



Board of Chosen Freeholders

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

October 12, 2018

2:0 PM

Salem County Courthouse, 92 Market Street, Salem, New Jersey

I. **Call to Order** Freeholder Director Melissa DeCastro called the meeting to order at 1:58 PM.

II. **Statement Regarding Open Public Meetings Act**

Clerk of the Board, Brenda Banks, stated that adequate notice pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act has been given of this meeting:

Adequate notice pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act has been given of this meeting:

1. By forwarding notice to the South Jersey Times and Elmer Times Co.; and
2. By posting notice on the bulletin board in the Salem County Courthouse, Fifth Street Complex; and
3. By filing notice in the Offices of the Salem County Clerk and the Clerk of the Board all having been done at least 48 hours in advance.

III. **Attendance Roll Call**

Freeholder	Present	Absent
Freeholder Lee Ware	X	
Deputy Director Charles Hassler	X	
Freeholder Benjamin Laury	X	
Freeholder Scott Griscom	X	
Director Melissa DeCastro	X	

IV. **Courthouse discussions:**

John Ruiz, R2A Architects, provided the Freeholders with an overview of block design sketches. He stated that he has met with judiciary staff, county representatives, and Sheriff and Sheriff's representatives. He stated to keep in mind the design can be done in phases and it will reduce disruption of services and costs. He heard from both sides that it does not need to be bigger than needed and the need to provide safe courts and "no fluff."

The presentation included various exhibits that showed the aerial view, the office space, expansion for court rooms, and the parking area. These were designed using input of the court mandates, Judiciary, Sheriff's and Administration.

The drawings indicated renovations and an addition in the back of the current courthouse vs. building a brand new courthouse. The total would be 110,000 square foot, which includes 65,000 of new square footage, ultimately a reduction of what was originally suggested. The site blocking showed the flow of vehicle traffic, the flow of the public, inmates, and staff. They proposed six courtrooms that could handle the mandates associated with inmates, while preparing for future growth should there be a need for seventh, there is space that could be turned into a courtroom for cases that do not involve inmates. R2A representatives met with Judiciary who provided their mandated needs, the Sheriff and representatives, both being reasonable. The Sheriff stated he could continue to have his staff work where they are reducing a need for space in the new courthouse. He heard from all sources, Judiciary, Sheriff

and County Administration that we don't need to make things big and beautiful to be successful.

It was suggested that the next step the Freeholders should make is to have an outside entity that specializes in budgeting/ cost estimating to provide the costs of such work proposed. This entity being an outside resource has no financial gain and can provide a true cost analysis to make a decision.

Judge Telsey stated he was appreciative that the Architect was brought in to work with us and understands the cost is primary, and that is the Freeholders job. When this was originally started the former request was ten courtrooms, and has been pared down to six with a potential seventh. He wanted the Freeholders well aware that all seven courtrooms would not be open and running all the time, as it is not the case. They need the ability to have access and have them available. There are times all will be needed and with Criminal Justice Reform we need available at all times. He also expressed that Freeholder Griscom asked him if could utilize other space and Judge Telsey indicated moving to the Finlaw basement could move probation and child support if space allowed, but don't know in the long run if it is the best as still would need Sheriff's Officers and that would be an additional cost to factor into the equation. The new proposal does reduce Sheriff's Officer manpower in the Fenwick building as they would no longer be needed and everyone is contained in one building, a cost savings. There was discussion about sharing space with neighboring County and he pointed out they are sharing the ombudsman and only have space in the courthouse not a designated office.

Director DeCastro stated the County needs real cost estimate and guesstimate salary savings. It was stated that the Sheriff's Office could look at the labor force and provide that information. Undersheriff Mabey stated Sheriff Miller apologies he was unable to attend as he had a bereavement day. He questioned if the wishes were for the Surrogate to remain in the Administration building or would she be moving over.

Freeholder Laury stated good job and it is a realistic point of view, though will double the County debt and over 90 percent of the voters were against this in the non binding ballot question.

Freeholder Scott Griscom stated that it looked good and the issues have been addressed which is good; however, need the number. If we get a number that is a problem, we can reduce it down.

Freeholder Laury felt that potentially don't do a third floor and look at other ways. What can we afford and still work with the judiciary. When we get the number per square foot and know what to work with. We all know we need the expansion and noted in Vineland they didn't finish the third floor until it was needed.

Freeholder Lee Ware stated as the senior member speaking for fellow Board members they did a great presentation, it would be good in the perfect world, but this is not the perfect world in Salem County and people cannot afford. We must look at this realistically. Judge Telsey has worked with us and we need to look at this carefully. Even a \$40 million courthouse we can't afford and I will have to vote no. Safety and security is number one and currently don't have and we need to see the numbers.

Judge Telsey stated that we are ending the thirty day arbitration and would like to proceed with their talks and extend.

Director Melissa DeCastro thanked Judge Telsey and the judiciary for working with the Freeholder Board.

- IX. Adjournment:** Motion was made by Freeholder Laury to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Deputy Director Hassler, no discussion. Meeting adjourned at 3:36 PM by a voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brenda P. Banks