

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG  
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES  
REORGANIZATIONAL & REGULAR MEETING  
February 18th 2025 | 7:00 PM  
15 Mountain Blvd., Watchung, NJ 07069  
Adopted On: 3/18/2025**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Acting Pro-tem Chairwoman Schaefer called the Reorganizational and Regular Meeting to order at 6:59 pm. and read the statement indicating the meeting was being held in compliance with N.J.S.A.10:4-6 of the Open Public Meetings Act, the Municipal Land Use Law requirements, and the recording of the Minutes as required by law and proper notice has been given. Ms. Schaefer led the group in saluting the American flag and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Next, Mr. Linnus, Board Attorney, led the Oath of Office. The following candidates were sworn in; Tracee Schaefer, Stephen Pote, Robert Gibbs and Dustin Antonio.

**ROLL CALL:**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- present        | Mr. Dustin Antonio - present                        |
| Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman –<br>(Absent) | Mr. Troy Sims – present                             |
| Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – present               | Ms. Jackie Bodnar – present                         |
| Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – present          | Mr. Francis P. Linnus, Esq. - present               |
| Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – present         | Mr. Mark Healey, PP – arrived late                  |
| Ms. Jennifer Kobliska- present                  | Mr. Richard Calbi Jr., Board Engineer –<br>(Absent) |
| Ms. Karen Pennett – present                     | Mr. John Jahr, Board Traffic Engineer -<br>present  |
| Mr. Stephen Pote - present                      | Ms. Catherine Furlan Board Clerk- present           |

A quorum was present for the meeting.

**REORGANIZATION 2025**

**Election of Officers**

Tracee Schaefer was nominated for Chair by Mr. Pote and seconded by Ms. Spingler. Ms. Schaefer accepted nomination as Chair.

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Aye          | Mr. Dustin Antonio - Aye   |
| Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman -<br>Absent | Mr. Troy Sims – Aye        |
| Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye                 | Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye    |
| Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Aye            | Ms. Jennifer Kobliska- Aye |
| Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye           | Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye    |
|   | Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye     |

Chairwoman asked for a Vice-Chairperson nomination. Ms. Pennet nominated Don Speeney and was seconded by Ms. Spingler. Mr. Speeney accepted the nomination despite his absence.

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| Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Aye                 | Mr. Dustin Antonio - Aye   |
| Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman -<br><b>Absent</b> | Mr. Troy Sims – Aye        |
| Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye                        | Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye    |
| Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Aye                   | Ms. Jennifer Kobliska- Aye |
| Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye                  | Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye    |
|  | Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye     |

Madam Chair nominated Ms. Spingler as Secretary and nomination was seconded by Councilman Gibbs. Ms. Spingler accepted nomination.

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|--|----------------------------|
| Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Aye                 | Mr. Dustin Antonio - Aye   |
| Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman -<br><b>Absent</b> | Mr. Troy Sims – Aye        |
| Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye                        | Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye    |
| Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Aye                   | Ms. Jennifer Kobliska- Aye |
| Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye                  | Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye    |
|  | Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye     |

## **RESOLUTIONS**

### **PB 25-R1; Calendar of Regular Meetings**

Chairwoman Schaefer asked for the reading to be waived, but reviewed the proposed dates for 2025 as the third Tuesday of the month with the exception of May. Motion to accept by Councilman Gibbs and seconded by Ms. Spingler.

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| Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Aye                 | Mr. Dustin Antonio - Aye   |
| Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman -<br><b>Absent</b> | Mr. Troy Sims – Aye        |
| Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye                        | Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye    |
| Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Aye                   | Ms. Jennifer Kobliska- Aye |
| Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye                  | Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye    |
|  | Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye     |

### **PB 25-R2; Adoption of By-Laws**

Chair accepted the motion to approve the By-Laws for 2025 as they stood in 2024., seconded by Councilman Gibbs.

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| Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Aye                 | Mr. Dustin Antonio - Aye |
| Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman -<br><b>Absent</b> | Mr. Troy Sims – Aye      |
| Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye                        | Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye  |

|                                     |                            |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Aye  | Ms. Jennifer Kobliska- Aye |
| Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye | Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye    |
|                                     | Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye     |

**PB 25-R3**; Designation of Official Newspapers. Ms. Spingler read the resolution designating the Echoes Sentinel and Courier News as official newspapers for the Borough for 2025. Chair accepted the motion for approval and was seconded by Councilman Gibbs.

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| Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Aye                 | Mr. Dustin Antonio - Aye   |
| Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman -<br><b>Absent</b> | Mr. Troy Sims – Aye        |
| Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye                        | Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye    |
| Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Aye                   | Ms. Jennifer Kobliska- Aye |
| Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye                  | Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye    |
|  | Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye     |

**PB 25-R4**; Appointment of Board Professionals for year 2025. Ms. Spingler read the resolution appointing Mr. Linnus the Board Attorney, Catherine Furlan the Board Clerk, Bright View Engineering and Mark Healey as Board professionals. Chairwoman accepted the reading and was seconded by Ms. Spingler.

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|--|----------------------------|
| Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Aye                 | Mr. Dustin Antonio - Aye   |
| Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman -<br><b>Absent</b> | Mr. Troy Sims – Aye        |
| Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye                        | Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye    |
| Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Aye                   | Ms. Jennifer Kobliska- Aye |
| Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye                  | Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye    |
|  | Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye     |

Mr. Linnus swore in the professionals present from Bright View Engineering, Greg Rapp and John Jahr. Richard Calbi and Mark Healey were not present.

Chairwoman Schaefer reviewed the **Committee Appointments**

- A. **Site Plan and Subdivision Committee**; Tracee Schaefer, Don Speeney, Robert Ellen Spingler, Troy Sims, Steve Pote (Alt), Dustin Antonio (Alt)
- B. **Ordinance Committee**; Tracee Schaefer, Don Speeney, Robert Gibbs, Frank Linnus, Mark Healey, Jackie Bodnar (Alt), Jennifer Kobliska (Alt)
- C. **County Planning Liaison**; Tracee Schaefer, Don Speeney, Steve Pote, Mayor Jubin
- D. **Environmental Committee**; Karen Pennett
- E. **Finance Committee**; Tracee Schaefer, Catherine Furlan

Adjourn to the regular meeting at 7:13pm.

**REGULAR MEETING**

Chair waived the reading of the regular minutes from December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024. It was motioned by Councilman Gibbs and seconded by Mr. Pote and carried unanimously by voice vote.

**NEW APPLICATIONS:**

**PB24-02; RAISING CANE’S**

Proposed Fast-Food Restaurant with Drive-Thru  
Blue Star Shopping Center  
Block 6404, Lots 2.01, 2.02, 2.03, & 2.04

The applicant proposes to replace the existing +/-8,616 sf Hibachi Grill & Supreme Buffet pad site fronting on Route 22 with a 3,760-sf Raising Cane’s restaurant with a 2-lane drive thru.

John DeLuca Esq from Savo, Schalk approached the podium as council on behalf of the applicant. Chairwoman Schaefer asked Mr. DeLuca to please explain why the applicant is adjourning again and the reasoning for numerous delays. Mr. DeLuca explained that there was an issue with the lease and another tenant on the site. The other anchor tenant is reserving their right to provide or withhold site improvement consent. Applicant is seeking to obtain the consent prior to getting approval from the Board. Mr. Linnus asked if they have obtained the lease yet for examination. Mr. DeLuca said they have yet to obtain the lease, but have requested it. The issue will hopefully be resolved by March and they hope to be heard at the March 18<sup>th</sup> meeting. They also requested an extension of time to April 30<sup>th</sup>. Madam Chair asked the applicant to re-notice for the March 18<sup>th</sup> meeting at 7:30pm.

**OTHE BUISNESS:**

Mayor Jubin spoke next regarding Affordable Housing and the state requirements. He stated our Borough was tasked with building 119 affordable units and the Borough proposed 91 units. Mayor Jubin stated he was forming an ad hoc committee and invited others to join who are interested in volunteering in biweekly meetings in the evenings starting this month. Mark Healey joined the meeting at this time.

Mr. Linnus swore Mark Healey in as professional Board Planner for the 2025 year.

**PB25-R5; Executive Session PB**

Ms. Spingler read Resolution PB25-R5 for the Executive Session Chairwoman Schaefer asked the public to leave the chambers for the closed session. Chairwoman accepts the reading as the motion to approve and seconded by Councilman Gibbs.

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|---|----------------------------|
| Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Aye          | Mr. Dustin Antonio - Aye   |
| Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman -<br>Absent | Mr. Troy Sims – Aye        |
| Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye                 | Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye    |
| Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Aye            | Ms. Jennifer Kobliska- Aye |

|                                     |                         |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye | Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye |
|                                     | Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye  |

Board resumed the public session at 7:30pm. Chair sought a motion for Board Attorney to continue to represent the Planning Board in the appeal and not to exceed \$5,000. Councilman Gibbs seconded the motion.

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Aye          | Mr. Dustin Antonio - Aye   |
| Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman -<br>Absent | Mr. Troy Sims – Aye        |
| Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye                 | Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye    |
| Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Aye            | Ms. Jennifer Kobliska- Aye |
| Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye           | Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye    |
|   | Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye     |

**Board of Adjustment Annual Report 2024**

Board discussed the report and acknowledge they received it.

**GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS.**

Madam Chair opened it up to the public for comment. Hearing none, comments were closed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:33pm with a motion to adjourn by Councilman Gibbs. The next Regular Meeting will be March 18th, 2025 at 7:30pm.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Respectfully Submitted,



Catherine Furlan

Board Clerk