

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING**

JUNE 9TH, 2025 | 7:00 PM

15 Mountain Blvd., Watchung, NJ 07069

Adopted On: 06/17/2025

CALL TO ORDER: Madam Chair called the Special Meeting to order at 6:59 pm. and read the opening 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 had been published in the Echoes Sentinel and Courier News. Notice was also sent to neighboring towns, the Somerset County Planning Board, The Office of Planning and Advocacy and the Military Commander registered with Watchung. The Chair led the group in saluting the American flag and the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- present	Mr. Dustin Antonio – (Absent)
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman – present	Mr. Troy Sims – present
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – present	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – present
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman - (Absent)	Mr. Francis P. Linnus, Esq. - present
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – present	Mr. Mark Healey, PP – present
Ms. Karen Pennett – present	Mr. John Jahr, Board Traffic Engineer - (Absent)
Mr. Stephen Pote – Tardy arrived 7:03pm	Ms. Catherine Furlan Board Clerk- present

Madam Chair opened the meeting, noting a quorum was present then provided background and introduced Board Planner, Mark Healey. Mr. Healey reviewed the history of affordable housing leading up to the 4th round 2025-2035. The new legislation replaced COHA and is furthermore known as the Housing Element Fair Share Plan (HEFSP).

Mr. Pote arrived at 7:03.

Currently the Borough has a surplus of 8 units from previous credits. Vacant land was reviewed and an adjustment was made since the Borough cannot meet the 110 units the state mandated. After the vacant land adjustment, the Realistic Development Potential or RDP is 23 units. An overlay zone is being suggested, Route 22 Affordable Housing Zone 2. This overlay zone would encompass Block 6201 Lot 4-501, 502 and 6 in the HD Zone. The Board discussed the location of this zone.

Next, Mr. Healey reviewed the 40 affordable units that will be renewed at The Point at Watchung. Other properties that were reviewed were 1375 Plainfield Ave, Our House at 103 High Tor Drive, and 990 Somerset. Mr. Pote asked if we always used vacant land adjustment data (yes). Chair asked what happens to the bonus credits if we do not use them (yes, we lose them)?

Mr. Healey reviewed what is required and what is being proposed in the HEFSP. Mr. Healey discussed the unmet need which is the balance of what is being mandated vs. what is being proposed. The Borough has to come up with a plan for the unmet need. The Borough will continue to incentivize opportunities for affordable housing as land becomes available. March 15th, 2026 is the deadline to adopt any ordinances to implement the HEFSP. Madam Chair opened it up to questions from the Board. Mr. Sims asked if there were any repercussions if we don't meet the goals due to developers abandoning building affordable housing projects? The Board discussed.

Ms. Pennet asked if Brookhill was looked at for developing? Mr. Healy said there was a proposal for senior living at that site, but it was not part of the current plan. Mr. Speeney asked where accessory housing fits into HEFSP? Mr. Healey replied that it is already in HEFSP from a previous round. The Board discussed accessory apartments. Madam Chair asked about the overlay zone. Mr. Healey said the Board does not need to act at this moment in regards to creating the overlay zone. First, HEFSP has to be submitted and approved and in March 2026 new ordinances will need to be adopted. Madam Chair opened it up to the public for questions, hearing none, it was closed. Mayor Jubin thanked the ad hoc committee and the Board. Mr. Speeney asked what HEFSP would be called? Mr. Healey said the date June 9th, 2025 Housing Element Fair Share Plan. Madam Chair made a motion to approve the June 9th, 2025 Housing Element Fair Share Plan. On motion by Mr. Speeney and seconded by Ms. Pennett. Mr. Linnus announced that the resolution would be available at the next meeting June 17th. Madam Chair asked the Board Clerk to please submit a memo and the HEFSP to the governing body.

Roll Call

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:36pm. The next Regular Meeting will be Tuesday, June 17th at 7:30pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,



Catherine Furlan
Board Clerk