

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

JULY 16, 2020 - 7:30 P.M.

(THIS MEETING WAS A VIRTUAL MEETING)

OPENING STATEMENT: Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 7:32 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 to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, and Star Ledger, and posted at Borough Hall.

Mayor Balla called forward Christina Tillinghast, Valedictorian of Mount Saint Mary Academy to lead the salute to the flag.

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]

Also resent were Administrator James J. Damato, Attorney Denis Murphy, Clerk Edith G. Gil, Office of Emergency Coordinator Carolyn Solon, and Engineer Bruce Koch.

There were 59 members virtually present

Mayor Balla began by commending the Borough's partnership with Lawson foods on the "Feed to Give" organization who's proceeds of soul discounted chicken were given to the Food Bank of Somerset County. Feed to Give organization provided a check to the Watchung Community Foundation in the amount of \$1,220. The Mayor expressed sincere thanks and gratitude on behalf of the entire community. The Mayor proceeded to call upon Council President Robinson to provide the following report on inclusion, diversity and equality.

REPORT OF AD HOC COMMITTEE

Council President Robinson began by stating that the Ad Hoc Committee and Council are committed to staying with this process for as long as it takes and that while a simple switch will not address all concerns, it is important to work as a community. Much of the work to be done will involve, research, self reflection, discussion, evaluation and determination to make Watchung an even better place to live and work and it is important for all residents to participate. Since the Mayor tasked this Committee with the responsibility to look into the incident at the summer camp last year and to assess whether the Borough's policies, procedures and protocols were adequate and reflective of the type of best practices that every resident has the right to expect. The Committee is studying the sequences and reporting of events, staffing, correspondence, registration materials, state regulations, and other relevant records. Additionally, the Committee is reviewing information received from the Police Chief and are working together to learn about the current procedures Police has in place for training, recruitment standards, procedures for traffic stops and call responses. President Robinson reported that today she had received additional information for their review about incidents reported by community members to the police department. The Committee is reaching out to Professionals in the field to schedule training sessions, beginning with Council Members and will expand to other departments. Additionally, the Committee is examining a history of any bias related incidents and Borough-wide policies and procedures. President Robinson reported that Mayor Balla is planning a series of informal listening sessions, one per voting district, this method will allow for social distancing. The district meetings will take place on July 29th, August 6th, August 12th, August 19th and August 26th at 7:30pm and a mailer will go out with all details to residents. If necessary, additional dates can be established. Upon processing all the feedback from the community district meetings, the Ad Hoc Committee will formulate a plan and report back and establish a diversity, equality and inclusion committee and lay out its responsibilities for the Borough.

Mayor Balla called upon Tynisha Sims, Rhea Williams and Dr. Kimberly Brown to provide the following presentation.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION BY THE WATCHUNG IDEA COMMITTEE

Tynisha Sims, Rhea Williams and Dr. Kimberly Brown made a special presentation by the Watchung Inclusion, Diversity, Equality, and Advancement (IDEA) Committee. Tynisha Sims stated that after she came forward with her experience at the June 4th council meeting, she received overwhelming responses from the community in addition to the Governing Body showing much support, but they also started the uncomfortable conversations that proved there is room for growth when it comes to inclusion, diversity, equality and advancement in Watchung. Ms. Sims introduced the Watchung IDEA Committee, comprised of a group of residents who represent the minority and are devoted to raising awareness and steering and supporting the actions around inclusion, diversity, equality and advancement in town. They seek to partner with the necessary Officials to help bring awareness and action to the Borough.

Rhea Williams spoke on the commitment statement prepared by community and interested members in an effort to document the dedication to inclusion, diversity, equality and advancement of those not in the

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

JULY 16, 2020 - 7:30 P.M.

majority. It is meant to ensure hiring practices are fair for all, that adequate training is provided in all areas of official Borough business, and diverse representation in procurement processes. It is the intent of the IDEA Committee to present various Watchung organizations with their commitment statement to help bring awareness and to begin to establish partnerships towards inclusion, diversity, equality and advancement.

Kimberly Brown discussed four areas in which they could help the Borough move forward. First through community outreach and partnering with the Mayor and Council, IDEA Committee would like to seek diverse representation of all ethnicities in the borough. This could ideally be accomplished through a survey of sorts. Secondly, a step towards diversity can be done by celebrating all cultures in town. There could be a calendar of sorts that the Borough could keep in which different cultures could share upcoming celebrations for all residents to be aware of what is being celebrated. The Borough could seek the assistance of outside organizations in this regard that help others become aware of the different cultural celebrations. Thirdly, in order for equality to exist there must be access and transparency across the board of opportunities that exist in the Borough. Finally, as the Mayor previously suggested, there could be a Diversity Officer, perhaps from the State or someone of that calibre that could come to the Borough to assist in this regard.

The Mayor thanked the IDEA Committee for their presentation and stated that he looked forward to working together for the betterment of the Borough.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance – Council Member Jubin reported that this committee met on July 8th and primarily discussed fleet vehicles and whether to purchase or lease them.
2. Police – Council President Robinson reported on the alerts sent out by the Watchung Police on bear and wildlife sightings. These sightings have become more frequent and they include black bear, fox and even coyotes. Residents are warned not to approach or feed any wild animals and are urged to report any sightings to the Police Department.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Council Member Black reported that this committee met yesterday and acknowledged the accomplishments of Public Works. Every morning DPW disinfects Borough Hall and the bathrooms and playgrounds at Mobus Field, these two tasks alone take up a lot of time. In the coming weeks, there may be short falls as vacations are coming up. The replacement of the roof of the Police Department was fixing of the court, grading of the 9/11 memorial, replacement of mulch, removal and elevation of trees, tree removals. Councilman Black pleads Council Member to consider adding additional employees to Public Works. Mayor Balla suggested that the hiring of another DPW employee be further discussed under new business.
4. Public Affairs – Council Member Goodloe had no report

Environmental – Council President Robinson reported that 20 dead trees and 9 live trees were removed this month. The bottle cap and plastic bag collections are still on hold; the Green Team met and is looking for volunteers on anyone wishing to assist the Borough on achieving sustainable NJ certification. The Borough is looking to install a rain garden at Best Lake and is seeking input from the Rescue Squad and the school district on whether they want to host rain gardens as well. The Commission is looking into a tree grant program from Long Hill and the Ash tree issue is still ongoing. The commission would also like to emphasize the importance of allowing dandelions to grow and remain long as they are important to the pollinators, birds and butterflies. Lastly, bamboo was observed going out of the storm sewer and the commission reminds residents that it is damaging to properties. The next meeting is set for August 24th. Council Member Goodloe inquired on a recycling event, if feasible. Council President stated that there have been some discussion on this matter, but no final decision has been made. Council President will keep member posted.

Recreation – Council Member Black reported that the commission had Yoga and Zumba instructors, a permit for the Gazebo and the Basketball youth camp suggestions for the Council's consideration tonight. There is a concern for the sanitization of the port-a-john rentals because Public Works would be short-staffed. Also, the commission is revisiting many of the usual events: movie night, the fishing derby, harvest festival, and music in the park. Mayor Balla moved to discuss these recommendations to the discussion portion of this agenda.

Historical – Council Member Goodloe reported that the committee met on July 1st and are working on the 9/11 memorial; recently certain plants were planted. The committee is also looking for guest speakers to speak twice a month and live stream on Facebook so that the public could hear presentations about different historical items, including women's suffrage.

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

JULY 16, 2020 - 7:30 P.M.

Board of Health – Council Member Jubin reported that the Board of Health met on June 17th mainly to discuss covid-19 updates and that Bridgewater might have the opportunity to join the Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission and they discussed legionella in the water. Council Member Jubin provided updates on covid-19 and contact tracing and reminded everyone of the guidelines recommended by the CDC. Council Member Goodloe inquired on updated numbers for long-term care facilities.

5. Fire – Council Member Martino had no report
6. Laws/Ordinances – Council Member Eisenberg Knegten had no report

REPORTS – OTHER:

7. Engineer – Engineer Bruce Koch reported that for NJDOT FY2021 State Aid Program, they submitted an application on behalf of the Borough for Elsinore Drive, Johnson Drive, and Sherwood Drive well before the due date.
8. Police Chief – no report
9. Fire Department – no report
10. Rescue Squad – Council President Robinson reported that on July 8th the Rescue Squad attended a North Plainfield High School Graduation to support member Carlos Berruecos; on June 28th 1st Lieutenant Denise Wilson held a CPR class for their members. Also, several members are in need of EMT recertifications course, recently Somerset County released a complete hybrid refresher course to satisfy these requirements. There were 11 total calls and year to date 101.
11. Emergency Management – OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon reported that no food or PPE donations have been recently made, CERT completed the food inventory and boxed up any food to expire soon to be taken to the Somerset food bank. On July 8th, executive order 163 was released requiring the mass usage of masks while outdoors if social distancing could not be accommodated, in this regard all of the posted signs were reviewed to ensure that the public is aware of the new requirement. A new Administrative order was released for long term care facilities that was forwarded to the Borough's facilities to ensure compliance. An update on the Governor's travel ban was also provided. Watchung CERT recently met and those minutes are on this meeting for review, the LEPC met to review plans for the fall and winter season, and OEM Coordinator Solon is working with the Recreation Commission to ensure a covid plan is in place for any potential activities that may be approved by Council.
12. Attorney – Attorney Denis Murphy had no report
13. Clerk – Clerk Gil provided an update on the primary election, the Borough had over 150 voters that showed up, but all social distancing rules were met.
14. Administrator – Administrator Damato reported that the Borough has opened Mobus Park, there is currently a fishing camp operating there for the youth, there were 2 outdoor dining permits recently approved for Water and Wine and Buffalo Wild Wings and 1 pending for TGI Fridays. Since the June 25th meeting, there were six new covid cases reported, while the numbers are low the Borough is still pushing for everyone to follow CDC recommendations, avoid crowds, and to get tested if anyone experiences any symptoms.
15. Wildlife Committee – Council Member Jubin reported that the committee met on June 29th and voted on the committee's President and Secretary. At their meeting they primarily discussed deer count, geese over population, the vultures in town, and certain plant species that may negatively be impacted by the overgrazing of deer. They discussed partnering with the Environmental Commission to help manage some of these matters.
16. Youth Services – Council President Robinson had no report.
17. Planning Board – Council Member Martino had no report.
18. Board of Education – Council Member Eisenberg Knegten reported that they met on June 29th and there is a larger committee that has divided into sub committees to formulate a plan that has to be submitted approximately four weeks before school begins. Valley View held an in-person graduation for their eight graders on July 14th; the district is "*consciously exploring how they can broaden the student's horizons while providing a quality 21st century education, while in the Watchung school district.*" The next meeting is to be held on July 20th at 7:30 p.m.

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

JULY 16, 2020 - 7:30 P.M.

Council Member Martino inquired if there was Council representation on the committee to re-open the schools. It was reported that currently, Council Member Jubin is a part of these meetings representing the Board of Health. Council Member Martino expressed that there should be more open communication between the Board of Education and the Borough Council.

19. Municipal Alliance – Council Member Black had no report.

20. Library Advisory Board – Council Member Goodloe had no report.

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PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

No one appeared

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DISCUSSION

The Recreation Commission would like to recommend the following:

1. Yoga Instructor – Phillip’s Field – 2 classes 8/15 & 8/22 (Saturday’s) 8am-9am paid thru the Recreation budget. Total Cost = \$100. The program will be free of charge to residents with a suggested donation to the Watchung Art Center of \$10.
2. Yoga Instructor– Phillip’s Field – 2 classes 7/29 & 8/5 (Wednesday’s) 6:30pm-7:30pm paid thru the Recreation budget. Total Cost = \$100. The program will be free of charge to residents with a suggested donation to the Watchung Art Center of \$10 per class
3. A Temporary Restroom supplied for the programs at Phillip’s between 7/29 & 8/22. The rental company will service unit once a week and DPW will sanitized once per day. The cost would be \$47.18 a month.
4. Zumba Instructor – Mobus Field - 2 classes per week from 7/27 – 9/4 or a total of 6 weeks / 12 classes total held on the Basketball Courts OR at Phillip’s Field – paid thru the Recreation budget Total cost = \$600. The program will be free to residents with a suggested donation to the Watchung Art Center of \$10 per class.

Council Member Martino inquired on the Borough having the ability to sub-lease the Board of Educations field for these activities and on the liability of the Borough hiring these instructors as they would potentially become employees. He stressed the importance of having a plan in place, especially to address covid concerns.

Council Member Black stated that in the past the Borough has sublet Phillips Field to these entities in the past, so certainly the Borough has the authority to do so. However, the main concern for Council to decide on is whether to approve these events because of the health issues they raise given the rise in covid numbers.

Council Member Goodloe thanked the Recreation Commission on their initiative to bring forth these recommendations, however questioned the need for a temporary restroom as it puts more burden on the Borough.

Council Member Jubin equally echoed the sentiment of the health concerns over these events. These recommendations should first be approved by the Office of Emergency Management and the Board of Health.

Council President Robinson inquired on the Borough having to pay the instructors versus the Arts Center as it has been done in the past.

Council Member Martino stressed the need to have policies and procedures in place for private entities having events on Borough property and placing the burden on the Borough to clean up after these events; especially during this pandemic.

Mayor Balla stated that in the past the Arts Center was able to pay for these instructors, it would now only be a matter of moving the event from indoors to outside of their property. He also inquired on why the Borough would need to absorb the cost of the instructors.

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

JULY 16, 2020 - 7:30 P.M.

Council Member Eisenberg Knegten echoed the sentiments of Council Member Goodloe; if the Borough chose to move forward, there would be no need for a temporary restroom.

5. Titledown Performance – A Youth Basketball Camp run on the Basketball Courts at Mobus Field for 2nd Grade – 10th Grade students of the WHRHS sending district. The program would run for 5 weeks between July 27th thru August 28th, Monday thru Friday from 8:30am – 4:30pm

Council Member Jubin inquired on a covid plan for this event. Administrator Damato assured the Council that a covid plan would have to be submitted for this and any activity before any approvals would be granted. OEM Coordinator Solon stated that a covid plan was submitted but that she was working with the applicant to ensure adequate procedures are in place to limit the exposure of the covid virus to any residents.

6. Watchung PTO – Use of Best Lake for food truck festival fundraiser August 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th from 4pm – 8pm.

Council Member Eisenberg Knegten recused herself from this discussion.

Karen Locke, Treasure of the Watchung PTO, was present to speak on this matter. She reported that 10-20% of proceeds would go towards the Watchung PTO. While most fundraisers are done during the school year, because of covid this could not take place. The PTO is looking to advertise this event as a take-out only event in order to comply with all covid regulations. All protocols will be followed by the food trucks. Additionally, while the original permit was submitted to have the event on Borough property, they are now looking to amend this permit as Bayberry school parking lot would provide a better opportunity.

Council Members Martino, Goodloe, Jubin and Council President Robinson agreed that Bayberry School parking lot offers the best opportunity to hold this fundraiser in order to alleviate any safety and traffic concerns. All Members agreed that the Borough would use the website and it's Facebook page to help advertise for this event.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Council Member Black reminded the Council that vacations would be upcoming thereby leaving the Borough's Public Works Department short-staffed, especially during a crucial time with this pandemic. He reported that the Public Works Manager had identified an individual who could begin to work part-time immediately, if the Council approved, or at least someone temporary to provide assistance to Public Works.

Council Member Martino mentioned that he understood that the Borough would be advertising for a Foreman and a Laborer so that positions would be filled by September 1st. Additionally, Public Works would be putting together bids to outsource snow removal and landscape maintenance services so that PW would free up for other services.

Mayor Balla inquired on when the posting of a Foreman would take place.

Administrator Damato said that once the Council approved moving forward, this could be done immediately. However, the time of posting, interviewing and hiring a Foreman would perhaps take over a course of 4-6 weeks. Which would still leave Public Works in serious need of assistance. He mentioned that it was the desire of the Public Works Manager to bring in someone temporary to assist with covid related duties. The Borough would also be submitting anything covid related for reimbursement, which would be 75%.

Mayor Balla clarified that the proposal is short-term, for the next 5 weeks. Administrator Damato confirmed this information, it would only be temporary as the Borough did not budget for 6 members in Public Works; having someone part-time is an easier cost to absorb.

Council Member Jubin stated that for the good and safety of the Borough, that the Council move forward and rather quickly with supporting an additional part-time position. It is a health concern to be able to have the man-power necessary to assist in covid related duties. Council Member Goodloe echoed these sentiments.

Council Member Martino inquired on the salary and hours per week of the new position. Administrator Damato expressed that the cut-off would be at 25 hours per week and that between \$15 to \$20 per hour

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

JULY 16, 2020 - 7:30 P.M.

would be a good rate. We can look into the going rate for this positions and report back to the Council, but the rate would not exceed \$20/hour.

A motion was made by Council Member Jubin to move forward on this item, second by Council Member Black. Upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Black, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, “aye” and Martino, “nay.”

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NEW BUSINESS

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

Approval of the following Council minutes:

June 04, 2020 –Regular Meeting
June 18, 2020 – Regular Meeting
June 25, 2020 – Special Meeting

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Recreation Commission Minutes	March 4, 2020
Environmental Commission Minutes	April 27, 2020 and May 18, 2020
Planning Board Minutes	May 19, 2020
and Transcripts	February 18, 2020
Fire Prevention Report	May and June 2020
Building Department Report	June 2020
Board of Adjustment Minutes	June 11, 2020
Traffic and Beautification Minutes	June 16, 2020
CERT Minutes	June 23, 2020

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #20 - Township of Berkeley Heights Planning Board 7/07/20 Notice of Public Hearing on 7/15/2020
Re: Application submitted by Elite Properties for minor subdivision approval and preliminary and final site plan approval for 182 Plainfield Ave c: M& C, JD, Pl. Board
- #21 - Borough of North Plainfield 7/07/20 Notice of Introduction of two (2) Ordinances; #20-04
Re: Amend Code to Comply with Third Round Affordable Housing Requirements #20-05 Re: Adopting Redevelopment Plan / Block 110, Lots 2.02 to 2.14. Public Hearing to be held on July 21, 2020 c: M & C, JD, Pl. Board

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

- R1: Purchase Orders over \$2,000 - NJDEP Env. Regs., First Battalion and Emergency Reporting
- R2: Authorize Grant Application /NJ DOT – 2021 Roadway Improvements project
- R3: Authorizing Participation with the State of NJ in a Safe & Secure Communities Program
- R4: Authorize Duplicate Tax Payment Refund- 289 Mountain Boulevard
- R5: Return of Escrow – Various Applicants, as listed on Resolution
- R6: Authorizing rain garden at Best Lake

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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.

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

JULY 16, 2020 - 7:30 P.M.

R7: 07/16/20 Payment of Bills

Administrator Damato explained that several Council Members inquired on the bills for the Watchung Rescue Squad and that it would be a few days before he would have the answers. Therefore, if Council agreed, tonight's approval of bills would exclude those bills in question.

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

R8: Authorizing Change Order, final payment and close out of 2019 Various Road Improvement project with Top Line Construction

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

R9: Renewal of ABC licenses: Watchung Liquor Store and The Wine Cellar of Watchung

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

R10: Authorizing extension of R10: 06/04/10 Temporary Outdoor Dining

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

R11: Authorizing use of Gazebo for marriage ceremony on July 26, 2020

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

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PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

Council Member Martino inquired on the hours of operation of the Borough, which were provided by Administrator Damato. He also inquired on who authorized the summer hours; Mayor Balla stated that he had granted approval. Council Member Martino also mentioned that the website needed to update certain information and on the status of locating office space for Council Members. Administrator Damato mentioned that he would look into it.

Council Member Jubin urged the Borough to begin to look into hosting the council meetings at Borough Hall. Administrator Damato expressed the technological challenges that currently prevented this and expressed concerns for being able to maintain social distancing in an enclosed space. He measured the room and if covid protocols were to be followed, the room would only allow for 12 residents to sit in the chamber.

Council Member Eisenberg Knegten mentioned that we also keep in mind that if meetings started to resume in-person, that we still allow residents to participate remotely as it would not be fair to those that did not yet feel comfortable being in crowds.

There were 2 questions posed on the chat log of the Go-To Meeting application. One resident wanted to know why the Borough had not worked on a virtual summer camp like Warren? Another resident wanted to know why Watchung was unable to join Warren's summer camp this year, like previous years?

Council Member Black mentioned that he would obtain this information and get back to the residents.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting adjourned to the Call of the Chair at 10:27 P.M. The Mayor called a Special Meeting on July 30th at 7:30 P.M. The following regular meeting of the Mayor and Council is scheduled to be held on August 20, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Edith S. Gil
Borough Clerk