

MINUTES

JANUARY 8, 2011

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 8, 2011 at 9:06 a.m.

The meeting was called to order by Director Chamberlain and upon roll call, the following members were present: Freeholder Everett Chamberlain and Freeholder Jason Sarnoski. Freeholder Richard Gardner arrived one minute later. Also attending were Fiscal Analyst Dan Olshefski and County Administrator Steve Marvin. CFO Charles Houck was absent due to illness.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Director Chamberlain.

Director Chamberlain read the following statement: **“ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING OF JANUARY 8, 2011 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.”**

No updated budget numbers were provided on paper; the group referred to numbers presented to them at the last budget session. Mr. Olshefski verbally informed the Board that he had made the following adjustments since the last meeting: the Property/Casualty Insurance line was reduced by \$76,000 due to Mr. Grossmann's update and a reduction of \$2,935 in Rutgers Cooperative Extension Salaries & Wages (S&W). A cost that needs to be worked in somewhere, possibly in the Buildings & Grounds budget, is \$29,000 in maintenance costs for defibrillators throughout County facilities.

Mr. Gardner noticed \$397,000 budgeted for eight residence rooms in Warren Haven. He thought that had been approved in last year's budget, but Mr. Olshefski said it had not.

An extensive discussion ensued regarding personnel and attrition with Mr. Marvin distributing a list of positions currently vacant and projected 2011 retirements earning more than \$50,000 annually. In the Public Safety Department, Mr. Chamberlain noted that Frank Wheatley is now serving in a dual title and has expressed interest in moving Bill Hunt up to Deputy OEM/Deputy Public Safety Director. He thought Mr. Hunt's current position could then be shed.

Mr. Chamberlain was interested in pursuing the idea of putting the new Sheriff in charge of the jail. It's done in other counties, he said, and thought Dave Gallant would be a good fit. In the past, there have been custody battles between the Warden and Sheriff; this arrangement would eliminate that possibility. Mr. Chamberlain thought this move would save money and make for a smoother and more efficient operation. He said he had already spoken to Mr. Gallant and he is willing to consider taking it on.

Mr. Gardner thought the idea had promise. He agreed the arrangement could result in a smoother process of moving incarcerated people to and from the Court House. However, he said, we have to be cautious. While we respect Mr. Gallant as very capable, this is a whole new realm

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for him. Mr. Gardner suggested giving it a year to see how it goes. Mr. Chamberlain said it's already being done in about half of New Jersey's counties.

Mr. Sarnoski agreed with Mr. Gardner. We are fortunate to have Mr. Gallant as Sheriff, but this is an elected position and in future, we may not be so lucky. Then we'll no longer have control. Mr. Chamberlain said the Board could still have jurisdiction; we could change it back.

Mr. Marvin said from an organizational standpoint, putting the Sheriff in charge of the jail is fine, but there should still be a Warden in place. The Warden should not be in a bargaining unit and could report to the Sheriff. If the Board really wants to eliminate a position, maybe it could be that of the Deputy Warden.

Mr. Chamberlain wanted to invite Mr. Gallant in for a budget session to discuss the matter. He thought Mr. Gallant had the people skills and management acumen to make it work.

Mr. Sarnoski thought keeping a Warden in place was a good idea. Throwing all this at Mr. Gallant at once while he's learning how to run a new department is asking a lot. He thought perhaps Acting Warden Bob Brothers should be included in the discussion since he has the background in Corrections. Mr. Gardner noted the hierarchal structure in the Department of Corrections is not quite the same as Public Safety. Mr. Chamberlain thought the chain of command structure was similar to the military. He did not agree that Mr. Brothers should be party to the discussion. Not everyone over there is going to agree and some of them want the job.

From the audience, Elaine Reichart of White Township suggested that combining one position may not be the most effective way to increase efficiency. Perhaps an examination of the organizational structure of both departments should be conducted. Mr. Chamberlain acknowledged that there are many things to consider. Officers in the two different departments receive slightly different training; perhaps cross-training should be implemented. There are a lot of things to look at, he said, but I think there is a lot of potential.

Mr. Olshefski thought it was too soon to make any permanent changes and endorsed the idea of trying it for one year. We don't jump to add positions, he said; we shouldn't jump to take them away.

Attention then returned to the Vacancy List. Mr. Marvin noted a significant top-down turnover in the Prosecutor's Office. Some are retirements and some are attributable to the pending change in management. Referring to some data he had obtained from other counties (particularly Sussex), it appeared to Mr. Chamberlain that the Warren County Prosecutor's Office has a comparably higher level of staffing. With a lot of attrition happening anyway, Mr. Chamberlain thought now was the time to think about cutting positions. Mr. Marvin suggested including the Prosecutor in a future budget session out of respect. It was decided to add him to the list of department heads to come before the Board.

Mr. Marvin predicted that if the Governor implements the next round of pension reforms, Warren County could see a mass exodus in the coming months. An employee around age 55 with 25 years of service would have no reason not to leave which is a concern since chains of succession are not in place and from a budgetary standpoint, the County would then have to pay health benefits for both retirees and new personnel. Mr. Marvin said proposed pension reforms do not differentiate between groups that have continually made payments such as local governments and those that have shirked the responsibility such as the State. The huge deficit in P.E.R.S. is not across the entire group.

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Some disparate areas of focus for future budget discussions were raised. Mr. Gardner was under the impression the IT upgrades were not complete, but the nature of technology is that it is never done, but constantly ongoing. With part of the increase in OE in the Mosquito Commission due to rising pension and health insurance obligations, Mr. Sarnoski requested a breakdown of those amounts.

The Board thought Buildings & Grounds Superintendent Alex Lazorisak should be consulted regarding potential ways to control utility costs. On further examination, Mr. Olshefski thought there may not be enough budgeted for electricity. Mr. Sarnoski didn't think so either. The Technical School was added to the list to bring in during the budget process. They are carrying a surplus.

Regarding the County's own surplus, Mr. Olshefski did not recommend reducing it as it will be needed going forward nor was Mr. Chamberlain in favor of raiding the capital account to reduce the tax levy. Such a temporary fix does not reduce the size of government.

A schedule was established to invite representatives from the following departments to discuss budget matters: Sheriff, Prosecutor and Warren Haven on January 15; Information Systems and Human Services on January 19 and Buildings & Grounds and the Technical School on January 22.

It was noted that Information Systems requested \$400,000 in Capital Improvement funds for a backup generator system. It was not recommended at this time even though part of the cost would be recovered through a grant.

Mr. Sarnoski reported that he would be attending the next Projects Committee Meeting in the coming week. He agreed with Mr. Chamberlain that dipping into capital funds would be artificial and inadvisable. However, we want to be sure we are properly planning for Capital Improvements. He suggested bringing in the chairman of the Projects Committee for an overview.

Mr. Chamberlain said he would like to plan for the second phase of Court House renovations. I don't want to just buy buildings, he said. We have the Juvenile Detention Center just sitting there vacant. Mr. Marvin noted that the County is involved in a number of lease agreements that it should probably extricate itself from. Mr. Chamberlain said he thought the Projects Committee should come to us with a strategic plan, but he doubted they were ready to do so.

In that case, Mr. Sarnoski thought perhaps the entire committee should come in as a whole. Maybe not as part of the budget process to allocate dollars, but to give them some direction to aid them in coming up with a plan.

Mr. Gardner wanted to stay focused on the Court House and then start on the Annex. Mr. Marvin noted that consideration should be given to budgeting for related architect services. There is no provision in the 2011 Budget for the next phase of construction at the Court House.

The Library has nearly \$5.5 million in its capital budget.

Mr. Chamberlain thought it was premature to ask the Projects Committee for any specifics; they need more time to prepare. Mr. Sarnoski maintained that the Board should provide some vision to move forward. It was decided to tentatively schedule a special meeting with the Projects Committee at 4:00 p.m. on March 9, 2011.

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Mr. Olshefski asked if the committee has looked at Warren Haven since there are significant capital improvement needs there. Both Mr. Gardner and Mr. Chamberlain thought probably not; that wasn't really its charge.

There were no further Public Comments nor any members of the press in attendance.

On motion by Mr. Chamberlain, seconded by Mr. Sarnoski, and there being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 10:47 a.m.
Recorded Vote: Mr. Sarnoski yes, Mr. Gardner yes, Mr. Chamberlain yes

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