



Board of County Commissioners

SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING MINUTES

June 5, 2024 4:00 PM

Salem County Historic Courthouse, 104 Market Street, Salem, New Jersey

Call to Order – Commissioner Director Laury called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

Invocation – CFO Kelly Hannigan offered the Invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance – Director Laury invited all to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

Statement Regarding Open Public Meetings Act – The statement was read by Clerk of the Board, Stacy L. Pennington.

Adequate notice pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act has been given of this meeting: By forwarding notice to the South Jersey Times and Elmer Times Co.; and By posting notice on the bulletin board in the Salem County Courthouse and the Fifth Street Office Complex; and 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.

Attendance Roll Call

Commissioner	Present	Absent
Director Laury	X	
Deputy Director Ostrum	X	
Commissioner Ramsay	X	
Commissioner Taylor	X	
Commissioner Timmerman	X	

A quorum was present.

Minutes

Dispense with the reading of the minutes of the May 15, 2024 Regular Meeting. Minutes are to be received, approved, and recorded in the Minute Book.

Commissioner	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Commissioner Ramsay		X	X			
Commissioner Taylor			X			
Commissioner Timmerman			X			
Deputy Director Ostrum	X		X			
Director Laury			X			

Hand vote passed 5-0.

Ordinance**Final Reading and Adoption of Ordinance 2024-001**

An Ordinance of the Board of County Commissioners of the County of Salem, New Jersey, Appropriating the Sum of \$1,925,000 From the Capital Improvement Fund for the Completion of Various Capital Improvements and the Acquisition of Various Capital Equipment

- Motion and Second to Open the Public Hearing
(comments limited to Ordinance 2024-001)

Commissioner	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Commissioner Ramsay		X	X			
Commissioner Taylor			X			
Commissioner Timmerman			X			
Deputy Director Ostrum	X		X			
Director Laury			X			

Roll Call vote passed 5-0.

Director Laury allowed for public comment pertaining to the Ordinance:

Katie Coleman (Alloway Township) commented as follows:

- Ordinance that was advertised did not have the date of 06/05/2024 within the listing, therefore she believes the Ordinance cannot be adopted at this meeting
- Inquired as to what the Ordinance entails (Wanted to know what the \$1.9 million includes)

CFO Kelly Hannagan responded:

- The \$1.9 million includes the rehabilitation of the fuel depot (replacement of the current fuel depot) along with the acquisition of vehicles.

- Motion and Second to Close the Public Hearing

Commissioner	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Commissioner Ramsay		X	X			
Commissioner Taylor			X			
Commissioner Timmerman			X			
Deputy Director Ostrum	X		X			
Director Laury			X			

Roll Call vote passed 5-0.

Director Laury clarified that the Board will vote on the Ordinance tonight; however, if it was improperly advertised, the Ordinance will have to be re-introduced.

- Motion and Second to Adopt Ordinance 2024-001

Commissioner	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Commissioner Ramsay		X	X			
Commissioner Taylor			X			
Commissioner Timmerman			X			
Deputy Director Ostrum	X		X			
Director Laury			X			

Roll Call vote passed 5-0.

RESOLUTIONS**ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE: -**

A1 Resolution Awarding a Contract for Providing Industry Focused Training & Internship Program Services for In-School Youth in Cumberland County by Means of the Cumberland, Salem, Cape May County Workforce Development Board

A2 Resolution Awarding a Contract for Providing One Stop Career Services-WIOA Title 1-B Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programming Services for Cumberland, Salem and Cape May County by Means of the Cumberland, Salem, Cape May County Workforce Development Board

A3 Resolution Authorizing a License Agreement between Salem County and Atlantic City Electric Company for Placement and Maintenance of Aerial and Underground Cables and Equipment in Atlantic City Electric Company's Rights of Way (Middle Mile Project)

A4 Resolution Authorizing a License Agreement between Salem County and Verizon New Jersey, Inc. for Placement and Maintenance of Aerial and Underground Cables and Equipment in Verizon's Rights of Way (Middle Mile Project)

A5 Resolution Authorizing an Inter-County Agreement for The Regional Rehabilitation and Reentry Center of Salem, Gloucester and Cumberland Counties

A6 Resolution Authorizing the Execution of a Shared Services Agreement with The County of Gloucester for The Housing of Gloucester County Inmates

A7 Resolution Authorizing a First Amendment to License Agreement with American Towers, LLC and The County of Salem for the use of Certain Portions of a Tower Facility in Quinton Township, Salem County, New Jersey

A8 Amended Resolution Authorizing County Entity to Exceed the County Entity Budget Request CAP for Calendar Year 2024 (P.L. 2015, c.249)

A9 Second Reading of Resolution 2024-182 to Exceed the County Budget Appropriation Limits and to Establish a CAP Bank (NJSA 40A: 4-45.14)

Director Laury stated that Resolutions A5 & A6 will be voted upon after the public comments/hearing.

Commissioner Ramsay asked for a Motion to Table A5 & A6 Resolutions. Desires to have these Tabled for further Board member discussion.

Director Laury stated that this vote will be for Resolutions A1 through A4, and A7 through A9.

Commissioner	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Commissioner Ramsay			X			
Commissioner Taylor		X	X			
Commissioner Timmerman			X			
Deputy Director Ostrum	X		X			
Director Laury			X			

Hand vote passed 5-0.

Deputy Director Ostrum mentioned that the resolutions in scope are pertaining to the Broadband Project. These are echoing resolutions that have been passed by Cumberland

pertaining to pole agreements with the utilities involved. This will also include updating the use of the Quinton Tower to enhance the current 911 service system and the new Broadband system.

2024 BUDGET

ADOPTION OF THE 2024 SALEM COUNTY BUDGET

- Motion and Second to Open the Public Hearing
(comments limited to the 2024 Budget)

Commissioner	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Commissioner Ramsay		X	X			
Commissioner Taylor			X			
Commissioner Timmerman			X			
Deputy Director Ostrum	X		X			
Director Laury			X			

Roll Call vote passed 5-0.

Director Laury opened for public comment pertaining to the 2024 Salem County Budget:

Jessica Bishop (Upper Pittsgrove) commented as follows:

- The Budget Advertisement did not include the total number of employees to be employed for the current Budget year pursuant to NJ Statue 40A4-6.1
- The advertisement also stated it would be available on the Salem County Website, however it was not.
- It is required by law that the Budget be made available by request in the Clerk of the Boards Office as well as the County Clerk's Office, however an individual that went into the county offices was unable to obtain.
- The Budget Advertisement also wasn't posted on the public bulletin board as required by law.
- The Budget pursuant to NJ SA 40A:4-8 the Budget should be sent to the Public Library's for inspection however this was not provided.

Margaret Kramme (Elmer) commented as follows:

- Inquired regarding page 15 of the 77 calculations cap the 2024 budget claims an exception for the jail amount of \$814,150.00 to increase the tax levy by that amount. Further questioned, "exactly what statue does this falls under?"

County Council Karin Wood responded that she does not have a physical copy of the budget; however, she would be happy to address this inquiry tomorrow once she reviews the document to provide the correct answer.

Maggie Maxwell Mood (Quinton) commented as follows:

- A piece of the rumor mill Today had an unequal approach to spreading the budget increase amongst the various municipalities.
- Pointed out that Quinton is expected to increase by 14.2%.
- Stated she is retired and on a set income.
- Further added, if the Board raises the taxes, she will ensure that the current elected officials on the Board do not get re-elected. It's unconscionable to take the current communities/municipalities from our area that are poverty stricken and hiking the tax increases to excessive amounts to adjust the budget to take part in shared services that are almost guaranteed to increase costs over the upcoming year.

- Further added, she was unable to access the budget online however she did come across multiple resolutions which contained high dollar amounts (million here million there) as an addition to the current budget that was approved last year.
- Feels upset and disturbed, hopes that her concerns are addressed accordingly.

Katie Coleman (Alloway Township) commented as follows:

- This is not a public comment, this is a public hearing.
- The fact that there is a cap exception of eight hundred thousand dollars that can't be explained now is a disgrace.
- Your budget is great, the expenses haven't really increased so what is the seven million dollars in capital improvement fund?
- The capital improvement fund currently has three million dollars so how is the board anticipating spending ten million dollars?
- By raising taxes to double digits across multiple municipalities, it's going to make a huge impact on its communities. Rent will be expected to increase along with entertainment options such as dining out.
- The Board isn't near the debt ceiling, if there is an immediate need, issue bans instead to ease the difference over the next couple years.
- Heard a rumor that Gloucester sold a million and a half from covid funds for the inmates.
- Further added, that a resolution can't be passed to establish an authority without going to the Local Finance Board first, that's in the statue.
- Feels that there might be conflict of interest as the CFO for Cumberland County and the Administrator for Salem County are father and son.
- Hopes the Board considers eliminating the seven million dollars in capital improvement and reducing the tax rate by ten cents.

Lisa Swain (Quinton) commented as follows:

- Also heard the tax rate increase rumor of 14%.
- Expressed concerns about not being able to afford this increase.
- Expressed concerns of waste that is currently occurring.
- Stated that a large amount is being wasted by a building owned by the Sweeney and Campbell.
- The basement is currently being rented for about \$22,000.00 a month for a period of 10yrs for the Salem County Improvement Authority.
- The concern is that the Improvement Authority isn't currently utilizing this building as a glass building was purchased by the local dump.
- Wants to know how the \$22,000 monthly rent expense is being recouped?

Al Parker (Pennsville) commented as follows:

- Concerned regarding the increase in taxes as he currently pays close to \$10,000.00 yearly.
- NJ paid 7.3 billion dollars in 2024 for 894,000 illegal immigrants. \$1,600.00 per worker and \$2,100.00 per household. (This information can all be found online)
- For every 1,000 workers the tax rate is increased by 1.8 million
- Medical they spent \$14 million per year
- Legal Services \$15 million per year
- Discounts for EZ Pass
- Discounts offered for NJ Transit for students
- Free parental and contraceptive programs
- 5 million dollars a year for college tuition in 2018
- \$624 million per year for Public Safety for illegals
- \$775 million per year for education costs
- 2021 - \$1.5 billion for general county for Aliens
- 2022 - \$34 million for hospital services

- 2024 - K through 12th Grade Education \$775 million
- 2021 thru 2022 - \$27,000.00 per student

Director Laury noted that this discussion is pertaining to the County Budget only, not State or Federal Budgets.

Mr. Parker further stated:

- He understood, however, wanted to point out that the Board should be considering what the state is currently paying out.

Ed McKelvey (Alloway Township) commented as follows:

- Expressed that sometimes when you're put up against the wall one must just say no.
- Further added, that Mr. Parker provided a brief explanation of expenses at a state level is truly disturbing.
- Believes a possible solution is to balance out the increased assessments and adjust the tax rate where the common people aren't paying more out.
- If we as a County don't voice our concerns directly to Trenton, we are only allowing them to send a Bureaucrat to determine how we should manage our issues.
- We need to change the system.

Margaret Danner (Quinton) commented as follows:

- Believes there is a major discrepancy to the tax rate increases that were published online.
- 2.5% in Mannington up to 15.8% in Pittsgrove, believes this isn't fair as all these towns pertain to Salem County.
- Why can't it be evenly distributed across all towns?
- Quinton is considered a poor town; however, it has one of the highest tax increases
- Senior Freeze isn't an option as I moved a house
- The taxes are terrible and it's pushing the senior citizen/retirees out

Director Laury asked our auditor, Evan Palmer from Bowman & Co., to provide an explanation on the multiple variations concerning the tax increase percentages.

Mr. Palmer explained equalization in the aggregate. The percentage is determined by the real estate sales per town and the true value of the property. The determination is also made up by the value of the homes. The assessment-sales ratio involves a comparison of the sales prices of parcels of real property which have been sold with the assessed values of these properties. Once this ratio is determined the aggregate taxable value of real property in a municipality may be raised to true value through use of the ratio so determined

Amy Ty (Carneys Point) commented as follows:

- Grew up in Gloucester County originally, (National Park)
- Moved to Salem County because of what it is, farmers and average people that love where they live
- In the last few years, I've witness warehouses come and take over Salem County
- Discovered that the tax rate increase was occurring via a Facebook page, which in turn makes it appear as though the County isn't being transparent
- Believe that a 4pm meeting is unreasonable for the working community to have the opportunity to attend
- She was an Educator, as a Paraprofessional and now is a secretary at the Carneys Point School District and feels that she doesn't make enough to cover the anticipated tax increase

- Feels ashamed that she urged her children to buy homes within Salem County as the elected officials aren't being fully transparent regarding County issues

Jason Bennett (Quinton Township) commented as follows:

- 4pm on a Wednesday with 2days notice should be unacceptable
- 14.6%, 6.25% & 5.75% tax hikes that Quinton Township has faced within the last 3years
- Quinton was just reassessed after Covid
- Feels that the tax rate should be divided equally amongst all towns
- Some people are still struggling financially due to Covid Pandemic
- Hoping that the issues are resolved within the weeks to come
- Taxes being increased isn't the way to go about handling business

Katie Coleman (Alloway Township) commented as follows:

- Inquired if the Auditor would be able to answer the previous question regarding what the cap exception entails for the jail?
- Also, wanted to know the specifics regarding the 7million in the capital improvement fund?

Director Laury responded that the capital improvement fund entails information technology equipment the county plans to purchase, road and bridge improvements, facility improvements, public works equipment and improvements.

Katie Coleman countered:

- The Capital Budget was approved in previous years to include such improvements.

Director Laury responded that approved previous Budgets didn't have sufficient funds to complete some improvements, so they move forward to the current year.

Katie Coleman mentioned that this information isn't detailed in the current Capital Budget.

Director Laury further added that the Fuel Depot needs replacement, and that estimated cost is \$1.5 million.

Kaite Coleman rebutted that the Capital Budget should be amended to include the \$1.5-million-dollar cost.

Director Laury asked if Auditor Evan Palmer had any further commentary/explanation he would like to provide.

Mr. Palmer responded that the 1977 Jail agreement goes back further than his current involvement with the County. The state does reserve the right to honor certain extensions.

Maggie Maxwell Mood (Did not indicate location) commented as follows:

- Worked for the county several years ago and recalls the county applying for a \$27 million dollar grant to fund the Broadband Project. This was to unify the 911 service center as well as broadband and the infrastructure needed.
- Is the county currently looking into such grants?

Director Laury responded as follows:

- *The county is reviewing for grants continuously.*
- *The county just received \$2.5 million dollars from the state to help pay for the \$18-million-dollar bond to upgrade our EMS Works Communication System.*

- *We also received another \$2.5-million-dollar federal grant to assist with the updates to the courthouse.*
- *The county is applying for another grant for about the same amount to assist with future projects.*

Maggie Maxwell Mood asked: Will the grant money received decrease the \$7million dollar cap budget?

Director Laury responded that we can't anticipate something that isn't guaranteed to be received with the current year. Usually what's requested might roll into the following year.

Maggie Maxwell Mood further commented:

- She is happy to assist in finding possible grant money.

Betty Coombs (Pittsgrove) inquired as to who is on the Administrative Committee?

Director Laury responded:

- *If more than two commissioners meet, it's then considered a quorum.*
- *The current Administrative Committee consists of myself, Mr. Ostrum, the Clerk of the Board, the Administrator and CFO.*
- *All the commissioners cannot attend an Administrative Meeting.*

Deputy Director Ostrum commented as follows:

- *Clarified that current matters are usually discussed in the Administrative Committee Meeting and then the discussions that took place are further communicated to the other Board members.*
- *According to the Sunshine Law, only two Commissioners can be present during an Administrative Committee Meeting.*
- *When more than two Commissioners are present, then a Public Meeting must take place.*
- *In the scenario where one of the two Commissioners is absent, then another Commissioner may be called upon to fill in.*

Betty Coombs further questioned:

- Are matters being discussed at length?

Deputy Director Ostrum noted that matters are discussed at length; however it has to be in small doses as per the prohibitions that are in place, (quorum of commissioners). This is state mandated again per the Sunshine Law.

Director Laury asked for a motion to close the public comment/hearing section and vote on adoption of the 2024 Salem County Budget.

Deputy Director Ostrum further commented:

- Thanked the public for coming out and demonstrating their commitment.
- We appreciate everyone's input and want the public to understand that the Board is not blind to the public's concerns.
- We are your elected officials and will strive to continue being your advocates.
- We want to listen to you; we want to act in your best interest, and we want to have reasonable comments and have a meaningful discourse with you so we may better the situation of everyone within the county.

- The inequity in the increases isn't decided upon at the County level, it's mandated by the State. We are attempting to mitigate these effects.
- Please reach out to us in advance. We are always happy to hear your comments; let's just try to keep them constructive so we may all move forward and thank you.

- Motion and Second to Close the Public Hearing

Commissioner	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Commissioner Ramsay			X			
Commissioner Taylor			X			
Commissioner Timmerman		X	X			
Deputy Director Ostrum	X		X			
Director Laury			x			

Roll Call vote passed 5-0.

A10 Resolution to Amend the County of Salem 2024 Budget

Katie Coleman commented from the audience, "You must read out the Resolution in its entirety. You can't just vote on it."

Stacy Pennington, Clerk of the Board, read out the entire Resolution to Amend the County of Salem 2024 Budget as requested. See Resolution A10 attached for complete breakdown.

Commissioner	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Commissioner Ramsay		X	X			
Commissioner Taylor			X			
Commissioner Timmerman			X			
Deputy Director Ostrum	X		X			
Director Laury			X			

Roll Call vote passed 5-0.

Director Laury commented as follows:

- In the last few days, we have reduced the County tax levy by almost \$3 million dollars.
- Reducing everyone's tax rate, originally a 2-cent reduction we reworked the budget and there is now a 6 cent reduction. Even so, the taxes will still increase.
- All the current rates have been reduced but, unfortunately, they will increase like everything else.
- All the tax rates have gone down but not to zero.
- The county is applying for as many grants as they can to attempt to mitigate these numbers and costs.
- Each of the commissioner's cell phone numbers were put on Facebook. I received phone calls and answered every single one of them. Deputy Director Ostrum received calls as well. I haven't had the chance to catch up with the other Commissioners regarding phone calls, but we are listening and addressing your concerns.
- We cut the County Tax Levy by another \$3 million dollars. What this means is the County took the funds out of the Surplus. This was approved by the State although we are nearing the borderline.
- We took funds out of the capital so some projects will not be completed this year.

- We are doing the best we can in hopes that next year we can reduce the tax rate again.

Deputy Director Ostrum further commented:

- Just to reiterate what Director Laury mentioned, regarding the tax equalization, that is not the decision of the county. That is a decision made at the state level determined by the current assessments on properties.
- Secondly, we are hoping to do better next year as Director Laury just mentioned.
- We are anticipating growing revenue from the local warehouses (Piles Grove).
- The warehouses in Carney's Point were provided with Pilot Programs. This means that the county will receive fewer benefits from the revenues, specifically a portion of roll back taxes. Usually, the Municipalities receive the advantages from Pilot Program funded projects.
- We want to be attentive to your questions and welcome your input.

Adoption of the 2024 Salem County Amended Budget

- Motion and Second to Open the Public Hearing for the Amended Budget (comments limited to the 2024 Budget)

Commissioner	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Commissioner Ramsay		X	X			
Commissioner Taylor			X			
Commissioner Timmerman			X			
Deputy Director Ostrum	X		X			
Director Laury			X			

Roll Call vote passed 5-0.

Director Laury allowed for public comment pertaining to the Amended 2024 Salem County Budget:

Joyce Johnson (Carney's Point) asked if the county researches and applies for grants?

Director Laury noted the county is continuously researching and applying for grants.

Joyce Johnson further questioned how the grant funding is being used.

Director Laury noted, as mentioned earlier, that we received a \$2.5-million-dollar federal grant to assist with the updates to the courthouse. In addition, we continually apply for grants for the Health Department.

Commissioner Ramsay noted that we receive more grants on a yearly basis than we can manage.

Joyce Johnson further questions what is meant by more grants than can be managed?

Commissioner Ramsay noted that we receive many grants yearly. Each grant has pages of conditions which need to be adhered to and managed at the County level.

Joyce Johnson further asked if this means that grants currently aren't being managed well? Are we losing funding due to this?

Commissioner Ramsay responded: I wouldn't say we are losing funding. We are finding that the staffing we currently have is facing issues keeping up with the number of grants applied versus what's received and the ongoing management of those grants.

Joyce Johnson further asked what is planned to address this issue?

Deputy Director Ostrum commented:

- *We are currently in the process of looking into positions to be considered as grant expertise administration to assist with grant applications and management of those grants among our various committees.*
- *As previously mentioned, our various department apply for numerous grants including the Health Dept., Public Safety, Sheriff Office, and Roads Department.*

Joyce Johnson asked if you don't have the staff to manage the grants, then the people still won't benefit?

Commissioner Ramsay responded that we have the staff to manage the grants. I don't mean this to be a current crisis, the management of the volume of grants is something that should be considered in the long term.

Joyce Johnson further questioned if the county considering hiring an Administrator for the grants?

Deputy Director Ostrum responded there are a lot of people who have experience in grant administration who can fill the various positions within the departments and assist with the application/submission process for such grants.

Director Laury asked for a motion and second to close the public hearing.

- Motion and Second to Close the Public Hearing

Commissioner	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Commissioner Ramsay		X	X			
Commissioner Taylor			X			
Commissioner Timmerman			X			
Deputy Director Ostrum	X		X			
Director Laury			X			

Roll Call vote passed 5-0.

Deputy Director Ostrum noted he would like to thank all those individuals that participated in this decision-making process.

Director Laury asked for a motion and second to vote on the Amended 2024 Budget.

- Motion and Second to Adopt the 2024 Budget as Amended

Commissioner	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Commissioner Ramsay		X	X			
Commissioner Taylor			X			
Commissioner Timmerman			X			

Deputy Director Ostrum	X		X			
Director Laury			X			

Roll Call vote passed 5-0.

Director Laury now asked for a Motion to vote on Resolutions A5 & A6

Commissioner Ramsay asked for a Motion to Table Resolutions A5 & A6 for further Board discussion.

Director Laury asked for vote on Tabling Resolutions A5 & A6

Commissioner	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Commissioner Ramsay	X		X			
Commissioner Taylor		X	X			
Commissioner Timmerman				X		
Deputy Director Ostrum				X		
Director Laury				X		

Roll Call vote passed 2-3.

Director Laury stated the Motion to Table A5 & A6 has been denied. Resolution A5 & A6 will be discussed. He also opened these up for public comment. To note, these resolutions are pertaining to permissions on establishing an Authority to run a Tri-County Correctional Facility. (Cumberland, Gloucester, Salem Counties)

Karin Wood County Council commented as follows:

- I just want to clarify A6 is for the extension of the current shared services agreement, not for the establishment of an Authority.

Deputy Director Ostrum further commented:

- To clarify we currently have about 235 Gloucester County inmates housed in Salem that are there under no agreement.

Ed McKelvey, Mayor from Alloway Township:

- Dr. Ostrum did a great job explaining the formation of an Authority during our local league municipality meeting.
- Talking to several elected officials from other Townships, the thought of entering into an agreement with a county that hasn't been able to keep pace with the current inmates being housed is concerning.
- I'm not seeing a good track record from Gloucester County regarding our jail.
- Cumberland County is also struggling for funding.
- If we enter into an agreement, we should really make sure that Salem County continues to hold the reigns.
- Salem could lose power as Salem has the least number of inmates.
- Salem is considered as the host community for the jail so there should be some rights in place specifically for Salem residents.

Deputy Director Ostrum intervened and commented as follows:

- There has always been a primary concern with released inmates in the area.
- We conveyed to Cumberland and Gloucester Counties that the formation of this Authority is to include a transportation agreement to have released inmates transported back to their designated county.

Director Laury commented as follows:

- Gloucester and Cumberland Counties owe a minimum.
- When Covid occurred, they couldn't meet that minimum, so they didn't pay.
- It's considered to be a legal issue, at this time.
- They want us to use our Covid funding, however we feel that isn't correct.
- Salem County is taking the issue to arbitration to handle the matter legally.
- Cumberland has a \$50-million-dollar bond to put towards the Regional Jail Project.
- Gloucester ensures they have the funding to proceed with the Regional Jail Project as well.
- Salem County will not be absorbing any of the project costs, instead Salem will receive a percentage of revenue once an Authority is established.

Deputy Director Ostrum offered a further explanation of the issues with Gloucester County.

Commissioner Daniel Timmerman commented as follows:

- He was an average citizen up until a year and a half ago.
- Now sitting on this Board and learning as I go along.
- My understanding is that the formation of this Authority is going to consist of all three counties. However, Salem County will be considered as the dominant county with having the final say on all decisions.

Scott Kramer (Elmer) commented as follows:

- Expressed that there is a contract in place and yet is concerned that the other counties owe \$7 million.
- Did Salem County reduce its workforce services?
- When does the Shared Services Contract expire?
- Feels concerned that 2 out of 5 Commissioners don't want to discuss this issue. It makes it look like the Board isn't being fully transparent.
- Is there a figure as to what it costs to house a Salem County inmate?

Deputy Director Ostrum responded:

- We agree.
- Salem did not reduce its services.
- The Shared Services Contract has expired and as of right now Gloucester pays \$96 a day per inmate. If the contract is approved by Salem it will increase to \$135 a day retroactively charged.
- Right now, we are losing \$40 a day per inmate because there is no contract in place.

Director Laury commented as follows:

- \$235 a day per inmate to house an inmate
- We have mixed costs.
- The agreement helps offset some of the costs pertaining to the housing of Salem County inmates.
- For every additional inmate, we still face costs as to feeding it, clothing it, etc.

Deputy Director Ostrum further added:

- You've made all valid points here today.
- Just to note, the establishing of an Authority will help ease costs.
- The permission to establish an Authority has been approved by Gloucester and Cumberland.
- This Resolution does not actually create the Authority as Ms. Coleman brought up earlier.
- Ms. Coleman wanted to privatize the Regional Jail idea under her tenure at Salem County.
- An Authority cannot be established without first going through the Local Finance Board as well as the DCA for approval. By approving this Resolution, we can then commence to the next steps to eventually establish an Authority.

Katie Coleman (Alloway Township) commented as follows:

- You can't do it without sending the proposed Resolution along with the Budget to the Local Finance.
- The statute states that a proposed Resolution along with the Budget and other required documents must be submitted ahead of time.
- I believe that an Authority is a great idea.
- Are people made aware that this Authority will require a separate tax levy. Salem County residents are going to see a separate taxed line item for this Authority.

Director Laury intervened and clarified as follows:

- The Resolution we are voting on Today is to attempt to establish an Authority. We are not voting on the creation of an Authority; we are attempting to apply for the establishment of an Authority.

Katie Coleman further added:

- I'm assuming that studies have been conducted to find out what the costs would be for the facility, the staff etc.
- You're not getting rid of the Jail expenses in its entirety.
- You can't offload the entire Jail expenses to an Authority.
- Has the Salem County Sheriff's Office been made aware of this idea?
- There are legal requirements that need to take place before an Authority can be created.
- Is everyone truly committed to this idea? What if in the future Cumberland County and Gloucester County opt for satellite facilities?
- The Resolution on the Agenda Today reads as to create an Authority.
- Cumberland County will have the final say on what the tax rate will be. I don't think Salem County residents will appreciate that decision.
- With this agreement, the County should also consider the fact that they are exposing themselves to a higher risk of lawsuits and legal cases etc.

Deputy Director Ostrum thanked Ms.Coleman for her comments and concerns.

Jessica Bishop (Carneys Point) commented as follows:

- The Fact Sheet that was posted on Facebook yesterday evening mentions a \$55 million dollar equity repayment, however, the repayment isn't mentioned anywhere within the agreement? When is that being addressed or was that considered a handshake deal?

Commissioner Ramsay responded as follows:

- Where did you obtain that information? I believe I don't have a copy of that document.

Jessica Bishop further added:

- It's been stated that several conversations have taken place regarding this agreement, yet it appears that two of the Commissioners aren't aware of exactly what's transpiring.
- Not in this agreement, how are you going to protect Salem County Correctional Officers that are Salem County residents? What's to say that the establishing of this Authority will result in less pay? What if Gloucester and Cumberland decide to do away with all Salem County Officers and utilize their own?

Director Laury commented:

- The County is currently hiring Correctional Officers and we are trying to hire officers as quickly as possible.

Jessica Bishop noted:

- Correctional Officers are protected by Unions. What's to say that the establishing of an Authority their contracts won't be negotiated for a lower rate?

Deputy Director Ostrum further added:

- We have spoken to the Unions. We have had discussions on transferring the positions over with the possibility of receiving a comparable figure.

Jessica Bishop continued:

- The Fact sheet further stated that Salem County inmate total is 100.
- Our portion of the Jail costs us 24 million dollars.
- Gloucester has 225 inmates, and their Jail costs are 10 million dollars. Gloucester County has twice the number of inmates as Salem County, yet their costs are lower than ours.

Linwood Donelson (Lower Alloways Creek) commented as follows:

- I read the MOU and this is to send it to DCA to get approval to create an Authority.
- Even in the creation of an Authority, it does not mean that Salem County is forced to join the Authority.
- The separate tax comes into play when you vote to relinquish your responsibility for housing inmates to the Authority itself.
- Gloucester County and Cumberland County do not want to build a Correctional Facility.
- Why would Salem County take part in having multiple conversations, negotiations etc. for the State to then decide an Authority can't happen. It doesn't make sense.
- Our Jail is worth 55 million dollars, the other two counties say we will only pay 40 million dollars. Salem County then has the option to deny joining the Authority and say no we will keep our jail.
- Our Correctional Officers are contracted to receive the exact same pay. The other two counties decided that they want to cut Correctional Officer pay by half. Salem County can then choose to not join the Authority. These are methods that Salem County can use to their advantage.
- The purpose of all these negotiations is to make a shell that will protect the interests of Salem County.
- The problems that are being addressed tonight are legitimate concerns if you are unaware of how the process works. Salem County should have the final say on whether they want to join an Authority.

Katie Coleman (Alloway Township) commented as follows:

- That was a perfect explanation.
- At this time, I'm just asking for the Resolution to be amended as an agreement to explore or apply to the Local Finance Board due to prerequisites needed to create an Authority.
- I also want to request a commitment that Mr. Ridgway does not partake in negotiation with Cumberland County. (Mr. Ridgway's son works for Cumberland County).

County Administrator Jeff Ridgway said, "I do not take part in any of those negotiations with Cumberland County."

Ed McKelvey (Alloway Township) commented as follows:

- Thanked Linwood Donelson for the explanation.
- Statements have been made that make me feel that everyone on this Board isn't in agreement.
- I believe everyone should be provided with the same documentation for discussion so that everyone is on the same page.

Deputy Director Ostrum commented:

- We have had multiple conversations/discussions around this issue.

Todd Woodside (Alloway Township) commented as follows:

- Transparency, I've known Ed McKelvey (Mayor) here since 1968.
- Ted Woodside is my brother.
- My wife is the director of nursing over at the Salem County Correctional Facility.
- Charles Miller and John Cuzzupe have been to my bar multiple times and again none of these individuals are aware that I am here today.
- Ms. Coleman does bring a lot of expertise to the floor here tonight.
- People do not spend on the most nor do they spend on the least.
- Is there a financial benefit to having a Jail in Salem County?
- We have a culture here in Salem County and I personally would like to maintain this culture.
- If our Jail has 125 inmates that pay the bills, why are we reaching?
- Correctional Facility isn't a money maker.
- We are good Quakers. We should be more concerned with Public Safety.

Deputy Director Ostrum commented as follows:

- Unfortunately, maybe this was not the best decision, but the Jail has been in the existence for over 20 years. We are stuck with this business which is costing the County \$24 million.

Andrea Robinson (Carneys Point) commented as follows:

- Director Laury was referring to inmates as 'It'. They are people and shouldn't be addressed in such a manner.

Director Laury responded:

- I sincerely apologize. If I referred to anyone as an "It", that was in error.

Joyce Johson (Carneys Point) commented as follows:

- Asked Commissioner Ramsay and Commissioner Taylor, what were their thoughts since they wanted to Table the one Resolution?

Commissioner Taylor responded:

- We will express our thoughts and concerns, but a motion needs to take place then we vote upon it to determine what will transpire, and then we can comment.

Leroy Pearce (Pennsville) commented as follows:

- Kudos for posting the Fact Sheet. It's a great thing, as it allows the public to be informed on the issues/costs.
- In reference to the proposal, Gloucester County owes \$1.5 million, I agree with Mr. McKelvey, we shouldn't do business with entities that are considered bad pay.
- During the pandemic, the costs at the Correctional Facility skyrocketed. The facility, however, did not close. Correctional Officers were paid Hazardous Duty pay and were paid a significant amount of compensatory time for coming to work every day (12hour shifts).
- Did Salem County receive any Covid benefits? Possibly yes.
- Cumberland and Gloucester have already approved this resolution. I would implore that the 5 Commissioners along with the CFO and solicitor take the time to vet out all the information.
- The current agreement that expired as of May 1st, there was only 1 beneficiary of that contract, Gloucester County was the beneficiary of that contract.
- It's time for Salem County to sit down and review the agreement to possibly re-negotiate terms.

Director Laury further added:

- We agree with you however there is one exception, Gloucester County isn't considered bad pay.
- They are current with Salem County. The issue of lack of payment occurred during the pandemic. There is a minimum payment due regardless of the number of inmates housed. Gloucester feels this amount should be covered by Covid funds Salem County received; however, Salem County doesn't agree and feels Gloucester is obligated to pay the minimum amount in the contract. We are going to arbitration on the matter.

Leroy Pearce added:

- We are hoping that Salem County prevails via the arbitration process.
- The current Correctional Officers employed at Salem County Correctional Facility; those will then become Authority employees?

Director Laury responded:

- Yes. The current Correctional Officers will be considered Authority employees.

Leroy Pearce continued:

- The payroll responsibility will then drop from the Salem County Budget?

Director Laury responded:

- That is correct.

Leroy Pearce continued:

- Someone has thought of the logistics of Authority Correction Officer and Sheriff Correction Officers and sometimes their ambitions may or may not comingle.

Director Laury responded:

- Logistics is still down the road.

Leroy Pearce closed with the following:

- When an Authority is formed/established, some local government bodies, such as a Board of County Commissioners, can lose power.

Director Laury asked for Motion and a second to Approve Resolution A6.

Commissioner Ramsay asked for a Motion to postpone the vote on Resolution A6. No second was made to honor the Motion.

Director Laury asked for Motion to Approve Resolution A6.

Commissioner	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Commissioner Ramsay				X		
Commissioner Taylor				X		
Commissioner Timmerman		X	X			
Deputy Director Ostrum	X		X			
Director Laury			X			

Roll Call vote passed 3-2

Director Laury opened Resolution A5 for discussion:

Commissioner Taylor commented as follows:

- We are concerned about released inmates wandering around the Jail/Community.

- In the agreement, it states that the Authority will ensure released inmates are transported back to the county of origin.
- The current agreement with Gloucester County has no mention of Transportation arrangements.
- We have no current contract with Gloucester. The contract has expired.
- The cost of the contract at \$135 per day doesn't seem to differentiate to the actual cost per inmate. The negotiated amount isn't justifiable.

Deputy Director Ostrum further commented:

- Your points are well taken. First, you cannot compel a prisoner to do anything other than leave the Facility. The plan is to have a re-entry system in place to assist inmates once they are released.

Commissioner Ramsay commented:

- I asked for this Resolution to be Tabled as this issue wasn't discussed in depth as it should have been.
- Last fall, we sent Gloucester County a notice that we would not be renewing the contract.

Director Laury asked for Motion and a second to Approve Resolution A5.

Commissioner	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Commissioner Ramsay				X		
Commissioner Taylor				X		
Commissioner Timmerman		X	X			
Deputy Director Ostrum	X		X			
Director Laury			X			

Hand vote passed 3-2

Director Laury opened up discussion for Resolution A5.

Commissioner Ramsay commented:

- I feel as though we are ahead of ourselves by approving this Resolution. I will be voting No.

Commissioner Taylor commented:

- Thank you, Linwood, for your explanation of an Authority earlier.
- Why are we rushing to approve this at a Special Budget Meeting?
- Believes this decision should not be made at this meeting.

Director Laury replied:

- There are times to say No but Today isn't one of them.
- We need to move forward and to do so as Linwood explained we need to apply for the approval of an Authority.
- We have the power; we have the Jail, and we don't have to do a thing if we desire not to.
- The savings are significant. All we are saying is we are taking the step to move forward to begin the negotiations with Gloucester and Cumberland Counties.

Director Laury inquired if there are any additional public comments.

Jessica Bishop (Upper Pittsgrove) commented as follows:

- The Bond Ordinance ad was missing the meeting date.
- The Special Budget Meeting Ad states the meeting is regarding the Budget. We have discussed more than just the Budget tonight.

- If additional topics are going to be discussed, there's a process in place where advertisement needs to be released/published 48hours prior.
- The Special Budget Meeting Ad wasn't posted in the County Clerk's Office, nor was it posted on the Public Bulletin Board.
- The venue was changed prior to the meeting, and this was only posted via Facebook. It was not posted to the Salem County Webpage. Several people called the Salem County Office complex and spoke to your operator who stated that the meeting was still taking place at the fifth street office complex.

Commissioner Timmerman intervened and responded:

- Ma'am, I'm looking at the Salem County Webpage right now via my cellphone. It has a pop up that states the Special Budget Meeting is taking place June 5th.

Director Laury also intervened and responded:

- We moved the venue from the Fifth Street Office Complex to the Historic Courthouse because we all wouldn't have fit at the Fifth Street Office Complex.
- The decision was made to move the venue due to the anticipated audience. The update was published on Facebook, our Salem County Webpage and we have Notice Signs posted up at the Fifth Street Office Complex addressing the change in venue. We are not trying to hide anything regarding the Budget Meeting.

Jessica Bishop continued:

- Statue 40A:4-8 states the Budget must be made available at the Public Library. If not, the Budget must be read in full. Something else to consider and it may have to be redone.
- Also, the budget reflects a \$300K transfer that was just approved in May yet it's retroactive to March. I understand mistakes occur but to have this many mistakes makes the public think that the Board is trying to hide something.
- The Budget is not on the webpage, the agenda is not on the webpage and the Facebook page has the comments turned off where we can't comment to tell you how we are feeling.

Amy Tighe (Carneys Point) commented as follows:

- I feel as though the Fact Sheet that was put out onto Facebook wasn't sent to all the Commissioners.
- Whoever is responsible for posting the meeting dates and times should ensure to post these within a reasonable timeframe. The meeting tonight could've had a better turnout if advertisements had been made in advance.

Director Laury ended the meeting with the following comments:

- This is America where we value freedom of speech.
- I appreciate everyone that came out tonight to attend our meeting.
- You, as the public, stood up and voiced your concerns, we listened.
- It does help and we urge you to come out for future meetings as this does make a difference.
- Thank you again.

Next Meeting Date July 17, 2024 4:00PM Historic Courthouse

Executive Closed Session – not needed tonight

Adjournment – There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:16 pm.

Commissioner	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Commissioner Ramsay		X	X			
Commissioner Taylor	X		X			

Commissioner Timmerman			X			
Deputy Director Ostrum			X			
Director Laury			X			

Hand Vote passed 5-0

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy L. Pennington
Clerk of the Board