

SPECIAL MEETING

HUNTERDON COUNTY BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS

71 Main Street, Freeholder's Meeting Room, 2nd Floor

Flemington, New Jersey 08822

May 29, 2018

The Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders convened in a Special Open Session at 5:30 p.m. in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act.

PRESENT: MR. HOLT, MS. LAGAY, MR. LANZA, MR. VAN DOREN, MR. KING.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Director Holt 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 30, 2018, 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

FREEHOLDERS' COMMENTS

The Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders did not have any comments at this time.

FINANCE

Janet R. Previte, Chief Financial Officer came before the Board and provided explanation for the following resolutions to be considered for approval, in accordance with the Division of Local Government Services.

Mr. Van Doren moved and Ms. Lagay seconded this:

See Page 05/29/18-1A RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, Certifying compliance with certain Federal civil rights requirements; and authorizing signature of the group affidavit.

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

Mr. Lanza moved and Mr. Lagay seconded this:

See Page 05/29/18-1B RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, Authorizing the County Budget be read by Title Only.

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

Director Holt opened the public hearing on the establishment of a CAP Bank for 2018.

There being no comments or questions from the press or public, Mr. Van Doren moved and Mr. King seconded a motion to close the public hearing.

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

Mr. Van Doren moved and Ms. Lagay seconded this:

See Page 05/29/18-1C RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, Adoption of the establishment of a CAP Bank.

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

Director Holt opened the public hearing on the 2018 County Budget.

There being no comments or questions from the press or public, Mr. Van Doren moved and Mr. King seconded a motion to close the public hearing.

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

As required by the Division of Local Government Services, Mrs. Previte read the amendment to the Board outlining the changes to be made in the 2018 County Budget.

Mr. Lanza moved and Mr. Van Doren seconded this:

See Page 05/29/18-2A **RESOLUTION**

RESOLVED, Approving an amendment to the 2018 County Budget as introduced.

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

Ms. Lagay moved and Mr. Van Doren seconded a motion to approve the 2018 County Budget as amended.

See Page 05/29/18-2B **2018 COUNTY BUDGET**

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

Mr. King moved and Ms. Lagay seconded this:

See Page 05/29/18-2C **RESOLUTION**

RESOLVED, Approving the Library Tax for 2018, in the amount of \$6,245,088.72.

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

Mr. King moved and Mr. Lanza seconded this:

See Page 05/29/18-2D **RESOLUTION**

RESOLVED, Approving the Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation Tax for 2018, in the amount of \$6,486,864.81.

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

FREEHOLDERS COMMENTS

Director Holt thanked the Freeholder Board and County staff who have been worked on the Budget.

Deputy Director Lagay reported the County's Budget process is very detailed and involves a Budget Committee in addition to all Department Heads and Division Heads; as well as personnel. This is a well-coordinated effort by all that is looked at multiple times before decisions are made.

Ms. Lagay extended her thanks Janet R. Previte, County Financial Officer because of her this Board is educated on the process and receives explanation on the movement of the numbers. As a member of the Budget Committee, Ms. Lagay appreciates the opportunity to have worked on the budget.

Director Holt reported he has assisted in the budget preparation for the past three years and stated someone else will be doing the work next year.

Mr. Lanza thanked the members of the Budget Committee; he's sat on that committee a couple of times and it is a lot of extra work and detail.

Mr. Lanza thanked Mrs. Previte and her staff, for all they have done and asked her to keep finding ways for the County to save money without compromising services. This budget protects services to Hunterdon's most vulnerable residents; it continues to make needed investments in key areas, such as, public safety, health services and upgrades for the County's Park System which helps maintain the County's unique quality of life.

Mr. Lanza stated this County budget stands in stark contrast with the state budget proposed by Governor Murphy to increase the state's spending by 8% and contains nearly \$1.5 billion in new taxes. Well done to the County's staff.

Mr. Van Doren advised this is the first County budget he's sat through; he has great appreciation for the time and effort spent. He has sat in on 21 municipal budgets and also chaired the Finance Committee in Tewksbury Township for a dozen years; he appreciates Mrs. Previte and the time she spent educating him and answering his questions.

Mr. Van Doren commended the Budget Committee, Freeholder Lagay and the County's staff for all their hard work in putting this budget together.

Director Holt advised the budget for 2018 is almost \$1 million less than in 2017; which is a result of cost savings and continued good financial planning. This is the 5th consecutive year that the County's Budget has been reduced. Also, today's budget is \$12 million lower than the nearly \$100 million budget Hunterdon County has in 2005.

Director Holt asked everyone to think about the fact that it is now 2018; the County Budget is \$12 million less than it was twelve years ago; in addition, the County now has no debt and twelve years ago the County had around \$37 or \$38 million worth of debt. Director Holt stated this budget is a result of many things; part is dividends received from investments made in technology. This Board made a clear conscience decision to increase spending on technology which would pay the County back in dividends and that is being seen today. That has helped streamline government operations; and in the area of shared services; as well as in the private sector contracts; and it helps the County to deliver cost savings.

Director Holt stated the budget continues the Freeholders and the County's pay as you go policy for capital improvements; it has no debt. There is no debt service in this budget. The budget provides for the numerous County shared programs that also save costs for municipalities.

Director Holt stated the County's Tax Rate has been held steady by the Freeholders at 30.9 cents per \$100 of assessed property value for four straight years and under this budget the rate is 31.5 cents. There has been a reduction in non-tax revenues and the County covered that by reducing the budget by almost \$1 million and adjusting the tax rate which is still lower than where the tax rate was in 2005.

Director Holt stressed Hunterdon County's tax rate is lower than it was in 2005; a budget that is \$12 million lower than it was in 2005; the County has a debt level that is zero.

Director Holt stated a tremendous congratulations goes to the County's Chief Financial Officer, Janet Previte and her staff as they helped produce the budget that is almost \$1 million less than 2017's budget. The Freeholder Board is indebted and is tremendously grateful and has a deep appreciation to all its department heads and team leaders because while the County can craft any budget but it is the team who has to deliver and they do. This is the reason why their buy-in has allowed the County to accomplish these goals; so they deserve the Board's thanks, respect and appreciation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Director Holt opened the meeting to the public.

Tim Mathews, Mayor of East Amwell Township, congratulated the Board on its budget. He just went through this in East Amwell Township, where the tax rate has just been lowered for the first time in thirty years.

Mayor Mathews came before the Board to discuss a matter that is very important to the residents of East Amwell Township, which is moving the South Branch County Library back to East Amwell. He and East Amwell's Deputy Mayor, Richard Wolfe has been trying to develop viable options working with some Freeholders in the past to bring the library back to East Amwell Township.

Mayor Mathews reported that recently, there have been discussions with Hunterdon County's Administrator, Kevin Davis and the new owner of the real estate building which used to house the South County Library Branch. It appears on those discussions, they have found a way to bring the Library back to East Amwell on a basis that makes economic sense to the County.

Mayor Mathews questioned if the Freeholder Board have a position, at this time, on bringing the South Branch of the Library back to East Amwell Township, in that particular building.

Deputy Director Lagay advised James Keebler, the new Hunterdon County Library Director has looked into this in some depth. Since the South Branch Library was moved the participation has decreased by 60%; it went from \$106,000 and change in 2011 down to \$44,000 last year. She is aware that the County Administrator has been working with the new landlord.

Deputy Director Lagay praised Mr. Mathews for bringing this to the Freeholders attention because bringing the Library back into Ringoes, serves the community; the residents and the County. She thanked Mr. Mathews for supporting this. In her workings with the Library Commission, she stands behind the Freeholder Director and Mayor Mathews and thinks it is a good idea to put the South Branch Library back in East Amwell to its previous location. Ms. Lagay stated financially it makes sense.

Mr. King stated he was sorry to see the South Branch Library move out of East Amwell Township and he's happy to see it relocated back in Ringoes.

Mr. Lanza reported the County has been working on this issue for numerous years, since Mr. King was Director. The Freeholders always had an open mind about bringing this library back

to East Amwell; it's a better location geographically. The County needed to receive a proposal that the Library Commission would accept and that the numbers would work. There was a previous proposal which added a second floor that wasn't ADA compliant. He recalls sitting in a Library Commission meeting where this was denied, so the matter never got to the Freeholders because it wasn't workable and it would have required hiring additional staffing. There was also no guarantee on the cost. Mr. Lanza wished it was accomplished while he was the Library Liaison but there is good leadership in East Amwell and it looks like the Library Commission will be presented with a proposal that will make economic sense. He appreciates that. Mr. Lanza agrees with Ms. Lagay, his running mate, that this is a fantastic idea, to bring the Library back to East Amwell Township.

Mr. King complimented Mr. Lanza stating this would not have happened until he has kept on it and he complimented him for keeping this on his radar.

Director Holt stated the South County Library was located in Ringoes, and the cost – prerecession, was much higher and it was a financial decision to move the Library at a good cost savings to the County. Through the process of now knowing what the hard numbers are and the fact that the County Administrator is in contact with the owners of the property, this Board believes an appropriate agreement can be reached between the County, the Library Commission and the property owners.

Director Holt thanked Mayor Mathews attending this evening's meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Director Holt adjourned the meeting at 5:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise B. Doolan
Clerk of the Board