

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

JANUARY 20, 2022 | 7:30 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 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 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.

ROLL CALL:

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

Mayor Balla welcomed the Borough’s new Counselor, Joseph Sordillo.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

No one appearing.

DISCUSSION

❖ Borough Newsletter: Home Town Press

Clerk Gil reviewed the details of the program if the borough chose to partner with Home Town Press. Home Town Press is a company that would design and distribute the borough newsletter at no cost to the borough, except for postage, while obtaining advertising from local businesses. Mayor and Council expressed their thoughts and concerns of the program and instructed the Clerk to research other organizations that might do the same to outweigh the benefits before committing to anything.

❖ Safety Crossing Light on Stirling Road

Mayor Balla noted that several residents have requested certain additional safety measures for crossing Stirling Road by Valley View School at Verona. He commented on the existing crossing light and mentioned the car accident that occurred. Mayor Balla said he reached out to the County Engineer who is in agreement of installing a large overhead light fixture for safety purposes. If the Borough installed this, Administrator Damato advised he would need to get estimates and our Engineer would have to come up with drawings and specs for the installation. Administrator Damato stated this would be brought back to Council for discussion once a proposal was done.

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Council Member Robinson asked for clarification on who is responsible for maintaining the crossing signal device. Administrator Damato advised it is the Boroughs responsibility to maintain right now. He asked Clerk Gil to research for a possible agreement already in place with the County regarding the crossing signal. Mayor Balla suggested we ask the County to maintain the traffic signal even if we proceed with the installation. Council President Jubin suggested we utilize the safe route to school grant program.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE

Building Department Monthly Report	December 2021
Fire Prevention Bureau Report	November 2021 December 2021
Green Team Advisory Committee Minutes & Year-End Report	November 15, 2021 2021
PARSA Meeting Minutes	December 2, 2021
Police Activity Monthly Activity Report	December 2021

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

#1- Office of Youth Service, Somerset County: Notice of Award Y2021 Annual Grant \$5,000. Received 1/10/22, c: M&C, JD, LM

#2- Board of County Commissioners, Somerset County: SC Recreational Grant Program Guidelines. Received 1/18/22, c: M&C, JD, LM

Motion to Accept above by Jubin/ Second by Robinson

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

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS:

R1: Authorizing Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – ACE Tech Pest (*DPW-yearly pest control*)
OSI Technology (*PD-Avaya IP maintenance*)
Coban Technologies, Inc. (*PD-flashback 3 dvr*)
Applied Concepts, Inc. (*PD-Stalker Radar units*)
CSM (*PD-Panasonic toughbooks & docks*)
Integrated Systems & Services (*PD-6tb dvr hardware*)

R2: Authorizing Clerk to Issue Raffle License #659 – St. Mary’s Church Stony Hill

R3: Authorizing a Refund for Overpayment of Construction Permit #21-0288+A

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R4: Authorizing a Refund for Overpayment of Pet License Fee #7

R5: Authorizing Bill List

R6: Appointments of Volunteers to Boards, Committees, Commissions

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin / Second by Robinson

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

NON-CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

R7: Authorizing Non-Fair and Open Contract - CME Associates

Councilmember Robinson questioned the process of reappointment of our professional service contracts. Going forward, she expressed concern for Council to communicate and work together in hopes of not wasting resources and Borough tax payer money. Councilmember Robinson also hopes to approve the hiring of CME Associates to make the transition process smoother.

Councilmember Hayeck disagrees that there was dangerous legal precedent set and feels Council member Robinson's comments are making a bad impression to the public.

Councilmember Robinson feels it is unwise to reject the legal opinion from our paid Counsel. Council member Dahl said getting a new set of eyes might help save the Borough money.

Motion to Adopt by Ead/Second by Dahl

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

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

Tamara Benc, Lakeview Avenue, asked the Council to step back from any plans to relinquish the barn property. She feels reducing our town center does not make sense and asks the Council to be pro-active in maintaining our Borough property. Council member Martino asked Ms. Benc to forward a copy of her comment to the Mayor and Council.

Virginia Hartmann, Ellisen Road, said one of the main reasons residents wanted the Council to build a new library was due to the lack of space. Ms. Hartmann feels an outdoor building could be used to store crafts and for small unvaccinated children to work on crafts. She also feels the space on the side of the library should be kept free if someday as a future improvement an elevator is installed. Council member Martino asked for Ms. Hartmann to forward a copy of her comment to the Mayor and Council.

Christy Hartmann, Watchung, asked if the Council has ever considered providing the newsletter to residents digitally with a link posted on the Borough website. Mayor Balla stated there is a link provided online for the newsletter and also a mailer sent out to residents who may not use the internet. Council member Robinson said this idea was brought up with the previous Borough Clerk who stated there was a majority of residents who do not visit the Borough website and a significant number of residents who do not use the computer. Mayor Balla strongly advised all residents to sign up for email options to receive emailed information from the Borough.

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Catherine Leigh, Guinard Drive, requested something be done by the circle alerting drivers they need to stop at the Stop sign and yield towards pedestrians using the crosswalk. Mayor Balla stated this problem is being looked into.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

R8: Authorizing Executive Session: Attorney-Client Privilege Matters and Anticipated Litigation

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Robinson

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

Mayor and Council entered executive session at approximately 8:27 P.M.

Motion to return to open session at 10:14 P.M. by Jubin / second by Robinson

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

ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business before Council, the meeting ended at 10:15 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council is scheduled to be held on Thursday, February 3, 2022 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Regina Angelo
Deputy Clerk