

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

AUGUST 18, 2022

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

MAYOR’S STATEMENT: Mayor Balla called the meeting to order at 7:30 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]

Mayor Balla started the meeting and read the following proclamation:

PROCLAMATION

❖ 31st Anniversary of Ukraine Independence

Mayor Balla called for a motion to change order of business.

Council Member Robinson Moved to Change Order of Business, Second by Jubin

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion to Adopt below by Jubin/ Second by Ead

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

R16: Authorizing Executive Session: Contract Negotiations and Personnel Matters

Mayor and Council entered executive session at approximately 7:37 P.M. and returned to open session at approximately 8:53 P.M.

Motion to Return to Open Session by Jubin/Second by Ead

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

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance: Council President Jubin reported on the committee’s August 12th meeting in which matters relating to the Borough mission and vision statement, review of the

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field and facility permit application, current social media policy, and refinancing the borough's short term note debt to long term debt.

2. Police: Council Member Robinson discussed the ongoing recruitment process and the conversations that took place in relation to a possible school resource officer.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds: Council Member Ead discussed completed projects such as dead trees and brush removed from Stirling Road, police station repairs, shrubs pruned and removed in front of Borough Hall, and the repaired retaining wall behind Borough Hall. She also mentioned Borough improvements such as sprinkler repairs at the Texier House, the ongoing efforts to maintain catch basins and advised the beginning stages of paving Corey Lane and Old Somerset Road have begun. Council Member Ead discussed upcoming projects in detail such as the Sanitary Sewer Infiltration and Inflow Study done through our Engineer, Best Lake fountains, playground updates and others.
4. Public Affairs:

Environmental: Council Member Robinson reported the Commission recommended the Borough start replacing the trees with money from the Tree Bank. She advised there were 125 trees to be removed and 56 to be replaced. She commented that the company has emptied the new legacy books donation bin twice already. She also stated the Styrofoam collection was very successful and the next collection will be on September 17th. She mentioned another possible upcoming Styrofoam Collection date and provided further updates on the Best Lake planting and a grant program relating to the chemical control of the spotted lantern fly.

Recreation: Council Member Hayeck stated the Commission has not yet met but mentioned the Movie in the Park event is scheduled for September 9th. He also advised the Summer Camp program was very successful.

Historical: Council Member Ead thanked all the dedicated volunteers who helped water at the Texier House until the sprinklers were back up and running. She mentioned the next open house is Sunday, August 21st and encouraged everyone to visit the Texier House to see all the exciting updates. She mentioned the next big event will be Journey through the past scheduled for October 8th and 9th. She also mentioned Committee discussions relating to a possible professionally done film of members of the Committee touring the Texier House and the grounds. The next meeting is scheduled for September 21st.

Mayor Balla advised he is in full support of moving the video project forward. Council President Jubin suggested the Committee reach out to the High School for student participation.

Board of Health: Council President Jubin reported on the Committees July 20th meeting and provided comments relating to the pediatric COVID-19 vaccination, the possible need for a liaison to the school from the Board of Health and lastly the request to fill the

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two Board vacancies. He encouraged everyone to participate in the Monday night Watchung Walks program and proposed some new ideas regarding health initiatives for the Borough.

Council Member Robinson commented on the Farmers Market success and the health benefits of fresh fruit and vegetables.

5. Fire: Council Member Dahl reported on the departments July figures. He mentioned two new members were sworn in and the new lock system installed is now operational.
6. Laws/ Ordinances: Council Member Martino mentioned the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 27th and topics for discussion include the Borough wide feeding of wildlife, the electric vehicle ordinance, and the permanent outdoor dining ordinance.

Council President Jubin suggested more frequent visits to massage establishments in the Borough to ensure the establishment is properly licensed as well as the massage therapists. Council Member Martino agrees and suggested moving this forward to the Board of Health for their opinion.

REPORTS – OTHER:

7. Engineer: Professional Engineer Jason Cline, RVE, provided comments on various matters. Among them were updates relating to the Stirling Road water main break, Fiscal year 2023 DOT Trust Fund grant application, funding to support the various storm culverts, updated specifications to Stirling Road flashing crosswalks, Corey Lane and Old Somerset Road are scheduled to be milled and paved under the Morris County Co-Op pricing Council program, recommendation of award of contract to J.A. Alexander for the 2022 Roadway Improvements Project, updates relating to the Ness Farm soil sampling and other projects were discussed.

Council Member Ead commented on the Stirling Road water main break and reviewed the water main break process.

Administrator Damato advised the Borough is not charged extra when there is a water main break and went into detail on the process relating to water main breaks.

8. Police Chief: Lieutenant Scott Anderle reported on behalf of Chief Hart the departments July figures. He also commented where the signs are located in relation to the speed sign enforcement program.
9. Fire Department: Fire report filed with and reviewed by Council Member Dahl.
10. Rescue Squad: Council Member Robinson reported on the departments July figures and new member updates to the Department. She also mentioned a lot of the surrounding towns are short on ambulance providers and as a result our squad has been called upon a lot for mutual aide.

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11. Emergency Management: OEM Coordinator, Carolyn Solon, stated there was no update for this month but shared information regarding updated legislation related to outdoor dining.
12. Attorney: Attorney Sordillo had no report.
13. Finance: CFO Bill Hance advised the Auditors have completed their review of the 2021 records and discussed Resolution R1, extending the tax grace period to September 1st.
14. Clerk: Clerk Edith Gil reported on the Watchung Hills Regional School Board Special Election scheduled for October 6th with voting hours from 2-8 pm.
15. Administrator: Administrator Damato provided comments on various matters. Among them were the County's request for a wastewater grant, the importance of moving forward the Infiltration and Inflow Study, discussions relating to the importance of replacing trees in the Borough and the scheduled presentation regarding the referendum by Watchung Hills School at the September 15th Council Meeting.

Council Member Martino discussed suggestions to streamline the tree permit process.

16. Youth Services: Council Member Dahl had no report.
17. Planning Board: Council Member Martino reported on a letter from the Planning Board regarding NJ Assembly Bill 1294. He provided clarification on the bill and expressed his concerns in detail regarding how this new legislation could affect the Borough. He explained that this is a blanket bill covering all of New Jersey and discussed how smaller municipalities do not have the same resources as larger ones. Council Member Martino does not feel this legislation will have positive effects on the Borough.

Mayor Balla explained this legislation is supported by big time developers to circumvent the local zoning laws and approvals. Mayor Balla and Council Members expressed concerns supporting this legislation and all agree this legislation is not in the best interest of the Borough. Mayor Balla advised at our next Council meeting we will pass a Resolution to officially oppose this legislation.

Council Member Robinson suggested posting different versions of form letters on the Borough website to make it easier for residents to oppose this legislation.

Mayor Balla provided a brief update on the Watchung Board of Education. He mentioned the Board created an Ad-Hoc Committee to enlist community engagement and participation in the review of the facilities and projects proposed under the 2021 referendum which was not approved. He advised the Committee is diligently searching for community input.

18. Municipal Alliance: No report provided.
19. Library Advisory Board: Council Member Robinson commented on the Boards July 20th meeting in which matters relating to review of the proposed purchase of a sign for the back of the building,

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poor condition of the patio and driveway, and the decline in the number of programs offered by the Somerset County Library System for Watchung residents were discussed. Council Member Robinson mentioned the upcoming Sweet Start event scheduled for August 30th encouraging children to come get a Library card and free ice cream. Lastly, the Committee congratulated Virginia Hartmann for being designated a Hometown Hero.

20. Traffic and Beautification: Council Member Ead reported on the upcoming new plantings, banner concept ideas to fill the empty spaces when the Hometown Hero banners are not hanging, and provided details on upcoming events such as the Scarecrow Stroll. She advised the next meeting will be held on September 19th.

Attorney Sordillo clarified the process and provided background information regarding Resolution, R15. He clarified what the Memorandum of Understanding represents and discussed the process of moving forward with this agreement. He also discussed the terms of the contract and required approvals needed to move this project forward. He discussed the different easements contemplated as part of this agreement. Attorney Sordillo stated the Council right now by way of resolution is only authorizing approval of the contract which by doing so will allow the property owner the ability to file for required land use approvals as well as clarify language throughout the easements.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

1. Dr. Stella Couchells, Valley Road, expressed her support for the Library sign purchase.
2. Margaret Ellis, Valley Road, Watchung, expressed her support for the Library sign and mentioned hearing the difficulty people are having locating the Library building. She believes the sign will help beautify the area.
3. Virginia Hartmann, Ellisen Road, requested Council Members make a copy of the letter shown from the Somerset County Library Administrator. She spoke on the number of programs offered in different towns compared to the minimal amount in Watchung. She expressed her concern with the Somerset County Library System cutting Library programs for the community as a result of the poor conditions of the building. She asked the Council to get involved and insist Watchung be offered more programs and their assistance with improving the Library building.

Mayor Balla advised a meeting has already been setup to go over the reduction in Library programs from the SCLS and how to reinstitute these programs.

4. Lynda Goldschein, Sherwood Drive, submitted written public comments regarding the contract for transfer of real property and easements between the Borough and Maha at Watchung, LLC.

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5. Hazel Bell, Hillcrest Road, submitted written public comments regarding the contract for transfer of real property and easements between the Borough and Maha at Watchung, LLC.
6. Margaret Ellis, Valley Road, expressed many safety concerns she has regarding the proposed sidewalk location on Hillcrest Road.

DISCUSSION

❖ Watchung Library Signs

Council Member Robinson described in detail the design and location of the proposed signs. She also mentioned the sign expenditure is within the Library Committee's escrow money and zoning approval requirements are being evaluated.

Administrator Damato advised there are no zoning issues.

Council President Jubin asked for further clarification on the location of the sign and suggested an additional standing sign may offer better visibility.

Mayor Balla asked if there was consideration to use recycled material instead of plywood for the signs.

Mrs. Hartmann commented she did not look into using recycled material.

Attorney Sordillo confirmed the Borough has to comply with its sign Ordinance but can grant itself waivers.

Council Member Ead suggested all signs have the look and feel of Watchung. She also suggested including unifying the sign appearance throughout the Borough in the sign Ordinance.

❖ Tennis Ball Recycling Program Mobus Field

Council Member Robinson explained in detail the dangerous process of how tennis balls degrade. A suggestion was made to place a container by the tennis court fence and instead of the tennis balls being thrown away they would be sent to a company that recycles them into rubber for the construction of new courts.

Council Member Ead requested a photo of the type of container that will be used. Attorney Sordillo requested an oral resolution be done approving this.

Mayor Balla called for a motion to move forward with the program to recycle the tennis balls, request photos of the container to be used, and structure this program in conjunction with our Public Works Department as a backup for assistance with recycling the tennis balls.

Motion to Adopt above by Robinson/ Second by Jubin

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

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:

Board of Adjustment Meeting Minutes	July 14, 2022
Building Department Monthly Report	July 2022
Engineer's Status Report	July 2022
Green Team Advisory Committee	June 27, 2022 July 18, 2022
Library Advisory Committee Minutes	May 18, 2022
Planning Board Meeting Minutes	May 17, 2022
Police Department Activity Report	July 2022

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

#19 – Township of Bridgewater, 7/15/22, Notice of Introduced Ordinance #22-11 entitled “AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 126-321.6, ENTITLED "R-SEED REDEVELOPMENT SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT (R-SEED) DISTRICT ZONE," TO ESTABLISH AN ALTERNATIVE SET OF PERMITTED PRINCIPAL USES, DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AND RELATED PROVISIONS FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT AREA DESIGNATED ON LOTS 17,18 AND 19 IN BLOCK 483 ON THE TOWNSHIP'S TAX MAP, FRONTING ON ROUTE 206 WITH THE NEAREST ROADS TO THE NORTH (NOT ADJACENT) CEDARBROOK ROAD AND OLD FARM ROAD AND TO THE SOUTH (NOT ADJACENT) MOUNTAIN VIEW AVENUE AND BYRD AVENUE AS REFLECTED IN NEW SECTION 126-321.7, ENTITLED "ALTERNATIVE R- SEED DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS" c: M&C, JD, TS

#20 – Watchung Planning Board, 8/16/22, Review of A-1294, c: M&C, JD, JS

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/Second by Hayeck

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

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CONSENT RESOLUTIONS

- R1: Authorizing Extension of Tax Grace Period for Third Quarter to September 1
- R2: Awarding Contract to RealAuction.com, LLC for Online Tax Sale Hosting Services
- R3: Opposing the Proposed Cost Increases to the State Health Benefits Program
- R4: Authorizing Refund to Providence Healthcare Diagnostics for Overpayment of Borough Fees
- R5: Authorizing Bill List
- R6: Authorizing Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – ASL Group, LLC (Retaining Wall for 55 Johnson Dr)
El Coronado (FD Annual Convention)
NJ Fire Equipment, Co. (Firefighter protective clothes)
Pinto Brothers (2022 Bulk Pickup)
Motorola Solutions, Inc. (FD mobile radios & switch cables)
Quarry Tex (Library Watchung Sign)
ESO Solutions, Inc. (FD – Computer Software)
Gen-El Safety & Industrial Pro (FD – Equipment)
Somerset County Road Division (DPW – Street Sweeping)
- RC: Jubin [Y] Robinson [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Y] Ead [Y]

NON-CONSENT RESOLUTIONS

- R7: Authorizing Salary Adjustment and Appointment of Carolyn Taylor as Office Manager of Building Department
Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Dahl
RC: Jubin [Y] Robinson [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Y] Ead [Y]
- R8: Authorizing Salary Adjustment for JoAnn Estrella as OPRA Coordinator for the Police
Motion to Adopt above by Dahl/ Second by Ead
RC: Jubin [Y] Robinson [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Y] Ead [Y]
- R9: Authorizing Contract Expansion for Remington & Vernick Engineers for Infiltration & Inflow Analysis of the Sanitary Sewer System
Motion to Adopt above by Ead/ Second by Jubin
RC: Jubin [Y] Robinson [Y] Martino [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Y] Ead [Y]
- R10: Awarding Professional Services Contract to Appraisal Systems Inc. for Appraisal Inspections and Related Services in Connection with 2023 Borough-Wide Reassessment Program

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Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Ead

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

R11: Determining the Form and Other Details and Providing for the Determination of Other Terms of Not to Exceed \$5,782,950.00 General Improvement Bonds of the Borough and Providing for Their Sale to the Somerset County Improvement Authority

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Hayeck

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

R12: Providing for the Combination of Certain Issues of General Improvement Bonds of the Borough Into a Single Issue of Bonds Aggregating \$5,782,950.00 in Principal Amount.

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Hayeck

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

R13: Authorizing Field and Facility Permit Application for Flag Raising Ceremony at Borough Hall

Motion to Adopt above by Hayeck/ Second by Ead

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

R14: Awarding Bid Contract for 2022 Roadway Improvements Project to J.A. Alexander, Inc.

Motion to Adopt above by Ead/ Second by Jubin

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

R15: Authorizing a Contract for Transfer of Real Property and Easements with Maha at Watchung, LLC

Council Member Martino asked Attorney Sordillo to give an example of condemnation referenced on Page 3 Number 10 of the Contract. Attorney Sordillo provided further clarification of the language used.

Council Member Robinson expressed her concerns in detail regarding the process of the above resolution and the dangerous location of the sidewalk placement.

Council President Jubin expressed his disagreement with Council Member Robinson's comments on the decision being pre-ordained and relating to political party.

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Hayeck

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

R17: Authorizing Field and Facility Permit Application for Friends of the Library Ice Cream Event at Watchung Library Branch

Motion to Adopt above by Hayeck/ Second by Dahl

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

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PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

No one appearing to speak.

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 will be held on Thursday, September 1, 2022 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Regina Angelo
Deputy Clerk
Approved: October 6, 2022