

**MINUTES****JANUARY 17, 2018**

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 17, 2018 at 5:30 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Director Smith and upon roll call, the following members were present: Freeholder Ed Smith and Freeholder Jason Sarnoski. Also attending were County CFO Dan Olshefski, Fiscal Officer Kim Francisco and County Administrator Steve Marvin. Freeholder Rick Gardner arrived at 5:35 p.m. during Executive Session.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Director Smith.

Director Smith read the following statement: **“ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING OF JANUARY 13, 2018 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.”**

**RESOLUTION 41-18**

On motion by Mr. Sarnoski, seconded by Mr. Smith, the following resolution was adopted by the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Warren at a meeting held on January 17, 2018.

**A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING EXECUTIVE SESSION OF THE WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS PROVIDING FOR A MEETING NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE NEW JERSEY OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12**

**WHEREAS**, the Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders is subject to certain requirements of the *Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6, et seq.*, and

**WHEREAS**, the *Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12*, provides that an Executive Session, not open to the public, may be held for certain specified purposes when authorized by Resolution, and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that this Board hereby excludes the public in order to discuss such matters. The general nature of the subjects to be discussed are as follows:

(1) *Matters Relating to Employment Relationship*: Items to be discussed include: Interviews for position of Personnel Director.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board shall disclose to the public, as soon as practicable, the contents of the discussions after the final disposition of the matters discussed.

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 in a meeting held on January 17, 2018

Steve Marvin, Clerk of the Board

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

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On motion by Mr. Sarnoski, seconded by Mr. Gardner, the Board adjourned executive session at 7:08 p.m. and returned to open session.

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

Upon return to Open Session at 7:10 p.m., the following members were present: Freeholder Ed Smith, Freeholder Jason Sarnoski, Freeholder Rick Gardner, Fiscal Officer Kim Francisco and County Administrator Steve Marvin. County CFO Dan Olshefski would join them shortly.

Mr. Smith reported having met with AT&T representatives regarding digital solutions to replace or enhance our first responder communications. The simulcast is a very exciting possibility to be on the ground floor because they are looking for a test bed to be able to utilize digital technology. This would greatly enhance communication in a number of dead areas. Mr. Olshefski had arrived at this point, so Mr. Smith asked if \$300,000 was included in Public Safety's 2018 Capital Budget for the simulcast. Mr. Olshefski said there is money from last year under the Phillipsburg School Site Improvements section. He was to clarify with Public Safety Director Frank Wheatley the following day if that line item partially or fully funded this prioritized cell system. A portion of bandwidth would be a dedicated wavelength to prioritize cell operation for first responders.

Moving on to the budget overview, Mr. Olshefski said not much had changed since the previous Budget Session. We have our three taxes: our General Current Fund, Open Space Fund and Library Fund. The latter two will be discussed this evening. Land Preservation Director Corey Tierney was first to approach the Board.

Mr. Tierney said his budget was flat from last year; four cents for an estimated \$4.3 million. About 20 percent of that goes to administration/maintenance (10 percent each), then the balance is divided as follows: 55 percent for Farmland Preservation, 25 percent for Municipal & Charitable Conservancy Trust and 20 percent for Board of Recreation. These allocations can be changed at any time. Mr. Smith said as we are going to see a half cent savings on the debt service, he proposed dropping the Open Space a penny and change the allocation percentages.

Mr. Gardner inquired about new money because of the 2015 bond issue passed by the voters. Mr. Tierney said we have a dedicated source of funding going forward. For Farmland Preservation, we have a \$1 million base grant and up to \$5 million in competitive funding. He said we aim to preserve 1,000 acres per year, priced at an average \$5,000 per acre. That's \$5 million. He said if we can get the State to match (almost 60 percent) and then we try to get a match from the townships or nonprofits, our actual cost is closer to \$1.5 million.

Mr. Gardner asked how many farms are in the pipeline for 2018. Mr. Tierney said there are currently about 30 applications pending and there will be an outreach meeting in February, but the process typically takes one and a half to two years from application to closing. He thought about 2,500 acres worth of farms would close in the next two years; certainly, at least 2,000 acres.

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Mr. Sarnoski revisited the discussion of the five year Open Space cash analysis and the Board's desire to cut a penny from the tax rate, partially offset by the half cent of debt service going away. As it's essentially looking like a half cent cut, he asked Mr. Tierney if he expected a problem continuing these programs. Mr. Tierney said no, given the surplus. He thought the challenge was that the surplus was earmarked for Farmland Preservation. A rebalance of the allocation percentages for the three programs should address this concern.

Mr. Sarnoski asked about how much preservation is being done in the Highlands area. The question has been posed to him as to why we are preserving land in an area that is already preserved. Mr. Tierney didn't have figures in front of him, but said the justification is twofold: some farms are still developable, just not at the same density prior to the Highlands Act and the landowner equity issue.

When asked about the farm incubator, Mr. Tierney said it is still being worked on with five acres set aside at Bread Lock Park for Foodshed Alliance which is pursuing grants from the USDA and another foundation. The question is whether it can raise funding needed to implement the program.

Further discussion ensued with the Board in consensus regarding taking a comprehensive approach, with Mr. Tierney's input, to take a penny and redistribute the percentage allocations moving forward. It was noted that historic preservation grants have sometimes been granted for sites that go underutilized or abandoned. Mr. Gardner said, "That's the real issue. What is real value to the public?" It was decided to discuss the redistribution again in April.

Mr. Marvin advised that Green Acres was now going to give top priority to applications that include creation of accessible playgrounds. With no further questions for Mr. Tierney, this portion of the meeting concluded at 7:35 p.m.

Library Director Maureen Baker Wilkinson was next and her biggest concern was her request for salary adjustments for librarians. She has been unable to hire qualified librarians for two years since our entry level salary is \$38,000 and anywhere else, they are offered more than \$50,000. There are two vacancies. She sought to upgrade them to Librarian 4 positions which are managerial/supervisory positions and would function as branch managers. She said computers at Headquarters were moved downstairs because they were no longer able to adequately staff the upper level.

She verbally explained her plan which would entail raises for two other individuals, eventually replacing a position at a lower title upon the current employee's retirement, converting one part-timer to full-time and abolishing one position. The Board sought paper documentation of the plan and its financial impact beyond the current year. Mr. Olshefski suggested she work with Personnel to produce an annual cost analysis moving forward.

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All agreed that the goal was to see the Greenwich Branch hit the ground running. Mr. Smith asked if there were going to be any major capital issues among the other branches this year. Public Works Director Alex Lazorisak said probably not this year, but the Catherine Dickson Hofman (CDH) Branch has been on the radar for roofing and related HVAC. When pressed, he estimated it would cost about \$100,000-\$200,000 to address. Mr. Smith said we will be seeing a capital savings due to the termination of the Phillipsburg Agreement. There was some discussion about the potential of obtaining a library construction grant for CDH, but it will be quite competitive.

Mr. Olshefski asked how the bookmobile fleet was doing. Ms. Wilkinson said perhaps another van next year would be requested. She shared information about a cheaper version of a 24 hour library kiosk as a stopgap if needed in the Washington Township area, but it does have to be inside.

The Board was inclined to keep the Library Tax flat.

Mr. Lazorisak reported that the developers' agreement between Polaris and Greenwich was on the agenda for the following evening for execution.

Ms. Wilkinson said she appreciated all that everyone has gone through for this new branch; it has been a challenge from the start. "I think people are going to be amazed at this library," she said.

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 8:07 p.m.

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

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