

**MINUTES****NOVEMBER 5, 2008**

The Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren met in Work Session in its offices in the Wayne Dumont, Jr. Administration Building, Belvidere, New Jersey on November 5, 2008 at 7:09 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Director DiMaio and upon roll call, the following members were present: Freeholder John DiMaio, Freeholder Richard Gardner and Freeholder Everett Chamberlain. Also attending were CFO Charles Houck, Fiscal Analyst Dan Olshefski, Assistant County Counsel Erik Hassing and County Administrator Steve Marvin.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Director DiMaio.

Director DiMaio read the following statement: **“ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING OF NOVEMBER 5, 2008 WAS GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT BY FORWARDING A NOTICE OF THIS BUDGET WORK SESSION MEETING 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.”**

Warren County Prosecutor Scott Ferguson began the meeting by publicly congratulating Mr. Gardner on his reelection as Freeholder.

Mr. Ferguson said he was sensitive to the Board's position and thought the Freeholders were doing the right thing. From the time I became Prosecutor, he said, I've been sensitive. In the first six months, a secretary left and I didn't replace her without any prompting from you. As people have left and retired, we tried to replace them at a lower cost. Just a couple of years ago – he thought the year 2006 – Mr. Ferguson said he saved about \$250,000 and called it “a gift that keeps on giving”.

John Laky, former Prosecutor, had already reduced his staff prior to Mr. Ferguson's tenure. The amount of budget reduction the Board is seeking can really only be achieved through layoffs. We're at the point where I don't see how we can further reduce staff, Mr. Ferguson said. Next year, there may be a retirement that could result in cost savings, but nothing definite at this time.

Mr. Chamberlain thanked Mr. Ferguson for having been “more than cooperative when asked to work with the Board in the past, particularly, the willingness to relocate offices in an effort to mitigate space issues.

Mr. Chamberlain then asked several questions about various budget line items. While numerous areas had certain amounts budgeted, it appeared they were carrying fairly large balances. Although Mr. Ferguson said he would look into a couple of areas in question, it was established that the figures to which Mr. Chamberlain was referring were several months old and generally, the accounts do not in fact carry balances into the next budget cycle.

Regarding the K-9 Unit, Mr. Chamberlain said he was “not excited” about its funding. The Sheriff had requested taking it over a couple of years ago and was denied since the grant funding

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had been on the verge of expiring.

Mr. Ferguson noted that a Nurse Coordinator who does forensic work is funded in large part by a State grant and pending legislation dealing with Pre-Trial Intervention will generate money to be put back into Victim/Witness grant funding.

Mr. DiMaio initiated discussion on the Riverside Building which houses several divisions of the Prosecutor's Office and costs about \$114,000 in rent each year. Mr. DiMaio was interested in getting out of the lease and relocating elsewhere.

In terms of manpower, Mr. Ferguson emphasized that he is down a detective. Last year, he attempted to trade an administrative position for a detective, but did not get one. He's trying again this year. Two detectives were lost under Mr. Laky so the department is now down three detectives. Mr. Ferguson provided some figures comparing Warren County's caseload, population and manpower to that of Somerset and Hunterdon. Mr. Chamberlain asked if, when an attorney retires, the vacancy could be filled with an investigator instead. Mr. Ferguson said no, he would rather not go down a lawyer.

This segment of the meeting concluded at 7:48 p.m.

Next to come before the Board was Public Health Nursing Agency Director Dot Harth. Mr. Chamberlain asked what percentage of staff time is devoted to community health. Ms. Harth said only about 25%-30% of time is spent on community health with 65%-70% devoted to home health care.

With a caseload about two percent higher than last year, Ms. Harth did not expect any problems with anticipated revenues.

Mr. Chamberlain inquired about control of overtime pay. Ms. Harth said this was a labor negotiation issue. The agency does have to provide services 24/7 and overtime is incurred on any County holiday. Plus, weekends are a very busy time as hospitals have a penchant for discharging patients on Fridays. The idea of a floating holiday may be something to bring to the bargaining table.

After having a few questions answered regarding specific line items, Mr. Chamberlain asked if procedures could be combined among PHNA, Warren Haven and the Department of Senior Services for the purpose of recouping Medicaid "back room reimbursements". Ms. Harth said, "Absolutely not." The person doing the billing has to be in attendance to have access to the records and system software. The process takes a lot of time and the first piece is actually completed by the nurses. It was also pointed out that not all Medicaid payments are the same; they come from different "pots".

This portion of the meeting concluded at 8:15 p.m.

Laura Decker, Administrator of Warren Haven, was then summoned by the Board. Mr. DiMaio thanked her for working to try and find solutions to the budget CAP problem. Ms. Decker expressed appreciation for the opportunity to speak with the Freeholders. These

uncertain times present challenges to every level of government, she said. Thinking she had complied with the five percent reduction directive, Ms. Decker said she was "horrified" to find out she hadn't. The last two months have been very difficult for staff, families and residents of Warren Haven, continued Ms. Decker. I hope we can recover from some of the strain and return to the mission of caring for the frail and indigent.

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Ms. Decker explained how budget increases will be offset by revenues. The Medicaid rate per day has been increased by the rate setting bureau. She characterized the projected revenue for 2009 as conservative. Operating Expenses had been reduced in 2007 and remained flat from 2007 to 2008. She said certain increases are simply beyond our control, citing food, fuel, examining gloves and incontinence products as examples. Food costs rose 18% in the first quarter of 2008.

We're running very tight, Ms. Decker said. The only place to make further cuts is in salaries and wages. A full-time Administrative Clerk position was eliminated in 2007. It would not be possible to completely eliminate overtime, but it has been reduced by 1,000 hours. She was doubtful overtime hours could be reduced much more. Current vacancies and pending retirements have all been achieved through attrition. An Assistant Director of Personnel position is vacant. Ms. Decker has been doing the job even though it is not within her area of expertise.

Mr. Chamberlain asked about various administrative nursing titles. Ms. Decker advised not getting too caught up in Civil Service Titles. For example, a title prefaced by the word "Senior" simply means that person has been working in the title for five years. It does not denote supervisory status. Further, the State mandates this number of nursing positions. Ms. Decker repeated that Warren Haven is "running very tight".

This portion of the meeting ended at 9:10 p.m.

Mr. Chamberlain inquired about getting County employees on the State Health Benefit Plan. Mr. Olshefski said the coverage is very comparable. Mr. DiMaio preferred to wait and see how the fund performs over time; he was concerned about costs skyrocketing in the future. Mr. Chamberlain said he wanted to keep the option open. He pointed out that the larger the pool, the more spread out the risk. He thought this could be an area of potential cost savings.

Another idea Mr. Chamberlain was interested in pursuing was to have meals for the Senior Nutrition Project prepared at the commercial kitchen in Warren Haven. Ms. Decker said she agreed "philosophically", but a significant amount of research and initial investment would have to be done first. Saying she was a big believer in shared services, Ms. Decker would love to see it happen, but the in-house resources are not in place right now.

Dale Mulliken, a Warren Haven maintenance worker, came forward under Public Comments. He asked the Board to bear in mind that seasonal staff members are utilized at Warren Haven to cover summer vacations. Regarding expansion of meal preparation operations, he said increased staff would be required and wear and tear on equipment should be considered. Years ago, Meals on Wheels were prepared there.

Under Freeholder Comments, Mr. DiMaio congratulated Mr. Gardner on his reelection victory.

Mr. Chamberlain said there is currently a vacancy on the Warren County Pequest River Municipal Utilities Authority (PRMUA). The Pollution Control Financing Authority (PCFA), a sister agency, is investing \$5 million to build a pre-treatment plant that will benefit PRMUA ratepayers and taxpayers. He thought it was important to optimize communication between the two agencies and suggested appointing Laurel Napolitani to the PRMUA. She would replace Donald Niece who had resigned.

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On a closely related topic, Mr. Chamberlain recommended amending the criteria for appointments to the PRMUA. Presently, appointees represent certain regions, some of which are not and will never be, served by the PRMUA. He thought it made more sense to require members reside within the service area.

**RESOLUTION 612-08**

On motion by Mr. Chamberlain, seconded by Mr. Gardner, the following resolution was adopted by the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren at a meeting held on November 5, 2008.

**RESOLUTION AMENDING A RESOLUTION OF NOVEMBER 8, 1995 CONCERNING WARREN COUNTY PEQUEST RIVER MUNICIPAL UTILITIES AUTHORITY'S MEMBERSHIP**

**BE AND IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders that effective immediately, the Resolution of November 8, 1995, #665-95, is amended as to residency requirements of members of the Warren County Pequest River Municipal Utilities Authority; namely, members shall be residents of those municipalities serviced by the utilities of the Warren County Pequest River Municipal Utilities Authority to include only the Town of Belvidere, the Township of Oxford and the Township of White and that said amendment shall be applied prospectively to any appointments or reappointments to the Warren County Pequest River Municipal Utilities Authority.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders retains jurisdiction and discretion to determine the distribution and allocation of membership between the municipalities named herein.

I hereby certify the above to be a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren at a meeting held on November 5, 2008.

Steve Marvin, Clerk of the Board

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

**RESOLUTION 613-08**

On motion by Mr. Chamberlain, seconded by Mr. Gardner, the following resolution was adopted by the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren at a meeting held on November 5, 2008.

**RESOLUTION APPOINTING MEMBER TO THE WARREN COUNTY PEQUEST RIVER MUNICIPAL UTILITIES AUTHORITY**

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren hereby appoints the following member to the Warren County Pequest River Municipal Utilities Authority for a term ending January 31, 2013.

Laurel Napolitani  
912 Liberty Street  
Belvidere, NJ 07823

Term to expire: January 31, 2013

I hereby certify the above to be a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren at a meeting held on November 5, 2008.

Steve Marvin, Clerk of the Board

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

Belvidere resident Ralph Coppersmith, who served the County for "many, many years" as a member of the Shade Tree Commission, Library Commission and more, passed away recently. Mr. Chamberlain said he will be very much missed. Mr. Gardner agreed; Mr. Coppersmith had been an asset on the Projects Committee as well.

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On motion by Mr. Gardner, seconded by Mr. Chamberlain, and there being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.  
Recorded Vote: Mr. Chamberlain yes, Mr. Gardner yes, Mr. DiMaio yes

**ATTESTED TO:****Steve Marvin, Clerk of the Board**