

## **SPECIAL MEETING**

### **HUNTERDON COUNTY BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS**

Main Street County Complex, Second Floor  
Flemington, New Jersey 08822

**May 08, 2008**

The regular meeting of the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders convened at 9:20 a.m. in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act.

**PRESENT: MR. PETERSON, MR. MENNEN, MR. HOLT, MR. MELICK, MR. SWOREN.**

Also Present: Cynthia J. Yard, County Administrator, Gaetano M. DeSapio, County Counsel and Rhonda E. Kelly, Deputy Clerk of the Board.

#### **Open Public Meetings Act**

Director Peterson announced: "This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate notice has been given by posting throughout the year a copy of the notice on Bulletin Boards on the First and Second Floor of the Main Street County Complex, Building #1, Flemington, New Jersey, a public place reserved for such announcements. A copy was mailed on or before May 07, 2008, to the Hunterdon County Democrat, Lambertville Beacon, The Express, Courier News, Trenton Times, Hunterdon Review and The Star Ledger, newspapers designated to receive such notices and by filing a copy with the Hunterdon County Clerk."

#### **Pledge Allegiance**

#### **Open Space**

The Board of Chosen Freeholders met in a special open session to continue their considerations of modifications to the County's Open Space Cooperative Acquisition Program. This modification is to the process by which the municipalities and non-profits request cost sharing partnerships for land acquisitions.

The Open Space Cooperative Acquisition process would be open to all municipalities and non-profits and would offer two rounds each year for interested parties to submit applications for funding. The applications would be reviewed, rated and ranked using certain criteria and recommendations forwarded to the Board of Chosen Freeholders for funding decisions.

Open Space Coordinator, Kevin Richardson and County Administrator, Cynthia Yard have been working on the modified process since October 2007. Several presentations have been given to the full Board and to Freeholders Sworen and Mennen.

The major thrust of today's discussion was the need to have another Open Space Advisory Committee or reconfigure the current Open Space Advisory Committee to reflect the representation of the Cooperative Program. After lengthy discussions, it was determined that one committee will handle the two different open space charges. One of the charges of this sole committee would be to function as the clearing house to make recommendations to the Board of Chosen Freeholders for the distribution of the current Open Space Tax (of which the municipalities and non-profits are allocated 15 percent). The other charge of this committee would be to implement this Open Space Cooperative Acquisition process and make recommendations to the Board.

There was also discussion of committee makeup, participation criteria and consequence if committee members do not fulfill their responsibility. Open Space Coordinator Kevin Richardson indicated that the participation standard was already part of the Structure and Function document.

It was determined that one committee would suffice with clear expectations of charges and that Mr. Richardson would contact each existing member and canvass their interest to continue to serve this committee with its additional responsibilities.

The next topic that was discussed at length was how the County would "cut up the pie" with regard to open space acquisitions and County funding. At previous presentations, it was explained that once the Board of Chosen Freeholders determines to cooperatively or independently purchase property, the Finance Department has four choices on how to fund the acquisition:

1. contribution form trust fund (full or partial)
2. deferred charges (funds raised through the County)
3. other funding sources (partnerships with federal, state, municipality)
4. sell bonds

The County's philosophy has been to 'pay as you go'; the County has not sold bonds since 2002 for open space. The funding of acquisitions is a combination of one through four. The current Open Space Tax generates \$2.5 million dollars per once cent and at the current three-cent tax rate, equals \$7.5 million dollars. The current Open Space Tax levy expires on December 31, 2009. The County is considering a new ballot question for a new tax function stream after the current tax expires.

The Board continued a lengthy discussion regarding funding and what goes into the capital plan. Currently on an annual basis, the Board sets aside two pots of capital money, one for farmland acquisitions (purchasing easements); the other for open space. The Board spent a great deal of time discussing the funding arrangements with no decision.

Mr. DeSapio, County Counsel, was requested to meet with Mr. Richardson and Mrs. Yard to put into a resolution the terms and conditions of this Open Space Cooperative Acquisition Program, including the process, the tools utilized to rank and rate applicants and the funding sources.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mr. Mennen moved and Mr. Melick seconded these:

**See Page 05/08/08-2A** **RESOLUTION**

**RESOLVED**, Executive Session to discuss personnel budget issues.

**See Page 05/08/08-2B** **RESOLUTION**

**RESOLVED**, Executive Session to discuss the potential acquisition of property in Bethlehem Township and Readington Township..

**See Page 05/08/08-2C** **RESOLUTION**

**RESOLVED**, Executive Session to discuss an appointment to the Human Services Advisory Council.

**See Page 05/08/08-2D** **RESOLUTION**

**RESOLVED**, Executive Session to discuss to dissolution of the Hunterdon County Housing Corporation.

**ROLL CALL: (AYES) MR. MENNEN, MR. MELICK, MR. HOLT, MR. SWOREN,  
MR. PETERSON.**

The Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders went into Executive Session at 11:15 a.m. and reconvened in Open Session at 12:00 p.m.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Director Peterson adjourned the meeting at 12 noon.

Transcribed by:

Rhonda E. Kelly  
Deputy Clerk of the Board

Respectfully submitted,

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Denise B. Doolan  
Clerk of the Board