

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

DECEMBER 3, 2020 - 7:30 P.M.

[THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUAL FOR ALL PARTIES]

MAYOR'S OPENING STATEMENT: Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 7:31 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 meeting was given by way of the Special Meeting Notice to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, the Star Ledger, and posted at Borough Hall and the Borough's website. In order to comply with all NJ Executive Orders and to protect members of the public, this meeting will be held virtual for all parties. Public Comments will be accepted through zoom at the designated time or in writing. For those joining through Zoom, please note that upon arrival you are automatically muted. If you wish to speak during public portion, you will need to click on the "raise your hand" feature so that we may see you. For those joining us through the conference call line, you will need to press *6 to unmute yourself.*

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 Knechten [P] Jubin [P] Martino [P]

Mayor Balla informed everyone that a mailer would be going out that included aids and several resources available to all residents during this pandemic. He also advised that the mission of all volunteer boards and committees would be reviewed and called on Council Liaisons to review and suggest edits for the reorganization meeting in January.

REPORT OF AD HOC COMMITTEE

Council President Robinson reported that there were scheduling conflicts and meetings were scheduled for tomorrow. Reports would be forthcoming.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance – Council Member Jubin reported on the discussion held with Tax Assessor Ed Kerwin and the potential impact of tax appeals and the ongoing budget reviews. Mayor Balla inquired on freezing tax assessments and asked if that was considered.
2. Police – Council President Robinson reported that discussions were held on the data collected from the speed trap and traffic control system placed on Hillcrest. Their next steps are to send this data to the County in order to advocate for lowering the speed limit on that road. She also reported a decline in accidents on Hillcrest; there were 54 in 2017, 52 in 2018, 48 in 2019 and down to 42 in 2020. Discussions were also held on enforcing speed limits in town, more patrol officers were placed on Hillcrest and they are seeking a greater presence in Valley for deterrence.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Council Member Martino thanked the department for their hard work on the after effects of the storms we've had. He reminded residents of the importance of maintaining their property since the leaves usually end up on the streets and end up in the catch basins and we get flooding. He also reported that the department did a good job on putting up the holiday lights.
4. Public Affairs: Council Member Goodloe echoed Council Member Martino's sentiment, the Department of DPW did a fantastic job on putting up the holiday lights. She reported that the Traffic & Beautification Commission did its annual holiday and decorating, all of the decorations around the borough facilities are up.

Environmental – no update provided

Recreation – Council Member Eisenberg Knechten reported that they launched a snow sculpture decorating contest which begins on Saturday and runs through March 1st.

Historical – no update provided

Board of Health – Council Member Jubin reported that no Board meeting took place, however every Sunday night OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon, Board President Bruce Ruck and Health Officer Kevin Sumner meet to discuss everything going on. He reported that we are in a second covid wave and numbers are record high, he also discussed at length vaccine, covid information released by the CDC, and contact tracing efforts in place.

5. Fire – Council Member Martino reported on the outdoor dining tents, these are permits that will be required of the borough's construction department. Mayor Balla made an inquiry on the state guidelines for outdoor use of tent, Borough Attorney Denis Murphy reviewed the state's adopted guidelines.

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6. Laws/Ordinances – Council Member Eisenberg Knegten reported that this Committee met twice since the last council meeting, discussions surrounded the potential of hosting cannabis operations on Route 22 and occupied store fronts, code construction issues that ended up going into resolution R7 tonight, the tree removal application, and revisions to resolution R8 tonight, current noise and construction ordinances, and discussed internal committee structures.

REPORTS – OTHER:

7. Engineer – Malay Patel of CME Associates reported on behalf of Borough Engineer Bruce Koch, Mr. Patel reported that the borough submitted a grant request of \$1,154,157.56 to the NJDOT and received a \$300,000 award. CME suggests the funds be used to resurface Hill Hollow Road and Nottingham Drive. They also submitted a grant request for the FY2021 State Aid Programs and received a \$375,000 award for Elsinor Drive, Friar Lane, Johnston Drive, and Sherwood Drive. In terms of the Elsinor Drive Culvert Repair project, CME met with a contractor that has trenchless technology for repairing culverts like such as those, it is estimated that the construction cost will be approximately \$85,000, should Mayor and Council give CME directing to prepare a proposal, they are read to do so.
8. Police Chief – Acting Police Chief Kelly gave a brief overview of the traffic discussion at the recent Police Committee. He reported that training with JM Montgomery began through the Joint Insurance Fund, they received a positing review from them. The department had about 1,795 calls in the month of October and about 36 motor vehicle accidents.
9. Fire Department – Fire Chief Al DeSandolo reported the following for the month of November: 20 calls, 2 cooking fires, 2 motor vehicle injuries, 1 elevator call, 1 carbon monoxide, 2 power lines down, 1 water leakage, 1 haz mat release, 7 fire alarm activations, 2 cancellations in route. He also reported that several members completed their live fire training and they are working on a socially distant Santa run on December 12th. Fire Official Chris Czuba was unable to attend, but submitted a written report.
10. Rescue Squad – Council President Robinson reported that the Tree of Lights virtual ceremony would be held this Saturday.
11. Emergency Management – OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon reported that a large amount of food donation was received, she thanked all donors and CERT members are sorting through all the inventory. She also reported on Executive Order 204, outdoor gathering limits released by the State, and the coronavirus funding released. The state has also released a covid complaint hotline for anyone wishing to report a business that is not being compliant with all executive orders. This hotline has enforcement powers, so they encourage anyone to use this number to report any violations. Lastly, Coordinator Solon reported that the County has implemented the Smart 911 app where residents can put confidential information that about their household, including pets that will help cut response time for mobile callers to first responders.
12. Attorney – no update provided
13. Clerk – Clerk Edith Gil reported on changes to some of the resolutions on tonight's agenda
14. Administrator – Administrator James Damato described in detail the breakdown and trend in covid cases in Watchung and urged everyone to follow all CDC recommendations.
15. Wildlife Committee – no update provided
16. Youth Services – Council President Robinson reported that the grant the Commission recently applied for was granted to them.
17. Planning Board – Council Member Martino reported that a meeting was scheduled for December 14th to review the draft master plan, which is available for public inspection. He also reported on a site plan that Berkeley Heights Planning Board is set to review, he noted on the importance and possible impact on Watchung. Council Member Goodloe requested that the master plan be made available.
18. Board of Education – Council Member Eisenberg Knegten reported that the high school would be on 100% remote schedule through December 9th and would be returning to a hybrid schedule on December 10th.
19. Municipal Alliance
20. Library Advisory Board – Council Member Goodloe reported that the library's virtual programs remained ongoing at scls.org; she also reported that the Historical Committee along with Girl Schools were partnering for a scavenger hunt activity.

Council Member Martino inquired on meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee.

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PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

No one appearing wishing to be heard

DISCUSSION

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

CONSENT AGENDA: Council President Robinson motioned to accept the items listed below, second by Council Member Eisenberg Knegten. Upon roll call, the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

CERT Meeting Minutes	November 24, 2020
Fire Prevention Monthly Report	November 2020
Library Advisory Minutes	September 16, 2020
Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority	November 5, 2020

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #35- Jersey Central Power & Light Company 11/18/20 2021 JCP&L Vegetative Management Gillette Substation Notice c: M&C, JD
- #36- Township of Berkeley Heights 11/30/20 Planning Board Legal Notice, approvals to construct a 211-unit inclusionary multi-family development c: M&C, JD

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS:

R2: Authorizing 1-year Contract for Animal Control Services – St. Hubert’s Giralda, Inc.

Council Member Jubin motioned to remove R2 from the consent agenda. Upon roll call, the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.” Council Member Martino inquired on the expiration of the current contract.

Council Member Jubin motioned to table item R2. Upon roll call, the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.” Council Member Martino inquired on the expiration of the current program.

Council President Robinson motioned to accept the items listed below, second by Council Member Goodloe. Upon roll call, the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

- R1: Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – Lawsoft, Inc. (PD – 2021 Support & Maintenance for CAD/RMS)
- R3: Waiving delinquent interest on 1680-1690 Route 22/ Block 6201, lot 3
- R4: Budget Insertion of Special Item of Revenue (Chapter 159) - Somerset County Youth Svcs Grant
- R5: Waiving delinquent interest on 1511 Route 22 West

NON-CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

Council Member Jubin Motion to adopt the item listed below, second by Council President Robinson. Upon roll call, the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

- R6: Authorizing Appointment of Public Works Driver Operator Step E / Vickram Kissoon

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Council Member Jubin motioned to adopt the item listed below, second by Council Member Eisenberg Knegten. Upon roll call, the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

R7: Waiving Permit Fees in Support of Outdoor Dining

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

Council Member Martino made several inquiries on the impact of the state legislation, he asked if anyone had made any inquiries on this with the Planning Board and how the drug-free zones would be addressed. He asked if anyone had solicited the help of the Watchung Board of Health, Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission, Somerset County Health Department, NJ Department of Health and Human Services, Watchung’s Police Department, and the Board of Education. He also suggested that the Borough solicit the opinion of neighboring municipalities and more importantly, the opinion of borough residents. Mayor Balla addressed some of Council Member Martino’s comments. All Council Members expressed their thoughts on the impact of this legislation and some members noted possible revenue advantages to the Borough.

R8: Expressing Intent to Serve as Host Municipality for Legal Cannabis Operations

Council Member Jubin motioned to adopt the item listed below, second by Council Member Eisenberg Knegten. Upon roll call, the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

R9: Resolution rescinding R6 9/17/20 previously issuing pocket license to Miller’s Ale House of Watchung, LLC.

Council Member Jubin motioned to adopt the item listed below, second by Council Member Eisenberg Knegten. Upon roll call, the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

R10: Authorizing Renewal of Plenary Retail Consumption License – Miller’s Ale House
Pocket License

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1) Adam Kraft, Board of Education Member, spoke on cannabis legislation and the possibility of a town hall meeting and on the Council not wishing to work with the IDEA Committee. He noted it was a pleasure to work with this committee and urged Council to reconsider their decision.

Council Member Martino clarified his position on cannabis and having a public meeting and Council President Robinson explained that no one had made the decision to not work with the IDEA Committee and a final report of the WIDER Committee would be forthcoming.

Council President Robinson motioned to adopt the item listed below, second by Council Member Robinson. Upon roll call, the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Black “absent.”

R11: Authorizing Executive Session: Personnel Matters

Mayor and Council went into executive session at approximately 9:40 P.M.; upon return from executive session at 10:28 P.M., all members previously present were again in attendance.

Council Member Eisenberg Knegten motioned to return to open session, second by Council Member Goodloe. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Martino “aye,” Black and Jubin “absent.”

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 10:28 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council is scheduled to be held on December 17, 2020 at 7:30 P.M. regular meeting and a Police Department budget workshop meeting is to be scheduled.