

**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 15, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Director Sarnoski and upon roll call, the following members were present: Commissioner James R. Kern III, Commissioner Deputy Director Lori Ciesla and Commissioner Director Jason Sarnoski. Also attending were County Administrator Alex J. 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.

Mr. Sarnoski announced this is the last budget meeting of 2025. He then gave an outline of today's agenda: overview of the 2025 budget, review of budget proposals, wrap-up, CAP calcs and personnel requests. He thanked all staff for the flexibility with the meeting schedule this year. He invited CFO Kim Francisco to give the overview.

Mr. Francisco started with the Motor pool requests and asked County Administrator Lazorisak to discuss. Significant cuts and recommendations have been made.

- Ford Explorers to replace an existing sedan, which will be recycled back into the fleet. It has full police take-down, set up in it. This vehicle will be hold onto.
- The Sheriff's Department - they do not have one vehicle with over 50,000 miles on it. There is no need for a truck or a new vehicle.
- Health Department – Ford Escape, last week the Board authorized two electric vehicles. One will go to the Health Department. The Department's regular request was taken off. It was expressed every vehicle has gone up \$20,000.
- Prosecutor's Office – they are down two vehicles. Vacancies are being filled, so the recommendation is to give them one Ford Explorer package for \$70,000 and a Ford Escape for the First Assistant. There is no legal obligation to give the First Assistant a car. The Office has three vehicles associated with the Victims Witness that they received through grants; two sit and are not being driven because there are restrictions on their use. There is something in the grant agreement that over 5,000 miles we can purchase the vehicle and use it for whatever we want. It is anticipated we can purchase one of the vehicles for far less than \$40,000 cost of the Ford Escape.
- Motor pool needs another van. The Ford Escape will be pulled and replaced with the second electric vehicle.

We are at \$288,000, we tried to keep within the \$280,000. Next year it is anticipated we will be over \$300,000.

Next, Mr. Francisco discussed the requests of the Warren County Community College and Vo-Tech School.

- Warren County Community College - \$175,000 special allocation for the drone position. Discussion took place as to keep it in the budget or not. It was the feeling of the Board to keep it in because it will help aid in increasing enrollment. There is no capital request from the College. Discussion took place this would be a two to three year request.
- Warren County Vo-Tech – Capital Request. Last year they received \$500,000. They requested \$1.5 million. \$1 million will be budgeted in capital and \$500,000 will be kept in county reserves and provided if an issue arises during the year at the discretion of the County Administrator and Public Works Director.
- Levy and estimated tax rate – Increased the bottom line by \$500,000 capital line will go up by \$500,000.

Next Mr. Lazorisak reviewed and discussed the requests of promotions and salary adjustments, as well as the requests of new positions from various departments. There being no further discussion regarding personnel, the Board moved along with the agenda.

Mr. Francisco moved the agenda forward to funding the budget. The ratables were received. We had another great year with ratable growth, up 6.3%. Last year it was up 8.7%. The County is growing in the right direction and a good place where people want to live and move to. He explained last year the levy was 79.5 million, 54.71 cents tax rate, which is a decrease of \$2.00. He discussed a few scenarios. Keeping the levy flat at 79.5 plus we have to account for some credits of \$200,000. The rate would go to 51.45 cents, down 3.26 cents. There will still be a reduction in the library tax. Two cents is the lowest we can go in the open space tax, per resolution when created. We are using 18.3 million surplus out of our almost \$37 million. It will be offset to \$19 million because the \$500,000 to the Vo-Tech was not included. To be clear we are using \$19 million in surplus. Right now we have \$37 million in surplus, bringing us down to \$18 million. We are generating \$12 million. If we continue at the same level, we can't keep using the \$18 million every year.

Next Mr. Francisco addressed the library. There are four municipalities that are not a part of the County's library system. There was a growth of 4.75%. By reducing the levy from \$4.72 million to \$4.5 million, the rate would go down 0.377 cents, which is below 4 cents. It is recommended to keep it flat and build our surplus. Hopefully get a year caught up and cutting next year. Keeping the levy flat would change the rate to .395, which is still good. The Board decided to keep both levies flat.

The next topic of discussion was Open Space and keeping it at 2 cents. It will be confirmed that we cannot go under 2 cents. Keeping it the same with the ratables, this will give us an extra \$189,000.

Mr. Francisco concluded by stating the finalized budget will be introduced at the second meeting in February, which is February 26, 2025 and will be adopted in March.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion by James Kern III, seconded by Jason Sarnoski, and there being no further business before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 6:54 p.m.