

*\*These minutes were approved by the Board of County Commissioners on May 08, 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 20, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order by Director Kern and upon 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.

After leading the flag salute, Director Kern confirmed with the County Administrator that the meeting notice complied with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975.

## MEETINGS

Mr. Francisco provided an update to the Board. Mr. Francisco and Mr. Lazorisak met with the Human Services Department earlier this week to discuss the Annual Health and Wellness Field Day that is held with various agencies from around the county. This year there will be a dedicated line of \$12,000 for the program with Human Services Department being the lead department. There were no further updates at this time. The first department up on the agenda is Warren County Community College.

Dr. Austin, President, started by informing the Board what a great value attending Warren County Community College (WCCC) is. The costs to attend the county college, books are included with the tuition, is cheaper than attending Sussex, Raritan and Morris County Colleges without the books. It costs approximately \$2,800 to attend Warren County Community College. Morris County costs \$3,100. WCCC is the most cost effective school in Northwest New Jersey. The unrestricted budget for this year is approximately \$10,453,000. This is a little higher than seen in previous years. This includes about a \$500,000 in grants that are now readily thrown through the institution. The requested county support pays about twenty-four percent of the budget. The state support is about thirty percent and tuition fees is about thirty-seven percent. He is asking for a two percent increase which is roughly \$50,000. This would bring the county's contribution to \$2,555,000. He expects the state's proportion to be level funded. Enrollment will be at current levels. They plan to refill a number of vacant positions that happened post COVID. They have some grants coming in. They have maintained steady over the years, somewhere between 50 and 55 full-time employees. He explained they need the other \$50,000 to cover inflation costs and health benefits.

Next Dr. Austin spoke about the college's drone program. He informed the Board this program was recognized in the *Community College Daily*, published by the American Association of Community Colleges. The article entailed how they are partnering with universities differently. It spoke of their partnerships with Emory Riddle, in agriculture at Rutgers, the partnership they are starting in agriculture to work with Delaware Valley University. What this is saying is that community colleges shouldn't just be about transferring students and shouldn't be used by universities. Community colleges should be doing their own research and be a benefit. He stressed the drone

students are already getting jobs before they are graduating. He noted two students started with New Jersey Transit with a salary of \$110,000 and they haven't even graduated yet. That's what you can get in less than two years in this degree.

Dr. Austin next discussed staffing at the college. With grants, they are able to offset about \$500,000 in expenses. They are requesting about \$175,000 in staffing to put in their DEI retention initiative, to make sure everybody exceeds. He spoke at great length about a new position of Dean of Accountability, explaining it's an ethical position. They need to maintain and evaluate their grants. The college is bringing in millions of dollar in federal funds. They need someone, in addition to the CFO, to help look at these things. The Dean of Accountability position will be looking at every course and where their enrollment should be and where it is, so they know what to cut, where they have gaps. They're starting to do the analysis of what they need to do to make everything better. Their rates have fallen since COVID. This is why the accountability position was created. They're tied for the best in African American black student graduation rates in the state. They are tied with Union County because Union copied everything Warren did. Dr. Austin discussed the demographics of the student body and graduation rates. He also discussed the problem they have with a group of employees who are legacy employees, who belong to a union that put an average of 12 hours a week in 30 weeks out of the year. He gave an example of one employee who moved to Knoxville, Tennessee and under state law could be a full-time instructor from Knoxville for them and hold a full-time job in Tennessee. NJEA controls education in the state of New Jersey. He criticized these employees stating how can someone make \$130,000 a year and be on campus an average of five hours a week. These employees do no research or bring in any grant money. He feels these employees are the ones who are going to say it's a culture war bringing in the new accountability position. He feels these employees are stealing money from the county, ripping off our kids and they're not putting in the best effort they can.

Dr. Austin moved his attention to a contemplation garden he is hoping to start this summer. He's requesting \$100,000, at third of the cost, from the Board. The college and a private donor will be funding the remaining two-thirds of the costs. The garden will fall in on their trail and give those a place to relax, sit and think. It will also be a place for people who have dedicated their lives to the college, like trustees, to have their ashes interred at the contemplation garden.

His next request is for an additional \$50,102 in operating expenses, at two percent that will be \$2.3 million. \$200,000 to continue to help subsidize their dual enrollment program. He is also asking for a special, one-time request from the capital fund for \$100,000 so they can complete the contemplation garden this summer. He would like to speed up the garden because he's concerned some of the people who would like their ashes placed there may not be able to do so if it's not completed in time.

Mr. Sarnoski thanked Dr. Austin for a great presentation. He said the Board is always happy to support the college and is very proud of the college with everything it has done. The campus really looks great and has improved over the years. He supports the garden and is happy to see there is support from the outside as well. As far as the accountability position, he has no problems with it. Accountability is so important. He thinks the new hire, being a retired Army Major, will work nicely and the fact that he has an agricultural background will also help the college with their precision agriculture program. He believes this will improve the culture at the college. He said the statistics Dr. Austin discussed about the number of hours the college staff put in was shocking and he's glad Dr. Austin will be addressing it. He also agreed about the comment made earlier about NJEA and the

state failing our students. It's good to see Warren County still has the right mindset. He supports what he sees in the budget.

Ms. Ciesla asked if there are any zoning issues in regard to peoples' ashes being interred in the garden. Dr. Austin said no that was researched. Ms. Ciesla also thinks they are doing great things at the college. She feels that if someone graduates from Warren County Community College, they can actually do a job because they are learning skills that are only going to increase with the precision agriculture and drones. She agrees with Mr. Sarnoski regarding the Dean of Accountability position. She said with all that's been going on at the ivy league colleges, these past few months, it's disturbing to see children aren't even learning history correctly. The college has her full support.

Dr. Austin discussed how they were on board very early regarding the drone program. He added that other colleges are calling him, making the request of his instructor coming and training their staff. He also said one of the things he is most proud of is the fact that he's hearing from employers that one of the things they like most about WCCC students is that they show up for interviews and have a good work ethic. He has stressed to his staff he wants students to be taught a good work ethic, like there was prior to COVID.

A discussion took place about the course offerings and the times they are being offered. Dr. Austin said the reason they have greater capacity than students enrolled is because they need to fix their course schedule. He would like to see the course schedule accommodating students, not the faculty. It was noted the new position of Dean of Accountability will aide in this process.

Yvonne Reitemeyer, Chair of the College Board, praised their drone program and to further her point, she mentioned her niece who is attending a prestigious college and she's in a drones program there. Her mother is so proud because she was going to go see Embry Riddle. Ms. Reitemeyer said their students were able to work with Embry Riddle. She knows her niece is going to come out of college and she won't have the opportunities that the students at WCCC will have after just two years and her niece will have a lot more debt.

Dr. Austin concluded by thanking the Board for being supportive of what the college is doing. He thanked them for the people they appoint to the College's Board as well. He also mentioned there may be some people showing up at Board of School Estimate hearing on February 14. To this regard, the Commissioners meeting was pushed back from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm on February 14. This concludes the presentation on Warren County Community College's budget at 9:34 a.m.

Next up on the agenda is Warren County Technical School. CFO Francisco said the technical school is requesting a two percent increase as well and they do have a capital budget request of \$1 million.

Superintendent Derrick Forsythe introduced himself and School Business Administrator Amy Barkman. He also introduced Dr. Lori Austin the school board's president, Tim McDonough, Vice-President and Jim Mengucci, Buildings & Grounds Supervisor who are all in the audience.

Mr. Forsythe thanked Dr. Austin for his support and for helping support what they do at the Technical School. He also thanked Emily Hammer, Warren County Public Works Director, for helping them with their presentation. He did a brief overview of the programs they offer at the school.

He particularly pointed out their welding and construction technology programs. Both programs are offered as part of grades 9-12 curricula but they are also offered to adults. This past fall semester, both programs were full. He pointed out the welding course is always full every time it's offered. It is also the most popular adult training program as well. The LPN program is an adult-only program. They also have a health science program available for grades 9-12. He cited the enrollment numbers for the LPN class has increased since COVID. The instructor has asked if she could split sections or do evening classes. Thanks for Dr. Austin, they are able to use the college's Phillipsburg site for instruction for the LPN program.

Turning his attention to a snapshot of the school, Mr. Forsythe said they currently have about 400 students in grades 9-12. They provide full day instruction; they are not partial time. They have twelve career programs. Students are in school from 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. They receive every course required by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJ DOE) for graduation. They have Varsity and JV sports teams, various clubs and organizations. A very active PTSA career advisory group and an alumni association he's very grateful for. It's a newly formed group that is trying to coordinate with school personnel to do some activities to provide school spirit and a sense of community among current students and former students.

Next Mr. Forsythe discussed the long range facilities plan. He referred to the handouts distributed to the Board, stating everything highlighted in yellow are all things that have been completed. In year one, they have completed four and a half of the six projects they wanted to accomplish in that year. They didn't repair all the concrete sidewalks and curbing, but they did install concrete sidewalk to provide proper egress at the only area of their building that didn't have it.

A discussion took place about work that needs to be completed near the entrance, on Route 57. Mr. Forsythe noted he hasn't heard anything from the state, however Senator Steinhardt's office has been very responsive. The Technical School has taken care of the portion of the property that they are permitted to access. They've capped it, repaired potholes, and installed a new drain. They did not do anything within the state's right-of-way. He further explained the gutter area right along Route 57, water lays, it doesn't flow, it freezes, it pushes the concrete, the blacktop, everything heaves and then giant potholes are formed.

Mr. Forsythe spoke of other projects they were able to complete including:

1. Installation of concrete sidewalks in the rear of the building.
2. Replacement of the welding ventilation system, the construction dust collection system.
3. Repairing of the main entrance off Route 57.
4. Repairing and replacement of the walk-in freezer. He pointed out the freezer was not an outside job with a contractor. Their construction technology students, led by the teacher, completed that project. This is one of the perks of working at a technical school, you can task your experts in the building from time to time. This was a huge savings for the school as well as a great experience for the students.

During year two, which is the current year of the five-year plan, they did replace the six remaining rooftop units. Although they are not hammering out every single item, they are doing what they can as it comes up.

Next he moved on to the things the Technical School is requesting of the commissioners this morning:

1. A new sewer and septic line. They have some issues that runs the entire length of the front wing of their building.
2. New roof membranes. They've had 30+ areas where roof leaks were evident. They had some serious mold issues from late August up until about a month or two ago. A huge factor into the mold issues was through the leaking roof systems. He stressed nobody was ever in danger. They worked with all of the professionals in the field. He notified Pete Summers at the Health Department. He kept everyone updated along the way. They kept staff and students out of these areas while things were remediated and cleaned. As soon as tests came back, in a favorable manner, they allowed them to continue classes back in those original spaces. It was quite a hurdle for them. At least half a dozen classrooms, the main office area and several other office areas had to be relocated while they dealt with roof leaks and then subsequent mold issues.
3. The new gas fired boiler.

Mr. Sarnoski asked if the \$1 million request is for these three projects and not for the continuation of the long-range facility plan? Those projects in the plan need to be placed on hold? Mr. Forsythe responded correct.

Mr. Forsythe continued on with his presentation, stating these are the three projects that need to be completed sooner than they originally thought. In the copy of their presentation, there was a picture of a corroded pipe, which, Mr. Forsythe stressed, is not a picture of their pipe. Theirs actually looks worse, according to the plumber who has been dealing with their drain issues. The plumber said they have a four-inch pipe, cast iron that was installed in 1969 when the building was created. He said that four-inch pipe, in most cases, is now a two-inch pipe or less because of the buildup. In addition to the rust and the buildup, they have areas where ground settled causing bellies in the pipe. So water and any other waste just sits there. The plumber has been very clear that he's going to do whatever he can to keep it functional for as long as he can. He gave the warning that as thin as that cast iron is after 50+ years underground, the next time he goes through to auger or snake something he could very easily bust through without even trying. So they may sooner, rather than later, have an emergent issue on their hands. Ms. Barkman has reached out to their architects and engineers. They are going over some options. The preliminary price they've received was approaching half a million dollars to excavate and replace.

The school has the plumber come in every month to snake that line. He pumps out the tank because it won't pump effectively, it won't flow effectively to be pumped out. It's approximately 150-180 feet and it's all underground. They are looking at hopefully diverting it outside and running it along the building. Otherwise they have to rip up all the terrazzo flooring. The original option given to them was the entire wing with the terrazzo flooring would have to be excavated for that pipe to be brought up and replaced. Obviously that gave them pause. They would never be able to get that flooring back the way it was originally. Luckily after meeting with the engineer and the architect, they found two PVC pipes, that come out underground from the front of the building, with clean outs, with caps. He said they may be able to tie into those, to bypass the existing line, tie into those outside of that front wing wall. Then all of the excavating would take place outside and not destroy the inside. That's what they're hoping for. It will require an additional pump station to do it that way. The timeframe is to do this project ASAP. They have approval from NJ DOE to do it on an emergent basis

instead of having to go through the whole formal bidding process. The approval from NJ DOE is indefinite until they get it done. The architect is working on the bid specs. They've completed a topographical study for the pitch. The engineer was out this past week. They're actively working on it. It would require an additional pump station to complete it that way. Mr. Forsythe continued on to say several years ago they had a backup in the health office. They had to evacuate and they had to have it cleaned professionally. The plumber is doing a great job and they are great to work with. He's been very clear-they are on borrowed time. As soon as they can get specs taken care of and know what they are up against, this may be a project that they have to undertake sooner than later.

Previous renovations were discussed and it was noted the laterals were ran then. It runs the entire length of the front wing and then it takes a right. However, it was noted this is not where the issue lies. It's strictly a problem in the front way and can be replaced with PVC. It was suggested they may want to look at the laterals coming out of the building and pull it right way back to the foundation line and PVC that. They don't want to have to go backwards and do it again. They might want to have the engineer evaluate that as well.

Mr. Forsythe said they are working with a potentially emergent issue right now. He and Ms. Barkman felt they had to prioritize here. This is something that is going to need attention much sooner rather than later.

Mr. Forsythe circled back to the leaking roof. Again, over 30+ roof leaks. They had an infrared scan done recently of the entire roof system that revealed every area of the roof that had wet insulation underneath it. It was between 30-40 different leaking areas of the roof. These roof leaks contributed directly to the mold issues they faced late summer through fall. The roof has been out of warranty since about 2017. It basically covers the board office, all the way down to the theater area. That is primarily where many of the roof leaks occurred that contributed to the mold issues. This is the area of the roof they would like to replace sooner rather than later. Other roof areas where the warranty will be expiring soon include the gymnasium. This warranty ends in about a year. The roof in this area is nineteen years, the warranty is for twenty years. It was noted that every time they have someone come to fix the roof, the leak shows up somewhere else. The roof is still a part of the five year-plan, it just has to be prioritized. He went back to the presentation and pointed out pictures of wrinkled, rubber roofing pulled back from edges and seems. Various areas where water can penetrate and cause problems over time.

The final request Mr. Forsythe brought to the Board's attention was for a new gas fired boiler. The boiler in the picture has been down several times over the last few years. They have spent approximately \$200,000 in maintenance fees with the heating system in the past year. They have had a bit of good news in the last few days. The technician who services this boiler consistently said he thinks they can get away with keeping the boiler but they will need new boiler pumps. If that's his recommendation, they can save some money in that area. A new boiler replacement is probably around \$80,000. They were able to get a remanufactured pump about a month or two ago for about \$25,000-\$30,000. This is not a priority at the moment. It's on the wish list. He doesn't think it was on the needs assessment, but in response to issues they have been having, they thought they could at least put it out on the table for discussion.

Mr. Sarnoski commented this is why they came we came up with a capital plan. Things get prioritized, things are going to come up and you need to adjust. This is what you are doing here. You

are adjusting to your needs. It makes sense. Mr. Forsythe is justifying it. He has no problems.

Mr. Forsythe continued by saying he would like to look into having another pump or two on hand because they seem to go much more often than they should. The lead time to get them is six months.

Mr. Forsythe asked Amy Barkman, School Business Administrator at the Technical School, to go over the financials. She started by saying last year they had a huge significant increase in healthcare benefits for those in the state health care benefits plan. They've tried to get into another plan, however, due to the fact that they only have approximately 45 insured and they have high claims, they couldn't find a better plan. To this regard, it was suggested the Technical School supply the County Administrator with the stop loss numbers and he'll look into the possibility of getting them out of the state health care plan. It was noted the county has not raised health insurance for over four years. Ms. Barkman continued on with her presentation about the health care costs and said the good news is the increase is only 6.5% versus 15% last year. It was still an increase of \$85,000. They do have a lot of young staff and a lot of family coverage. When the state health care plan came out with other additional insurance plans, the first year they had a couple people jump on board because it's a lot cheaper coming out of their paychecks. Now that they have been in it for a year, staff are talking with their co-workers and they had more people jump in which means it's a less of a contribution back to the school. They have lost the revenue from that.

Next Ms. Barkman discussed the mold remediation that Mr. Forsythe mentioned earlier. It cost a little over \$100,000 which was not budgeted. That reduces their end of the year surplus which helps them as revenue for the next year. Going into next year, they are going to be short at least that \$100,000.

Next topic of discussion was the teachers' contract. They settled the four-year contract. The first two years the teachers sat tight on the increase on all the extracurricular, stipend positions. Salaries are at 3% increase for teachers, 3.5% for custodians and secretaries. So this equates to \$165,000 increase in salaries.

Ms. Barkman next discussed tuition noting that in the past there was a huge issue with paying the tuition back to the sending districts. She is happy to report that they are now under \$400,000. They went from \$1,000,005 to now just under \$400,000. This of course helps their revenue because they will be receiving more revenue from the sending districts instead of having to pay them back.

Last year Ms. Barkman said she spoke to the Board about the fiscal cliff for the grants which were multi-year grants. Those are drying up, will be losing approximately \$292,000 out of those federal grants. Some of their positions were staffed through the grants. Now they need to look at whether or not they can absorb those positions in their operating budget.

Again they are asking for a 2% increase in their operating budget and a \$1,000,000 to offset their capital projects. She discussed their revenues. This is based on flat state funding. If they cut it, they will have to have a contingency plan in place. She worked with their bank to get a better interest rate, which they will be getting about \$50,000 more than last year. The LPN program is very strong for their revenue coming in. It's over \$600,000 coming from this program alone. This is the gross revenue, that's not factoring out expenditures. Overall their budget is \$300,000 less than it was last

year. She thinks they've done all they can do to generate revenue. She applies to every grant that comes along, but they don't get huge grants. Financially they are in a good place. They are not as strong as they would like to be in their reserves. They can only do what they can do in order to take fund balance and offset the budget for the revenues.

Mr. Sarnoski said he likes the two-year look ahead. He noticed the tuition, that's increased by 4.5%. He thinks that's great, but it's flattened in 2025. He asked if an increase is possible in 2025. Ms. Barkman replied she is hoping by next year, they will be owing even less and they will have even more coming back in for revenue.

The discussion led to enrollment. Their tuition is making progress. They received 200 applications and can only accept 100. It was noted the student applications are holding steady. They typically receive approximately 180-200 applications a year. They may be able to increase enrollment a little, to around 110 to 120 max. The issue is with the shop classes. They are capped because there would be more students in a potentially unsafe environment. The example was given for an automotive shop with lifts and tools, the more likely for safety issues. The enrollment become an issue also in the academic classes. A welding teacher may only have ten students, but an English teacher may have 35 in one section. That's what they have to be mindful of.

A discussion took place about whether or not anything can be done on a flat roof to help with drainage? Mr. Forsythe responded by stating there are drains on the roof. The problem is because of the age of the roof and the leaks, causing a weak substructure. Everything sunk, so the pitch is no longer where it should be. Water that would have went, when new or fully functional, it would have made its way toward the drain. Now it's just sitting in a belly because of that weaken substructure. A new roof isn't going to be just that rubber coating. It's going to be the new sub roof and everything else that goes along with it, if necessary.

Mr. Mengucci offered some insight regarding some options for the replacement of the roof. He has spoken with roofing business owners that have been in business for over 50 years, there are some coatings out there now that can be put on roofs, right over top of the existing roof. That will give you the same warranty as a new roof. This is something they should look into, not only at the technical school, but for other schools as well. He mentioned in Phillipsburg they are about to get a new roof for the early childhood center for approximately \$4.5 million. There are some technologies that should be looked into.

It was also discussed how some parts of the roof at the Technical School are covered with stones. So it's not flat, it's like river rock. That's how it was held down. When a leak is found, the stones have to be shoveled first. Obviously the shoveling can damage the rubber roof. Speaking with other school superintendents throughout the county, Mr. Forsythe mentioned most schools have flat roofs. With every flat roof, you are chasing those leaks. Because of the many leaks, coupled with the mold issues and the expired warranty, it's time to do something about it and possibly replace it.

Ms. Ciesla thanked Mr. Forsythe and Ms. Barkman for their presentation. She also thanked Dr. Austin from the Community College. She thinks we are educating our children so they can actually do something when they are out of school. They will have a job that they'll be able to do their entire life and they can make a good amount of money from it.



Mr. Kern commented it is his hope to promote Warren County Technical School's culinary program by having them participate in a contest in Atlantic City during the New Jersey Association of Counties (NJAC) annual conference in two years. He commented by saying not only will our students go down to Atlantic City, but they will win! He thanked both Mr. Forsythe and Ms. Barkman for the presentation and for being on top of the budget. He echoed Mr. Sarnoski in saying by preparing these types of capital programs, we're prepared for the worst. Thank you.

This concludes the Technical School budget presentation at 10:12 a.m.

After a brief break, the Board reconvened at 10:25 a.m. and continued on with the agenda and started with the budget presentation from the Library. Mr. Francisco gave a quick overview of the library budget, stating they are paying for books and digital materials. He reminded the Board, digital materials cost more than regular books. Mrs. Wilkinson has a request for \$11,000 for chairs for the Northeast branch. He said they can handle this expense with no problems. Mrs. Wilkinson was asked to come forward with her presentation.

Maureen Wilkinson, Library Director started with the chair request and explained the chairs are to replace the old M&M chairs that were donated when the Northeast branch opened in 2011. They have done their service. The hydraulics on the bars are dropping people down, so it's time to replace them.

Next, she turned to the library digital resources and how they are equal to a branch in terms of what they're spending. Unfortunately they are not things they will ever own. They're basically a lease in a sense because they either have a meter attached to them or they are a straight charge per use. It's interesting because it's not really replacing a lot of the things they own because they're mostly audio books. She explained they do buy some on CDs. It's not the e-books, it's the audiobooks that's overwhelming. In talking with other libraries, the audiobooks are the most popular thing. The cost is going up because the use is going up. She believes since they started this service, the cost has more than doubled. It's an expensive offering, but it's a popular one.

She said she wanted to talk about the circulation based in December that had dropped 74% over last year at the Blirstown Municipal office branch. It seems that most of the population that is using an in-person library service other than that is going toward the Northeast branch. About 1% seems to be going to the Richard D. Gardner (RDG) Library branch. The Northeast branch is already seeing an uptick in use prior to that. She doesn't know if they are getting a lot of new population in that area, but the memberships have been going up and the circulation has been going up at the Northeast branch. RDG is pretty flat all the time. It's an older population that uses that library. That's where it seems the traveling is going right now for the collection. The collections that seem to be most affected are the kids' collections. Some of the homeschoolers are still using the hold system. The adults know how to place the holds. The kids like to browse. They are seeing some drops in that. In some other collections that they call the library of things, the kits with items in it and the hotspots and things like that are going down. For some reason inter-library loans are going up. They are fairly expensive offerings for them to do because it's requesting other libraries in the state to send a book. So it's not just their work, it's the work of another library. She also mentioned she has had contact with some libraries in Sussex and it seems some of the Blirstown population is using the libraries there. A brief discussion took place about how the inter-library program works and whether or not the county has to pay for the service. Mrs. Wilkinson said it is funded by the New Jersey Library and

there is no cost to the county.

Next Mrs. Wilkinson said they completed their new calendar which was done in a very timely manner this year. The vendor they had been using, announced, after they just launched, that they were going out of business. They sent a whole realm of libraries in a spin trying to find software to use.

She is in discussions with Somerset about shared services in terms of their ILS. The idea being that if they partner with another library system and start sharing a portion of their system (the services are virtual anyway), it's just dividing it up. The Library Department would be able to save considerable amount of money. On average, an annual cost savings would be about \$30,000. We have issues with their ILS. When it was launched back in 2014, the software was what a library our size was designed for. Since that time they have broken off. They always had two tracks of software and one was for the extremely large libraries, like Los Angeles Public Library. Then all the other libraries are in the other software. Since that time, they have started to target the software that they have, which was designed for smaller libraries, more towards the school market. They are starting to transition them to the other software. The reason the needs of school libraries is very different than what they have. Our library system has a lot more software that plays with other software. Mrs. Wilkinson explained what they are finding is when they have been trying to implement software and they are told by the vendor that yes it can be done, but then the vendor realizes they can't do it. They can do it with the other software the company uses, but they can't do it with ours. It has stalled them in doing some of the things they wanted to do. She started talking with Somerset and now there is a second initiative going on primarily in the Northern New Jersey. It's sort of headed by the Main Library Alliance (Main) which is Morris County. Somerset, Sussex, Hunterdon are already part of the Main Library Alliance. It's mostly consisted of larger county libraries and a few municipal libraries. They are trying to look at ILS from that much larger point of view. Again, the idea is with more libraries participating and sharing the same software, there will be savings from the vendor. It does look like there will be significant savings.

A discussion took place about the Main Library Alliance and whether there is more material coming or going through this system. It was determined its minimal traffic either way. It's not using any of the resources that are in high demand. They can limit the collections they offer to anyone and they don't let them place holds on things. It was noted through this program, Hackettstown borrows from Warren County and vice versa. This includes in-person borrowing only. Hackettstown borrows slightly more than our libraries borrow from them because Warren County is borrowing a lot more as part of the agreement from places like Chester, Washington Borough and Mount Olive. Our residents are going in that direction as well. She doesn't think it's a huge number of people. Open borrowing for them is a very small number of borrows either way. For example people in Sussex use some of the CDH branch and some of the CDH branch goes to Sussex. Some of the people at the Southwest branch go to Hunterdon and vice versa. It's usually a small number of items. She said most of the people who borrow through this program are better borrowers than other borrowers. She has only contacted a library once about a borrower who was delinquent. The issue was resolved quickly because both library systems blocked the borrower. Open borrowing was a decision a long time ago by the library board. Mrs. Wilkson thinks it was started by former library director, Rich Moore.

There are a couple of things going on. The county libraries are trying to do a reciprocal borrowing as well. With this kind of service, they are not going to see much difference because they are already talking with Hunterdon and Sussex. They're already in those agreements. It's not

impacting our library system. It's the libraries that are in the southern part of the state that are more concerned about doing this. These counties receive a lot of revenue from summer residents. So they are not as inclined to do it. In terms of the number of things that they are lending, it's minimal. It is a nice offering for people to have the option to go and pick up a book instead of trying to get it through the library loan. It's cheaper. It really is a small number of people doing it. If we joined and have access to the bigger, better software, it will solve most of the issues. Mrs. Wilkson explained at this time if we went with Somerset, they are looking at whether they would save money by being part of this larger group. The problem with being part of a larger group is it's a larger group deciding what software it will be. Somerset is very happy with the software they have and it is the big brother to the software we have. This would be the easiest transition for us. The state library has been part of the discussions with us, with the larger group. There is a loose commitment that there may be some funding to help with this project. They see it as a value in terms of a model. Main thinks there may be some other money they can tap into in terms of helping to start this project as well. It may have a low startup cost. The startup cost if we went with Somerset alone, would be for an initial year. It will be a slight increase the first year for the implementation. They thought they could do it in about six weeks because it's software internal. After that it would be about a \$30,000 less. They have all their software hosted on Cisco servers.

The next discussion that took place was regarding a line item of \$50,000 for legal services. Mrs. Wilkinson explained the contract is from year to year. She explained they went out for a request for proposal through the county. When they did it the first time, it was for a partial year, they received two proposals and the second time they had two. This contract is the first full year. Mrs. Wilkinson said she hopes to not spend the full \$50,000 in one year. She also noted she did not know what the litigation hourly rate was or what the firm will litigate for the library. It was requested that Mrs. Wilkinson send a copy of the contract with the attorney to County Administrator and to meet with him next week. The contract needs to be reviewed because the County already has legal counsel for labor issues. County Administrator would like to see the contract to make sure no conflict of interest is going on between a separate attorney for a commission and county counsel.

It was asked if it was known how many boards/commissions we have in the county that have their own budgets and autonomy to make decisions like this. It depends on the statute; it depends on the legality of the commission. The Library Commission does have the authority to do so as well the PCFA and PRMUA. Before any contracts go out, County Administrator needs to see them first so he can run it by county counsel just to make sure things are buttoned up. It's also protocol that needs to be followed. Now at this point having an attorney represent the library if we get a workers comp claim and it goes down to NJIIF, who's the lead attorney on it, on behalf of the county? Mrs. Wilkinson said there is no retainer on this contract. It's an hourly and it's basically policy and any meetings that may need to be attended. Mr. Lazorisak requested a copy of the bylaws and legal counsel contract be sent to his office for review.

Ms. Ciesla requested Ms. Wilkinson keep this Board up-to-date regarding the software contracts.

Ms. Hammer, DPW Director, gave an update on the status of the CDH library construction. The demolition and external demolition has been completed. Internally the walls have been laid out. They are starting to put in the studs for it. They're doing the internal cutout for electrical. That will follow along the new room layout. On deck is going to be footings and foundation for the addition.

She’s meeting with the contractor this week to see what the next two weeks looks like. They are on schedule for February 2025 completion.

The Board is looking forward to the temporary Hope Township location of the CDH branch opening by the end of the month. One of the nutrition sites will also be housed there. It was noted there is a lack of communication to the public about current library renovations in the Blairstown/Hope area. The public needs to be better informed that the Board has been very generous with funding. There has been no state grant monies or any outside monies used to renovate/build the various library branches. Also, it is felt that the Blairstown area has a misunderstanding of who the CDH library serves. It serves the northern part of the county because it is a County library not the Blairstown library. It is believed the community thinks it’s the Blairstown Library because prior to becoming a part of the county library system, it was run by a non-profit organization in Blairstown that raised funds for the library. Apparently these funds are still available and a discussion took place as to how these funds could be used.

The conversation circled back to the Main Library Alliance and how it’s a consortium of Morris County. Mrs. Wilkinson explained Morris County has a county library system, but it’s a single building in Morristown. Main is made up of the Morris County library, Morris County’s municipal libraries, a few other counties and the town of Hackettstown. It’s not the same kind of a system as Warren County. Many other states have one library system throughout the state. This is one of the reasons why the state library is considering giving some assistance to the group, as an experiment to see how it would work. It would include software that everyone would have to agree to. There would be a certain commitment of a number of years for the contract. She further explained how Hunterdon County is a part of Main, however, they are just using the computer system and not for all the other services. Main will negotiate for software, library databases and things of that nature.

This concludes the Library’s presentation at 11:11 a.m.

CLOSING PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

PRESS COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

**RESOLUTION 44-24**

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 11:12 a.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 11:45 a.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 11:45 a.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 44-24**

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 20, 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]