



# BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG



Fall/Winter 2022

## OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

### Welcome To Our Newsletter!

Dear Residents and Friends:

The Borough of Watchung is pleased to provide a publication designed to inform you of available municipal services, information on officials, contact numbers for municipal offices and other agencies, along with updates on current projects being undertaken and events within the Borough.

We extend a special thanks to the business and professional members of our community whose support through advertising has made publication of this newsletter possible at no cost to taxpayers. Please support the local businesses that support the Borough.

We would like to take this opportunity to encourage all residents of the Borough of Watchung to contact the municipal offices for any assistance you may need. Community service is a priority of the Borough. We strive to do our best to make this a better community for all our residents.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Letter from Mayor Keith S. Balla .....	3-4	Environmental Commission .....	10
Contact Information.....	4	Watchung Historical Committee .....	11
Watchung Fire Department .....	5	Public Works .....	12
Watchung Rescue Squad .....	5	Watchung Police Department .....	13
Office of Emergency Management .....	6	Watchung Recreation.....	13
Tax Office Reminder .....	6	From the Desk of the Borough Clerk.....	14
Watchung Library Advisory Committee.....	7		
Traffic and Beautification Committee .....	7		
Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission.....	8-10		



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# Letter from Mayor Keith S. Balla

Hello Neighbors & Friends,

As Watchung Mayor for the past four years I wish to thank all of the residents and Borough employees for their help, assistance, patience and trust in my leadership serving as Mayor. I also thank my wife Karen and our two sons Jonah and Noah and our daughter Hannah for their continued unwavering support and encouragement enabling me to provide my time, talents and treasures in service to our residents, businesses and our Borough employees.

I began my term with an ambitious plan to build a new library and community center with New Jersey State Library grant funds that were made available for the first time in many years. We had great cooperation from the volunteers on our Library Ad Hoc committee and Friends of the Watchung Library and Watchung Arts Center to provide all of the materials needed for our grant proposals. Regrettably, Watchung did not receive a New Jersey State Library Grant that would have greatly benefited our popular Public Library and our Arts Center on Stirling Road. During my term there have been many retirements of long-time employees. Watchung's Business Administrator retired in 2019 and the Director of Public Works also retired which led to an exhaustive search for well qualified personnel to lead the Administration and Public Works in Watchung. We are very fortunate to have James Damato as our Administrator with his diverse experience which has been invaluable in helping us navigate these tumultuous times. Our Emergency Management Director had also retired. Thankfully, Carolyn Solon a longtime volunteer and member of the Somerset County OEM stepped up to take the Director position. Carolyn's devotion to our community and public safety has kept our residents and businesses safe. We now have our new Public Works Director, William McClave, with his extensive public works background to lead our devoted DPW team.

In my second year we marshalled the resources to mobilize and communicate with our residents to protect everyone as best as possible with the onslaught of the COVID 19 worldwide pandemic. Fortunately, all of our emergency service personnel comprised of our Watchung Police, volunteer Fire Department and volunteer Rescue Squad, Office of Emergency Management and our Administration worked together tirelessly to keep all in our community safe and well informed. Having to implement a State of Emergency for the Borough of Watchung and organize weekly Council meetings to keep everyone well informed and safe due to the very fluid pandemic situation was challenging. In 2020 our Borough Clerk retired and we went through an extensive search for our new Clerk, Edith Gil. Edith has taken charge as Clerk to digitize our Borough records and along with our CFO William Hance implemented the technology necessary for the Zoom meetings and communications through COVID. Now with back in person meetings being held, the Borough has continued to use Zoom which enables residents anywhere in the world to participate virtually in all of our meetings. To foster and improve transparency I directed that all draft supporting documents be included with all meeting agendas to inform residents of the details behind what was to be discussed and voted upon for each meeting. In September 2020 our long time Police Chief retired. We went through the process of replacement for the new Chief twice and are grateful for the experience and service of our Police Chief Andrew Hart.

In my third year Watchung and Somerset County sustained the brunt of devastating flood waters created by Hurricane Ida. In coordination with our Police Department, Fire Department, Public Works Team, Rescue Squad and Office of Emergency Management our team worked together to ensure that no lives were lost and the men, women

and children stranded in cars by the flood waters were all brought to safety where we provided shelter at our Court House until they were all returned safely to their homes. The floods caused devastating property damage throughout our Borough with washing out Elsinore Dr and Mobus playground and a multitude of damage to the roads, culverts and private residences. Fortunately 90% of the cost of rebuilding the Elsinore Culvert and Mobus playground was covered by FEMA totaling approximately \$665,000. We filled the vacant ranks within the Police Department and promoted Lieutenants and Sergeants within the department to have a full complement within our Police force to best protect and serve our residents and all in our community.

As a fiscally conservative forensic accountant, I have over the past four years carefully maintained the budget, held the line on expenses and minimized tax increases all of which has resulted in the largest Borough of Watchung surplus Fund Balance of nearly \$7.0 million. The developers of the proposed Bonnie Burn apartment complex completed their application and obtained the approvals from the Watchung Planning Board to move forward with the development of the project. As Mayor, I negotiated a Payment in Lieu of Tax ("PILOT") Agreement with the developers which will generate far more annual revenue for Watchung than traditional property taxes, totaling nearly \$32 million extra revenue over the next 30 years.

I welcome and applaud the many new businesses that have opened in Watchung over the past four years including Cinemark Theater, Sierra Trading Post, Home Sense, Chick-fil-A, Lawrence Law, Fiserv, Provident Health Care Diagnostics, Playa Bowls, Fat Ass Lashes, Better than Philly Cheesesteaks, Dicks Warehouse Sale, and soon to be Miller's Ale House and a Super ShopRite at Blue Star. This is a credit to our community's resilience and to our many residents who support our local businesses with their patronage.

## OUR LIBRARY & ARTS CENTER

The Facilities Ad Hoc committee has had numerous meetings to explore options for a new library and community gathering space.

The first option is to create a joint venture between the Borough and a potential developer. Watchung would continue to own these properties, leasing them to a developer. The developer, in turn, would agree to build a mixed-use facility that includes a brand new, state-of-the-art library and community center plus ample parking at no cost to the Borough. The Borough would have to provide the interior furniture and specific space improvements for the Library estimated to be \$750,000.

This concept would also include cost-efficient apartments for our growing number of senior citizens living on fixed incomes. These lower-cost rentals would also help Watchung meet state-required affordable housing obligations.

The second option is for Watchung to pay out-of-pocket for much-needed upgrades to our library and arts center bringing them into current building code compliance. This option is estimated to cost the Borough between \$2.5-\$4.0 million.

The continuation of this plan and any project option will be in the hands of my successor in 2023.

## SURVEY FOR RESIDENTS

As Mayor, I want residents to know that I value their ideas, opinions and suggestions. Local government works best when more people participate in the decision-making. Borough Hall wants to hear from you.

The Camp Endeavor survey was completed to enlist the community's help formulating our Borough's future agenda. The results of the survey

*continued on next page*

## Letter from Mayor Keith S. Balla continued

yielded that the community was most in favor of walking and nature trails at the site. We embraced thoughtful dialogue with our residents. I am confident our residents, with their personal experiences and talents, will provide the expertise and resources to bring this project to a formal plan and ultimate completion.

### VOLUNTEERS

I am also extremely pleased to see an increase in local volunteerism. It's wonderful that so many people are offering their valuable time and energy to help their neighbors and our town.

There has been a substantial increase in the volunteers for our Fire Department, Rescue Squad and many committees including, Recreation, Historical, Traffic and Beatification, CERT, Environmental, Green Team, Library Advisory, Municipal Alliance and Youth Services. I thank all who have given of their valuable time to serve in our community.

There has also been countless hours devoted by those residents serving on the following Boards, Board of Adjustment, Board of Health, and Planning Board. I thank all of the volunteer members and especially thank the respective Chairs of these Boards, Daniel Cronheim, Dr. Bruce Ruck and Tracey Schaefer who have Chaired these Boards during the COVID pandemic.

### MY GRATITUDE

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to each of Watchung's essential workers, first-responders, volunteers, employees, and residents who have generously helped in so many ways over the past four years. Our community truly has come together to help those in need and make Watchung a great place to live, work, play and raise a family.

Please continue to share your ideas and interests to serve and volunteer within our community. Working together for the common good produces lasting fruit and dividends to improve the lives of all residents in our community.

Thank you for the privilege and opportunity to serve as your Mayor. I know that Watchung is now in a great position as a safe, clean, vibrant community in very strong financial condition coupled with a very experienced Administration, dedicated Borough employees and volunteers to provide Watchung residents with a great future.

God Bless you All,

*Keith S. Balla*  
Keith S. Balla, Mayor

## Watchung Municipal Building

15 Mountain Boulevard  
Watchung, New Jersey 07069

Phone: 908-756-0080 • Fax: 908-757-7027

[www.watchungnj.gov](http://www.watchungnj.gov)



Watchung Public Information Channel 15 • Watchung Radio 1610 AM

**Mayor** Keith S. Balla

### BOROUGH COUNCIL

Ronald Jubin, Council President

Wendy Robinson

Pietro "Pete" Martino

Freddie Hayeck

Curt S. Dahl

Christine B. Ead

### Administration

**James Damato, Administrator**

908-756-0080

[JDamato@watchungnj.gov](mailto:JDamato@watchungnj.gov)

### Borough Clerk

**Edith Gil** 908-756-0080 ext. 221

[EGil@watchungnj.gov](mailto:EGil@watchungnj.gov)

### Chief Finance Officer

**William Hance** 908-756-0080 ext. 216

[BHance@watchungnj.gov](mailto:BHance@watchungnj.gov)

### Engineering Office

**Jason Cline** 908-756-0091 ext. 225

[jcline@watchungnj.gov](mailto:jcline@watchungnj.gov)

### Watchung Fire Official

**Chris Czuba** 908-756-0091 ext. 235

[cczuba@watchungnj.gov](mailto:cczuba@watchungnj.gov)

### Police Department

**Emergency** 911

**Non - Emergency** 908-756-3663

### Fire Department

**Emergency** 911

**Non - Emergency** 908-756-0091

### Emergency Management

**Carolyn Solon** 908-756-0080 ext. 239

[CSolon@watchungnj.gov](mailto:CSolon@watchungnj.gov)

### Municipal Court (N. Plainfield)

**Jodi Mack** 908-769-2265

### Tax Assessor

**Ed Kerwin** 908-756-8333 ext. 224

[ekerwin@watchungnj.gov](mailto:ekerwin@watchungnj.gov)

### Tax Collector

**William Hance** 908-756-8333 ext. 223

[BHance@watchungnj.gov](mailto:BHance@watchungnj.gov)

### Construction Official

**Robert Lacosta** 908-756-0080 ext. 228

[RLacosta@watchungnj.gov](mailto:RLacosta@watchungnj.gov)

**Carolyn Taylor, Zoning Officer/TACO**

908-756-0080 ext. 219

[CTaylor@watchungnj.gov](mailto:CTaylor@watchungnj.gov)

### Public Works

908-756-0080 ext. 214

### Watchung Art Center

For information call 908-753-0190

(Closed Saturdays during July and Aug.)

### SC Public Library

**Watchung Branch**

908-458-8456

## SCHOOL DISTRICT

### Watchung Hills Regional High School

**Grades 9 through 12**

108 Stirling Road, Warren, NJ

908-647-4800

### Bayberry Elementary School

**Kindergarten through 4th Grade**

Bayberry Lane

908-755-8184

### Valley View Middle School

**Grades 5 through 8**

50 Valley View Road

908-755-4422

# WATCHUNG FIRE DEPARTMENT

## *IS THERE A FIRE IN YOU?* - Become A Watchung Volunteer Firefighter Today!

The Watchung Fire Department is a 100% volunteer organization that is constantly in need of new members. Beginning at 16 years old, Watchung residents can join our Junior Firefighter program, which allows them to respond to emergencies under the guidance of experienced firefighters, as well as learn about the fire service and gain valuable knowledge and life skills. Our Active Firefighters and Associate Members are over 18 years old and come from Watchung and neighboring communities. Active Firefighters attend basic Firefighter training as well as other training courses, all paid for by the Department. Associate Members assist with non-firefighting activities such as Membership Recruitment and Retention, Fund Raising, and other administrative duties.

The Borough also offers an incentive plan as well as numerous other benefits to our Volunteer Firefighters, most importantly, the ability to be one of the heroes who helps their neighbors in a time of need.

If you or someone you know has a desire to be a hero in

our community, please visit our website at [www.watchungfd.org](http://www.watchungfd.org), follow us on Facebook @WatchungFD, call us at (908) 756-0080 x250, or email at [watchungfire@watchungnj.gov](mailto:watchungfire@watchungnj.gov), or pick up information at Borough Hall! As always, we appreciate the support from our community in Watchung. Without your generous contributions and the dedication of our volunteers YOUR Fire Department could not continue to provide these invaluable lifesaving services.



## WATCHUNG RESCUE SQUAD NIGHT IN THE LIFE



### Follow Captain Matthew King on a typical Thursday night shift!

My name is Matthew King and I am the Captain of the Watchung Rescue Squad. This is the second year I am serving in this role. I ride on Thursday nights from 6PM to 6AM and we rotate weekend shifts every 6th Saturday. At the beginning of each shift, the crew meets at the squad building and completes a Rig/Building Check. This is to ensure that all of the supplies are well stocked and our equipment is in working order in all of our vehicles and our building. After this, we do training as a crew. Each week the training is different. Recently, we have been doing driver training for our newer Probationary Members. We have various training sites to practice driver training including radio communications. After this, we may get dinner and then crew members have free time to complete homework, watch TV or just socialize. I usually take time to go through emails and make sure the schedule is up to date for everyone to follow. When the tasks of the evening are completed, if the crew members live locally, they can go home to sleep, otherwise they spend the rest of the night at the squad. During our shift, our pagers and radios are on to listen for a call or any other communication needed with the town.

### **This could be you!**

**We are looking for eager individuals 18+ to join our squad! No experience is necessary.**

**We offer: Free training, Free uniforms, Flexible schedules, The chance to make a difference!**

**Want to Apply? Have Questions? Visit our website at [www.watchungems.org](http://www.watchungems.org)**

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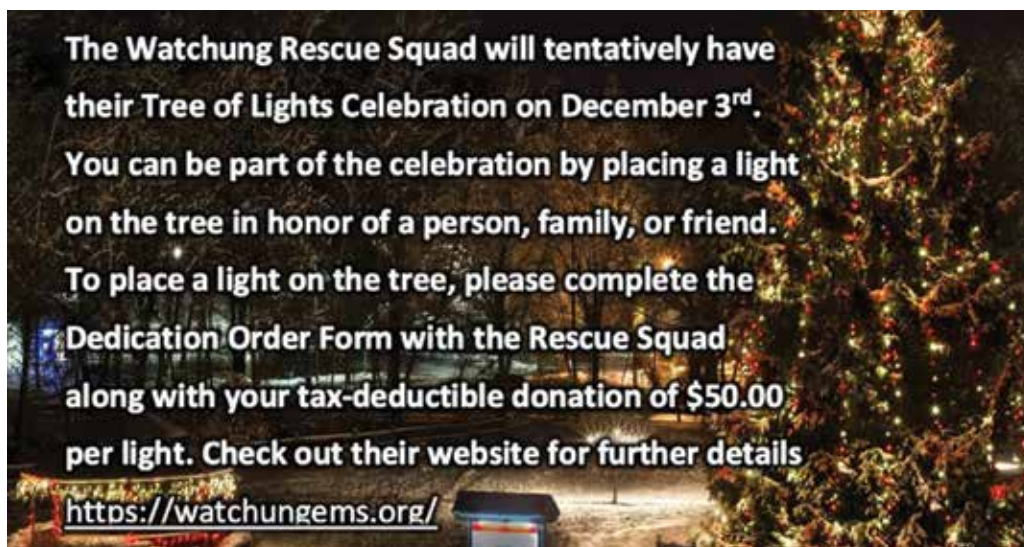
Watchung Rescue Squad



### **Taking a Call**

Our call volume varies; one night may be quiet and the next could be very busy. When we do get a call, whether we are at the building or at home, we are quick and eager to respond. The ambulance lights go on and we are on our way! Upon arriving at the scene of the call, we perform an initial assessment to determine the patient's condition and move step by step appropriately from there. We will then determine if we need other resources (for example paramedics, fire department, police, HazMat, etc.) to respond as well. We move the patient to the ambulance and begin transporting to the appropriate hospital. While en route, we reassess the patient and try to get pertinent past medical history, background information, etc. When we arrive at the hospital, we check the patient in, give report to the designated ER nurse, and bring the patient to their assigned room, transferring care to the hospital staff!





## OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program educates volunteers about disaster preparedness for the hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. CERT offers a consistent nationwide approach to volunteer training and organization that professional responders can rely on during disaster situations, which allows them to focus on more complex tasks. Through CERT, the capabilities to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters is built and enhanced.

### The CERT Basic Course training includes:

**Disaster Preparedness:** Addresses hazards specific to the community. Materials cover actions that participants and their families take before, during and after a disaster as well as an overview of CERT and local laws governing volunteers.

**Fire Suppression:** Covers fire chemistry, hazardous materials, fire hazards and fire suppression strategies. However, the thrust of this session is the safe use of fire extinguishers, controlling utilities and extinguishing a small fire.

**Medical Operations Part I:** Participants practice diagnosing and treating airway obstruction, bleeding and shock by using simple triage and rapid treatment techniques.

**Medical Operations Part II:** Covers evaluating patients by doing a head-to-toe assessment, establishing a medical treatment area and performing basic first aid.

**Light Search and Rescue Operations:** Participants learn about search and rescue planning, size-up, search techniques, rescue techniques and rescuer safety.

**Psychology and Team Organization:** Covers signs and symptoms that might be experienced by the disaster victim and workers, and addresses CERT organization and management.

**Course Review and Disaster Simulation:** Participants review and practice the skills that they have learned during the previous six sessions in a disaster activity.

Free CERT training is offered to Somerset County residents at the Somerset County Training Academy, Hillsborough, NJ. For further information, please email Watchung CERT at: [watchungcert@watchungnj.gov](mailto:watchungcert@watchungnj.gov)

### NJ REGISTER READY—SPECIAL NEEDS REGISTRY

NJ Register Ready was created to help people with disabilities in times of emergency. NJ residents with special needs are encouraged to add their personal information to this special needs registry. The information provided will be shared with emergency response agencies so that responders will be better equipped to serve registrants in the event of an emergency or evacuation in their area. No one else will have access to the information.

To keep this registry current, registrants are required to update their registration information each year.

*Need help registering? Dial 2-1-1 and a representative will assist you in the registration process.*



## WATCHUNG LIBRARY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Library Advisory Committee purchased a beautiful hand-carved wooden sign to be installed on the Valley Road side of the Watchung Library in September. Visible from Hillcrest Road, it helps identify the library's location for the public and brings attention to the newly paved lower parking lot near Best Lake. The new sign replaces one that had been removed when the building was painted a few years ago, and had become too weather-beaten to reuse. This signage is another essential enhancement to the Watchung Public Library.

A donation of four sturdy new weather-proof Adirondack chairs was generously provided by the Hartmann family for the library's lawn, overlooking Best Lake. The LAC purchased six additional matching chairs, including two that are child-sized for young patrons. They are located in the peaceful, scenic space adjacent to the library; it is a wonderful place to sit and read, socialize, gather with friends in an outdoor location, or enjoy a good book. All residents are invited to stop by and check out the newest offerings available at the library, then enjoy the view of the vibrant fall leaves reflected in Best Lake while reading their new selections.



The lives of some of western classical music's most famous composers and musicians were highlighted by a guest lecturer at the library in August, to a near-capacity crowd. Be sure to go online at [sclsnj.org](http://sclsnj.org) to pre-register for any of the upcoming free programs offered at the Watchung Library this fall and winter. Did you know you can suggest a library program? Do YOU have a great idea for a new or unique presentation? Are you a specialist or a presenter who might be interested in sharing your knowledge with the community? Have you ever wondered why a distant library sponsored an interesting program but the same was not offered here? If so, click on "Programs and Events" at the [sclsnj.org](http://sclsnj.org) website, then click on "Suggest a Program." Your request will go directly to the programming director. Let's bring more and different engaging programs to Watchung by using this feature on the SCLSNJ website.



Bayberry School held its back-to-school "Meet the Teacher" event on August 30, and the Friends of the Watchung Library—joined by several members of the Library Advisory Committee—invited elementary students and their families to visit the library following the event. This was a successful school-community collaboration. In only three hours, nearly fifty new patrons—students and adults—signed up for their first library card! The Friends of the Watchung Library supplied ice cream, and children did a craft, painting rocks to adorn the garden area outside the library entrance. Despite the humid August heat, more than 150 people attended.

The next meeting of the LAC will be held in the Bicentennial Room of the library on November 16, at 5:30 p.m. The public is invited to attend in-person or virtually. The meeting link can be found on the borough calendar.

Please remember that YOUR library provides a multitude of materials, services, and programs for all borough citizens and is open six days a week. The dedicated staff members are eager to assist you, so don't hesitate to stop by!

*Tamara Benc*, President, WLAC

## TRAFFIC & BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

The Traffic and Beautification Committee is always in the process of beautifying Watchung. We hope the residents enjoy driving up Somerset Street and seeing the cherry trees a bloom in the Spring and the banners welcoming them to town.

With the help of the DPW, the trees were water bagged during this exceptionally hot summer. The sprinklers were fixed and the grass beneath the trees remained green. The flowers around Borough Hall held up due to their watering. A T&B volunteer helped to water the flowers at the 911 Memorial and the Tree of Lights.

This past Spring, Operation Pride was a success with the help of our residents, the scouts, and the Knights of Columbus who turned out to clean up around our lakes, roads, and schools. Thank you to everyone who volunteered to keep Watchung pristine clean!

T&B is looking forward to decorating for the Fall and Winter Seasons. Plantings needing to be replaced will be planted at the ends of the medians on Somerset Street and around the WATCHUNG sign at Spratford Park. DPW planted the evergreens behind the sign giving it a fresh look.

T&B appreciates our Council's help in lighting the roof trim on Borough Hall and the Texier House, brightening the dark winter evenings. Our committee is planning to bring some light to the east end of Best Lake with a grouping of lit deer.

*Phyllis Juetter*, T&B Chair



# MIDDLE-BROOK REGIONAL HEALTH COMMISSION

111 Greenbrook Road  
Green Brook, NJ 08812  
Kevin G. Sumner, Health Officer/Director

732-968-5151 x 1  
732-968-5331 (fax)  
mbrhc@middlebrookhealth.org (e-mail)

[www.middlebrookhealth.org](http://www.middlebrookhealth.org)

## COMMUNICABLE DISEASES ARE NOTHING NEW, BUT...

Public health has a long and storied history in responding to and controlling the spread of communicable diseases. In fact, the CDC names control of infectious diseases as one of the ten great public health achievements of the 20th Century, resulting in healthier populations and longer life spans. However, it must be noted that our work is never done. While we are all learning to live with COVID-19, the pandemic of the last years is a stark reminder of the impact infectious diseases can have on an individual and a population. More recently we have heard of the spread of Monkeypox and of the identification of at least one case of Polio in the United States. Both of these infectious diseases were rare and in fact, in the case of Polio essentially considered eradicated in the US. However, just like humans, organisms evolve and find ways to survive, and our human actions (inactions) do not help. Human behaviors such as travel, not keeping vaccinations up to date, going to work or school sick and not washing our hands all provide opportunities for a disease to arise in an individual and populations. Our public health response to COVID-19 (and other diseases) should be a reminder to us of the importance, effectiveness, and value of public health interventions such as vaccination, physical distancing (staying home when sick), and hand washing. These are all effective tools and if used consistently can all help to prevent the spread of disease. Even if you are not concerned about your own health, consider the effect you may have on others by not practicing good public health. Our actions make a difference so please:

- Stay Home if Sick
- Wash Your Hands Frequently
- Make Sure You and Your Children (and pets) are up to date on All Vaccinations
  - o Including 'routine' vaccines such as tetanus, polio, influenza, etc.
  - o Current recommended vaccines can be found at:
    - o Adults - [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/adult.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/adult.html)
    - o Children - [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent.html)
- Cover Your Coughs and Sneezes
- Do Not Share Personal Items



If you have any questions or concerns about COVID-19, monkeypox, polio, or any other infectious diseases please contact the Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission at 732-968-55151 or by email at [mbrhc@middlebrookhealth.org](mailto:mbrhc@middlebrookhealth.org). We are happy to hear from you and try to answer your questions, though please understand that the situation and available information are constantly changing so we may not have all the answers.

## RABIES CLINICS

Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission plans to offer several rabies clinics in the fall to assure availability of free rabies vaccines for our cat and dog owners.

Our tentative Schedule is as follows:

- November 19, 2022  
9:00 am to 10:30 am  
Finderne Fire House
- December 3, 2022  
9:00 am to 10:00 am  
Watchung Fire House

As we are still working to coordinate all the moving pieces to make these clinics happen, residents are asked to call the Health Commission at 732-968-5151 in late September/October to confirm the dates, times and locations. All cats must be held in a carrier and all dogs must be leashed.





## **FLU SEASON MEANS FLU SHOTS ARE NEEDED**

Although we are focused on COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, it is very important to remember to get your annual flu vaccine! The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone over six months of age get a flu vaccine each year, but it is especially important that certain people get vaccinated either because they are at high risk of having serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for people at high risk for developing flu-related complications.

For example, the following groups are at particular risk:

- Pregnant women
- People 50 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
  - Health care workers
  - Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
  - Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)

Contact the Health Commission at 732-968-5151 for information about locally available flu vaccines.

Protect yourself (and those around you)! Get your shots!

## **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

The health department and other emergency response agencies are ready to assist during times of need, but our capacities and resources are limited. Therefore, it is critical that we all prepare for emergencies by making a plan and an emergency kit. Federal guidelines and recommendations from the experts suggest a kit of essential supplies for a minimum of three (3) days. This kit should include such vital items as water, non-perishable food items, medications, important documents, and many more items.

For a complete list of items and instructions on preparing a kit, see [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) or <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies>. These sites also have valuable information on developing a personal preparedness plan, such as how to reach loved ones during an incident, identifying where you will meet and how you will communicate when traditional methods are not available. Social media sites are a useful way to obtain current information so we encourage you to monitor local government sites including your health department: Twitter - @mbrhc, Facebook – [www.facebook.com/mbrhc](http://www.facebook.com/mbrhc), and our Website - [www.middlebrookhealth.org](http://www.middlebrookhealth.org).

Everyone's circumstances are different so use these tools as a guide and develop a plan that helps you. Remember as you prepare your plans and kits not to forget about those in your family with special needs, such as the elderly and the young. Also, remember to plan for your pets.

## **Young Children and Cannabis – A Bad Combination**

The following information is courtesy of the New Jersey Poison Control Center. <https://www.njpies.org/> 1-800-222-1222

For the fourth year in a row the NJ Poison Control Center has seen an increase in calls concerning children who accidentally consumed cannabis (marijuana, THC) edibles. Last year (2021), the NJ Poison Control Center assisted in the medical treatment of more than 150 children who were accidentally exposed to cannabis edibles — nearly 100 children 5-years-old and younger; more than 55 children between the ages of 6 and 12. According to Dr. Bruce Ruck, Watchung Board of Health President and Managing Director of the Poison Control Center, calls in 2022 are on track to exceed 2021.

Although many people believe cannabis (marijuana, THC) is safe in any amount, consuming too much cannabis can lead to unwanted physical and mental side effects ranging in severity/seriousness. When compared to smoking cannabis, the effects of edibles are often delayed leaving people to consume more than they intended. Unlike adults, children who ingest edibles are at a much higher risk for severe health effects and even fatal outcomes from cannabis. These effects can include trouble breathing, loss of coordination, drowsiness, and seizures. In severe cases, children may need to be admitted to an intensive care unit (ICU).

"Since edibles may be highly concentrated, limit the number of edibles you have at home if you live with young and school-aged children," says Lewis Nelson, chair of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. "Many edible products look and taste like store-bought treats and other food products, making it difficult for children to know the difference. Although edibles like brownies, gummies, and lollipops can be fun and/or therapeutic for adults, high levels of THC (the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana), can lead to dangerous overdose symptoms in children."

*continued on next page*

When using or storing marijuana products in the home, remember the following tips to prevent an accidental exposure:

- Store edible products in a secure/locked place, out of sight and reach of children and pets.
- Cannabis products can also cause severe and potentially fatal health effects in pets.
- Limit the amount/number of edible products you have in the house at one time.
- Be aware of the potency (concentration of THC) of the edibles you have at home.
- The effects of edible cannabis may be delayed compared to smoking cannabis.
- Only purchase products containing cannabis from licensed, reputable sources.

If you think someone consumed too much cannabis, contact your local poison control center immediately for medical treatment advice. Poison control centers are a medical resource for both the public and health professionals.

**Get help 24/7 Call 1-800-222-1222**

**If someone is not breathing, hard to wake up or having a seizure, call 9-1-1**

## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Another year is drawing to a close, and the Environmental Commission (EC) sends greetings of the season to all Watchung residents! As always, we have spent 2022 working to fulfill our mission statement: "To protect and preserve the natural resources of the Borough, make recommendations to the Mayor and Council on actions and policies of sustainability and environmental stewardship, and preserve and enhance the rural residential aspects of life in the Borough of Watchung." Here are the highlights of our year...



The EC started two new recycling programs for residents: Styrofoam and books. With help from the Dept. of Public Works (DPW), three Styrofoam collections were held – in February, June, and September – which yielded over 750 pounds of foam. Keeping Styrofoam out of landfills helps protect wildlife and the environment, and residents are encouraged to save all clean white Styrofoam for recycling in this special program. The next collection is scheduled for Saturday, January 21, 2023.

A book recycling program was started in July, with a bright green recycling bin installed along the driveway of the Firemen's Exempt Hall. Hardcover and paperback books in good condition with a barcode on the cover are accepted. (No encyclopedias, magazines, or water-damaged books, please.) Books can also be donated to the Watchung Library.



Have you noticed a small tree growing on the lawn of the north shore of Watchung Lake? If not, look for it in its protective enclosure. It's an offshoot of the famous and amazing Salem Oak tree, a 565-year-old tree from Salem, NJ, that fell in 2019. NJDEP grew seedlings from this historic tree's acorns and gave one to each town in the state. The EC planted Watchung's seedling on April 22, Earth Day, and is excited to watch this special oak tree grow and thrive over the coming years.



Our biggest event took place on April 23 – Operation Pride Day – when the EC gave away 200 seedlings and 75 bags of milkweed seeds to residents, and then hosted a planting event near the stream just east of Best Lake. In a long-planned effort to help restore the stream bank, improve the stream's water quality and benefit aquatic life, fifty seedlings of native trees and shrubs were planted by residents, Borough officials, and EC members. Six large native trees were also planted by DPW. These actions will help reduce flooding and slow erosion in the area, and the Commission hopes to continue planting there. We invite you to check it out and enjoy the beauty of that location.

Please remember that a permit (free!) is required when taking down any tree, dead or alive, and please replant whenever possible to keep Watchung green. Reduce, reuse, recycle, and think globally/act locally to protect the environment in Watchung and around the planet!

Watchung Environmental Commission

*Rachel Funcheon,*

Chair

# WATCHUNG HISTORICAL COMMITTEE

*Hello Neighbors,  
Greetings from the Watchung Historical Committee!*

The Historical Committee invites all Watchung residents to visit the Watchung Texier House Museum in the center of the Watchung Circle. Join us every first and third Sundays of each month from 2pm to 4pm with additional openings for special holidays and events. Be sure to check the Borough website before your visit for announcements, availability, programming, and special guests! We once again participated in Somerset County's Journey Through the Past in October, and were happy to see how much interest and support there is at the event each year!

We are excited to announce new additions and improvements to the Museum! We worked closely with The Garden Club of Watchung to update the display on Tiby Wotherspoon, who had a brush with history as the youngest female survivor, and the very last survivor of the General Slocum Steamship Disaster of 1904. The museum's Artists of Watchung exhibit now features a beautiful original painting by Dot Kenney, who was a longtime resident who taught generations of young people at Watchung's Valley View Middle School. The Lions Club worked closely with volunteers to document the history of the organization which is now displayed in the Eaton Room. Over the coming months the Committee will be focusing on updates to the School Display.

The committee is grateful for community donations and wishes special thanks to the Blackadar Family for the donation of a beautiful ornamental shrub which accents the recently restored brick patio and lighting along the Stony Brook. Several volunteers came together over the summer to install a new display featuring original signs which longtime residents may recognize from the Watchung of years past. These display updates are a reminder to us all that the Texier House Museum is Watchung's community museum which continues to benefit from the hard work of residents, volunteers, and historical committee members alike.

Our oral history film collections will soon be more accessible to the public on YouTube so residents and those interested in Watchung's history can have easy and convenient access to them and learn more about the rich history of the Borough! We have approximately 10 hours of footage, and these are locally produced historical videos.

The oral history archives represent the first great step towards the committee's goal of digitizing our documents and displays through donations and grant support. In the years to come, we hope to have a complete video tour and comprehensive online access to our photo collections to supplement our oral history film catalogue.

The Committee salutes all who made possible the Borough's veterans banner program and was glad to provide guidance and resources to implement the program. We are happy to see the inaugural roll out on Memorial Day and invite everyone to tour the Texier House Museum's curated array of local militaria, media collection, and exhibits with information on Watchung's veterans.



*Horse trails once criss-crossed the Watchung landscape. It was not uncommon to see locals riding horses along the main roads in town including Mountain Boulevard, Valley Road, Bonnie Burn, Stirling Road or even Johnston Drive. Old Somerset Street was no exception, and once served exclusively as a riding trail. It ran uninterrupted between Hillcrest and Bonnie Burn Road, both south and parallel to Ridge Road. A discreet entrance to Old Somerset Street is still visible while traveling north along Hillcrest Road. This same horse trail extended west of Hillcrest and into the towns of Warren and Bedminster.*



*Throughout its history, the Watchung Library has resided in three buildings. It was first located in the northwest corner of a multiuse building known as the Honeymoon Apartments which was located in front of where the Rescue Squad building resides today. This lower northwest corner was where the Watchung library originally resided and had approximate dimensions of 16' x 30' making it about 480 square feet in area. The building, like many of the original structures in town did not have plumbing, but only two adjacent outhouses used for lavatory purposes. The building was owned and occupied by the Doleman and Douglas families.*



*Harlan Pratt's signature antique-style coffee tables with a simple pine or cherry top and cast iron base built and sold at the Valley Furniture Shop brought him much success during his early business endeavors. It is estimated he sold approximately 3,300 of them.*

The Watchung Historical Committee has completed the restoration and conservation of the Legend of Watchung mural. Through a generous community effort to save the mural, the Watchung Historical Committee was able to preserve and prepare it for future display entirely through private charitable donations and grants. We look forward to announcing the location of a new home for the impressive and unique 10-foot high by 16-foot-long original piece of artwork. More details will be available for report on the public display of the mural in the next Borough newsletter.

The Historical Committee of Watchung is grateful for public input, donations, and patronage. To learn more about how you can help the Watchung Texier House Museum, and to volunteer for our upcoming 2023 speaker series please email us at [historic@watchungnj.gov](mailto:historic@watchungnj.gov).

The Watchung Historical Committee



## PUBLIC WORKS

The 2022 Leaf Pickup will commence on November 1, 2022 and continue throughout the month of November. All leaves must be in **BIODEGRADABLE PAPER BAGS** and placed on the grass area close to the road. **NO PLASTIC BAGS WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR PICKUP.** Pickups will not be scheduled for any specific time or location.



Leaf pickup is limited to high density areas located within the following areas:

Brookdale, Stirling and Hillcrest Roads North to Evergreen Lane; Mountain Blvd from Washington Drive to Rock Ave.; Johnston Drive to the water tower including Upper Drive and Johnston Drive Extension.

All residents are urged to utilize their leaves as compost; however, should any resident in a rural area desire pickup of leaves in **BIODEGRADABLE PAPER BAGS ONLY**, call the office of Public Works at **908-756-0080, ext. 214**. Due to the State's Stormwater Regulations, the Borough has an ordinance prohibiting the placement of leaves in the streets, culverts, or streams.

### Residents:

Please remember to comply with snow removable regulations. Snow removed from driveways or any other place shall not be placed on any public street or right-of-way!! § Chapter 17-3.3

§ Chapter 14-45.1

### Snow and Ice Removal from Sidewalks and Driveways.

The owner or tenant of real property abutting, adjoining, or bordering any public street shall remove all snow and ice from the abutting, adjoining, or bordering sidewalk and driveway within the public right-of-way, of said public street, within 24 hours of the snow having fallen or the ice having formed thereon.

Check the borough's website for full regulations or call our Public Works Dept. with any questions (908) 756-0080 ext. 214



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# WATCHUNG POLICE DEPARTMENT

According to the National Hurricane Center, the Atlantic hurricane season officially started on June 1st of this year. Numerous Universities have issued studies indicating that models have predicted an active hurricane season for 2022. As the fall season changes to winter, the threat of tropical storms and hurricanes will shift to severe snow storms and blizzards. Watchung residents and first responders are not strangers to major weather events. In recent years we have endured high winds, flooding, and significant snow accumulations that have caused long-term power outages and travel hazards.

While Watchung Police, Fire, EMS, DPW, and OEM always provide excellent service during major weather events, we recommend that our residents take some time to prepare for the storms that are almost certain to affect us in the upcoming months. Staying up-to-date and informed about weather events is critical. The Borough of Watchung regularly uses the NIXLE platform to send warnings and information to residents through text, email, and social media. You can sign up for the NIXLE system by visiting [www.nixle.com](http://www.nixle.com).

The N.J. Office of Emergency Management recommends that families create a communications plan in advance of a disaster or emergency. The plan should include keeping a record of all important phone numbers and designating an out-of-town person as central point of contact to help reconnect family members in the event of a disaster. Templates for family emergency plans are available free at both [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) and [ready.gov](http://ready.gov)

Last September, Watchung residents and employees experienced the danger of flash flooding during Hurricane Ida. The Watchung Circle, Somerset Street, and some stretches of Route 22 experienced high fast moving water levels. According to FEMA, six inches of moving water may be enough to knock you down, and as little as twelve inches of moving water can lift a vehicle. If you are traveling and encounter flooded roadways, do not attempt to drive through the water. While our Watchung Police Officers are trained in Swift Water Rescue Awareness, hazardous hidden debris and the danger that the water presents are not worth the risk to your life and safety.

When a major weather event occurs, the most common response for residents is to shelter-in-place. Depending on the severity of the storm, you and your family may be unable to leave your home for several days. Storing adequate supplies and water in advance will ensure you are prepared. A gallon of water per person/per day is the recommended quantity. According to the Red Cross, you should begin by preparing two types of emergency kits; home kits that include at least three days of supplies per household member, and "mini-kits" (also known as "go bags") that contain supplies that you will use during an emergency evacuation. In addition to food, items to consider are first aid supplies, medications, currency, flashlights, and batteries.

Once you have these smaller supply kits in place, you can begin to focus on food and water storage that can sustain your family for a longer period of time. There are several companies that offer emergency food packages containing freeze dried meals. You can also purchase canned foods or other products that do not need to be refrigerated. Items like peanut butter and energy bars are calorie-dense and easy to store. Having access to clean water is not a guarantee during a disaster. While storing bottled water is important, you may consider other methods of accessing water. Items like rain barrels can provide over fifty gallons of water which can be purified by boiling.

Residents with disabilities or vulnerable needs may require additional assistance during an emergency or disaster. New Jersey has two different resources available where residents can provide emergency services with information that can help first responders provide special assistance. Smart 911 and NJ Register Ready are separate databases that provide confidential registration that can be used for emergency responses. You can learn more by visiting [www.13.state.nj.us](http://www.13.state.nj.us) and [www.smart911.com](http://www.smart911.com) (Please note that NJ Register Ready and Smart 911 do not automatically guarantee 911 service response).

Disaster planning and preparation should take into account all members of the family, including our pets. Having food supplies, water, medications, leashes, vaccination records and carriers on hand are important for emergency situations. Consider including your pets in emergency drills. If you are forced to evacuate, be mindful of hazards like spilled chemicals or dangerous debris. Ensure that your pet has emergency contact information on their collar or carrier.

As always, the members of the Watchung Police Department are well trained and available twenty-four hours a day to provide service to our residents. Stay safe!

*Detective Lieutenant Scott Anderle*  
*Watchung Police Department*  
*Executive Officer*  
*Criminal Investigation Division Commander*  
**Additional resources are available at:**

- American Red Cross [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)
- NJ Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness <https://www.njohsp.gov/>
- NJ 2-1-1 [www.nj211.org](http://www.nj211.org)



## **2022/23 SEASON Adult Basketball** **Open to Watchung and Warren residents**

**Fridays: Starting November 18th thru June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Times: 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm**

**Where: Bayberry School gym - 113 Bayberry Lane, Watchung**

**Please sign registration form before entering**

For more info or cancellations due to inclement weather please call 908-756-0080 Ext. 210  
**Gym closed on the following dates; Nov. 11 & 25, Dec. 23 & 30, April 07, May 26**  
**And anytime school is closed for inclement weather.**



**Open to Watchung and Warren residents only!**  
(Must be 18 or older)

**"Pick up style" GAME NIGHTS:**

# DON'T FORGET!

## January is Dog License Renewal Month in Watchung!

### TOP 3 REASONS TO LICENSE YOUR DOG:

- Easy identification is a lost dog's ticket home.
- Prevents spread of Rabies.
- **It's State Law!**



**Deadline to register is  
JANUARY 31, 2023!**

Residents can renew their dog licenses online at:  
<https://watchungnj.gov/clerk-digital/313-pet-registration>  
or download/print the application and bring or mail with payment to:

Borough of Watchung Clerks Office  
Dog Licensing  
15 Mountain Blvd  
Watchung, NJ 07069



The Borough is seeking to further our  
success in community engagement  
through our residents.



Learn more about our Boards, Commissions or  
Committees and fill out an application by visiting:  
<https://watchungnj.gov/resident/become-a-volunteer>



**VOLUNTEERS MAKE IT WORK!**



## Rental Property Update

**LANDLORDS** in the Borough of Watchung  
must register their rental property.

All registrations are due by the end of September of each year.

### Fees

- \$150 Annual registration and inspection fee
- \$50 Per unit, change in tenant/occupancy
- \$50 Per unit, re-inspection fee
- \$50 Failure to be present and/or provide access at requested inspection time (15 min grace period)
- \$50 Petitioned inspection fee (when filed by occupant)

For complete details and to download the **PROPERTY REGISTRATION FORM**,  
please visit: [www.watchungnj.gov](http://www.watchungnj.gov) and go to the CLERK page.

**SIGN UP**



### Register for Borough of Watchung Website e-Bulletins

The E-Mail registration list is an "Opt-In" style  
email list. You must register to receive Watchung  
e-News and you can unsubscribe at any time.

Go to: <https://watchungnj.gov/resident/resident-communications>

Click on: **SIGN UP FOR EMAILS** (black button)

Fill out the information. The screen will be displayed like the one below.

Submit by clicking: **SIGN UP** (orange button)



or use this QR code



# THANK YOU!

Watchung Borough would like to thank the businesses that appear in this newsletter and to recognize them each as supporters and cornerstones of our community. For it is with their contributions that this newsletter has been produced at no charge to our residents. The Borough would like to further request that citizens, in response, patronize these businesses first when given a choice as these businesses are saving each citizen tax dollars.



### THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG Mayor & Council Reorganization Meeting

**JANUARY 5, 2023 AT 6:30PM**

**Borough Hall**

**15 Mountain Boulevard**

**Watchung, NJ 07069**

For meeting details and to tune in visit:

[www.watchungnj.gov](http://www.watchungnj.gov)



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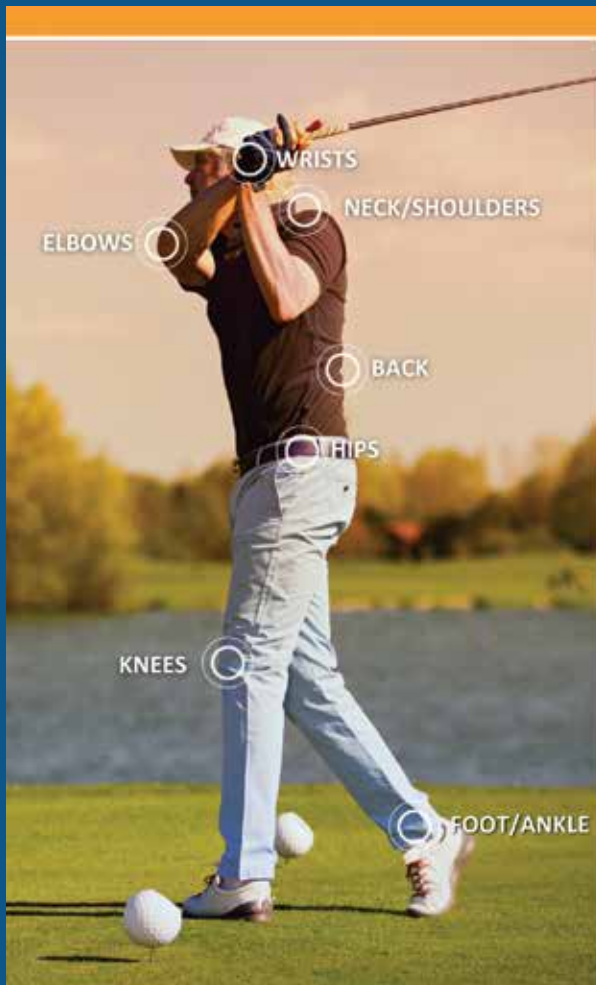
Fall/Winter 2022



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