



## **BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG - BOARD OF HEALTH**

### **MINUTES RE-ORGANIZATION MEETING**

**JANUARY 19, 2022**

**7:00pm Virtual Meeting**

**Phone Number: 1 -646- 558- 8656**

**Conference Code: 507843**

Via Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/94234059374?pwd=QjhOKzQySXhkQ3RiQ3VPY2swektvUT09>

#### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:11pm.

#### **President's Statement**

Under the provisions of N.J.S.A 10:4-6 et seq., notice of time and place of this meeting has been posted and sent to the official newspapers.

#### **Oaths of Office**

Charlene Vergilio, Joel S. Cohen and Robert Blair Riedinger-Alternate #1, were sworn in by Mayor Keith Balla.

#### **Roll Call**

Present: Bruce Ruck, Francesca Escaleira, Julia Gunther, Charlene Vergilio, Joel S. Cohen, Robert Blair Riedinger and Kimberly Brown  
Absent: Diana Logan and Meghana Anadarangam

Also present: Mayor Keith Balla, Council President/Liaison Ronald Jubin, Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission – Health Officer Kevin Sumner.

#### **Election of President**

Charlene Vergilio nominated Bruce Ruck for President, Francesca Escaleira seconded. All were in favor with the following exceptions.

Absent: Diana Logan and Meghana Anadarangam

Health Officer Kevin Sumner informed Alternate Robert Blair Riedinger that he can vote due to absence of two voting members.

#### **Election of Vice President**

Robert Blair Riedinger nominated Charlene Vergilio for Vice President, Francesca Escaleira seconded. All were in favor with the following exceptions.

Absent: Diana Logan and Meghana Anadarangam

### **Appointment of Representatives to Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission**

Health Officer Kevin Sumner gave overview of the Commission and explained that two representatives, along with one alternate are appointed by each municipality to participate in the Commission's meetings held every other month beginning in February. Kevin Sumner stated that all the Commission's meetings are public meetings, everyone is invited to attend – whether a voting member or not. The following were appointed:

Member 1: Joel S. Cohen

Member 2: Francesca Escaleira

Alternate: Julia Gunther

### **Appointment of Liaison to the Community Animal Response Team (CART)**

Council President Ron Jubin read email from OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon requesting a Liaison to be appointed from the Board of Health to serve on CART. Kevin Sumner stated that CART is a County-based team made up of representatives from each municipality who meet to develop a plan for animal, care, shelter and recovery after a natural disaster or emergency. Bruce Ruck asked the Board Members if anyone was interested in being a liaison or finding out more about this initiative. No one volunteered and Bruce Ruck suggested that Council President Ronald Jubin take this request to the Council to see if anyone in town might be interested in participating. Julia Gunther shared her findings on CART and stated that this project involves extensive training to deploy these animals and concurred that many animal rights activists in town may be interested.

### **Consent Agenda**

Julia Gunther moved and Bruce Ruck seconded, motion to approve the Minutes of the November 17, 2021 meeting. All were in favor with the following exceptions.

Abstain: Robert Blair Riedinger (was not present at November 17<sup>th</sup> meeting)

Absent: Diana Logan and Meghana Anadarangam

### **Approval of 2022 Meeting Dates**

Robert Blair Riedinger informed the Board that he cannot attend the March 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. Julia Gunther moved and Joel S. Cohen seconded, a motion to approve the 2022 Meeting Dates. All were in favor with the following exceptions.

Absent: Diana Logan and Meghana Anadarangam

Diana Logan arrived at 7:38pm

### **Health Inspector/ Health Commission Reports**

December Reports - Bruce raised a question regarding inspection report conducted on December 22<sup>nd</sup> on property located on Stirling Road. Report states that "Watchung Lake is behind Mr. Shrecks' house. He has issues with standing water in backyard. What can he do?" Kevin Sumner responded that in December, mosquitos and insects are not breeding. However, if these conditions persist into the Spring, Summer and Fall when mosquitos are active it will be addressed. If it's on private property the owner would be responsible to rectify this issue, but if it's because of the lake it would be referred to the County's Mosquito Commission for their inspection and necessary action.

Bruce Ruck asked Ronald Jubin about the status of dredging, cleanup and embankments work at the lake being done. Ronald Jubin stated that he will bring it up to DPW and new engineering firm – Remington & Vernick, along with other concerns of the lake from the Council.

### **Old Business**

Watchung Walks – Bruce Ruck expanded on a health initiative for the upcoming year that was discussed at the last meeting. He stated that he wanted to work with the Recreation Commission in setting up a Watchung Walks for Health opportunity. He gave an overview on how this initiative would be implemented for a group to walk around the lake one night a week to encourage community engagement while promoting good health incentives. Kimberly Brown recommended to have a meeting place and provide an item to track miles walked, especially for those who are not tech savvy and the item may help in advertising. Bruce Ruck asked Kimberly Brown to assist him in this project. Ron Jubin will provide date to next Recreation Commission meeting for Bruce Ruck and Kimberly Brown to attend. Ronald Jubin also mentioned the Mayor’s Wellness Campaign which he provided information to the Board previously. Information will be sent again to Board Members. Francesca Escaleira stated that the Mayor’s Wellness Campaign is a State initiative. Ronald Jubin explained that each town does their own certification which is followed by a series of activities.

COVID-19 Update – Bruce Ruck stated that he runs the COVID Hotline from the State. He shared that he was in on a Board of Education meeting and wanted to clear up issue with CDC guidelines and the confusion some people are experiencing. He explained that guidelines are passed by CDC, but it does not mean that the State adopts every recommendation and it may take up to a week for the State to adopt guideline. Further he stated that many of the statements that come from the CDC are “suggested” guidelines and are constantly changing. Francesca Escaleira explained that what was said at the Board of Education meeting, was not clear enough. She continued that the parents get frustrated when they visit the WatchungSchools.com website, which refers to guidelines from the CDC or the State approved guidelines, then they have to go through 6 pages of information when it should be straight and forward. She also stated that everyone in town, Kevin Sumner and the nurses are doing a great job. Kevin Sumner expressed that the frequency of these changes is compounded by the fact that early on in COVID everyone was treated the same way. Now we have segments of the population that are fully vaccinated, up-to-date with vaccinations, unvaccinated; and each one of those sub-sets of the population have a different set of guidelines depending on what the issue is – travel related, school related, quarantine and isolation. He stated that case numbers have been higher than they have ever been, almost all of which are attributed to the Omicron variant. Kevin Sumner informed the Board he was able to hire a new employee – Megan, through a COVID grant, who has initially been tasked to work with School nurses so the Commission can get a better handle on what’s going on within the schools.

### **New Business**

Robert Blair Riedinger asked why the Board of Health did not have a liaison to the Board of Education. Bruce Ruck responded that the schools respond to the school board with no direct oversight by Council, town or other boards. Kevin Sumner shared that he has a great working relationship with the schools at the present time, especially with the Superintendent and administrative staff. He stated that the relationship between the Health Department and the school system is more appropriate at the administrative level with the Superintendent, Principals, staff than with the Board members.

Cannabis - Ronald Jubin questioned if Bruce Ruck knew of any funding being made available for local health departments to conduct educational materials, etc. Bruce Ruck is not aware of any grants. Robert Blair Riedinger asked if the town has approved the sale of Cannabis and issuing of licenses. Ronald Jubin responded that as of yet the town has not.

**Public Portion**

No public in attendance.

**Adjournment**

Joel S. Cohen moved and Julia Gunther seconded, a motion to adjourn at 8:13 pm. All in favor (Mehgana Anadarangam – absent). The next scheduled Board of Health meeting will be held on March 16, 2022 at 7:00pm via zoom at: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/94234059374>. In order to comply with all NJ Executive Orders and to protect members of the public, meetings will be held virtually for all parties until such time when in-person meetings can safely resume while complying with all NJ Executive Orders. When in-person meetings resume, they shall be held at Borough Hall, 15 Mountain Boulevard, Watchung, New Jersey.

Respectfully submitted,

*Dámaris Quiñones-Gray*

Secretary, Board of Health

Accepted: 3/16/22

**EMAIL RE: CART – (Community Animal Rescue Team)**

**From:** Carolyn Solon <[csolon@watchungnj.gov](mailto:csolon@watchungnj.gov)>

**Sent:** Friday, January 14, 2022 9:43 AM

**To:** Edith Gil <[EGil@watchungnj.gov](mailto:EGil@watchungnj.gov)>; Damaris Quinones-Gray <[dgray@watchungnj.gov](mailto:dgray@watchungnj.gov)>

**Cc:** Ronald Jubin <[rjubin@watchungnj.gov](mailto:rjubin@watchungnj.gov)>

**Subject:** RE: RESPONSE REQUIRED - CART Liaisons

Good morning,

The CART Liaison and Borough would be responsible for the following:

1. When the Borough needs to shelter residents due to emergencies/disasters there is always a need for animal sheltering along with congregate (overnight) sheltering. The animals need to be sheltered close to but not inside the sheltering facility with residents. We currently shelter our residents for congregate sheltering at Stonecrest Church in Warren. To date, the Borough does not have the means to congregate shelter our residents. In the case of a major fire, such as at the Point – sheltering would be done at the community center and CART would need to also be set up close to this location. Disasters are unexpected and can differ at each location.
2. The CART Liaison should be a person that is interested in assisting pets during disasters. Technically, the Borough should have crates, animal supplies, etc to set up during an emergency (We do not). Years ago, the location for set up was deemed as the East End Fire House. We need a facility that has heat, air conditioning, water, preferably generator backup, etc. The needs depend on the time of year – cold, heat, etc.
3. The liaison can attend the Somerset County CART Team meetings to understand more about pet sheltering. We as a Borough, are responsible for these animals during sheltering. This includes staffing and security 24 hours a day. Residents can assist with their own animals (walking, feeding), etc. but a procedure needs to be put in place to protect these animals.

During IDA response, the need for animal sheltering was huge. Somerset County set up an animal shelter for those families that lost their homes. Due to COVID, it was decided that non-congregate sheltering was necessary. The closest hotel that we could find that would accept pets was in Parsippany. These families lived in the hotels with their pets. The County was responsible for feeding residents/pets, etc. The Borough is responsible for a minimum of 72 hours, from the onset of the disaster, for sheltering residents and animals before a Regional Shelter (County) is established.

Most residents will not leave their homes (as seen in Hurricane Katrina) and therefore, FEMA mandated that sheltering for animals is a necessity.

There is much more involved with animal sheltering. I am including only a synopsis in this email.

I would recommend that if this person is going to be assigned through the BOH, then a discussion should take place on the Borough's responsibilities and the CART persons responsibilities. I can go into more detail with the BOH.

I hope this helps.... Please contact me with any questions.

Carolyn

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OEM Coordinator  
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