

MINUTES

August 20, 1998

The Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren met in special session in its offices in the Administration Building, Belvidere, New Jersey on Thursday, August 20, 1998 at 7:11 p.m.

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

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 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".

Mrs. Dickey explained that this meeting was called to decide whether or not the resolutions before the board at this time should be put on the ballot in November.

RESOLUTION 561-98

On motion by Mr. Lance, seconded by Mrs. Dickey, the following resolution was unanimously adopted by the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren at a meeting held August 20, 1998.

**RESOLUTION REQUESTING THAT THE COUNTY CLERK PRINT UPON THE OFFICIAL
BALLOT TO BE USED AT THE ENSUING GENERAL ELECTION A PROPOSITION
AUTHORIZING WARREN COUNTY TO EXPAND THE WARREN COUNTY COMMUNITY
COLLEGE.**

WHEREAS, the Warren County community College (WCCC) has stated an intention to submit a capital proposal to the Board of School Estimate for their approval in 1998 authorizing the County of Warren to bond for construction of a second building of approximately 28,000 square feet and that the existing 52,000 square foot headquarters which opened in 1996 be renovated; and

WHEREAS, this expenditure is the first phase of a \$20,300,000 four-part construction plan to expand the two year old campus; and

WHEREAS, the bond issue will increase county debt by a maximum of \$5,600,903 with anticipated reimbursement from the State of New Jersey of \$2,800,450 pursuant to N.J.S.A.18S:64A-22.1 et seq; and

MINUTES**August 20, 1998**

WHEREAS, the bond issue represents an annual increase to the county budget of approximately \$560,090.00 in debt service and an additional cost in operating expenses and as yet unspecified salary and wage increases, cumulatively resulting in an anticipated tax increase in the county tax rate; and

WHEREAS, the warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders has determined that a non-binding referendum is appropriate at the next general election in which the public shall consider whether the County should be authorized to bond in the maximum amount of \$5,600,903 to expand facilities at the Warren county Community college;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders hereby requests that the County Clerk, pursuant to N.J.S.A.19:37-1, print upon the official ballot to be used at the next ensuing general election the following question:

Shall the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren:

(a) fund construction of a community services building of approximately 28,000 square feet at the Warren County Community College site which may include: "Center for Career and Personal Development, the Small Business Development Center", a student lounge and cafeteria/kitchen, meeting rooms, assembly hall, rooms for student activities, offices for other county educational uses, a computer laboratory and wellness center including locker rooms, weight and aerobic exercise rooms, dry sewer lines and stand alone utilities; and

(b) support renovation of the existing 52,000 square foot building for the possible purposes of additional classrooms, and offices for other educational uses; and

(c) support the possible construction of two baseball fields, a soccer field, a parking lot and new exit road; and

(d) issue bonds for such purposes in an amount not to exceed \$5,600,903 and apply to the State of New Jersey for Chapter 12 funds in the amount of \$2,800,450. It is anticipated that the State of New Jersey would reimburse the County of Warren for 50% of the bonded indebtedness.

Answer { } Yes or { } No

Mrs. Stone asked if we hadn't received a resolution from the WC Community College opposing this.

Mrs. Dickey opened up the meeting to the public for comments on this subject.

Tony Wyhopen from White Township said that he is representing the resolution passed last night by the Technical School and they oppose the action being taken tonight. No figures have been received from the state and so he is concerned about a referendum which may cloud the whole issue.

A resolution has also been received from the college opposing the referendum resolution.

Ed Church said that he is in favor of the referendums. There is big money available now and some people are trying to figure out how to use it. He asked what the freeholder board policy is on charge-backs.

MINUTES**August 20, 1998**

Mrs. Stone said that there was a meeting at the Technical School last night and the college and technical school are working together very well, there is less duplication of services.

Dr. DeSanctis submitted a signed and sealed resolution to the board opposing this referendum. He is concerned that people will be going into the voting booth misinformed and will vote yes or no but not on the real issues. The final version of the plans were approved last night. These resolutions are getting people to react to words like "taxes". The voters are not being given the proper information to vote intelligently.

Jim Cooper is a WCCC trustee and he has a problem with the verbiage but not the philosophy of the trustee resolution.

Ann Jennings said that the trustees were under the gun last night and now the public will be faced with too many referendums and won't be able to make an educated vote.

Another gentleman in the audience said that the public can make good decisions when give the proper facts but he does have serious concerns about the fact that our elder population will lose their homes to high taxes. The light of day will not tarnish a good thing.

A Stewartsville resident said that she can't afford to remain in New Jersey. The population needs to be educated and informed, we need a voice to address what is happening in Warren County.

Ed Church said that Warren County's taxes are higher on a per capita basis, we have to be wise in our spending.

Mrs. Stone said she was upset that this has occurred, it was not the intent of the ECPC and it is unfair to both schools. It is important that we all work together, she supports both schools.

Steve Lance said that he is not anti-education but the people should have the opportunity to express their opinion on a tax increase. Would the Technical School consider putting their plans on hold for a year and then put the referendum on next year's ballot?

Tony Wyhopen said it would not be appropriate for him to answer that. He pointed out that it is a changing, competitive world and the kids have to be prepared for it. A quality education is important in the community. You will reap what you sow! The school's intent is to give good value in education that is affordable.

Mrs. Dickey said she knows where they are coming from. The freeholders have a right to get the public's opinion on a tax increase for the county. The board has spent the last four years asking employees to share jobs, do more with less, keep the costs down. The VoTech plans are mandated but the college is optional. How far can we go to fund expansion, the public needs to know all the additional costs associated with this expansion. We have a responsibility to all the taxpayers in the county to keep them informed. We haven't done enough to move towards regionalization. She is fearful that if the information is not correct,

MINUTES**August 20, 1998**

the people won't get a good sense of what is happening.

Susan asked if a date has been set for the Board of School Estimate and Dr. DeSanctis said no, not yet.

Ken Keyes said that 1/2 of the cent tax increase in 1992 cost each individual \$4.38 or \$20.00 per household for the cost of the building, not the land.

Dr. DeSanctis said that \$271,000 is the cost per year, each year, which is \$2.72 per capita plus operating expense and additional staffing, not projected staffing.

Mrs. Stone said she wants everyone to know that asking them, the schools, to come before the board of freeholders was to bring everyone up to date. The county is growing and we have to face reality. The Technical School is debt free and hasn't asked for any money since 1968. This is a disgrace to them. We have to address the educational needs of the young.

Ken Keyes said that Ann Stone should have been very aware of what has been going on in the ECPC. It has been going on for at least six months. Why can't the college and the technical school share the costs?

The board voted on the version of the resolution without an interpretive statement.
ROLL CALL: Mrs. Stone: no Mr. Lance: yes Mrs. Dickey: yes

RESOLUTION 562-98

On motion by Mr. Lance, seconded by Mrs. Dickey, the following resolution was unanimously adopted by the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren at a meeting held August 20, 1998.

RESOLUTION REQUESTING THAT THE COUNTY CLERK PRINT UPON THE OFFICIAL BALLOT TO BE USED AT THE NEXT ENSUING GENERAL ELECTION A PROPOSITION AUTHORIZING WARREN COUNTY TO EXPAND THE WARREN COUNTY TECHNICAL SCHOOL.

WHEREAS, Warren County Technical School has submitted a proposal to the State of New Jersey for the construction of 51,525 total square foot (34,350 classroom and auditorium square footage) addition to their facility; and

WHEREAS, the bond issue represents an annual increase to the county budget of approximately \$625,000 in debt service less anticipated reimbursement from the State of New Jersey (estimated 30%) and an additional amount for as yet unspecified operating and salary/wages increases resulting in an anticipated increase in the county tax rate; and

WHEREAS, the Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders has determined that a non-binding referendum is appropriate at the next general election in which the public shall consider whether the County should be authorized to bond in the amount of \$6,250,000 to expand facilities at the Warren County Technical School;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders hereby requests that the County Clerk, pursuant to N.J.S.A.19:37-1, print upon the official ballot to be used at the next ensuing general election the following question:

MINUTES**August 20, 1998**

Shall the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren :

(a) build a 34,350 square foot addition at the Technical School to increase academic classroom space; provide an auditorium facility; relocate Licensed Practical Nurse, Performing Arts and Broadcast Media Arts Programs to main campus, and provide office and classroom space for Special Services School District; and

(b) issue bonds for such purposes in an amount not to exceed \$6,250,000. Pursuant to budget footnote language contained in the Property Tax Relief Fund provisions of the Appropriations Act for fiscal year 1999, it is anticipated that the State of New Jersey would repay to the County of Warren 30% of the bonded debt.

Answer { } Yes { } No

The board voted on the version of the resolution without an interpretive statement.

ROLL CALL: Mrs. Stone: no Mr. Lance: yes Mrs. Dickey: yes

On motion by Mr. Lance, seconded by Mrs. Stone, and there being no further official business to come before the board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

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

ATTESTED TO:

NAOMI J. STOUT, DEPUTY CLERK