

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

DECEMBER 8, 2022

MAYOR'S STATEMENT: Mayor Balla called the meeting to order at 8:03 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]

PROCLAMATION

Mayor Jubin read and presented the following proclamation

- ❖ Honoring Gary Greeves for 50 Years of Service

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance: Council President Jubin reported that the Committee spoke about St. Hubert’s who will no longer continue in animal control services but mentioned they are reviewing two proposals received and they are also reviewing proposals related to agenda management software.
2. Police: Council Member Robinson reported on the Committees November 22nd meeting and given the resignations of two Officers. The recruitment process has begun for three new officers, if successful, the Ordinance limiting the number of officers would have to be amended. Discussions took place regarding the purchase of license plate readers and possibly adding those to next years budget, the second vehicle ordered has finally arrived and its processing is underway, body armor was purchased and thanked Chief Hart for their assistance at the Tree of Lights Ceremony. Council Member Robinson also recognized Detective Sergeant Frank Gualdino of Yonkers who died tragically shortly before retiring.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds: Council Member Ead reported on completed projects and various updates such as the damaged sewer line damaged during Hurricane Ida, the new spreader on small plow built and installed by the Public Works staff, the two islands have the sprinklers repaired, the plantings / sprinklers for the island across from the Rescue Squad will have to wait until PSE&G is done with their work, the 5 fountains have been removed and are stored for the Spring season, the dam testing at Watchung Lake is moving forward, the dam at Best Lake will be getting serviced, the I&I study has been completed and the report is being finalized, and Mr. Damato is dealing with NJ American Water and the water main break challenges that have surfaced lately. Upcoming are plans for the replacement or repair of the

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Phillips Field bridge, the library bridge, the roof replacement for Borough Hall, it was also noted that DPW typically has in place plans and procedures established for snow removal and road conditions, however as an added protective measure the Borough contracts with outside service in case higher snowfall levels arise, staff shortage, or unforeseen equipment malfunctions. Councilwoman Ead noted this would be taken care of and lastly, thanked the Garden Club, the Traffic & Beautification Commission and DPW staff for their wonderful work with the festive decorations making Watchung look beautiful at night.

4. Public Affairs:

Environmental – Council Member Robinson reported on the Commissions December 6th meeting and noted the dead tree report numbers. The Commission also recently submitted comments to the Planning Board on the renovations to be done at the Shoprite Blue Star location, and there is a Styrofoam collection scheduled for January 21st. She noted that Long Hill purchased their own compact system and is accepting Styrofoam from surrounding areas. In conjunction with their purchase, Long Hill also purchased a bin for residents. The Commission is discussing the possibility of Watchung purchasing a bin for residents too, noting that there are monies in the Clean Communities Fund that must be used. A new check for \$147 was recently received for the Legacy Books bin, the total received thus far is \$274, the bottle cap recycling program is being looked into by the Chair of the Environmental Commission. A member of the Green Team is looking to partner with Montclair to do a survey of residents and their desire for additional vendors for the next Farmer’s Market and new plantings are expected in Mobus Field. Lastly, it was reported that there is a conflict between the Borough’s catch and release Ordinance and the green sunfish plaguing Best Lake. The state would rather have the town kill this invasive species that is threatening the bass fish.

Recreation – Council Member Hayeck noted that a quorum could not be reached at the last meeting, however a progress review was briefly discussed for next year. The Commission is looking to offer ice skating trips or additional recreational programs to its residents, but it would have to increase its budget. Council Member Hayeck noted this years budget has already increased by 10% from the prior year, but the goal is to increase program availability.

Historical – Council Member Ead reported on the Committee’s November 16th meeting and noted that tours would begin again in January, as well as a school display that the Committee hoped to accomplish. There is a new holiday ornament done by resident Laurie Wood and proceeds help benefit the Historical Committee so residents are encouraged to purchase this and a home is being sought for the mural.

Board of Health – Council Member Jubin provided no updates.

5. Fire – Council Member Dahl reported 27 calls were made during the month of November, Fire training was conducted in November along with ordering air packs, the annual Santa Run was held successfully, lastly an ICS class will be held this weekend to conform with State regulations put forth.

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Council Member Robinson made an inquiry on insurance requirements relating to the Santa Run and Mr. Damato addressed the concern.

6. Laws/ Ordinances – No updates provided.

REPORTS – OTHER:

7. Engineering – Borough Engineer Jason Cline reported that the water in the lake has been lowered and DPW staff is maintaining that, dredging work into the lakes is being discussed and funding options are being pursued, the 2023 DOT application was approved for \$368,400, the repairs to the storm culvers are moving forward and bid solicitations will go out in the near future, specifications are being prepared for second round of sampling of Ness Farm, the Michael Stein Foundation is obtaining a vendor to install and build the memorial, FEMA funding was finalized for the library bridge, and additional projects were discussed.
8. Police - Chief Hart reported on the activity report numbers for the month of November and commented the speed sign enforcement program has proven to be successful.
9. Rescue Squad – Council Member Robinson reported on the success of the Tree of Lights despite the weather and reported on activities and calls for the month of October.
10. Emergency Management – No update provided.
11. Attorney – No updates provided.
12. Finance – No updates provided.
13. Clerk – Borough Clerk Edith Gil reported that during the last two Administration & Finance Committee meetings she presented a proposal for agenda management software that would assist with the minutes aspect and allow viewers to jump easily from one section to the other when watching the meeting videos, and provide OCR technology for agenda attachments. Positive feedback was received from the Secretary of the Board of Adjustment and Planning Board.

She also reported that emails went out to the various Committees soliciting renewal volunteer forms as well as recruiting new volunteers and advised forms are due at the end of the month.

Lastly, Clerk Gil reminded all that Tuesday, December 13th was the Special School Election, polls open 6am to 8pm and the only voting location to be open is the Firemen’s Exempt Hall at 31 Mountain Boulevard.

14. Administrator – Administrator James Damato reported on the referendum meeting he attended on the Mayor’s behalf and the items discussed that would potentially be acquired/ repaired if the referendum was successful. He noted the Principals of Valley View and Bayberry were present at the meeting to discuss the challenges of old technology, infrastructure and an old cafeteria.

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Administrator Damato also noted that often times the Borough will re-post official correspondence or notices submitted by the Watchung School District.

Council Member Hayeck commented that he had also attended the last Board of Education referendum meeting and noted that the flyer that the school put out was very similar in educating the public like Watchung Hills Regional High School had done. Mayor Balla noted Administrator Damato's experience in the school system and commented that was why he had asked him to participate.

The election flyer and signs released by the Watchung School District were discussed and Council consented to having them placed at an appropriate location as agreed upon by Clerk Gil and Administrator Damato.

15. Youth Services – Council Member Dahl provided no updates.
16. Planning Board – Mayor Balla reported that at the last meeting the outdoor dining proposed Ordinance was discussed and their recommendation came back to Council.
17. Municipal Alliance – No updates provided.
18. Library Advisory Board – Council Member Robinson reported on the last meeting in November and one of the items discussed was a separate fund created during the last referendum in 2012 to show taxpayers what it would cost to renovate the library. Residents were encouraged to donate \$1.30 to this fund and those funds will remain there. Friends of the Library reported on the success of the True Crime event held, the hanging wires in the Bicentennial Room were removed and was noted painting was the next step. Ms. Hannah Kerwin reported that grants were being looked into for renovations and the next meeting is scheduled for January 18th at 5:00 P.M.

Council Member Ead inquired on the amount saved thus far in the library fund reported, Council Member Robinson reported it was about \$3,000 and the fund was referred to as the "\$1.30 fund."

19. Traffic and Beautification – Councilwoman Ead reported that the Commission was busy making Watchung look like a "Norman Rockwell painting," she noted the plantings for spring were ordered and a menorah and new nativity scene coming soon onto the village green.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

No one appearing to speak.

DISCUSSION

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

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NEW BUSINESS

REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

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| CERT Meeting Minutes | November 29, 2022 |
| Construction Code Monthly Report | November 2022 |
| Green Team Meeting Minutes | October 17, 2022 September 19, 2022 |
| Library Advisory Committee Minutes | September 21, 2022 |
| Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority Minutes | November 3, 2022 |
| Police Department Activity Report | November 2022 |

#36 Township of Scotch Plains Notice of Proposed Ordinance 2022-37, Amending Off – Street Parking Requirements of the B-1 and B-2 Zones, Public Hearing Dec 13, 2022. cc: M&C, JD, TS

Motion to Accept above by Jubin/ second by Hayeck

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

CONSENT RESOLUTIONS

- R1: Authorizing Purchase Orders over \$2,000 – Sparta Discount Tire, Inc. *(PD-tires)*
The Rodgers Group c/o Lexipol *(2023 online training modules)*
East Coast Tactical *(PD-type IIA tactical shield & cover)*
Motorola Solutions, Inc. c/o Wireless C&E *(PD-apx all band portable, digital CAI)*
2-Lawsoft, Inc., *(annual support and maintenance for lawsoft CAD/RMS system for 2023 & encrypted backups)*
2-Winner Ford, *(two (2) 2023 Ford Interceptor SUVs w lighting options)*
- R2: Authorizing Return of Escrow Deposits – Various Applicants Listed
- R3: Authorizing Budget Insertion of Special Item of Revenue (Chapter 159): Clean Communities Grant and Alcohol Education, Rehabilitation & Enf. Grant
- R4: Requesting Authorization from NJ Division of Local Government Services to Establish Dedication by Rider for Expenditure of Fees from Unemployment Trust Fund
- R5: Requesting Authorization from NJ Division of Local Government Services to Establish Dedication

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by Rider for Expenditure of Fees from Storm Recovery Trust Fund

R6: Requesting Authorization from NJ Division of Local Government Services to Establish Dedication by Rider for Expenditure of Fees from Uniform Fire Safety Act Penalties Fund

R7: Requesting Authorization from NJ Division of Local Government Services to Establish Dedication by Rider for Expenditure of Fees from Animal Control Fund

R8: Requesting Authorization from NJ Division of Local Government Services to Establish Dedication by Rider for Expenditure of Fees from for Outside Employment of Off-Duty Municipal Officers

R9: Authorizing Cancellation of Unexpended Capital Balance

R10: Authorizing Cancellation of Outstanding Checks Prior to March 2022

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin/ Second by Hayeck

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

NON-CONSENT RESOLUTIONS

R11: Authorizing Application to DLGS for LEAP Implementation Grant with Borough of North Plainfield

Motion to Adopt above by Dahl / Second by Jubin

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

R12: Authorizing Compensation for Duties as Acting Manager of Department of Public Works

Motion to Adopt above by Jubin / Second by Hayeck

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

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1) Theodore Sliwinski, Attorney for Messercola Excavating, spoke on the bid proposal submitted by his client for Snow Plowing Services and explained the second proposal submitted by ASL was inadequate with documents missing and does not believe that proposal should be considered. He advised his client has been a long time Watchung resident and asked on behalf of his client for his proposal to be considered and accepted.

Jenna Messercola, advised an email was received stating there are no funds remaining in the Public Works funds account but it was said earlier tonight that funds are available. She asked what is remaining in the budget for 2022.

CFO Bill Hance stated there is about \$15,000.00 left in the Public Works other expense budget.

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EXECUTIVE SESSION

R13: Authorizing Executive Session to Discuss Contract Negotiations: TWA Application – Sanitary Sewer Agreements

Motion to Adopt Above by Jubin/ Second by Hayeck

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

Mayor and Council entered Executive Session at approximately 9:43 P.M. and returned to open session at approximately 10:07 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 10:08 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on Thursday, December 22, 2022 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted:

Regina Angelo
Deputy Clerk
Approved: February 16, 2023