

MINUTES**FEBRUARY 6, 2013**

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 February 6, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Director Sarnoski and upon roll call, the following members were present: Freeholder Jason Sarnoski and Freeholder Ed Smith. Also attending were County CFO Charles Houck, Fiscal Analyst Dan Olshefski and County Administrator Steve Marvin. Freeholder Richard Gardner was unable to attend.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Director Sarnoski.

Director Sarnoski read the following statement: **“ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING OF FEBRUARY 6, 2013 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.”**

Warren County Technical School Chief School Administrator Robert Glowacky came before the Board to discuss budget matters. He said it was a pleasure to be in front of the Freeholders as they understand the needs and mission of WCTS as opposed to those in Trenton. The students are our investment, he said. The two main areas of concern are programs and infrastructure. Mr. Glowacky said this year they were between a rock and a hard place financially, yet they were trying to upgrade as much as possible in areas such as energy efficiency. He characterized the school's Board Secretary/Business Administrator Ed Zalewski as a magician for somehow finding money to get things done.

Mr. Glowacky said Trenton issues more mandates than we can afford and they offer very little guidance in terms of actually getting things done. As a Vo-Tech, our mission is to see that our students are trained in real materials so when they enter the job market, they have actually seen the equipment. Some such equipment (automotive, welding, etc.) can be extremely expensive. Such purchases are considered as Capital expenditures even though they directly benefit programs. Students and parents expect programs to be supported and it's hard to say no. Supplemental Perkins money is no longer there, said Mr. Glowacky.

Regarding a long-term Capital plan, Mr. Glowacky said the existing generator is not adequate. Thankfully, the power came back on just a few days after Superstorm Sandy. If it hadn't, the school would not have been able to serve as a hub for the public. The facility operated as a shelter providing food, heat, showers and overnight accommodation. The school would appreciate any assistance, but Mr. Glowacky said they understood the position that the county, state and country is in.

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Mr. Sarnoski said the shelter being open in the aftermath of Sandy was very beneficial to the public and for that he was thankful. Seeing no increase in the O.E. portion of the school's budget, Mr. Sarnoski said that was commendable and a great achievement. He wanted to give the administrative team and school board a lot of credit for what they have been doing. Students seem to be thriving, earning scholarships and such. The wait list is a blessing and a curse; it's unfortunate to have to turn away some students, but it's good that the school is desirable.

The topic of tuition was discussed. Tuition is increasing about 3.5 percent this year from \$2,218 to \$2,300. Mr. Sarnoski pointed out that the increase is being passed on to the municipalities that send students to WCTS which is probably as it should be. Mr. Smith asked if the Perkins grant funds had gone away entirely. Mr. Glowacky said no, but it was now minimal. Mr. Smith requested a quantified dollar figure of the decrease from year to year. He was not given a specific answer. The cost of WCTS tuition is a very good value compared to the per pupil cost of other public schools (about \$10,000-\$11,000).

The WCTS District has been providing busing, but Mr. Glowacky said by regulation, the sending district should do it. Coordinating transportation gets complicated and despite effort, it's an issue that remains very difficult to solve. Mr. Sarnoski thought we have to slowly put more responsibility on the municipalities.

School security is a concern and Mr. Glowacky said they are doing what they can little by little to make improvements. The Freeholders' decision to install a basic single unisex toilet bathroom for the County Library Branch is going to help close one gap in security. Mr. Marvin told Mr. Zalewski he needed the cost estimate for that project.

Regarding other Capital projects, Mr. Glowacky said we know we need to chip away at them in a multi-year plan. Mr. Marvin asked if there was any match money for Capital from the State. Mr. Glowacky said not as long as he's been here. Mr. Sarnoski said the Freeholders had not built any of these requested projects into the County Budget. Of the following three projects: parking lot sinkhole, window replacement and emergency generator, Mr. Sarnoski asked Mr. Glowacky to prioritize that list.

Mr. Glowacky thought the generator would probably be highest since it is a safety and security concern and also would benefit the public at large as evidenced by Sandy. The current generator powers the computer network, emergency lighting, and the freezer and alarm system. To serve in an emergency capacity for the public, the goal is to be able to have a portion of the school serve as housing where people can stay with heating and air conditioning to run food services and keep lights on. The windows would be his next choice in the interest of energy efficiency. When the time comes, we may want to consider bullet resistant windows.

While Mr. Smith thought the generator in particular was a worthy project, he said none of these three projects would affect the school's ability to educate kids. Mr. Olshefski said there may be some possible FEMA money for the generator though it may take a long time to process.

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Regarding the sinkhole, Mr. Sarnoski said we'll just have to utilize the County Road Department to keep it filled for the time being. The window replacements will have to wait. He did want to start saving for a future generator purchase. Mr. Smith said as difficult as it is for us to say no, we're facing challenges on all fronts. He noted that the mechanical systems in the school are in good shape. Mr. Glowacky said we're all in this together.

After a reminder that the group would be meeting again for the Board of School Estimate Meeting on March 27, this portion of the meeting concluded at 7:47 p.m.

Mr. Marvin said the upcoming Saturday was supposed to be a budget wrap up session, but the weather may force us to change plans.

There was a personnel discussion and the Board was given a list of requested promotions, salary adjustments, new positions and pending retirements. Some requests were recommended by Mr. Marvin and Personnel Director Jerry Coyle and some were not. One noteworthy person not included on the retirement list was Human Services Director Karen Kubert. She seems to be having trouble making up her mind as to when she's going. The retirement list consisted only of employee name, department and expected retirement date. The Freeholders thought it would be helpful to have more detail such as job title and current salary.

Mr. Olshefski then went over the Open Space Budget to illustrate again how much money has been built up in that account. Encumbrances were already factored in, but the figures did not reflect what will be added as a result of the Wattles Auction which fetched another \$1.4 million. Some of that money may have to go to the State, but regardless, Mr. Marvin said it was a very good result. Mr. Olshefski presented what he thought was the strategy to address the current year's budget shortfall much as he did during the first Budget Session of the year. The budget could be balanced with a combination of reducing the Open Space Tax by 1.5 cents, utilizing some funds in the Medical Stabilization Trust and bringing the County Purpose Tax Levy back up to where it should have remained all along. Mr. Sarnoski agreed that if the tax levy had been kept flat for the past four years, we would already have the \$4.6 million needed to balance the budget.

Mr. Smith thought this plan would bring a good end result under the circumstances. He wanted to acknowledge everyone that works for the County. He hoped to arrive at some solutions regarding Warren Haven this year that will benefit the County for next year's budget.

Speaking of Warren Haven, Mr. Sarnoski wanted to be clear that the Board was taking steps to maintain it as a County facility. We're marketing more effectively and we're diversifying services to generate more revenue. We're doing what we can, but we'd be doing the County a disservice if we didn't look at every option to try and alleviate the budget issues we're facing now so we don't have the same problem year after year.

Mr. Smith said the best thing that could possibly happen is to solve the problems at Warren Haven and keep it moving forward in a direction as close as possible as it is now, but more financially sound. Mr. Sarnoski said regardless of ownership, that facility is not going anywhere.

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That facility will still be there to take care of patients and continue to be maintained at a high level.

Closing Public Comments

Susan Cullen of Independence asked for clarification on the Open Space discussion. Mr. Sarnoski said the Board planned to reduce this tax by 1.5 cents this year.

She then asked about the WCTS tuition. Mr. Sarnoski said they reported they've been increasing it every year approximately two percent. It's about \$2,300 this year which is still a great value. In the future though, they may be looking for a little more support from municipalities to help fund their Capital Improvement projects.

On motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Sarnoski, and there being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Recorded Vote: Mr. Gardner absent, Mr. Smith yes, Mr. Sarnoski yes

ATTESTED TO:

Steve Marvin, Clerk of the Board