MINUTES **September 4, 1996**

The Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren met in regular session on Wednesday, September 4, 1996, at the Hope Township Municipal Building, Hope-Great Meadows Road, Hope, New Jersey.

The meeting was called to order by Director Dickey at 7:10 p.m. Upon roll call the following members were present: Freeholder Susan Dickey, Freeholder Ann Stone and Freeholder Kenneth Miller arrived at 7:17.

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".

The Hope Township Committee also opened a public meeting with proper notice. Mayor McDonough and Committeemen Koonz and Beatty were present.

Mrs. Dickey expressed the appreciation of the freeholders for Hope hosting the traveling meeting. Mayor McDonough expressed the township's appreciation to the Board and indicated that the committee believed the traveling meetings were very worthwhile in assessing public issues.

Michael Hession, Warren County Transportation Coordinator, presented an update on the countywide transportation program. General information and available services were explained. The department is attempting to set a schedule whereby a vehicle will be going on routine trips, such as to the Morristown area, at regularly set hours. This will enable clients to schedule medical visits around the set schedule.

The newly developed transportation manual is almost ready for presentation to the Freeholders for approval.

A resident asked about the statement of the number of one way trips, asking if trips were not available for return. It was explained that the way the trips are counted are as one way, but most services are round-trip. It was stated that this sounds like a taxi service, and what is the cost? Mr. Hession replied that they try to coordinate trips as much as possible. Costs for 1996 are about $950,000. The group is also trying to develop a set route system. In answer to a question, it was noted that the service has been available for about 13 years, run by NORWESCAP prior to July of 1995, and by TCT since that time. The Mayor said the senior centers could be outreached. Mr. Hession said that would come later, that the municipalities are being outreached first. The county is looking at how other counties provide services, and Mr. Hession is becoming a member of a state- wide group.

Regarding truck traffic between Routes 80 and 46 on Routes 519/621, Mayor McDonough said there is concern about noise and damage being done to historic buildings in town. He asked if the county can do anything about the trucks.

County Engineer Hicks said the county runs a traffic count program each summer. Without good alternate routes, it is hard to ban trucks on the county roads. If regular businesses come through, the county could talk to them and try to get them to consider other routes.

The Mayor said many trucks are going to the Harmony sludge facility, and that they create not only noise but they have a terrible smell as well.

Mrs. Dickey stated the county will be working on a new master plan next year, including traffic patterns. Committeeman Koonz said the pounding damages property, as the houses are so close to the road. The Mayor added that the town has been looking for a by-pass for years, and now it will be more of a problem due to the wet-lands rules.

Mr. Hicks said the township needs to propose a by-pass. If the county proposes one, everyone whose property will be impacted will protest. We should not rule out the wet-lands yet, it will just make the job more difficult.

A resident said the town needs sidewalks so pedestrians can get away from the road. The Mayor replied they are trying to get the post office to change the entrance or put curbs or sidewalks in, because the parked cars are a hazard. Could the county take a look at curbing?

Mr. Hicks said generally the township is responsible for sidewalks and curbs. The county works curb to curb.

A resident said he has lived here 16 months, and has seen only one state police car that was in town for a half hour and saw no tickets given.

The Mayor replied that is not a county problem. The township and state police continue to talk. The state police are getting cut-backs in funding and they do what they can.

A resident asked why trucks over a certain weight cannot be banned. Mr. Hicks said we only have a few roads with limits, usually because of special problems and with good alternate routes. We need to accommodate as much as possible.

A resident said the whole county is experiencing growing pains, but Hope sits along an interstate route. Our roads were not designed for this much traffic. Mr. McDonough said the new homes in the area are going to increase traffic.

Mr. Beatty stated the town needs a by-pass. Twenty years from now, the fields will be full of houses and we won't be able to put a by-pass in.

Mrs. Dickey noted there is no good north/south connection between Route 80 and Route 78. The only one is Route 31 to 46 and up county roads.

A resident asked again if a weight limit could be set. Mr. Hicks said it is not an engineering decision, but a political and social decision.

Mr. Koonz said there would still be an enforcement problem. A resident asked why the Foothills Freeway had not been build. Mr. Koonz said he couldn't answer that, but there had been much opposition at the time it was proposed in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Mr. Beatty said we need to do something now, as twenty-five years from now it will be too late. Federal and state funds probably will not be available.

The Mayor said no federal, county or township money may be available, but there is still the state transportation trust fund, but we need to go after it.

Mr. Miller said a program can go through if someone in the state wants it to be done. Outside Trenton, they put roads through a swamp and even an Indian burial ground.

Frank Van Horn said there is only one solution, and that is to extend Route 31. This is the most direct route. We need to enforce speed limits, put up "no-parking" signs and then be sure the ordinances are in place to support enforcement.

The Mayor said the pedestrian bridge leaves no room for walking when traffic is present. There was a path alongside the bridge, and the owners are willing to reopen the path, with some help. Would the county help with this, as this is private property.

Mr. Koonz said this may save a lot of money and effort in eliminating hanging a structure off the bridge.

A resident asked why can't we just build a wooden foot bridge.

The Mayor said there is a big drop in elevation, and it would be involved to build the structure. As for road signage, can the county try to reduce the number of signs.

A resident asked who designed the four-way stop, as it is crazy.

Mr. Beatty replied that it was much worse when it was a flashing amber. There is lots of congestion due to people not knowing where they are going.

The Mayor said that he believes small towns must get together to share services to reduce costs. He is going to apply for a grant from DCA to organize a cooperative effort with several townships around Hope. He thinks the county should assist towns when possible. Hope joined the Sussex cooperative last year.

Mrs. Stone said the southern townships assist each other, share equipment, etc.

Mr. Van Horn said they are also looking to regionalize fire and ambulance services.

A resident indicated he was wondering why towns don't merge to cut costs.

The Mayor said they don't want to lose individual identity.

A resident said all things are possible, something can be done. Maybe we should look for federal help.

Mr. Miller said now it takes about ten years to get a federal project done.

Mrs. Dickey said there may be money as Hope is a national historic district. She will raise the issue at the next planning board meeting.

The Mayor indicated he will talk with Mr. Hicks and the township engineer to pursue options.

Mr. Beatty asked that if the county is doing anything, it must consider the traffic going to the Land of Make Believe.

There was a request to hire a chauffeur for Nutrition, as one employee had gone out with a serious illness. There were no objections to the request.

Mr. Miller and Mrs. Stone thanked the township for hosting the meeting. Mrs. Dickey announced that there is a meeting at the Pequest Hatchery on the state redevelopment plan. Flyers were brought to the meeting for distribution.

The Mayor thanked the freeholders for returning to Hope.

On motion by Mrs. Stone, seconded by Mr. Miller, and there being no further official business to come before the board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

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

ATTESTED TO:

Naomi J. Stout, Deputy Clerk