

**MINUTES****JANUARY 19, 2019**

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 19, 2019 at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order by Director Sarnoski and upon roll call, the following members were present: Freeholder James Kern, III and Freeholder Jason Sarnoski. Also attending were County CFO Dan Olshefski, Fiscal Analyst Kim Francisco and Deputy County Administrator Alex Lazorisak. Freeholder Richard Gardner and County Administrator Steve Marvin were absent.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Director Sarnoski.

Mr. Sarnoski read the following statement: **“ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING OF JANUARY 19, 2019 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.”**

Regarding the general overview, Mr. Olshefski said there was nothing new to report.

Jennifer Gruener, Superintendent of the County Mosquito Extermination Commission, was first to come before the Board. Acknowledging the budget increases, Ms. Gruener noted they hadn't asked for a significant increase since 2012, and that the operation is weather-dependent. The years 2013-2017 were stable, but supplemented by a grant and shared services. The year 2018 brought 64.3 inches of rain; the average is normally 40-something. It was also the 11<sup>th</sup> warmest on record, and saw increases in West Nile Virus, including human cases. Last year was “definitely one for the record books,” said Ms. Gruener.

Regarding ticks, she said the Federal and State governments are finally seeing the problem. She was not requesting tick funding from the County, but was from the State, and needed the Freeholders' authorization to participate in a pilot program (one of five counties). Most ticks carry more than one disease, and discussion ensued regarding various tick species.

Regarding personnel, Ms. Gruener said there has been an inspector position on the books since 1988, but has been vacant since 2008, when the Board requested cuts. Since then, they have been trying to make up for it with seasonal employees, which has worked quite well, but she thought it was now time to fill. She noted the low starting salary (\$30,000), as well as the fact that the position would not be filled until April, with benefits not commencing until June. This position, increases in chemical costs, and aerial larvicide services, accounted for the overall budget increase.

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Mr. Olshefski wanted to go on record on behalf of former Freeholder Ed Smith, that he deemed the increases merited.

Mr. Lazorisak asked if things would improve if the rain let up. Ms. Gruener said, "Right now, if we didn't get any more precipitation, we'd already be in trouble for the spring," but it could change quickly once the trees leaf out if we have a drier spring.

Regarding capital, Ms. Gruener said the last time she asked for anything was the chemical storage shed. If the weather dries up, Mr. Sarnoski asked if costs could go back down next year, aside from the salary cost. Ms. Gruener said yes. Mr. Kern said this is one of the characteristics of the rural nature of the county. This portion of the meeting concluded at 9:13 a.m.

County Engineer Bill Gleba was next, and began by talking about capital projects. Bridges came first, with Mr. Gleba noting that the County receives a yearly grant (Local Bridge Funding Future Needs) which has fluctuated. With the Transportation Trust Fund reestablishment, he thought it would now balance out. In the past, we were getting \$1 million; last year we received \$1.6 million; and this year we are slated to receive \$1.54 million for bridges. He explained as we perform work on our critical structures, they are then removed from the list of structurally deficient, functionally obsolete or scour critical structures. Therefore, our funding goes down. Yet each time we get these structures off the list, inevitably another one goes on, Mr. Gleba said. We assume all design costs on smaller bridges.

Mr. Gleba briefly went through the list of bridge projects. County funding remains at \$1.2 million. He said these projects take years to develop; we need to be able to stay ahead of that curve. Mr. Gleba said environmental permitting, utility relocation, and right-of-way acquisition take significant amounts of expenditure and time. That is why major bridges are much more difficult to push out the door.

A schedule of road resurfacing projects was distributed, dating back to the year 2012. Funding aid from the State has increased over the years. It is now up to \$2 million, and can be used anywhere, as long as the project qualifies. Asphalt prices hit a low in 2016, when the Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) was frozen and contractors were "hungry for work," as Mr. Gleba put it. Prices are now up, based on market conditions. We keep a reserve of \$400,000 for fluctuations. Resurfacing does not get caught up in all the environmental permitting, utilities and right-of-way issues mentioned earlier, so some projects had been deferred to see what was going to happen with the TTF. Now we are catching up. A typical average for resurfacing is about 14 miles per year. In 2018, we achieved 15.71 miles, and the goal is to complete about 16 miles over the next three or four years to get back on pace. The contractors are now capitalizing on supply and demand, able to command higher prices since there is a lot of work out there. Mr. Gleba hoped it would balance out.

Mr. Kern asked if we could be certain the TTF funding would remain stable. Mr. Gleba said that was a very good question. While anything coming from the State should be taken with a grain of salt, it was supposed to be in place for 20 years.

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On to Road and Drainage Improvements, budget requests had been submitted in the fall prior to the closure of CR 659 in Hardwick due to flooding, so that project was not included in the budget. Mr. Gleba said there were two options to address the problem: install a drain, or build a roadway. Either way, it is going to involve the NJ DOT and NJ DEP. Mr. Gleba recommended the drain installation, going down past the lake, which would reside within our right-of way, setting up some type of discharge into Blair Creek. Mr. Lazorisak said he had spoken to Vince Mezzei at the NJ DEP, who was well aware of the situation and would hopefully cooperate. Mr. Gleba and Mr. Lazorisak agreed that the County should go to an outside consultant for design, estimated to cost \$50,000 - \$100,000. This could be funded by shifting money around without raising the budget. "There is something unique going on up there and we really have to look at it very closely, because something just isn't making sense," Mr. Gleba said.

Once we get to the construction phase, Mr. Lazorisak thought the other two parties (Hardwick Township and Ridge & Valley Conservancy) should help bear the cost. Mr. Sarnoski noted RVC did have a maintenance fund and was willing to contribute for draining, which never occurred. Perhaps Land Preservation Director Corey Tierney should be consulted, as Open Space gave RVC the money to buy the swamp that is flooding the road. This concluded discussion of Engineering Capital projects.

Regarding guardrail issues (mostly due to accidents), Mr. Lazorisak suggested the possibility of forming a repair division to deal with the issues in-house. He requested Mr. Gleba, Mr. Olshefski and Road Division head John Tate run numbers of costs incurred for the last two years. He thought if the Road Division had some additional equipment and a budget to stock materials, the County could do its own repairs and receive insurance money. We have liability exposure if repairs are not completed in a timely manner.

Moving on, a personnel discussion ensued, beginning with the retirement of Confidential Assistant Mary Jane Grotenhuis coming up on April 1. "I can't say enough about her," said Mr. Gleba. "She gets things done." He thought he could get by with half a person upon her departure, but it was decided to replace her with a full-time Confidential Assistant, with the long-term potential that the new employee could take on duties for the Planning and Land Preservation Departments as well. Permission was also given to hire a Senior Engineering Aide for permit review and development review.

Mr. Gleba had requested a replacement for a survey vehicle that is reaching the end of its life. He was going to get John Tate's SUV. This portion of the meeting concluded at 9:59 a.m., followed by a five-minute break.

Reconvening at 10:06 a.m., the Department of Public Works was up, beginning with Liz Zukoski, Superintendent of the Buildings & Grounds Division. All she really asked for were two new zero turn mowers, replacing 15-year-old ones. Utilities may increase, particularly water. Ms. Zukoski budgeted for increased postage rates in her OE. TASS, the Prosecutor's Office and Board of Elections use a high amount of postage. Alarm maintenance was mentioned.

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Regarding personnel, the division has three or four vacancies. Ms. Zukoski said it is getting harder to fill government positions. She twice advertised for an electrician and got no applicants. Civil Service makes promotions difficult. She tries moving people around. Mr. Sarnoski said, "Thank you. Good job." This portion of the meeting concluded at 10:11 a.m.

Next to approach the Board was Rich Frinzi, Superintendent of the Bridges Division. He said the division has been keeping busy, doing well with what it has, and performing a lot of bridge, guardrail and flood work. There have been some scour problems due to all the rain. "We pretty much handle whatever needs to be done around here," he said.

The OE was fairly even, but regarding capital, Mr. Frinzi said a few years ago they purchased a Kubota, which he characterized as "a nice little machine" that has already paid for itself in terms of jobs done. He requested a few attachments for it: a hydraulic jackhammer, an auger and a ripper tooth. Mr. Frinzi said they have been doing a lot of ditch clearing, tree work, etc., requiring the expense of renting dumpsters, so he requested purchasing two dumpsters to keep on site, fill at will, and haul the material away himself. One for Bridges, one for Roads.

Mr. Frinzi said his team takes pride in their work, and call themselves "the few and the proud". This launched a personnel discussion, noting he lost two men to retirement. He requested two salary adjustments and wanted to open up a laborer position, to get the crew back to 12 men. This portion of the meeting concluded at 10:22 a.m.

Mr. Lazorisak said he would answer any questions regarding the Roads Division, as John Tate could not attend due to a procedure the previous day. He said the OE is fairly flat, except for one increase for tree services. Regarding personnel, they are moving things around and seeking to create a truck driver. Salt is down this year and gas and diesel are flat-funded. The biggest expense this year is an excavator. Mr. Lazorisak said over the next couple of years we should be caught up in terms of capital equipment purchases, and will be looking at a 12-year cycle.

Mr. Lazorisak said his three division heads were "outstanding," and it was a shame he was leaving. Mr. Sarnoski said this part of the budget process was easy. "Good job," he said.

Countywide capital improvements were then reviewed. Mr. Lazorisak noted the sidewalk replacements in Belvidere had to match the tinted concrete already there, which would be a bit more expensive. There was mention of improvements to the Belvidere salt shed and Oxford garage and salt shed. Mr. Lazorisak went down the list of Buildings & Grounds improvements requests. "We're getting caught up," he said.

Mr. Sarnoski asked about the Alpha garage. Mr. Lazorisak said it is just in a bad location. He apprised Mr. Kern that we have been searching for an alternative facility in the area to relocate the operation, but nothing suitable has come along yet. We are trying to find something existing to renovate; not build from the ground up. Perhaps there may be some opportunity at the former Ingersoll-Rand site.

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Moving on, the scope of the Human Services addition expanded since first discussed, now planning on office space for Aging & Disability Services along with a secure entrance. It was decided to budget \$50,000 this year to plan and design the space.

Once complete, the Department of Land Preservation will move to the space vacated by Aging & Disabilities. Mr. Lazorisak requested \$5,000 - \$7,000 be set aside to explore reorganizing this space, as well as the downstairs of the Administration Building. The concept was to take space away from Rutgers Cooperative Extension and allow Engineering and Planning to spread out and collaborate more closely. Mr. Sarnoski questioned if this building was the best place for Rutgers, as there is no stipulation that the operation has to be in the administration building. Mr. Lazorisak noted space available at the new library, but Mr. Sarnoski didn't like the idea or converting it to office space for this purpose.

Mr. Lazorisak said we really need a plan for the office of the Superintendent of Schools, saying there is about a year left in that building. It was estimated four full-timers and several part-time staffers work there.

Mr. Olshefski reminded everyone that the Prosecutor is obtaining a \$90,000 grant for the Barry House, and asked if Mr. Lazorisak was going to be working with him on that project. This brought Mr. Lazorisak to his next topic. For Mr. Kern's edification, he explained that he had first come on board with the County as a consultant, as a construction manager. When the Buildings & Grounds Superintendent position opened up, he took on that role and became a full-time County employee, while continuing to oversee capital projects. Now that he will be vacating the Public Works position, he did not yet know what type of position he was going to seek to fill it, as we will be getting into a reorganization. "We're going to need someone to oversee these projects," he said. He suggested a consultant, a project manager, working on behalf of the County. Regarding cost, he said it is usually eight to 10 percent of the project, and we are looking at about \$2 million in projects. Mr. Kern asked if this kind of volume is to be expected annually. The answer was no. The matter was to be taken under consideration.

Regarding the Soil Conservation District, with construction down, Mr. Lazorisak thought the Freeholders should really look at whether the County should be funding its \$81,000 budget request. Mr. Sarnoski said it is funded by the State; it is not statutory nor mandatory for the County to fund. "They don't report to us," he said. He asked Mr. Olshefski to gather some information for the next budget session.

The Shade Tree Commission budget was status quo, but they may get busier.

On motion by Mr. Kern, seconded by Mr. Sarnoski, and there being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:48 a.m.

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