

MINUTES**JANUARY 22, 2004**

The Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren met in a special budget hearing session in its offices at the Wayne Dumont, Jr. Administration Building, Belvidere, New Jersey on January 22, 2004 at 2:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Freeholder Director Gardner and upon roll call, the following members were present: Freeholder Richard D. Gardner, Freeholder John DiMaio, and Freeholder Everett A. Chamberlain.

Also attending were Fiscal Analyst Daniel Olshefski, CFO Charles L. Houck, County Administrator Steve Marvin, and Deputy Clerk Tammy M. Lynn.

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

Director Gardner read the following statement: **"ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING of January 22, 2004 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-LEDGER, AND DAILY RECORD 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."**

Director Gardner asked to review the updates from the last meeting. Mr. Olshefski distributed the new Capital Improvement report and noted that the bottom line amount to be raised by taxation is listed. He continued to report that if nothing changed on the budget requests along with the preliminary county tax base report the overall county tax rate will reduce by 1 cent. Basically the county tax rate reduced 15 cents over the last three years.

Mr. Olshefski explained that \$300,000 was added to the Capital Improvement Fund for future county building needs, which was the same amount as last year.

Mr. Olshefski distributed the Open Space tax report with the new 6 cent levy approved by the voters. Mr. Houck explained that he received a visit from Land Preservation Director Robert Resker with suggestions for what to do with the amount listed. Mr. DiMaio noticed the substantial increase. Mr. Olshefski explained that was because the ratables increased 12 % from 2003.

Director Gardner requested to move on to the Library Budget. Mr. Olshefski stated that Library Director Tom Carney requested \$3.557 million for the 2004 Library budget. He included Architect and Design appropriations in this budget amounting to \$100,000. for future expansion needs.

After some discussion between the Board, Mr. Houck and Mr. Olshefski it was agreed that they would keep the Library tax rate the same as 2003 and the difference would be set aside in the Capital Improvement Fund for architectural and design fees.

Mr. Olshefski discussed the revised overview report from the last meeting, which included the capital projects, the WC Technical School, the wraparound debt and the rail museum funding that Mr. Houck will discuss, and personnel issues that Mr. Marvin will discuss.

Mr. Chamberlain wanted to look at the open space projects to see if there is a need to change the current percentage allowances. Mr. Marvin explained that the Open Space

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Farmland Trust account has to back out the operating expense, debt service and the difference left is what is used in the percentage allowances. Mr. Houck explained that the report shown complies with the format for State DCA filings.

Mr. Houck explained that as a follow up to the suggestion to cancel the 5-4-5 Loan program it would be necessary to amend the 2001 resolution, freeze the \$100,000 already used to issue current loans and then the Board could redirect the funds toward Capital. He concluded this option would reduce the need to borrow funds to cover the capital facility costs. The Board agreed and asked Mr. Houck to prepare the necessary documents for the next regular meeting.

The Board began review of the WC Tech School capital improvement requests which increased substantially from 2003. Mr., Marvin presented a follow up report that he received from Dr. Mancuso. Mr. Marvin reported that the school wants to add 6 teachers due to an increase of 60 students. Mr. DiMaio responded that a message needs to be sent back, that the school find alternative ways to cover this need. Mr. Marvin responded that he checked the statutes and it says the Tech School shall charge tuition back to the sending school district. Mr. DiMaio stated that nothing can be done now but the school can begin to prepare for the 2005 school year and the Board should follow up and research with the Tech School regarding tuition issues.

After much discussion on the WC Tech School budget, capital projects, and administrative staff levels, the Board agreed to set the appropriation in the county budget at \$3,716,000, which equals a 6% increase.

Mr. Marvin began discussion of the PEER Group funding reduction details. He asked Human Services Director Karen Kubert to report her findings.

Mrs. Kubert explained that the PEER Group funding is received through Federal Medicaid and funneled down to the State for Nursing Homes to supplement Senior Beds and the other portion would be distributed to Human Services for outsourcing services.

Mr. DiMaio asked Mrs. Kubert to look at what the reduction will affect within Human Services and present options for the Board to consider. Mr. Chamberlain asked what would result if the Board reduced the allocation at Warren Haven and moved it over to Human Services to help offset the \$70,000 PEER Group funding loss.

After some discussion between the Board, Mrs. Kubert, and Mr. Marvin, it was agreed that there is a trend showing reductions are in the future, which could create increased appropriations with the county budget. However, there needs to be a formal report to measure the trend reductions. They concluded that Mrs. Kubert will present a report showing where the reductions could be effected, and it may necessitate sending a message to the Agencies that they begin planning on alternative funding sources. Mrs. Kubert confirmed she would have a report for the Board to review at their next meeting on January 28, 2004.

Mr. Marvin distributed the Personnel report and stated that there is not enough time to begin discussion and recommended that another meeting be scheduled for budget review. The Board agreed to have another budget session after the regular meeting scheduled on January 28, 2004.

There were no closing public comments.

There were no press questions or comments.

On motion by Mr. Chamberlain, seconded by Mr. DiMaio, and there being no further official business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 3:50

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p.m.

Recorded Vote: Mr. Chamberlain yes, Mr. DiMaio yes, Mr. Gardner yes.

ATTESTED TO:

Tammy M. Lynn, Deputy Clerk