

**These minutes were approved by the Board of County Commissions on May 28, 2025. 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 11, 2025 at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order by Director Sarnoski and upon roll call, the following members were present: Commissioner James R. Kern, Commissioner Deputy Director Lori Ciesla and Commissioner Director Jason Sarnoski. Also attending were County Administrator Alex Lazorisak, County CFO Kim Francisco and Deputy Commissioner Clerk Tracy Matlock.

After leading the flag salute, Director Sarnoski confirmed with the County Administrator that the meeting notice complied with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975. He then turned to County CFO Kim Francisco for an initial overview of 2025 budget ordinances and proposals. Mr. Francisco did not have any comments or updates at this time.

County Administrator Lazorisak listed those who will be presenting today: Land Preservation, Engineering, Public Works, Corrections, Public Safety and the Prosecutor's Office.

Corey Tierney, Land Preservation Director, started the meeting off with an overview of accomplishments. Three Municipal MCCT grants were awarded, totaling \$324,000, preserved three properties as open space, expanded the parkland by 109 acres. The total cost of \$876,000. They preserved two farms, which includes the state direct Jaindl Farm. The two farms total 609 acres at a total cost of \$27.4 million. They rely heavily on the nonprofits and volunteers such as New Jersey Youth Corps and the Warren County Parks Foundation to provide routine maintenance and upkeep. The Park Naturalist has done a great job. She's running environmental education programs, reaching over 1,300 people last year. The Department also continues to administer history and arts grants to nonprofits and municipalities, as well as hosting summer concert series performances. Last year they awarded 11 history grants to local groups totaling \$25,000, 34 arts grants to local groups totaling about \$165,000. He expects to do the same in 2025.

For 2025, Mr. Tierney is proposing to keep the open space fund tax flat. This would collect about \$2.9 million after administrative, maintenance and other overhead under the current allocation formula, fifty-five percent or \$730,000 would go towards farmland preservation. Forty-five percent or \$332,000 would go to the MCCT and twenty-five percent or \$265,000 go to the Board of Recreation. For farmland preservation, while they've seen a drop in applications recently, the State is developing a new formula. It is expected to increase the amount paid to landowners.

Mr. Tierney continued SADC is considering a cost increase. It hasn't been finalized. Under the MCCT they've been allocating about \$500,000 per year. For 2025 they have about \$250,000 in funding that came back from canceled projects. When they add that to the \$330,000 proposed allocation, they'll get about \$580,000. And then, under Parks and Recreation, for open space, they can receive up to fifty percent cost share from Green Acres. Currently they are seeking approximately \$600,000 in reimbursements. They are submitting a supplemental funding request for the upcoming year for \$665,000. Over the past 10 years, they've been averaging about three to four projects a year, anywhere from 75 to 100 acres per year, and that's at a total cost of about \$500,000 to \$750,000,

which is before Green Acres reimbursements, or when they are able to get assistance from nonprofits. They continue to focus on the Morris Canal, greenway and expanding existing parks select areas having high environmental recreation importance. He has been working closely with the Nature Conservancy and the Land Conservancy of New Jersey. Although the total cost of preserving those three farms last year was \$876,000, he was able to work with the Land Conservancy and have them donate 37 acres. The property was valued at \$398,000 so, and then they'll receive fifty percent, \$239,000 from Green Acres for the other two properties. The total County costs would actually be \$239,000 that's across 110 acres. Then they have to have some significant open space acquisition projects in the pipeline. Given the balance that they've accrued in the account, he thinks they can manage with the current allocation. Obviously, if they were to allocate more money to parks, Open Space Preservation, they could preserve things at a faster rate. He noted they have been steady the past 10-15 years.

Mr. Tierney next spoke of Parks and Recreation. They've been working with Emily Hammer, Public Works Director, on developing plans for a Nature Center and future office space to be located at Breadlock Park. There is an increase in visitation to our parks. There's a growing demand for outdoor recreation and nature-based programming. So as we look ahead for the next 5, 10, 15 years, we currently have two existing structures at Breadlock Park that are vacant and underutilized. So they're proposing an environmentally-friendly way through adaptive reuse to use the one structure for a nature center, the other structure for office space. Ms. Hammer, Director of Public Works, further explained they would like to add a circular driveway, add an additional 1,000 square feet to an already existing structure (to be used for the Park Naturalist and staff to conduct more educational events and a place to hold meetings) and add an additional 2,300 square feet to what is known as the teacher cabinet shop. It is in this building where they are proposing to house the headquarters for Land Preservation as well as the future Parks and Facilities Division.

A brief discussion took place about what else will be done to the barn. The extension of electrical has been done already. This will aide in safety issues as well as use of extended hours of the structure. They are anticipating having several summer concerts this year. It was noted there is a lot of future potential for the building. They have already received inquiries about renting it.

Also discussed was the possibility of farm land preservation applications slowing down and what the implications could be. It was explained the factors contributing to the slowdown, include the real estate market, the expiration of the Highlands dual appraisal provision, and the program's decreasing payout over time. The County does everything we can actively, to preserve this farmland and to preserve our rural area. But unfortunately, the State puts too many barriers on the land. This may dampen the interest in the applications, however, the formula will help some, for example in a 100 acre farms, an extra \$1,000 or \$2,000 per acre is a pretty good incentive.

Also discussed was if the State increases their cost share, are we still going to be able to maintain the six to seven percent increase? It was explained the idea that's circulating is they would increase the cost share towards that additional total cost. It would help to offset the increase that we would be looking at. It was noted this wasn't clearly specified in the statute for this formula. The State might have to go back and have a separate law passed in order to change their contribution. The prediction is there will be a slowdown in the applications because everyone will be waiting to see what's going to happen. The legislature is the one who decides, with recommendations from the SADC. The County has a strong balance in our farm land preservation, open space account, which is good, because you never know what's going to come up. It is predicted this balance will continue to

rise as things slow up a little bit. You don't have that quick preservation. The County isn't looking to lower the open space tax. When it was established, it was established at two cents and you can't go lower than two cents. The possibility of using these dollars for passive recreation was discussed and it will be researched as to whether these funds can be used for such a purpose. It would be a good way to get those dollars back to the taxpayer.

Next Mr. Tierney discussed the allocations for the Board of Recreation and Open Space and whether or not the allocations are good. If the Board of Recreation or the MCCT were given larger percentages they could do more, particularly with the Board of Recreation. It receives the lowest percentage, approximately twenty-percent of the allocation. We have 2,600 acres of parkland which is more than 10 park units. They rely heavily on the Youth Corps and volunteers. Their volunteers are getting older and they're not seeing as many young people interested. Meanwhile the public interest and demand for trails and facilities is increasing. He is thinking in the future, the Commissioners may want to consider allocating more money to parks and recreation. It was noted the main focus of the Department of Land Preservation was farm land preservation and that is transitioning to parks and recreation. Mr. Tierney has done a great job with parks and with everything else. Corey does a fantastic job of getting money from the State for farmland preservation. We have never had an issue with our surplus in there, or being able to purchase a farm. We often have a partner to share costs with. It makes our money go a lot farther.

With Mr. Tierney's presentation complete at this time, Commissioner Director Sarnoski asked if the Public had any comments. Lisa Thomas, resident of Liberty Township, asked if there is any kind of encouragement for the farmers to be growing food or is there any kind of component that would encourage the growth of more farmers? Mr. Tierney explained the new next gen farmer program that has just started. It is hopeful this program will encourage more, new and younger farmers.

Ms. Thomas asked about community gardener and if that would be something that could work with in the local communities? Mr. Tierney explained The Genesis Farms is a community garden and a preserved farm. So its preservation does help, in that sense, it's for any purchaser. If you don't already own a farm, the preserved farm is less expensive than a non-preserved farm. Some of the community gardens have been able to come together to create a non-profit, or however they want to structure it, and purchase a preserved farm, because they would not be able to purchase an unpreserved farmer.

Mr. Terry Urfer, resident from Hope Township and Deputy Mayor, commented he supports the conversation that has been taking place today and everything that is going on. He noted he works in construction so he understands how prices have risen. Before COVID, the Community Center was \$150,000 and after COVID, \$254,000. The numbers have gone up significantly. So even though it sounds like the Board is giving the same money, they're getting quite a bit less. He is in full support of opening that up and moving that forward. He said he can't tell the Board how much it means to the people in Hope and in the surrounding areas for the support of the Hope Community Center. He thanked the Board.

With no further comments from the public, the agenda moved on to the Engineering Department's budget presentation. CFO Francisco gave a brief overview of the Department's budget, saying it's pretty much the same. No increase in operating expenses. In the capital budget, there is money for resurfacing which supplements the State brings in. There is money to put aside every year for road and bridge improvements. We have a stable allotment that we use for future projects to pay

as we go. This year the request for resurfacing was a little bit higher than last year, and the State grant was less. We had \$4 million in 2024. We got \$3.7 million in 2025. County Engineer, William Gleba explained when the legislature reauthorized transportation trust fund, they did it for fiscal years 2025 to 2029. They reduced the initial two years of 2025 and 2026 by a couple of hundred thousand dollars. But overall, it's the same route. They back ended the authorization. As we go to funding years 2027, 2028 and 2029, we will see increases a little bit under ten percent of that number. So at some point we're going to get up to a little bit under \$5 million in the last funding year 2029.

It was noted \$2 million was cut from the old bridge accounts. Environmental permitting, utility relocation, property acquisition, were designated as the three biggest problems, trying to move projects or that's why we were able to cut. Also, there are more agencies now that Mr. Gleba has to deal with to get approvals. Engineering costs to meet these state requirements have increased as well, which takes away from the amount of miles we can do, what projects we can do with cost of inflation.

A discussion regarding road swaps took place. Mr. Lazorisak commented South Main Street in Phillipsburg is in for this year. He and Mr. Gleba are working with Allamuchy, there are a few bridge structures they have to take a look at. Mr. Finelli will be working on this once he is on board. It is hoped by the spring, they will be able to report to the Commissioners with a recommendation.

Next discussed was the update on the bridge at County Route 519/ State Route 57. County Planning Director Dave Dech reached out several months ago to the State and there has been no response. He will reach out again. Mr. Finelli, incoming Director of Engineering, commented he recently received an email from New Jersey Department of Transportation regarding scheduling a meeting about this intersection.

Commissioner Kern stated he is okay with the road and bridge improvements recommended funding. He asked if we are still trying to eliminate passing lanes on some of our County roads such as Route 519? The answer is yes, we evaluate those as we go, unless there is a pressing need.

Next, a discussion took place regarding guide rails and whether or not we will be replacing them with the rustic, brown ones to avoid the highway feel. From a safety perspective, our county roads should have those types of guide rails, because it makes it look less like a highway if you put in the dark brown. The County did buy a guide rail truck machine and in the future we'll be able to replace our own guide rails. Further discussion will take place during the Road Department's presentation.

With the Engineering Department's presentation coming to an end, the Board took a ten minute break and reconvened at 10:01 a.m. Emily Hammer, Director of Public Works, was next on the agenda. She gave a brief overview of the status of the reinvestment of County facilities. She began with Breadlock Park. They are planning on bringing everyone from the Land Preservation Department over as well as using it for the future Parks Division. With the central location right off of Route 57, this will make for a welcoming environment for the public and make these departments more visible to the public. Next, Ms. Hammer moved on to discuss the Human Services Building which is nearing completion. One of the Departments from the Wayne Dumont Building has already moved over. This has allowed us to set off a series of interdepartmental moves that we're currently implementing right now that allows us to consolidate areas, create functional agencies between areas and really make this building operation tighter and higher functioning. Similarly, when the Catherine Dickson Hofman Library (CDH) is complete, we will be looking at reinvestment at the other library

branches because they are nearing ten to fifteen years of use. Also, we've been able to augment our team in a very significant way. By bringing on Justin Tibbetts, Director of Parks and Facilities and Michael Finelli, Director of Engineering, we have built a team to help us facilitate at a much higher level of efficiency. While they have a number of things on the capital side that they're presenting, they are able to increase their capabilities to self-perform. She feels they have a really solid team now, and they are growing it, and they're able to be much more efficient.

A brief discussion took place about bringing Bridge Maintenance into Road Maintenance. This was done last year with the onboarding of Calvin Inscho as Supervisor of Bridges and Roads. It was noted the utilities is slightly increased, however it was determined it is not too bad. There is a big decrease in our telephone Ring Central. It was explained we're getting away from the IP based phone system and moving toward a cloud based one.

Mr. Francisco talked about the operating expenses for the Roads and Bridges Department. They did ask for approximately \$78,000, combined for both departments. \$10,000 is for additional tree removal. They plan to rent a mini excavator in Hope Township at a cost of \$24,000 and for guide rail materials, they are asking for another \$20,000. Increases are basically due to inflation. Calvin Inscho, Bridges and Roads Supervisor, explained they were hoping to purchase another mini excavator, however, the cost is too high. Because they only need the equipment for approximately six to eight months out of the year, they decided to rent one instead. If they rent it, they won't need to maintain it. They increased the equipment rental. Regarding guide rails, he explained they have the guide rail truck. They have completed some installations. They actually started replacing guide rails for some municipalities, giving them a way to recoup some of their money back. County Administrator Lazorisak also added the repairing of guide rails also helps with getting reimbursed from the insurance companies. The paperwork alone for recovering the money and then subcontracting out of repair through the co-op, took a year to get repairs completed. The fact that they could go out and prepare these guide rails right away, is certainly protecting us on a vicarious liability aspect.

Next on the agenda is Buildings and Grounds. Mr. Francisco said there is an increase in cleaning supplies and contracted cleaners. Basically all due to just inflation, about a \$23,000-\$24,000 increase.

Also discussed was a list of some of the capital projects coming up soon:

- Readjustments at the Wayne Dumont, Jr. building
- Courthouse
- Flood mitigation program
- Lommason Glen Road

Additional discussion regarding capital projects will take place at the next budget meeting.

Ms. Hammer gave an update on Lommason Glen Road, saying they started work back in the fall. They awarded a contract to Sparwick Contracting for \$3.3 million, and they started the activities. They had to do some kind of pushing around at the street course per the DEP's requirements, so that they could get in and be doing the work with the water out of the way. There was a tight window to do that because it's all about the preservation of the travel spawning season. So this set the beginning of the schedule. At this point, they've done work to affirm all of their rights of way where the projects

are going to be occurring, as well as easements that they need to acquire from property owners in order to continue to work. Right now, they are working with all of the property owners to get started again shortly.

Another a brief discussion took place, this time regarding the staff and vacancies at the Department of Public Works. Vacancies are being filled and they are holding steady.

It was determined since there was some time before the Warden arrived to give his budget presentation for the Correctional Facility, they would continue on and discuss Capital Projects.

- The entry ramp to the County Superintendent of Schools Office needs to be replaced. It's beyond repair. The Bridge Department will be completing the project. It was expressed the Bridge Department has really stepped up in the past few years to complete projects that normally would have gone out to subcontractors. The agreement the County has with the Vo-Tech school for this building is the County is responsible for maintaining the building because we don't pay the Vo-Tech any rent. If we put this project out to bid it would probably cost about \$100,000.
- Standard voting machine replacement -\$1.3 million to \$1.4 million. It was mentioned we have the best machines in the state.
- Body cameras for Sheriff's Office and X-ray machine for the courthouse.
- Annual Technology upgrades for the IT Department, upgrades for PCs, switch and server replacement this year. Mr. Sidie did not ask for money for the phones. He has \$150,000 for facility improvements, locks and cameras and such.
- Improvements over at the Public Safety Building, with the offices and classrooms and the kitchen area, \$25,000.
- The call center at the Public Safety Building needs improvements at a cost of \$385,000.
- Generator at the Hope Tower \$170,000
- Special upgrades to the 9-1-1 towers, \$3.8 million, not to be done this year, we cut it back to \$2.5 million. This will include the tower at the landfill. No monies received from the State of New Jersey, as promised.
- The County received \$30,000 dollars from insurance company money to cover costs from an accident that involved trees. This money was placed in the capital funds.
- Moving and new furniture to freshen up the forty-year old Wayne Dumont Jr. Building, \$100,000.
- Exterior repairs to the Wayne Dumont Jr. Building, \$700,000.
- Roof to the Wayne Dumont Jr. Building, \$700,000.
- HVAC at the Bank Building, \$115,000.
- Design for the relocation of a portion of the Clerk's Office to the Southwest library branch. Prior accounts will be used for this. The purpose of the move is to give more room for security and allow for people to get out of the weather at the courthouse. The courthouse will be used mainly for judiciary purposes. Currently the County Clerk's office is the only county office still located in the courthouse. It was noted by law, there has to be a Clerk's office at the courthouse for generalized records so accommodations will be made to keep a portion of the office there. Also discussed was the possibility of moving the County Clerk's Office to a more centralized location, such as White Township, near other County properties. This will be researched.

A discussion took place about what the use of the PCFA building will be once the Land Preservation moves out. It was determined the County doesn't own the building and being so close to the land fill, it is not an ideal place to have employees working there.

Review of the capital projects continued.

- 9-1-1 Fire alarm system replacement
- Electrical work at the Corrections Facility. This includes emergency lighting, installation of a large-scale surge protector and the replacement of an electrical cabinet.
- Probation and West Wing renovations. This is the last section of the courthouse to be renovated. There is still some asbestos abatement to be completed, \$1.5 million.
- Electrical vehicles - 4 light duty vehicles, \$25,000 each. There is grant money to offset about \$4,000 per vehicle. 1 heavy vehicle, which also has grant money but can buy diesel as well.
- Human Services campus exterior signage.
- Belvidere salt shed repairs, \$200,000 and design and replacement of Hope Township salt shed
- Overhead garage doors throughout the Roads locations.
- Maintenance feasibility studies for Corrections.
- Flood Hazard Mitigation Homeowner Assistance Program
- Specialty vehicles, Human Services put in for two new vehicles, Environmental Health is requesting a new hazmat vehicle, Public Safety is requesting a safety utility vehicle.
- Two emergency tower light generators for the Road Department. If a tree falls in the middle of the night, the Road Department has to close the road because they don't have ample lighting.
- Han Vibrator Roller for the Road Department. Because the Department is completing more in-house paving, the 1990 roller they have needs to be replaced because it costs more to maintain than the roller is worth.
- The Road Department is requesting two, axle dump trucks with piles and spreaders. There is a new emission standard coming in 2026.
- Calmag tanks - The current ones are only single wall. Per DEP regulations, in order to keep a single wall tank, you have to build a containment system around it that holds 125% of your tank.
- Cab chassis for a 2012 truck in the Road Department
- One utility truck from Buildings & Grounds.

A discussion took place regarding cars for the Sheriff's office. It was noted the cars for uniformed officers should be marked. Also discussed was the possibility of acquiring a building for the Southwest Roads building. Cost is \$10.5 million. We can't afford it.

With there being no further discussion or public comments regarding the capital budget, the Board took a five minute break and reconvened at 11:07 a.m.

Warden Dan Broesder was up next on the agenda. He informed the Board there are some minor updates and changes to the budget of the Correctional Facility that was submitted in October. He gave a brief overview of the Correctional Facility. This budget has been reviewed with attention given to all the issues facing Warren County, and every attempt to limit operating expenses has been made. The staffing levels being submitted, the capital equipment improvement requests are all considered essential for the continued efficient operation of the programs and services. A couple of recent positive fiscal impacts this far in the 2025 billing cycle, Warren County has invoiced Hunterdon

County for payment of 7,561 days. It's the equivalent to \$800,937. These numbers cover the months of January through November. That's down a little bit. The daily rate for housing our Hunterdon County inmates is adjusting from \$105.93 per day to \$109.11 in 2025. That's a rather significant increase. It will go up again in 2026 by three percent. New Jersey DOC housing reimbursement agreement rate was adjusted from \$190.21 a day to \$209.00 a day, effective January 1. That agreement did not come across until about June of 2024. Retroactive reimbursement was received back to January 1st. New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) is much better with picking up their State inmates. For January-November, he is looking at \$124,000 and change in reimbursement. The State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) provides federal payments to states and localities that incur correction officer salary costs are incarcerating undocumented criminal aliens with at least one felony or two misdemeanor convictions. This number goes up and down. They received \$59,082 and that was covering for federal fiscal year '23. Additional funds collected as of December include medical co-pays are approximately \$5,000, CLAP fees are \$3,600, intake processing fees \$26,000 for a total of \$34,850. The good work of the Warren County Corrections, Labor Assistance Program (CLAP) continues to supply the services to the County, local municipalities and nonprofit organizations within Warren County. Savings of entities and labor costs total of \$70,924.

Next Warden Broesder discussed grant renewals. New Jersey Department of Human Services, our medic medication and assisted treatment program (MAT) was renewed for this fiscal year, \$153,611. NJ Clean Communities Program continues to be a good program that we operate, \$117,252. They just re-entered in with NJDOC, a grant and aid agreement, for the reentry coordinator program. This has been made a mandate, \$100,000. This will offset salaries, programs and such. New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety, body armor vest, \$5,534.

Next Warden Broesder discussed his department's budget requests.

- He is requesting a new Ford Expedition, unmarked, base model. They are looking for an additional unmarked SUV for the warden's position, in the near future. He noted it takes approximately six months to a year to receive a new vehicle. The van that was approved last year has still not been received.
- The second year of a health care management services contract with CFG Health Services is increasing \$27,562 over the previous year. Off-site medical costs are the responsibility of CFG for the first \$100,000. Any costs beyond that are the responsibility of the County. Moving forward, based on current inmate medical needs for the specialty or in-hospital care, this \$100,000 will need to be looked at in future contract negotiations. Warden Broesder anticipates going through the \$100,000 quickly. He has spoken to the CFO and they feel it might be better to anticipate the overage again and budget for it this time, rather than finding ways to pay for it.
- \$150,000 increase for medical services and the overages for off-site care.
- \$20,000 for inmate and staff food services which is below the estimated increase of \$31,180 for Aramark.
- Operating supplies continue to rise as well. He is expecting a ten to fifteen percent increase for items such as inmate clothing, bedding, footwear, toiletries, grooming materials, etc. He is requesting an increase of \$15,000 to cover these costs.
- \$30,000 for janitorial supplies, including items such as cleaning supplies, disinfectants, soaps, laundry detergent, tissues and toilet paper.

Next Mr. Broesder discussed the fugitive recovery unit, stating in 2021 the Corrections Police Department assumed the responsibilities from the Prosecutor's Office. They utilize current members of their transport unit. As of October 1, 2024, the unit recovered 103 fugitives from six surrounding states. Extradition expenses, calculated using staff hours, vehicle mileage and any other incidentals are submitted for reimbursement to the courts to be addressed for sentencing as required restitution. As of October they have billed out \$53,868 and have received only \$21,000. The budget for this program in 2021 was \$25,000 and they have not asked for an increase since.

Warden Broesder ended his presentation by thanking the Board for keeping the supervisory ranks. It was noted these positions are State mandated. Staffing remains their biggest issue. This is the lowest staffing they have ever had. He noted he has another person retiring in a few weeks. He concluded by saying he looks forward to working together with the Board.

Next on the agenda is Dennis Riley, Director of Public Safety. They are requesting an increase of \$4,800 for the Communication Center through the contracted equipment. For Emergency Management they are requesting an increase of \$2,500 for contracted services. He is requesting no increase for aid to the ambulance, fire academy or the EMT program. He is requesting an increase of \$80,000 for public safety administration, explaining this is a temporary increase. This is due to the loss of a vital employee. This position takes care of the Communication Center floor. This position has been temporarily filled with a contract. He is hoping to find a candidate soon and the use of a temporary employee will no longer be needed.

Next Mr. Riley addressed the Capital budget, stating he is requesting \$500,000 which the bulk of will be going towards replacing the consoles that are in the commissary, which are sixteen years old. After replacement, the new one should last approximately sixteen to twenty years. Vehicle replacements and chairs are included in this request.

For the Office of Emergency Management, he is requesting \$25,000 for the completion of the upgrades that began in 2024. It was noted \$17,000 plus was returned from the OEM capital. Discussed was the use of some of the leftover capital funds being used to replace the 15 handheld radios for the correctional facility.

A status of the upgrades for the Communications Center was discussed. They started to upgrade channels with Tu-way Communications. Work has been started on the installation of the tower at the Warren County Landfill. Another part of this project is a tower in Pohatcong Township. He is currently entertaining other locations. Another feasibility study will be completed because the initial location is hard to get to and will be expensive. He noted the tower will not be going up this year. The microwave upgrades between the Communication Center and the current towers will be accomplished this year. Some additional items that have been added to this budget include the PL tone, in the southern part of the County, between PD South and the Phillipsburg Fire Department are the same tones. This creates a problem. They are too close together which creates feedback. The easiest thing to do is to change the PL tone for the South channel. A quote for approximately \$20,000 has been received. Discussed was the possibility of written communication to the municipalities informing them of the upgrades of the P25 and that they should start budgeting as well. Mr. Riley has already started these discussions throughout the County. P25 is the standard across the country now and will provide better communication. It was noted those who convert to the P25 system will not be able to communicate with those who are still on the analog system. For municipalities who are using services and a mutual aid agreement which is out of County, they need to make those arrangements

with their agency. It was noted that if, for example, we go to Pennsylvania for a fire, we would use their radios because their radios would communicate to their system. Also a part of phase one is the generator in Hope. We need to contribute for an expense on the tower itself to receive our equipment. This part of phase one came in at \$386,000.

Discussion took place about the P25 radios in the Road Department. Their radios will need to be upgraded as well. Should another \$50,000 be placed in capital budget for additional handheld radios to go out to Public Works for communication purposes, particularly during a storm. It was noted we are very happy with Tu-Way Communications. They have accomplished so much in eight months. Hazmat and the Prosecutors Office are up to date with the P25 handheld radios. \$30,000 will be placed in the budget for fifteen (15) additional radios. This will be a reoccurring budget line for the next few years until we get caught up.

Also discussed was EMT training. There is a lack of cooperation and support received from local hospitals for this training. The problem is it takes a long time and a lot of money to become an EMT instructor in the State of New Jersey. It was noted the hospitals can't find instructors themselves. With the conclusion of Mr. Riley's presentation, the Board took a five minute break.

The Board reconvened at 12:44 p.m. and picked up with Jessica Cardone, Acting County Prosecutor. Mr. Francisco commented the Prosecutors Office has a constitutional cap limit to two percent. Every year we go up to the maximum two percent. Ms. Cardone thanked the Board for listening to her this afternoon. She told the Board a little bit about herself. She has been in the position as of October 1. She has had approximately one hundred days to evaluate the office, to meet with all the units, to meet with individual detectives, to get a lay of the land. She was born and raised in Belvidere and currently lives in Phillipsburg. She worked at the Prosecutors Office previously for a little over ten years. She has a good general working knowledge of the office. She noted when she did return to the office, it is a different office. There are significant backlogs in some of the units, some staffing needs (they are currently under-staffed). Previous Acting Prosecutor Picione hired two detectives prior to her arrival. It's great having them onboard to help with the backlog the Department currently has. There are current inefficiencies that have been going on for some time and she feels they can work on them to make it better by the end of the year. This will help make them to be more fiscally responsible. She is looking forward to 2025 and being able to re-staff the Department. They are low on clerical staff, assistant prosecutors, a first assistant, some detectives and there are promotions that are needed. They are putting together the Professional Standards Unit that will consist of a full-time assistant prosecutor, a full-time detective, an agent and currently the deputy chief is helping with this unit. It's a work in progress and it's going to be able to have a separate entity in the office, but keeping things confidential, more of an executive administrative branch. One of the things this new unit will do is internal affairs. Prior to her arrival, the internal affairs unit was scattered throughout the office. Sometimes it was the person's secondary responsibility. She would like to focus and have it a single detective's responsibility, to keep things confidential, it stops things from spreading around the office, potential conflicts or potential information leaking, or individuals coming into the office and being uncomfortable with more than needed to know information. She would like to keep the unit separate and apart. This will also include PTC licensing, background checks, training for officers and assistant prosecutors. They do have a lot of ethical responsibilities to make sure that they are following through in court and providing the necessary documentations and disclosing the information properly. She will also be working on max training and in-person training for law enforcement as well as assistant prosecutors as needed. Ms. Cardone would like to build the relationship between the local police departments and the Prosecutors Office. She feels the best way

to do this is by being available to them.

Ms. Cardone discussed having the Office be accredited by the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police. This is a pretty intense program. It will be undertaken by the Professional Standards Unit. It's really important to regain the trust between the community and the Warren County Prosecutors Office and the local police departments and the Prosecutors Office. This way we will have clear expectations. It's a long-term investment. There is one local department accredited already and some others who are thinking about it or are already in the process. She anticipates starting the accreditation process sometime in the summer or fall. The process takes a year or two to complete. She is expecting no major costs associated with the accreditation.

Ms. Cardone would like to increase community engagement. The Prosecutors Office does more than just prosecute cases. She explained some in the community believe it's a law firm or a police department. The office also has a responsibility to maintain the safety of the community, to have that ability to divert people from the criminal justice program and supporting the agencies, supporting different groups, tasks force within the County. They want to help people be more productive members of the community.

A brief discussion took place about the coordination of messaging from the Prosecutors Office, Human Services, Health Departments, etc. so there is no duplication of the same messaging. Efforts will be made to spend grant money wisely.

Also discussed was personnel at the Prosecutors Office. There is the possibility of five or six retirements. Ms. Cardone has held interviews for the positions of assistant prosecutors. She is hoping to reach a more diversified pool of individuals. She noted they are lacking a Spanish speaking detective. They have a great need for one, particularly in the Special Victims Unit.

Further discussion took place about the Infernal Affairs Unit. It won't assist the local police departments, but if at times if there is a conflict or a chief, they will assist. The Unit will be separate from the PBA. The Office will be able to do a lot more internally with this Unit.

Acting Prosecutor Cardone ended by saying she is looking forward to working with the Board. She was thanked for jumping into a difficult situation and for keeping the Office within the two percent cap. The Board appreciates her dedication to efficiency. This portion of the budget session meeting with Prosecutor's Office concluded at 12:43 p.m.

The Board decided to do a quick overview. Mr. Francisco went over some changes from the discussion last week.

- IT Department budget was lowered by \$100,000 because due to the IT assisting different departments and costs offset by the other departments.
- Utilities-\$300,000 reduction in phone. The cloud-based system will save us a lot of money.
- College drone program – \$175,000 was placed in the budget just to see what the total number looks like. When we get to the end, the Board can make a decision on whether or not to keep it in.
- Because \$2 million was found in the old capital budget, that line goes down to \$11 million. Some things were added and some were taken out.

- The last time we were with levy at \$79 million. On the last page it was \$19 million. Surplus is down to \$18 million, which is still too high.
- Surplus is \$29.9 million

Discussion turned to the surplus. It was determined thirty-six percent of the budget is surplus, which some think is too high. It was noted years ago this would have been too high, however, given the cost of things today we may want to keep it a little higher. It was decided to wait until the assessments come in to make a determination.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion by James Kern III, seconded by Lori Ciesla, and there being no further business before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 12:59 p.m.