

BUDGET SESSION MINUTES**JANUARY 27, 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 27, 2006 at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.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 27, 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. Olshefski began by saying more than \$1.2 million had been inserted into the Library's Capital Improvements Budget for future expansion. The tax rate for the County Library System is 5.2 cents.

Library Director Tom Carney and Assistant Library Director Richard Moore approached the Board regarding the Library Budget. The first topic of discussion was the Bookmobile. Purchased in 1993, the Bookmobile has begun to corrode and rust. The typical lifespan of a Bookmobile is 18 years. The estimated cost for a new one is \$180,000 and the design and bidding process would take about 18 months. Staffed and driven by one full-time

Principal Library Assistant, the Bookmobile serves 19 preschools, four nursing homes, 12 individuals and three miscellaneous stops on a monthly basis accounting for 1.5 per cent total circulation. According to Mr. Carney, a sizable number of people cannot visit a library building due to handicaps, lack of transportation and other reasons. Adaptive technology for the blind and deaf is procured through the Bookmobile Program. Since the towns of Alpha, Belvidere, Hackettstown, Phillipsburg and Washington maintain their own libraries and do not support the County Library System, these areas are not serviced (with the exception of programs for the handicapped). The goal is to have an agency 15 minutes from people who are unable to drive.

The Board wondered if a Bookmobile was really necessary in the future due to advances in computer technology. Perhaps a book van with superior gas mileage would be suitable. Mr. DiMaio thought Washington Borough and Hackettstown may be interested in joining the County System. Maybe we should move in that direction to help meet the 15 minute goal. A van would not provide the same level of service, said Mr. Carney. If people knew exactly what they wanted that would be fine, but people like to browse and 40% of County residents do not have computers in their homes. In summary, a decision did not have to be made at this meeting regardless, but Mr. Chamberlain requested a report on Bookmobile use over the years to see in what direction the trend is heading.

The Board was supportive of the request for libraries to be open on Saturdays during July and August. Regarding the Phillipsburg Federation, two years' notice is required to leave the

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federation and 2007 is the year to give notice. The County carries 50% of the budget, but has only three representatives on the board. Mr. Chamberlain wanted to be sure a letter would be sent for notification. In addition to the Town of Phillipsburg, the Townships of Greenwich, Pohatcong and Lopatcong are served through the federation.

RESOLUTION 71-07

On motion by Mr. Gardner, seconded by Mr. DiMaio, the following resolution was adopted by the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren at a meeting held on January 24, 2007.

**RESOLUTION CREATING A PART-TIME POSITION OF SENIOR LIBRARY ASSISTANT,
CLASSIFIED, IN THE WARREN COUNTY LIBRARY.**

BE IT RESOLVED by the Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders that a part-time position of *Senior Library Assistant*, classified, is created for the purpose of efficiency and effectiveness of operations.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the newly created position of *Senior Library Assistant* is created on AFSCME Local 3287, Range 0535 and made effective immediately.

I hereby certify the above to be a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Board of Chosen Freeholders on the date above mentioned.

Steve Marvin, Clerk of the Board

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

The Library portion of the meeting was concluded at 9:53 a.m.

Land Preservation Director Bob Resker then came forward to answer any questions regarding his budget. The Garden State Preservation Trust Fund money is all committed. We are facing a minimum of 18 months of no state funding. Encumbered Historic Preservation funds include \$2,053,000 for the Warren Home renovations. Wages for Shippen Manor's part-time curator will be grant-funded for half the year so the remaining \$11,500 will be paid as a contracted operating expense. Extra funds were inserted into the Maintenance portion to fix up the coal barn in Bread Lock Park where a newly found artifact is expected to be housed. An alarm system will probably have to be installed. Work will also be done on the trail system through White Lake.

Mr. DiMaio commended Mr. Resker on the work that he does. Mr. Marvin noted that Mr. Resker's assistant, Janette Hendershot, will be retiring and much of the department's success is attributable to her. The program is one of Warren County's highlights, said Mr. Gardner. Mr. Chamberlain said this has been a salvation for some, making the program even more important. He thanked Mr. Resker, saying he was appreciative of all he does. The Open Space portion of the meeting concluded at 10:15 a.m.

Final details in the Capital Improvement Program were then settled. Due to the occupant load on the third floor of the Public Health Nursing Building, the proposed fire escape questioned at a previous meeting does indeed have to be installed. To compensate, Mr. Marvin suggested removing \$50,000 budgeted for Buildings and Grounds for the plan and design of wastewater treatment. The recommendation was approved. Although still waiting for anticipated ratables for two towns, the Board anticipated being able to cut the County tax rate by two cents and put two cents toward capital improvements. One penny is equal to roughly \$1.3 million. Although we

could cut taxes more, said Mr. DiMaio, this would mean borrowing more, which would be a burden on future generations. Mr. Chamberlain agreed that we do not want to leverage future generations, but pay as we go, unlike previous Freeholder Boards.

Regarding the unacceptable increase in Operating Expenses for the Prosecutor's Office, it was explained that among the requests was one for vests, weapons, ammunition and training

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unrelated to personnel expenses. Taking this into consideration, the Board settled on \$480,000 for 2007 Operating Expenses for the Prosecutor's Office.

A summary of Personnel Budget Requests was presented. Among the recommendations was a flat increase in the stipend of County Fire Marshal Joe Lake, bringing it to \$20,000 per year. Mr. Marvin said it was justified due to significant time and effort expended by Mr. Lake. Not recommended were requests that two positions currently grant funded through July 1 be funded for the remainder of the year. The Board accepted all personnel recommendations as presented.

Mr. Houck then reviewed final details of the Budget for the Technical School. There was a bit of confusion since their fiscal year straddles two of our calendar years resulting in a slight discrepancy between the amount appropriated last year and the amount actually paid. All parties agreed to Mr. Houck's estimation of funding for FY 2007 and changed nothing.

Next was a Final Budget Summary and CAP calculation. Although still awaiting a figure from Washington Borough, Tax Administrator Melissa Pritchett had submitted an otherwise complete Certification of New Constructions/Improvements/Partial Assessments for 2007. As he had stated previously, Mr. Houck said new construction has "really saved us over the years." If that slows down, he said, "We're in big trouble." He advised the Board to think about whether or not personnel positions really need to be filled when they become vacant. Mr. Chamberlain agreed this worthy of consideration. The dollar amount of the one percent increase in the CAP Rate (from 2.5% to 3.5%) is anticipated to be \$385,427. Mr. Marvin said the legislation is likely to change, increasing to a 4% CAP on budget growth and modifying the list of exceptions.

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 11:15 a.m.
Recorded Vote: Mr. Gardner yes, Mr. DiMaio yes, Mr. Chamberlain yes

ATTESTED TO:

Steve Marvin, Clerk of the Board