

MINUTES**July 27, 1995**

The Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren held a Special Meeting in its office in the Administration Building, Belvidere, NJ on Thursday, July 27, 1995 at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Director Dickey at 7:00 p.m. and upon roll call the following members were present: Freeholder Susan Dickey and Freeholder Kenneth Miller. Freeholder Ann Stone was absent.

Director Dickey read the following statement: "ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING WAS GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT BY FORWARDING A SCHEDULE OF SPECIAL MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS TO THE WARREN COUNTY CLERK, THE STAR/GAZETTE, BLAIRSTOWN PRESS, THE NEWS, STAR-LEDGER AND THE EXPRESS-TIMES AND BY POSTING A COPY THEREOF ON THE BULLETIN BOARD 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".

Phillipsburg Town Council President, Paul Rummerfield, opened the Phillipsburg Town Council meeting at 7:00 p.m. with the following members present: Paul Rummerfield, Sal Cassar, Meryl Crozier and William Jiorle.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was led by Director Dickey.

Mr. Rummerfield said we should find out what direction we are all going.

Mrs. Dickey said that we are looking at a decision here, whether the federation will continue and under what terms. The cost of expansion and what the entire project will cost will be discussed. At the last meeting, the figure of \$2.9 million was mentioned and that is a lot of money for the size of the expansion, etc. The freeholders have to determine how much the county will pay and what Phillipsburg will pay.

Mr. Rummerfield said that everything comes down to dollars and cents. The freeholders and the county library board have to decide what level of commitment they have to southern Warren County. To date, the only commitment to southern Warren County is what is provided by Phillipsburg.

Mrs. Dickey said that she is committed to maintain the same level of service in southern Warren County but what will be accomplished? We are looking at \$1 + million for expansion and now the decision must be made - what is the basic use?

Mr. Jiorle said that the existing building is worth \$1.3 million and the contents \$1.3 million, this does not include the land.

Mr. Cassar said that regarding the expansion, it is a question of when not if.

Mr. Miller said that the terms of the agreement are spelled out with regard to expansion and/or replacement, etc. The scope of the expansion, the final decision rests with the Board of Chosen Freeholders. The county is saying that they are not adverse to paying for an expansion, they are adverse to paying for the renovation of the existing structure.

Mr. Rummerfield said that if the freeholders are willing to renovate, we need to get to the specifics.

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The architect said that there items in the renovation cost, if the library is not expanded, that would have to be spent on the existing building anyway; upcoming maintenance and repair;

1. replacement of windows and doors \$7,000
 2. carpeting, painting \$125,000
 3. ADA requirements \$7,000
 4. boiler, heating system upgrade, approx. \$35,000
 5. power upgrades \$35,000
 6. lighting upgrades \$12,500
- Total - \$220 - 225,000

The rest of the renovation costs come as a result of adding to the new structure. These renovations are required by code. Most of the systems in the old building must be integrated to conform to the new structure. The average construction cost is \$134 per square foot and you would not be able to build a new structure for this money. A break-down of the costs is as follows:

1. \$1,625,000. for construction
 2. \$132,000 for site costs
 3. \$760,000 for projects costs such as; testings, borings, surveys, fees, moving costs, temporary location costs, etc.
 4. \$385,000 for furnishings and equipment
- Total of \$2.9 million for 22,000 square feet.

Mr. Rummerfield asked for a time frame on construction and the architect said about 10 - 12 months for construction and several months for the renovation.

Mr. Rummerfield said that with regard to what Phillipsburg is willing to put into this is \$220 - 225,000 for upgrades in the next 5 - 10 years. He said personally he would have no problem with this, if this is the cost that they will have to incur in time, they will expend these costs. He would support that. The other costs should be put up by the county. In other words, \$2.6 million from the county and approximately \$220,000 from Phillipsburg.

Mrs. Dickey said that the board is getting information that the expansion will not serve the southern end of the county in the future. We are still looking for an additional branch or a new central location.

The architect said that the library consulting firm feels that this facility would suffice for 10 - 15 years and with the continuing trend in computer usage, they may get more than that.

Mr. Rummerfield said that this is the best fiscal solution, to renovate the Phillipsburg Library. It would take over \$5 million to build a new building.

Mrs. Dickey asked how the parking would be handled and the architect said they had added 23 - 25 spaces and they plan to add even more. The capability is there.

Mr. Cassar said that they recently lost 20 employees from the building and that freed up some parking.

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Mr. Dinger gave some background on the county library in that a new central site library has been planned for many years. The educational park concept may or may not be a viable plan. The central site issue is not critical, it can be put anyplace in the county. The library needs a new headquarters badly. Something has to be done in the near future. If you did consider a southern county location, you could get double the amount of value for your money. You already have the equipment, staff, etc. in addition to that, if you spend \$2.9 million, Mr. Dinger suggested that they consider this option. It is not economically feasible to do the renovations or expansion of the Phillipsburg library at this time.

Mr. Rummerfield said that the building, staff, research, material; the county could have this next year, they are offering this for next year.

Mr. Cassar said that the agreement is in place for expansion, when not if.

Mr. Jiorle said that Phillipsburg is the most densely populated area in the county and it is centrally located so why would the county move to a less than central location.

Mr. Cassar said that according to Miss Hess's figures, they are the most convenient location for high school students for their research work, why would they change the site.

Mrs. Dickey said is he saying that if the expansion doesn't happen, the students won't have access? Mr. Cassar said no, they will arrange for access.

Mr. Rummerfield said that access has never been denied, there was a user fee a number of years ago but now it is open basically free of charge. He said we need the expansion to better serve the public.

Mrs. Dickey said the question at the last meeting was whether to expand in Phillipsburg, do they have any interest in expanding the federation to include another library?

Mr. Rummerfield said it is unfair to ask their constituents to pay for another building.

Mrs. Dickey said that she would like to maintain the federation but sometime between last November and now, the amount of money being spent went to \$2.6 million into a building that is 26 years old.

Mr. Cassar said that the agreement is in place, the location is convenient, technology moving forward is a fact, media is becoming smaller physically, he doesn't see how the county can lose. In effect, we are building a new building (26,000 square feet) for less money and renovating a building that will last 25 - 30 years.

Mr. Miller said that they are working under the premise that the financial terms are worked out. We need to put our interests together. We need to agree on some things; keep the federation agreement? should we extend the length of the federation? Yes! The other terms in the agreement; for example, the county has no say in the terms of the operating budget and as freeholders, they would like some say. Is that a possibility?

Mr. Rummerfield said he has no problem with that.

David Knauth, President of the Phillipsburg Library Board, asked what we mean by control of the money.

Mr. Miller said that he did not say control of the money but some say in the operating budget. We would continue with whatever our share is which is \$400,000 right now and next

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year will be 20% more with no say.

Mr. Rummerfield said that did we want a representative at the budget session? This is spelled out in the state code, that a representative of the freeholder board can assist in the budget process but the budgetary approvals are spelled out by law.

Mr. Miller said that Phillipsburg owns everything and the county puts out all the money. We need to extend the terms of agreement with some kind of a say or representation in the budget process. Mr. Miller said that at the last meeting Phillipsburg expressed a desire for the county to make a commitment in the 1996 budget. Phillipsburg wanted the fifth member of the advisory committee to be someone other than the freeholder director.

Mr. Rummerfield said that this was because of the changes in director over the last five year period so that there is no continuity. Of course, the advisory committee is probably not needed now.

Mr. Miller said that we are still divergent on costs. Here are the things we seem to agree on 1. extend the federation agreement 2. extend the length of the agreement 3. freeholder representation in the budget process 4. a commitment in the 1996 budget for construction costs.

Mr. Miller said that the federation allows the agreement to be opened on 5, 10 and 15 year dates but it doesn't mention money, than Phillipsburg can pull out.

Mr. Rummerfield said that the reason for the time frames is that this was the first federation in the state and he realizes that some changes, modifications, need to be made. We should make a commitment for a long-term agreement.

Mr. Miller said he has no problem with reopening the agreement as long as the federation agreement continues to exist. Reopening is fine.

Mr. Dinger suggested that there could be a buy-out clause put in it.

Mr. Rummerfield said that from the board's perspective, is the board willing to continue the agreement? To date the county has not put much into the southern part of the county. The county has to decide what way they want to go.

Mr. Miller said that the federation allowed the county to shift focus. The federation agreement allowed the county to build the new branches and address other areas in the county. Mr. Miller said that he is not familiar with the renovations in the existing building. If the addition were to be modified, not connected to the existing building, could we build a 7,000 square foot building that would house whatever it would house now without affecting the existing building? Why should the county be a part of the renovation? We will do what is contained in the federation agreement but we did not envision work on the older structure.

The architect said that he has never built a new building, but he has renovated many old buildings and the staffing costs would make Ken's idea a poor bargain. The new building is designed so that the entire floor plan would be a completely open area and visible by existing staff. The library is open over 60 hours a week so that if it was a separate building, it would require two additional staff, with benefits, at a cost of approximately \$40,000 each

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for 20 years figuring out to over \$2 million. The decision to add on was so that operating costs would be kept down. It doesn't make good sense to build a separate building.

Mr. Miller said he feels that the same two employees will be added with the expansion, the same as with a new building.

The architect said that the design of the building is such that all the area can be seen from the central location, all of it is sight accessible. All of the meeting area will be on the main floor, they are not adding any checkpoints. This was all worked out by the library consultant. They do not foresee anymore staff being needed.

Tom Carney said that he feels that the increased usage will necessitate additional staff and he feels there will be a dramatic increase in usage.

Mr. Rummerfield asked Miss Hess how the staffing level has increased in the last 5 years and she said the staffing has stayed the same except for a parttime page and a children's librarian. When a vacancy occurred in the children's librarian position, they did not fill that position but they expanded the hours of the parttime staff. Actually they are at the same level that they were before.

Mr. Miller asked if the additional floor space is children oriented and the architect said yes, the children's collection would go in the new structure. It will also be fully wired for new computers.

Miss Hess said that a significant factor in the use of staff is that the automated system has saved them staffing in certain areas.

Mrs. Dickey said that we are still talking about the money aspect. Back to the agreement; this expansion, according to #11 in the agreement, if the board pays for the entire cost of the new space and the associated costs of this expansion, then it is not proportioned correctly if Phillipsburg pays only \$220,000.

The Phillipsburg board president said that this only applies to the new building but Mrs. Dickey and Mr. Miller said that it reads expansion and/or replacement, etc.

He said he doesn't like the short time frame, we should build in a reopener but qualify what the reopener covers, the language needs to be cleaned up.

Mr. Dinger said there is nothing wrong with continuing the agreement if you take three scenarios over a period of 20 years:

1. expansion and renovation of Phillipsburg, assuming the library is looking for a new central site.
2. branch county library in the southern end of the county or a new central site.
3. new headquarters in Phillipsburg.

All these options allow for the continuation of the federation agreement.

Mrs. Dickey said we need figures on these options.

The Phillipsburg board president said that a new headquarters in the southern part of the county would be a duplication of services. This is not cost effective. Another building in

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Pohatcong or Lopatcong, this would be too close.

Mr. Cassar said that if we go on with the federation but don't expand, what will happen?

Mr. Miller said that if the county builds a separate facility in the southern part of the county, there would not be that much more of an increase in usage, if nothing is done, it will increase.

Mr. Dinger said that all these concerns tonight have been in place since 1990, where is the county library system going?

Mr. Rummerfield said we should go ahead with the federation, move forward and do what's right for Phillipsburg. Phillipsburg gets nothing now; they have 50% more people, cramped space, the county does nothing for Phillipsburg. Under the present terms, Phillipsburg is getting nothing.

Mrs. Dickey said that we can't proceed without knowing what it will cost the county.

Ms. Crozier said that there is total support to go ahead now, let's get it off the ground now, it is five years overdue now.

Mr. Rummerfield asked the architect if he could come up with a figure. The architect estimated \$196,000 for equipment and furnishings and \$225,000 for miscellaneous improvements; total of \$421,000 as Phillipsburg's share.

A gentlemen in the audience suggested that they end the federation agreement, the freeholder board will do nothing, now they are asking for more studies, etc., and nothing will be done.

Mr. Miller suggested that a new building be erected 10 feet from the old building to eliminate some of the costs to the old structure.

The architect said that this is not a good idea, you would then have children alone in the new building with no supervision.

Ms. Crozier said that the agreement says that the cost of the expansion will be fully borne by the county.

Mr. Miller said that this is just too expensive.

Mr. Cassar also asked if the new building could end short of the old building and the architect again said that this is not feasible; a separate structure is not a good plan.

Mr. Cassar said that the freeholders have to make a decision on this now.

Mrs. Dickey said that Mr. Dinger's recommendation for figures from our CFO on options is a good idea.

Dick Collins, Mayor of Harmony Township, said that the federation is a good idea but from what he has heard tonight, it doesn't sound like the freeholder board has all the facts

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yet.

Mr. Cassar said again that the freeholders have to make a decision and focus on the expansion.

Mrs. Dickey asked about the possibility of a central site in the southern part of Warren County and if this would be a viable plan.

Mr. Miller said that this expansion is just too costly, we need to get some of the expenses down, he is willing to commit, willing to borrow money but the costs are too high. We have a ten page report from the library commission which he considers to be confidential. This will cost \$800,000 per year for the federation and \$550,000 for a new branch building, 8000 square feet.

Mr. Rummerfield said he will sit down with their people and take a look at the figures. He is in favor of keeping the federation but we need to work on getting the cost down and then come back later.

Mr. Jiorle requested that the freeholders come up with a few proposals.

On motion by Mr. Cassar, seconded by Ms. Crozier, the Phillipsburg Town Council Meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

On motion by Mr. Miller, seconded by Mrs. Dickey, and there being no further official business to come before the board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 9:42 p.m.
ROLL CALL: Mr. Miller: yes Mrs. Stone: absent Mrs. Dickey: yes

ATTESTED TO:

Naomi J. Stout, Deputy Clerk