

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG  
MAYOR & COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

**OCTOBER 15, 2020 - 7:30 P.M.**

[THIS MEETING WAS HELD IN PERSON AND VIRTUALLY]

**MAYOR'S OPENING STATEMENT:** Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM and stated the following: This meeting is in-person and being held virtual and open to the public with appropriate social distancing rules. In order to comply with executive orders, indoor gatherings are limited and on a first come first served basis. All attendees must wear a mask and remain six feet apart. Public comments will be accepted in person, through zoom or in writing. 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 Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, and Star Ledger, and posted at Borough Hall.

**SALUTE TO THE FLAG and a MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN, SERVING HOME AND ABROAD.**

**ROLL CALL:**

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

**REPORT OF AD HOC COMMITTEE**

Council President Robinson thanked Mr. Bundy and acknowledged the hard work and dedication of volunteers of this Committee. She read the following statement: *They give their time and effort, into helping our Borough achieve its goals and overall make Watchung be a better community. The passion each volunteer has for the mission he or she undertakes is obvious, whether at meetings or events, it showcases their commitment. That passion exists in other residents as well, not just members of the various committees and commissions. We are righteous in our own way, and sometimes we get caught up in that righteousness and the passion can become inflammable. It can carry over to personal attacks between other committees or committee members, on the Mayor and Council Members, Borough employees and other residents. It causes me to ask these questions, would you be proud to say these things in from of your children and grandchildren? Would you be proud of them if they treated others the same way? Would you say these things to people, face to face? Would you be proud to show our social media to friends who might want to live here and move here? Would you show your emails or social media comments to your Clergy? What do you think they would say? Now we all know that covid is causing added stress to our already stressful world as is the impending election. So our good natures are being tested at every turn and the media we all watch and read are inflaming the conditions we are all doing our best to maneuver through. But instead of taking the bait, clicking, turning to our favorite social media, pressing send on that email and turning on one another, why can't we reach out? As if it's a physical emergency we are facing where we would all be helping one another. Remember how we all came together after Sandy? We helped our neighbors with water, food, fuel and any other assistance we could provide. We didn't ask whether they were Democrat or Republican or their belief, we didn't worry about who their friends were. We just reached out a hand. That's called humanity? And if we just stopped and recognized the humanity inside all of us, minimize the cynicism and the hate and we would be less likely to criticize and more likely to compromise. And we could make Watchung a more inviting place with more current and future residents. Now WIDER had the last of its listening sessions last night, it was the most well attended so far. Not everyone agreed on everything, but no one was disrespectful, and it was quite productive. Once thing we did agree on, was that we need more events that will bring residents together. If covid restrictions are ever lifted that will be the mission of this committee. We even came up with ideas that would bring us together without being together and we welcome input from everyone who may have other ideas. In the meantime, it was clear that we need to put aside some of that righteousness, come out from behind those screens, and once again remind ourselves we all have a place in this town. That no one person and no one's ideas are better than another. We encourage everyone to recognize the humanity in all of our residents. Thank you.*

Report of Ad Hoc Committee with Board of Education – Council President reported that Administrator Damato has an upcoming meeting with the Board of Ed and it is being recommended to reinstate the 3-year lease agreement and other potential shared services.

Council Member Goodloe mentioned that she looked forward to the WIDER Committee's recommendation and findings and pledged her own continued support for the values of inclusivity, diversity, equality and respect in the Borough's business.

Council Member Eisenberg Knegten echoed both sentiments and is glad Watchung is taking steps in the right direction.

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**REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:**

1. Administration & Finance – no new report since the last meeting but he provided an update on the FEMA grant being worked on with the assistance of OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon.

Council Member Martino inquired on the recommendations and requests made by the Fire Department at the last workshop meeting. He also stressed the need for council to begin discussions on their requests as they are large budget items in addition to keeping in mind other large projects on their wish list, like the lake dredging and road resurfacing projects.

Council Member Jubin inquired on assistance from county or state agencies that could assist the Department of Public Works and called upon the various committees and even residents with any skills to assist the borough.

Council President commented that perhaps the Mayor could reach out to Congressman Tom Malinowski on any federal grant assistance for the fire trucks. Council Member Martino also inquired on the vehicle policy as he believed that there might be issues with the IRS on these take home vehicles.

Mayor Balla gave a special thanks to Sam Robinson for his assistance with the technological issues the Borough was having.

2. Police – Council President Robinson deferred to Acting Chief Kelly to report later on the Walmart incident.

Council Member Martino requested that the traffic sign be reworked to have a deer warning message.

3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Council Member Martino reported that the bag leaf cleanup program is starting and discussions are underway for an additional Laborer. DPW is also conducting compliance training this month and looking into more efficient equipment. He also requested that the position of Foreman be removed from the website since a decision had been made.

Council Member Jubin inquired on lighting upgrades to LED lights, Administrator James Damato mentioned that he is meeting with someone from PSEG and they would be taking a tour of the area that is looking to be upgraded. If a grant opportunity is not available, there might be some incentives that PSEG can provide the borough.

4. Public Affairs: Council Member Goodloe reminded residents of the deadline to respond to the Census, she reported that they met with Acting Police Chief, OEM Coordinator and the Borough Health Officer to come up with Halloween covid protocols. Council Member Jubin elaborated on the protocols and suggestions that they came up with. Council President thanked Acting Chief Kelly for stepping up and being there for the community in this regard.

Council Member Martino brought up changes that need to be done to the website, updating content, etc. Several Council Members expressed the same sentiment and suggested that all board, commissions, and committees review their respective web pages to provide update to content.

Environmental – Council President Robinson reported that the Commission met on October 6<sup>th</sup> and discussed the spotted lanternfly and possible actions that can be taken. Members of the Wildlife Committee were also present to provide their input. There is a free Penn State course on this subject for anyone that may be interested.

Recreation – Council Member Eisenberg Knechten provided a report and reminded residents that the Borough will be having a pumpkin decorating contest on Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup> with times based on age group and a rain date of October 25<sup>th</sup>. Administrator Damato reported that he is working on an ADA grant for the Mobus Field playground through Investors Bank and Council Member Black is completely on board. Administrator Damato informed Council that the grant might be over the course of 2 years and if asked, the Borough could match about \$10,000 in order to make for a stronger application, which is due by November 15<sup>th</sup>.

Council Member Jubin called for a 5-year plan to invest in the Borough's Recreational assets.

Council President Robinson motioned to authorize the Administrator to submit a grant application with Investors Bank for an ADA playground, second by Council Member Eisenberg Knechten. Upon a roll call, the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knechten, Jubin, Martino "aye"; Council Member Black was absent.

Historical – no report

Board of Health – no report

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5. Fire – Council Member Martino provided an update on the recent purchases made for the new members, he also reported on the concerns that have risen from the public regarding the fire siren. There are parts of the town that are not covered, this whistle is a part of the annex and is supposed to cover at least 1/3 of the borough. He suggested that this matter be researched further.

Council Member Martino provided copies of reports on shared services he came across, he provided them to each member and advised that they could be discussed later on.

6. Laws/Ordinances – Council Member Eisenberg Knegten reported that they met on October 14<sup>th</sup> and they reviewed the following, ordinance amending procedures for introduction of an ordinance, tree bank ordinance, residential inspection policy, and making the WIDER committee a permanent committee which further led to discussions on the current committee structure.

**REPORTS – OTHER:**

7. Engineer – no report
8. Police Chief – Acting Police Chief Kelly was physically present and reported the details of the Walmart incident, reported on the full audit of PPE on hand, and reported on the monthly activity numbers from September.
9. Fire Department – Fire Chief DeSandolo virtually reported the activities from the month of September; 15 calls, 2 gas leaks, 1 elevator emergency, 1 water leak, 6 new members were sworn in. He also reported that the Fire Department does actively search for grant opportunities and had recently applied to a few like the 6 AED they received, NJ American Water Grant and for the new apparatus but they did not receive that one.  
  
Fire Inspector Chris Czuba virtually reported that 45 inspections were conducted in the month of September and in-person inspections for the Certificate of Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Compliance have resumed and 6 were conducted in September. In honor of Fire Safety Week, a video on fire safety presentation was recorded in Valley View School. He also reported that progress has been made on the business objects program, outstanding bills for life hazard use fee were hand delivered to our local businesses in an effort to get them paid.
10. Rescue Squad – Council President Robinson reported that the Rescue Squad will not be holding the traditional Tree of Lights ceremony this year due to the pandemic. They will be having a virtual ceremony on December 5<sup>th</sup>. The next training drill is scheduled for October 27<sup>th</sup>.
11. Emergency Management – OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon reported that the covid plan for pumpkin decoration event has been approved. The Watchung PTO food truck event is still pending since their covid plan has not been submitted. The covid plan for resolution R13 listed tonight has also not been submitted. She proceeded to provide updates on covid numbers. Rutgers will be working with Bayberry School to find a location for the rain garden, they just ask that the borough's Department of DPW assist them with the manual labor of moving the rain garden.
12. Attorney – no report
13. Clerk – no report
14. Administrator – Administrator Damato provided an update on covid cases. He also reported on the Cares Act funding and informed everyone that Watchung's allocation was \$74,512.00 and provided a detailed report on the current grant fund applications being worked on. He also assured that while the revenue numbers may be significantly different, the borough does not have a budget deficit.
15. Wildlife Committee – Council Member Jubin reported that the last meeting was held on October 5<sup>th</sup> and reviewed the Boards written recommendation to Mayor and Council on deer cull.
16. Youth Services – no report
17. Planning Board – no report
18. Board of Education – Council Member Eisenberg Knegten reported that the school sent out a survey to give input on the hybrid schedule and reported on the vacancy of the Board. The Educational Foundation is still planning their annual Trunk or Treat event, except this year it will be a drive thru version.
19. Municipal Alliance
20. Library Advisory Board – Council Member Goodloe reported that the Library is seeing robust activity with all covid protocols' in place.

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**PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY**

1. Deb Joren inquired on any vacancies on the Wildlife Advisory Board

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**DISCUSSION**

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**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Council Member Jubin motion to hold the public hearing on the ordinance below, second by Council Member Goodloe. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

No one appearing wishing to be heard

Council Member Jubin motion to close the public hearing on the ordinance below, second by Council President Robinson. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

Council Member Jubin motion to adopt the ordinance below, second by Council President Robinson. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, “aye,” Black “absent,” Martino “no.”

Public Hearing of Ordinance OR:20/05 entitled: "AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG CH. 5-12-12.76 ET. SEQ., THEREOF AND TO FIX AND DETERMINE MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM SALARIES AND COMPENSATION TO BE PAID TO CERTAIN EMPLOYEES."

R1: Adoption of OR:20/05– Amending Code/ Salary Ordinance

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**NEW BUSINESS**

**CONSENT AGENDA:** Council President Robinson moved to accept the items listed below, second by Council Member Jubin and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent,” Eisenberg Knegten “abstain.”

Approval of the following Council Minutes:

September 3, 2020	Regular Meeting
September 17, 2020	Regular Meeting
September 26, 2020	Special Meeting
October 1, 2020	Regular Meeting

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Building Department	September 2020
Fire Prevention Bureau Report	September 2020
Police Activity Report	September 2020
Wildlife Management Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes	September 14, 2020

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**CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS:** Council President Robinson motioned to adopt the items listed below, second by Council Member Jubin and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

Council Member Jubin inquired on the Lawsoft software used by Police and inquired if it could also be used for the vehicles under Public Works.

R2: Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – Institute for Forensic Psych (PD - Fitness for Duty Evaluations)  
MD Radio Services (FD – Radio Equipment)  
Lawsoft, Inc. (PD - Lawsoft Software)  
Amazon c/o Synchrony Bank (PD - Computers)  
Winner Ford (PD – Vehicle)

R3: Authorizing Tax Lien Redemption – Certificate #17-00002

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R4: Authorizing Surplus Property No Longer Needed for Public Use on an Online Auction

R5: Authorizing Purchasing Agent to Dispose of Surplus Property

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**NON-CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:**

R6: Payment of Bills

Council Member Jubin motion to adopt the above item, second by Council President Robinson and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

R7: Authorizing Extension of Field Permit for use of Blackadar Field for Mr. B’s Volleyball Camp

Council Member Eisenberg Knegten motion to adopt the above item, second by Council Member Goodloe and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

R8: Authorizing Field Permit for Philips Field to Watchung PTO

Council Member Martino motion to adopt the above item, second by Council President Robinson and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent,” Eisenberg Knegten “abstain.”

R9: Authorizing Extension of Temporary Outdoor Dining Resolution

Council Member Eisenberg Knegten motion to adopt the above item, second by Council Member Goodloe and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

Council Member Martino and other Members inquired on the tents that are being used now that the weather is colder and inquired on the effects of the virus with these enclosures. Council Member Jubin explained that there should be some form of air circulation and OEM Coordinator Solon provided answers to some of these questions based upon current executive orders. All Members expressed their concerns.

R10: Authorizing Payment of Accumulated Benefits – Joseph R. Cina

Council Member Jubin motion to adopt the above item, second by Council President Robinson and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

R11: Authorizing Payment of Accumulated Benefits – Benjamin Nir

Council Member Jubin motion to adopt the above item, second by Council President Robinson and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

R12: Authorizing Payment of Accumulated Benefits – Arlene McCoy

Council Member Jubin motion to adopt the above item, second by Council President Robinson and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

R13: Authorizing use of Mobus Field – Cub Scouts

Council Member Martino motion to adopt the above item, second by Council Member Martino and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

R14: Authorizing Tax Collector to Waive Delinquent Interest on Sewer Bill

Council Member Jubin motion to adopt the above item, second by Council Member Goodloe and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

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**PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION**

1. Deb Joren, Stirling Road, inquired on the status of the executive session breach

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Attorney Murphy stated that he had not received anything yet and that he would reach out to find out the status.

2. Carolyn Solon, OEM Coordinator, wanted to let residents know that October is curbing hunger month and we have about 2500 families that are suffering due to job losses. We are currently in need of detergent, body wash, and dish soap and the county has on their website information on how we can donate.
3. Bruce Ruck, Lakeview Avenue, followed up on Ms. Solon's statement. He asked if the residents of Watchung knew where to find the information necessary, should they need assistance. Coordinator Solon responded that the Borough has the hotline where any resident can call and the borough recently did a mail-in with all of the resources listed; however it has been found that residents in need will not often contact their local municipalities, but they will reach out to the county.

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R15: Authorizing Executive Session: Attorney-Client Privilege Matters

Council President Robinson motion to adopt the above item, second by Council Member Goodloe and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino "aye," Black "absent."

Upon return from executive session at 11:43 P.M. all Member previously present, were again in attendance.

Council President Robinson motioned to return to open session, second by Council Member Jubin. Upon roll call the vote was as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino "aye," Black "absent."

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**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the Council, the meeting was adjourned to the call of the Chair at 11:44 P.M. The next regular meeting of the Mayor and Council to be held on November 5, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Edith G. Gil  
Borough Clerk