

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

JUNE 17, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

[THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY FOR ALL PARTIES]

MAYOR'S STATEMENT: Mayor Keith S. Balla welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. and announced the following: *In order to comply with all NJ Executive Orders and to protect members of the public this meeting is being held virtually for all parties. Public Comments will be accepted through zoom or by email to the Clerk. For those joining through Zoom, please note that upon arrival you are automatically muted. If you wish to speak during the 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. 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.*

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

ROLL CALL:

Robinson [Absent] Goodloe [P] Eisenberg Knegten [P] Jubin [P] Martino [P] Hayeck [P]

Mayor Balla read the following proclamation and mentioned that a committee would be formed to plan the September 11th Ceremony.

PROCLAMATION Juneteenth Day

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

1. Administration & Finance: Council Member Jubin reported on the last A&F Committee discussing most of the matters listed on tonight's agenda.
2. Police: no report
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds: Council Member Eisenberg Knegten reported on the committee's June 2nd meeting and noted that discussions were held on sidewalk repairs, electric work at the gazebo, the ADA compliance at Mobus playground and the walkway at Best Lake. Discussions have also started on applying to the Safe Routes for School grant for possible sidewalks.
4. Public Affairs:

Environmental: no report

Recreation: Council Member Hayeck reported on the commissions June 2nd in which they discussed the Juneteenth celebration slated for this Saturday. Discussions were also held on the summer camp registration which is now at \$250 at Round Top Swim Club in Warren and the possibility of holding the fishing derby along with some ideas for activities in 2022.

Historical: Council Member Martino reported on their June 16th meeting and thanked all members for their efforts on the reopening of the Texier House Museum. He thanked Phyllis Juette who donated the American flags installed by the entrance and spoke on the open house dates being targeted for this summer. The Committee spoke on having a Junior Historians

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Club of sorts to engage students from Valley View School and their wishes to digitize some of their records in the future.

Board of Health: Council Member Jubin provided an update on covid numbers and spoke on vaccination efforts; he also spoke on the new Delta variant.

5. Fire: Council Member Goodloe reported on the Fire Department's request for capital expenditures to replace PPE and self-contained breathing apparatus. These expenditures are now being presented to A&F Committee and are expected to move forward. The Fire Department will also be participating in the upcoming Watchung Family Walk and were invited by North Plainfield to attend their 4th of July festival and parade.
6. Laws/Ordinances: Council Member Martino touched upon the 4 ordinances scheduled for tonight's meeting and noted the DEP model noise ordinance was circulated for internal review.

REPORTS – OTHER:

7. Engineer: Consultant Engineer Bruce Koch, provided a status update on the Elsinore Culvert repair, the 2022 state aide programs available, the Safe Routes to School's program that was announced and is a federally funded project – if awarded it might cover design expenses. Mr. Koch also reported on the storm water management plan, the camp endeavor survey work, and CME Associates environmental division issued a letter on the status update of the Ness Farm project and the next steps to take.
8. Police Chief: Chief Hart provided the Police Departments activity report for the month of May and he noted that the number of stops and citations issued has increased as more people return to work post-covid. He also provided an update on Hillcrest Road, he noted that approximately 33 trucks were stopped, 9 warnings were issued, 26 summons issued, 2 disabled trucks and 3 trucks were diverted.
9. Fire Department: Fire Chief DeSandolo provided a report for the month of May, he noted approximately 24 calls occurred and reported 3 members recently completed training and they look forward to participating in upcoming festivities.
10. Rescue Squad: written report provided to Council
11. Emergency Management: OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon provided an update on Executive Order 244 signed by the Governor on June 4th ending the public health emergency, but note that the State of Emergency was still in effect. Covid plans are still required at this time for any mask gathering event. EO 246 provides for a utility shut-off moratorium with a grace period from July 1st through December.
12. Attorney: Borough Attorney Denis Murphy briefly spoke on the proposed amendment to the redevelopment plan.
13. Clerk: Borough Clerk Edith Gil touched upon the recent primary election held and announced that Watchung was identified as receiving a ballot drop box and discussions would take place to find the most suitable location. Additionally, early voting period will take place from October 23rd through October 31st and Somerset County has yet to identify where throughout the county the polling locations will take place. Mayor and Council inquired if the Police Dept was the best location, Clerk Gil explained the legislation and the county's position on that matter.

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14. Administrator: Borough Administrator Damato provided an update on covid numbers, there has only been 5 new cases in Watchung since the last report, he spoke on the lights over at the Gazebo, and the paint over at Watchung Arts Center.
15. Wildlife Committee: No update provided
16. Youth Services: No update provided
17. Planning Board: Council Member Martino provided a brief report on the June 15th meeting where they heard the closing statements on 100 Union Avenue. He advised that June 29th will be a special meeting to hear the continuation of the Bonnie Burn development and July 20th is the next regular scheduled board meeting.
18. Municipal Alliance: Council Member Hayeck reported on the Board's meeting of June 9th where Project Graduation was discussed along with diversity programs to be held next year.
19. Library Advisory Board: Council Member Goodloe spoke on the County Library's efforts to eliminate late fee fines; this is a concern to the Watchung Library Advisory Board as they receive some of the proceeds from these late fines.
20. Traffic and Beatification: Council Member Goodloe thanked DPW on their behalf for their hard work in planting the vincas around the Cherry Blossom Trees. They are continuously working on ways to beautify Watchung and have discussed the possibility of having a sign at Best Lake indicating its name. The Commission would also like to resume discussions on holiday decorations, the deer display, etc.

*A public portion is held prior to Council action **for comments of agenda items only**; another public portion is held at the end of the meeting for general discussion.*

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

- 1) Charlie Neiss, Dogwood Lane, spoke on the Green Team's efforts on Sustainable Jersey certification and their continue efforts to host the Farmers Market. Council weighed in on possible locations.
- 2) Christine Ead, Washington Drive, asked for a brief overview of the cleaning efforts at Ness Property that were discussed by Borough Engineer Bruce Koch. Mr. Koch provided a brief summary.
- 3) Debra Joren, Stirling Road, inquired on the funding for the painting of the Watchung Arts Center. CFO Bill Hance noted that the monies currently in that fund were still there but to his knowledge could not be used for "cosmetic" fixes.
- 4) Andy Baldassarre, Lakeview Terrace, spoke on Mr. Damato's report and the electrical work being targeted for the gazebo.
- 5) Bruce Ruck, Lakeview Avenue, spoke on the proposed lights on the gazebo

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Written Comments

- 6) Harold Kreiss, please opt out of cannabis legislation
- 7) Wayne Hanlon, please opt out of cannabis legislation
- 8) Merinda Hanlon, please opt out of cannabis legislation
- 9) Ruth Rothgard, please opt out of cannabis legislation

DISCUSSION

❖ Amendments to Noise Ordinance

Borough Attorney Murphy and Council Members discussed the model noise ordinance established by the NJ Department of Environmental Commission as well as concerns from prior residents on the current ordinance.

❖ July Family Walk

Council Member Eisenberg Knegten spoke on the family walk that was originally intended for last year and spoke in favor of proceeding with it this year. Council Members exchanged comments on the proposed planning of the event and moved in favor to proceed.

Motion to proceed with event by Eisenberg Knegten/ Second by Goodloe

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE: Matters listed within this section were referred to members of the Borough Council for reading and study and were enacted by one motion of the Council.

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Board of Health Special Meeting Minutes	April 28, 2021
CERT Meeting Minutes	May 25, 2021
Construction Report	May 2021
Engineers Report	June 1, 2021
Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes	April 26, 2021

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Fire Prevention Bureau Report	April & May 2021
Green Team Meeting Minutes	April 23, 2021, May 7, 2021 & May 21, 2021
Library Advisory Board Meeting Minutes	March 17, 2021
Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority Meeting Minutes	May 6, 2021
Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes	April 14, 2021

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #30- Berkeley Heights, 6/2/21 re: Land Use Ordinance No 10-2021 *“Prohibiting the Operation of Any Class of Cannabis Businesses Within its Geographical Boundaries and Amending Section 6.4.1 of Land Use Procedures”*. C: M&C, PB, JD

- #31- Township of Scotch Plains, 6/8/21 re: Ordinance No. 2021-9 *“Prohibiting All Classes of Cannabis Licensed Businesses In Residential And Downtown Zones; Permitting The Operation of Cannabis Licensed Businesses Classes 1-6 And Consumption Areas Only in the B-3 Zone; and Permitting Licensed Cannabis Business Classes 1,2,3,4 and 6 Only in the M-1 and M-2 Zones”* This ordinance restricts cannabis licensed businesses to certain zones within Scotch Plans. C: M&C, PB, ZB, JD

Motion to Accept above by Eisenberg Knegten/Second by Jubin

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

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS:

- R1: Authorizing Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – General Code: 2021 code updates, supplement #1
Winner Ford: PD (2) 2021 White Ford Interceptor SUVs
Absolute Fire Protection: FD – flood light bar for Engine #603
Witmer Public Safety Group: FD– salvage cover, leather hose jacket & clamp
City Connections: Jan to Sept. website services
Estevez Plumbing & Heating LLC: PD Tankless Water Heater
JC Painting Svc, LLC: Arts Center painting & labor

- R2: Authorizing Clerk to Issue Raffle Licenses / Father’s Club of St. Mary Academy

- R3: Authorizing Renewal of Liquor Licenses for 2021 – 2022 Term

- *R4: Authorizing Field and Facility Permit Application – Mobus Field, Watchung IDEA & PTO Juneteenth Celebration

- R5: Authorizing Field and Facility Permit Application – Use of Watchung Lake Gazebo for Wedding Ceremony on June 25, 2021

- R6: Authorizing Field and Facility Permit Application – Use of Watchung Lake, Mr. B’s Sports Camp (Fishing Camp)

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- R7: Authorize Refund of Overpayment on Special Assessment - 1216 Johnston Drive, block 6403/lot 9
- R8: Authorizing the Appointment of Part-Time Summer Assistant – Nicholas Petersen
- R9: Waiving Delinquent Interest to Multiple Accounts – Upper Drive, Hillcrest Road,
Old Somerset Road and Parlin Lane
- R10: Authorizing Bill List
- R11: Authorizing Extension of Temporary Outdoor Dining
- R12: Authorizing Certification of 2021-2022 Tax Levy - Watchung Board of Education
- R13: Authorizing Certification of 2021-2022 Tax Levy - Watchung Hill Regional School BOE
- R14: Authorizing the Return of Various Escrow Deposits

Motion to Adopt above* by Eisenberg Knegten/Second by Goodloe

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

*Motion to Adopt R4 by Eisenberg Knegten/ Second by Jubin

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

NON-CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

- R15: Introduction of Ordinance **OR 21/05** – **“AN ORDINANCE BY THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG IN THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY PROHIBITING THE OPERATION OF ANY CLASS OF CANNABIS BUSINESSES WITHIN ITS GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES AND AMENDING SECTION 28-106 OF THE WATCHUNG MUNICIPAL CODE.”** Public Hearing to be held on July 15, 2021

Motion to Adopt above by Martino/ Second by Jubin

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

- R16: Introduction of Ordinance **OR 21/06** – **“ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 28 ENTITLED, “LAND DEVELOPMENT CHAPTER OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG”, TO AMEND THE DEFINITION OF “IMPERVIOUS SURFACE,” OF SECTION 28-203, ENTITLED “DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS,” TO EXCLUDE DECKS IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES.”** Public Hearing to be held on July 15, 2021

Motion to Adopt above by Martino/ Second by Eisenberg Knegten

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

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R17: Introduction of Ordinance **OR 21/07 - “ORDINANCE REPEALING SECTION 2-44 OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG AND DISSOLVING THE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE.”** Public Hearing to be held on July 15, 2021.

Motion to Adopt above by Martino/ Second by Hayeck

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

Council Members expressed the challenges that this Committee faced given the current wildlife situation. This committee should not have to face the challenge of dealing with matters not originally intended when this ordinance was originally adopted.

R18: Introduction of Ordinance **OR 21/08 – “AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ORDINANCE NOS. OR:20/06, OR:19/015 AND OR: 18/20, ADOPTING A "REDEVELOPMENT PLAN" FOR A NON-CONDEMNATION AREA IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT CONSISTING OF BLOCK 7402, LOTS 19.01 AND 19.02 AND BLOCK 7403, LOTS 5 AND 10 AND FURTHER IDENTIFIED AS THE "BONNIE BURN ROAD REDEVELOPMENT AREA", AS SHOWN ON THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG TAX MAP IN ACCORDANCE WITH N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-7.”** Public Hearing to be held on July 15, 2021

Motion to Adopt above by Martino/ Second by Goodloe

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

Mayor Balla asked Attorney Murphy to provide a small overview about the changes being proposed by this ordinance. He explained the two major adjustments being done were for the size-area of the four lots and the redeveloper obtaining sewer service not only from Berkely Heights, but perhaps from Middlesex or from other areas permitted by law without having to amend the redevelopment plan again in the future.

R19: Authorizing Release of Performance Surety Bond - 1660 Route 22, Bond #SUR0045218

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin / Second by Goodloe

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

R20: Authorizing Reduction of Performance Surety Bond – 1660 Route 22, Bond #SUR0045138
and Filing of Maintenance Guarantee

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Goodloe

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

R21: Authorizing Salary Adjustment – Theresa Snyder

Motion to Adopt above by Martino/ Second by Goodloe

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

R22: Authorizing Contract Expansion for CME Associates – 2021 Roadway Improvements

Motion to Adopt above by Eisenberg Knegten/ Second by Goodloe

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

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R23: Authorizing Appointments of Junior Volunteer Members of the Fire Department –
Michael Mattiassi and Peter J. Bentley

Motion to Adopt above by Goodloe/ Second by Eisenberg Knegten

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

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Bruce Ruck, Lakeview Avenue, brought attention to Hillcrest and the trees and branches leaning against power lines, he noted that power is lost as a result.
2. Christine Ead, Washington Drive, inquired on why Bonnie Burn Redevelopers were looking at Middlesex for the sewer line versus Berkely Heights. She asked if Berkely Heights said no to the connection?

Administrator Damato noted that the developers would have to work out an agreement either with Plainfield or with Berkely Heights and that we would have to wait and see what direction the developer goes in.

Mayor Balla congratulated the Valley View graduates on their graduation yesterday.

R24: Authorizing Executive Session: Personnel Matters and Contract Negotiations

Motion to Adopt above by Eisenberg Knegten / Second by Jubin

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

Council Member Eisenberg Knegten advised that she would be recusing herself from a portion of executive session. At approximately 9:33 P.M., Mayor and Council went into executive session.

Motion to Return to public session by Goodloe / Second by Jubin at approximately 11:40 P.M.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business, CM Goodloe motioned to adjourn, second by CM Jubin to the call of the Chair at 11:41 P.M. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council is a Regular Meeting scheduled to be held on July 15, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.

Submitted by:

Edith G. Gil
Borough Clerk