News from
SALEM COUNTY
Office of Public Information

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COUNTY TAX RATE DECREASED AND SPENDING LOWERED

Freeholders Introduce Budget with Lowest Spending Increase in 7 Years and Tax Rate Lowered by $540,000 to 1998 Level

(SALEM, NJ)-- Freeholder Charles Sullivan, Chair of the County Finance Committee, unveiled the County Budget at the April 16th meeting of the Board of Chosen Freeholders during the annual budget address. The county budget boasts the lowest spending increase in 7 years and lowers the tax rate to approximately the 1998 level.

"The old adage goes that a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step and this administration has taken major steps to maintain fiscal responsibility in County government," said Freeholder Sullivan. "We have been able to hold the line on spending to its lowest increase in 7 years, as well as lowering taxes by approximately $540,000 by decreasing the tax rate one-cent. We know that there is more work to do and we are committed to the task."

The introduced budget amount to be raised by taxation, revenue, and surplus is $77,591,000 which is a 3.71% increase ($81.3 million with grants included), below the State's mandated 4% increase cap. The amount to be raised by taxation is $49,058,071.57. The tax rate has been decreased by one-cent to . 9086. $8 million of the $16.8 million surplus was used to balance the budget.

"We adopted a modified zero-based budget process this year and we were able to substantially reduce the amount of the spending increase even though we are faced with increasing fixed costs and tough economic times," said Sullivan.

Freeholder Jeffrey J. Hogan, member of the Finance Committee, commented on the bi-partisan effort exhibited in the committee meetings.

"This year's budget process was transparent, honest, and responsible. All voices were heard and there were no substantial disagreements," said Freeholder Hogan. "I am proud to have been part of the process and proud of the result."

The Finance Committee, which includes Freeholders Sullivan, Hogan and Acton, was praised by Director Ware for their efforts to mitigate the increase in spending and lower the tax rate.

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“This budget process was long and thorough and many times felt like a roller coaster ride, but through teamwork the Freeholders were able to overcome the obstacles,” said Director Ware.

The Freeholders also announced that they have implemented a strategic planning process to develop a comprehensive three-year plan which will seek to develop even more streamlined budgets so that they can do more with less.

“We will not stop working to provide the best government for the best cost to the tax payer,” said Freeholder Bruce Bobbitt.

The Freeholders plan to adopt the budget at the May 7, 2008 meeting pending State approval.

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