

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

JUNE 1, 2023

MAYOR’S STATEMENT: Mayor Ronald Jubin called the meeting to order at 7:31 P.M. and stated the following: *“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 and FOR THE PASSING OF JUDGE LEVINE

ROLL CALL

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

PROCLAMATION

Mayor Jubin read the following proclamations onto the record.

- ❖ Alzheimer’s and Brain Awareness Month
- ❖ LGBTQ+ Pride Month

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Mayor Jubin read the following Community Service Award onto the record.

- ❖ Community Service Award: Sondra Fechtner

Mayor Jubin and Council Members took turns expressing their thanks and gratitude for Ms. Fechtner and for all of her contributions to the Community.

Ms. Fechtner spoke on how her family planted their roots in Watchung and the process of building Cardinal Drive. She expressed how thankful she feels belonging to such a wonderful community.

1. Administration & Finance – Councilman Fischer had no further report from what was posted.
2. Police – Councilman Marano stated all the Borough fields will now have signs that they are smoke free facilities. He advised the new block party form is now available on our Police Department’s website and mentioned there is a potential new Police Department candidate for hire, currently undergoing background investigation stage. He also reported that the Borough did not qualify for the license plate reader grant, on upgrades to the body cameras and police vehicle technology, awaiting County approval for the street sign dedicated to Officer Melchionda, and on the current officer in training for the scholarship program. Lastly, he reported on the ongoing grandparent scam.

Mayor Jubin advised all to be aware of the scam and asked for the information to be posted on the Borough website and social media.

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3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Council President Ead mentioned updated details are listed in the written report and the Department of Public Works is keeping busy with improvements.

4. Public Affairs:

Environmental – Councilwoman Abi-Habib referenced the Green Team & Environmental Minutes on the agenda, but mentioned the preferred tree list on the website is currently being updated to streamline the planting process. She advised the Styrofoam recycling bins are being emptied every day and thanked the DPW and Environmental Commission for all their help. Updates on the plantings were discussed from Operation Pride and discussions occurred relating to the tree swallows who have made a home in Watchung. The State of New Jersey Conservation Wildlife Foundation is looking for bat counters and lastly, Council Member Abi-Habib reminded everyone the farmers market starts Tuesday, June 6th and will be located in the Best Lake parking lot.

Mayor Jubin suggested building a swallow house and also provided comments on what a success the Community picnic event was.

Recreation – Clerk Edith Gil mentioned the written report was posted.

Historical – Councilman Fischer reported on the Memorial Day service event. Mayor Jubin urged all residents to visit the Texier House for all of the Borough's history it provides.

Board of Health – Councilman Marano had no report.

5. Fire – No update provided.
6. Laws/Ordinances – Councilman Hayeck had no further report from what was posted.

REPORTS OF BOROUGH OFFICERS

7. Engineer – Borough Engineer Jason Cline reported on the I-bank application submitted and advised they are in the process of scheduling a meeting. He also mentioned Department of Transportation Road project survey was finished.
8. Police Chief – Police Chief Hart reported on the numbers for the month of May. He mentioned there was a bear sighting recently in the Mayor's backyard and provided safety reminders to residents.
9. Fire Official – Fire Official Czuba reported on last months inspections and provided details on the new training systems.
10. Rescue Squad – Councilman Hayeck advised a written report was submitted but highlighted the top responder for the month of April.
11. Emergency Management – OEM Coordinator Carolyn Solon had no report.
12. Attorney – Attorney Sordillo had no report.

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13. Finance – CFO Bill Hance advised the sewer bills were mailed out recently and due on July 1st.

Mayor Jubin spoke on the Energy Receipt Tax webinar he attended. He advised the State of New Jersey has been keeping funds from municipalities and out of 536 municipalities, over 420 of them signed to petition the Governor and legislature to start returning funds owed back to municipalities.

14. Clerk – Clerk Edith Gil provided a reminder that early voting begins tomorrow, June 2nd and runs through Sunday, June 4th with further details listed on our Borough website. On Saturday, June 3rd, the County Clerk will have extended hours in their Somerville Office from 9am-12pm for voters who wish to receive a vote by mail ballot.

She provided an update on the CivicPlus Agenda Management software. She stated they are now looking to go live in August or September at latest. The assigned Implementation Consultant and Project Manager left Civic Plus and the Borough was assigned someone else, so this pushed back some pre-scheduled meetings. She also mentioned they are in the next stages and now looping in our Boards Clerk and the Board of Health Secretary for user training.

15. Administrator – Administrator Damato provided detailed information on the proposed gas main replacement on Somerset Street. This process may be inconvenient for Watchung residents and people who pass through Watchung for a few months. Nixle alerts social media alerts will go out regarding this project. The Borough is looking to get additional information from them on exact timeframes to make this a smooth process.

16. Youth Services – No update.

17. Planning Board – Mayor Jubin advised at the last meeting discussions occurred relating to the outdoor dining Ordinance which was recently passed.

18. Municipal Alliance – Councilman Marano advised the Committee is currently focused on organizing project graduation.

19. Library Advisory Committee – Councilman Fischer said farewell to Hannah Kerwin and thanked her for her service in Watchung.

Mayor Jubin expressed his thanks to Hannah Kerwin for all her time and dedication to Watchung.

20. Traffic and Beautification – Council President Ead advised the Committee met on May 1st and discussed many topics such as upcoming landscape improvements, spring flower plantings, planting through the village green and many other areas around the Borough. She mentioned the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 5th.

PUBLIC PORTION / AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

- 1) Kristy Hartmann, inquired on who residents reach out to regarding the bats. Councilwoman Abi-Habib advised that anyone with concerns can reach out to her or anyone on the Environmental Commission. Ms. Hartmann proceeded to ask for an explanation on the placement of surveillance

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cameras on Phillips and Mobus field.

Mr. Damato provided responded in regards to how many and where the cameras were placed. He explained cameras have a certain distance and angle they can pick up on to adequately cover a certain area. He also mentioned they will be installing their own poles to expedite the process. The need exists right now to secure these areas as the cameras there right now are outdated.

Ms. Hartmann discussed with Administrator Damato how these cameras will be monitored. She also asked for further clarification on a \$13,000.00 cost associated with the Watchung Little League and asked if the Little League will reimburse the town from the donations raised.

Administrator Damato directed CFO Bill Hance to look further into this cost and provide a response to Ms. Hartmann before the end of the meeting.

Council President Ead thanked the Police Department and EMS team for their hard work and dedication to the town.

DISCUSSIONS

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE:

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes	April 24, 2023
Green Team Meeting Minutes	April 26, 2023
Library Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes	March 15, 2023
Mayor and Council Meeting Minutes	May 4, 2023
Rescue Squad Monthly Report	May 2023

#12: Notice of Zoning Board Public Hearing on June 8th from Pushpam and Sana Patel for approval of bulk variances, 55 Jared Court, block 6802/ lot 14; recv'd 5/30/23, cc: M&C.

Motion to Accept above by Ead/ second by Marano

RC: Ead [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Absent] Fischer [Y] Marano [Y] Abi- Habib [Y]

CONSENT RESOLUTIONS

R1: Authorizing Watchung's Board of Education Tax Levy Certification for 2023-2024

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R2: Authorizing Watchung Hills Regional High School Board of Education Tax Levy Certification for 2023-2024

R3: Authorizing Refund of Tax Overpayment of 637 Valley Road, Block 7100/Lot 2.01

R4: Authorizing Purchase Orders over Allowed Threshold – Axon Enterprise, Inc. (*body worn camera equipment*)
Northeast Cabling Group (*11 Phillips field cameras*)
Northeast Cabling Group (*17 Mobus field cameras*)

R5: Authorizing the Appointment of Abigail Ann Marsh as Part-Time Summer Assistant to the Construction Office

Motion to Adopt above by Ead/ second by Hayeck

RC: Ead [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Absent] Fischer [Y] Marano [Y] Abi- Habib [Y]

NON-CONSENT

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

OR 23/06: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING APPENDIX A OF THE BOROUGH CODE TO UPDATE AND AMEND THE RULES OF THE COUNCIL, INCLUDING THE PROCEDURES FOR THE ADOPTION OF ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

R6: Introducing Ordinance 23/06 to Amend Appendix A of the Borough's Code

Council Member Hayeck thanked Clerk Edith Gil for recommending this Ordinance which will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Boroughs operation.

Motion to Introduce and Adopt above by Hayeck/ second by Ead

RC: Ead [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Absent] Fischer [Y] Marano [Y] Abi- Habib [Y]

OR 23/07: ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTIONS OF CHAPTER 12, FIRE PREVENTION, OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG

R7: Introducing Ordinance 23/07 to Amend Chapter 12, Fire Prevention, of the Borough's Code

Motion to Introduce and Adopt above by Hayeck/ second by Marano

RC: Ead [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Absent] Fischer [Y] Marano [Y] Abi- Habib [Y]

OR 23/08: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 23/02 ADOPTED APRIL 20, 2023 ESTABLISHING CHAPTER 22 ENTITLED "FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT REGULATIONS" TO FURTHER AMEND SECTION 103.1 DESIGNATING A FLOODPLAIN ADMINISTRATOR

R8: Introducing Ordinance 23/08, Amending Ordinance 23/02 to Clarify Section 103.1, Designating a

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Floodplain Administrator

Motion to Introduce and Adopt above by Hayeck/ second by Ead

RC: Ead [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Absent] Fischer [Y] Marano [Y] Abi- Habib [Y]

OR 23/09: ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BOROUGH'S ZONING REGULATIONS, CHAPTER 28, LAND DEVELOPMENT, TO REVISE ARTICLE 28-500 REGULATING FENCES AND WALLS

R9: Introducing OR 23/09 Amending Chapter 28, Article 28-500 Regulating Fences and Walls

Council Member Hayeck provided clarification on what the amendments reflect in Ordinance 23/09.

Motion to Introduce and Adopt above by Hayeck/ second by Ead

RC: Ead [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Absent] Fischer [Y] Marano [Y] Abi- Habib [Y]

OR 23/10: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG, CH. 5-12.76 ET SEQ. THEREOF, AND TO, FIX AND DETERMINE MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM SALARIES AND COMPENSATION TO BE PAID TO CERTAIN EMPLOYEES

R10: Introducing OR 23/10 Establishing a Minimum and Maximum Salary Ordinance

Motion to Introduce and Adopt above by Fischer/ second by Hayeck

RC: Ead [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Absent] Fischer [Y] Marano [Y] Abi- Habib [Y]

R11: Confirming the Re-Appointment of Edith G. Gil to the Position of Municipal Clerk

Mayor and Council Members expressed their thanks and appreciation for Clerk Edith Gil.

Clerk Edith Gil thanked Mayor Jubin and Council Members for all their support. She stated it feels great to be recognized for the work and dedication put in. She thanked Council Members for their confidence and her own team for always helping her move the office forward. She is proud to be surrounded by them.

Motion to Adopt above by Fischer/ second by Ead

RC: Ead [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Absent] Fischer [Y] Marano [Y] Abi- Habib [Y]

PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1) Kristy Hartmann, questioned why the library architect plans drafted in 2014 and 2015 can not be used now and commented on removing an invasive plant at the Watchung Lake.

Administrator Damato explained that the library renovations are a complex project and the 2014 and 2015 drafted plans are not adequate and pragmatic. Discussions occurred with Administrator Damato if an adequate size elevator would also be included in the library architectural plans.

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Engineer Jason Cline provided a detailed explanation that the goal of the lake dredging is to remove a lot of invasive vegetation.

Mayor Jubin provided comments on the upcoming new library building and asked for residents to provide their feedback. The goal is to have this building meet the needs of today and be functional for many years to come.

Mayor Jubin also provided detailed comments in support of the cameras being installed at Phillips Field.

R12: Authorizing Executive Session to Discuss Contract Negotiations with Ferrera Construction

Motion to Adopt above by Ead / second by Marano

RC: Ead [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Absent] Fischer [Y] Marano [Y] Abi- Habib [Y]

Mayor and Council entered Executive Session at approximately 8:57 P.M.

Mayor and Council returned to open session at approximately 9:21 P.M.

Motion to return to Open Session by Hayeck / second by Ead

RC: Ead [Y] Hayeck [Y] Dahl [Absent] Fischer [Y] Marano [Y] Abi- Habib [Y]

ADJOURNMENT

Upon there being no further business, the meeting ended to the Call of the Chair at 9:22 P.M. The next meeting of the Mayor and Council will be Thursday, June 15, 2023 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Regina Angelo
Deputy Borough Clerk

Approved: July 13, 2023