

BUDGET SESSION MINUTES**JANUARY 17, 2007**

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 17, 2006 at 7:30 p.m.

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by Director Chamberlain and upon roll call, the following members were present: Freeholder Everett 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 17, 2007 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.”**

Mr. Houck began by reporting that the County purchased a property located in Washington Township at a Sheriff Sale. The County has a deferred loan financial interest in the property and foreclosure proceedings had been initiated by the bank due to the owner's default on the first mortgage. Appraised for \$280,000, the County purchased the property for \$210,000. The sale was covered by the HUD Trust Fund. No County funds were utilized. After some minor renovations, the property will be sold to a qualified low to moderate income family in accordance with HUD regulations.

Barry Smith, Director of Information Systems, was then invited to present his report on data and voice communications systems. Mr. Smith distributed a detailed project status on the new telephone system currently being installed, emphasizing that the project also encompasses data connectivity. The entire project is expected to be completed in October of this year. After expenditures and encumbrances, it looks as if \$200,000 may be left over which could conceivably be applied elsewhere. Also presented was a list of County-provided cell phones and to whom they are assigned. In some circumstances, cell phone usage has replaced radio service communication. Township police cars equipped with mobile data terminals account for 41 data cards. Mr. DiMaio asked about the usage plans. Mr. Smith said the current master plan is with Verizon Wireless plus four plans through Sprint/Nextel. Requirements have been submitted to Sprint/Nextel to see what they are willing to offer. Although the County has entered into a seven year contract for the new phone system, mobile service can be switched. Mr. Smith noted that cell phones themselves are for the most part quite reasonable, but sometimes the chargers are expensive.

The Prosecutor's Office expects to implement a new software system as a capital project. Mr. Smith said he is applying for funding through the PARIS (Public Archives and Records Infrastructure Support) Grant Program since it does involve records management. He is hopeful the funds will be awarded, but there is no guarantee. Notification is not expected until July or August. If PARIS does not cover the costs, the \$200,000 mentioned earlier expected to remain in the Information Systems Budget may be utilized for this purpose.

Mr. Chamberlain thanked Mr. Smith for attending.

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The Board then reviewed a list of County-owned vehicles driven home at night and by whom. The Prosecutor's Office accounted for the majority, at 30, which had apparently been trimmed down significantly as compared to five or six years ago. Fifteen Public Health nurses take home cars. Sometimes the point of service is closer than from the office, plus there is inadequate parking at the PHNA Building for both sets of vehicles. Four cars were assigned to staff of the Sheriff's Office, two to the Road Department and one for each of the following departments: Rutgers Cooperative Research & Extension, the Correctional Center, Public Safety and Weights & Measures. Gasoline is also provided by the County.

Human Services Director Karen Kubert, accompanied by Fiscal Officer Kim Francisco, approached the Board to clarify a requested increase. Mr. Houck had been under the impression that an increase of \$103,810 in operating expenses was to be grant-funded. In fact, two ADRC (Aging and Disabled Resource Center) Grants have expired. Warren being a pilot county, the department hopes to perpetuate a program with the goal of transitioning people from nursing homes back to the community. Contracted caseworkers would first provide services to existing clients then submit documentation to the State for reimbursement which typically takes 30-45 days. Although the revenue is not guaranteed through a grant, historically recovered revenue has always exceeded projections. Documentation of this trend was provided along with a letter from the Director of the NJ Department of Health & Senior Services, Division of Aging and Community Services. Case Managers are employed through Manpower and only get paid for actual hours worked. The county has a growing senior population and the Senior Services Department keeps doing more and more. Even though the goal is to keep people out of nursing homes, the program will not negatively impact Warren Haven. There will be enough patients to fill the beds and there are currently 24 people on a waiting list. When asked what would happen should the Board refuse the requested increase, Ms. Kubert said, we won't be able to do as much; we've been able to help more people with this program. Although the general consensus of the Board was favorable, Mr. Chamberlain cautioned that he wanted to finish examining the County Budget in its entirety before giving a definite answer. The parties thanked each other for the clarification.

Attention then turned to Capital Improvement Projects. Mr. Olshefski noted that the Engineering Department had gotten "hit pretty hard" by Hurricane Ivan, requiring money to be shuffled around and some funds have yet to be recouped. Requested budget items meriting further questions and discussion included the following: a nurse call system software upgrade at Warren Haven, expenses associated with relocating the Health Department (new furniture, moving costs), annual computer replacement (including servers) for the Prosecutor's Office, another phase of radio system upgrades in

Public Safety, a proposed emergency generator system for the Wayne Dumont, Jr. Building, a fire escape at the Public Health Nursing Building, replacement boiler for the Court House and a bookmobile for the Library. Regarding the fire escape, Mr. Chamberlain wondered if it made sense to invest \$60,000 in the building if it were to be sold in a year or two. The circa 1950 boiler in the Court House will be replaced with multiple smaller units with future renovations in mind and may be fueled by gas rather than oil. The \$100,000 emergency generator for the Administration Building was deemed unnecessary and removed from the budget. Included in the budget was a "ballpark" figure of \$1.5 million for architectural and engineering services for the proposed new Human Services/Library Building. Anticipated construction costs of \$270,000 associated with the Warden's House had not yet been inserted into the budget. Mr. DiMaio wanted to discuss the bookmobile in more detail later. He wasn't convinced the purchase was necessary considering the number of branches and high level of technology available today.

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 9:23 p.m.
Recorded Vote: Mr. Gardner yes, Mr. DiMaio yes, Mr. Chamberlain yes

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ATTESTED TO:

Steve Marvin, Clerk of the Board