

**MINUTES****June 29, 1995**

The Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren held a Special Meeting on Thursday, June 29, 1995 in the Phillipsburg Municipal Building, 675 Corliss Avenue, Phillipsburg, New Jersey.

The meeting was called to order by Director Dickey at 7:15 P.M. and upon roll call the following members were present: Freeholder Susan Dickey and Freeholder Ann Stone. Freeholder Miller arrived at 7:20 P.M.

Director Dickey read the following statement: "ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING WAS GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT BY FORWARDING A NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS TO THE WARREN COUNTY CLERK, THE STAR/GAZETTE, BLAIRSTOWN PRESS, THE NEWS, STAR-LEDGER, THE EXPRESS-TIMES, CALL CHRONICLE, NORTH JERSEY HERALD & NEWS, RADIO STATION WEEX, RADIO STATION WRNJ, RADIO STATION WEST, CHANNEL 69, AND BY POSTING A COPY THEREOF ON THE BULLETIN BOARD IN THE COURT HOUSE AND IN THE OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS. FORMAL ACTION MAY BE TAKEN BY THE BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS AT THIS MEETING. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IS ENCOURAGED. IN ORDER TO ASSURE FULL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, THOSE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO WISH TO ATTEND THE MEETING SHOULD SUBMIT ANY REQUESTS FOR SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION ONE WEEK IN ADVANCE".

**A. OPEN DISCUSSION****1. Special meeting for the purpose of discussing Library Federation issues.**

Director Dickey stated the purpose for the meeting is to address questions and concerns about the Federation and the report on the expansion and renovation project. The use at the Phillipsburg Library has grown and we will need more space.

Phillipsburg Council President Rummerfield made opening comments that this is the first municipal/county federation in the state. In 1990, the town feels there were agreements made about expansion of the library. Half of the users are from outside the town, but the town has not benefitted as intended because there has been no expansion. Residents of Phillipsburg are being squeezed out by those from out of town. The library is bursting at the seams, there is no room for more, the collection and equipment is being stretched thin. He has heard the county wants the agreement to be longer. Phillipsburg has never said they wanted out except due to lack of expansion. Even though the politics have changed in town, no one ever wanted to get out of the agreement. He suggested that we first address the agreement as to the changes both sides want, and then proceed on the proposal. There was a change in attorneys on both sides, but there is nothing pending between the lawyers presently.

It was agreed to discuss the areas of the agreement that either side may want to negotiate for change.

Mr. Rummerfield asked Mrs. Hess, town librarian, to provide some background. She reviewed the history, that in 1989, 27% of use was from outside town, and that has steadily increased as a result of the federation to over 50% from outside. About 2700 are from Lopatcong, 1156 from Greenwich, 1361 from Pohatcong and 948 from Harmony. These are registered borrowers. They do a user survey twice a year, asking where the borrower is from. The use varies when school projects are coming due. With new computer equipment, they will be able to track better.

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Mrs. Dickey mentioned that the architect's study reflects a cost of about \$870,000 for expansion and \$865,000 for renovation of the existing building. The total project cost is \$2.9 million. What will Phillipsburg be paying toward this project's cost?

Mr. Rummerfield said that if we weren't expanding, we wouldn't need to renovate.

Mr. Hicks, County Engineer, said that was not necessarily so. Some of the renovation costs are for ADA compliance, new heat and air conditioning work, and other areas that would need to be done anyway.

The Architect said you cannot separate out existing building by code. The buildings when finished will be completely open, and so it becomes one building and therefore must comply with the new codes in the old building as well. That drives the cost for renovation higher.

Mr. Rummerfield said as we go through these items, we should address any differences that are identified.

**Item #1: Will Phillipsburg be responsible for any costs of the project?**

Mrs. Stone mentioned the length of the agreement was a problem.

Mr. Rummerfield said he thought the 5 year time was to see if the idea worked. They have never tried to get the town out of the agreement, only recently threatened due to lack of progress on building. He doesn't have a problem with a longer time frame. They would want to see the money in the budget first.

**Item #2: Length of the contract.**

Mrs. Dickey said that whatever the length of the contract, it should not have the same type of termination clause. We can't let the parties opt out unless by mutual agreement.

Mr. Rummerfield said whatever happens at the building to benefit other municipalities also benefits Phillipsburg.

**Item #3: Tighten the language in terms of operations costs for ongoing funding.**

Mrs. Dickey stated the county or the county library commission wanted to have some input into the way the money is spent in the federation library.

**Item #4: County to have some input on expenditures at the Phillipsburg library federation.**

Mrs. Dickey said that if the decision is to build a new building rather than expand, if the need is greater than the current proposal can handle, perhaps there should be another location sought. We have an option, maybe to include another site.

Mrs. Decker, Mayor, replied that she didn't think this was a good idea. Another site would remove more land from the tax rolls, the library is already here, and it would not be fair to ask Phillipsburg taxpayers to pay for a new building.

Mr. Rummerfield stated originally it was either/or, if a new building then the federation agreement would end. That was the original intent.

The Freeholders responded that that was not what the federation agreement says. Mr. Miller read from the agreement. This language contradicts what Mr. Rummerfield just said.

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Councilman Cassar asked Mrs. Dickey if what she was saying is that the expansion of the library may not meet the needs for the next 20 years.

The architect reported that they hired a consultant and he believes it is sufficient for 15 to 20 years of growth. He feels this way because they will use compact shelving, the impact of CD ROM and other new technology which reduces the size of the collection, and the costs of expansion and renovation of existing space versus the construction of all brand new space. He said new construction cost is \$134/sq. ft., other costs \$30/sq. ft., for a total of \$175-\$185/ft.

The expansion would be \$74/sq. ft., other cost of \$6, equipment \$15 for existing and \$22 for new, for a total project cost of \$132/sq. ft.

Mrs. Dickey said we may not build, we may buy an existing building and renovate. When we talk of 22,000 square feet, we can't count the existing footage in the dollar comparisons.

It was mentioned that if more space is needed later, the building could go up rather than out, but that parking will be tight. The library and surrounding space is already off the tax rolls. The library won't need as much expanded room due to new technology.

Mrs. Dickey asked how would parking be addressed.

Mr. Rummerfield said they have 20-25 spaces along the field, and could expand further if necessary. Spaces are not dedicated for the library, but are used for both buildings.

Mrs. Decker said when they refinish and restripe the lot, the spaces will be smaller and they will move some trees which will yield more spaces. Also, workers compensation hearings will soon no longer be heard in the building, and the school board has vacated the building opening more spaces.

Mrs. Dickey stated that it appears the town is not interested in a new building.

Mr. Rummerfield responded that Phillipsburg residents built the building, provided the service, and it is not fair to ask them to pay again.

Former Mayor Blanchfield spoke about the town giving the building, and the agreement was for the county to pay for expansion. It is not sensible to buy a building and start over now. Now is the time to finish the deal. The numbers were developed and they work.

Mr. Rummerfield asked if there was anything else in the agreement to discuss. Mrs. Dickey replied not in the agreement.

Mr. Miller asked what the Council wanted.

Mr. Rummerfield said the residents have suffered due to less books available and more crowded conditions. They continue to pay through taxes to maintain the building. County also has paid. This is a good facility and the town residents have gained from the county funding as well. All Phillipsburg wants is to work out the problems and proceed to have the county commit the funds to start expansion in the 1996 budget. The town has a problem with moving to a new building. The town is only asking the county to spend the money for library service in the southern part of the county. Short of that, Phillipsburg needs to look at withdrawing from the federation agreement.

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Mr. Cassar said he noted a reluctance on the part of the Freeholders to live up to the commitment.

Mr. Rummerfield stated that in five years there have been about five Freeholder Directors who have served on this committee. There is no continuity and maybe that designation should be changed so that one person is familiar from year to year.

**Item #5: Need someone besides the Freeholder Director at the point for continuity.**

Mrs. Dickey asked if Phillipsburg was putting no money in.

Mr. Rummerfield said they had not considered that five years ago. Phillipsburg could negotiate a new agreement on that point. He believes it is a valid point.

Mrs. Decker stated that she didn't think that it was an \$800,000 valid point. There is more here than just brick and mortar. Books, microfiche and other parts of the collection cost millions of dollars. Taxpayers of Phillipsburg and donations have built the collection, and the town has shared it with others. When the Freeholders put up money for the building, Phillipsburg has no problem with extending the agreement.

Mr. Rummerfield said we learned a lot in five years, as we had nothing to pattern after.

Mr. Cassar asked to set another meeting date so we know how to proceed. The Freeholders should approve the release of the funds for the architect to continue work.

It was agreed that another meeting would be held on Thursday, July 27, 1995 at 7:00 P.M. at the County Administration Building. By that time, there should be some resolution to the direction of the federation agreement.

On motion by Mrs. Stone, seconded by Mr. Miller, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

ROLL CALL: Mr. Miller: yes Mrs. Stone: yes Mrs. Dickey: yes

**ATTESTED TO:**

Naomi J. Stout, Deputy Clerk