

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

**OCTOBER 21, 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 “ *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 the 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. 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 Revised Annual Meeting Notice to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, the Star Ledger, posted at Borough Hall and on the Borough’s website.*”

**SALUTE TO THE FLAG AND A MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN, SERVING HOME AND ABROAD AND A MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR WATCHUNG YOUTH BENGAMN WATKINS.**

**ROLL CALL:**

Robinson [P] Goodloe [P] Eisenberg Knegten [P] Jubin [P] Martino [P] Hayeck [P]

Mayor Balla advised the public of his correct email address as he inadvertently stated an incorrect email address at the previous meeting.

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**PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY**

- 1) Lynda Goldschein, Sherwood Drive, inquired on the name background information on the new administrative assistant listed for approval on tonight’s agenda. Administrator Damato advised the new assistants name is listed on the resolution.
- 2) A written comment was received from Lynda Goldschein questioning the specific items included in OR: 21/10. Clerk Gil responded on the additional language changes added to the Ordinance suggested by Somerset County Planning Office.
- 3) Christine Ead, Washington Drive, questioned if the Council meeting format was changed. Clerk Gil advised the zoom meeting platform was changed over to a webinar format to prevent members of the public from unmuting themselves throughout the meeting. Ms. Ead feels that it is important for the public to know who is attending the Council meetings if they are not in person. Clerk Gil stated she can only control the mute and unmute feature not the participants shown. Ms. Ead was upset and stated the change is a lack of disclosure. Mayor Balla stated the Council will look into the meeting format change.
- 4) Debra Joren, Stirling Road, questioned who made the decision to change the meeting format to a webinar. Clerk Gil advised it was her decision to make the change as members of the public have been unmuting themselves during meetings and also the webinar feature focuses the meeting solely on the Governing Body. She advised other towns also use the webinar format for their Council meetings.

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**DISCUSSION**

❖ IDA Storm Updates

Mayor Balla asked Administrator Damato to provide an update on storm damages and the progress relating to Elsinore Drive, Mobus Field and other areas throughout the Borough.

Administrator Damato advised the storm cleanup at Mobus Field is finished. Public Works Director James Hutzelmann discussed all updates made to Mobus Field. He also mentioned the playground was inspected by insurance adjusters from the JIF and a contractor came out to look at the playground for repairs or possible upgrades. He added around other parts of the town the village green and sidewalks were cleaned up and they secured the library bridge location from traffic. Mr. Hutzelmann also said the Phillips Field bridge was inspected by our consulting engineers and has been reopened with a weight limit.

Mayor Balla asked for an update on Somerset Street. Administrator Damato advised Somerset Street is under the jurisdiction of Somerset County who was immediately contacted after the storm and sent detailed pictures of all the damage. He also said the work is in their queue to be completed as soon as possible.

Councilmember Martino stated his main concern is the structural problem with the gabion wall. He requested the Borough request weekly updates from the County on the status of the wall. He asked if some of the bricks could be moved out of the roadway as it is a potential danger to drivers. Administrator Damato advised the County will definitely address this project.

❖ 2021 Best Practices Inventory

Administrator Damato mentioned our CFO, Bill Hance puts together the Best Practices inventory checklist of items the Borough is requested and required to do. CFO Hance gave some background information on the Best Practices inventory process.

❖ New Legacy Books

Council President Robinson responded this was a proposal researched by the Environmental Commission. She said the Commission recommended to have one bin location in the Exempt Hall parking lot. She mentioned the Borough would receive 40 dollars per month even if no books were collected and 15 percent of any book resales up to 150 dollars per month. She also mentioned the books received will be weighed and the total tonnage amount will be added to our total recycling tonnage.

Councilmember Hayeck questioned the bin size. Council President Robinson stated the bins are relatively close in size to our clothing and donation bins and advised there would only be one bin per location.

Councilmember Martino asked for an explanation regarding the recycling tonnage process. Council President Robinson explained how the tracking of tonnage works. Councilmember Martino asked for a list of what the Borough has generated so far relating to tonnage.

Administrator Damato explained these specific reports are filed by Administrative Assistant Linda Monetti and submitted to the County Recycling Coordinator showing how many tons of material were generated for Watchung. Councilmember Martino requested a copy of last year's tonnage report submitted to the County.

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**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Motion by Eisenberg Knegten to open public hearing on below item/ Second by Goodloe  
RC: Robinson [Y] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knegten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y]

Public Hearing of Ordinance **OR 21/10 - “AN ORDINANCE AMENDING OR:21/02 AMENDING CHAPTER 21, STORMWATER CONTROL, OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, TO ESTABLISH MINIMUM STORMWATER MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS AND CONTROL”**

R1: Adoption of Ordinance **OR: 21/10** – Ordinance Amending OR: 21/02, Amending Chapter 21 Stormwater Control

No one appearing.

Motion by Eisenberg Knegten to close public hearing and adopt / Second by Goodloe  
RC: Robinson [Y] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knegten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y]

Motion by Jubin to open public hearing on below item/ Second by Goodloe  
RC: Robinson [Y] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knegten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y]

Public Hearing of Ordinance **OR 21/11 - – BOND ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR VARIOUS 2021 CAPITAL ACQUISITIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS, BY AND IN THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, IN THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET, STATE OF NEW JERSEY; APPROPRIATING \$198,400 THEREFOR AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$188,400 BONDS OR NOTES OF THE BOROUGH TO FINANCE PART OF THE COST THEREOF**

R2: Adoption of Ordinance **OR: 21/11** – Providing for Various 2021 Capital Acquisitions and Improvements

Councilmember Martino questioned if we are adding additional equipment onto this Ordinance. Councilmember Goodloe advised that the Fire Department only requested ten of these items because those are the only ones currently out of compliance. Councilmember Martino suggested we finance all of the necessary equipment at once. Administrator Damato went over the process of issuing notes. He also feels if we don't need to make the purchase for extra items right now than we should wait and budget for that in the next cycle.

Karen Grabois, Watchung, inquired on the lack of planning for these capital expenditures. Administrator Damato responded the Fire Department equipment recommendation was made by the Fire Chief and Assistant Chief. Administrator Damato explained the process of the rates for the notes. Ms. Grabois offered that with the rate of inflation increasing every year, the costs will be much higher next year.

Police Chief Hart explained the vehicle for purchase is an unmarked car and the life expectancy is usually between 5 and 8 years which is longer than normal cars and years and put in capital purchases for that reason. He advised the purchase of normal police vehicles are placed into the operating budget.

Motion by Jubin to close public hearing and adopt / Second by Robinson  
RC: Robinson [Y] Goodloe [Y] Eisenberg Knegten [Y] Jubin [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck\* [A]

\*Hayeck abstained as this Ordinance relates to some Fire Department purchases

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**NEW BUSINESS**

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Building Department Monthly Report	September 2021
Fire Prevention Monthly Report	September 2021
Green Team Advisory Board Minutes	September 20, 2021
Municipal Council Meeting Minutes	September 22, 2021
Police Department Monthly Activity Report	September 2021
Tax Collector's Report	September 2021

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #42- Notice from JCP&L re Establishing a New Rate Component – RGGI Recovery Charge for Costs Incurred to Mandated Community Solar Program, Recv'd 10/06/21. cc: M&C, JD
- #43- Public Notice from Chad and Rebecca Miller (Applicant) to Berkely Heights Board of Adjustment for variance re 111 Hampton Drive, public hearing for Oct. 28, 2021. Recv'd 10/18/21. cc: M&C, JD, Watchung Planning/Zoning Boards

Motion to Adopt by Robinson/ second by Goodloe

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

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**CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS:** The resolutions listed below were adopted by one motion.

- R3: \*Authorizing Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – PARSA (*Hack FL1500 Logger & Req. Meter Equip*)  
Messercola Excavating (*retaining wall demolition*)  
Morton Salt, Inc. (*2021 Salt Purchases – Morris Cnty Coop*)
- R4: Authorizing Agreement with Morris County Co-Op Council to Renew Membership through  
September 30, 2026
- R5: Authorize Towing License – Superior Towing & Transport, LLC
- R6: Authorizing Volunteer Appointment to Board of Health – Dr. Joel S. Cohen
- R7: Establishing a Municipal Construction Waste Policy for the Borough
- R8: Companion Animal Management Pledge
- R9: \*Authorizing Bill List

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Motion to Adopt by Robinson / Second by Eisenberg Knegten

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

\*For R9, Hayeck [ Abstain]

\*For R3, Martino [Abstain]

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**NON-CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:**

R10: Authorizing Amendment of Resolution R20 6/17/21 for Partial Release of Performance Surety Bond #SUR0045138

Motion to Adopt by Jubin/ Second by Robinson

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

R11: Authorizing Appointment of Administrative Assistant

Motion to Adopt by Jubin/ Second by Robinson

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

R12: Awarding 2020 and 2021 Roadway Improvement Project – JA Alexander, Inc.

Motion to Adopt by Eisenberg Knegten/ Second by Goodloe

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

R14: Authorizing Additional Extension of Time of the Designation of the Conditional Redevelopers of the Bonnie Burn Road Property

Motion to Adopt by Eisenberg Knegten/ Second by Goodloe

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

Administrator Damato thanked the Weldon family for their generous donation of materials to the Borough. He also gave a quick update on Elsinore Drive and advised the anticipated start date of this project is the second or third week of November. He also advised all if there are ever any situations that need to be addressed to please call the Clerk's Office or Administrators office and leave a message so concerns can be resolved on a timely basis.

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**PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION**

- 1) Catherine Leigh, Guinard Drive, expressed her desire to get back to in person Council meetings and questioned when the start date will be. Councilmember Goodloe stated for her family's safety she is not comfortable meeting in a closed room where all members are not vaccinated and will be unmasked. Council members expressed their opinions on returning to in person meetings. Councilmember Martino recommend the Council start hybrid Council meetings. Council President Robinson expressed her concern with transmission if returning in person and recommended the Council also look into different remote and in person technology. CFO Bill Hance stated the meeting equipment has been updated internally however it was difficult to hear Council members with their masks on.

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- 2) Bruce Ruck, Lakeview Ave, suggested when the Mayor and Council go back to in person meetings if they are also going to utilize the zoom platform to please make sure the audio equipment is top notch. He feels it is very important for members of the Council to be heard by everyone however they are attending the meeting. He asked if the equipment could be tested beforehand to ensure the public can adequately see and hear all Council members.
- 3) Karen Grabois, Watchung, expressed her opinion on individuals having to be vaccinated indoors. She also questioned why the Council members can't use zoom and also be live at the same time. She feels this is not an issue of public safety and the residents deserve an exact date of when the Council meetings will resume back in person.
- 4) Marianne Candiloros, Nottingham Drive, questioned why Council meetings are not back to in person sessions. She also feels the Council meeting audio equipment should be up to date.
- 5) Lynda Goldshein, Sherwood Drive, questioned if the Council has proposed anything to Levin Management Company regarding working together as partners to redevelop Blue Star Shopping Mall. She also asked if the sewer tax in town could be the same fee for all residents. Mayor Balla replied there was already a meeting held with the executives of Levin Management but the meeting outcome did not lead to any redevelopment. He advised the sewer fee is a flat rate fee.
- 6) Karen Grabois, Watchung, questioned if the Borough was reimbursed for any of the damage done at Mobus Field due to the storm. Administrator Damato commented on the reimbursements and grants available. He advised the reimbursement process is through FEMA and the grant is offered by Somerset County for recreation facilities. He mentioned there is no deadline to submit the grant but they are trying to get the grant submitted as quickly as possible.
- 7) Lynda Goldschein, Sherwood Drive, questioned what the objections were from the Levin management company in regards to developing at Blue Star Shopping Mall. Council President Robinson explained the Levin management company determined the buildings at Blue Star could not withstand a second story.
- 8) Bruce Ruck, Lakeview Ave, suggested moving forward in regards to the Boroughs housing obligation, the Council could possibly work with our surrounding towns to locate an area to build the minimum required housing units and set up an authority amongst the districts. He feels this could limit the ultimate number of apartments needed amongst the five towns. Councilmember Martino reminded residents the affordable housing plan is listed on the Borough website for review and urges anyone with comments or suggestions to send them via email.

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R13: Authorizing Executive Session: Attorney-Client Privilege Matters,  
Personnel Matters, and Contract Negotiations

Motion to Adopt by Robinson/ second by Goodloe

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

Mayor and Council entered executive session at approximately 8:43 P.M.

Motion to return to open session at 11:37 P.M. by Robinson / second by Goodloe

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

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**ADJOURNMENT**

Upon there being no further business before Council, the meeting ended at 11:38 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council is a regular meeting scheduled to be held on November 4, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Regina Angelo  
Deputy Clerk