

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

APRIL 1, 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 7:31 P.M. and stated the following: *“This meeting is being held virtually and instructions to join and comment were posted by the Borough Clerk. I’d like to welcome everyone tonight. 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 is 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]

Mayor Balla opened up by appointing the following members to the Ad-Hoc Committee on the Camp Endeavor redesign and improvement project for a community garden and charitable farm.

Council Member Martino representing the Council
Kim DiDonato, Project Initiator of Concept and Operations
Paul Panzarella for Logistics
Council President Robinson for Environmental
Jennifer Scharf representing the School District and Curriculum Committee

Mayor Balla is recommending the addition of \$60,000 to the 2021 budget for the financing of these initiatives from the Capital surplus. Additionally, the Borough Engineer has submitted his proposal for these services, but Mayor Balla hopes that some services and materials can be donated by its residents.

Mayor Balla also provided an update on the Round II Library Grant Application, he mentioned that he met with Christopher Korenowsky of the Somerset County Library System and Mr. Korenowsky has agreed to assist Watchung with this second round of grant application. The recommendation is to keep the plans and guts of the application as it currently is. Architect Iovino also provided his feedback and both feel confident that Watchung can have a shot at this second round, the deadline for the grant application is June 4th.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

1. Administration & Finance: Council Member Jubin provided an update on the last A&F Committee meeting and he reviewed the expected stimulus money that Watchung was scheduled to receive. The news was released that Watchung would receive approximately \$589,000 but no guidance on how the monies could be applied has been provided by the State, that is forthcoming. CM Jubin also touched upon a new internal form devised to assist in future requests for capital expenditures.
2. Police: no update since the last meeting
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds: Council Member Eisenberg Knegten reported that the Cherry Blossom Trees had been installed by Public Works on Somerset Street, about 15 trees were removed from the Best Lake parking lot and measure were taken to ensure no tree stumps were left to avoid tripping accidents, a park bench has been installed at Mobus and quotes were also received on the

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

APRIL 1, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

painting of the Arts Center which will be reviewed at the next Committee meeting. CM Eisenberg Knegten also informed everyone that PSE&G will be working on a project on Johnston Drive involving some road openings starting on May 12th and weather permitting, should take about 6 to 8 days to complete.

Council Member Martino inquired on the status of the Elsinore Culvert project; CM Eisenberg Knegten explained that Engineer Bruce Koch would review this under his report.

4. Public Affairs:

Environmental: Council President Robinson reported on the commissions March 22nd meeting. There were approximately 36 trees removed that were dead/dying or too close to structures, they also discussed their view of the planning boards submission on the Learning Experience, Styrofoam discussions took place but several questions have to be answered before they make any recommendations to Council. The Green Fair, in conjunction with Warren, is scheduled for September, but whether it is a drive through or an actual event is yet to be determined. There is a new legacy books with depositories that could be placed at Borough Hall, if this were to be done, the monies could be donated to a Watchung non-profit; the Texier House was one of the recommended locations as well. Rutgers University has scheduled a webinar on the spotted lanternfly for April 14th.

Recreation: Council Member Hayeck reported on the winners of the snow sculpture contest, first place went to Figuereo Family, second place went to the Mayer's Family and the Crump Family coming in third.

Historical: Council Member Martino reported on their March 17th meeting, extensive conversations took place on the AARP grant and the anticipated re-opening of the Texier House Museum. They are currently waiting on borough policy to accessing the site during covid and the Committee is hopeful that the Museum can be opened during the Veteran's Day Memorial Ceremony.

Board of Health: Council Member Jubin reported on their March 17th meeting and the discussion that took place around covid and contact tracing, and vaccination updates. CM Jubin advised that the Board is working on a document containing recommendations and suggested protocols to implement for the re-opening of borough facilities. He also mentioned that Middle Brook Regional Health Commission turns 50 this year, this commission was originally started in 1971 and currently serves Green Brook, South Bound Brook, Warren, and Watchung. Discussions also took place on cannabis legislation.

5. Fire: Council Member Goodloe reported on the Committee's last meeting and the expenditure requests that were made by the Fire Department. They are in need of new equipment for the new recruits and strategies for improving their ISO rating were discussed.
6. Laws/Ordinances: Council Member Martino reported on their March 30th meeting and reported that they are reviewing Chapters 2, 6, 12, 20 and Chapter 27 of the Borough Code. Recommendations on certain changes were made and these items are being reviewed by the Borough Attorney.

REPORTS – OTHER:

7. Engineer: Borough Engineer Bruce Koch reported on the 2020 municipal aid grant received of \$300,000 and the 2021 state aid in the amount of \$375,000. The 2020 grant requires the award of a contract by November 21st of 2021. The 2021 grant requires the award be awarded by November of

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

APRIL 1, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

2022. The 2021 grant includes proposals of Elsinore Drive, the interior culvert repair, and the storm water pollution prevention plan. A proposal was also submitted for Camp Endeavor.

Council Member Martino suggested putting together the necessary bid specs to move forward with the work on Elsinore Drive so that by the time an award is made, we will be into the dry season, which is the ideal time to commence work. Engineer Koch stated he would provide a separate proposal on this project and the Borough can make its decision from there.

8. Police Chief: Police Chief Kelly reported on the March figures, there were 1,987 incidents in Watchung, 31 of those were motor vehicle accidents, and 6 adult arrests. He also thanked the Mayor and Council for their well wishes during the last council meeting. He mentioned he would be retiring effective May 1st and spoke of his time with the Borough.
9. Fire Department: Fire Chief DeSandolo reported on the March figures, 15 calls took place, 2 mutual aids, 1 extrication of a victim from a vehicle, 1 motor vehicle accident, no injuries, 2 smoke investigations. The Department also conducted their annual hose and ladder testing.
10. Rescue Squad: Council President Robinson reported on the training that the Rescue Squad had in February, total calls in February were 20 and year to date 36, their top responder was Matt King with 7 calls.
11. Emergency Management: OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon reported that during the month of March the borough received a very large food donation from a resident which included 30 boxes of food, 464 items were donated. NJ OEM has recognized Watchung CERT for their participation and volunteer hours during covid. Coordinator Solon conveyed that they are awaiting guidance from the state on summer camp covid guidelines.

CM Goodloe inquired on the process for distributing the food donations received and Coordinator Solon reviewed the internal process and steps taking thus far.

12. Attorney: Borough Attorney Denis Murphy reported that he had just received the investigative report and has yet to review it. Once that is accomplished, he will be distributing it to Mayor and Council.
13. Clerk: Borough Clerk Edith Gil provided election reminders related to the June 8th Primary Election and reported on recent legislation signed by the Governor on early voting and its implementation for the 2021 General Election in November.

Council Member Jubin inquired on the outcome of implementing the online pet renewal system in January and Clerk Gil reported it was a success. Most residents expressed their content with being able to renew or register their pets online.

14. Administrator: Borough Administrator James Damato reported on covid cases and the trends in vaccination numbers. Administrator Damato also advised that CM Martino donated a tree that was planted in the same location that the Tree of Remembrance was planted several years ago and thanked Public Works Manager Charlie Gunther for taking care of the logistics to accomplish this. Lastly, Administrator Damato touched upon the draft shared services agreement with the Board of Education.
15. Wildlife Committee: Council Member Jubin reported that they met on March 8th and discussed some items from 2020. They are awaiting guidance from the Mayor and the Laws and Ordinance Committee on how to proceed with some items. Amongst the items discussed was the possibility of partnering with surrounding towns.
16. Youth Services: no updated since the last meeting

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

APRIL 1, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

17. Planning Board: Council Member Martino reported on the Boards March 17th meeting. Richard Matias was appointed as the Board Engineer and encouraged residents to tune in to the next meeting.
18. Municipal Alliance: no update since the last meeting
19. Library Advisory Board: Council Member Goodloe reported that the County Somerset Library System continued their hearings on the proposal to eliminate late fee fines. Part of these fees are sent back to the local branches, in the case of Watchung this resulted in approximately \$3,500 per year. As a result of covid late fees were suspended and now they are looking to be eliminated entirely. So far, there are no plans from the County on replacing the funds that the municipalities receive. She also thanked the Public Works department for the repairs done as a result of the winter storms.
20. Traffic and Beautification: Council Member Goodloe reported that the Committee is preparing for Operation Pride event and encourages everyone to attends. Recreation is planning a spring fling craft after the event and advanced sign-up will be required. CM Goodloe congratulated Linda Monetti and her family on the arrival of their newest family member, Sebastian. Also, at Operation Pride there will be a free tree seedling give-away by the Environmental Commission.

Council Member Martino thanked Council Member Goodloe for her work with Operation Pride and noted that it was good to see several committees come together for a borough event.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

- 1) Marianne Damico, Nottingham Drive, inquired on the total amount spent on Iovino Architects for their work on the proposed library and inquired if the investigative report would be made public.

Mayor Balla asked that Ms. Damico submit her request in writing and the information would be provided. With respect to the investigative report, Attorney Murphy stated that the report would first need to be reviewed with outside counsel to determine if any portions could be released.

- 2) Margaret Ellis, Resident, spoke on the scoring of the application to the library grant and noted that Watchung scored low on cost effectiveness. She asked that with the assistance of Iovino Architects and Chris Korenowsky that area be looked into so that Watchung scored higher.
- 3) Christine Ead, Washington Drive, asked if there are any plans in place to address the circle (coming off the circle by Texier House), to flatten the area and have it repaved. Engineer Koch noted that those are county roads. Mayor Balla mentioned that the County informed Watchung that they would be repaving the circle area this year.

DISCUSSION

❖ Proposed Farmers Market

Council President Robinson reported that the Green Team is working on getting a recertification on Sustainable Bronze and part of obtaining additional points is to have a Farmers Market. The best parking lot seems to be at Mobus Field or at the Police Station parking lot. Council Members expressed their full support and noted that the Police parking lot was the best option.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

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

APRIL 1, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Board of Health Meeting Minutes	January 20, 2021
Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes	February 22, 2021
Green Team Meeting Minutes	March 3, 2021 and March 19, 2021
Planning Board Meeting Minutes	February 16, 2021
Fire Prevention	February 2021

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

#11- Township of Bridgewater, Ordinance #21-04 “AMENDING SECTION 126-324 (GENERAL USE RESTRICTIONS) SO AS TO SPECIFICALLY PROHIBIT THE OPERATION OF ANY CLASS OF MARIJUANA ESTABLISHMENT IN ALL ZONES”, Public Hearing scheduled on April 5, 2021 c: M&C, JD

#12 - Borough of North Plainfield, Ordinance No. 2021-01 “Amend Ord No. 20-10 as to Stormwater Control,” Public Hearing April 12, 2021 c: M&C, JD

Motion to Adopt by Robinson/ second by Jubin

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

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS:

R1: Authorizing Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – Flemington Department Store (2021 DPW Uniforms)

R2: Authorizing Refund of Tax Payment – Block 4001/ Lot 4

R3: Reauthorizing the Green Team Advisory Committee

R4: Authorizing Appointment of Volunteers to Boards, Committees, Commissions

Motion to Adopt by Robinson/ second by Jubin

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

NON-CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

R5: Authorizing Amendment of Temporary Budget

Motion to Adopt by Jubin/ second by Robinson

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

Introduction of Ordinance **OR 21/03 – “AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK”**
Public Hearing to be held on April 15, 2021

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

APRIL 1, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

R6: Introduction of OR: 21/03 – Cap Bank

Motion to Adopt by Jubin/ second by Goodloe

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

R7: Introduction of **2021 Municipal Budget** (Public Hearing to be held on May 6, 2021)

<https://watchungnj.gov/finance/2021/2021-Budget.pdf>

Motion to Adopt by Jubin/ second by Robinson

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

R8: Authorizing Field and Facility Permit Application – Mt. St. Mary Academy Use of Mobus Field

Motion to Adopt by Hayeck/ second by Goodloe

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

R9: Awarding Non-Fair and Open Professional Services Contract – Acari Iovino & Architects

Motion to Adopt by Jubin/ second by Goodloe

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

Council Member Eisenberg Knegten asked for clarity on this matter as the title “non-fair and open” could be a bit misleading. Administrator Damato and Attorney Murphy explained that there are even more restrictions on a “non-fair and open” contract versus a “fair and open” contract.

R10: Authorizing Grant Fund Application – NJ Library Construction Bond Act

Motion to Adopt by Jubin/ second by Eisenberg Knegten

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

R11: Recognizing Charlie Gunther for his Services

Motion to Adopt by Eisenberg Knegten/ second by Goodloe

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

All Council Members expressed their appreciation for Charlie Gunther and thanked him for his dedication.

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

No one appearing

ADJOURNMENT

Upon no further business, the meeting ended at 9:17 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council is scheduled to be held on April 15, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Edith G. Gil
Borough Clerk