

JANUARY 3, 2002

MINUTES

The Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren met in special budget session in its offices in the Administration Building, Belvidere, New Jersey on January 3, 2002, at 7:31 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Freeholder Director Doherty and upon roll call the following members were present: Freeholder Michael J. Doherty, Freeholder John DiMaio and Freeholder James DeBosh. Also attending were County Administrator Steve Marvin, Personnel Director Jerry Coyle, CFO Charles Houck, Fiscal Analyst Dan Olshefski, County Engineer David Hicks, Assistant County Engineer Jim Bernaski, Building and Grounds Director James Durborow, Road Department representative George Melroy and Deputy Clerk Tammy M. Lynn.

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

Director Doherty 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 EXPRESS-TIMES, STAR-LEDGER, THE STAR GAZETTE, BLAIRSTOWN PRESS AND THE NEWS 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**”.

Freeholder Director Doherty began the meeting stating the cost of running Warren County is far greater than our neighboring Counties of Hunterdon and Sussex. The Per Capita County spending for Warren County is \$696.00 vs. \$542.00 in Hunterdon County and \$455.00 in Sussex County. There are going to be Federal and State funding cuts seen in the near future. His goal is to get Warren County closer to our neighbors.

Mr. DeBosh had no comments.

Mr. DiMaio had no comments.

County Administrator Steve Marvin asked Mr. Olshefski to give the Board of Chosen Freeholders an overview of the budget changes from the original proposal. Mr. Olshefski noted the original budget of \$79,797,000 was revised and reduced to \$75,950,000. He noted there were some grants waiting for approval, although this will increase the budget total, the tax base of \$44,600,000 will remain the same as last year and that equals a four (4) cent reduction to the Tax Levy. Other highlights were noted, \$6,000,000 in Surplus \$400,000 for medical litigation settlement, Capital projects to be discussed individually. Also we may want to utilize the Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund for other purposes.

Mr. DiMaio asked for the actual Pension contribution amount and level of funding. Since it appears for this year the estimate of \$550,000 will be waived, the County needs to preserve at least that amount in the Surplus account for future years expected cost.

Mr. DiMaio stated that he has two goals, first to reduce spending, second to see that future known expenses like the Pension contribution is incorporated into the budget process. Budget programs must be in priority order to control the Tax Levy.

JANUARY 3, 2002**MINUTES**

Mr. Olshefski presented the Capital Improvement program details for the Engineering and Bridge Departments. Mr. Doherty wanted to know how many miles are needed to be improved? Mr. Bernaski told the Board of Chosen Freeholders 13 miles and they gave the Board a detail of the projects for 2002. He also explained the reason for the changes and the cost of materials is that the market is controlled by one supplier.

Mr. Hicks gave the 12-13 year road resurfacing schedule to the Board of Chosen Freeholders and explained that some road require more than just resurfacing which adds to the maintenance costs.

Mr. Doherty asked what the Bridge Management System project included?

Mr. Hicks and Mr. Bernaski described the particulars of the program in three stages. This program is crucial to have a current record of every Bridge and its material structure to maintain a planning and repair schedule for future years. It will also assist in case of an emergency repair situation to have the appropriate materials necessary for an unseen emergency. Mr. Hicks added that this program could store all the data for the 200 culverts and 418 bridges owned by the county. Mr. Bernaski said the \$150,000 is for the Phase III portion. The cost to cover inputting the system, mapping, photos to be scanned, hardware and data process training.

Mr. DiMaio asked for an update on the bridge repair costs. Mr. Hicks explained drainage work is lower by \$56,000 and the bridge repairs are increased by \$30,000. Some repairs are covered by State Aid grants. He will take direction from the Board to prioritize projects. However, he asked the Board to keep future capital improvements open, as the need will not go away.

Mr. Doherty asked for status of the Morris Canal project. Mr. Hicks explained the Lee Bridges do not have a timeline and the land could be sold before repairs were made. Mr. Doherty asked to cut that project from Capital Improvement. Mr. DeBosh disagreed, arguing this has been on the Capital request list for a long time and it is only deferring the Capital improvement true cost.

The Board of Chosen Freeholders began reviewing the Salary and Wages. Both Mr. Hicks and Mr. Bernaski explained there are ten (10) total positions with some doing multiple tasks relating to the Engineering Department. Their request for the Supervising Engineering Aide position was generated due to a recent retirement. This is to keep the staff total the same, not to increase the staff. However, the workload has increased.

Mr. Doherty stated the Governor Elect is talking about a five (5) percent reduction for all departments. It appears to be a benchmark and we are certainly in a recession. He proposed a ten (10) percent reduction to the Salary and Wages and Operating Expense lines stating he feels the property owners need some relief with tax costs. Mr. DeBosh disagreed and doesn't see Warren County receiving less funding from the State or Federal Programs. You are talking about a layoff but were willing to pay five times the cost to contract with the Express-Times for advertising. Mr. DiMaio asked if the department would be able to administer the ten (10) percent reduction?

Mr. Hicks stated that canceling projects, cutting staff will eliminate both Departments ability to provide adequate service. He asked if the Board would consider taking the \$130,000 from the Capital budget instead. Mr. Doherty requested to provide information concerning a ten (10) percent reduction in Operating Expenses and Salaries and Wages and the impacts of doing so.

MINUTES

Mr. Doherty thanked Mr. Hicks and Mr. Bernaski for giving the detail information they requested which let the Board understand their departments.

The Board began review of the Building & Grounds Dept. with Mr. Durborow and his Asst. Liz Zukoski. They went over the list of Capital Improvements from the 2001 records to the 2002 proposal. Items of interest reviewed were the two (2) vehicles, the air handler for the 911 Center Building and Razor Ribbon Fencing cost at the Correction facility. Mr. Durborow noted putting the air handler off for one year would be feasible at this time.

Mr. Marvin explained holding prisoners is a boiler plate regulation. It is unfortunate the original construction design had errors. Would you like to schedule a meeting with the Warden? Mr. Doherty confirmed yes and to have his department added to a future meeting schedule.

Mr. Durborow went over his staff list with the board and explained that although he has 31 employees, right now there are 28 working as others are out on medical or disability leave. He advised the board that one (1) may be able to come back, one (1) not likely and is currently using Manpower to staff this position and the last one (1) is totally unknown.

Mr. Doherty proposed a ten (10) percent cut for the Salary and Wages and Operating Expense lines. Mr. DiMaio agreed however, he would not make a final decision until he saw the impact of the report. Mr. Doherty asked Mr. Durborow for a revised written report within one week for their review.

Mr. Doherty thanked Mr. Durborow for the time to explain his department. Mr. Durborow exited the meeting at 9:45 p.m.

The Board took a five-minute break at 9:49 p.m.

The Board returned at 10:00 p.m. and began discussion with Assistant Road Supervisor George Melroy and Motor Pool Supervisor Bob West. Dan Olshefski began review of their Capital project changes from the original proposal to the current; a reduction of \$188,000.

Mr. DiMaio asked for breakdown of the utility vehicle needs. Mr. Melroy and Mr. West described the age and condition of the current vehicles and described that the new vehicles will provide a more efficient workflow to their department.

Mr. Doherty requested review of the Salary and Wages and Operating Expense items. Mr. Melroy gave a breakdown of the entire department, locations and staffing for each with a combined total of 72 employees. He did note that one (1) just retired, one (1) is on leave without pay and in the summer they utilize college students regularly. Mr. Doherty wanted to know what overlap happens with the Engineering and Bridge Departments.

Mr. DiMaio asked to see a projection of Salary and Wage changes if the workweek was changed from 40 hours to 37 ½ hours. Mr. Coyle noted it would have the potential for overtime situations.

It was decided to request a ten (10) percent reduction plan from the Road Department and the impacts of such a plan as requested of other departments earlier.

Public Comments: Mr. William J. Vanheteren, Hope, NJ and employee of the WC Road Department, had concern about the pension and benefits if the workday was changed to 37 ½ hour weeks. Also what was happening with the county seal contest and its's cost. Mr. Houck

JANUARY 3, 2002**MINUTES**

explained the pension program is the average of three years income. Mr. Doherty responded that if the seal contest generated a change; the plan would be to have the seal installed on replacement vehicles, equipment and signs. This will control the cost, as the seal has to be installed on new items as they arrive. Mr. DeBosh disagreed and felt the total cost to replace the current seal by his calculation would be approximately \$56,000. Mr. Vanheteren told the Board that he feels the seal replacement would occur sooner than described and the cost is frivolous considering the budget cuts being proposed have the potential for layoffs throughout the county.

On motion by Mr. DeBosh, seconded by Mr. DiMaio, and there being not further official business to come before the board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 11:49 a.m.

ROLL CALL: Mr. DeBosh: yes, Mr. DiMaio: yes, Mr. Doherty: yes

ATTESTED TO:

Tammy M. Lynn, Deputy Clerk