

MINUTES

JANUARY 21, 2006

The Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren met in budget session in its offices in the Wayne Dumont, Jr. Administration Building, Belvidere, New Jersey on January 21, 2006 at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order at 9:06 a.m. by Director Chamberlain and upon roll call, the following members were present: Freeholder Chamberlain, Freeholder John DiMaio and Freeholder Richard Gardner. Also attending were CFO Charles Houck, Fiscal Analyst Dan Olshefski and County Administrator Steve Marvin.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Director Chamberlain.

Director Chamberlain read the following statement: **“ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING OF JANUARY 21, 2006 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.”**

County Prosecutor Scott Ferguson was welcomed and invited to come forward to discuss his department's budget requests. Mr. Chamberlain explained how the Board was trying to be as frugal as possible and one of the problems throughout the County is the inverse relationship of grants – as the grant funds decrease, the County's costs increase. He asked that Mr. Ferguson look at such programs. Desired results would be more easily achieved through attrition.

In regard to personnel, Mr. Ferguson said current Deputy Chief of Detectives Robert Barsony is interested in retiring, although he would not leave until late in 2006. Upon his departure, Mr. Ferguson would be inclined to promote current Captain Robert Bunn to Deputy Chief and subsequently eliminate the position of Captain. When he became County Prosecutor, Mr. Ferguson brought his secretary with him. She eventually resigned and he did not replace her. In terms of budget constraints, “I get it,” said Mr. Ferguson. Being a smaller county, it takes more to run operations than counties such as Morris and Somerset. He said there are 64 employees in his department of which three are part-time. He does not think that is excessive, although he did concede management is a bit top-heavy.

As for grants, he was asked about Narcotics and Domestic Violence. We need Narcotics, said Mr. Ferguson. Coverage is quite thin with only three people doing undercover work. There has been a steady reduction in funding and increase in match. It was unclear if the funding would eventually disappear. Warren had been a pilot county for Domestic Violence grants which seem to have evaporated. Homeland Security is mandated and is now fully funded with the \$46,000 received paying for that person's salary. A State Child Advocacy Grant in the amount of \$50,000 has been applied for and Mr. Ferguson had reason to believe it would be granted. The first floor of the bank building is going to be turned into a Child Advocacy Center utilizing forfeiture funds for renovation/moving costs. This is their busiest unit, with two or three cases coming in each week. The space designated for victims and their families is simply not adequate at this time.

Mr. Marvin asked if Mr. Ferguson has seen any changes coming from the office of new Attorney General Zulima Farber. The answer was not yet, maybe in a couple of months.

Some discussion ensued regarding the duties of Detective Bloodgood.

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In regard to Operating Expenses (O.E.), Mr. Ferguson said the unit that picks up fugitives has seen a huge increase due to gas prices in the form of a fuel surcharge. Leases on properties have also gone up.

Mr. Chamberlain said he would like to look at eliminating an employee or something in O.E. and we really need to evaluate programs, particularly grant programs. "Bureaucracy can grow and grow and grow," he said. Mr. Gardner agreed, yet said certain programs must stay in place due to need and socioeconomic factors.

Mr. Ferguson reiterated that he understands and is in fact, letting go of an upper management position in addition to already having lost a secretary. The First Assistant Prosecutor will be leaving in June, but that will only save about \$20,000.

The Board thanked him for coming and he departed.

Mr. Olshefski distributed updated budget data including a letter from Tax Administrator Melissa Pritchett attesting to an increase in revenue of \$7,006,710 based on last year's tax rate. Under Capital Improvements, the \$1.75 million earmarked for Court House windows had been removed. According to Mr. Olshefski, \$4,536,000 in Capital Improvements can be covered by the amount raised by taxation.

Mr. Chamberlain wondered about the feasibility of leasing electronic equipment since it can quickly become outdated. Mr. Olshefski warned the cost would then be inside the CAP which would be problematic. Mr. Houck thought if we have the funds, we're better off buying the equipment. Mr. Olshefski suggested dedicating a fund for this purpose, put money into it each year and then the funds will be available to replace equipment when it becomes obsolete.

Mr. Gardner preferred the \$225,000 budgeted for the replacement of two dump trucks in the Special Vehicles & Equipment portion be reduced to \$175,000.

Attention then turned to the blueprints of the four-bay garage for Public Safety. The plans include heating and insulation. Mr. Chamberlain warned this would be an ongoing cost. Mr. Marvin said the heat could be separated out when the project is put out for bid. Of the \$430,000 budgeted cost,

\$100,000 was devoted to site preparation and it may not cost that much. The Capital Improvement portion of the Budget was then approved as presented.

The group took a short recess at 10:18 a.m.

In discussion of the Open Space Budget, O.E. are dedicated to office space leases, vehicles and maintenance on properties such as mowing at Bread Lock Park. Mr. Chamberlain was of the opinion that historic funds should be dedicated to the JINS Building renovations and historic portions of the Library and Court House. He cited the \$1 million in the bank that had been intended for the Transportation Heritage Center. Could these funds be utilized by the Municipal Trust? Mr. Gardner said he had met with a couple of members of the Trust Committee and he thinks there will be some restructuring. There should be more accountability such as status reports. Mr. Marvin suggested building language into the grant agreement. It was decided Mr. Marvin would send a letter through Land Preservation Director Robert Resker stating there would be no more than \$1 million to spend, that grants would be shortened to two years. Regular status reporting by grantees must be accomplished.

It was noted that even though the County is funding the Phillipsburg Library over 50%, we're the minority membership. Mr. Marvin thought perhaps a member of the Warren County

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Library Commission should be selected to serve on the Phillipsburg Library Board as well.

The Board then went through the budget modifications by department.

The Surrogate's O.E. were reduced.

The Office of Public Information & Tourism had budgeted \$50,000 for a newsletter. The amount would now be \$30,000. Mr. Chamberlain mentioned a NJAC newsletter that would be a good model. He also thought the Freeholders should be given more credit in *The Wonders of Warren County* magazine.

The number of juveniles detained at Warren Acres has decreased dramatically, resulting in a decrease in the Salaries & Wages (S.W.) and potential layoffs. The O.E. portion increased due to educational programs. The Adult Correctional Center, however, has experienced an increase in population and higher food service and medical costs.

The issue of having a Shade Tree Unit within the Road Department was again raised. Mr. Houck thought by dissolving the unit, the County may break even or save a bit, but the current crew is "at our beck and call". There is the matter of liability, however. It was decided Mr. Houck would invite Supervisor of Roads Frederick Miller to the next Regular Session of the Freeholder Board to answer some questions.

Mr. Olshefski said Christine Musa, Director of the Mosquito Commission, does not feel comfortable with \$605,000 for O.E. Mr. Chamberlain said she will have to choose priority areas.

In the Bridge Maintenance Department, an employee who had been making approximately \$66,800 per year has left. Mr. Chamberlain thought looking into reorganization would be wise. Mr. DiMaio and Mr. Marvin both agreed.

Regarding the Environmental Health Department, the number of wells to be inspected is down, which prompted the question what are employees doing if not inspecting things? The pending retirement of Paul Wegmann was mentioned.

Mr. Chamberlain mentioned a \$500,000 bio-terrorism grant, reiterating his conviction that there has to be an understanding that the County will not continue funding programs when grants dry up.

A brief discussion regarding education ensued. Warren County Community College will come before the Board on February 15, 2006; Warren County Technical School and Special Services are expected to appear in late March. In the Office of the Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Chamberlain thought the staff could be leaner and suggested eliminating a clerical position upon retirement.

Mr. Houck conducted a review of his CAP calculation with CAP bank.

In summary, it was decided to pay for Capital Improvement Projects out of Annual Appropriations; charge \$1 million to Municipal Trust for Historic Preservation; pass the departmental budgets as presented and discussed. Frederick Miller will be expected to attend the next Regular Session of the Board to discuss Shade Tree.

The Board then turned its attention to a list of personnel budget requests. Only two promotions were recommended at this time, along with a few salary adjustments. Increases were being requested for every member of the Board of Elections and every employee in the Election

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Department, but no recommendations had been made either way. Mr. DiMaio noted that the four people who sit on that Board are working members with a lot to do. No decisions were made in regard to personnel requests at this time.

Mr. Marvin confirmed that the Budget would be introduced at the February 15, 2006 Freeholder Meeting and the Public Hearing and Adoption would take place at the March 8, 2006 Freeholder Meeting.

On motion by Mr. Gardner, seconded by Mr. DiMaio, CANCELLED BUDGET SESSION SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 28, 2006.

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

On motion by Mr. DiMaio, seconded by Mr. Gardner, and there being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 12:03 p.m.

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

ATTESTED TO:

Steve Marvin, Clerk of the Board