

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

FEBRUARY 17, 2022 - 7:30 P.M.

[THIS MEETING WAS HELD IN-PERSON AND BROADCASTED VIA ZOOM]

MAYOR’S STATEMENT: Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 7:31 P.M. and stated the following: *“This meeting is being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. 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. Public Comments will be accepted in-person, through zoom or by email to the Borough Clerk. For those joining through Zoom, please note that upon arrival you are automatically muted.”*

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

ROLL CALL

Jubin [P] Robinson [P] Martino [P] Hayeck [P] Dahl [P] Ead [P]

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

- 1) Thomas Hemsworth, Cedar Road, commented on the request for a memorial bench and table in memory of Michael Logan Stein who passed away in 2021. He spoke in favor and in full support of the request from Michael’s family.
- 2) Andrew Pluta, Templar Drive, also commented on the memorial bench and table request in memory of Michael Logan Stein and spoke fondly of Michael. He noted that this was a community project that included the work of Professional Engineers who offered their services in support to honor Michael.
- 3) Ms. Stein, spoke on her son Michael and his contributions to the community, he was someone who brought everyone together. She thanked the Council and all of those that volunteered their services to make this a possibility.
- 4) Todd Hay, also provided comments on the memorial bench and table. Mr. Hay stated that his firm had donated their services to honor Michael and commented he previously tutored Michael. Mr. Hay also thanked everyone involved and spoke on the plans put together in cooperation with the borough and noted it would be handicapped accessible. Administrator Damato informed Council that there were small flags pointing to the area that was identified for the placement of the memorial bench and table.

Council Member Robinson inquired on the timeframe of the project upon having Council approval. Mr. Hay noted that approximately 45 days from obtaining council approval, the Contractor would be able to work with Borough Officials to lay down the necessary foundation.

- 5) Lynda Goldschein, inquired on the unfinished business of the agenda and Mayor Balla clarified that there was no unfinished business listed.

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DISCUSSION

- ❖ Memorial Bench and Table

No further discussion took place since all relevant information was provided and discussed during the earlier public comment section.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Annual Debt Statement	2021
Fire Prevention Monthly Report	January 2022

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #4- Township of Scotch Plains, 2/10/22 re: Notice of Introductions, Ordinance No. 2022-8 “*An Ordinance authorizing 475 Terrill Road Redevelopment Plan Consisting of Block 204, Lot 5, and Supplementing and Amending Chapter XXIII, by the Amendment of Subsection 23-3.2 Entitled “Zoning Map”, and by the Addition of New Subsection 23-9.5 Entitled “ 475 Terrill Road Redevelopment Plan (Block 204, Lot 5)”*” and Ordinance No. 2022-9 “*An Ordinance Amending Redevelopment Plan known as Snuffy Pantagis Redevelopment Plan Consisting of Block 803, Lot 1.*” c: M&C, JD

Motion to Accept above by Jubin/ Second by Robinson

RC: Jubin [Y] Robinson [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Y] Ead [Y]

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS

- *R1: Authorizing Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – Messercola Excavating (*Snow Plowing Services*)
Air Group LLC (*PD- Cooling / Heating System*)
- R2: Authorizing Refund of Tax Overpayment – Block 4001 Lot 4 – 22 Schmidt Circle
- R3: Authorizing Bill List

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R4: Authorizing Mayors Wellness Campaign

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Hayeck*

RC: Jubin [Y] Robinson [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Y] Ead [Y]

*R1 Martino [Abstain]

NON-CONSENT RESOLUTIONS

R5: Authorizing Payment of Fire Stipends 2021

Motion to Adopt above by Dahl/ Second by Jubin

RC: Jubin [Y] Robinson [Y] Martino [Abstain] Hayeck [Abstain] Dahl [Y] Ead [Y]

R6: Authorizing use of Gazebo for Wedding Ceremony on June 25, 2022

Motion to Adopt above by Hayeck/ Second by Jubin

RC: Jubin [Y] Robinson [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Y] Ead [Y]

R7: Authorizing Award of Contract for Janitorial Services - ACCSES NJ

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Robinson

RC: Jubin [Y] Robinson [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Y] Ead [Y]

R8: Authorizing the Appt. of P/T Elec. Sub-Code Official – Joseph Maretta

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Hayeck

RC: Jubin [Y] Robinson [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Y] Ead [Y]

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1) Lynda Goldschein, Sherwood Dr, commented on the rumors she has heard about conversations taking place between Mr. Bisignano and the Borough regarding property at 12 Stirling Road. Mayor and Council clarified that no discussions were being held to purposely exclude the public and noted the appropriate measures were being followed. Council Member Jubin further clarified
- 2) Brother Andrew Calandriello, Hughes Lane, asked if the borough was closing the library? He informed Council that those were the rumors that were circulating. Mayor Balla clarified that closing the library was not in the Borough's plans. He noted that he planned on appointing an ad Hoc Committee to review the various borough facilities to provide recommendations on the library and the arts center.

Council Member Dahl commented that unfortunately there was no plan B, that all borough efforts

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went into the submission of the grant, but that as a body, Council would do their best to move this along.

- 3) Tammy Benc, Lakeview Avenue, commented that while advocates of the library must reconcile with the fact that they will not get a new building, they will not settle for being in a substandard building. She commented that just as fields needed repair, that the library facility too needed repair and that they have been advocating this for nearly two decades. Ms. Benc explained that now was not the time to be trading land as it might be one day needed during the construction of the library. She implored Council to stop all negotiations on giving away the barn.
- 4) Virginia Hartmann, Ellisen Road, wanted clarification on comments provided by Council President Jubin at the previous meeting and commented on the much-needed repairs of the library roof. Council President Jubin provided clarification, asked to see the old plans on the library and stated he would like a tour of the items that needed to be fixed at the library. Ms. Hartmann noted she would happily provide everything and Council Member Robinson suggested CP Jubin reach out to Ms. Kerwin at the Library.
- 5) Michael Zaikov, Templar Drive, noted that they walk from Valley View and wanted sidewalks.
- 6) Lynda Goldschein, Sherwood Dr, backed up what Ms. Benc and Ms. Hartmann commented and provided historical background on prior discussions borough officials had regarding the library.
- 7) Jack Aylward, Hughes Lane, Member of the Watchung Arts Center (WAC), thanked Council for the paint job at the Arts Center and asked Council that they also consider the Arts Center in their facilities review. The WAC is in need of approximately 30 parking spaces on a sold-out night.

Council Member Ead spoke at length on the process involved with accomplishing tasks that might not seem like they take long. She commended the Department of Public Works for their work on the library bridge.

- 8) Kathleen Ruperto Ferrara, Rock Avenue, asked the Mayor to have the regional high school make a presentation to its residents.
- 9) Stuart Homer, Sherwood Drive, offered comments on the sidewalk project and noted that it would not be prudent to give away land at this time without knowing all of the facts. He further noted that previously the owner did not have any liability issues with letting the public go through is property
- 10) Marianne Candeloris, spoke on the paved parking lot in the Circle. She commented that everyone is in favor of continuing with the library and noted that the new owner of Valley Furniture might allow parking if someone asked.
- 11) Jessica Ingrassia, High Oaks Drive, voiced similar comments as Ms. Ruperto Ferrara. She noted it would be proper to have the Watchung Hills High School come present to council about regionalization of the schools.

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- 12) Tom Franklin, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 13) Erick DeVos, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 14) Virginia Hartmann, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 15) Hazel Bell, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 16) Jen Schiffman, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 17) Stella Couchella, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 18) Hazel Bell, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 19) Gail Bennett-Taffaro, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 20) Michelle Stewart, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 21) Sondra Fetchner, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 22) Michael Edmonds, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 23) Susan Stiles, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 24) Erin Baitel, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 25) Allison Baitel, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 26) Janine Reidenger, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.

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- 27) Diane Churchill, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 28) Marta Bloomberg, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 29) Alexandria and Anastasia Benc, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 30) Ben Lao, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 31) Scott and Terry Black, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 32) Edward and Linda Lauerman, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 33) Asish Kappor, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.
- 34) George Grief, submitted written public comments regarding the sidewalk project on former Valley Furniture property that were read onto the record.

Council Members thanked members of the public and provided their own comments on all of the comments submitted. Council Members allowed Virginia Hartmann to provide additional comments.

Mayor Balla concluded that every member of the Governing Body is looking to do what is best for its residents as Public Servants.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

R9: Authorizing Executive Session: Contract Negotiations and Anticipated Litigation

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Ead.

RC: Jubin [Y] Robinson [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Y] Ead [Y]

Council entered executive session at approximately 9:39 P.M.

Council returned to open session at approximately 11:11 P.M. Upon return, all members were present.

R10: Authorizing and Approving the Memorandum of Agreement wit FMBA Local 432

Motion to Adopt above by Robinson/ Second by Ead

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ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business before Council, the meeting ended at 11:15 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on Thursday, March 3, 2022 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted:

Edith G. Gil
Borough Clerk