

## Special Meeting

### HUNTERDON COUNTY BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS

Main Street County Complex, Second Floor

Flemington, New Jersey 08822

May 21, 2009

The special meeting of the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders convened in open session at 5:00 p.m. in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act.

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

#### **CONVENE**

Director Mennen 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 faxed on or before May 07, 2009, to the Hunterdon County Democrat, Lambertville Beacon, The Express, Courier News, Trenton Times, Hunterdon Review and Star Ledger, newspapers designated to receive such notices and by filing a copy with the Hunterdon County Clerk."

#### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

#### **PUBLIC HEARING**

Director Mennen opened the public hearing for Bond Ordinance No. 03-09 to the public.

There being no comments or questions from the press or public, Mr. Holt moved and Mr. Peterson seconded to close the Public Hearing.

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

Mr. Sworen moved and Mr. Holt seconded to Adopt Bond Ordinance #03-09.

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**BOND ORDINANCE #03-09**

**ADOPTION, BOND ORDINANCE TO AUTHORIZE THE ACQUISITION OF REAL PROPERTY FOR OPEN SPACE, PARK AND RECREATION PURPOSES IN, BY AND FOR THE COUNTY OF HUNTERDON, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, TO APPROPRIATE THE SUM OF \$2,000,000 TO PAY THE COST THEREOF, TO MAKE A DOWN PAYMENT, TO AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS TO FINANCE SUCH APPROPRIATION AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF SUCH BONDS.**

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

#### **PERSONNEL:**

##### **Surrogate's Court**

Mrs. Yard reminded the Board that she and Cheryl Wieder, Human Resources Director was instructed to meet with the County Surrogate, Susan Hoffman, after the Surrogate's presentation to the Board at their regular meeting on Tuesday, May 19, 2009. Mrs. Yard stated that Surrogate Hoffman did provide additional information as requested.

Mrs. Yard reported that she and Ms. Wieder have written up some possibilities for how this vacancy could be handled. Mrs. Yard noted that the Board did adopt a resolution to institute a hiring freeze and there is also an emergency resolution which was adopted that she believes could help come up with a solution to meet the Surrogate's needs, at least temporarily until the Freeholders can revisit the full hiring freeze and decide what needs to be done.

The County was thinking about different possibilities from the very beginning when the Board started its discussions on a full freeze. At the time, the Board discussed if the County could be flexible with staff or reassign staff if possible. There are a couple of scenarios at this time that could be considered: One scenario would be with the contractual employees, the County can ask the department manager if they would be agreeable to asking their contractual employees if someone would volunteer to be transferred to another department. Mrs. Yard advised she and Ms. Wieder did discuss having a volunteer be temporarily assigned to her office.

Mrs. Yard continued by saying that the areas they looked, it was decided that was not an option at this time. The department managers that may have adequate staffing probably would not want to work with the County to try to preserve people's jobs. She and Ms. Wieder began to look outside the realm of classified employees, and considered unclassified employees. It would be desirable to have an unclassified employee volunteer. In conversations with County Counsel, she informed the Board that the County would not need to have someone volunteer but a person could be reassigned.

Mrs. Yard informed the Board that the County did away with its temporary pool of clericals at the end of 2008 but there is one person remaining who will be with the County through the summer that could fill in, in the Surrogate's Office.

Mrs. Yard stated this means there are two possibilities of an opportunity to reassign staff on an interim basis in the Surrogate's Office.

Mrs. Yard advised when the modified hiring freeze began in 2008 and the full freeze started in 2009, the County asked department managers to look at their employees and to reprioritize what needs to be done; they were asked to see what changes could be made in their operation.

Mrs. Yard understands that the Surrogate's Office was a four person office and it is understood that this could compromise their operation if they are done by 25% of their work force. There are some things that the Surrogate could do and some things that the County could do with options to explore further such as the reassignment of an employee until the Board of Freeholders can again look to see how the County is doing with its cost saving measures.

Mrs. Yard stated that the resolutions adopted by the Board are very clear and they were unanimous. Mrs. Yard and Ms. Wieder are trying to creatively meet the needs of all the County's departments. The County has lost 21 people since the beginning of the year, and the Surrogate is the first person to come before the Board asking for a replacement. All the department managers know and understand what that the County is trying to do and at the same time, everyone is trying to honor the Freeholders' full hiring freeze. Ms. Wieder and Mrs. Yard feel that this is a doable situation; it may not be the best situation but it certainly is getting some help to the Surrogate's Office so she can continue to be in business.

Director Mennen asked if anyone on the Board had any questions.

Mrs. Yard confirmed for the Board that there are two options to be explored. Mrs. Yard was just talking to one area yesterday morning where someone would volunteer to be transferred and that will be revisited in the beginning of June; and then there is the other option in the Administrative Suite, of having Stacey Salvato who goes to various departments, and who will be with the County until the end of the summer.

Director Mennen asked if there were any special qualifications for the position, other than general phone and filing duties.

Mrs. Yard confirmed that everyone in the Surrogate's Office is cross trained. The Surrogate explained that if she received a new person, it wouldn't be until October that she felt that person could be left on their own.

Director Mennen said the only reason he asked the question is because what Mrs. Yard and Ms. Wieder are proposing sound like excellent alternatives. He would just want to make sure that the two scenarios do not fall short in regarding qualifications. Mrs. Yard informed the Board that since they are both unclassified positions, there is no job description.

Mr. Sworen expressed concern regarding financial responsibility in the Surrogate's Office. He asked if someone would need to be qualified for certain aspects of the job.

The Surrogate stated that she is the only one in the office that is bonded.

Mrs. Yard noted that in the Surrogate's write up, which was provided to the Board, was that the Surrogate's Office has been in this situation before when an individual was on maternity leave and the office had to pick up that person's duties for three months. Mrs. Yard stated that she is not saying the proposed recommendations are the best solution but that she is trying to be compliant with the Board with the full hiring freeze.

Mr. Sworen informed Mrs. Yard that the Board does appreciate her work but the problem is that if there isn't a qualified person placed in the office, it could cause a problem that is bigger than a vacancy problem.

Surrogate, Susan Hoffman said she appreciates both ideas.

Mr. Peterson stated that the County is going to do an evaluation on needed/mandated services versus discretionary services and he feels that the County may find that it has people that can be moved over to the Surrogate's Office permanently, because this may show if programs can be eliminated, which could lead to someone being placed into the position.

Mr. Peterson thinks that Mrs. Yard's temporary solutions will give the Board time to go through the process and determine where there maybe extra people. He told the Surrogate that this will all work out for her in the long run. The Freeholders have a good stopgap to get the County through this process. He confirmed the Surrogate is fine with this and if she is, then he is fine with it.

Director Mennen asked if there were any other concerns that needed to come before the Board.

Mr. Holt stated the Board needs to find a solution for this even if the Board has to back off on the hiring freeze at this time. He acknowledged that this could be a short term solution. Mr. Holt believes that when the presentation is made on discretionary versus mandated services; that additional opportunities may be found that would solve this problem long term instead of short term. He believes that this Board is committed to solve these problems and he hopes that the Surrogate understands the need with regards to the hiring freeze, but to not take that as a non-commitment from this Board to not solve the problem.

Mrs. Yard stated feels that this is a solution temporarily and the timing is right because there is an opportunity with two employees. Mrs. Yard informed the Board that most managers will not come to the Board because of the hiring freeze. She stated this is just one band aid and she does not have a whole box of band aids.

Mr. Peterson stated the Board has talked about reassigning people as being a way to solve these types of problems when the full hiring freeze resolution was adopted; so this is exactly what the Board had talked about, and this is in spirit of what the Freeholders had talked about doing. He is proud of the way this is being done because he things it is the smart and efficient way of handling things.

Director Mennen stated that Mrs. Yard and Ms. Wieder are to be congratulated for their creativity and the Surrogate is to be congratulated and thanked for her cooperation. This is going to be a test case and fortunately there is a solution that is consistent with the Board's previously adopted policies.

Director Mennen discussed Mrs. Yard when the presentation for the discretionary/mandated services of the County will be ready. Director Mennen stated that this is the continuation of Finance's spending cuts, not just about the line items but the preparation for the 2010 budget.

After further discussion, Mrs. Yard was directed to have the presentation in report form and distributed to the Board for review by June 08, 2009, and the formal presentation can be made on June 15, 2009, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in the Freeholders Meeting Room.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Director Mennen adjourned the meeting at 5:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Denise B. Doolan  
Clerk of the Board