

MINUTES**April 30, 1997**

The Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren held a Freeholder/Mayor meeting in its offices in the Administration Building, Belvidere, NJ on Wednesday, April 30, 1997 at 7:47 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Director Ann Stone and upon roll call the following members were present: Freeholder Ann Stone, Freeholder Susan Dickey and Freeholder Stephen Lance.

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

Director Stone 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. Paula Williams, owner of the Whistling Swan Inn, provided a presentation on Bed & Breakfasts. Jay Miers, Director of Economic Development and Tourism, indicated that the B&Bs attract overnight people to spend money. Warren County is the lowest or next to lowest in terms of tourism funds. One-third the hotel rooms of Sussex County, and half of the number in Hunterdon.

Mrs. Williams talked about the four types of B&B which are:

1. Homestay or Host Home: Owner occupied, 1 or 2 spare bedrooms, small operation.
2. Bed & Breakfast: owner occupied, 4 to 6 guest rooms, meets fire/health code, not self-sufficient.
3. B&B Inn: owner occupied, primary financial support of owners, 7 to 30 rooms, primary use is for business and small business meetings.
4. Country Inn: overnight lodging and meals, restaurant, usually have a staff as well as the owner involved.

These places serve remote lodging needs. The big chains do not want to build in rural areas, as there is not enough profit. B&B preserves old buildings, provides local jobs, brings income into the area for other items in the community. It is a non-polluting industry, and owners are committed to their community.

The Mayor of Hackettstown said he asked Council for an ordinance to allow B&B, but they have not yet acted. Mrs. Williams said if you limit to four bedrooms, a place can't make it pay. With the price of real estate, taxes, etc. need more rooms. 38% of use is for business purposes and 62% for tourism. It requires a big commitment in time and relationships, etc. A B&B operation changes your life. Advertising is mostly by tourism guides and books, internet and word of mouth. Mrs. Dickey asked if Mrs. Williams would make a presentation before the Economic Development Committee on May 20th, and she agreed.

Jay Miers talked about the Main Street Program. This is designed for towns between

MINUTES**April 30, 1997**

4,000 and 50,000 population, but this can be modified under certain rules. For example, if Belvidere wanted to participate, they could join with White Township. This requires a full time coordinator. Hackettstown has a plan, and the town put up \$35,000. Now the committee and others need to raise the other \$65,000. Blairstown is pursuing one. There is another group called Downtown, N.J., but it lacked government support.

Mr. Lance asked if communities could share a coordinator. The answer was yes, but not unless you join as a group. The funds could be used to hire a consultant.

Mr. Miers distributed and reviewed the latest economic development report. There are few vacant buildings available, and limited sewer capacity. Businesses want the infrastructure present before moving in.

The Belvidere Mayor said they have a 30 acre tract for rezoning. The owners might want to sell, as they are behind in taxes.

Mrs. Stone introduced William King, Warren County Superintendent of Schools. There were several issues on the agenda regarding school funding. Mr. King discussed the distribution of state aid. There is a pool of money, \$70 million, for assistance on debt service. This has not increased since the 1992/93 school year. However, more schools have claimed funds from this pool, reducing the amount available for each school. Therefore, schools are receiving less debt service funds than previously. Now, the State is paying 49% of what they used to get before the pool was frozen. This has had an impact on many local districts. There is legislation pending to increase the amount by \$25 million.

There were some complaints about developers not paying for increased schools, and Phillipsburg being a poor district that causes extra spending by the sending districts to pay to match the increased state aid. The problems with courtesy busing were also discussed.

Mrs. Stone then introduced Pat Rivoli, Public Safety Director/Emergency Management Coordinator. Mr. Rivoli updated those present on the Merrill Creek sirens, the planned exercise coming in June and the work to improve the communications. He indicated they have trained 80 local officers on the MDT, Multi-Data Terminals, which were donated by the Prosecutor. There is now an emergency high band frequency for department of public works crews to report emergencies when they are out working the roads. The BCF approved the Fire Academy Coordinator at 20 hours per week. This should improve the fire school, as it is now under the Department of Public Safety.

The Hope Mayor asked about the county transportation master plan. Dave Dech said a staff member is visiting all the towns to discuss local issues on county roads, as well as state and local roads. There are two goals: long range to identify areas and advocate for changes in DOT if on state roads; Short term is related to county regulations to work with local groups so all are ready when developers come in, so improvements can be made.

There was discussion about moving truck traffic from Hope through Knowlton Township or through Allamuchy. Dave Hicks indicated that weight limits can be considered on any road, but we need to look at the nature of our system. Limits move traffic elsewhere.

MINUTES**April 30, 1997**

Hope has a committee to look at the by-pass option. Mr. McDonough said there is legislation pending which would allow local or county government to lower speed limits without state review and approval.

Mrs. Dickey said two weeks ago she asked for a study on truck traffic, particularly in regard to the sludge trucks. If the state wants to let the sludge in, let the trucks use state roads. She wants an origin and destination study. Mr. Lance asked if there might be any help for a by-pass due to the potential destruction of historic buildings in Hope. Mr. Dech said he believed the year of building roads is over, as there are too many environmental issues.

Mayor of Franklin asked about the canal access issue. Mrs. Stone indicated no changes at the present time. Franklin voted last meeting to urge the retention of access. Asked about the sewer plant, Mrs. Stone said the county wants nothing to do with the issue.

In response to a question about the open space trust fund committee, Mr. Dech reported that the first meeting was held two weeks ago, and regular meetings will be the first Monday of each month. Application forms and evaluations criteria for funding requests are under study.

Questions about solid waste were referred to Mayor Pool who is chair of the PCFA. He reported a meeting with Assemblyman Gibson to try for an amendment to A-50 to help Warren County. Also trying to get more competitive by streamlining operations. They hope to be able to become competitive and have new programs at the landfill. There may be more to report later.

On the issue of closing the Washington inspection station, Mrs. Dickey said she wrote to the state about the matter. Right now, there are no plans to have a station anywhere in Warren County.

Mrs. Stone said she thinks the county and all municipalities should support retaining a station in the county.

The Mayor of Mansfield asked the county to support the fire companies in municipalities where there are county facilities. He cited a statute that he believed allowed the county to contribute up to \$10,000 to each company.

Mrs. Stone responded that this matter has been discussed before. The Fire Chiefs Association supports equal funding for all companies, and desires the county contribution to be given to support the fire academy.

Pat Rivoli stated that the fire company is a municipal responsibility, not the county's. The county supplies training site, training at no cost, etc.

Mrs. Dickey said we have gone over this several times. We appreciate the fire companies, and need to give more support to the academy.

Mr. Lance indicated that County Counsel interprets the statute differently than the

MINUTES**April 30, 1997**

municipal attorney.

The Mayor of Belvidere said the county should prioritize the types of buildings also. The company protects lives as well as property. It is unfair to spread money out in training when the companies need equipment.

Alan Fisher from Washington Borough suggested the county could pay money in lieu of taxes to the towns. They would not pay the school or county portion, but just the municipal portion.

The Hackettstown Mayor asked if the county was pursuing a cooperative purchasing arrangement. Mr. Dinger explained that Chris Pessolano had attended the recent meeting, and would provide a report shortly. There are a number of questions, such as the number of towns to participate, what items would be included, what they are paying now, etc. It was suggested that a survey be sent to all towns and school districts and ask for their interest. Mayor Pool said eleven municipalities and two school districts were interested. The county might help all involved. Alan Fisher said he would be interested, but needed to work slowly to get started.

Mr. Dinger said he would talk to the Purchasing Agent and get a meeting set for all interested.

Mr. Hicks said there was information on the front table on road regulations, etc. Mrs. Dickey expressed concern about the Atlantic City tunnel and reduction of State Police coverage on behalf of Mr. VanHorn.

Mr. Lance reported he attended the rail tour in Phillipsburg on Sunday. They want to make a presentation to the BCF.

On motion by Mr. Lance, seconded by Mrs. Dickey, and there being no further official business to come before the board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 10:39 p.m.
ROLL CALL: Mr. Lance: yes Mrs. Dickey: yes Mrs. Stone: yes

ATTESTED TO:

Naomi J. Stout, Deputy Clerk