

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

DECEMBER 22, 2022 - 7:30 P.M.

MAYOR’S STATEMENT: Mayor Balled 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 Revised 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 [Absent] Martino [Absent] Hayeck [P] Dahl [P] Ead [P]

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Mayor Balla called forward Mr. Bisignano and Councilman Dahl read the below resolution.

R1: Expressing Appreciation for Commitment and Dedication to Community: Mr. Frank Bisignano

Motion to Adopt above by Dahl, second by Jubin

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

All Council Members thanked Mr. Bisignano and his family for all of his support to Watchung. Mr. Bisignano noted that the most precious resource is time and he thanked Council for their time dedicated to the betterment of Watchung and the Mayor for his leadership.

MAYOR’S FINAL ADDRESS

Mayor Balla stated the following:

“I would like to share some comments as my term serving the residents of Watchung as your Mayor comes to a close. I was truly humbled by the privilege to have been elected to serve as Mayor of Watchung. As elected public servants we have an awesome privilege and responsibility to serve all residents of Watchung and I thank all of the resident for their trust, confidence and encouragement in leading the Borough over the past 4 years.

I thank all of my Council colleagues who have worked with me to provide the best services to all in our community I thank all of our employees who have worked tirelessly with me to provide services to our residents and make Watchung the best community to live , work and raise our families. I thank all of the many volunteers who have given of their time , talents and treasures to bring community unity, happiness, safety and beautification within in Watchung. I have always said our greatest resource in our community is our residents, young and old with diverse experiences , expertise and

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abilities. We have the intelligence, honesty, integrity and experience to ensure that Watchung is a desirable community to live, work, educate and raise families and strengthen the friendships and bonds between us.

There have been many accomplishments over the past 4 years and there have been challenges as well. We have drastically improved the communications and transparency over the period with all agendas and draft materials published in advance of the meetings. We instituted video and zoom of all meetings to allow for everyone, anywhere to participate live in our meetings.

We made vast improvements and repairs to our Borough properties and roads. We ran fiscally responsible operations which produced the largest surplus in funds for future use. I was able to successfully negotiate a favorable financial agreement with the developer of the Bonnie Burn Redevelopment project which will benefit the Borough over the next 30 years. We improved public safety by bringing our police department to full complement and lowering the speed limits. We fostered community engagement with town hall meetings and special committees for the annual budget ; road safety; cannabis; diversity inclusion and equity; the library; uses for our parks and property development.

Some of the challenges were ensuring the safety of our resident and employees and volunteers during the worldwide Covid 19 pandemic and the massive property devastation caused by Hurricane Ida. Both of these challenges brought about some memorable moments. During the State of Emergency for Covid we established a hotline for residents in need to assist the elderly or compromised residents and I would go to their homes to get their list of groceries and other items needed and do their shopping knowing, they didn't need to take a risk, and seeing the joy when I brought the items back to their homes left an indelible mark on me. During the flooding of Hurricane Ida I went to the police station to work with the Police Chief and officers and emergency personnel. As they rescued stranded motorist, we provided a safe rescue area in our court house where we assisted individuals and worked to get each of them safely home through the entire night. Bringing calm and security to individuals during a very traumatic event emphasized what is truly important in life.

Serving as Mayor of Watchung I would pray each day that God would grant me the wisdom to know right from wrong and to do what is right and pleasing to both God and my neighbors. If we are blessed with all of the riches of the world but can't love our neighbor, we are nothing. If we have all of the knowledge of the world but can't love our neighbor, we have nothing. My pray for the future is that each of us would love our neighbors as ourselves. Use each day to bring a smile and joy to someone. I thank my loving wife Karen and my three children, Jonah, Noah and Hannah for all of their love, support and encouragement.

What has carried me through all of life's journey and trials has been my faith in my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit who refreshes me each day. As a youngster I recognized that you come into this world with nothing and when you go home to heaven you don't bring anything with you, so while we are here, we should use each moment to

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love and be a blessing to everyone we meet. My commitment has been to serve and love God and serve and love each of you. I thank God and all of the people of Watchung, for the opportunity to share God's love with each of you. May God continue to bless each and every one of you now and always. God Bless You All."

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

- 1) Angela Meely, read a poem titled an Ode to the Bisignano's

DISCUSSION

Council President Jubin stated that this was something discussed in Administration and Finance Committee and this was something necessary and often asked for grant applications.

❖ Mission and Vision Statement

Proposed mission statement: *The Borough of Watchung's mission is to provide quality public services while upholding the well-being, sustainability, and protection of our diverse community and our assets through responsive governance, volunteerism and encouraging citizen involvement.*

Proposed vision statement: *To attract and support residents and businesses while maintaining rural tranquility and enhancing accessibility, recreation, and sensible development.*

Council Member Hayeck noted that this was something he looked forward to tackling in the new year. Mayor Balla noted that the Somerset County Film Commission had also recently advised that Watchung was approved as a certified film ready community and that might be something to consider incorporating.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion to Adopt below by Jubin, second by Hayeck

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

R17: Authorizing Executive Session for Contract Negotiations and Attorney-Client Privilege Discussions on:

- Bonnie Burn Redevelopment Project Sewer Agreements,
- R13: Authorizing Sewer Connection Agreement with Levin Properties, L.P.,
- R14: Authorizing Sewer Connection Agreement with Bonnie Burn Redevelopers Urban Renewal, L.L.C.,
- R15: Authorizing the Borough Administrator to Endorse the NJDEP Treatment Works Approval (TWA) Permit Application for the Bonnie Burn Redevelopment Project

Mayor and Council went into executive session at approximately 7:52 P.M. and returned to open session at approximately 8:19 P.M.

Motion to Return to Open Session by Jubin, second by Hayeck

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

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Motion to open Public Hearing on below by Hayeck, second by Jubin

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

Council Member Hayeck noted this was a model ordinance adopted by the State in 2021 and Watchung was looking to comply with this

Attorney Sordillo recalled that Council had previously inquired if this ordinance would apply to borough projects and Mr. Sordillo noted that answer was no. It is only triggered when a site plan approval is required.

Adoption of OR 22/09

ORDINANCE AMENDING BOROUGH CODE, CHAPTER 28 LAND DEVELOPMENT, AND ESTABLISHING ZONING REGULATIONS FOR THE ELECTRIC VEHICLE SUPPLY/SERVICE EQUIPMENT THROUGHOUT THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG PURSUANT TO P.L. 2021, C.171.

R2: Authorizing Adoption of Ordinance 22/09 Establishing Zoning Regulations for the Electric Vehicle Supply/ Service Equipment

No one appearing wishing to speak on this ordinance

Motion to close Public Hearing and Adopt above by Hayeck, second by Ead

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

NEW BUSINESS

REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE: Matters listed within this section have been referred to members of the Borough Council for reading and study, are considered to be routine and will be enacted by one motion of the Council. If separate discussion is desired, any item may be removed by Council action.

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Board of Adjustment Meeting Minutes	November 10, 2022
Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes	October 24, 2022
Green Team Meeting Minutes	November 21, 2022
Mayor and Council Executive Session Minutes	November 3, 2022 November 21, 2022
Mayor and Council Regular Meeting Minutes	November 3, 2022

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Planning Board Meeting Minutes

November 15, 2022

Traffic and Beautification Meeting Minutes

November 7, 2022

#37 Planning Board Review of Proposed Ordinance Establishing Zoning Regulations for Electric Vehicle Supply, Chapter 28, Land Development, recv'd 12/14/22, cc: M&C, JD, JS

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin, second by Hayeck

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

CONSENT RESOLUTIONS

R3: Authorizing Purchase Orders over \$2,000 –Gentilini Chevrolet (*PD- chevy tahoe*)
Civic Plus (*Agenda Management System*)
Somerset County Clerk (*2022 Primary ballots mailed*)

R4: Authorizing Tax Overpayment Refund - 36 Gildersleeve Place, Block 1501/ Lot 1.01

R5: Authorizing Bill List

R6: Waiving Delinquent Interest for 30 Maple Street

R7: Authorizing Application of Local Recreation Improvement Grant to NJ Department of Community Affairs for Mobus Field

R18: Authorizing Participation in PSE&G Direct Install Energy Audit Program

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin, second by Hayeck

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

NON-CONSENT RESOLUTIONS

R8: Authorizing Appointment of Junior Fire Volunteer – Rohan Nagpaul

Motion to Adopt above by Dahl, second by Jubin

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

R9: Authorizing Revocable License Agreement for 170 Johnston Drive Extension, block 52.01/ lot 1.04

Motion to Adopt above by Ead, second by Dahl

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

R10: Authorizing Agreement with Animal Control Solutions for 2023 –2024

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin, second by Dahl

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

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R11: Authorizing Salary Adjustment for Tax Collector

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin, second by Dahl

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

R12: Authorizing Removal of Majestic Towing from Borough's Towing List

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin, second by Dahl

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

R13: Authorizing Sewer Connection Agreement with Levin Properties, L.P.

Motion to Table above by Ead, second by Hayeck

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

R14: Authorizing Sewer Connection Agreement with Bonnie Burn Redevelopers Urban Renewal, L.L.C.

Motion to Table above by Ead, second by Hayeck

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

R15: Authorizing the Borough Administrator to Endorse the NJDEP Treatment Works Approval (TWA) Permit Application for the Bonnie Burn Redevelopment Project

Motion to Adopt above by Ead, second by Hayeck

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

R16: Authorizing Agreement with Safe & Sound Somerset to Establish a Domestic Violence Response Team

Motion to Adopt above by Ead, second by Jubin

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

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1) Hannah Balla, spoke of Mayor Balla's accomplishments and challenges during his tenure. She thanked Mayor Balla for all of his dedication as a public servant and fiscal responsibility in moving Watchung in a better direction.
- 2) Fred Schieferstein, Farmer's Market Participant, thanked the Mayor and Council for having him participate, he stated he looks forward to making next year's farmers market even more successful and wished all happy holidays.
- 3) Council Member Pietro Martino submitted a written public comment which was read onto the record.

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- 4) Linda Goldschein, submitted a written public comment which was read onto the record.

Each Council Member thanked Mayor Balla for his service, dedication, and support during his tenure, they spoke very highly of his leadership, and how Watchung is a better place because of his leadership.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business before Council the meeting ended at 8:46 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council is the Re-Organization Meeting on Thursday, January 5, 2023 at 6:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted:

Edith G. Gil
Borough Clerk
Approved: January 19, 2023