

The Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren met in special budget hearing session in its offices in the Administration Building, Belvidere, New Jersey on January 5, 2002, at 9:10 a.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, and Deputy Clerk Tammy M. Lynn.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was led by 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**”.

Mr. Marvin discussed impacts on the budget relating to the pending Legislative bill S553. Mr. DiMaio feels the salary of the Constitutional Officers should be capped at \$91,500. Mr. Doherty agreed to call his colleagues at the Legislative level for support not to pass the bill as written. After lengthy discussion it was concluded the Salary and Wage category for the budget will be up slightly, however the Operating Expense may balance out or improve since the processing and service fees portion of this bill are expected to increase.

Mr. Marvin informed the Board of a discussion with Dr. DeSanctis, Warren County Community College. Statutory requirement is to set a date for the Board of School Estimate meeting and he wanted approval to schedule it for February 13, 2002 at 7:00 p.m.

All Board members agreed to the date. Mr. Doherty asked how early can they have the budget drafts in advance. Mr. Marvin will review the statutes and advise.

The Board began review of the Economic Development Department Budget with Mr. Art Charlton. Mr. DiMaio explained that last years Seachord report noted that the Board should create a public / private partnership to utilize a Countywide Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Charlton agreed and suggested Warren County could follow the Hunterdon, Sussex County models. We have to choose to invest in the county Economic Development Department or to go private. He feels representation from the County, as participant and audits of county appropriations should be considered if the public /private partnership model is chosen.

Mr. DiMaio asked for an overview of the other service his department provides. Mr. Charlton told him there is Tourism and Public Information inclusive of the County Website, which he would like to see expanded. He also gave the Board a breakdown of the Operating

Expense needs for a new county map, 2002 county directory and misc. items. He mentioned the revolving loan program as an added enhancement for economic growth countywide. Mr. DiMaio stated that the economic portion could be privatized and he would like to see him focus more heavily on the Public Information needs back to County residents. His Operating Expenses would be reduced and Salary and Wages would eliminate the secretary position. Mr. DeBosh noted he doesn't agree with the philosophy about changing to a public private partnership. We still have to recognize the other Municipal Chambers that are funding their own existence like the Phillipsburg Chamber of Commerce. Also he doesn't feel Mr. Charlton's salary justifies the reduced list of responsibilities.

Mr. Doherty thanked Mr. Charlton for the breakdown of his department and asked him to consider the Boards suggestions from today.

Mr. Marvin suggested reallocating the revolving loan funds that were not committed. As possibilities: the Phillipsburg Rail Museum Land Acquisition, pay down the Warren Technical School debt, or splitting it up into different categories. Mr. Doherty discussed having the Economic Development Advisory Council dissolved since there will be a Regional Chamber of Commerce now and he would like to see Mr. Charlton as a representative in that capacity. Mr. Marvin confirmed a resolution will be presented at the January 23, 2002 regular meeting.

The Board took a short break at 10:20 a.m.

The Board returned to open session at 10:30 a.m.

The Board began review with the Planning Director David Dech. They started with Capital Improvements and Mr. Doherty asked for an overview of the mobile radio need and extra vehicle request. Mr. Dech explained the limitation of cell phone use for the Ranger and the mobile phone would enhance his communication. The vehicle request was to replace a very old 1987 Chevrolet Blazer. This vehicle would permit the Department to be more efficient; needed materials could be stored in this vehicle all the time. Mr. DiMaio suggested that they remove the 1987 Chevrolet Blazer and have the new Van requested placed in the motor pool records with the Planning Dept. as the designated regular user.

The Board and Mr. Dech then continued review of the Salary and Wage section of the Department. A review of the Open Space Trust Fund confirmed that the Department was utilizing the 10% statutory allowance to cover 3 positions for processing paperwork, doing inspections and maintenance of the properties.

Mr. Robert Shandor explained in detail what the Planning Department does for the Open Space Trust Fund programs. When this program was developed it was designed to include a percentage of the funds for staff to process all the paperwork and for inspections and maintenance needs. Mr. David Detrick a member of the Warren County Board of Recreation also described the Task Force process requirements necessary to get the State funding. This needs staff to get all that work accomplished.

As summary of the Planning Department review: Mr. DiMaio suggested to remove the 1987 Chevrolet, Blazer and have the van mentioned in Capital Improvement section moved to the Motor Pool program with Planning as designated primary use. Mr. Doherty feels that the Open Space Trust Fund money should be used in its entirety for land acquisition as primary use of funds and so he recommends that the positions funded by O.S.T.F. be removed since he has an offer from the Sheriff Dept. to utilize staff from the Sheriff's Department for the land inspections. He no longer

wants to see the O.S.T.F. used for the Historic Property Preservation. That portion of the program generates long term maintenance. He asked Mr. Dech to research this idea and return a revised report of the impact the suggestions would have to his Department. Mr. Doherty also thanked Mr. Shandor and Mr. Detrick for their comments presented.

The Board proceeded to review Open Space and Farmland Preservation programs. Mr. Dech explained Duane Copley Director of the programs, had an emergency family situation and was not able to attend. They discussed the total Farmland Preservation budget of \$293,657 that includes 3 staff needs. He confirmed that two were current positions and one was the Farmland Specialist request to be added. It was further explained that there is a separate statutory regulation for the Soil Conservation entity and that person is splitting workday responsibilities with Farmland Preservation. By adding this position the County would be able to place more property into the Farmland Preservation program. Mr. Dech also explained there is potential for almost \$2,500,000 in Open Space Trust Fund Grant monies available to Warren County. He asked if they could take the leftover from the 2001 Grant funds to cover all the Open Space Trust Fund recommendations for Municipal and Charitable Conservancy Projects from the December 19, 2001 meeting.

Mr. DiMaio stated we are just discussing your recommendation and not making a decision here today. Also this request is for land acquisitions with exception of the Long House? Mr. Dech confirmed requests were for land except the Long House and that falls under the Historic Preservation Program. Mr. DeBosh commented he understands the need to have more land acquisition however, there is allowance for concerns like the Long House program, he feels it should be considered. Mr. Doherty advised his strong concern to dedicate all O.S.T.F. funds for land acquisition because there is less cost in maintaining them. Mr. DiMaio explained that he would like to personally speak with Mr. Copley to discuss the additional staff request before he makes any decision or comments. He further noted that he needs clarification of need since it appears work is being accomplished with the current staff in place. Mr. Greg Sipple advised the Board that the programs already share services and workloads and he feels they could continue that for now but some opportunities may be lost if we remain understaffed.

Mr. Doherty asked about the Bonding issues and Mr. Dech recommended approving the \$3,000,000 Bonding so that they can take aggressive steps for the land acquisition considering the State is offering 50% reimbursement. While it is not guaranteed forever, we have the next 7 years. Mr. DeBosh believes the Bonding makes sense with the State reimbursement and the current interest rates are favorable. Mr. Doherty agreed with that direction however, he wants more time spent on land acquisition than spent on fixing Historic Properties. Mr. Dech thanked them for their input and asked the Board to remember that the O.S.T.F. has wording in the regulation stating that 10 % may be allocated for the purpose of

funding to provide for processing applications and maintenance of the properties acquired.

The Board began review with John Metroke the Chairman of the Cultural and Heritage Commission. He advised they have immediate maintenance concerns for the Shippen Manor; ADA State compliance for their stage area and structural concerns that the concrete pillars are deteriorating on the grounds. He confirmed that without approval the State is holding back grant funds until the upgrades are completed. The Commission has two (2) salary positions totaling \$41,640 and their success is only because of the dedicated volunteers. These twenty (20) volunteers do maintenance of the building and grounds throughout the entire year. Mr. Doherty suggested reducing the Operating Expenses budget from \$33,860 to \$30,000 for this year. Mr. Metroke explained if that happens it will impact what they do for the year. However, they will

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shave some areas if that is the desire of the whole Board. The Board allowed Dennis Austin, Art Coordinator for the commission to speak. He shared with the Board that this commission is practically a volunteer program and to cut away any portion would be a disservice to the 18,000 citizens in Warren County they serve. Mr. Marvin noted that as the budget was being drafted all discretionary programs also had to be looked at. Mr. DeBosh stated he will not support the reduction. This request to reduce Operating Expenses will have little or no impact on the whole budget. Mr. Doherty commented he recognizes and appreciates their volunteer program and all the work. Mr. Metroke asked if the \$12,500 Capital Improvement was approved? He further explained that without it the State would not release the \$22,000 appropriations until the ADA ramp for their stage is installed. Mr. Marvin confirmed there are no dollars available for Capital Improvement requests.

There were no Public comments.

There were no press comments or questions.

On motion by Mr. DiMaio, seconded by Mr. DeBosh, and there being no further official business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

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

ATTESTED TO:

Tammy M. Lynn, Deputy Clerk