

MINUTES**MARCH 9, 2011**

The Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren met in Special Session in its offices in the Wayne Dumont, Jr. Administration Building, Belvidere, New Jersey on March 9, 2011 at 4:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Director Chamberlain and upon roll call, the following members were present: Freeholder Everett Chamberlain, Freeholder Richard Gardner and Freeholder Jason Sarnoski. Also attending was 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 MARCH 9, 2011 WAS GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT BY FORWARDING A SCHEDULE OF THIS SPECIAL 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.”**

Mr. Chamberlain said this is a meeting to discuss the direction of capital projects to go into the future, a strategic plan to move forward. He then turned the meeting over to the Projects Committee Chairman Joseph Houston.

Mr. Houston said the committee has met intensively for the past two and half months and is prepared to present four proposals to the Freeholders tonight plus a fifth proposal regarding the Court House clock. Architect Ray O'Brien has been working with the committee on most of these proposals and has been very helpful. Pursuit of these projects is completely dependent on the Board's direction and cost. We have preliminary numbers associated with these recommendations, but they are not hard numbers.

Mr. Houston spoke of the Ribbon Cutting event held at the Court House two weeks prior revealing the first phase of renovations there. He thought it was very successful. He had been thanked many times by various people affiliated with the Courts. He estimated a savings in excess of \$30 million by the time all renovations are done. The first phase went exceptionally well; we had a good contractor.

The first recommendation is to proceed with Phase Two of the renovation of the Court House. Mr. O'Brien has been studying the best way to proceed. At this point, it is advised to make improvements along the front of the structure involving the Jury Assembly Room, possibly new roofing and opening up the front door as the main entrance. The front entrance would provide increased security as well as be more pleasant for people waiting to enter as they will be under the covered portico.

Mr. O'Brien then presented his suggestions as to how to proceed while referring to drawings and floor plans. Regarding the exterior, the Board will be faced with decisions regarding window replacements, roofing options and exterior trim. The clock tower, main

pillars, fascias, soffits and gutters should be refurbished. His proposal included capturing 2,000 additional square feet in the interior, refinishing Court Room #1 and continuing HVAC connections

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to the newly installed infrastructure. Asbestos abatement will be required in certain areas as will temporarily relocating workers.

Mr. Chamberlain wanted to know how many people would have to be relocated, suggesting potentially moving the Election Board to the soon-to-be-vacated Northeast Library Branch Building and other workers to the Belvidere Hotel. Mr. O'Brien wasn't sure of the number; he thought perhaps 25-27 people might be affected.

Mr. Gardner was concerned about the condition of the slate roof. Mr. O'Brien said the remaining lifespan of the roof has not yet been assessed. If it is deemed sound for another 20 years, we'll probably leave it alone, but if there is evidence of defacing or leaks, it should be addressed. Mr. Gardner thought this was a major determining factor in budgeting for the project as the roof could really drive costs up.

If it were to be determined that this next phase should be split in two, Mr. Sarnoski asked how that could be done. Mr. O'Brien said possibly by doing one floor at a time, bearing in mind that duct work has to be considered as the goal to get this section hooked into the new heating and cooling powerhouse in the Old Jail Building. The planning would have to be done as a whole, but the construction could be done in steps. Mr. Chamberlain thought it could be more economical to do all at once. Mr. O'Brien agreed.

Mr. Sarnoski asked about what funding has been set aside for this venture. Mr. Marvin said all we need to pay for this year is architectural and engineering work and he thought we were in good shape.

The second project being recommended by the committee was converting the vacant Warren Acres Building into an evidence storage facility with a few offices for the Prosecutor's Office. The Projects Committee had been charged with moving County operations out of rental space and a site in Belvidere known as the Rossi Building is costing the County about \$150,000 per year. Committee Member Dick Mach said the secure rooms in Warren Acres are ideally suited for storage of evidence and weapons. He thought a minimum amount of work would be involved in preparing the site for this use. There is also a fenced-in lot that could be utilized for impounded vehicles.

Mr. Sarnoski asked how much money has been budgeted for this. Mr. Marvin said \$13.5 million is set aside for capital improvements. Of this amount, \$5.7 million is earmarked for the Library and \$350,000 belongs to Public Health Nursing. With the County paying for the Rossi lease on a month-to-month basis, Mr. Chamberlain was interested in firm numbers for the Warren Acres project. He expressed a desire to have the whole operation move at once rather than in stages. Mr. Gardner agreed this project should be expedited.

The third project being recommended tonight dealt with voting machine storage and was presented by Buildings & Grounds Superintendent Alex Lazorisak. After utilizing the Warren Acres fenced-in lot for impounded vehicles, that would vacate the existing impound garage which is approximately 7,200 square feet. The current storage facility for which the County is paying rent is 7,800 square feet. The cost to renovate is minimal.

The plan would likely include a small office area and bathroom as well as moving all the County owned mechanical heating and cooling equipment out of the Rossi Building to this facility. Mr. Lazorisak and Mr. O'Brien estimated this plan would cost roughly \$150,000. With the County paying about \$60,000 in rent to store the machines, this option would pay for itself in about two years.

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Mr. Houston invited former Library Director Richard Moore to present the committee's fourth recommendation. After considering various possibilities, the committee advised proceeding with new construction of a Library Headquarters on County owned property adjacent to the Wayne Dumont, Jr. Administration Building. Moving the current Headquarters out of the Court House Annex in Belvidere would free up space there for the Department of Human Services which could in turn, open up the Cummins Building for a different use.

It was proposed to construct a one story single use facility so elevator costs would be eliminated. The location would simplify connections to information/technology, phone and data. The Administration Building lot could accommodate overflow parking during special events.

Mr. Chamberlain explained to the audience that the purchase of an existing building nearby was examined, but the seller was not willing to negotiate. The asking price is higher than what the appraisal says it is worth. Considering the price and what it would cost to retrofit the structure for use as a library, the engineer thought it would be more cost efficient to put up a new building. In addition, 15,000 square feet all on one floor is more desirable than two floors of 7,500 square feet each. The committee estimated the cost of the new building would be in the \$4.5 million range.

Mr. Gardner noted that we've come full circle; we're back where maybe we should be. He liked the idea of not having to compete with commercial traffic for parking. Mr. Chamberlain added that we're not taking ratables off the tax rolls this way either.

The final proposal involved the clock housed in the Court House clock tower. Jane Primerano shared some research originally provided by Jay Richards regarding the origin of the clock. She said the clock was designed by a man named Byram, yet there is no record of him having a contract with Warren County. There is, however, a record of him building a clock of this design for the Virginia Military Institute which was burned by the Union Army during the Civil War. The clock and bell were removed from the VMI tower around the time of the fire and Ms. Primerano thought it was possible the clocks were one and the same.

According to bids obtained back in 2007, restoration would cost about \$43,000 with an additional \$15,000 for an electronic mechanism for automatic winding. These figures do not include any structural work on the tower. In addition, being a very sensitive instrument, there are no guarantees that the clock would not require repeated repair when subject to vibrations. Regardless, the clock has to come out. The committee recommended replacing the clock with an electronic one that will look the same. The existing clock could be displayed someplace visible; perhaps inside the Court House, encased outdoors on the Court House grounds or in the to-be built library. Mr. Chamberlain thought it would be a great event to have Civil War re-enactors parade the clock back down to Virginia.

The presentation of recommendations now complete, Mr. Chamberlain thought the Freeholder Board should come to some consensus on how to proceed. He personally concurred with moving forward on the next phase of Court House renovations. Ray O'Brien has already submitted a proposal and Mr. Chamberlain was in favor of including it on a meeting agenda in the near future. Whether or not the next phase is broken up into separate projects will be determined by cost.

Regarding Warren Acres, Mr. Chamberlain liked the idea of moving forward as soon as possible and get everything moved all at once, offices and evidence storage, to get out of the Riverside lease agreement completely. Mr. Gardner agreed. He thought the proposed

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arrangement would be very advantageous and the project should be expedited. Mr. Sarnoski concurred with his colleagues. We have this property sitting there not being used. We shouldn't be leasing something at a high expense if we already own a suitable facility. He thought it should be done quickly also.

The Board next discussed moving voting machines from rented space to a building on the County Garage complex. Mr. Chamberlain said the building is secure and fenced in, so it's probably more secure than where the voting machines are now housed. While it's about 600 square feet less than the present storage location, Mr. Lazorisak said he had consulted the Election Board and they thought it was workable. Mr. Gardner was in favor of moving quickly on this project as well. Perhaps it could be done by the end of the year. Mr. Sarnoski agreed it should be a priority.

There was another proposal from Mr. O'Brien to scope out a beginning schematic phase for Warren Acres, the voting machine storage garage and the Library that would give the Freeholders a better idea on cost. Mr. Chamberlain wanted the proposal on the agenda as soon as possible.

Next, the Board discussed the Library. Mr. Gardner thought the Projects Committee was correct in no longer pursuing an existing building, but rather focusing our energies on this campus. He thought this would ultimately be the best for our citizens. We're developing the type of library that will be well suited to the public whether it remains a headquarters or a branch. Potential future expansions will be implemented in the design.

Mr. Sarnoski said while he wasn't here when discussions first began on plans for a new Library Headquarters, he knew a number of options had been considered and reconsidered. He knows the Board has been working hard to make sure that the project is one that serves the taxpayers well; the right facility at the right cost. He was pleased the Library would be back on the County campus and was okay with moving forward.

For his own edification, Mr. Sarnoski requested more information from the Library Director regarding library usage and circulation, family usage by location, where they're coming from, etc. to get a better idea on how to proceed in the future.

The Board agreed with the recommendation of replacing the clock as well. "I think we have consensus amongst the Freeholder Board to pursue these projects as presented today and move forward with the planning process and getting some hard numbers," said Mr. Chamberlain.

Bill Wichert of The Express-Times asked if all the projects were going to proceed simultaneously. Mr. Chamberlain thought there was already a head start on the Court House Project. As for the others, we're still in the information gathering phase. Once we know the costs, Mr. Chamberlain thought we could move rapidly on Warren Acres and the building for voting machines once we get the design and know our costs. Going out to bid and the rest of the process all takes time. We'll have to organize depending on what we can afford. "Contractors are hungry now ... so that's a benefit to us," said Mr. Chamberlain.

Mr. Sarnoski thanked the Projects Committee members for all their hard work. When I proposed this meeting a couple of months ago, I hoped we'd get to this point, he said. He found it very beneficial and thought it would be a good idea to do this year to year. Mr. Gardner thanked them as well.

On motion by Mr. Gardner, seconded by Mr. Sarnoski, and there being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:17 p.m.

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

ATTESTED TO:

Steve Marvin, Clerk of the Board