

MINUTES

JANUARY 16, 2002

The Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren met in special budget session in its offices at the Wayne Dumont, Jr. Administration Building, Belvidere, New Jersey on January 16, 2002 at 7:34 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by 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, 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”.**

The Board met with Sheriff Sal Simonetti to discuss the Sheriff's Department budget. Mr. Doherty asked how the transition in the Sheriffs Department was going. Mr. Simonetti stated he was pleased to report the positive response he has had. Mr. Doherty asked what was his next plan of action. Sheriff Simonetti explained that his department has been understaffed and has hired the 5 officers and one Sergeant position which will enable his department to get back to the services that have been missed in the past years however, he advised the Board that there will be some time needed to provide the proper training for the 5 hires. He wanted to acknowledge that his two new Undersheriff's Vera Bunn and Frank Stettner have played an important role with his department transition. Sheriff Simonetti described the breakdown of his staff and their responsibilities in comparison to what former Sheriff Donald Kelly had, adding that some positions were eliminated and not filled. Mr. DiMaio affirmed that there are three (3) less position and asked him to give the Board a wish list of where he sees the department going. Sheriff Simonetti stated that he would like to get back to transporting of prisoners, start the D.A.R.E. program within the Schools and get the dog handler program initiated again. Mr. Doherty asked what the status of vehicles was. Sheriff Simonetti explained that the former Sheriff had reduced the fleet mainly impart due to the reduction of services. The Board discussed the availability of opening the Court House front doors, new fee program, current workflow situations and concerns for assisting inmates from the courthouse holding cell to the courtroom hearings. Sheriff Simonetti advised that the front door area of the Court House is not dimensional for another metal detector to be installed. He activated the new fee schedule on January 9, 2002 and described there were 12 different forms that had to be redesigned by his clerical staff, his department workflow is continuous mainly due to the under staffing situation, noting that will be eliminated once his new hires complete the 18 week training. He reassured the Board that his staff takes pride and care concerning transporting the inmates in the holding cells to the courtrooms.

They are alert to protect any public citizens that are in the hallways of the courthouse. Sheriff Simonetti advised the Board that he has no immediate training requirements to be Sheriff, and

MINUTES**JANUARY 16, 2002**

he confirmed the department will be more proficient after all his staff complete their necessary training. Mr. Olshefski confirmed to the Board that the new fees are not included in the current Operating Expense segment of the Sheriff's 2002 budget proposal. Mr. Doherty asked if there were any more questions, hearing none, he thanked Sheriff Simonetti for the updates provided. Sheriff Simonetti left at 8:02 p.m.

The Board met with Warden of the Department of Corrections Byron Foster and Lt. Brothers assisted him. Mr. Doherty asked him for an overview of his department. Mr. Foster explained their core function is service for the courts within the local municipalities and county. They pick up prisoners to be housed at the facility within the NJ Statutes Title 10A. He further explained that this statute has specific structure, staffing and regulations to follow.

Mr. Doherty and Mr. Foster discussed the jail capacity and guard to prisoner ratios confirming there were no statutory regulations in place. Mr. Foster gave an overview of the daily workday and staffing numbers for each shift. Mr. Brothers explained the benefit of the dormitory unit within the Correctional Center and the purpose of their power shifts staffing procedure. Mr. DiMaio requested the distance traveled to transport prisoners. Mr. Foster explained the types of prisoner transport.

Mr. DeBosh asked about the revenue for State prisoners housed in our county facility. Mr. Foster explained that the \$330,000 is in part due to the contract they have. He was able to get an agreement to house a minimum of 10 prisoners, which guarantees revenue for his department. Mr. DeBosh wanted to know about the Capital Improvement request for the Razor Ribbon installation. Mr. Foster explained it is to prevent escape, which is the last defense and an important component for improvement to his facility. Mr. DeBosh and Mr. Foster discussed the Correction Labor Assistance Program, which was mirrored from the Sussex and Morris County facilities. It allows for them to schedule work for the consistent weekend offenders in lieu of housing and meal costs. Mr. Brothers explained that it is only available to the non-violent criminals who the Judge feels would qualify. The offender is offered to participate and then required to pay in advance a fee to participate in the program. They have received approximately \$10,000 since the program was introduced in September 2001.

Mr. Doherty asked to explain the purpose for double bunking. The Board and Mr. Foster discussed some aspects of the Dormitory section of the facility along with the cost savings in their food service program. Mr. Foster gave an overview of improvements: Prisoner transportation was originally overtime processed and now with some restructuring he was able to eliminate that added cost. He was able to improve staff morale, which has practically eliminated all grievances. Financially, he was able to obtain \$400,000 from the State for housing their prisoners and he filed for a Federal Government program to house foreign inmates and the county received \$147,000 in the first year. He has been advised of the new Immigration Departments concerns and he is developing a data program to enhance jail inmate records. He further credited Lt. Brothers for initiating discussion with the Prosecutors Department for fugitive backlog, their joint effort enabled them to recover 85 fugitive cases. He explained that some inmates are skilled workers and he has put them to use within the facility for a shed construction and interior renovations vs. subcontracting the work out. He appreciates assisting the Sheriffs Department regarding transportation of prisoners to allow the Sheriffs Department the time needed to train new staff. The Board thanked Mr. Foster and Lt. Brothers for the information given and they left at 8:50 p.m.

The Board began review of the Warren Acres Budget with Director Lt. Robert Castner. Mr. Doherty asked for the population average. Lt. Castner noted they have on average 22 juveniles. He also explained that they have a contract with Hunterdon County to utilize four (4) beds at all times. The Board suggested to renegotiate with Hunterdon County a new rate. Mr. Foster explained that the beds are not always filled but the fees are still paid. That contract

MINUTES**JANUARY 16, 2002**

provided \$237,542 in 2001. Lt. Castner also explained that they started another contract with Salem County with additional revenue potential.

He then explained his staff shift/schedule and duties of each shift with a total of 16 fulltime officers, 13 part time officers, 1 fulltime secretary and 1 part time secretary and 1 social worker. Mr. DiMaio commented he saw a reduction in Operating Expense. Lt. Castner advised that it was due to the food service contract with Aramark. Mr. Doherty asked if the juveniles attend school? Lt. Castner advised they have a program in place for the juveniles from 9:00 a.m., break for lunch and it continues until 2:25 p.m. There is time for juveniles to visit with relatives, they have maintenance activities for them on their off days, gym class and he started a Church program for those that want to participate. Lt. Castner concluded his presentation with some enhancements since he took over the program: he had new cameras installed for better surveillance, improved the

Education segment with Professional teachers volunteering their time and he invited the Board to visit whenever they had an opportunity. Mr. Doherty thanked Lt. Castner and he left at 9:15 p.m.

Mr. Doherty announced that this was the conclusion of the budget hearing portion of the meeting. Next will be Public Comments, however, for everyone to be heard tonight, he requested that comments be limited to three (3) minutes and asked for everyone to cooperate.

Under Public Comments: Mr. Richard Ames, Gold Finch Drive, Panther Valley, told the Board he was concerned about the 20% cut back to the Prosecutors Department, he described the death of his son and the professional investigative service provided by the Prosecutors Department and their assistance in having closure for his grieving family.

Mrs. Ellen Lurig, Phillipsburg, NJ told the Board she was there to support Mark Francis of the Prosecutors Department. She described the experience of her sons' gruesome pain and death, caused by a drunk driver and stated that if you cut this department Warren County is going to be in a lot of trouble.

Mary Beth Adams Collier, Warren County resident noted she's a surviving victim of Domestic Abuse and Violence. She passed photos of herself to the whole Board, which gave them a picture of what happens to victims. She told Mr. Doherty that every victim will have a hard fight because of idea to reduce this unit's budget allowances. She concluded that because of this unit's compassion for her and their professionalism her abuser is in jail. She further described the Express Times article about Assistant Prosecutor Janci. She called the Board of Chosen Freeholders rapists, abusers of the County if you go through with this cut. Then she called them the Bin Laden of Warren County because of all their other department cuts. Mr. Doherty asked Ms. Collier to summarize so that everyone could be heard and she yelled out to the Board to go to hell.

Amy Sandlin, Phillipsburg NJ resident, Detective in the Sexual Assault, Child Abuse Unit of the Prosecutors Dept. and President of PBA Local 331, read a prepared statement to Board. She summarized that the cuts proposed will directly effect the services that her unit provides to the citizens of Warren County and explained the importance of having 24 hours use of assigned vehicles.

Donna Lamonaco, Belvidere, NJ resident, employee of the Hunterdon County Prosecutors Office. She described the death of her husband while he was serving as a NJ

MINUTES**JANUARY 16, 2002**

State Police Officer. She described 10 years of Trial attendance and the support she received from the Prosecutors Department to help her through the case. She told the Board she is concerned the trained people you have decided to cut from this budget, every dollar, person, vehicle you take away is another victim without protection.

Jim MacDonald, Phillipsburg, NJ resident and Chief of Police Washington Twsp. told the Board by cutting County services, his municipality cost will increase. He explained Public Safety is 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, this is an important budget item to keep.

Robert Gara, Chief of Alpha, NJ Police Dept. and President of Warren County Chiefs Association told the Board that the Chief of Police opinion is we need the

Prosecutors Department to get the specialists to all of our communities for the quality of service to remain in Warren County. He further described as Chief of Alpha Police, more than ever Public Safety is on a heightened sense of Alert. He asked the Board of Chosen Freeholders to reconsider their choices and what it effects. Safety should be first in Warren County.

Frank Herrick, Union Rep AFSCME Local 3287 lives in Trenton, NJ Mercer County asked the Board who came up with a 10% cut in a County that already gives tax relief. He noted one employee who will be affected, single mom with health concerns and she will lose medical coverage now. Warren County has the best operation in the state for efficiency and there is no denying Warren County Government is as lean as it gets. If you are going to cut do it through attrition do not hurt the 40 families here tonight.

Neil Corley retired Police Chief of Lopatcong Twsp., prior Mayor of Pohatcong Twsp. and resident of Warren County. He described a brief history as a Warren County resident. He believes in all Departments and the service they provide. He suggested to use attrition as the option to cut budgets. Let's keep the families working.

Anna Cohens, Family Physician, practicing in Warren County. She came to represent Warren Haven employees and residents. She told the Board she was concerned for its continued existence and suggested they consider alternatives other than privatization. She suggested buy land for private long-term care facility instead of closing Warren Haven. She invited the Board to see the facility without notice and they would see Staff that is proud of their work and the sense of security they give to the residents.

Mary Pothenhough, Bethlehem Pa noted she was a victim of a crime that occurred in Warren County. She agreed with all the prior statement made tonight. She stated that the Prosecutors Department is the only voice once you are a victim of a crime. She gave an analogy of how a butcher cheats by holding extra weight on the scale to over / charge the consumer. She feels by cutting the Prosecutors Department the Board is putting a

thumbprint into action for increased crime in Warren County.

Robert Schmetzly, Phillipsburg resident and Police Officer explained that all local law enforcement uses the Prosecutors Office everyday for assistance on sex, juvenile, narcotics crimes. He has witnessed first hand that the Prosecutors have been at crimes scenes as fast as the local police force. In order to prosecute correctly we need that Department to serve in Warren County. He suggested increasing their budget. He advised the Board use prudence and tolerance to meet with all parties for a revised budget.

Domenica Stabb, Phillipsburg NJ, employee of the Warren County Welfare Department.

MINUTES**JANUARY 16, 2002**

She told the Board that she serves the poor, low income workers. She described additional services besides her Welfare responsibilities that include Food Stamps and utility assistance. What are you doing?

Lou Snover, Hackettstown, NJ and representing the Warren County Road Department. He described what they do under special weather conditions, they are out all night while the Board sleeps comfortably in their home. This is a large safety factor for every employee in his department and you are reducing their work force. He spoke directly to Mr. DiMaio relating to their daughters who play soccer together. He told Mr.

DiMaio that if his department cuts cause his death what do you think our daughters will talk about?

Martha Rassie, employee of Catholic Charities shared her experiences working with the Prosecutors Juvenile and Sexual Assault units. She told them for years children were abused and there were no trained staff to convict these criminals. Now the Prosecutors' Department is capable and you want to cut this valuable service. She has a concern for future victims and offenders will start coming back.

Susan Mowrey, Buttsville, NJ asked Mr. Doherty what statistics were used to privatize Warren Haven? Mr. Doherty explained to her he does not have statistics, this is just an idea within the budget process. The privatization is under consideration and the Board has begun fact finding. She asked for the peer group funding process. Mr. Doherty explained to her the split between Warren Haven and Warren County Human Services. She told him that she has concerns that funding will no longer support Warren Haven will the taxes go up? Mr. Doherty confirmed there is that possibility however, that is why the study is being looked at and not finalized.

Sherry Hill, Oxford, NJ resident and Warren Haven Nurse. She asked the Board to relook at Warren Haven before considering privatization. The care of a privatized facility is far less than what they provide currently.

Wayne Willever, Greenwich Twsp Police Chief and Pohatcong Twsp., NJ resident told the Board that his community is the largest and fastest growing community in Warren County and the State. He asked the Board to reconsider the Prosecutors Department cuts.

John Laky, Warren County Prosecutor and resident of Mansfield Twsp., NJ, He told the Board that he has been a resident since 1987, he is honored to be in Law Enforcement

and is grateful for the turnout tonight. Perhaps the Board learned more tonight than what we presented earlier. Talk to a victim this may help you to understand how committed his Department and staff are. He told the Board he has watched this County grow and the service needs of his department since 1987. He acknowledged copies of the January 12, 2002 meeting tapes described that his department would be reduced 20%, much to his surprise. He never imagined that would happen, he asked for a reason to justify the cut. He further mentioned his concerns that what he heard on the tapes described not much concern for the citizens of Warren County or his Department. He thanked the Law Enforcement representatives that were here tonight to show their support for his Department. He agrees with all that spoke tonight emphasizing the Phillipsburg officers comment "we need to grow not be reduced". He reminded the Board that his Department was cut 4% last year.

MINUTES**JANUARY 16, 2002**

Mr. Doherty asked him to summarize in compliance with the three (3) minute request he stated before public comments were to begin. Mr. Laky asked the Board again to reconsider the cuts and to give back the Sexual Assault Investigator position that was cut last year. He gave them a letter requesting another meeting to communicate directly with the Board. He thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak to them.

Linda Donner, Social Worker at Warren Haven, told the Board that she left a 22 year employer because of what she saw happening at that facility. She worked at

Hackettstown Hospital too but found Warren Haven's approach to Elder was superior care. She asked the Board to look at their track record, 0% neglect and dedicated staff. She told the Board that everyone she works with takes pride in providing the best for their residents at Warren Haven. She confirmed that Warren Haven is a Medicare facility with rules and regulations they have to follow. If privatized the residents would not receive the same caliber of service. She asked the Board to come and see what they are able to do with the limited resources they have.

Patricia Sweeney, Exec. Director for the Domestic Abuse and Rape Crisis Center in Warren County. She confirmed to the Board that she was not a resident of Warren County however, she described what the Prosecutors Department has done to assist her Agency whenever they call them. She further explained that the Prosecutors Dept. took the time to set up training for all officers to learn how to be more sensitive to the victims, to know how to investigate the cases more efficiently.

Harold Warne, lifelong resident of Warren County told the Board that he originally came to discuss the Warren Haven issue. He felt enough was said relating to that and he wanted to let the Board know his overall concern that what they propose with the whole budget and departments cuts are displeasing. He suggested they use the attrition formula and keep the young families working.

On motion by Mr. Doherty, seconded by Mr. DiMaio, the Board called for a break at 10:15 pm.

The Board returned to open session at 10:28 p.m., Mr. Doherty stated that the Public Comments section was closed.

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 10:30 p.m.

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

ATTESTED TO:

Tammy M. Lynn, Deputy Clerk