

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG  
RE-ORGANIZATION MEETING MINUTES**

**JANUARY 6, 2022 | 6:00 P.M.**

***[THIS MEETING WAS HELD IN PERSON & BROADCASTED VIA ZOOM]***

**MAYOR'S OPENING STATEMENT:** Mayor Keith S. Balla called the meeting to order at 6:00 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 in person and 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 FOR OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN, SERVING HOME AND ABROAD**

**OATH OF ALLEGIANCE AND OFFICE**

Former Governor Donald DiFrancesco administered the Oath of Office to newly elected Council Members Christine B. Ead and to Council Member Curt S. Dahl.

**INVOCATION** – The Invocation was given by Reverend Monsignor William Benwell, St. Mary’s Church – Stony Hill

**ROLL CALL:**

Jubin [P]   Robinson [P]   Martino [P]   Hayeck [P]   Dahl [P]   Ead [P]

**OATH OF ALLEGIANCE AND OFFICE**

Mayor Balla administered the Oath of Office to:

Matthew King      Rescue Squad Captain

Jeiner Betancourt      Rescue Squad First Lieutenant

**PROCLAMATION**

Mayor Balla read the following proclamation:      Fran Ellis

**NOMINATION FOR COUNCIL PRESIDENT**

Council Member Hayeck nominated Council Member Jubin for Council President, with a second by Council Member Dahl. No other nominations were made. Upon roll call the vote was as follows: Jubin, Robinson, Martino, Hayeck, Dahl, Ead “aye”

Council President Jubin expressed his gratitude for the new role.

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**APPOINTMENT OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

Mayor Balla announced the following Committee assignments:

***Administration & Finance***

Chair: Jubin  
Dahl  
Robinson

***Fire***

Chair: Dahl  
Martino  
Jubin

***Laws & Ordinances***

Chair: Martino  
Robinson  
Hayeck

***Police***

Chair: Robinson  
Ead  
Martino

***Public Works***

Chair: Ead  
Dahl  
Hayeck

***Public Affairs:***

Chair: Hayeck  
Ead  
Robinson

Board of Health Liaison: Jubin  
Environmental Commission Liaison: Robinson  
Recreation Commission Member: Hayeck  
Historical Commission Liaison: Ead

<b>Rescue Squad Liaison:</b>	Robinson
<b>Youth Services Commission Liaison:</b>	Dahl
<b>Library Advisory Committee Liaison:</b>	Robinson
<b>Planning Board, Class III Member:</b>	Martino
<b>Municipal Alliance:</b>	Hayeck
<b>Traffic and Beautification:</b>	Ead

Mayor Balla noted that he would remain the liaison to the Board of Education.

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**CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS:** The resolutions listed below were adopted by one motion.

- R1: Designation of Official Newspapers – Echoes Sentinel, Courier News, Star Ledger, and TAP into Watchung (Electronic News Source)
- R2: Adoption of Annual Calendar of Meeting Dates
- R3: Designation of Depositories – Investors Bank
- R4: Re-establish Petty Cash Funds – Borough Clerk, Police Chief
- R5: Adoption of 2022 Temporary Budget
- R6: Payment of Property Taxes and Establishing Payment Procedures
- R7: Appointment of JIF Commissioner
- R8: Appointment of Fire Chief and Assistant Chief

Councilmember Hayeck thanked Fire Chief DeSandolo and Assistant Chief Pivnichny for their service to Watchung.

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Dahl

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

Mayor Balla administered the Oath of Office to:

Al DeSandolo	Fire Chief
Charles E. Pivnichny	Assistant Fire Chief

**NON-CONSENT RESOLUTIONS**

- R9: Awarding Professional Services Contract – Tax Appeal Attorney, DiFrancesco Bateman Kunzman, Davis, Lehrer & Flaum, P.C.

Mayor Balla stated his recommendation of the above item.

Motion to Adopt above by Robinson/ Second by Ead

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

- R10: Awarding Professional Services Contract – Prosecutor, DiFrancesco Bateman Kunzman, Davis, Lehrer & Flaum, P.C.

Mayor Balla stated his recommendation of the above item.

Motion to Adopt above by Robinson/ Second by Hayeck

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

- R11: Awarding Professional Services Contract – Labor Counsel, DiFrancesco Bateman  
Kunzman, Davis, Lehrer & Flaum, P.C.

Mayor Balla stated his recommendation of the above item for Interim Labor Counsel as the Borough awaited submissions to the RFPs solicited.

Motion by Robinson to adopt, no second. Upon there being no second, motion did not carry.

Motion by Hayeck/Second by Dahl to reject the nomination above.

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

- R12: Awarding Professional Services Contract - Borough Attorney, Weiner Law

Mayor Balla stated his recommendation of the above item for Interim Borough Attorney as the Borough awaited submissions to the RFPs solicited.

Motion to reject above by Hayeck/ Second by Dahl

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

CM Martino inquired on the outcome of voting this resolution down. Attorney Denis Murphy explained that the Borough would not remain without an Attorney, that until the appointment of a successor, the current appointment would remain.

CM Robinson motioned to adopt this item, Attorney Murphy explained that a motion to reject carried through and she could not motion to adopt this item.

CM Hayeck moved to reject the solicited proposals and stated that those received on November 30, 2022 are acceptable and in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:60-6d the Council has failed to confirm the nomination by the Mayor being presented in Resolution R12 and pursuant to the Councils authority, he moved with the following motion. Attorney Murphy provided his interpretation of the statute, but the following motion carried.

Motion to award above contract for 2022 to DiFrancesco Bateman, Kunzman, Davis, Lehrer & Flaum, P.C. by Hayeck/ Second by Jubin

RC: Jubin [Y] Robinson [N] Martino [Abstain] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Y] Ead [Y]

- R13: Awarding Professional Services Contract – Professional Engineer, CME Associates

Mayor Balla stated his recommendation of the above item.

Motion by Robinson to adopt, no second. Upon there being no second, motion did not carry.

Motion by Hayeck/second by Jubin to reject the nomination above.

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

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R14: Awarding Professional Services Contract – Bond Counsel, Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer, P.A.

Mayor Balla stated his recommendation of the above item.

Motion by Hayeck/ Second by Jubin to reject the nomination above.

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

R15: Awarding Professional Services Contract – Auditor, Suplee, Clooney & Company

Mayor Balla stated his recommendation of the above item.

Motion to Adopt above by Robinson/Second by Ead

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

R16: Awarding Professional Services Contract – IT Consultant, Marmic Associates

Mayor Balla stated his recommendation of the above item.

Motion to Adopt above by Hayeck/ Second by Jubin

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

R17: Appointments of Volunteers to Boards, Committees, Commissions

Mayor Balla stated his recommendation of the above item.

Motion to Adopt above by Robinson/ Second by Hayeck; this was followed by council discussion.

CM Martino inquired on the internal review process as he had only received 1 volunteer application for review. This was followed by various Council comments, which prompted Council President Jubin to initiate the following motion:

Motion to Table above by Jubin/ Second by Ead

RC: Jubin [Y] Robinson [Y] Martino [Abstain] Hayeck [N] Dahl [Y] Ead [Y]

R18: Appointing Municipal Court Judge – Brian Levine, Esq.

Mayor Balla stated his recommendation of the above item.

Motion to Adopt above by Robinson/Jubin

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

R19: Awarding Professional Services Contract – Risk Manager, Reliance Insurance Group

Mayor Balla stated his recommendation of the above item.

Motion by Hayeck/second by Jubin to reject the nomination above.

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

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CM Hayeck stated that by rejecting the above and in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:60-6d the Council has failed to confirm the nomination by the Mayor being presented in Resolution R19 and pursuant to the Councils authority, he moved with the following motion.

Motion to Adopt and award contract to Meeker Sharkey & Hurley as the 2022 Risk Manager/Second by Jubin

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

CM Robinson asked the Mayor to provide comment on a prior encounter with this firm.

R11: Awarding Professional Services Contract – Labor Counsel, Ruderman & Roth, LLC

CM Hayeck stated that by previously rejecting R11, the Council moves to reject the solicited proposals as those received on November 30, 2022 are found acceptable and in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:60-6d the Council has failed to confirm the nomination by the Mayor being presented in Resolution R11 and pursuant to the Councils authority, he moved with the following motion.

Motion to Adopt and Award contract to Ruderman & Roth, LLC, as 2022 Labor Attorney's/ Second by Jubin

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

R13: Awarding Professional Services Contract – Professional Engineer, Remington & Vernick Engineers

CM Hayeck stated that by previously rejecting R13, the Council moves to reject the solicited proposals as those received on November 30, 2022 are found acceptable and in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:60-6d the Council has failed to confirm the nomination by the Mayor being presented in Resolution R13 and pursuant to the Councils authority, he moved with the following motion.

Motion to Adopt and Award contract to Remington & Vernick Engineers as 2022 Professional Engineer/ Second by Jubin

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

R14: Awarding Professional Services Contract – Bond Counsel, McManimon, Scotland & Baumann, LLC

CM Hayeck stated that by previously rejecting R14 and in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:60-6d the Council has failed to confirm the nomination by the Mayor being presented in Resolution R14 and pursuant to the Councils authority, he moved with the following motion.

Motion to Adopt and Award contract to McManimon, Scotland & Baumann, LLC as 2022 Bond Counsel/ Second by Ead

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

CM Robinson provided comments and expressed disappointment relating to the rejections and nominations that occurred.

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**RECOGNITION OF EMPLOYEE SERVICES**

Mayor Balla read the following employee milestones and congratulated all for their service to the Borough.

- 50 Years: Gary Greves, Fire Department
- 15 Years: Scott Otto, Fire Department
- 10 Years: Albert DeSandolo, Fire Department
- 5 Years: Nicholas Salvemini, Fire Department

**MAYOR'S ADDRESS**

The following was Mayor Balla's 2022 address:

*Happy New Year and welcome to all of our residents, friends, relatives and elected officials who have come to join us at this reorganization of the Watchung Municipal Governing Body.*

*I want to welcome newly elected Council member Christine Ead and Council member Curtis Dahl who join the Watchung Governing Body to govern with honesty, integrity, humility, respect for everyone and in the best interest of Watchung.*

*I am extremely thankful for the opportunity and privilege to serve as Mayor of Watchung. As elected public servants we have been entrusted by our residents to manage the affairs of the Borough to create and keep a safe environment for all people who live, work and visit Watchung. This responsibility includes our police, fire, emergency services as well as safe streets and roads and quality education programs for children and activities for our resident's health, education well-being, recreation and enjoyment.*

*2021 was the second year filled with challenges regarding the public safety of our residents during the COVID 19 pandemic. This unprecedented worldwide pandemic has strained the resources and lives of our employees, volunteers, residents and businesses working to maintain order, safety and help all in need regarding life, employment, education, business and health needs within our community. I thank all of our employees, volunteers, residents and businesses for their tireless efforts, understanding and cooperation to help get through these difficult times. I look forward to working with all of my Council colleagues, Ron Jubin, Pietro Martino, Wendy Robinson, Freddie Hayeck, Christine Ead and Curtis Dahl and all of our employees as we move forward into the future to make Watchung the best community for all.*

*Clearly our residents with their diverse experiences, expertise and abilities are the greatest assets in our community. I look forward in 2022 to working together as a unified Watchung community in bipartisan collaboration to strengthen the bonds between us and help each other as we live, work, educate and raise families in Watchung.*

*Our number one responsibility is public safety for all of our residents, businesses and visitors. In 2021 I installed our new Police Chief Andrew Hart, Lt Kenneth Boyle, Lt Sherif Zaiton, Sergeants Jason Moberly, Brad Sporer, Ryan Dunne, and Officers Michael Bahadourian, Casy Breese, Darren Calleo, and Alyssa*

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*Krum. Through our persistence working in collaboration with our businesses, residents, State and Somerset County Officials we plan to continue to improve public safety on our county roads in Watchung by having new crossing lights erected on Stirling Rd and at the circle along with lowered speed limits. As a result of unending truck accidents on Hillcrest Rd we submitted detailed support and facts to NJDOT and the County with recommended changes at Rte 78 and Hillcrest Rd to mitigate the illegal truck use of Hillcrest Rd and to make Hillcrest Rd safer. On September 2, 2021 I spent the night at the Watchung Police station and Court room with individuals rescued from the raging flood waters that swept through Watchung. By the swift actions of our first responders and the grace of God no one died in Watchung from the floods. We ultimately over the course of the night ensured that each person rescued made it safely home. I want to thank and recognize the sacrifices made by our Police Chief Hart and the entire Police Department and many volunteers in Watchung who serve in various capacities on the Rescue Squad and Volunteer Fire Department who saved many lives when Hurricane Ida dumped 10 inches of rain in just a few hours causing flash floods in Watchung, the most severe flooding since the flood of August 1973. As we emerge from COVID our Rescue Squad and Volunteer Fire dept. have seen a resurgence bolstering enthusiasm and strengthening the numbers of volunteers for our Fire Department and Rescue Squad. I encourage everyone to consider volunteering in some capacity. As a volunteer working side by side with your neighbor you recognize the value and importance of helping neighbors and friends and bringing unity among the community.*

*Second Hurricane IDA's flooding exposed the past decades neglect of our roads and infrastructure. Fortunately, the cost of the Elsinore culvert reconstruction was covered by FEMA. Moving forward I have planned that all culverts in Watchung with corrugated pipe be mapped and assessed for priority repair or replacement to ensure that we do not have another roadway that collapses or gets washed away. We have scheduled various Watchung road improvements utilizing NJ DOT matching grants from 2020 and 2021 totaling \$675,000 along with Borough funds for a total of \$1,350,000 which work will be done in 2022. With the Federal Fiscal Recovery Funds received of \$589,000 we will also have our sewer lines evaluated for storm water intrusion and repair to save the Borough on unnecessary sewer charges from storm water intrusion.*

*Third on Administration we keep improving technology and communications, with the development of our new website and more access online to forms and information with postings on the website, Facebook and Nixcle alerts; we increased transparency of information with live streaming of the council meetings as well as on zoom provides residents with the ability to keep informed and to interact with all Borough officials about information that affects their lives and our community even if unable to attend in person. We redesigned the Borough website and are installing modules to better inform our residents and improve responsiveness of the Borough to meet the needs of the community. We continue to digitize our records to eventually have all of our records digital and accessible on line. We are advancing the initiative on inclusion, diversity, equality and respect and I look forward to the establishment of a standing Watchung Inclusion, Diversity, Equality and Respect committee which will continue to review our policies, procedures and operations regarding recruitment, retention, training, support, advancement and recognition in all operations of the Borough including our volunteer committees.*

*Fourth the Borough unfortunately was not a recipient of the State Library grant award to construct a new state of the art combination, library, arts and community center. I will appoint a new Ad Hoc Facilities committee to develop alternative plans for required improvements to the existing library, evaluation of the library and arts center properties and recommended alternatives and costs.*



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*Fifth, we continue to search for properties and areas where the Borough can meet its future affordable housing obligations. We are proactive to develop solutions for the affordable housing requirements so that they are beneficial to the community in meeting the mandates well before the deadlines. In 2021 I was able to use my professional expertise as a forensic accountant working for municipalities when I negotiated the Financial Agreement with the developer of the Bonnie Burn site which as a result of my professional experience and expiries increased the expected revenue to Watchung by over \$6.2 million. The first 15 years payments are 13% of Gross Revenue of the Project and increase to 15% for the last 15 years. Over the 30 year term the Project is estimated to generate \$31.8 million in net revenue to the Borough as compared to only \$15.2 million if the Project was taxed under conventional taxation.*

*Sixth, For 2022 moving out of COVID, I plan to have more community activities for our residents of all ages including our Watchung seniors; a family sports challenge competition with various events; an international foods night to bring residents together to sample foods from different cultures around the world; a community band concert and music on the green; arts and crafts fair on the green; community barbeque; a chili cook-off contest; and reinvigoration of Camp Endeavor for community use.*

*We have drafted a survey to enlist community feedback and will continue to embrace thoughtful dialogue and communication and input from our residents to share in the molding of critical agendas so that we provide the best solutions utilizing the experience and talent from within our community.*

*We thank our outgoing Council Members Eisenberg Knegten and Goodloe for their service to the residents and businesses of Watchung, thank you for the hard work of our Historical committee to reopen the Texier House after the flood damaged the property. Special thanks to our Borough Administrator James Damato, who has stepped up numerous times while we had a vacancy in our Public Works Manager position and ensuring that the many emergent projects were completed during 2021 including the removal of the old pool and collapsed retaining wall at the Library, painting of the Arts Center Building, reconstruction of the Elsinore culvert which the cost was covered by FEMA.*

*On behalf of our entire community, I thank our frontline medical workers and emergency services, police, fire and EMTs for dedicating their lives to preserve the lives of others.*

*I ask all of our residents to please be patient, forgiving, respectful, and provide encouragement as we move forward in 2022 so we can work together in peace and harmony for the good and well being of everyone in Watchung.*

*I thank my loving wife Karen for all of her love and support and my three children, Jonah, Noah and Hannah for being a tremendous help, support and blessing throughout the year.*

*I thank everyone in Watchung for your encouragement, help and support providing advice and valuable time, talents and treasures to make Watchung a great community. These past two COVID years have given each of us time to reflect on the blessings we have and the opportunities to brighten someone's day with kind words, a smile, helping hands and a giving heart as we unite to make Watchung the best. I welcome your help and assistance in making Watchung united for a brighter future for each of us. God Bless You All.*

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**COUNCIL REMARKS**

Council President Jubin:

*This is so exciting being back here in person and I'm very happy to finally see everyone face to face and not just the glow of my computer screen. I whole heartedly agree with all of the Mayors comments. Watchung is the best kept secret in New Jersey and that's what is so great about our town. We are neighbors and friends and colleagues first and the issues we debate are not personal because we are all in this for the same reasons. The debates we have should be how to get to all the goals we want to achieve. This job should be fun not easy and I am looking forward to having a fun and challenging year. The more we share the discussions early on the more we can plan together. I encourage everyone to please bring their ideas to the Borough. I am very excited to be here serving this great Borough with my colleagues. I also want to thank my loving family for their continued support.*

Councilmember Robinson:

*"Nearly all people can stand adversity, but if you want to test a person's character, give him or her power." That quote — that I took a little liberty with by adding both genders — like many others we value, belongs to Abraham Lincoln. When I heard it, I realized how relevant it is to what we face collectively, as a council, and individually as council members. We've been through a good deal of adversity in the past year — two years, in fact — and we have seen council members pitch in to help residents and our town deal with many challenges ranging from the coronavirus to the ravages of hurricane IDA, among other things.*

*In the year ahead, we can't know what other misfortunes will face us, but one thing is clear: how we work together to solve those problems will be the true test of our character. We hold positions of power, as modest as they may be in a small town of roughly 6,500. And it is these roles that offer an opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to our residents who have entrusted us to do what is in their collective interest, not ours individually, or theirs as individuals, unless it is for the good of all (or at least most!).*

*We are not here to don capes and swoop in wearing a big red or blue "S" on our chests as if we have the power to act as individuals to save Watchung. We are not here to make ourselves look good for the next election. We roll up our sleeves and function as a body to keep the wheels turning, to get our borough's needs met while we limit the costs to taxpayers. That gives us all a common interest, where party is irrelevant. It is frequently said about local politics that potholes are not Republican or Democratic, they just need to be filled.*

*Now, we may disagree sometimes on how we get there, but my goal is to realize the promise of Watchung through cooperation, collaboration, and compromise — things we all need to do — and with a recognition that we've had enough divisiveness for a lifetime. My hope is that we do so with kindness, with grace, and with an open mind and open heart. We have much to lose if we don't work together and our borough has much to gain if we do. We saw examples of that last year with a number of activities. With the help of our first responders and volunteers, for whom we are extremely grateful, and our staff, especially our administrator, Jim Damato, we jumped in to assist stranded motorists during Ida, held a delightful Tree of Lights Ceremony, the PBA's Open House, and our annual clean-up day, reopened the Texier House, gained Sustainable Jersey Bronze Certification, and the town center has looked lovelier than ever during the holidays. Let's show our residents who have entrusted us with this power that we have the character to do what's*

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*right, for them. I want to thank everyone from the top down and all across the Borough. We have a lot to be grateful for and for my family even if they are not listening.*

Councilmember Martino:

*I think we have a situation in town and we are missing a vital link. We have had a hole in this Borough since last March regarding our Public Works Director. I believe we owe it to people in this Borough to reappoint our previous Public Works interim director. I want to bring this up and establish this interim Public Works director and offer it to Mr. Gunther allowing our administrator to negotiate the salary and hours.*

Administrator Damato advised he is in the process of putting together the ad and job description for the position. He advised the Council can re-establish the Director of Public Works position or the Council can choose to recreate a new position. Mr. Damato feels it's in the Boroughs best interest to post for this position and for the Borough to have a separate position for Engineer and Director of Public Works.

Councilmember Martino is concerned with the amount of time it will take to fill the position and suggested an interim director be appointed in the meantime.

Council President Jubin agrees it is a good idea to appoint an interim Public Works Director in the meantime. Administrator Damato said it will take at least a month or two to get a permanent role filled and also agrees in the meantime an interim Public Works director is a good idea.

Councilmember Hayeck and Ead support Councilmember Martino's motion to negotiate the terms for an interim Public Works director. Administrator Damato advised he will take steps towards initiating this process. Councilmember Martino emphasised understanding, tolerance and kindness.

Councilmember Hayeck:

*Thank you to the entire community of Watchung for giving me this opportunity serve as your Councilman for the past year. I am very grateful for this opportunity and have had a wonderful time serving the community. Thank you to our Police, Fire, EMS, DPW and our administrative staff who are the backbone of our town. I would also like to thank members of the Council and the Mayor for all their support. I am committed to serving the entire community and focus on key issues that affect everyone. I am looking forward to another year of serving the Borough of Watchung.*

Councilmember Dahl:

*I want to thank God, that's the first thing in my life and he guides me through everything. I would like to thank my friends and family for always supporting me. I love the town, going door to door was one of the experiences I dreaded the most but I ended up loving the most. I loved meeting people and figuring out what they want and hearing their ideas and complaints. We are here for you and will do as best as we can.*

Councilmember Ead:

*I am humbled beyond compare and greatly appreciative for this opportunity. I love this town and will give my absolute all. I am here to serve and give to this community and I ask you give me that opportunity to do that job for you. All politics aside, we are a community that goes back many generations. I am very excited to get started and am looking forward to work with the entire community and all of my colleagues on the dais. I want to also thank my family for always standing by me and offering support.*

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**PUBLIC PORTION**

- 1) D.J. Hunsinger, III, Skyline Drive, spoke on resolution R17 and noted that he was one of the members being appointed tonight and expressed that the Board of Adjustment would not be able to properly organize and urged the Council to reconsider voting on R17.

R17: Appointments of Volunteers to Boards, Committees, Commissions

Motion to un-table by Jubin/Robinson

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

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/Hayeck

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

- 2) Karen Graboyes, Carrar Drive, expressed her concern in regards to improving communication between the Council and the Borough Clerk.
- 3) Janine Riedinger, High Tor Drive, congratulated Councilmember Ead and Dahl on their swearing into office.
- 4) Clerk Gil read the following written public comment received from Katherine Donovan, Stirling Road into the record.

*“To Whom It May Concern - It is a poetic irony that we in Watchung are today installing new officials to run the borough on January 6th, exactly one year after delusional mob rule assaulted the US Capitol, in an attempt to subvert and obstruct the very process of democracy and the long history of peaceful transfer of power. While most of us were transfixed in horror as we watched the events unfolding in Washington a year ago, one of our new Watchung Councilmembers, Christine Ead, was in Washington in the midst of it all. And we've yet to hear her denounce the motivation, the deception, or the lingering consequences from that day. All who love Watchung need to be vigilant and participate in our own government, to advocate for progress in the town's best interests, and to question everything. Effective government requires the participation of the public. Integrity counts. Truth matters.”*

Councilmember Hayeck advised Watchung is a neighborhood as well as a community. He also stated as we go forward, we need to focus on the issues that focus on Watchung and not Washington.

Councilmember Martino expressed we are in the United States of America and everyone is entitled to have an opinion. He feels we need to tolerate each other as this is what this democracy is built on.

Council President Jubin suggested everyone focus on the issues that Watchung faces.

- 5) Debra Joren, Stirling Road, commented on Councilmember Eads previous comments regarding her attendance at the rally mentioned. She also stated Councilmember Ead spoke publicly at the open town meetings on several occasions regarding her response to her attendance at the rally. Mrs. Joren feels it is important for our community not to look backwards but forward.
- 6) Tracy Zaikov, Templar Drive, congratulated Councilmember Ead and Dahl on their newly elected position and thanked the entire council for their contribution.

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- 7) Kim DiDonato, Friar Lane, thanked all the members of the Council for all that they do and congratulated Councilmember Ead and Dahl as our new councilmembers.

**BENEDICTION** – The Benediction was given by Reverend Monsignor William Benwell, St. Mary’s Church – Stony Hill

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Balla thanked everyone for viewing the meeting. There being no further business to come before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 PM to the Call of the Chair. The next scheduled meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on Saturday, January 8, 2022 at 8:30 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Regina Angelo  
Deputy Borough Clerk