

*These minutes were approved by the Board of County Commissioners on May 10, 2023. Full texts of resolutions appear at the end of this document.*

The Board of County Commissioners of the County of Warren met in Budget Session in its offices in the Wayne Dumont, Jr. Administration Building, Belvidere New Jersey on January 18, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Director Ciesla at 6:01 a.m. Upon roll call, the following members were present: Commissioner Jason Sarnoski, Commissioner Deputy Director James Kern and Commissioner Director Lori Ciesla. Also attending were County Administrator Alex Lazorisak, County CFO Kim Francisco and Deputy Commissioner Clerk Tracy Matlock.

After leading the flag salute, Director Ciesla confirmed with the County Administrator that the meeting notice complied with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975.

Ms. Ciesla invited Rutgers Co-Operative to discuss their budget. Alayne Torretta went over a brief history of the Rutgers Co-Op. It was established in 1914. It serves the education and developmental needs of communities across the United States by supporting three mandated areas:

- 4-H Youth Development
- Family and Community Health Sciences
- Agricultural and Natural Resources

The mission is to help diverse population of Warren County adapt to rapidly changing society and improve their lives through an educational process that uses science-based knowledge, focuses on issues and needs relating to agriculture and the environment, management of natural resources, food safety, quality health, nutrition and physical activity, family stability, economic security, and positive youth development.

Ms. Toretta explained for the 2023 budget year, Rutgers has agreed to raise their percentage of funding to make the position a faculty position for the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department. That keeps it a flat-funding of \$50,402.00. They are not looking to increase the funding from the Board of Commissioners. Rutgers will increase their percentage from twenty-five percent to forty percent. As in the past, Rutgers picks up the benefits for that position. Should that go forward, the County Commissioners will have a seat on the search committee alongside the stakeholders, so they will have a say in the review and selection of the candidates. She explained how they use to have the position of Staff Member and the County

was paying seventy-five percent of the salary, which was \$50,402.00 and Rutgers paid twenty-five percent and that brought the salary up to \$62,000+. By turning this into a faculty position, Rutgers is going to increase their portion so it stays the same for the County at \$50,000.00. There was some discussion about the budget that was submitted and it was brought to the attention of the Board there was an error and that the funding would be flat at \$186,875.00.

For clarification, the existing vacancy salary was \$67,203.00. With the new salary it's going to be \$84,000.00. Rutgers is going to kick in \$33,598.00 and the County stays flat at \$50,402.00 and Rutgers will pick up the benefits. The flat funding of \$50,402.00 will stay the same and any increase of percentages will be paid by Rutgers. When it comes time for the applicant to receive a raise, a discussion will need to take place about whether or not the County will help fund the raise. It was noted it takes six years for the person to become tenure and receive a raise of ten percent.

A faculty member is expected to obtain grants and form partnerships and do the cutting-edge research that benefits the people of the County. Having a faculty member in the Agriculture Department would then open us up to receiving more grant funding. For 4-H, Ms. Torretta gave the example that she received \$50,000.00 for the past couple of years, she was able to hire a part-time person with that through Rutgers. The FCHF educator receives grant funding for different positions. It all runs through the university, but the benefits come back to the County. Having a faculty member would open us to having those dollars.

The new position will be tailored to Warren County's needs. One of the Mr. Sarnoski, asked, "What are our needs"? The Board of Agriculture has been working with the Extension on that and they submitted a letter stating what we need. At the time the items were agronomy and livestock.

Terry Urfer, Treasurer of the Agriculture Board, came before the board to discuss what the needs are for Warren County. This agent will be responsible for working with the farmers, with focus points of livestock and field crops. Discussion took place regarding the difference between a faculty staff member vs. county staff member and the responsibilities.

Mr. Sarnoski made a motion to allow the County to fill the position of Warren County Agriculture Agent, Mr. Kern seconded the motion.  
Rollcall: Mr. Sarnoski yes, Mr. Kern yes, Ms. Ciesla, yes.

Rutgers Co-op will start the search for the new position. Public comments

about the Rutgers Co-op budget were invited. There were no comments.

CFO Francisco went over the Engineering Department's budget. There is an increase of \$150,000 for a contracted engineer. He pointed out that all though it's a lot of money, there will be a savings on the salary and benefits side.

Ms. Ciesla invited the Engineering Department to present the department's budget at 6:28 p.m.

Mr. William Gleba, County Engineer, began his presentation by saying the budget is similar from year-to-year. In bridges, they budget about \$1.2 million. There are grant moneys that have been applied for this year for South Main Street Bridge, along with put in for Shoddy Mill Road Bridge that was in need for repair. He is hoping that falls under the qualification of needing repairs grant, the State offers. If it doesn't, they will roll over that \$400,000.00 into the South Main Street project. The bridge project on Rte. 678, which we had to accrue, year-to-year, because the projected costs that's going to be about \$4.5 million. He explained they get about \$1.5 million a year through the grant program. Having summed up the bridge repair portion of his budget, Mr. Gleba turned to the line-item that is used with the bridge department for a \$100,000 for the in-house projects.

A discussion took place about the bridge on County Route. 678, which is near Carpentersville Road, and a housing development that will be going up nearby.

Mr. Sarnoski asked about the contracted services and how it will be utilized in Engineering to do things differently. Mr. Gleba explained there are three open positions within the Department and they are mid-level leadership positions that require some type of engineering background and in some instances, a professional engineering licensure. This seems to be a premium these days. Other counties are struggling with this as well. Warren County struggles with it more because of our border with Pennsylvania. The Department has brought on three new individuals that are working out well so far. It is hoped they will stay long enough to become licensed engineers. In the interim, the Department will need some help. He mentioned, through the Planning Department, they have procured traffic engineering review. That has helped significantly. It is hoped that in future years, when larger developments come in, there will be an escrow account that gets set up to have engineering services reviewed. Most of the work in the Department is subcontracted out including bridges and roads. Just about everything goes out with the exception of some of the in-house projects they can handle. It leaves the department open in the area of land development review for Planning Board and permitting. As they get people acclimated, they are slowly getting there with filling people into these new

types of work they are taking on. Most likely with permitting for larger projects and permitting for some of the utility work, it's rather large and then the development review where they can fit them in. Part of it too is you have to have consultants that aren't conflicted out because if we have a project in certain locations, certain consultants can't work on it. He's been working with Emily Hammer. They'll have to have a discussion about finding another consultant in order to help balance that need.

Mr. Lazorisak commented it will be a stepping stone to get the younger engineers up to speed. There is another issue, space. To expand engineering downstairs, we can't. Hopefully we get the building built and we open downstairs, and expand it, we can look forward to getting additional people.

Mr. Lazorisak turned his attention to resurfacing. Everything has been delayed because of the State, COVID and the cost of fuel went up. Where are we with our resurfacing program? What roads did we cut out of last year's budget and where are we at in the road surfacing? Mr. Gleba responded the Department has stayed on course with the roads. They do swap roads interchangeably with utility work, or other work being done to the roads or they may do another type of treatment to help the road last a little longer, like a micro surfacing or oil and chip, what is called cape seal. They're going to be getting the 2021 resurfacing project out in the spring. They'll be getting plans for that and spec approval and it will be going to the State. The Department is going to try to get 2021 done this year. Concentrating is on County Route 624, Belvidere Avenue, in Oxford Township. It needs to get done. They finally got the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) approval on that. He's hoping to have that up for plans and specs approval. He hopes to get that done sometime this summer when school is out. That's a sidewalk portion they use in Oxford Township. He is also hoping to get 2022 resurfacing out in the fall.

The attention next turned to the cost of fuel. Mr. Gleba mentioned they got all the work done this past year and did a little additional work to catch up on some locations. They spent about \$5 million this past year on the resurfacing project. \$500,000.00 of that was spent on fuel adjustment cost. That is the most significant fuel adjustment. It's the highest asphalt cement and fuel increase of his career. But, some years we come under. This year it was a significant hit. He said he doesn't know what next year will hold, but the costs right now have become somewhat stable. We put about \$200,000.00 into the contract to cover such costs.

The Department does not plan on doing 2023 road projects this year. These projects will probably go into 2024. They will be doing the section of County Route 519 at County Route 620 up to County Route 623, White Township. It was

confirmed the projects for 2021 and 2022 will be done this year. Mr. Lazorisak would like to meet with the Mr. Gleba to look at the resurfacing projects and discuss the striping and signage.

Mr. Lazorisak brought up in the Capital Improvement Program, there is one item that's been carried over the last few years and that is the traffic impact study line item. They did not budget anything this year. Mr. Lazorisak asked the Board if they want to continue to put the money in there for when issues come up, we can get the independent traffic studies. Mr. Francisco commented last year there was \$200,000.00 and there is \$150,000.00 left. It was suggested to bring it back up to \$200,000.00. Mr. Gleba commented there is also road and drainage improvements but that is standard listing of items. The guiderails, we are a little bit behind on. The guiderails are important for liability purposes. They are finding some success going through the Morris County Co-op to go directly to the contractors instead of going out to bid. That seems to be working for them. He noted it has been a pretty significant line-item. There were some adjustments during COVID that had been reduced and will bring us back up to where we need to be. The long-life pavement marking program, our annual restriping program, and there are some other items they use as placeholders for any special projects. It's the Departments standard budget.

Commissioner Ciesla commented the department is doing a great job trying to keep up with the roads.

Next on the agenda is the Department of Public Works. County Administrator mentioned they hold the line every year and have some slight increases in operating budgets due to inflation and the economy.

Mr. Francisco directed his attention to the Bridge Division. There is a line-item for education at \$15,000.00. This will cover three employees for CDL licenses. Ms. Hammer was introduced as the Public Works Director and she explained the three CDL licenses are class A and not just people from the Roads Department. They offered the opportunity to get the licenses throughout the DPW and included Bridges, Roads, and Buildings and Grounds Divisions. This will allow the Department to work together more effectively, particularly during a large snow event. It is anticipated they will be able to send 2-3 people to the training every fall in order to build upon the number of employees obtaining the license. She explained the other costs associated with the training, which includes drug screening, as well as additional training regarding alcohol and drug abuse recognition. To spread the licenses across the board gives the Department more cohesion and more opportunities to self-perform.

Ms. Hammer made note there are some increases across the board due to the cost of fuel and raw materials. Buildings and Grounds, in particular, they elected to increase the electricity line item because she does anticipate coming on-line with the electrical vehicle chargers which will be installed in the spring and they are also anticipating bringing a new building on-line.

Mr. Lazorisak noted the largest increase being in the salt account. The quotes came in extremely high, \$10.00 a ton more at 18,000 tons.

Next, Ms. Hammer turned her attention to the infrastructure they maintain and develop for the public's use and her involvement to work with Bill Gleba, County Engineer, John Tate, Roads Supervisor, Elizabeth Zukoski, Buildings & Grounds Supervisor, and Calvin Inscho, Assistant Superintendent of Bridges. She is looking forward to the opportunities to continue to work as a team. Looking out for training opportunities so they can continue to develop staff and retain the talent they have. She would like to involve them in the process of developing the capital improvement plans. By using that knowledge and experience in the County, they will be able to make the proper selections and will be cost efficient.

Ms. Hammer next turned her attention to the capital projects list.

CFO Francisco noted the various requests from Departments, which were talked about before:

- Voting machine replacement at \$200,000.00 put aside
- Warden McCarthy wants to update the video system in Corrections and getting a new camera for bookings
- Prosecutor getting portable radios
- Information Systems' annual tech upgrades
- Public Safety's \$500,000.00 from American Rescue

Ms. Hammer turned to the discussion of Buildings and Grounds Improvements:

- Tree planting on County property, annual from Shade Tree
- Roof door and window reserve – no money will be placed in there
- Renovations to the existing Human Services building-while the new building is being developed, they are looking at putting the Office of Aging into that existing building, creating their own entry way and an office so they can best serve that population. They may need to contract out for some of the services for the entry way and will be able to self-perform some of it.

- County Clerk's Office – Asbestos removal and renovations, to continue the course of work that has been established at the courthouse. There has been very little time when they have not been actively working on improvements. She hopes to continually improve from a renovation standpoint of the existing spaces there. And take care of any hazardous materials should they arise. Toilet rooms will be renovated and as well as making the courthouse space more efficient throughout.
- Conversion to gas at Warren Acres and the Health Department. This is to look at boilers, hot water heaters, etc., as the gas line is being constructed along Oxford Road. It hasn't yet reached out to the Warren Acres property. It's teed out at the end of the street, before you make the turn in. It's anticipated that will be picked back up with construction in the spring. Then they can do a conversion and get into design and then construct for the conversion of anything that is on oil over to gas.

A concern came up about the boiler and the mandate by the Governor and whether or not this will be covered. The implementation has been delayed. It was also noted that as the County has been getting rid of the oil tanks, it has been saving money each year from insurance, on the environmental end. It's a small investment but the county will make its money back.

- Electric vehicle charging stations – these were partially funded with a grant from the Board of Public Utilities. This is to officially construct the first portion of our conversion program for fleet vehicles. We are planning for two at the Administration Building, two at the Road Department, and two at the Health Department. They will be for County EV vehicles only, at this time. Costs include the level of design so the work is permissible. The DPW will self-perform a large part such as the trenching and the conduit runs, and so forth and an electrician to assist us, as necessary.
- The gazebo for Garret D. Wall Park – The realistic number for something that will be a reasonable space to host an event that could be a highlight in the park and any security that may need to be associated with it. We will be looking at purchasing a "kit" so the materials will come pre-cut and work will be minimum. We would pour a foundation and put a roof on it. Project will be funded through open space. It is anticipated to be completed in time for the County's Bicentennial.
- Sidewalks and lighting around Garret D. Wall Park - It will be a continuation with the dark gray stained sidewalks that were done for the historic esthetic as well as the historic street lamps. They are in the process of developing a design that works its way around the courthouse.

We are in the process of looking at the foot candles, that those will be put out, will be looked out to see if they can be relied upon them for the sight lighting. It is hoped video cameras can be tied into security at the courthouse.

- Improvements at the Superintendent of Schools Office - This facility needs a number of different systems to be updated. It has a boiler that needs to be relit every time there's a rain event, rain comes through the chimney and takes out the pilot. The chimney needs to be rebuilt. The roof has exceeded its useful life. It has a handicapped ramp and stairs that are in need of improvements. It needs a facelift to improve that space and not to have the continual maintenance issues.
- Covanta Site Improvements- This is a line-item for the cost of a license of a site remediation professional in the future.
- Northeast Library Branch - Exterior painting and minor outside repairs. This will be paid through the library budget.
- Facility Feasibility Studies and Preliminary Design – As you know through the past year, there have been times when contemplating a project and the first step is to either get into some schematic design, some layout, some initial opinions or probable costs, so we can get our thoughts together before we advance from a full design into construction documents process. There are a couple of things DPW has been considering including the potential for the Environmental Education Center. That's something they would like to take a look at the existing facility, as well as the workshop facility that could host the museum in the future and take a careful look at the viability of each structure and how would you approach them. DPW is also looking at having some money available for when they're doing advanced mechanical studies and looking at improvements, County-wide such as controls, being able to work with an Engineer and properly sequence and get the right guidance of how to approach things.
- Security Cameras, entrances, etc. - IT Department will take the lead.
- Quotes from Johnson Controls – Will allow to remotely control mechanical systems and will save the County on service calls if they would have employees, from Buildings and Grounds, trained in those systems and have access to the remote control systems. This number is inclusive to Health, Annex, 911 Communications Building, Corrections and the Bank Building.
- The County Vocational School – Ms. Hammer is in the process of working with them on their five-year plan.



CFO Francisco changed to the topic of special vehicles.

- Paratransit has asked if there was extra money, they would take up to six, but we'll start with one this year under \$65,000.00. It will come from the American Rescue. All the big vehicles will come from American Rescue.
- Ford F550 dump truck with crane (Bridges) -\$140,000.00 and a hitch-mount \$8,500.00 will come from American Rescue.
- Fleet EV Vehicles – there's a grant for \$40,000.00 which will put \$260,000.00. DPW Director explained these are light vehicles from compact sedans up to light SUVs. These would be for Health, Engineering, Department of Public Works, and Land Preservation. They haven't been able to get quotes because they are not available as government fleet vehicles. They are estimated \$30,000.00 each. The charging stations are much easier to come by. There was a brief discussion about the concern of how long the batteries will last and how expensive they will be to replace vs gas vehicles that will last ten years and can be worked on in-house.
- Heavy Equipment Modernization Grants – DPW went after some grants that came from the DEP for the replacement of existing diesel vehicles with newer vehicles because emissions would be much improved. There were several vehicles that they went after grants for both Roads and Bridges, excavators, lifters and tractors.
- Road Department asked for a couple of heavy equipment pieces, dump truck with steel bed for \$290,000.00, a case tracker with machete mower for \$195, a Kubota excavator for \$75,000.00 and a walk-behind mower for \$16,500.00. It's all coming out of the American Rescue. This is all normal equipment, it's not extra.

Director Hammer moved on to buildings and land. Ms. Hammer started with the CDH Library. The budget does include the moving and storage fees. They are finalizing some design decisions as they are in the construction documents development phase. In regard to what's happened in the last year with construction results, we have volatile and unpredictable escalation. It used to be that we could anticipate three percent escalation any given year. That number has moved up to ten to fifteen percent. There are different factors that go into a cost rising significantly. Not only is there the year-over-year escalation but also square footage cost because of the rising cost of all the material. The estimate they are working with is a conservative one and tries to prepare us for what we can be looking at. Regarding a time frame for the CDH Library's renovation, it could take approximately eighteen months. It will be put out to bid and when the numbers come and if we're not

satisfied, we'll address and use a new design to build one. We'll try to re-engineer and go from there.

New Human Services/TASS – They are looking for additional funding because of escalation costs. This is to bring up to a number that is appropriate for the building. This is a more straightforward building than the library. It's a single floor. They can predict with much more accuracy.

Design for a multi-functional building that could offer us potential additional meeting space or space for special events. The numbers are for site and facility design.

Mr. Francisco moved on to motor pool request for cars.

- Prosecutor requested 3 vehicles: 1 Navigator, 2 Explorers
- Health Department – requested electric vehicles, which can be bought with capital money (electrical vehicles only)

Mr. Francisco made mention he usually budgets approximately \$280,000.00 for cars. He likes to have extra money in there for emergencies if they are to arise.

Money so far for the American Rescue Plan – we've spent about \$8.5 million this year, leaving \$7.5 million for next year. We will have two more years to spend it. It has to be spent by 2026.

The schedule for Saturday's budget meeting was reviewed. County Surrogate, Public Information and discuss Personnel Requests.

There were no public or press comments.

Commissioner Sarnoski reported on the truck meeting held today and said it went extremely well. He thanked Mr. Gleba, County Engineer, the Planning Department, and Mr. Lazorisak, County Administrator. The room was filled with mayors and municipal engineers and there was a good discussion. Most towns had a representative. They were very amiable with working together and liked the County plan. There was a lot of positive discussion. More detail will be presented at next week's Board meeting.

On motion by Mr. Kern, seconded by Mr. Sarnoski, and there being no further business before the board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:36 pm.