

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
MAYOR & COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 21, 2022**

[Approved May 5, 2022]

[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 OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN, SERVING HOME AND ABROAD

ROLL CALL

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

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

- ❖ Regionalization Feasibility Study
Presented by Robert Morrison, President, Watchung Hills Board of Education

Mr. Morrison spoke on Senate Bill 3488 that NJ Governor Murphy recently signed into law. The bill establishes a grant program to reimburse NJ districts for costs incurred for doing a regionalization feasibility study. Mr. Morrison provided an overview of why Watchung Hills is interested in doing the feasibility study. He clearly indicated that the Board of Education has not yet expressed their recommendation on whether towns should do this or not, but merely the interest in conducting the study to determine what is best. Mr. Morrison continued to provide a general overview of the process and noted what the possible outcomes might be. He proceeded to go over what the options could be.

- Option: 1- We do nothing and everything stays the same.
- Option 2 - Combine all five districts into a PK-12 single district
- Option 3 - Create a regional school district with Green Brook in a sending/receiving relationship for the high school grades
- Option 4 – Combine any of options with Green Brook, Watchung Hills etc.)
- Option 5 - Status quo having significant shared services between all districts. The objective is to study educational impacts, racial impact, staffing impacts, financial impacts, impacts on school buildings and facilities, and impacts on governance and legal considerations.

Mr. Morrison noted that Watchung Hills Regional School Board of Education has not made any determination if this is a good idea, they are only interested in conducting the feasibility study since it is now being funded by the State.

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Council Member Hayeck inquired if any responsibility fell on Council or Board of Education to make a decision once the study was completed. Mr. Morrison explained that the voters would determine this by voting on a referendum on the ballot.

Mayor Balla and Council Members proceeded to make several inquiries on the process, methodology, and consequences of the study, as well as if any districts in NJ had previously regionalized. Mr. Morrison provided answered in great detail and noted that South Hunterdon had previously regionalized.

PROCLAMATIONS

Mayor Balla read the following proclamations onto the record:

- ❖ Mayor's Wellness Campaign
- ❖ Building Safety Month

Council Member Martino suggested that local health care providers could be present to set up a table for blood pressure screenings etc. for the May 2nd event. Council President Jubin confirmed he would look into this.

MAYORS REPORT

Mayor Balla expressed thanks to the County for paving Somerset Circle at night and during a holiday period to avoid traffic buildup. He also thanked Administrator Damato and the Public Works staff for installing the irrigation on the island to help new plants grow. Based on Administrator Damato's extensive experience, Mayor Balla appointed him as the Watchung Borough Administrative Representative to the Watchung Board of Education Ad-Hoc Bond Referendum Committee. He also thanked the Bisignano family on behalf of the entire community for their generosity in donating the new roof for the community Library and barn. He reminded everyone that Operation Pride will be held on Saturday beginning at 10:00 A.M., the planting of tree seedlings at Best Lake will be held between 1:00 and 3:00 P.M. and lastly next Friday April 29th is Arbor Day and they will be dedicating the seedling oak of the 103-foot-tall Salem white oak.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

- 1) Lynda Goldschein, Sherwood Drive, provided comments in favor of the regionalization study.
- 2) Bruce Ruck, Lakeview Avenue, commented on the Watchung Walker's initiative for the Mayor's Wellness Campaign. He clarified that the intent is to make it a more permanent program and would be held every Monday. Council President Jubin explained the Mayors Wellness Campaign in further detail.

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DISCUSSIONS

❖ Special Recognitions

Council President Jubin discussed the importance of recognizing individuals and groups in the Borough aside from the longevity recognition. He mentioned recognizing the great things done in the Borough by our employees, first responders, schools, student athletes, and volunteers. He proposed the category of Special Recognition as a regular agenda item and asked Council for their thoughts.

Council Members were all in favor and Mayor Balla advised going forward this category would be added as an agenda item to the second meeting.

❖ Scarecrow Stroll & Contest

Council Member Ead discussed the event in detail being sponsored by the Traffic and Beautification Commission, Recreation Commission, Watchung Chamber of Commerce, Watchung Arts Center, Friends of Watchung Library and the Historical Committee. She discussed the procedure rules for the contest entry, judging criteria for the scarecrows and prizes for the top three winners.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Motion to Open Public Hearing on below by Jubin/Second by Ead

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

Public Hearing was held; no one appearing to provide comment.

Public Hearing of Ordinance# 22/04 “ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK WHEN THE COLA IS EQUAL TO OR LESS THAN 2.5 PERCENT (N.J.S.A. 40A:4-45.14)

R1: Adopting ordinance **22/04** Establishing CAP Bank

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/Second by Ead

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

Motion to Open Public Hearing on below by Jubin/Second by Ead

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

Public Hearing was held; no one appearing to provide comment.

Public Hearing of Ordinance# 22/05: “AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING THE ACQUISITION AND INSTALLATION OF PARK EQUIPMENT AND RELATED IMPROVEMENTS IN THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, IN THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY AND APPROPRIATING \$500,000.00 THEREFOR FROM THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND”

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R2: Adopting ordinance OR 22/05 – Capital Improvement Ordinance for the Acquisition and Installation of Park Equipment and Related Improvements

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/Second by Hayeck

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

NEW BUSINESS

REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Green Team Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes	March 21, 2022
Mayor and Council Regular Meeting Minutes	March 3, 2022 March 17, 2022
Mayor and Council Special Meeting Minutes	February 16, 2022
Mayor and Council Executive Session Minutes	April 7, 2022
PARSA Meeting Minutes	March 3, 2022
Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes	March 2, 2022

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

#9 - Letter of Resignation, Joseph Popolo, Fire Subcode Official cc: M&C, JD

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/Second by Hayeck

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

CONSENT RESOLUTIONS

R3: Authorizing Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – Grove Lock & Safe Co. (*fire dept. lock system*)
SF Mobile Vision Inc. (*pd-maint. agmt. for BWC, car video server soft.*)
BIS Digital, Inc. (*pd- revcorder call recorder server*)

R4: Authorizing Tax Overpayment Refund – 65 Crestwood Drive, Block 4303/ Lot 3

R5: Designating the Month of May as “Bag Up NJ” Month

R6: Authorizing Bill List

R7: Designating Proceeds from New Legacy Books, LLC to Watchung Library Advisory Board

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Escrow

R8: Authorizing Re-Appointment of Volunteer to Green Team – Margaret Ponzio

R9: Authorizing Field and Facility Permit Application from The Garden Club of Watchung to Hold a Plant Sale on May 14, 2022

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/Second by Ead

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

NON-CONSENT RESOLUTIONS

R10: Authorizing Salary Adjustment for Joseph Buro, Laborer

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/Second by Ead

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

R11: Authorizing Appointment of Part-Time Tax Clerk – Nicole Izzo

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/Second by Ead

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

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Lynda Goldshein, Sherwood Drive, asked for clarification regarding the parking lot located at 20 Stirling Road, specifically why the lot is not striped, why the owner received a certificate of occupancy without presenting a parking plan and why the Borough cannot inquire how the building is being used. Administrator Damato advised the parking plan can be re-examined.
2. Rachel Funcheon, Cedar Road, thanked Mayor Balla for promoting Operation Pride and the tree planting event. Ms. Funcheon also mentioned at Operation Pride the Environmental Commission will be giving away tree seedlings and milk weed seeds.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

R12: Authorizing Executive Session: Anticipated Litigation

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/Second by Ead

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

Mayor and Council entered executive session at approximately 9:05 P.M. and returned to open session at approximately 9:32 P.M.

Motion to Return to Open Session by Jubin/Second by Hayeck

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

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ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business before Council the meeting ended at 9:34 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on Thursday, March 15, 2022 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Regina Angelo
Deputy Clerk