

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

NOVEMBER 21, 2022 - 7:30 P.M.

MAYOR’S STATEMENT: Mayor Balled 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 Revised 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 [P] Martino [Absent] Hayeck [P] Dahl [P] Ead [P]

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

- ❖ Watchung School District Presentation on [Referendum](#)
George P. Alexis, Superintendent of Schools
Richard Pepe, Business Administrator

Superintendent George Alexis addressed the Mayor and Council, introduced Mr. Pepe and proceeded to speak about the upcoming referendum. Amongst various other improvements, he noted that Valley View library and their visual arts studio is in need of the referendum funds. He explained that the referendum had been placed into two questions. Mr. Alexis commented that the average impact would be \$323/year per home impact if both questions passed.

He commented that the Special School Board election is set for Tuesday, December 13, 2022. Poll hours will be from 6am to 8pm and the polling location has been set to Firemen’s Exempt Hall, 31 Mountain Boulevard.

He also mentioned in March the school did a mailer to notify the community asking if anyone would participate in the Referendum Ad- Hoc Committee. Mr. Alexis provided details on the referendum questions, their total combined costs, and the amount the State Aide would cover. He also advised a question-and-answer session is scheduled for December 1st at Valley View at 7:00.

Council President Jubin expressed his thanks to the School Board Representatives for and made a few inquiries. The Mayor and all other Council Members took turns making their inquiries and also thanked both School Representatives for their presentation.

Mr. Pepe commented that 3 rounds of Covid funds received totalled to about \$600,00.00 and could only be used for specific things such as professional development, accelerated learning programs and mental health supports for teachers and students.

Council Member Hayeck congratulated Mr. Bisignano, Chairman of Fiserv, for their grand opening in Berkeley Heights and bringing a tech hub to this part of the State.

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NOVEMBER 21, 2022 - 7:30 P.M.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

- 1) Charlie Neiss, commented he was a former Board of Education Member and that 2001 was when the last referendum was successful. He stated at the time experts informed that ten to fifteen years would pass until the next upgrades would be due. Mr. Neiss provided detailed comments in support of referendum.
- 2) Jackie Pike, commented she moved to Watchung for the great schools. She commented on the excessively hot and cold temperatures in the classroom effecting children's test scores and spoke in favor of the referendum.
- 3) Daryl Eisenberg Knegten, thanked Mr. Alexis and Rich Pepe for coming in and presenting the plan for the referendum. Mrs. Eisenberg Knegten spoke in favor of the referendum and strongly feels that our schools deserve more.
- 4) Lisa Kraft, provided detailed comments on what she feels is the fiscally responsible thing to do in terms of the referendum. She stated the repairs are immanent and need to be done now and spoke in favor of the referendum and accepting the donation from the State.
- 5) Gina Pontoriero, provided detailed comments in favor of the referendum and improving our schools for our children. She stated she is an advocate of communication and encouraged everyone to help and work together.
- 6) Lindsay Goodloe, provided detailed comments in support of the referendum and encouraged we listen to the experts. She expressed when our schools are thriving so are our property values.
- 7) Angela Mealy, expressed it will cost the Borough more to fix the problems in our schools incrementally rather than going to the referendum with the State funding.
- 8) Frank Bisignano, provided detailed comments regarding the declining HVAC system in the schools, and questioned why ventilation is being discussed in a Covid induced era for our children and teachers. Mr. Bisignano provided detailed comments in favor of the referendum.
- 9) Lynn Biviano, provided detailed comments in favor of the referendum. She also praised the Council on how well they are doing especially in regards to beautifying the town.
- 10) Candace Cheung submitted written public comments in support of the referendum.
- 11) Jason Adler submitted written public comments in support of the referendum.
- 12) Raina Koren submitted written public comments in support of the referendum.
- 13) Francesca Escaleira submitted written public comments in support of the referendum.
- 14) Sandra Loya, provided detailed comments on how beautiful the town looks and thanked the Council for all their hard work.

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
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NOVEMBER 21, 2022 - 7:30 P.M.

DISCUSSIONS

- ❖ 2022 Best Practices Inventory by Department of Community Affairs 2022 Best Practices Inventory by Department of Community Affairs

Bill Hance provided detailed comments regarding the Best Practices Inventory. Council Member Ead had detailed discussions with CFO Hance for clarification on questions 12, 46 and 52.

Administrator Damato advised the Borough relies on the Department of Community Affairs and the Local Finance Board which handles ethics issues for local government. He also thanked everyone for their hard work on the Best Practices Inventory.

- ❖ North Plainfield and Watchung LEAP Implementation Grant

Administrator Damato commented on initial meetings with North Plainfield and provided detailed information on the grant process and possible outcomes if the grant was received. He provided clarification on the shared services agreement with North Plainfield.

Council Member Robinson requested further clarification regarding the reference made to fire house updates and personnel.

- ❖ Holiday Lights Request

Administrator Damato advised he received a request from Mr. Bisignano offering to display holiday lights on the barn. Mayor and Council Members expressed their thanks for Mr. Bisignanos generous donation. Administrator Damato also advised Mr. Bisignano is happy to comply with all requirements including proof of insurance as requested.

Council Member Robinson asked Attorney Sordillo for clarification on the proper process of receiving this donation.

Motion by Hayeck to accept donation, subject to insurance certificate.

Motion to Adopt above by Hayeck/ Second by Jubin

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

Council Member Ead provided updates on the donated happy holidays display sign and discussed possible locations with Council Members.

Council Members discussed possible locations and Mayor Balla suggested this discussion be taken back to the Committee for further reflection.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

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

NOVEMBER 21, 2022 - 7:30 P.M.

NEW BUSINESS

REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Board of Adjustment Meeting Minutes	October 13, 2022
Board of Health Meeting Minutes	July 20, 2022 October 19, 2022
Building Department Monthly Report	October 2022
Municipal Council Meeting Minutes	October 6, 2022
Planning Board Meeting Minutes	October 18, 2022
Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority Minutes	October 6, 2022

- #32 Notice from NJDEP re Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance deadline to implement May 2, 2023, recv'd: 11/9/22, cc: M&C, JD, JS, JC
- #33 Notice from Board of Education re Special School District Election on December 13, 2022 to hold Referendum, recv'd: 11/9/22, cc: M&C, JD
- #34 Legal Notice from Board of Adjustment Applicant for property at 990 Somerset Street, Block 44.01/ Lot 3, recv'd: 11/14/22, cc: M&C, JD
- #35 Letter of Resignation from PO Ekoue, recv'd: 11/18/22, cc: M&C, JD

Council Member Ead encouraged everyone to thank our first responders.

Motion to Accept above by Jubin/ second by Dahl

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

Council Member Hayeck thanked Mayor Balla for donating Council shirts and Council Member Dahl for donating to the building of the manger display.

CONSENT RESOLUTIONS

- R1: Authorizing Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – Applied Concepts (*PD- dsr 1 antenna radar system*)
Barton Nursery (*DPW - borough hall plants*)
Barco Products (*DPW 3-double-side load recycling containers*)
Pacific Lawn Sprinklers (*DPW new system for Spratford*)

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

NOVEMBER 21, 2022 - 7:30 P.M.

Park)
Witmer Public Safety Group *(PD 33-Glock 45,
magazines, etc.)*
Auto Rebuilder Collision Specialist *(PD- car 17 dol)*
Gold Type Business Machine Inc. *(PD-info-cop license
renewal)*
Atlantic Tactical *(PD-33 Safariland Model body armor)*

R2: Authorizing the Borough Clerk to Waive Bingo and Raffle License Application Fees for Watchung PTO

~~*R3: Authorizing Appointments of Volunteer Members to Board of Health~~

Motion to remove the Above from agenda by Jubin/ second by Hayeck

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

R4: Authorizing Bill List

Motion to Adopt above *(excluding R3)* by Jubin/ Second by Hayeck

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

NON-CONSENT RESOLUTIONS

ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BOROUGH'S CODE CHAPTER 6, POLICE REGULATIONS, TO AMEND REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE FEEDING OF WILDLIFE THROUGHOUT THE BOROUGH, SPECIFICALLY SECTION § 6-3.

R5: Introducing OR 22/09 Amending Code Section 6-3 Regulating the Feeding of Wildlife

Motion to Adopt and Introduce above by Hayeck/ no second.

Upon there being no second, motion failed.

Introduction of OR# 22/10 09

“ORDINANCE AMENDING BOROUGH CODE, CHAPTER 28 LAND DEVELOPMENT, AND ESTABLISHING ZONING REGULATIONS FOR THE ELECTRIC VEHICLE SUPPLY/SERVICE EQUIPMENT THROUGHOUT THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG PURSUANT TO P.L. 2021, C.171.”

R6: Introducing OR 22/09 10 Establishing Zoning Regulations for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations”

Council Member Ead asked for further clarification on the costs and Borough impacts on a financial level and a maintenance level going forward. She suggested tabling this Ordinance until further information is received. Attorney Sordillo provided general comments relating to specific sections of the Ordinance. He advised sections A through E are all mandatory based off the State model Ordinance and no modification of the terms in these sections are allowed. Attorney Sordillo provided further explanation and continued

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NOVEMBER 21, 2022 - 7:30 P.M.

discussions with Mayor & Council Members to answer questions. Council President Jubin requested further information be provided at the next meeting relating to the future financial implications if the Borough wants to improve parking.

Motion to Adopt and Introduce below by Hayeck/ Second by Robinson

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

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1) Charlie Neiss, Chair of Green Team, provided detailed comments in favor of Ordinance 22/09. He spoke on possible grants available and requested the permit fee for residential construction be waived.
- 2) Gail Tafaro, expressed her thanks for the go-fund me started to place a new menorah on Borough grounds. She also expressed thanks to Monsignor Benwell for support of the nativity scene, Council Member Dahl for his donation as well as all the hard work from the Traffic and Beautification Committee and everyone who takes time to help beautify the town.
- 3) Kim DiDonato, expressed thanks to everyone who puts effort into the town. She expressed her support for our teachers and schools.
- 4) Diane Fahmy, expressed her thanks to all for making the town such a beautiful place. She also expressed thanks for the Councils consideration to Electric Vehicle parking.
- 5) Charlie Neiss, provided comments relating to the symbol of the crucifix displayed on the dais.

Council Member Hayeck expressed his support for Council Member Dahl in displaying his beliefs.

- 6) Phyllis Juette, provided detailed comments that all religions and backgrounds are represented throughout the town.
- 7) Diane Fahmy, stated everyone's perception is their own reality and recognized Council Member Dahl for moving his crucifix closer to his nameplate.
- 8) Kristy Hartman, asked for further clarification on who pays the insurance regarding the donated lights. Administrator Damato advised the person donating would provide the Borough with an insurance certificate / policy.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

R7: Authorizing Executive Session to Discuss Contract Negotiations:

TWA Application – Sanitary Sewer Agreements
Construction of Sidewalk Circle Updates

Motion to Adopt Above by Jubin/ Second by Hayeck

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**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
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NOVEMBER 21, 2022 - 7:30 P.M.

Mayor and Council entered Executive Session at approximately 9:18 P.M. and returned to open session at approximately 9:33 P.M.

Motion to return to open Session by Jubin / Hayeck

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

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, December 8, 2022 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted:

Regina Angelo
Deputy Clerk
Approved: February 2, 2023