

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

NOVEMBER 7, 2024

MAYOR’S STATEMENT: Mayor Jubin called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 P.M. and made the following statement *“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.”*

SALUTE TO THE FLAG and MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN, SERVING HOME AND ABROAD

ROLL CALL

Ead [P] Dahl [P] Fischer [P] Marano [Absent] Abi- Habib [P] Gibbs [Absent]

PROCLAMATION

Mayor Jubin read the following proclamation onto the record.

- Epilepsy Awareness Month

MAYORS ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

- ❖ Recognizing the Environmental Commission for their ANJEC award

Mayor Jubin provided a brief history of the ANJEC and their mission. He reminisced of his time when he was first a volunteer of the Annual Operation Pride, and of the past efforts of Watchung’s Environmental Commission. He commended the Environmental Commission for their important and continuous work. He opened up the floor to the Council for comment. Council Member Abi-Habib commended them for their devotion and commitment in preserving natural resources in Watchung and noted how proud she is.

Each member of the Environmental Commission was presented with a certificate acknowledging the Commission’s work.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

- ❖ Scarecrow Stroll and Contest

Council President Ead began by noting that this was the 3rd Annual Scarecrow Stroll and provided a brief history on how the program came about. She credited Gail Tafaro as the “founder”/ organizer of this idea, and asked her to come up to explain the scoring process. Gail Tafaro expressed her gratitude for all those who help conduct the Scarecrow Stroll and proceeded to explain the judging process that was done by three Watchung Regional Hill High School students. Tafaro also encouraged other organizations and families to participate in next year’s Scarecrow Stroll.

Council President Ead introduced Sue Tucker as a lifetime member of Watchung and commended Tucker for all she does for the Watchung community, including her work with the Texier Museum. Sue Tucker has provided the prizes for the Scarecrow Stroll and distributed them to the present winners as Council President

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Ead announced them.

Mayor Jubin brought attention to his letter in the fall newsletter, thanking all of the volunteers and reminding all that could participate in supporting the Watchung Community.

REPORTS OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES

1. Administration & Finance – Councilman Fischer advised that a written report was posted but provided a brief overview of the topics covered at the last committee meeting.
2. Police – Council President Ead reported on Councilman Marano’s behalf and advised the committee had met on November 4th. She advised that the in-person court will be starting up again for second appearances and contested matters. She reported that Department has signed with a new GPS Company for all vehicles, which will improve efficiency and cut costs. Council President Ead announced that there will be a dedicated Traffic Sergeant position in 2025, which will help the squad have focus on traffic issues, which is a focus point in Watchung.
3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Council President Ead advised a written report was submitted, but added that our Public Works crew had begun leaf pic-ups and asked residents to not fill up the bags as to avoid them tipping over and falling out.

4. Public Affairs:

Environmental – Council Member Abi-Habib reported on the commissions last meeting held October 28th. She reported the EC discussed zoning and planning applications and noted concerns on the oversight of the Bonnie Burn project underway, in particular for the tree removal process. The commission is also preparing to propose a new special recycling program for clothing and textiles, they are looking into a company called HELPSY and more information will follow when they are ready to proceed.

Recreation – Councilman Dahl reported on the fishing derby held on Oct. 19th which he advised Colleen Lange ran. He reported on the categories and prizes given out. Councilman Dahl noted that the approximate donations for the harvest festival held on October 5th totaled about \$8,450 and named the organizations that donated as well as the activities held.

Historical – Councilman Fischer wanted to provide a shoutout and thanked the volunteers for at Texier House for their scanning assistance and efforts into helping the committee.

Board of Health – Councilwoman Abi-Habib noted no recent meeting had been held, but thanked the board for their participation in the harvest festival. She advised that the board was looking into offering CPR classes and that information would be shared in the future.

Green Team – Councilwoman Abi-Habib commended the Greem Team for their work in winning the silver certification under Sustainable Jersey, she noted this was a rarity for a town the size of Watchung. She advised the green team would be honored at the December meeting after receiving the designation at the NJ League of Municipalities event. Mayor

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Jubin spoke about the organization Pedals for Progress, who participated in the last farmers market. He elaborated on their good cause and just how far these donations helped.

5. Fire – Councilman Dahl advised a written report was filed and had nothing further to add.
6. Laws/Ordinances – no report

REPORTS OF BOROUGH OFFICERS

7. Engineer Jason Cline reported the two most recent DOT jobs are nearing completion and they are expecting a list of the 2025 awards soon.
8. Police Chief Anderle reported on the month of October, shoplifting operations, summonses to overweight vehicles. He also reported on the mobile inspection done in October about 40 vehicles inspected. He joked that they are working on a scarecrow that serves chili next year.
9. Fire Official McNulty reported on the October inspections he conducted and advised he had also helped out with rental registration inspections.
10. Emergency Management – no report
11. Rescue Squad – written report on file
12. Attorney Sordillo reported that the Laws & Ordinance Committee is working hard on about 10-12 ordinance to keep the Borough code up to date.
13. Finance – no report
14. Borough Clerk Edith Gil reported on the smooth conduction of Election Day and that results will be certified November 25th. She mentioned that volunteer applications are available on the Borough's website. She also reported that New Jersey Advanced Media announced the daily print publication of the Star Ledger and other newspapers will end printing next year. Gil further explained that new legislation regarding mandatory official newspapers may be moving forward.

Mayor Jubin commented on the importance of supporting local newspapers.

15. Administrator James Damato reported on the work on the library establishing utility connections and planning meetings. He reported they will most likely be taking bids in January 2025. Damato mentioned that they will be scheduling a ground breaking ceremony. He continued to report that the library is progressing very well. Damato also mentioned that he has recently been called out on a lot of tree inspections, several ash tree that are dead or dying, and he encouraged residents to report their dead or dying trees near the curblin. Mayor Jubin expressed that he is pushing on opening the library by the Borough's 100th anniversary in the most quick and cost-effective way.
16. Planning Board – no report

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- 17. Municipal Alliance – no update
- 18. Library Advisory Committee – no update
- 19. Traffic and Beautification – Council President Ead advised that the winter displays will go up in next 2-4 weeks. Some lights are already on and the rest of décor is on its way.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

- No one appearing

NEW BUSINESS

REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Construction Monthly Report	October 2024
Environmental Commission Minutes	September 23, 2024
Fire Prevention Bureau Monthly Report	October 2024
Mayor and Council Meeting Minutes	July 18, 2024 October 17, 2024
Mayor and Council Executive Session Minutes	July 16, 2024 October 17, 2024
Planning Board Meeting Minutes	September 17, 2024
Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority Mins	October 3, 2024
Police Department Monthly Activity Report	October 2024
Rescue Squad Monthly Report	October 2024

Motion to Accept the above by Ead/Second by Fischer
Ead [Y] Dahl [Y] Fischer [Y] Marano [Absent] Abi- Habib [Y] Gibbs [Absent]

CONSENT ITEMS

- R1: Authorizing Appointment of James Damato as Municipal Housing Liaison
- R2: Authorizing Return of Escrow Monies for Engineering Review Fees
- R3: Authorizing Bill List
- R4: Authorizing Purchases Over Threshold – National Auto Fleet Group (*2024 Chevy Blazer EV*)

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Motion to Adopt the above by Ead/Second by Fischer

Ead [Y] Dahl [Y] Fischer [Y] Marano [Absent] Abi- Habib [Y] Gibbs [Absent]

NON-CONSENT ITEMS

R5: Authorizing Appointment of Frank Genova as PT Building Inspector and Fire Sub-Code Official

Motion to Adopt the above by Fischer/ Second by Ead

Ead [Y] Dahl [Y] Fischer [Y] Marano [Absent] Abi- Habib [Y] Gibbs [Absent]

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

**OR 24/18 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING STORMWATER DRAINAGE &
MAINTENANCE EASEMENT AT 55 BEECHWOOD LANE, BLOCK 25.01/ LOT 7**

Motion to Adopt the above by Ead/Second by Abi-Habib

Ead [Y] Dahl [Y] Fischer [Y] Marano [Absent] Abi- Habib [Y] Gibbs [Absent]

**OR 24/19 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BOROUGH'S ZONING REGULATIONS,
CHAPTER 28, "LAND DEVELOPMENT", TO UPDATE AND AMEND THE REGULATION
OF FENCES AND WALLS IN ARTICLE 28-401 & 28-500**

Motion to Adopt the above by Fischer/ Second by Dahl

Ead [Y] Dahl [Y] Fischer [Y] Marano [Absent] Abi- Habib [Y] Gibbs [Absent]

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Sam Tabikh, commented he was a resident at Knollwood Drive and spoke on the pool fence installation done on his neighbor's property which has caused the character of his house to change. He wanted to know if this was "legal" as it conflicted with the open space character of Watchung. He asked the Mayor and Council to reconsider the proposed ordinance. He advised that the construction was completed on or about October 11, 2024.

Mayor Jubin thanked Mr. Tabikh for bringing the issue forward and explained the Borough will advise either the Planning Board or Board of Adjustment on this. Mayor Jubin proceeded to advise the construction of Tabikh's fence may not be related to the proposed ordinance since the original was adopted in 2022. He continued to note that there are legal requirements for fencing around pools.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Council President Ead reminded all about the borough's peace throughout the world event tomorrow and Mayor Jubin invited all to the Veteran's Day ceremony on Monday.

R6: Authorizing Executive Session to discuss anticipated litigation

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Motion to Adopt the above by Ead/Second by Fischer

Ead [Y] Dahl [Y] Fischer [Y] Marano [Absent] Abi- Habib [Y] Gibbs [Absent]

The Governing Body entered executive session at approximately 8:46 P.M. Upon return to open session at approximately 9:07 P.M. the attendance was the same.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business, the meeting ended at 9:09 P.M. to the Call of the Chair. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council will be Thursday, December 5, 2024 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Edith G. Gil
Borough of Watchung

Approved: December 5, 2024