

Special Meeting

HUNTERDON COUNTY BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS

71 Main Street, Flemington, New Jersey 08822

May 02, 2016

The special meeting of the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders convened at 8:32 a.m. in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act.

PRESENT: MS. LAGAY, MR. LANZA, MR. KING, MR. WALTON.

Via Phone: MR. HOLT.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Director Lagay 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 April 21, 2016, to the Hunterdon County Democrat, Star Ledger, Trenton Times, Courier News, TAPinto (online) and the Express Times, newspapers designated to receive such notices and by filing a copy with the Hunterdon County Clerk."

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Director Lagay announced that Freeholder Holt is on a worksite and will be attending this meeting via the telephone.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Director Lagay opened the meeting to the public.

There was no one in the audience to address the Board.

FINANCE

Budget Items

Janet R. Previte, County Financial Officer came before the Board to hold a workshop in reference to the 2016 County Budget.

Mrs. Previte thanked the Budget Committee for all their work and collaboration. This has been a team effort and she appreciates the hard work that was put forth. She thanked Director Lagay who has been interested in the both the process and the product.

Mrs. Previte advised the goal this year, is the same as it has been for the last several years, to bring in a flat budget; to be fiscally responsible; to not impact services or health and safety; but to safeguard the public trust. The product before the Board meets those goals.

Mrs. Previte feels this product provides transparency. She was reminded by Mr. Walton that the County has to be transparent.

Mrs. Previte advised today's documents are summary documents for personnel and operating line items in the budget.

EXECUTIVE SESSION REQUEST

Mr. Lanza moved and Mr. King seconded this:

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RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, Executive Session to discuss various personnel items with reference to the 2016 County Budget.

Shana Taylor, County Counsel informed the Board that individuals to be discussed in Executive Session today have received a Rice Notice.

ROLL CALL: (AYES) MR. LANZA, MR. KING, MR. HOLT, MR. WALTON, MS. LAGAY.

The Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders went into Executive Session at 8:37 a.m., recessed at 10:00 a.m. and reconvened in Open Session at 10:04 a.m.

PRESENT: MS. LAGAY, MR. LANZA, MR. KING, MR. WALTON.

ABSENT: MR. HOLT.

For the record, Mr. Holt left the meeting via telephone due to a previous work commitment.

Health Insurance and Jail

The Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders discussed Health Insurance and the Jail. Mr. Lanza stated it isn't prudent to cut the budget in the areas of Health Insurance and the Jail at this time, based on projections. The County is mid-way through the first year of the jail program,

and has not had a full year of hard numbers. The same can be said for health insurance, the County should have a full year of hard numbers to review.

Mr. Lanza confirmed the Budget Committee did not think it was prudent to cut the budget in these two areas based only on projections and felt it was prudent to do this in 2016, so the County can get hard numbers to budget off of for 2017.

Shana Taylor, County Counsel, stated regarding health insurance, the County budgeted for three additional months for the lapse in claims when the change took place.

Mr. Walton questioned the County projecting \$1 million in savings for the jail and asked the status.

Mr. King reported the jail census increased more than expected; the day the contract was sign the census went from 72 to 96. Today the number of inmates is around 85. There are numerous programs being implemented to resolve the census issue.

Mr. King advised he is frustrated by the management of the contract is different than the actual executed contract; the medical security and medical costs are dramatically higher than what was anticipated but they don't need to be because there is a provision in the contract which states inmates in hospitals are to be guarded at the lowest possible cost and that is not being done. In addition, the costs for drugs has been extraordinary and it could be a procedural issue or an operational issue but that is being looked into, to see where it can be resolved.

Mr. King reported there has also been an issue regarding transporting of inmates; noting the Sheriff's Office at this time is understaffed. Also, it isn't the amount of transporting the County expected, it's more, much more.

Director Lagay advised many issues are being reviewed including security personnel, medical issues, entering into a Co-Op with Essex County.

George Wagner, Chief of Staff/Director of Public Safety and Health Services announced a co-op may be considered in June, 2016, where the County would not have to pay security costs and it would be part of the per diem stay for inmates. Essex County is looking at East Orange Hospital to assist in getting costs reduced.

Mr. Lanza commended Mrs. Previte for seeing the cost overruns with the jail contract and calling meetings with the Sheriff and the Executive Committee to find ways to reduce administrative costs. The County is also working to resolve contract issues. In addition the contract is up for expiration shortly.

Communications/Emergency Services Division

Mr. Walton questioned the vision for the Communications Division/Emergency Services Division. He questioned the salary increase and the fact there isn't a division head. Every Division in the County has a division head but Communications/Emergency Services Division which is one of the most important things this County does. He would like to see a line item for the position of Division Head for Communications/Emergency Services Division in the budget.

Mrs. Previte reported that there has been a serious retention issue in Communications /Emergency Services Division that requires salary adjustments and some reorganization of the Division. Also, being understaffed, their overtime is up.

Mr. Wagner would like to have a Division Head position in the Communications/Emergency Services Division budget.

The Board confirmed Mr. Wagner is expecting a significant transfer between overtime to salary. In 2015, overtime was around \$350,000.

Mr. Wagner feels all figures are contingent on the current negotiations taking place. Currently the Communications/Emergency Services Division is overworked and understaffed.

Mrs. Previte stated the budget she has worked out is a tight budget with no fat and if the Board wants to approve anything more, it needs to be firmed up today so it can be placed in the budget document and if that is what the Board is looking to do, then the Board also has to find things to cut.

Director Lagay agrees the Communications/Emergency Services Division must be addressed and recommended a meeting with Mr. Walton, Mr. Wagner, herself and Mrs. Previte on this matter.

Vehicle Services Division

Mrs. Previte reported when the head of Vehicle Services submitted the numbers for his 2015 budget, he used the wrong numbers. Mrs. Previte will work on what vehicle services budget numbers should be.

Health Division

Mrs. Previte confirmed for Mr. Walton that the money coming out of the Health Division's budget is for Animal Control, which ended in 2015.

Human Services

Mr. King questioned if Human Services is being adequately funded.

Ms. Taylor advised the Human Services Department does have \$44,000 in discretionary money and she would like to go out and bid for disabled services; the ARC of Hunterdon was doing this previously.

Mr. Taylor would also like to make sure that the specific social work division is running well; the actual social workers. The Social Services budget has temporarily gone down as the Medicaid money has gone up from the state to process more applications.

Mr. King questioned how Hunterdon Helpline received a large increase.

Ms. Taylor stated Hunterdon Helpline received a \$47,000 increase as it is considered to be a priority needed service and they are also working with the LINK.

Budget Line Items

Mr. Walton has looked at the proposed budget line items and questioned what the big picture is since general government is going up by \$1 million and statutory is going down by \$1 million roughly. It seems grants have gone down substantially and it seems all new spending is coming from general government; we are taking the increase in levy and using it to offset the decline in grants and pay for new government spending on the operations side.

Mrs. Previte stated she doesn't look it that way. She confirmed for Mr. Walton that if grants had gone down, the Board would be looking at a different budget. She is preparing the budget using the same guides as in past years.

Mr. Walton questioned why grant money is down so much and is it because grants that come into the County have been reduced.

Mrs. Previte is not aware that Hunterdon is seeing an elimination of grants; there is always year to year fluctuation in grants. Once the budget is in place, grant award letters will be received and the County will have to add them to the budget, as always.

The Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders discussed the issue of grants and budget controls; as well as the matter of ordinances and deferred charges.

Mrs. Previte stated this is the Board's budget and it contains the pay as you go mentality, which past Boards have held.

Mr. Walton confirmed last year a capital budget analysis started during the budget process. He confirmed with Mrs. Previte that those capital ordinances have been reviewed and some have been eliminated. He asked where that project stands.

Mrs. Previte reported a list has been made for the Board to review.

Mr. Walton said the levy is going up and questioned by how much; he's aware the ratable base has grown, so the rate will stay flat. Is it due to taxes or the value of existing properties?

Director Lagay has made the Tax Board Administrator aware that the Freeholder Board is looking for that information. He was unable to be here today because of Tax Appeal Hearings that are ongoing.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Director Lagay adjourned the meeting at 10:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise B. Doolan
Clerk of the Board