

**These minutes were approved by the Board of County Commissioners on April 23, 2024. 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 17, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Director Kern. He confirmed with the County Administrator that the meeting notice complied with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975.

At this time Director Kern requested roll call, the following members were present: Commissioner Lori Ciesla and Commissioner Deputy Director Jason Sarnoski and Commissioner Director James Kern. Also attending were County Administrator Alex Lazorisak, County CFO Kim Francisco and Deputy Commissioner Clerk Tracy Matlock.

Director Kern led everyone in the flag salute.

MEETINGS

Mr. Francisco provided an update. He spoke with the tax administrator today and she's getting the numbers ready. Apparently the tax board's vendor went out of business, so they are still working through the numbers. It's hoped he will have the ratables by Saturday. County Administrator, DPW Director and he have met again today to go over our capital. As mentioned before it's a work in progress and it's still being processed. That's all Mr. Francisco has to report for now, with that he turned the presentations over to the departments.

First to present is Warden McCarthy, he started with positive fiscal impacts the Corrections Department had this year:

1. The shared services agreement with Hunterdon is moving along. The rate for 2023 was \$95.51 a day. In 2024 it increases to \$105.93 a day and there are increases for the next two years after that. The total amount billed to Hunterdon County for 2023 equaled \$1,118,171.00.
2. The next positive thing was the New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC's) housing reimbursement program that they have with them, when they house state-sentenced inmates on their 16th day after sentencing, the state has to start paying the host county jail per day. A few years ago they were receiving \$60 a day and now they are receiving up to \$190 a day. In 11 months, at \$190.21 a day, they took in \$339,996.00.
3. The next program Warden McCarthy spoke of is the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) it provides federal payments to states in localities that incurred correctional officer salary costs for incarcerating undocumented criminal aliens with at least one felony or two misdemeanor convictions. These inmates are with us for at least four days. The payments were behind a couple years. This year they received \$198,022 for 2022. For 2023 they received \$59,082, for a total of \$257,104.

4. Additional funds they receive at the correctional facility are just the funds within the facility which includes medical co-pays, booking fees, and the CLAP program. The total taken in from these items is \$36,537. All toll for those monies that were taken in were \$1,751.808.

The Warden spoke about some issues with staff, like anywhere else in law enforcement, they are having a big problem with that. His department is currently down by six officers. At one point they were down by eight officers and had three people out on family leave, so they were working with a shortage of 11. This is why their overtime budget was higher last year. They haven't been fully staffed in approximately two years. Again, they are down six officers right now. They have two that are getting out of the academy next Friday and another two getting out in a few months. He's trying to squeeze three or four people into the next class. He's been hiring outside of civil service because there is no one on the civil service list. The list hasn't been updated for almost two years. They did get one person from civil service, however that person worked one day and quit. The warden is still working on staffing, but they are at a better point now where they are functioning a little better. He hopes to get the new people at of the academy by vacation season.

Next he turned to the Correctional facility's programs, stating all programs are currently up and running. Their programs include anger management, parenting classes, GED classes, bible study classes, and AA classes. For about two years they didn't have any of these programs running. Within the past year they were able to get everything back up and running. They also hired a re-entry coordinator, which was a state mandate. They received a state grant of up to \$100,000 for the position. The person was hired last April and is doing a phenomenal job. Up until this past month, she was also taking care of Hunterdon's inmates. Hunterdon County was a little slower with hiring someone. The re-entry coordinator works hand-in-hand with our Human Services Department. She even has some space over in the Human Services Department to work. He feels the position has been an asset. She has some things she has to do such as getting things through social security and birth certificates through DMV. Inmates walk out with a pretty nice package.

The Warden's next turned to the topic of his department's budget requests for this year.

1. He explained they are having increases that they never had before. Most of it is to spend on things that everybody spends on at home to buy. They have to supply things and things have gotten a lot more expensive than in prior years.
2. The healthcare management contract with CFG was renewed and they are looking at an increase of almost \$575,000 just in this one contract. He knows it's a big expenditure. CFG works out and they have never had a problem with them. The medical service is so important. You get what you pay for. It was noted there really aren't any other vendors. He is asking for an increase of \$575,000 to cover this increase.
3. Inmate and staff food services – which is conducted through Aramark. Their bill went up \$178,000 in the new contract for the year. He's asking for \$200,000 because that's a flexible bill depending on how many meals for inmates and everything else.
4. Operating supplies – he's requesting an additional \$14,000. Operating supplies include clothing, bedding, footwear, toiletries, and grooming materials for inmates. They had about a 10-15 percent increase in cost just for these items alone. Mr. Francisco commented the food service contract was made prior to COVID and said we all know how much food has gone up since then.
5. Janitorial supplies – he is requesting an additional \$30,000. They buy cleaning supplies,

disinfectants, soap, laundry detergent, tissues and toilet paper. They've had about a forty percent increase in costs for these items. Sometimes they had to pay retail prices for these items because they were hard to come by.

6. A van – He is asking for one inmate van basically to travel back and forth to the courthouse. Now they have a 2011 van that has approximately 50,000 miles on it. It has a lot of wear and tear on it. The van they are requesting comes with an inmate enclosure which is a secure unit that gets installed in the van. They used to have old bench seats with the windows wired. Now it will have one big compartment that sits about eight inmates, and then it will have two separate other compartments to put individual inmates that may be problem inmates or if they need to be separated. It will all come installed in the van. The cost is \$104,000.

He emphasized the amount of money the jail brings in, approximately \$1.7 million plus, citing he knows it doesn't pay the bills. He's asking for an increase of approximately \$819,000.

Mr. Francisco stressed this is the department where inflation really hit hard with the healthcare, they have a nurse 24/7, food, groceries, soap, t-shirts and socks. Just like we pay at home. He also mentioned the Warden gives him numbers for a calendar month and Mr. Francisco's numbers are on a cash basis. For example in November we bill for December and we get it in January. So the numbers the Warden says may not agree with our financial statements because Mr. Francisco's are based on a cash basis and his are as we earn.

Mr. Sarnoski asked what the current number of inmates is, therefore, a short discussion took place about the current number of inmates the facility is housing. It was noted there are currently 99. It's starting to drop as it always does this time of year. During the summer-fall, it's usually about 120. The state has made two pickups in the last month and a half. The Warden explained the state has gotten better with the pickups, however, we lose that money from the state then. They haven't gotten to the point where they are struggling for space. In the old days they were at 150 plus inmates. They haven't seen that in years.

Mr. Sarnoski also asked if we were caught up on the capital security upgrades at the correctional facility. The Warden answered they finished up all the camera work and the video work in the jail last year. They do have a couple of projects with Buildings and Grounds that need to be done, but nothing major. A lock project that sat for years was done and he thinks it was done at a cost much less than anyone anticipated. With there being no further questions, the agenda moved on to the next department which is the Prosecutor's Office.

Next, James Pfeiffer, Prosecutor, presented his department's budget. He started by saying Wendy Riley does an incredible job helping him with the budget process. Obviously, they are in a situation where they have the two percent cap or within the two percent cap. They are able to maintain that. The challenges his department faces are just the same as everyone else in terms of inflation, etc. The bulk of his budget is made up of salaries and they're in contract negotiations this year with the detectives. They have been working on that with the County Administrator and CFO. That's their biggest challenge.

Prosecutor Pfeiffer turned his attention to the costs of his department, saying they have one issue that they're losing money they used to get from a grant from VOCA. That used to pay for some

of their contracts on software for the support, that's being cut back by the state. They used to pay 100% of those contracts. This year those contracts will be cut back to 75% or about \$53,000. That goes until about June and then the state will decide whether they're going to contribute or not towards that cost.

A brief discussion took place about whether or not these programs are mandated and if not, can they be cut back. Prosecutor Pfeiffer explained no they cannot be cut back because they're contributing towards maintenance on computer software for victims' advocacy. Also for info share and things that they use to keep track and run the office. They're at a point that they're beholden to the software. They get money to buy it and now the state is pulling it back. But they still need it. The entire state runs on this software. They can't change vendors. They're locked in on the software. For years the state has paid for it, this is the first year they're pulling back. There may or may not be a change as we go forward. Obviously, this puts a major dent for them because now they have to come up with the money. If the state decides to not pay for it, it will be a major hit, especially with the 2% cap.

The other major issue the Prosecutor presented is the cost of all the software they use. Forensically, they have the result listed on the budget. It's very expensive, but 100% necessary from a forensic standpoint. In today's world, everything is electronic, based upon phones and computers. Again, that's a mandatory, necessary cost for them to be able to do business.

Mr. Sarnoski asked if we could save money by doing it in-house rather than farming it out to other law enforcement, such as another county? The prosecutor responded that it really can't be farmed out. Getting discovery from the state police is problematic. His office would lose control. It would be a disaster to try to lean on them in any way. As far as the other counties, everyone is so busy. It's not a situation where you can go, there's someone that has excess capacity. It doesn't exist in today's world.

County Administrator brought up the idea of possibly shifting every department's IT expenses to the Information Technology Department, explaining some of this cost can't be paid out of capital. It has to be part of the operating expenses. We may want to try to group or create another operating expense in IT's budget. We have the prosecutor, 911 center, corrections, every department. If we took the time and broke it down, our IT and operating IT, it's probably two to three percent of the entire budget. That's why he thinks we need to revamp this next year. Maybe create a separate line item because the Prosecutor is going to need to free up money from his cap. It was noted the Prosecutor's Office is within the two percent cap this year, as long as the grant pays a good amount of money towards the software.

It was also noted the call out for budget usually goes out to all the departments in August. Next year, it may have to go out much earlier because we may have to meet with each department.

County Administrator moved back to the prosecutor's budget and asked the prosecutor what's the cost for the cybercrime unit software for a year? The answer is \$109,000. If that can be taken out of the Prosecutor's budget, it would give him some breathing room.

The prosecutor continued on with another issue that they're running into this year and that being expert testimony they are going to have. They are being promised to have another judge coming

in. It was supposed to be full-time, but it seems like it's going to be on a part-time basis. As they start to try these cases, you may have one case with an accident reconstruction expert. That report alone is approximately \$7,500. He thinks their total for expert testimony is approximately \$20,000. He also spoke about the issues with IRPOS (34:45), which are the extreme. Protection orders for people with firearms. When they get psychological reviews on these, they need to pay for doctors. Ultimately, as they need more experts, those costs are expensive. He has spoken with County Administrator and they may be able to do something to divert some of that in a different way. They could easily exceed, for example, if they tried three cases with three experts, their budget is completely gone for experts. Unfortunately year-to year, they don't know when or how many experts they will need. They have been lucky over the past few years because they haven't had to try that many cases that involved experts.

He concluded by saying the rest of the budget is pretty straightforward and he asked if there were any questions. County Administrator told the Prosecutor he did an outstanding job staying within the 2% cap. With there being no further questions, the agenda moved on to the Public Safety Department.

CFO Francisco explained the Public Safety Department has four different cost centers: the Communications Center, Public Safety Administration, Emergency Management, and a Fire Academy. Each one has its own separate budget. There will be no Public Safety Capital being discussed tonight, just operating budget.

Dennis Riley, Public Safety Director, came forward to start his presentation on his department's budget. He started with the Fire Academy, stating this budget will stay flat this year. Two years ago they were able to restructure the fire academy and how it operated. It worked out well. Next year he'll look at it again to see if they can bring it down a little more. This year they had two Fire Fighter One classes and all of the other trainings. They were still under budget about \$37,000 in salary for that particular line.

Mr. Riley stated the Public Safety Administration budget will remain flat.

Next for discussion, Mr. Riley spoke of the Communications Center. He said there is a bit of a change here. The reason being they had some increases in their reoccurring maintenance agreements. Their firewall license, some QEDs increased, a couple of increases with Tuway. This budget was reworked. Originally it came in at a \$35,000 increase. The original budget for the Communications Center was \$749,000 and we came back in on a modified budget at \$738,700. They were able to split out Public Safety and the Office of Emergency Management. They have their own line item budget this year. He was able to lessen that and spread that money out across both disciplines. It's a .04% gain. By splitting out the Office of Emergency Management, we reworked the original budget, looking at it hard, they were able to bring these numbers to where they need to be without going over budget. It was noted by splitting the budgets, they are now following the chain of command and it will be much clearer.

Mr. Riley discussed they are slating their interview process to start again in a few weeks. They have 15-18 resumes for public safety training positions that they're going to review and start interviewing for Public Safety Tele-communicators. He also mentioned they need to keep a little bit of a gap with new trainees before they start setting more people up on the floor. It was noted there is

still \$60,000 in this \$330,000. The money is still in there for training.

Mr. Riley talked about how difficult it is to get training for the EMT program because there are so few trainers in the state of New Jersey. He asked various organizations about training and was able to secure training with Northampton County Community College. This training will begin in March. He explained people will be trained in Northampton County and then they'll come back over to us and go through a couple of day's training with us. Northampton County really was able to help Warren County out. When the trainees pass, that's when payment is made by the trainee's agency. Most municipalities have an agreement the trainees have to serve for a certain amount of time. A discussion took place about why Atlantic and St. Luke's are reluctant to conduct trainings. Mr. Riley said Atlantic did supply training previously. They came to the Communications Center, but he is unsure as to why they won't continue to do so. This concludes Mr. Riley's presentation.

Mr. Kern congratulated Mr. Riley on a great job on his presentation and with the past couple of storms. The briefings were fantastic.

Mr. Sarnoski asked Ms. Hammer if the Tech School's capital budget was ready. She is currently reviewing it to be sure they are adhering to the five year plan.

Mr. Kern asked if it's possible for the College and the Tech School to send a copy of their presentations ahead of time. Both facilities will be contacted and requested to do so.

CLOSING PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

PRESS COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

RESOLUTION 43-24

On motion by Ms. Ciesla, seconded by Mr. Sarnoski, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING EXECUTIVE SESSION OF THE WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PROVIDING FOR A MEETING NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE NEW JERSEY OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 at 6:41 p.m.

Recorded vote: Ms. Ciesla yes, Mr. Sarnoski yes, Mr. Kern yes

On motion by Ms. Ciesla, seconded by Mr. Sarnoski, the board adjourned Executive Session and returned to Open Session at 7:26 p.m.

Recorded vote: Ms. Ciesla, Mr. Sarnoski yes, Mr. Kern yes

ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Mr. Sarnoski, seconded by Ms. Ciesla, and there being no further business before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

**THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF THE COUNTY OF WARREN**
Wayne Dumont, Jr. Administration Building
165 County Route 519 South
Belvidere, NJ 07823

RESOLUTION 43-24

On motion by **Ms. Ciesla**, seconded by **Mr. Sarnoski**, the following resolution was unanimously adopted by the Board of County Commissioners of the County of Warren at a meeting held on January 17, 2024.

**A MOTION AUTHORIZING EXECUTIVE SESSION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE
PROVISIONS OF THE NEW JERSEY OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12**

WHEREAS, the Warren County Board of County Commissioners is subject to certain requirements of the *Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6*, et seq., and

WHEREAS, the *Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12*, provides that an Executive Session, not open to the public, may be held for certain specified purposes when authorized by Resolution, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Board hereby excludes the public in order to discuss such matters. The general nature of the subjects to be discussed are as follows:

- (1) *Matters Relating to Litigation, Negotiations and Attorney-Client Privilege*: Items to be discussed include:
Status of various litigation: Bullock.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board shall disclose to the public, as soon as practicable, the contents of the discussions after the final disposition of the matters discussed.

RECORDED VOTE: Ms. Ciesla yes, Mr. Sarnoski yes, Mr. Kern yes

I hereby certify the above to be a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Board of County Commissioners of the County of Warren on the date above mentioned.

_____, Clerk
Alex J. Lazorisak

[O1]