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JANUARY 15, 2000

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 Saturday, January 15, 2000 at 9:42 a.m.

The meeting was called to order by Director Stone and upon roll call the following members were present: Freeholder Ann Stone and Freeholder James DeBosh. Freeholder Susan Dickey was absent at roll call.

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"**.

There were no public comments.

Some changes to be made are an adjustment to Planning; modification to the trust fund and Health Dept.; building project from the capital.

It was noted that we can take money from the capital surplus for the Phillipsburg Library expansion. Pete said we could also amend the ordinance after the fact. Steve said that an architect needs to come back and re-scope the project.

Rick Miller spoke to the board regarding the Road Department budget. The capital items are listed by priority:

1. Dump trucks
2. Crew cab
3. Back-hoe loader
4. Aerial bucket truck (need for Shade Tree)

Rick said we have already trained a tree crew from current staff. The new 55-foot truck will be used for tree work. We are responsible for everything in the county right-of-way and on county property.

Mr. Miller has asked for four new positions; a Senior Tree Climber, a Tree Climber, a Senior Tree Trimmer and a Tree Trimmer. These positions will be promotions from within; the tree climbers

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now and the tree trimmers later on.

5. Mason dump trucks (change to one)
6. Air compressors

Mr. Miller said he will be replacing the heavy-duty equipment over the next few years. He left at 10:07 a.m.

Prosecutor John Laky and Dan Gardner spoke to the board at 10:10 a.m.

Prosecutor Laky said there is no change in the operating budget over the past 3 - 4 years. They are in the seventh year of the lease on their leased office spaces and they are asking the county to pick-up this cost of \$44,000. This is something they used to take out of forfeiture funds but as it is a normal recurring expense, it is questionable as to whether they can continue to do this.

Regarding vehicles, for the last ten years, Warren County has not had to pay for vehicles. However, five vehicles now need to be replaced as they have over 100,000 miles on them. They will pay for three from forfeiture funds and they are asking the county to pay for two.

They are requesting special training for 20 people on the WC Technical Entry Team. The board had no problem with that.

They are also requesting an increase in salaries and wages for two new positions; an Investigative Systems Administrator to supervise the computer system and a Megan's Law Detective, full-time. There are 126 registered sex crime offenders in Warren County which justifies the need for this detective.

Under personnel, the Byrne Grant for \$2 million supports the Narcotics Task Force and there is \$266,000 available to Warren County from this. Every county is being told that the \$266,000 is to remain the same but the county share goes up from 25% to 33%.

The Prosecutor left at 10:30 a.m.

Duane Copley spoke to the board about acquiring farmland. There are two things to accomplish; make time payments to the landowners with a way to leverage their money and we would be able to purchase the easements outright. Under the current system we wait 18 months and it usually runs longer than that. The budget submitted would allow them to clean up purchases and set the 2000 round of funding. The first few are very accurate but the next few are in round numbers, based on estimates.

Duane addressed the new project, PIG Grants (Planning Incentive Grants) which is available in the amount of \$5-1/2 million for a ten-year program.

Mr. DeBosh said the county Ag board cannot look at municipal property as intensely as the state. Regarding title insurance, the general lender makes this a requirement. Can we look into this? Is it a requirement? Duane said he is not sure if it is a state requirement or just a county one. Mr. DeBosh will talk to Brian Smith.

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Mr. DeBosh said we talked about doing this a different way; bonding or installment purchasing. There was an article in the Wall Street Journal indicating that IRS has changed the tax requirements on installment purchasing so that now you have to pay the tax up front. This would destroy the advantage of this program.

Mrs. Dickey arrived at 10:45 a.m.

Mrs. Stone said that farmland preservation is very important for this county and we have to do everything we can.

Under public comments, Assemblywoman Connie Myers said she came today to answer any questions that anyone might have regarding the PIG program. Out of twelve applications, nine are from her district; five from Hunterdon and four from Warren. She said she wrote this legislation to benefit Warren County. She views Warren County as an agricultural county and this was designed not to save the best land but to preserve agriculture. The overall goal of the program is to keep the area agricultural. Hunterdon has passed a resolution and sent a letter to make a commitment. Warren County should do this also.

Mr. DeBosh asked if there was enough money to do this now? Steve said we have \$376,000 unencumbered in the Open Space Trust Fund. Pete Houck said we can commit but when do we have to pay? We have to lay out all these projects. There is not enough money to do all these things. We have to prioritize.

Connie Myers said she is asking that we support the concept. Bob Canace said we need to do this now and plan for a secure financial future.

Bob Zelley said that it is important that we take this step. Seven farms are a part of this application. There is a ten-year payout at \$120,000 per year. Any help will be appreciated.

Ann Stone said that regarding working farms in Greenwich, she has found only one dairy farm still operating.

Debbie Petrangelo of Washington Township said that regarding future purchases, if we can't do it now, it will be developed. Mrs. Stone said if we work together, we can accomplish this.

Dave Dech said he did an analysis and over a ten year period, if we bond for \$15 million, he estimates the county ag development board would fall short by \$6.7 million and the Board of Recreation Commissioners would fall short by \$6.6 million plus \$1.4 million for MCCTFC.

Mrs. Stone said we will try to work together with everyone to accomplish our goals. A resolution will be done for the Wednesday meeting and copies will be faxed on Thursday to each of the municipalities.

Mr. Marvin asked if the income tax incentive for donation of land is by donation only and Connie Myers said yes.

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Duane dropped off two videos for the board to watch and then return to him.

A recess was called for at 11:20 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 12:05 p.m.

Various personnel issues in Dave Dech's department were discussed. The two promotions were approved. Dave's proposal moves his staff from 35 to 40 hours which results in an additional \$46,000. The board has to decide whether or not to do this. The issues to consider are the promotions, the hours and the new assistant planner position. The overtime is already inserted into the budget.

Mr. Dech said that the increased hours will take care of the workload. Susan asked why he needs to add an assistant planner. Dave said that the census is not being done properly. Bernie is doing it now. He would like to have Albert, his GIS expert, do that only. He could then take away the development review and give it to the new assistant planner. He would also take on the additional projects that would come up.

Susan said she has a problem with taking this (the added positions) out of open space money. Both Mrs. Stone and Mr. DeBosh agreed to the two promotions and the increased hours but not the assistant planner position. Susan said she does not approve the funding for the parks department be taken out of the open space funding. This should be added into the county budget.

Steve said we should schedule one more budget session for Wednesday, January 19th, at 7:00 p.m. and try to introduce the budget on January 26th. He asked if there are any other departments to come in on Wednesday and Mrs. Stone said no. She did mention that she has concerns over the increasing costs in the Nutrition Dept. since they moved to Washington. Steve will review the Nutrition lease. Jim said there are no other departments to come in as far as he is concerned.

Steve said that Wednesday night, all proposed personnel actions should be discussed. Based on discussions today, he will put a final sheet together and decide if we should dip into surplus as deeply as originally thought.

Pete Houck said we should put the budget together and he recommends that we do not take the full amount out of surplus as anticipated. This would result in a modest increase in the tax rate (.01 - .02). The board may want to consider using the economic development revolving loan fund. This program has not been successful because the state offers the same thing. The project in Phillipsburg, the Railroad Museum, qualifies to come out of the economic development revolving loan fund. We could take the \$700,000 and apply it to this project.

Steve said we would be better served in the long run to use this money. The federal government may see it sitting there and take it back. At least we should consider \$500,000 to the Railroad Museum.

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Jim said we need to discuss the new positions for the Prosecutor's Office. He is not sure they need the two new positions.

Ann said we should look into a network administrator for the whole county, not just the Prosecutor's.

Steve said that on Tuesday, Pete, Dan and he will prepare the final sheets for review at the Wednesday meeting.

Ann will talk to Duane about coming in to talk again.

On motion by Mr. DeBosh, seconded by Mrs. Stone, and there being no further official business to come before the board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.
ROLL CALL: Mrs. Dickey: yes Mr. DeBosh: yes Mrs. Stone: yes

ATTESTED TO:

NAOMI J. STOUT, DEPUTY CLERK