesterday from the County has been inventoried already and now stored in the trailer. She mentioned the long-term care facilities in Watchung received a PPE delivery today by Somerset County. She said all volunteer paperwork has been completed and distributed. She thanked Council President Robinson and Councilwoman Goodloe for their assistance with this process. She also said she was made aware of a new program being provided by the United Way of Northern New Jersey called the ALIS Recover Fund for families who have lost income of their jobs and need financial assistance. She would like this information posted on our Borough Facebook page for our residents. Mayor Balla questioned when the volunteer paperwork will be sent out and Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said she will reach out to all of the volunteers who have registered and provide them with the finalized paperwork. Mayor Balla explained that the forms will go to the volunteers to complete first and then they will need to make arrangements to get a Police background check done. He said once that process is complete they will need to report to the Police Department for a volunteer ID and their PPE.

Administrator Damato reported another confirmed COVID positive case in Watchung. He said our total number of confirmed cases are now at 65. He said on today's conference call with Somerset County they mentioned that the PNC and Bergen County Community College testing sites have begun testing asymptomatic people. Administrator Damato also said there's going to be some more discussion and guidance from the State about reducing the interest rate on unpaid taxes. He said within the next few days we should receive some legal guidance from the Attorney General's Office or from the Division of Local Government Services. He reported the Raritan Valley Community College testing site is averaging about 100 appointments a day. He also mentioned Somerset County will be introducing their budget on April 28th.

Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten asked for a consensus of the Council on what Thursday was going to be designated as the "Make some Noise" effort that Warren has initiated. She feels we need a resolution so we can move forward with whatever the plan for the Borough will be. Councilman Jubin, Councilman Black and Councilwoman Goodloe feel it is a good idea to show support for our first responders in unison with Warren. Council President Robinson said neither Councilman Black nor Councilman Jubin heard last night's discussion. Council President Robinson said the Mayor asked her to draft something to publicize the make noise effort for our residents. She said the possibility of doing it a separate day was brought up because a resident said that would be preferable, and also so we are not piggyback on everything that Warren does. The Mayor had suggested doing it on May first to coincide with May Day, because that is the day that traditionally supports workers. Council President Robinson doesn't feel we should prohibit our residents from recognizing and celebrating our essential workers if they want to on both days. Councilman Jubin thanked Councilwoman Robinson for explaining and agrees the more celebration the better. He said he is in favor of celebrating this Thursday with Warren and also Watchung planning their own celebration.

Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten asked if the consensus was to proceed with joining Warren every Thursday and if the Council wants to plan something separate for May 1st then we can. She asked if the drafts stating we are joining Warren's efforts in celebrating are ok to send out. Mayor Balla agreed to send out the drafts so residents know we are also participating.

Councilman Martino feels it is a great idea to support Warren Township in their Thursday night “Make Noise” initiative. He also doesn’t feel there is a problem doing something extra on our own time such as the fundraiser event mentioned by Council President Robinson on a separate day. He said we should be holding hands with our surrounding towns.

Councilman Martino also said he is pleased all the volunteer forms and paperwork have been completed. He thanked Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten, Councilwoman Goodloe and Council President Robinson for their dedicated participation during this process. Mayor Balla stated the volunteers will sign in at police Headquarters and also fill out a time sheet for the work that they do. He said this is a way for us to track what time they come in and out, what they went out for and for whom. Council President Robinson thanked our OEM Coordinator, Carolyn Solon for taking the lead on moving the documents for the volunteer process along as well as Councilwoman Goodloe and Eisenberg Knegten.

Mayor Balla is happy we can help our residents in this time of need and also for the amount of volunteers who want to help out others in our Borough. Mayor Balla also advised any activities regarding OEM should go through our OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon.

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PUBLIC PORTION

No one from the Public desired to be heard.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 8:03 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 23, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Regina Angelo, RMC
Deputy Clerk