

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

FEBRUARY 3, 2022 - 7:30 P.M.

[THIS MEETING WAS HELD IN-PERSON AND BROADCASTED VIA ZOOM]

MAYOR'S STATEMENT: Mayor Balla called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. and stated the following *"This meeting is being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. 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. Public Comments will be accepted in-person, through zoom or by email to the Borough Clerk. For those joining through Zoom, please note that upon arrival you are automatically muted."*

SALUTE TO THE FLAG and MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR NEW YORK CITY POLICE OFFICERS JASON RIVERA AND WILBERT MORA WHO DIED IN THE LINE OF DUTY AND TO ALL FIRST RESPONDERS WHO ARE KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY

ROLL CALL

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

Mayor Balla administered the Oath of Office to Historical Committee Members Freddie Hayeck, Sr. and Robert Mayers.

PROCLAMATION

❖ Black History Month

Mayor Balla read the above proclamation onto the record.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance: Council Member Jubin reported on the committee meeting held on January 28th in which matters regarding the website and ADA compliance were discussed as well as compliance with social media archiving. Grant opportunities regarding infrastructure, etc. were also discussed.

CM Martino inquired on the view that zoom users see in a zoom meeting versus a zoom webinar and inquiries were made on showing who the attendees where. It was debated if the zoom meeting feature was better than the zoom webinar feature.

2. Police: Council Member Robinson noted that Chief Hart is working on a banquet reception to award officers with distinguished awards, she also reported the driver feedback signs have been relocated. With the recent increase in car thefts, the PD will be sending out postcard reminders to residents reminding everyone to lock their cars and place valuables away. R1 on tonight's agenda is to order a new truck for the detective bureau. CM Robinson reported on much needed repairs to the police department building.

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Council Member Martino inquired on overtime and special duty situations where some volunteer organizations are being charged because a police officer is required to be present. Mayor Balla suggested that the Administration & Finance Committee look into this matter.

3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds: Council Member Ead reported on the committees January 12th and January 30th meetings and noted that a transition meeting was held with CME Associate and Remington Vernick Engineers. Several items were discussed, most notably Mobus Field and the damages sustained with Hurricane IDA, the tennis and basketball courts possibly being resurfaced, 7 culverts in need of repair, 2 bridges in need of repair, and clean up needed for Ness property

CM Dahl inquired with Administrator Damato on the availability of drawings for Mobus playground.

CM Martino inquired on the status of the DPW Interim Manager. Administrator Damato advised that applications were being reviewed and properly vetted.

4. Public Affairs:

Environmental: CM Robinson reported on the commission's January 24th meeting, those sworn in and proceeded to provide the number of trees to be removed. New Legacy project on hold until the Spring time when DPW can get the pad on which the bin would sit on. The Styrofoam collection will take place on February 12th.

Council Member Martino inquired on the Styrofoam collection and the donations to occur from the New Legacy project. Further clarification will be needed from CFO Bill Hance.

Recreation: CM Hayeck reported on the commissions meeting that took place just last night. He noted the possibility of new events like the Mayors Regatta which would be a race of canoes, possibly having national night out, and required updates to Mobus field.

Historical: CM Ead reported on the committee's first meeting, volunteers were sworn in and she noted that they are planning for a Memorial Day opening, planning weekend journey through the past and working on archiving historical information. She also spoke on the upcoming veteran flags program.

CM Martino noted that he had promised the committee three things, that the basement and patio would be cleaned and he suggested a member. Administrator Damato noted that on tonight's agenda there was a purchase order for cleaning services to the Texier House.

Board of Health: Council President Jubin reported on the boards January 20th meeting and the officers for this year. The Board is hoping to start the Watchung Walkers club and hopefully partner with Recreation. CP Jubin noted his resumed efforts on the Mayor's Wellness Campaign and touched upon cannabis information.

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5. Fire: CM Dahl reported that the committee's meeting was pushed to next week, however he did initiate a conversation with the Fire Chief and Assistant Chief and toured the facility.
6. Laws/ Ordinances: CM Martino noted the upcoming meeting and hopes they will finalize the pending ordinances.

REPORTS – OTHER:

7. Engineer: Professional Engineer Jason Cline, RVE, held a power point presentation on the emergency repairs to various culverts. They are focusing on the Phillips field bridge to start, but Mr. Cline went on to describe other projects being planned.
8. Police Chief: Chief Andrew Hart reported on the departments January figures. He also noted that 3 officers from Watchung attended the funeral in New York City of Officers Mora and Rivera.
9. Fire Department: no report
10. Rescue Squad: Council Member Robinson reported on the meeting held on January 11th, reported the new officers of the Rescue Squad and noted the figures from December.
11. Emergency Management:
12. Attorney: Attorney Sordillo reported that he was up to speed on pending legal matters and looked forward to his first upcoming Laws and Ordinances Committee meeting to move matters forward. He commented on the recent articles in the local newspaper regarding a potential sidewalk project and noted that the borough was intending on moving forward but doing its due diligence in all aspects.
13. Finance: CFO Bill Hance reported that he completed the annual debt statement and the remaining budget hearings were scheduled to be completed on the upcoming Wednesday Special meeting.
14. Clerk: Deputy Clerk Regina Angelo reported on upcoming important deadlines and informed Council of the research done regarding Home Town Press and the borough newsletter. Council Members decided to move forward with Home Town Press and Mr. Sordillo was instructed to begin drafting an agreement that would be satisfactory to all parties.
15. Administrator: Administrator James Damato provided an update on covid cases and noted budget updates were almost done and would be presented to the A&F Committee prior to being introduced. He also advised that because of the healthy budget, the possibility of cleaning up Ness was around the corner. Council Member Dahl inquired on the mask mandates for schools, Attorney Sordillo concluded that the State had jurisdiction in that regard.

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16. Youth Services: Council Member Dahl noted he was excited to be a part of this commission and looked forward to the upcoming meeting.
17. Planning Board: Council Member Martino informed the public of the upcoming meeting.
18. Municipal Alliance: Council Member Hayeck reported on their January 12th meeting of which upcoming events were discussed.
19. Library Advisory Board: Council Member Robinson reported on their January 19th meeting in which new members were sworn in, she reminded all that the County's library system was now "fine-free." She advised that the board discussed the various infrastructure needs of the library building.
Council President Jubin commented that he would like to see the previous plans of the library and noted he looks forward to the future recommendations.
20. Traffic and Beautification: Council Member Ead reported on the commissions January 17th and spoke on the ideas the commission had to beautify the town, the sprinklers that were damaged by the county. She also thanked members of the Department of Public Works for removing the holiday decorations during the cold weather.

Council Member Martino asked for a report from the Board of Education Liaison. Mayor Balla reported that a meeting was held with the Board of Educations Operation Committee regarding the bridge and trying to secure FEMA funding since the damages incurred exceeded \$1 million.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

- 1) Virginia Hartmann, Ellison Road, spoke on the library fines and informed Council on what the Advisory Board would use the fines for. She asked that Council consider allocating the Legacy book bin money received to the Advisory Board to support their efforts in maintaining the aquarium and the much-needed repairs.
- 2) Catherine Leigh, Guinard Drive, spoke on the plans to pave around the circle. Ms. Leigh noted that no crosswalks had been installed and implored Council to reach out to the County.
- 3) Karent Locke, submitted comments regarding Food Truck Friday fees.
- 4) Michelle Desiano, submitted comments regarding Food Truck Friday fees.
- 5) Kevin Corrigan, submitted comments regarding Food Truck Friday fees.
- 6) Mollie Lustig, submitted comments regarding Food Truck Friday fees.
- 7) Drew Salvatore, submitted comments regarding Food Truck Friday fees.

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- 8) Jennifer Anderson, submitted comments regarding Food Truck Friday fees.
- 9) Lindsay Goodloe, submitted comments regarding Food Truck Friday fees.
- 10) Kayla and Jason Briant, submitted comments regarding Food Truck Friday fees.
- 11) Lauren Wilkos, submitted comments regarding Food Truck Friday fees.
- 12) Katie Schickel, submitted comments regarding Food Truck Friday fees.

DISCUSSION

- ❖ Remington & Vernick Engineers provided a presentation to Mayor and Council on the emergency repairs to various culverts projects. Council requested to make the presentation available online.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Board of Health Minutes | November 17, 2021 |
| Building Department Monthly Report | January 2022 |
| Environmental Commission Minutes | December 6, 2021 |
| Library Advisory Committee Minutes | November 17, 2021 |
| Mayor and Council Meeting Minutes | December 2, 2021 |
| PARSA Meeting Minutes | January 6, 2022 |
| Traffic and Beautification Minutes | December 13, 2021 |
| Engineer's Report | February 2022 |

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

#3- Letter of Resignation, Matthew King DPW P/T Laborer cc: M&C, JD

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Motion to Accept above by Jubin/ Second by Dahl

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

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS

R1: Authorizing Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – Coban Technologies, Inc. *(PD-Focus in-car pkgs)*
United Ford, LLC *(PD- 2022 Ranger 4x4)*
Everbridge (*PD-Nixle 360 Annual Service*)
Northeast Mountain Guiding *(PD-Swiftwater Vest Awareness)*
RDC Restoration LLC *(Texier House Storm Cleanup)*

R2: Authorizing Agreement with Somerset County – 2022 Recycling Services

R3: Authorizing Clerk to Issue Raffle License #660 – Mercy Guild of Mt. St. Mary Academy

R4: Waiving Delinquent Interest of Properties at 201 Sophia Court and 6 Fox Chase Drive

R5: Authorizing Bill List

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Dahl

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

NON-CONSENT RESOLUTIONS

R6: Waiving Borough Fees for 2022 PTO Food Truck Fridays Event

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Robinson

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

R7: Authorizing Emergency Contract Procedures for the 2022 Culvert Repair Project

Motion to Adopt above by Ead/ Second by Dahl

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

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1) Virginia Hartman, Ellisen Road, spoke on the proposed sidewalk agreement that the borough is considering regarding the property at 12 Stirling Road. She implored the Council to reconsider the exchange of property. Attorney Sordillo clarified on his prior comments.
- 2) Bill Candiloros, Nottingham Drive, inquired on the library grant that the borough did not receive and asked if the town could find out the reasons the borough did not receive the grant.

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- 3) Karen, zoom user, thanked the Department of Public Works for clearing out and noted that some homeowners might not be aware that clearing the sidewalk is their responsibility and suggested adding this to the website. She also inquired if the tennis courts would be resurfaced, and converting one of the courts to something else.
- 4) Rachel Funcheon, Cedar Road, provided comments on the location of the legacy book bin and noted that the best location was by Exempt Hall.

Council took a brief 3-minute recess.

- 5) Janine Riedinger, submitted written public comments regarding the proposed sidewalk project connecting to Best Lake.
- 6) Eunice Aridi, submitted written public comments regarding the proposed sidewalk project connecting to Best Lake.
- 7) Kristy Hartman, submitted written public comments regarding the proposed sidewalk project connecting to Best Lake.
- 8) Jen Shiffman, submitted written public comments regarding the proposed sidewalk project connecting to Best Lake.
- 9) Paul Fiorilla, submitted written public comments regarding the proposed sidewalk project connecting to Best Lake.
- 10) Margaret Ellis, submitted written public comments regarding the proposed sidewalk project connecting to Best Lake.
- 11) Diana Churchill, submitted written public comments regarding the proposed sidewalk project connecting to Best Lake.
- 12) Stuart Homer, submitted written public comments regarding the proposed sidewalk project connecting to Best Lake.
- 13) Lynn Biviano, submitted written public comments regarding the proposed sidewalk project connecting to Best Lake.
- 14) Amy Fiorilla, submitted written public comments regarding the proposed sidewalk project connecting to Best Lake.
- 15) Marybeth Lijo, submitted written public comments regarding the proposed sidewalk project connecting to Best Lake.
- 16) Kim DiDonato, submitted written public comments regarding the proposed sidewalk project connecting to Best Lake.

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Council Members provided comments regarding all the public comments submitted and noted that Council was doing its due diligence to be transparent. Attorney Sordillo noted that if anything was agreed upon by Council, it would be in the form of an ordinance which would go through more than one public meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

R8: Authorizing Executive Session: Contract Negotiations and Anticipated Litigation

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin / Second by Ead

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

Council Members entered executive session at approximately 11:07 P.M. and returned to open session at approximately 12:22 A.M.

Motion to Return to open session by Jubin/ Second by Robinson

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

ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business before Council the meeting ended at 12:23 A.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on Wednesday, February 16, 2022 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted:

Edith G. Gil
Borough Clerk