

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

FEBRUARY 4, 2021 - 7:30 P.M.

[THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUAL FOR ALL PARTIES]

MAYOR'S OPENING STATEMENT: Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 7:31 PM and made the following statement: *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 and instructions for that were posted. I want to welcome everyone to tonight's meeting. 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.

ROLL CALL:

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

Mayor Balla removed the proposed discussion item, bamboo ordinance, and referred it to the Laws and Ordinances committee for further review prior to discussion. He proceeded to thank OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon, the Public Works Department and the Police Department for their collaboration in preparing for this snow storm and for keeping Watchung safe.

Mayor Balla stated that he had been asked why the Council held executive session, he proceeded to explain that they have executive session discussions in order to cover topics such as contract negotiation, personnel and labor matters, union contracts, potential acquisitions involving borough property, and matters subject to attorney-client privilege. The Borough does not take action, but it is merely discussion the matters just referenced. At the time the issues are addressed and resolved, borough action is taken in open session by ordinance or resolution of the council, which in the past has been the settlement of litigation matters, the execution of labor contracts, hiring of new employees. In the past two years alone, we have a new Administrator, new Clerk, new Police Chief, new Director of Public Works and have had a few litigation matters. All of which were in executive session prior to going public with ordinances or resolutions.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

1. Administration & Finance – Council Member Jubin mentioned that their first meeting was on January 15th and discussed personnel matters, deployment of fleet management software, certain grant applications and employment benefits for employees at a lower price for the Borough. He reported that discussions were held with Tax Assessor, Ed Kerwin, about the potential impact caused by covid on certain properties. The main concentration right now is the upcoming review of the budget.
2. Police – Council President Robinson reported that there was an arrest made from the hit and run accident on Valley Road in 2019 and thanked Lt. Anderle and Detective Moberly for their persistence in pursuing this case. She also thanked Chief Kelly and his department for having a good plan in place to handle the storm and providing regular updates via Nixle to keep all the residents informed.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Council Member Eisenberg Knekten echoed the sentiments of prior members on commending the Department of Public Works for their work on managing the

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storm. At their last meeting, Administrator Damato provided an update on DPW's concerns on inspections of the dam at the lake, obtaining pesticide licenses, goose trap applications, drainage on Carrar, and the lake dredging. A review of personnel needs was also conducted. An update on snow cleaning activities was also provided.

4. Public Affairs:

Environmental – Council President Robinson reported that the Commission met on January 25th and provided a tree report and advised the bottle-cap program is currently suspended. She also spoke on the Warren Green Team, there is a proposed fair for September 25th that they are looking to coordinate with Watchung. Discussions were also held with Traffic and Beautification on tree planting initiatives. President Robinson later reported on the officers appointed at the Commissions reorganization meeting.

Recreation – Council Member Hayeck reported on the Commission's meeting of January 13th and reviewed field and facility permit requests at Blackadar Field and Tennis applications at Mobus Field; ideally the events would be taking place from March through May, they are all being reviewed for their covid plans. Long Hill Township also recently engaged the Borough to open up a virtual program to Watchung residents.

Historical – Council Member Martino reviewed the Committee's reorganization meeting of January 20th and advised on the appointed officers. He also reported on the condition of the Teixier House and the upgrades that are needed to that the building can eventually reopen.

Board of Health – Council Member Jubin reported on the Boards reorganization meeting of January 20th and advised on the appointed officers. He also reviewed any vaccination updates and advised on where residents can find accurate information to sign up if interested or to receive education on this matter.

5. Fire – Council Member Goodloe reviewed some discussion points at their meeting this week, they discussed the future budget and equipment needs of the Fire Department.
6. Laws/Ordinances – Council Member Martino reported that this Committee met on January 12th to review Chapter 12 and made recommendation that are currently being reviewed. He also reported that a review of Chapter 27 will also be conducted.

REPORTS – OTHER:

7. Engineer – Bruce Koch, Borough Engineer, reported on the 2021 Trust Fund Grant, the Elsinore Drive Culvert repair, the model stormwater control ordinance that municipalities must adopt, and the best lake walkway and funding sources for this. Council Member Martino inquired on the model stormwater control ordinance. Borough Attorney, Denis Murphy, explained that almost 99% of this ordinance came from the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.
8. Police Chief – Chief William Kelly reported on the recent activities of the department as well as the recent donation drive "Share the Warmth" in which Resident, Cindy Homer and the Mayor spearheaded, along with the assistance from OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon. Chief Kelly also reported on the activities of the recent storm, the recent mask donations received, and spoke on the diligent investigation of Lt. Anderle on the hit and run incident from 2019.

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9. Fire Department – Chief DeSandolo reported 17 calls for the month of January and their standby operations in anticipation of the recent snow storm. He asked for the assistance of any residents in clearing out fire hydrants and reported that all members were part of a CPR recertification course to renew lifesaving skills and informed that 4 new members were enrolled in fire academy.
10. Rescue Squad – Council President informed that the new President is Katrina Dumapit and Mathew King is the new Captain of the Rescue Squad. The year end 2020 report highlighted those new members and those that advanced in ranks. During the pandemic several members took on additional officer roles in order to ensure operations continued, therefore the strategic plan implemented in 2020 is expected to be repeated for 2021. For the year 2020, the total number of calls were 219 with Matthew King being the top responder. Council President thanked Lysandra Plotkin and Jeiner Betancourt for their leadership in 2020 which was one of the hardest years the squad has had to face.
11. Emergency Management – OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon reported on the food donations and Share the Warmth donations that took place in January. The CERT team is currently working on the distribution of food donations that will expire soon and will be taking it over to the local food pantries. Coordinator Solon also reported on the winter storm operations of the CERT team, the Watchung EOC opened on Sunday night at 6pm and closed Tuesday night at 9pm. Covid plans on upcoming spring recreation activities are also under review.
12. Attorney – Borough Attorney, Denis Murphy, had no additional report.
13. Clerk – Borough Clerk Edith Gil provided a brief update on the success of the online pet renewal system
14. Administrator – Borough Administrator, James Damato, provided detailed covid updates on the rising cases in Watchung and informed on the shortfall of the number of vaccine doses received by the county. He also reported that the County has advised that there are 11 new strains that have been identified in the State thus far and some county offices will be open late on Wednesdays to offer services to residents. The State has also released a vaccination support number that will be posted in the Boroughs website that is maned from 8am to 8pm. He also reported on the extraordinary efforts of DPW on the recent storm; he also received calls from the Public Schools Administrator thanking the Borough for their assistance with the storm.
15. Wildlife Committee – no update at this time
16. Youth Services – Council President Robinson reported that the Commission met on January 27th to discuss a new grant called *Girls Who Code*, the County Representative informed them that Watchung's application was well received and this is in addition to the grant previously received by the Commission.
17. Planning Board – Council Member Martino reported that the Board had their reorganization meeting on January 19th and reported on their officers. He reported on a daycare application being reviewed by the Board and suggested to Council Members that cannabis review go back to the Planning Board since they have retained a Planner and the Borough must act within a limited time.
18. Board of Education – Council Member Eisenberg Knegten reported on the appointed officers of the Board of Education. She also provided an update on the school's remote schedule and mentioned that the Board also recently approved the Long-Range Facility Plan, this is a requirement that must be submitted to the State and met every 5 years. The next BOE meeting will be February 25th.
19. Municipal Alliance – no update at this time

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20. Library Advisory Board – Council Member Goodloe reported that this Board met on January 27th to hold their reorganization meeting and reported on the officers. The County Library Commission recently met as well and they are considering removing late fee fines permanently; currently they were temporarily waived due to covid. The County Library System is also conducting a community survey, Council Member Goodloe encouraged all residents to take this short survey and provide feedback to the library.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

1. Bruce Ruck, provided comments and information on the covid vaccine and urged anyone interested in a vaccine appointment to reach out to other locations and not wait on the State’s registration website.

DISCUSSION

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

CONSENT AGENDA: Council President moved to approve the items listed below, second by Council Member Goodloe. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino “aye,” Hayeck “abstain.” Council Member Hayeck only voted “aye” on the acceptance of correspondence #2.

Approval of the following Council minutes:

November 19, 2020 Special Meeting

November 19, 2020 Regular Meeting

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Board of Adjustment Minutes	December 10, 2020
Board of Health Meeting Minutes	December 16, 2020
Building Department Monthly Report	January 2021
Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes	December 7, 2020
Library Advisory Board Meeting Minutes	November 18, 2020
Planning Board Minutes	December 14, 2020
	December 15, 2020
Historical Committee Minutes	November 14, 2019 - September 9, 2020
Historical Committee Financial Report	February 19, 2020

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Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

#2 - Letter from the Environmental Commission on proposed bamboo ordinance 1/28/21
c: M&C, JD, BK

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS: Council President motion to adopt the resolutions listed below, second by Council Member Eisenberg Knegten. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino, Hayeck “aye.”

R1: Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – Weissco Power (PD – UPS unit replacement)

R2: Bill List

R3: Authorize Clerk to Issue Raffle License / Mercy Guild Mount St. Mary Academy

NON-CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

Council Member Eisenberg Knegten moved to introduce and read the following ordinance, and offered R4 directing the Clerk to publish in accordance with law, second by Council Member Goodloe. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino, Hayeck “aye.”

Introduction of Ordinance OR 21/02 entitled “**ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 21, STORMWATER CONTROL, OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, TO ESTABLISH MINIMUM STORMWATER MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS AND CONTROL.**” Public Hearing to be held February 18, 2021.

R4: Introduction of Ordinance OR:21/02 – Amending Chapter 21, Stormwater Control

R5: ~~Awarding Professional Services Contract – Website Redevelopment, Jaffee Communication~~
This resolution was removed prior to start of the meeting

R6: ~~Awarding Professional Services Contract – Media and Public Information Consultant, Direct Development~~ – This resolution was removed prior to start of the meeting

R7: Commemorating the Life of Salvatore Davino

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

Mayor and Council provided comments thanking Mr. Davino and his family for their contributions to Watchung.

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PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Carol Bianchi, External Affairs Representative of JCP&L, wanted to thank the Borough with their assistance during this recent storm
 2. Rachel Funcheon, Environmental Commission Chair, spoke on the bamboo ordinance and the concerns expressed by other residents.
 3. Christine Ead, Resident, spoke on items R5 and R6 which were removed from the agenda prior to the start of today's meeting and inquired on the RFPs for each of the services.
 4. Sam Reinhold, Resident, spoke on the bamboo ordinance that was referred to the Laws and Ordinance Committee. He mentioned he was one of the residents that reached out to Rachel for the inconvenience caused upon his property from his neighbors' bamboo.
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R8: Authorizing Executive Session: Personnel Matters

Council President Robinson motioned to adopt the above resolution, second by Council Member Martino. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino, Hayeck "aye."

Upon return from executive session, Mayor and all Council Members were present. Council President motioned to return to open session, second by Council Member Eisenberg Knegten. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino, Hayeck "aye."

Council President Robinson motioned to amend the agenda, second by Council Member Goodloe. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino, Hayeck "aye."

Council Member Jubin motioned to adopt resolution R9 Authorizing a Salary Adjustment for Danielle Gaebele, second by Council President Robinson. Upon roll call the votes were as follows: Robinson, Goodloe, Eisenberg Knegten, Jubin, Martino, Hayeck "aye."

The Clerk received a written comment from Sandi Davino Niccolai, daughter of Salvatore Davino and read the comments onto the record: *I would like to thank the Council for the resolution honoring my father, Sal Davino, he was equally dedicated to every project or philanthropic endeavor he was involved with. But he was particularly proud of his project at Watchung Square Mall, he would have been just as proud as I am to hear you. Thank you.*

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 10:02 PM to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council is scheduled to be held on February 18, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.