

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

**MARCH 4, 2021 | 7:30 P.M.**

***[THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY FOR ALL PARTIES]***

**MAYOR'S STATEMENT:** Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 7:31 P.M. and made the following statement: *This meeting will be held virtually for all parties. Public Comments will be accepted through zoom or by email to the Borough Clerk and instructions were posted. I'd like to welcome everyone this evening. 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. For those joining through Zoom, please note that upon arrival you are automatically muted. If you wish to speak during 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.*

**SALUTE TO THE FLAG and a MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN, SERVING HOME AND ABROAD and a MOMENT OF SILENCE for WATCHUNG'S HERO POLICE OFFICER MATTHEW MELCHIONDA WHO SERVED FAITHFULLY IN WATCHUNG'S POLICE DEPARTMENT WHEN 15 YEARS AGO HE DIED OF A FATAR INJURY WHILE ON DUTY.**

**ROLL CALL:**

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

**REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

1. Administration & Finance: Council Member Jubin reported on the last 2 Committee meetings, amongst the items discussed was introducing a table of organization, the certification of digital images for Fo-veonics, replacements to the Department of Public Works, and a code of conduct for summer camp is being worked on.
2. Police: Council President Robinson reported on the authorization for the body worn cameras and the traffic studies conducted on Hilcrest and Sterling Road. Council Member Martino inquired on a traffic safety campaign, and mentioned that April is National Safety month and suggested the Police Dept could spearhead the program following the resolution. He also inquired on the status with the orange construction signed and suggested that it could be moved to the top of Hilcrest Road with a simple message such as "no trucks, we mean it." Council Member Martino suggested that the Police Chief offer his opinion on the state legislation that was adopted last month on the legalization of cannabis and urged Council to begin discussions on this matter in order to meet all the deadlines. Borough Attorney Denis Murphy mentioned this topic was also part of his report.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds: Council Member Eisenberg Knegten report on the multiple winter events and reported on the man hours and provided salt figure updates. She reported that on tonight's agenda we have resolutions for new hires and discussed geese addling operations. Operation PRIDE has begun and reminded the Council that DPW Manager Charlie Gunther is set to depart soon from the Borough. Council Member Martino inquired on a status update of the removal of the trees at best lake. Council Member Eisenberg Knegten reported that discussion took place on Best Lake walkway, deferring to closer resolution of timeline, potential paving of parking lot,
4. Public Affairs:  
Environmental: Council President Robinson reported that the commission discussed the bamboo ordinance and the new proposed place for the Trex bench is at the walkway in Mo-

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bus Field. They also discussed distributing seedlings at the Operation Pride event and discussed the spotted lanternfly mitigation. Council Member Martino urged the department of Public Works to pick up the Trex bench from the Chairs house to move forward with its installation.

Recreation: Council Member Hayeck reported on the discussions that took place at the last commission's meeting and the timelines surrounding "Music in the Park, Comedy in the Park, and Movie Night" to target different age groups. He reported that Traffic & Beautification had suggested incorporating a craft event at Operation Pride and reported that Mayor Balla had also made a few recommendations to the Commission. Council Member Jubin suggested sending out a survey of sorts for previous campers.

Historical: Council Member Martino reported that no meeting took place since his last report, however inquired if certain clothing items have been removed from the Texier House. Carolyn Solon has been spearheading removing the donated food that was originally stored at Texier House that and getting it done, already requested access to the building. He inquired on a policy for accessing the Texier House so that the Committee could reassess what is there. Council Member Martino provided an update on the eagle scouts project and mentioned that the Committee is reviewing the AARP grants.

Board of Health: Council Member Jubin primarily spoke on the covid vaccine and its challenges.

5. Fire: Council Member Goodloe reported that the Committee is still considering the department's capital requests and the Department of Public Works is working on repairing steps of the fire house. Council Member Goodloe made a statement on her decision to not seek reelection and thanked the residents for their support. It's been an honor serving the borough.
6. Laws/Ordinances: Council Member Martino reported that the Committee is waiting on feedback on the review of Chapter 12. They are also currently reviewing Chapter 2 and will be having a meeting on March 6<sup>th</sup> to discuss changes.

**REPORTS – OTHER:**

7. Engineer: Engineer Bruce Koch reported on 2 NJDOT grants and the Elsinore Drive culvert repair. He also reported on the updates being done to the stormwater pollution plan; Malay from CME will be doing a walk through with Jim around Best Lake to determine where sidewalks should go. CME has also put together a proposal on Camp Endeavor community gardens, they are refining their preliminary construction cost estimate and a formal proposal should be forthcoming. The County Open Space Fund is also funding projects and might be able to be combined with the AARP grant if the County considers this to be a recreational amenity. Council Member Jubin spoke on the urgency of making road repairs given the weather conditions.
8. Police: Police Chief William Kelly reported that during the month of February there were 1,661 calls requiring police action, there were 6 arrests made, and 37 ½ service hours in training. The department is in the process of accepting applications for a new hire, the deadline is March 15th. Chief Kelly reported that there was a press release on the traffic safety initiative sent to all Members, the message board had storm updates but can now be relocated to Hillcrest for truck detail.

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9. Fire Department – Fire Chief Albert DeSandolo reported 21 calls for the month of February, 133.5-man hours, 6 alarm activations and 3 weather standbys. Members of the department participated in an annual surface ice and recertification class.
10. Rescue Squad – Council President reported on the stats from their January meeting.
11. Emergency Management – OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon reported on the food and clothing drive done in February and the outcome of the February storms. She reported that the County sent out a survey to all municipalities on homebound residents interested in the covid vaccine. This information was gathered through joint efforts between OEM and Police.
12. Attorney – Borough Attorney, Denis Murphy, spoke on the details of the state’s legalization of marijuana and the options available to all municipalities within the allowed time. He also reported on the Planning Boards case on the Bonnie Burn Redevelopment Plan, he also mentioned that the investigative report on the ethics breach would be forthcoming.
13. Clerk – Borough Clerk Gil informed the public on free radon kits available at Borough Hall and reported on the testing site that will occur in North Plainfield.
14. Administrator - Borough Administrator James Damato provided covid updates and spoke on the county’s efforts to assist residents interested in registering for covid vaccines. He also reported on the budget deadlines set by the state, the Borough must introduce the budget by March 30<sup>th</sup>. He also reported on recycling issue due to the storm, especially on private roads. Council Member Martino inquired on resuming Mayor/Council officer hours, hopes it can be done by March 15<sup>th</sup>. He also inquired on the mailing of the tax assessment cards, the Clerk advised that they would go out around March 15<sup>th</sup>.
15. Wildlife Committee – no report
16. Youth Services – Council President provided details on the grant received for Girls Who Code.
17. Planning Board – no report
18. Board of Education: Council Member Eisenberg Knegten reported on the Board of Educations last meeting and their Architects presentation of a long-range facilities plan and encouraged everyone to view this recent meeting.
19. Municipal Alliance – Council Member Hayeck reported that the Municipal Alliance met on February 10<sup>th</sup> and discussions were about Project Graduation and upcoming programs.
20. Library Advisory Board: Council Member Goodloe reported on the County’s efforts to eliminate library fines. For Traffic and Beautification, she reported on Operation PRIDE and the joint efforts of the Environmental and Recreation Commissions. T&B would also like to recommend the planting of 27 Yoshino Cherry Trees, it is estimated that it might be about \$6,000 stemming from the Tree Bank Fund. Council Member Martino suggested getting approval from Somerset County since it is a county road before moving forward. He also suggested that a maintenance plan be put in place to ensure that these new trees remain healthy and viable.

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**PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY**

- 1) Bruce Ruck, Lakeview Avenue, commended Council Member Martino for his suggestions to the Hillcrest sign and also recommends a message on “drugged driving” for prescribed medications. Lastly he inquired on the state wide opioid program, Chief Kelly provided a brief explanation of the program.

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- 2) Jen Scharf, Woodledge Road, inquired if the town had an ordinance on shoveling your own sidewalk. She explained that several houses on Hill Hollow were not shoveling and suggested that the town enforced its ordinances so that homeowners become more responsible.
- 3) Deb Joren, Stirling Road, spoke on the issue of snow on sidewalks and mention that this has been an ongoing issue every winter. She provided history on the surrounding issues regarding this matter.
- 4) Jen Scharf, Woodledge Road, thanked Ms. Joren for her comments, but clarified that she was primarily referring to houses at Hill Hollow. She firmly believes that home owners will not comply if not fined by the Borough after receiving a waring.

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**DISCUSSION**

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**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

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**NEW BUSINESS**

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**CONSENT AGENDA:** Council President Robinson moved to accept the following items, second by Council Member Goodloe. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Kneigten, Jubin, Martino, Hayeck “aye.”

Correspondence #8 was referred to the Environmental Commission.

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Borough Annual Audit Report	2019
Building Department	February 2021
Environmental Commission Minutes	January 25, 2021
Historical Minutes	November 4, 2020 January 20, 2021
Planning Board Re-Org & Meeting Minutes	January 19, 2021
Police Activity Report	February 2021
Tax Collector Annul Report	2020

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #5- Township of Berkley Heights 2/16/21 Notice of Ordinance Amending the Code, Appendix A (“Municipal Land Use Procedures Ordinance”) Public Hearing to be held March 2, 2021  
c: M&C, JD, Pl. Board

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- #6- Township of Warren 2/22/21 Notice of Ordinance N0. 21-03 Replace Section 15B entitled “Stormwater Management” with the new Stormwater Control Regulations found at NJAC 7:8-1.2 et. Seq. Public Hearing to be held March 18, 2021 c: M&C, JD, Pl. Board
- #7 - Letter of Resignation from Nilima Palekar, Board of Health 2/22/21 c: M&C, JD, CG
- #8- Sofia Lopa, Food & Water Watch Intern, Rutgers Univ. 2/23/21 Proposed Resolution Opposing the Gibbstown Logistics Terminal and Liquefied Natural Gas Shipments Exports, c: M & C, JD

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**CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS:** Council President Robinson moved to adopt the following items, second by Council Member Eisenberg Knegten. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino, Hayeck “aye;” for R3 and R4, Council Member Martino “abstain.”

- R1: Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – Everbridge (PD – Annual Nixle 360 Subscription)  
Coban Technologies, Inc (PD – body worn camera package)
- R2: Authorizing Raffle License Amendment- Mercy Guild Mount St. Mary Academy
- R3: Authorizing Tax Collector to Waive Delinquent Interest / Block 4001 Lot 17
- R4: Authorizing CFO to Refund Overpayment of Building Permit #04-0281

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**NON-CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:**

Council Member Goodloe moved to adopt the item below, second by Council Member Jubin. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin “aye,” Martino and Hayeck “abstain.”

- R5: Authorizing 2020 Stipend for Fire Department Volunteers

Council Member Hayeck moved to adopt the item below, second by Council Member Eisenberg Knegten. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino, Hayeck “aye.”

- R6: Authorizing use of Gazebo for Wedding Ceremony on July 31, 2021

Council Member Jubin moved to adopt the item listed below, second by Council President Robinson. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Jubin, Martino, Hayeck “aye,” Eisenberg Knegten “abstain.”

- R7: Authorizing Fee Waivers for Watchung PTO Dine to Donate Food Truck Event

Council Member Eisenberg Knegten moved to adopt the item listed below, second by Council Member Goodloe. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino, Hayeck “aye.”

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R8: Authorizing the Appointment of Laborer – Steve Ferrara

Council Member Eisenberg Knegten moved to adopt the item listed below, second by Council Member Goodloe. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino, Hayeck “aye.”

R9: Authorizing the Appointment of Laborer – Harrison Werner

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**PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION**

- 1) Adam Kraft, Summit Way, thanked the Council for approving item R7 and thanked Council Member Goodloe for her work during her term.
- 2) Christine Ead, Washington Drive, inquired on the grant application being submitted for the new library and suggested using the County instead of hiring a consultant. Mayor Balla clarified that this was already in progress.

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Council President Robinson moved to adopt the item below, second by Council Member Jubin. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino, Hayeck “aye.”

R10: Authorizing Executive Session: Contract Negotiations and Attorney-Client Privilege Matters

Council Member Eisenberg Knegten recused herself from a portion of the Executive Session during contract negotiation.

Upon return from executive session, all members previously present were once again in attendance.

Council Member Jubin motioned to return to open session, second by Council Member Goodloe. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino, Hayeck “aye.”

Mayor Balla announced that after discussions with the School Board President, he is eliminating the Liaison to the Board of Education effective immediately. He advised that the Mayor would be the one to communicate with the School Board President on a regular basis and that the Business Administrator would provide any updates each month.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting adjourned at 10:54 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council is scheduled to be held on March 18, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.