

MINUTES**May 15, 1996**

The Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren met in regular session on Wednesday, May 15, 1996 at the Washington Township Municipal Police Building, 33 Little Philadelphia Road, Washington, N.J.

The meeting was called to order by Director Dickey at 7:15 p.m. 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 statement: "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 thanked Washington Township for hosting this traveling meeting. Mayor Kovacs welcomed the Freeholders and expressed appreciation for the visit.

Mike Hession, County Transportation Coordinator made a brief presentation on the coordinated transportation system operated by the county. Mr. Hession is appearing at the traveling meetings to get the information out to local officials and the public regarding the current status of the program and future plans for improvement.

County Engineer Hicks was present to provide information on the status of various bridge rehabilitation projects in the township. Mine Hill Bridge is a federally funded project therefore, its status in relation to the Bowerstown Historic District is presently unknown. Its location may impact on design of the bridge. The preliminary designs are finished, and they are submitting information for stream encroachment permits. It may be getting close to being able to be sent out for bid.

Plane Hill Bridge is a county funded project on which bids have been taken and the county is waiting to award the contract. The 1996 DOT money has not yet been released, but these funds may be available and usable for award by the next Freeholder meeting on May 22, 1996.

Kinnamon Avenue Bridge is another federal funding project, and there is not much progress on the plan. The project is floundering in the DOT process. Changes are occurring in the state department DOT, and it does not appear that a quick resolution of this project is forthcoming.

Mayor Kovacs asked if both Kinnamon and Mine Hill were federally funded. The answer was affirmative. He asked if the Mine Hill program is close to contract. Mr. Hicks stated that it depends on how fast the state review process takes place. Construction probably is not likely even next year.

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Mr. Hicks said the state controls the federal money, and the county does not handle it directly. New applications for funding go to the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority. These projects are under the old system where the county has a little more control.

Mayor Kovacs asked the status of school bus traffic on Mine Hill. Mr. Hicks reported that they are going around the area for now, until the bridge is fixed. Mayor Kovacs asked if Plane Hill is a part of a historical project. Mr. Hicks said it was, as it is part of the Morris Canal, and the bridge will be restored in relation to the historical context to the best of the county's ability.

Mayor Kovacs asked if Buttermilk Bridge is the responsibility of the railroad. Mr. Hicks stated that it is part of the orphan bridge rehab projects. Money for improvements is limited. The county provided input, but not much money in the orphan bridge fund. Most RR bridges are functionally obsolete rather than structurally deficient. They are sturdy, but suffer from such problems as being too narrow or having poor roadway alignment.

Mayor Kovacs said that taxpayers come to the municipality to discuss or complain about taxes, rather than go to the county or the schools. He tracked the tax rate from 1980 to 1996 and found the rate to be relatively stable and constant, although raising much more money. In order to help with a local presentation, he needed to go to the paper and make a guess at what the county equalized tax rate would be for county taxes. He requested the county to provide an estimate for his township's tax rate.

Mrs. Dickey indicated the county will attempt to provide the estimate. Mr. Miller asked when the figure would be needed, and the response was in mid-March. Mr. Miller said we usually have a good idea on the basic county rate by then, but don't have the equalization figure.

Mr. Dinger suggested that the estimate of the equalized rate be referred to the county tax board, who has the expertise and the responsibility to set the rate, rather than to ask the freeholders or treasurer to make the estimate.

Mr. Miller said we can send a request to the tax board to respond to the municipal requests. Mrs. Dickey said the county would do whatever it can to provide this information. Mrs. Stone said we have to remind the voters that they passed a two cent tax for open space programs.

A citizen asked what the county was doing to keep taxes stable in the future.

Mrs. Dickey said that for the past two years, the county has not borrowed money for capital projects. We are trying to reduce the debt service. The first bond to drop is due in 1998. More cash is being committed to capital projects. It is hoped that the county won't have to raise taxes to meet new expenses. However, the fear is the potential reductions in federal and state funding. Next year the county may have to reduce services. We need to look at personnel and try to consolidate when possible. Mrs. Stone and Mr. Miller indicated they agreed with that view. Mrs. Dickey said the county is proud of the services it provides, such as the visiting nurses, homemaker services, etc. There was general agreement by all present that the county roads were kept in good shape during the winter, and are well maintained.

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RESOLUTION 286-96

On motion by Mrs. Stone, seconded by Mr. Miller, the following resolution was unanimously adopted by the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren at a meeting held May 15, 1996.

RESOLUTION TO PAY BILLS

BE AND IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the Master Voucher Certificate for Certification for Payment No. 96-13 dated May 15, 1996 in the amount of \$1,486,381.85 including bills and investments, is approved subject to the review of the vouchers by the Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Payroll Wk Ending 5/9/96	917,319.95
Total of Purchase Orders	<u>569,061.90</u>
TOTAL	\$1,486,381.85

I hereby certify the above to be a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren on the date above mentioned.

s/Naomi J. Stout, Deputy Clerk

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

Mr. Dinger indicated the freeholders were provided with a copy of a letter from Judge Diana regarding the issues of chair of the security committee. The Judge indicated that he believed a motion brought by county counsel was necessary for the consideration of a change in the August, 1994 agreement between the Sheriff and Freeholders.

On motion by Mrs. Stone, seconded by Mr. Miller, the Board agreed to contact special counsel Charles Lee to file a motion on behalf of the Board of Chosen Freeholders for the court to review and assign a new chair of the security committee.

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

Mrs. Dickey again expressed appreciation to Washington Township for hosting the meeting.

On motion by Mr. Miller, seconded by Mrs. Stone, and there being no further official business to come before the board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

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

ATTESTED TO:

Naomi J. Stout, Deputy Clerk