

MINUTES

FEBRUARY 4, 2004

The Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren met in Special Budget Session in its offices in the Wayne Dumont, Jr. Administration Building, Belvidere, New Jersey on February 04, 2004 at 3:11 p.m.

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

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Director Gardner.

Director Gardner read the following statement: "**ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING OF February 4, 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 informed the Board that he invited Sheriff Simonetti to this meeting and he asked the Sheriff to begin his report. Sheriff Simonetti thanked the Board for allowing his attendance. He distributed a report pointing out all the changes that have occurred in the Sheriff's Department since the 1997 Security Committee met.

Director Gardner asked who formed the Safety Committee. Sheriff Simonetti responded it was comprised of former Freeholders Dickey, Lance, Stone, and various County and Superior Court representatives; Judges, Asst. Trial Court Administrator Sue Regan, Former County Administrator Henry Dinger, and various County Department Heads.

Director Gardner stated that he recalls back then, the Sheriff's Department initiated no longer transporting prisoners. The Sheriff agreed that was ordered by the former Sheriff and since then, he has started a new program, the 4D, which is a grant that covers the position needed for security of the 4th Judge, and they are not able to transport prisoners due to current staff being 15 while there were 21 positions back when that service was being performed.

Sheriff Simonetti explained that he currently has 11 officers; a lot of the transition is due to transfers out of the department. He would like his Undersheriffs to be granted the same salary levels similar to county positions. He described the many salary and operating expense savings he has made to the department over the last 2 years since taking office.

Sheriff Simonetti concluded asking the Board to consider adding 4 positions to his department. He further explained that these positions would make sure the department is properly covering the regular services and the added state mandate for DNA testing and fingerprint scanning as prisoners enter the system. This requires retroactive processing of individuals as well. He would like permission to change 2 officer positions to flex time for covering the Court night hours too.

Mr. DiMaio asked why the Courts are opened at night and how often; also, how the staff is currently being compensated; overtime or comp. time.

Sheriff Simonetti stated Tuesday and Wednesday nights for probation services, and the staff is currently compensated with overtime.

Mr. Chamberlain asked what was the highest percentage of revenue received within the

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Sheriff's department. The Sheriff stated that most of the revenue is fee driven from Sheriff Sales and serving civil cases. He also explained that in 2003, 509 complaints and 48 garnished wages summonses were processed, with the 4D grant program covering the salary of this position.

Mr. Gardner suggested to the Sheriff to apply for additional grants that are available like the ones that are coming available from the Homeland Security programs. Mr. Marvin and the Sheriff both responded that those grants are not afforded to police and /or security services at this time.

Mr. Chamberlain asked for a current breakdown of all the positions within the Sheriffs' Department. The total was agreed at 22 positions, however, one position is on military leave, 2 positions are attending the Training Academy and 2 positions are vacant.

Mr. DiMaio commented that the training is identical to police officers and he would like to suggest that our State Legislature Reps, Lance, Doherty and Myers formulate changes to the law, which could eliminate the constant turnover and transfers to local municipal police departments.

Mr. Chamberlain asked about the DNA testing requirements. He thought the jail would be performing that service. Undersheriff Vera Bunn responded that is partially correct. The Sheriff's department is required when the individual is convicted, but not incarcerated; while the jail performs the test when the individual enters the jail.

Mr. Gardner expressed his concerns that he does not want to see any department with a staff shortage and will consider discussing this further before the budget introduction is completed.

Sheriff Simonetti thanked the Board for the opportunity to report his departmental issues before the budget was finalized.

Sheriff Simonetti and Undersheriff Bunn left the meeting at 3:45 p.m.

Director Gardner asked Fiscal Analyst Daniel Olshefski to present the revised anticipated tax revenue. Mr. Olshefski stated that the new report shows that with the revenue, the overall tax levy reduction would be 1.5 cents with 1 cent equal to \$900,000.00.

The Board moved to the Library budget. After some discussion, they agreed to keep the tax rate the same as 2003 and to set aside the 2004 revenue difference to the Capital Improvements appropriation. They agreed the \$1.2 million would be best utilized as the deposit for all anticipated bonding of county capital improvement projects.

Mr. Chamberlain would like to utilize the savings to plan now and to begin the project while interest rates are low.

Mr. Gardner and Mr. DiMaio responded they would like to work on the planning for one year to make sure all the appropriations are secured for proper planning of all county facility needs.

Mr. Chamberlain stated that he sees a need to begin the planning now, if not for any other purpose but to begin the necessary maintenance repairs on the Courthouse and Annex buildings. If we plan now, the taxpayers will see a benefit in the future with the lower interest rates too.

The Board and Mr. Houck discussed all the options that would be potential costs and savings for the taxpayers and decided to move ½ cent of the Library Tax Revenue over to surplus.

Mr. DiMaio asked to review the Sheriffs' proposals. He doesn't want to grant him all the positions requested, but would like to increase the officer positions by one (1).

Mr. Chamberlain was concerned that when the total number of positions was disclosed, the Sheriff didn't know how many he had in his department currently.

Mr. Gardner asked what one additional position would cost. Mr. Marvin and Mr. Olshefski responded with wages and benefits the total would be approximately \$40,000.00.

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There was much discussion of the Sheriff's Department's situation and the Board decided to leave it as is, since he has the potential to add 2 officers with the current vacancies and they will review any other requests throughout the year.

Mr. Marvin asked the Board if they wanted to change the original tax levy reduction of 1.5 cents, so that Mr. Houck and Mr. Olshefski could begin the necessary filings and paperwork necessary for introduction at the February 11, 2004 regular meeting. Director Gardner responded that he would like to thank Mr. Olshefski and Mr. Houck for their due diligence in assisting the Board whenever they asked for information during the budget preparation process. He would like to lower the savings to 1 cent, and placed the other ½ cent in the surplus account for future capital improvements in 2005. Mr. DiMaio agreed. Mr. Chamberlain commented that he express a need to go to ½ cent, and use 1 cent now for capital improvement; but he will yield to his experienced fellow Board members and agree to the 1 cent reduction.

There were no closing public comments.

Under Press Comments and Questions, Kate Blok of the Express Times asked what the current tax rate would be. Mr. Olshefski responded \$0.5612.

On motion by Mr. Chamberlain, seconded by Mr. DiMaio, and there being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 4:33 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Mr. Chamberlain yes, Mr. DiMaio yes, Mr. Gardner.

ATTESTED TO:

Tammy M. Lynn, Deputy Clerk