

MINUTES**March 6, 1996**

The Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren met in regular session on Wednesday, March 6, 1996, at the Hackettstown Municipal Building, 215 Stiger Street, Hackettstown, New Jersey.

The meeting was called to order by Director Dickey at 7:12 PM. Upon roll call the following members were present: Freeholder Susan Dickey, Freeholder Ann Stone and Freeholder Kenneth Miller.

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

Director Dickey read the following announcement: "ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING WAS GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT BY FORWARDING A SCHEDULE OF REGULAR 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".

Mrs. Dickey expressed the appreciation of the freeholders for Hackettstown hosting the traveling meeting, which was for a second time since the program began.

Mr. Michael Hession, WC Transportation Coordinator, had been asked by the freeholders to attend the meetings in the municipalities to provide information on the transportation system operated by the county. He provided an overview of the system:

27 vehicles; 8,000 trips per month; operates 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with scheduled appointment call two working days in advance. Priorities for service are health, employment, social service agency visits and others. He mentioned the Wheels program in Hackettstown, and stated that perhaps the county could work with that program for mutual benefit. Mayor DiMaio said they needed to talk to NJ Transit and WCCTS, and ultimately needed to retain the bus service in Hackettstown.

Ed Bruder, 911 Coordinator, provided updated information on the cut-over of dispatching services for the remaining municipalities to the county center. He reported that all town officials from areas scheduled to transfer will be invited to a planning meeting set for March 27. That letter should go out this week. It will invite mayors, police, fire and ambulance personnel, 911 municipal coordinators and others interested to meet to work out details for the conversion.

The schedule now calls for cut-over for Hackettstown, Independence and Mansfield on June 5, 1996. While it is a realistic date, it cannot be absolutely guaranteed. However, it is possible that it could occur earlier. Blairstown is scheduled for June 26, 1996. All licenses have come in. Two are not in hand yet, but the FCC has verbally confirmed approval. The two missing are Hackettstown and Blairstown Ambulance Corps.

Construction on the Mansfield tower site is complete, and the antennas are due to be installed next week. That tower will serve Hackettstown, Independence and Mansfield.

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Much of the other work is almost completed. There is a need to get the equipment shelters moved to the site. Mr. Bruder asked what Hackettstown wished to do about cutting over their fire alarm pull boxes. It can be done, and would be beneficial if that could be completed prior to the other changeover.

Mansfield needs to update its 911 maps and turn them in.

It was stated that the fire company wanted to keep the pull boxes, but there is a need to check on the process. Mr. Bruder responded that whatever they desired would be satisfactory, but the county center could identify which box was pulled, etc. The only cost would be for the transfer of the phone line to the center, which would add a small amount to the bill. The process is very simple.

The Chief of Police stated that it is important for the local 911 coordinator to put in accurate information to the system. Some of the dispatchers are criticized, but they are only relying on the information that was placed into the computer. The local people must take responsibility for accuracy.

Jim Bernaski, Assistant County Engineer, handled the request of the county takeover of Grand Ave., High St. and Willow Grove St. Hackettstown has made similar requests in the past. The Roads Supervisor, Mr. Ulmer, had prepared a map showing the routes the Hackettstown section had to maintain and plow. There are three trucks based in the section, and they have four long runs that lead out of town. Two runs take three hours to plow, sand and grit. The routes don't connect with each other, which adds to the time needed to complete the runs.

If the county were to take over the streets, it would add about two and one half miles to the system. It would likely require an additional truck for the section. Also, the town roads would need to be hit very quickly. They need two trucks to plow Route 517 because it is so wide. If they plowed one way, by the time they got to the game farm and got back, it would be thirty five minutes before they got to the other side. The county maintains more county roads in Hackettstown than any other municipality. The county department is not set up to be a town department. County roads are feeder roads between town and state roads. They have one sweeper for the entire county.

Mrs. Dickey said that right now, there appears to be no way for the county to consider this request. Maybe in the future after a cost analysis.

A citizen said if a truck is going through anyway, why not just drop the plow and forget about maintenance takeover. Mr. Bernaski said there are liability issues, and it would slow down the trucks, there are manholes, etc.

Council representative said that all levels of government have budget problems, but maybe we can look at it and work out an agreement for both sides to share services. By working together, perhaps we can provide services at lower costs.

A citizen asked if these streets had ever been county roads.

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Mr. Bernaski replied that in the 1930s, Harry Vetter was the County Engineer, and also engineer for most every municipality, so it may have appeared that these were county roads. It was hard to determine where his county work ended and municipal work began.

A citizen asked what steps are being taken for economic development. Mrs. Stone said they are working with chamber groups, and many chamber people have joined the county committee. We need to get out and promote it. There are different points of view in different towns. She stated she is a supporter of economic development and balance in the county. She mentioned that the county will take any suggestions for improvement.

Regarding a traffic study of all major corridors within the Hackettstown area, David Dech provided a follow-up to the last report of the study he requested by the state. He sent a written request to NJ DOT to conduct a corridor study. The surrounding townships are working on getting approval as a regional center. DOT did not have the personnel or resources to conduct the study with that large a scope of work. The offer to meet with local representatives and look at information and try to present it to the public for consensus. Mr. Dech has been without the services of his transportation coordinator for about a month. He will try to set the meeting for the beginning of April.

When asked if the regional center would help in this endeavor, Mr. Dech said that it would. Also, because it involves several municipalities and two counties, it may help in getting state support.

Mayor DiMaio thanked the freeholders for the installation of guardrail along Willow Grove as asked for at the last meeting.

All three freeholders expressed gratitude to the town for hosting the meeting. This was the first revisit town on the schedule.

On motion by Mrs. Stone, seconded by Mr. Miller, the meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

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

ATTESTED TO:

Naomi J. Stout, Deputy Clerk