

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

MAY 6, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

[THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY FOR ALL PARTIES]

MAYOR'S OPENING STATEMENT: Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. 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 Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, the Star Ledger, posted at Borough Hall and on 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 virtually for all parties. Public Comments will be accepted through zoom or by email to the Borough Clerk. 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. 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] Goodloe [P] Eisenberg Knegten [P] Jubin [P] Martino [P] Hayeck [P]

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

1. Administration & Finance – Council Member Jubin reported on matters discussed at today’s A&F meeting. Amongst the matters discussed was the possibility of working on a table of organization, the scoring system used for website proposals, and delinquent special assessment balances that must be sold, and the farmer market fees.

Council Member Martino brough forth the discrepancies with the special assessment balances dating back to 2018 and urged Council to consider waiving delinquent fees as several residents, like him, did not receive any additional notifications via mail. This matter will be further considered by this Committee.

2. Police – Council President Robinson reported that they are moving forward with the hiring of the four new patrol officers. The newly ordered white police cars have arrived and the motto “Protect with Respect” will be placed on them. She also noted the orange sign have been moved to the top of Hillcrest, per CM Martinos suggestion and thanked Warren Township for allowing them to place it on their border line.

Council Member Hayeck inquired on the color of the police vehicles and Council President noted the recommendation came from CM Martino and the intent was to make the police vehicles more friendly. CM Martino noted it was also suggested to increase visibility during the night.

CM Martino inquired on who is responsible for the electronic sign and suggested a written policy on the use and content of this sign. CM Goodloe and Jubin offered comments and more suggestions on this matter.

3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Council Member Eisenberg Knegten reported that this committee had met twice since the last council meeting. The bond ordinance and LSRP resolution on tonight’s agenda were discussed as well as repairs at the Police station and Texier House, the committee is currently awaiting additional quotes on the painting of the Arts Center, and discussed cleaning procedures within the borough.

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

MAY 6, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

4. Public Affairs:

Environmental – Council President Robinson reported on their April 26th meeting, 99 trees were to be removed, 23 in about 6 sites to be replaced and another 30 at one location. Discussions took place on two matters before the Planning Board, the issues from ash trees, and the Styrofoam recycling matter. The Green Team is moving forward with plans on the Green Fair event done in partnership with Warren, it might be done as a drive-thru event because of covid concerns. Operation Pride was a huge success and all of the seedlings ordered were given away. For tonight’s agenda we have correspondence #20, the Commission hopes that the checklist can be made mandatory in order to increase sustainability points.

Recreation – Council Member Hayeck reported on the success of the craft event following Operation Pride, the covid plan for summer camp is being finalized, and the next meeting of the Recreation Commission will be towards the end of May.

Historical – Council Member Martino reported on the Committee’s April 21st meeting, where he asked the Mayor to attend on his behalf. Mayor Balla reported that he was pleased with the discussions that took place and that they have initiated collaborations with other historical societies. CM Martino reported that plans are moving forward for the grand re-opening of Texier House, which is expected to be right after the Memorial Day ceremony. Thanked residents for their volunteer work on the plantings around Texier House.

Board of Health – Council Member Jubin reported on the Board’s last meeting held in April and noted the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission and commended Kevin Sumner for his years of leadership. CM Jubin asked the Board Chair and Mr. Sumner to submit a written recommendation to the Governing Body on their upcoming special meeting on cannabis and to make themselves available for that meeting.

5. Fire – Council Member Goodloe asked Fire Chief Albert DeSandolo to be present to speak on their department’s capital request. Chief DeSandolo discussed the items they are requesting (SCBA, hose and turnout), 10 SCBAs this year, 24 in total, 10 next year, and 4 the following year. Each one is approximately \$8500 each, they also need to replace most of their packs which are roughly 20 years old. He discussed further details of each replacement equipment they seek. Chief DeSandolo noted that incoming volunteers are issued fire gear upon joining the department and they are issued used gear out their surplus. With the new influx of volunteer members, the department is low on reserve gear so they are looking to replace that and upon graduation of fire school and passing the probationary period, purchase new gear for the new members, the previously used gear would then go back into surplus. CM Goodloe asked the Fire Chief to put together a comprehensive spreadsheet of what the replacements are and their cost so that Council could review and approve when the time came to approve these purchases.
6. Laws/Ordinances – Council Member Martino reported that the committee met on April 15th and reviewed ordinances on the Wildlife Management Advisory Committee, impervious coverage, fire prevention regulations and inspections, the noise ordinance, the bamboo ordinance and they’ve recently received suggested changes to the construction department fees. CM Martino also touched upon outdoor dining and the possibility of incorporating that to the code.

REPORTS – OTHER:

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

MAY 6, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

7. Engineer – Engineer Bruch Koch and Malay Patel of CME Associates gave a PowerPoint presentation on the 2020 NJDOT Municipal Aid grant for the improvements to Nottingham Drive and Hill Hollow Road and the 2021 NJDOT Municipal Aid grant for the improvements to Elsinore Drive, Friar Lane, Sherwood Drive and Johnston Drive. They gave an overview of the grant process and the necessary steps after the award of the grant. Engineer Koch also reported on the 2022 grant timeline recently announced, the deadline is July 1st and noted there were some roads (Wolford Court, Scott Drive from Washington to Winter Lane, Corey Lane) that still required work, as suggested by former Public Works Manager Charlie Gunther.

Administrator James Damato informed Council that the Administrator from Warren reached out to him on the first 100 yards of Helen Street which are in Watchung. It would be in the best interest of everyone to coordinate the paving of this road.

Council Members thanked Mr. Koch for his presentation and made inquiries on some of the areas in the targeted road work.

8. Police Chief – Acting Police Chief Hart reported on the departments April activity, there were 1,871 calls requiring police activity, there were 10 shoplifting incidents, they arrested 10 individuals, 2 of those for driving while intoxicated and 47 accidents investigated. 185 hours of department training took place, most of it for qualification mods.
9. Fire Department – Fire Chief DeSandolo reported on 19 calls for the month of April, 3 squad assists, 2 smells of gas, 2 mutual aids, 3 brush/mulch fires, 3 alarm activations, 3 motor vehicle collisions, 1 power line down, 1 water issue and 1 motor vehicle fire. Members also attended Operation Pride this past weekend, and completed blood work pathogens and right to know /haz com requirements for the year.
10. Rescue Squad – Council President Robinson provided figure from April, there were 20 calls, 13 BLS, 3 ALS, 4 RMA, year to date calls are 52, the Rescue Squad also trained last month in epi-pen, Narcan and SMR protocols.
11. Emergency Management – OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon reported on food donations collected and sorted, a large bulk was donated to a Somerset County food bank. The food banks are reporting that approximately 1,200 families are in need of assistance, therefore a great majority was donated. However, a small surplus remains with the borough should any residents need assistance. OEM is working on the summer camp covid plan, this year the NJ Department of Health is requiring very specific information in this regard, which makes the process a bit more complex. Coordinator Solon met with the Chair of the Historical Committee to discuss the reopening of the Texier House. A plan is being written to submit to the Board of Health.
12. Attorney – no update since last meeting
13. Clerk – Borough Clerk Edith Gil reported that the Spring 2021 newsletter contained the wrong date for the June primary. Announcements correcting this information have been released via email to all subscribers, the correct dates have been posted to social media and the borough's website as well as in the digital signs. She also reported on changes to the remainder of the 2021 council meeting dates, all information has been posted and advertised properly.

Council Member Eisenberg Knegten inquired on a plan of action to mail out the correct date. Clerk Gil explained that it takes the same efforts to mail out a postcard as it does the newsletter and the office is current short-staffed, doing this would hinder the office. Mayor Balla noted that several other pieces of literature, with the right date, would be sent out by the County and other people campaigning to

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

MAY 6, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

residents. It would be best to save on the cost of mailing and continue advertising through digital means.

14. Administrator – Administrator Damato reported on the number of covid cases, he has also started conversations with the County on having a pop-up site in Watchung for covid vaccines, and recently applied for a grant with AARP for ADA improvements to Mobus, sidewalk repairs have been looked at extensively and the borough is in the process of contracting with a company to address some of these issues. There was a trip and fall incident on Mountain Boulevard by the lake area and the borough needs to prevent this from happening again. Administrator Damato also informed of a new form devised by the A&F Committee to allow for departments to explain and document their capital expenditure requests.

CM Goodloe thanked the Administrator for his work on the AARP grant and looks forward to it, she asked that the Public Works Committee be allowed to review the plans and provide feedback if awarded.

15. Wildlife Committee - no update since last meeting
16. Youth Services – Council President Robinson reported on their meeting of April 13th where Mayor Balla swore in new members. CP Robinson reported that Chair Richard Pepe provided an updated quarterly report and put in great efforts to track the Commission’s money from 2015 to identify where the money came from and where it was spent. The Pursuit of Excellence is underway in Valley View and Bayberry and they are looking to extend the program through the summer, the Girls Who Code grant is also underway in Bayberry, the PBA is looking for ideas on summer activities with the schools and discussion took place on revising the bylaws of the commission.
17. Planning Board – Council Member Martino reported on their April 20th meeting and established a sub-committee to provide an extensive review of cannabis matters. They provided a report to Mayor and Council in this regard. The Board also continued review of the Learning Experience. They will be having a special meeting on May 26th to begin review of the Bonnie Burn redevelopment site.
18. Municipal Alliance – Council Member Hayeck reported on the April 14th meeting where they discussed different programs being planed, most notably project graduation.
19. Library Advisory Board – no update since last meeting, however CM Goodloe inquired on the status of the library grant application. Mayor Balla advised that Mr. Korenowsky was waiting on the Architects certification, which were receive today and on tonight’s agenda we have resolution R19, so once that is approved the borough should have all of its documents submitted to him for further completion of the grant.
20. Traffic and Beautification – CM Goodloe reported on the success of Operation Pride, it was a great collaboration of various committees. Approximately 75 people were there for the cleanup, this was one of the greatest turnouts; she thanked the Police Dept. for coming out as well. T&B would like to recommend the purchase of vincas to plant around the cherry trees on Somerset Street. It would be about \$900 for 300 vincas, about 240 would go around the trees and the balance would be placed around the borough, like the Texier House. Council Members were in favor of the purchase.

It was also reported that resident Matt Murphy has been cultivating canna lily bulbs and is interested in planting 40 of these bulbs around the Tree of Lights on the Village Green and he would be responsible for watering them and removing them in the fall. If no member objects, CM Goodloe would recommend moving forward with this and allowing him to graciously proceed.

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

MAY 6, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

Resident Maureen Hemsworth also generously donated American flags that will go up before Memorial Day and will stay through the 4th of July on Somerset Street and at the Triangle. The Garden Club will also be putting blue wreaths on the blue star memorial and the borough thanks them both for their work.

CM Eisenberg Knegten thanked the residents for their donations, CM Jubin also suggested reaching out to the schools to engage the boroughs youth in these planting activities. The Mayor and other Council Members supported this idea.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

- 1) Christine Ead, Washington Drive, inquired if the meeting of May 26th on the Bonnie Burn project was a public meeting. She was informed that all committees/board have their zoom information on the website. Ms. Ead also thanked the police department for their services.

DISCUSSION

❖ Memorial / Honorarium Beautification Program

The borough received an inquiry from residents on identifying other areas to continue this program. By way of background, when this program was started, specific allowable areas were identified to allow for the planting of trees or memorial benches only at Watchung and Best Lake. Now, the borough may be running out of space in these areas and other areas need to be identified to allow the continuation of this program.

Council Members spoke in support of this program, Mayor Balla recommended that Traffic & Beautification along with Public Work take a look at the original map and identify other locations and possibly other trees to allow in the future.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

R1: Determining Budget to be Read by Title

Link to 2021 Introduced Budget: <https://watchungnj.gov/finance/2021/2021-introduced-budget.pdf>

Motion to Adopt the above by Jubin/ second by Robinson

RC: Robinson [Y] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knegten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y]

Public Hearing on Adoption of 2021 Annual Budget is held

Motion to open the public hearing by Jubin/ second by Robinson

RC: Robinson [Y] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knegten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y]

No one appearing

Motion to close the public hearing by Robinson/ second by Eisenberg Knegten

RC: Robinson [Y] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knegten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y]

R2: Adoption of the 2021 Municipal Budget

Motion to Adopt the above by Jubin/ second by Robinson

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

MAY 6, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

RC: Robinson [Y] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knegten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y]

NEW BUSINESS

CONSENT AGENDA:

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

CERT Meeting Minutes	April 27, 2021
Environmental Commission Minutes	March 22, 2021
Green Team Minutes	March 29, 2021 and April 9, 2021
Historical Committee Minutes	March 17, 2021
Planning Board Minutes	March 16, 2021
Recreation Commission Minutes	March 3, 2021
Traffic & Beautification Minutes	March 15, 2021
Tax Collector Reports	January, February & March
Youth Service Commission Minutes	January 27, 2021

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #17- Saint Mary - Stony Hill, Reverend Monsignor William Benwell, 4/19/21, re: New Library in Watchung c: M&C, JD
- #18- Somerset County Planning Board, 4/16/21, re: Resolution Adopting Amendments to the Somerset County Land Development Review involving Recycling Fees, Public Hearing held on April 27, 2021 c: M&C, JD, BOA, PB
- #19- Watchung Planning Board, 4/20/21, re: Cannabis Study Sub-Committee Report c: M&C, JD
- #20- Environmental Commission, 5/4/21, re: Proposed Ordinance to Adopt Sustainable Jersey Green Building Checklist in the Land Development Ordinance c: M&C, JD
- #21- Township of Warren, 4/16/21 re: Ordinance 21-15 Introduced on April 15, 2021 Prohibiting the Operation of Any Class of Cannabis Businesses Within Its Geographical Boundaries, Public Hearing Scheduled for May 13, 2021
- #22- Board of County Commissioners, Kelly Mager Clerk of the Board, 5/4/21, re: County Resolution Supporting the Implementation of the 2019 State Energy Master Plan c: M&C, JD

Motion to Adopt the above by Robinson/ second by Jubin

RC: Robinson [Y] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knegten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y]

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

MAY 6, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS: The resolutions listed below were submitted to the Governing Body for review and were adopted by one motion.

- R3: Authorizing Purchase Orders over \$2,000 - Coban Technologies (PD/ Equipment / HD Camera Systems)
- R4: Authorizing Sale of Surplus Property No Longer Needed for Public Use on Online Auction
- R5: Authorizing Waiving of Delinquent Interest – 60 Joan Drive, Block 7004/ Lot 11
- R6: Authorizing Waiving of Delinquent Interest – 125 Lakeview Avenue, Block 3501/ Lot 10
- R7: Authorizing Waiving of Delinquent Interest – 145 Nottingham Drive, Block 6905/ Lot 27
- R8: Authorizing Waiving of Delinquent Interest – 25 Kristy Lane, Block 6802/ Lot 8
- R9: Authorizing Waiving of Delinquent Interest – 105 Scott Drive, Block 1604/ Lot 4
- R10: Authorizing Waiving of Delinquent Interest – 636 Valley Road, Block 6905/ Lot 13
- R11: Authorizing Waiving of Delinquent Interest – 286 Old Somerset Road, Block 7100/ Lot 1.02
- R12: Authorizing Refund of Construction Permit Fee – Anthony & Sylvan Pools
- R13: Authorizing Refund of Overpayment – 132 Sunbright Road, Block 4308/ Lot 4
- R14: Authorizing Fee for Bulky Waste Collection
- R15: Authorizing Annual User Charges for the Collection and Treatment of Wastewater - 2021
- R16: Authorizing Payment of Accumulated Benefits – Chief Kelly
- R17: Supporting Participation in the Sustainable Jersey Municipal Certification Program
- R18: Authorizing Bill List
- R19: Certification of Library Site

Motion to Adopt the above by Jubin/ second by Goodloe

RC: Robinson [Y] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knekten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y]

NON-CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

ORDINANCE ON FIRST READING

Introduction of Ordinance **OR 21/04** entitled “**BOND ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO VARIOUS ROADWAYS, BY AND IN THE BOROUGH OF**

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

MAY 6, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

WATCHUNG, IN THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET, STATE OF NEW JERSEY; APPROPRIATING \$1,100,000 THEREFOR (INCLUDING GRANTS RECEIVED OR EXPECTED TO BE RECEIVED FROM THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$675,000) AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$1,100,000 BONDS OR NOTES OF THE BOROUGH TO FINANCE THE COST THEREOF,” *[Public Hearing to be held May 20, 2021]*

R20: Introduction of Ordinance OR:21/04 – Bond Ordinance Providing for Improvements to Various Roadways
Motion to Adopt the above by Eisenberg Knegten/ second by Goodloe
RC: Robinson [Abstain] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knegten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y]

Council Member Martino requested clarification on the long-term effects of financing this project with a bond ordinance. Administrator Damato reviewed the details of this bond ordinance and spoke on the grant reimbursement that is expected.

R21: Authorizing Expansion of Contract - CME Associates / Licensed Site Remediation Professional Services
Motion to Adopt the above by Eisenberg Knegten/ second by Goodloe
RC: Robinson [Y] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knegten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y]

CM Eisenberg Knegten inquired on how this item came to be listed on tonight’s agenda. Administrator Damato explained that they became aware of this only recently and that NJDEP had placed a June 1st deadline for the Borough to accomplish this. Otherwise, the State would be the one to hire the LSRP and require the borough to pay for those services, no matter the expense.

Mayor Balla inquired if escrow monies could be used for this purpose, CFO Hance explained that the escrow monies in place are specifically for the clean-up of this property, approximately the current balance is \$313,000, which raised further concerns for Council Members.

R22: Authorizing Appointment of Fire Volunteer – Harrison Werner
Motion to Adopt the above by Goodloe/ second by Eisenberg Knegten
RC: Robinson [Y] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knegten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y]

R23: Authorizing Conditional Appointment as Patrol Officer – Steven Grant White
Motion to Adopt the above by Robinson/ second by Eisenberg Knegten
RC: Robinson [Y] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knegten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y]

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1) Christine Ead, Washington Drive, spoke on the Ness property and suggested having a plan in place that could be shared with the residents to allow the community the opportunity to review prior to Council action.

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

MAY 6, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

R24: Authorizing Executive Session: Personnel Matters and Litigation Matters

Motion to Adopt the above by Robinson/ second by Goodloe

RC: Robinson [Y] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knegten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y]

Upon return from executive session, all members were present.

Motion to return to open session by Eisenberg Knegten/ second by Goodloe

RC: Robinson [Y] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knegten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y]

ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business, the meeting ended at 11:57 to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council is a Special Meeting scheduled to be held on May 12, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Edith G. Gil
Borough Clerk