

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

SEPTEMBER 9, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.

[THIS MEETING WILL BE HELD VIRTUALLY FOR ALL PARTIES]

MAYOR'S STATEMENT: Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. and stated the following *“In order to comply with all NJ Executive Orders and to protect members of the public, this meeting will be held virtually for all parties. Public Comments will be accepted through zoom or by email to the Borough 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 Revised 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 TO HONOR THE BRAVERY OF OUR 13 SOLDIERS KILLED IN AFGANISTAN FOR SAVING AMERICAN LIVES AND FOR OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN, SERVING HOME AND ABROAD.

ROLL CALL:

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

PROCLAMATION

Mayor Balla read the following proclamation onto the record *Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD)*

Mayor Balla noted that resolution R8 would not be considered as the borough sustained several damages to its fields and lake and damages were being assessed at this time.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance: Council Member Jubin reported on the last committee meeting and advised Tax Assessor Ed Kerwin was on the call and that at the next meeting a resolution would be considered to hire a company to conduct field assessments. He also briefly reported on the measures being taken to assess the damages sustained from the storm and report them to the borough’s insurance company, budget hearings to take place in the future and noted some grant opportunities.
2. Police: Council President Robinson reported on the police department’s monthly activity report from August and reported on an incident in Fanwood in which the department provided assistance as well as the major assistance provided overall in the recent storm.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds: Council Member Eisenberg Knegten thanked the department for all of their assistance in dealing with the recent storm and deferred to Administrator James Damato who would later provide a more detailed report and recovery steps in dealing with the aftermath of the storm. She also welcomed the new Borough Engineer.

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Administrator Damato provided a detailed report on the impact of the storm and the debris that was still waiting to be cleaned up, he noted Stony Brook sustained serious erosion and spoke on the 2 bridges that were seriously impacted, as well as the culvert on Elsinore that was damaged.

Borough Engineer James Hutzelmann also commented on the damages sustained and the clean up work performed by Public Works in dealing with the aftermath of the storm. Council Members discussed the several damages that occurred and those that had been identified long ago.

4. Public Affairs:

Environmental: Council President Robinson reported on the last meeting held and noted that discussions regarding Legacy Books took place, spoke on the Green Fair at Warren, and provided an update on the Farmers Market.

Recreation: Council Member Hayeck spoke on the Commissions last meeting and commented that because of the increase in covid cases, the Harvest Festival might not proceed as intentionally scheduled. The same would apply for the fishing derby and the planned movie night.

Historical: Council Member Martino reported that the committee spent a great deal updating the displays and everyone was disheartened to see the damages sustained by the storm to the Texier House. He thanked everyone that volunteered their time to clean up the Texier House to make it look presentable for the upcoming 9/11 Ceremony. The Committee is also gearing up for the Journey in the Past program done in partnership with the County.

Board of Health: no update provided

5. Fire: no update provided.

6. Laws/Ordinances: Council Member Martino inquired on the internal process to get rid of dead, dying, and disease trees as it should not take a long time to process this kind of application and offered to make the application process easier.

REPORTS – OTHER:

7. Engineer: no update provided.

8. Police Chief: Lt. Boyle reported on behalf of Chief Hart and advised that the Chief wanted to stress all the assistance provided during the storm. Lt. Boyle proceeded to report on the departments August activity.

9. Fire Department: Chief DeSandolo reported on the departments activity in August and expressed condolences for the passing of former Chief Ralph Lacanna.

10. Rescue Squad: Council President Robinson reported on the Squad's August activity and noted that they were also making plans for their annual tree lighting ceremony in December.

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11. Emergency Management: OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon noted Tropical Storm Ida was the main concern and resulted in the flooding of the circle. She also reported that one family in town was displaced and they are working on providing assistance, she also reminded everyone that any damages sustained could be reported to FEMA for potential reimbursement.
12. Attorney: no update provided.
13. Clerk: Clerk Gil provided an update on the progress of the website and noted the locations identified for early voting. Everything is detailed in the website.
14. Administrator: Administrator Damato provided a breakdown of the covid numbers.
15. Youth Services: no update provided.
16. Planning Board: Council Member Martino noted the upcoming date to hear the Bonnie Burn application and asked Residents to tune in.
17. Municipal Alliance: Council Member Hayeck reported on upcoming programs for the Watchung Hills Regional High School.
18. Library Advisory Board: no update provided.
19. Traffic and Beautification: no update provided.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

- 1) Christine Ead, Washington Drive, spoke on the extensive damage of the storm and inquired on debris pick-up.

Council Member Goodloe joined the meeting at approximately 9:28 P.M.

- 2) Debra Joren, Stirling Road, inquired if she had to wait until the end of the meeting to comment on something discussed during the reports section as it was not regarding a specific resolution. Council debated the matter and asked Ms. Joren to proceed with her question. Ms. Joren explained that when she was a Council Member prior approval had to be obtained from NJDEP to lower the lake in anticipation of a storm to avoid flooding and asked if that was done prior to IDA.

OEM Coordinator Solon explained that regulations from NJDEP have changed over the years and that their recommendation to municipalities is that lakes not be lowered prior to a storm.

Engineer Hutzelmann explained DEPs reasoning on why it does not recommend that lakes be lowered and proceeding to explain why that would cause instability.

- 3) Frank Bisignano, Jared Court, commented about the strategic vision plan, investing in infrastructure, sidewalks and the damaged done on the barn as a result of the storm.

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Attorney Murphy offered that Council Members might feel the need to be cautious of what was discussed in open session as negotiations is typically an executive session matter and therefore might not be inclined to respond in person.

Mr. Bisignano noted that his intent was not to negotiate anything, he only responded to the Mayors comment of needing a sidewalk by his property and his willingness to pave the ground, he noted that he has openly expressed a willingness to help the town and that his offer has never been made on confidential grounds.

Council Members expressed their views of Mr. Bisignano’s offer and commented on prior outstanding projects and the process in which they have been handled.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Public Hearing of Ordinance **OR: 21/06** entitled an **“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.”**

R1: Adoption of Ordinance **OR:21/06** – Amending Chapter 28 Entitled “ Land Development” to Amend the Definition of “ Impervious Surface” of Section 28-203, to Exclude Decks in Certain Circumstances.

Motion to open public hearing by Martino / Second by Robinson

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

No one appearing wishing to be heard

Motion to close public hearing and Adopt above by Martino/ Second by Hayeck

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

NEW BUSINESS

REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:

Board of Adjustment Meeting Minutes	July 8, 2021
Fire Prevention Monthly Report	July 2021 August 2021
Green Team Meeting Minutes	July 19, 2021
Historical Committee Minutes	May 19, 2021
Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority	August 5, 2021

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Planning Board Meeting Minutes
& Transcript

July 13, 2021
July 20, 2021

Police Activity Report

July 2021

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #39- Letter of Resignation from Baburao Koneru, Historic Committee Resignation 8/17/21 c: M&C, JD
- #40- Borough of North Plainfield, 8/23/21 re: Notice of Introduction, Ordinance No. 21-12 “*An Ordinance to Amend, Revise and Supplement Chapter 20 of the North Plainfield Borough Code, Entitled, “Flood Prevention” by Deleting Same in its Entirety and to Amend, Revise and Supplement Chapter 22 of the North Plainfield Borough Code, Entitled, “Land Development,” Chapter 22-114, Entitled “Flood Plain Zone,” Most by Deleting Existing Chapter 22-114 in its Entirety and Adopting a New Chapter 22-114 Entitled “Floodplain Management Regulations.”*” c: M&C, PB, JD

Motion to Accept above items by Robinson/ Second by Jubin

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

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS:

- R2: Authorizing Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – Fox Fence Enterprises, Inc (*Public Works*)
Round Top Swim & Tennis Club (*Recreation*)

Motion to Adopt above by / Second by

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

- R3: Authorize Strategic Plan - Watchung Hills Regional Municipal Alliance Grant – 2021/2022
- R4: Authorizing use of Gazebo for a Holiday Ritual on Tuesday, September 7, 2021
- R5: Authorizing Additional Extension Designating Sterling Watchung, LLC as Conditional Redevelopers of the Bonnie Burn Road Property
- R6: Authorizing Bill List

Motion to Adopt above items by Robinson/ Second by Eisenberg Knegten

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

NON-CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

- R7: Authorizing Stipulation of Settlement Relative to Tax Appeal PSE&G Tax Dept T6B vs Watchung Borough, Docket No. 012795-2018

Motion to Adopt above item by Jubin/ Second by Robinson

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

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~~R8: Authorizing Field and Facility Permit Application – Mr. B’s Fishing Camp~~

R9: Authorizing Appointment of P/T Custodian – Mathew King

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

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

CM Eisenberg Knegten asked Administrator Damato to speak on the benefits of hiring someone part-time versus hiring a cleaning service. Mr. Damato explained the financial benefit to the borough.

R10: Authorizing Appointment of Fire Volunteer – Joseph Buro

Motion to Adopt above item by Goodloe / Second by Jubin

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

R11: Authorizing 2020 Stipend for Watchung Rescue Squad

Motion to Adopt above item by Jubin/ Second by Robinson

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

R12: Authorizing 2020 Budget Request for Watchung Rescue Squad

Motion to Adopt above item by Jubin/ Second by Robinson

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

CM Martino requested that the Rescue Squad be requested to attend a budget hearing next year since that did not occur this year.

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

Written Public Comment

1. Lynda Goldshein

“Dear Edith, below is some correspondence that I have had with Bill about the survey to get opinions on what the citizens of Watchung would like to see at Camp Endeavor and now also the Ness property. In my opinion the survey is its present form is deficient. If it does not include a column about costs to both develop and maintain and how often they might use the option. I would like this discussed in the public comment portion of tonight's meeting. Thank you, Lynda Goldschein”

Council Member Martino brought up the deer management situation that is outstanding and recommended that this be further discussed at the next council meeting. CM Jubin explained his understanding of the only 2 allowable locations to permit hunt, the Bonnie Burn property which is being redeveloped and no longer an option, and the Ness property, which has its own set of issues. Council Members expressed the concerns surrounding a hunt and Administrator Damato and Attorney Murphy noted they would look further into this matter.

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R13: ~~Authorizing Executive Session: Litigation Matters~~

The Council did not entertain the above resolution.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business before Council, the meeting ended at 10:48 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council is a Regular Meeting scheduled to be held on Wednesday, September 22, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.