

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 27, 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 RESDIENTS 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 [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 20 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 over the weekend there were two large food donations which were inventoried and then transferred to the Texier House. She said in regards to our OEM volunteers, all the paperwork was sent out to every registered spontaneous volunteer and they can start processing the background checks. She also mentioned PPE was disbursed to the Zoning Office today for the inspectors going out into the field.

Administrator Damato reported there were two new COVID positive cases and no new deaths on Friday. He said on Saturday there were six new cases and four new deaths reported for a total of 10 deaths in Watchung. As of Sunday and today there have been no new reported cases or deaths. He mentioned on the Governors press conference today he provided a basic roadmap for restoring the economic health of the State. The Governor outlined a few principles on his plan however there is no timeline as of right now. He said it will be dependent on how these principles pan out and whether the curve is increasing or decreasing. Administrator Damato said he will keep an eye on these updates and report back as new things develop. Administrator Damato also mentioned the Borough received a UV light sanitizer that will be used by all Departments. He said this will help us sanitize our PPE so it can be reused.

Councilman Jubin asked how long the UV light treatment takes to complete a cycle in a vehicle. Administrator Damato said he will look into all these details of the equipment and report back.

Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten brought up a fundraiser event that took place in Warren that she feels would be a great idea for Watchung to participate in also. She said there is a resident in Basking Ridge who owns a food plant and has donated chicken as a fundraiser for the Somerset County Food Bank. She said she spent the day making sure the necessary permits were in place and thanked Kevin Sumner for all of his help. She said she would love to have the Council on board to wrap this up together as a team and present this fundraiser to Watchung. The other Councilmembers thanked Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten for setting this up and they fully support this great idea. Administrator Damato said he spoke with the Administrator in Warren Township and he advised they did advertise this event by sending out an E-blast and a Nixle Alert. The Council agreed on a date of May 6th and the Police Department Parking lot as a suitable location to hold this fundraiser event. Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten thanked the Bernard's Chamber of Commerce for providing the insurance for this event.

Councilwoman Goodloe said it was reported to her that the parking lots at both of the lakes were very full over the weekend. She feels residents from other towns are coming to use our lakes because their parks have been closed and due to the overcrowding suggested we should close all the municipal parking lots around the lakes. Council President Robinson said they are having a Police Committee meeting regarding this topic and would like to wait to hear Chief Cina's input. Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten said she agrees with Councilwoman Goodloe's position on this topic. Councilwoman Goodloe encouraged the Police Committee to act quickly because the longer this takes the more of a safety, risk and hazard, it can post. Council President Robinson said they are having the Police Committee meeting within the next couple of days. Councilman Martino stated the Council makes the decision to close the municipal lots not the Police Chief so he is in agreement that everyone needs to come to a decision on this topic.

Councilman Jubin is in agreement to close all municipal lots around the lakes. He encouraged residents to please walk on their own street and wear a face mask. He also mentioned that Governor Murphy has begun having discussions about opening things back up and feels we should also have some type of a plan in place for Watchung when that happens. Council President Robinson said there are some restrictions about using the temporary orders to close parking off the streets that Chief Cina is looking into. Councilman Martino feels even if we decided not to close the lots completely, we could reduce the amount of cars going in and out. He said we have professionals in our town that should be able to make anything work when we asked them to. Councilwoman Goodloe asked if the consensus of the Council was to close all the Municipal lots including the Texier House lot and both of the lots that give you access to the lakes. Council President Robinson said she will agree with whatever the Council feels is best but likes Councilman Martino's idea of limiting parking to every other space in the lots. Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten and Councilman Jubin feel the recommendation should be to close all the municipal lots. Councilman Martino mentioned the City Hall lot has to be kept open during business hours. Carolyn Solon said the Texier House lot is used for our food station so we cannot block that off during the week for food deliveries. Mayor Balla said the driveway would stay open but the parking area would be cornered off.

Councilwoman Eisenberg Knegten mentioned the Borough website is becoming very crowded and hard to navigate. She suggested we try to keep the most important notices towards the top of the homepage in terms of relevance and importance. Mayor Balla said we will bring this concern to our webmaster.

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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 28, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Regina Angelo, RMC
Deputy Clerk