

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

**OCTOBER 6, 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]

**PROCLAMATION**

Mayor Balla read the following proclamation onto the record:

❖ Breast Cancer Awareness Month

**REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:**

1. Administration & Finance: Council President Jubin reported on the Committees September 30<sup>th</sup> meeting in which matters relating to construction revenue received, the attendance of construction code official Robert LaCosta at the next meeting for discussions relating to outstanding permit fees, updated technology for inspectors for data capturing and other items, preparation of the 2023 Request for Professional Services, completion of the bond – funding and the draft of the Watchung Borough Community Service award nomination form and other matters were discussed.
2. Police: Council Member Robinson reported on the Police Committees September 13<sup>th</sup> and October 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting in which matters relating to new hires, resignation letter from Police Officer Bahadourian, County scholarship program recruitment, awaiting on the arrival of patrol cars, anti-idling laws, application for a grant to receive up to three licence plate readers, and motorist safety at Wilson Memorial Church were discussed.

Council Member Martino provided reasons for the importance of this equipment and ways it could benefit the Borough.

Police Chief Hart provided comments on the Somerset County Grant for the license plate reader technology.

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3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds: Council Member Ead provided detailed updates on various matters. Among them were updates to Mobus Field playground, upcoming road projects, PSE&G gas main replacement beginning on October 10<sup>th</sup>, sidewalk replacement along Valley Road, improvements made to Borough Hall and the Texier House, and other matters were discussed.

Council President Jubin discussed winterizing Borough equipment with Administrator Damato.

4. Public Affairs:

Environmental: Council Member Robinson reported on the Commissions September 19<sup>th</sup> meeting in which matters relating to the tree report, beech leaf disease, Styrofoam collection, tennis ball recycling program, Farmers Market, increased tree planting and other various matters were discussed.

Recreation: Council Member Hayek stated the Commission has not yet met but mentioned the Fishing Derby being a great success and reminded all the Harvest Festival is scheduled for October 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Historical: Council Member Ead provided updates on the upcoming Journey Through the Past Event scheduled for this weekend. Discussions occurred relating to approvals for social media platforms regarding video archives created by Chris Vander Fliet.

Board of Health: Council President Jubin advised the meeting had to be postponed due to lack of quorum and is rescheduled to October 19<sup>th</sup>. He also mentioned the Board still has two vacancies to be filled.

5. Fire: Council Member Dahl reported on the Committees shared services with North Plainfield, and mentioned there were 17 calls for service for the month of September.
6. Laws/ Ordinances: Council Member Martino advised the Committee has not met since the last Council Meeting but provided detailed updates on upcoming Ordinances.

Administrator Damato provided an update on the apartment inspection program. Clerk Edith Gil provided comments regarding the number of applications received and the registration process.

Council Member Martino provided comments on a Zoning Board hearing for an outdoor dining application and suggested the Board be made aware of the Boroughs permit process.

Mayor Balla provided comments on a potential Ordinance for the Committee to consider regarding his attendance at the New Jersey Film Commission Film Ready Seminar.

**REPORTS – OTHER:**

7. Engineer: Professional Engineer Jason Cline, RVE, provided comments on various matters. Among them were receipt of the water lowering permit tentatively scheduled for the second

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week of October, awaiting notification from the NJDOT regarding the 2023 grant application submitted, updates to the flashing crosswalk signal on Stirling Road, preconstruction meeting occurred for the 2022 DOT Road Project, updates relating to Ness Farm, Mobus Field and the Phillips Field Bridge and repairs to various storm culverts.

8. Police Chief: Chief Andrew Hart reported on the departments September figures. He also discussed the speed sign enforcement program and provided comments regarding Somerset Street Road closure beginning on October 10<sup>th</sup> only effecting the northbound lane. He also mentioned a Nixle alert was sent out to all residents.

Council Member Hayeck suggested black as opposed to white for the purchase of Police vehicles moving forward. Council Member Martino touched upon the benefits of having white Police vehicles.

9. Rescue Squad: Council Member Robinson reported on the September 13<sup>th</sup> meeting and provided updates on the 2022 Tree of Lights Ceremony and the figures for the month of August.
10. Emergency Management: OEM Coordinator, Carolyn Solon, reported on a free community event giving away items to Somerset County residents in need offered by Somerset County Human Services. She also mentioned the Watchung CERT Team will be participating in a Somerset County search and rescue drill.
11. Attorney: Attorney Sordillo provided comments relating to the censure resolution adopted by the Mayor and Council on September 1<sup>st</sup>.
12. Finance: CFO Hance provided detailed comments relating to the bond closing.
13. Clerk: Clerk Edith Gil provided comments on various matters. Among them were the PSE&G gas line construction work alerts, updates relating to the Somerset County Film Commission initiative and a potential Ordinance passed to the Laws and Ordinance Committee, General Election early voting period is underway, and the upcoming Watchung Board of Education Special School District Election to be held on Tuesday, December 13<sup>th</sup>.

Discussions occurred with Police Chief Hart regarding qualifications for the traffic safety service officers for the Wilson Memorial church polling location.

Discussions also occurred relating to reimbursement for certain election costs from Somerset County. Administrator Damato provided comments that the County Board of Elections should incur this expense for a traffic safety service as it is an election expense.

14. Administrator: Administrator Damato thanked the Police Department for helping with the repair of a severed communications wire at Mobus Field. He also stated Mobus Field is still a construction site and advised children not to play on the playground. He mentioned possibly purchasing a new sign for Mobus Field and asked Council to provide direction for another recreational activity.

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15. Youth Services: Council Member Dahl had no report.
16. Planning Board: Council Member Martino reported on the September 20<sup>th</sup> meeting in which matters relating to a new board application were discussed. Once a hearing is completed and the board votes a report will be submitted to the Council. He advised the next meeting is scheduled for October 18<sup>th</sup>.
17. Municipal Alliance: Council Member Hayeck reported on the Committees September 14<sup>th</sup> meeting in which matters relating upcoming programs and events were discussed.
18. Library Advisory Board: Council Member Robinson reported on the Committees September 21<sup>st</sup> meeting in which matters relating to the success of the sweet start program, updates on the summer reading program, the decline of program offerings at the Library between members and the County Administrator, and other library matters were discussed.
19. Traffic and Beautification: Council Member Ead reported on the Committees last meeting in which matters relating to the first annual scarecrow stroll and contest, beautifying the Borough and ideas for plantings were discussed.

**PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY**

Attorney Sordillo advised anyone interested in speaking on the Place-to-Place Liquor License Transfer (R4) on the agenda to speak during this public portion.

Anthony Golowski, Attorney Representing Miller's Ale House, expressed his thanks for all the help consideration and courtesy offered throughout this Liquor License Transfer process.

**DISCUSSION**

None held

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Motion to Open Public Hearing by Jubin/ Second by Robinson

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

**Public Hearing of Ordinance# 22/07: "AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, CH. 5-12.76 ET SEQ. THEREOF, AND TO, FIX AND DETERMINE MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM SALARIES AND COMPENSATION TO BE PAID TO CERTAIN EMPLOYEES AND FURTHER AMENDING TO INCLUDE THE TITLE OF POLICE CAPTAIN"**

Public Hearing was held; no one appearing to provide comment.

R1: Adopting OR 22/07 – Amending the 2022 Min/Max Salary Ordinance

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Motion to Close Public Hearing & Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Robinson

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

Motion to Open Public Hearing on below by Robinson/ Second by Ead

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

Council Member Robinson asked for clarification on the language to cap the number of officers in the Ordinance at 20. Attorney Sordillo advised that it a common practice in most municipalities, pursuant to the statute, that they include an up to maximum number of officers for the Police Department. He provided further explanation on this topic. Council Member Robinson discussed in detail with Attorney Sordillo reasonings other municipalities provided for having the cap .

Chief Hart confirmed any need for a change in the Police Department would come via his request. Council Member Robinson provided additional comments comparing the proposed cap on the Police Department to other departments. Discussions continued clarifying this process as well as discussions relating to a potential school resource officer.

Lynda Goldschein, Sherwood Drive, submitted written public comments regarding the limitation on Police Officers hired for the Department.

**Public Hearing of Ordinance# 22/08: “AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, CHAPTER 3, POLICE DEPARTMENT, TO AMEND THE ORGANIZATION OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT TO CREATE THE POSITION OF POLICE CAPTAIN”**

R2: Adopting OR 22/08 – Amending Chapter 3 to Establish the Title of Police Captain in the Department of Police

Motion Close Public Hearing & Adopt above by Robinson / Second by Hayeck

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

**NEW BUSINESS**

**REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:**

Building Department Monthly Report	September 2022
CERT Meeting Minutes	September 27, 2022
Engineers Status Report	September 2022
Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes	August 15, 2022
Library Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes	July 20, 2022

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Municipal Council Meeting Minutes	August 18, 2022 September 1, 2022
Traffic and Beautification Meeting Minutes	June 13, 2022
PARSA Meeting Minutes	August 4, 2022 September 1, 2022
Planning Board Meeting Minutes	August 16, 2022

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #26 –Township of Bridgewater, Notice of Adopted Ordinance 22-17, Creating RMDU-26 Multifamily Residential Zone at Site of The Hyatt House, 530 Route 22. Recv'd 9/22/22, cc: M&C, JD, TS
- #27 – Letter of Resignation from Police Officer Bahadourian, Recv'd 9/28/22, cc: M&C, JD
- #28 – Board of Adjustment Legal Notice, Applicant Seritage Growth Properties for property at 1640 Route 22, block 6101/ lot 5. Recv'd 10/3/22, cc: M&C, JD

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/Second by Ead

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

**CONSENT RESOLUTIONS**

- R3: Authorizing Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – Auto Rebuilder (*PD-repair car#14*)
  - John's Painting Contractor (*Exterior painting-borough hall*)
  - John's Painting Contractor (*Texier House exterior*)
  - Flemington Department Store (*DPW boots & clothing*)
  - ASL Group LLC (*Islands at circle, soil, weed, etc.*)
  - Wayne Fence (*Mobus Park Fence*)
  - The Rodgers Group c/o Lexipol (*pd accreditation maint.*)
  - Tomco Construction Inc.,. (*Stone for park and field*)
  - Oceans Resort (*2022 NJLM Annual Conf. Hotel for 9*)
  - Air Group LLC (*Texier House AC replacement*)
  - Peter Downes & Son, Inc (*On-site grinding Ness Farm*)
- R4: Authorizing Place to Place Transfer of Liquor License - Millers Ale House Watchung, LLC
- R5: Waiving Chapter 6-2.11 of the Borough Code – Rescue Squad Tree of Lights Fireworks Display
- R6: Authorizing Budget Insertion for Special Items of Revenue (Chapter 159) for Various Grants
- R7: Authorize Clerk to Issue Raffle License - Summit Animal Rescue Association, Inc.

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R8: Authorizing Bill List

Council Member Martino suggested that going forward the Council is provided more time to go through all supporting documents.

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/Second by Hayeck

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

**NON-CONSENT RESOLUTIONS**

R9: Authorizing Borough Engineer to Endorse NJDEP TWA Permit Application for S/K Morris Township Associates, LLC for Project 1375 Plainfield Avenue (block 7010/ lot 9) Watchung Townhouse Redevelopment Plan

Motion to Adopt Above by Ead / Second by Hayeck

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

R10: Authorizing Appointment of Patrol Officer – Koami Ekoue

Motion to Adopt Above by Robinson/ Second by Jubin

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

**PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Renu Cheng, Kamal Singh, Joanne Kim, Neil Shroff, Jigyasa Agarwal submitted written public comments regarding the status of the lawsuit between Council Member Martino and fireman Burkhard.

Council Member Martino advised he believes in the judicial system and the law will prevail.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION** - This resolution was removed and no executive session was held.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Upon there being no further business before Council the meeting ended at 9:41 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on Thursday, October 20, 2022 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Regina Angelo

Deputy Clerk

Approved: November 21, 2022