

MINUTES OF A CAUCUS MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS OF THE COUNTY OF CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY, HELD IN THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, 4 MOORE ROAD, CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE, NEW JERSEY ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2020 AT 3:00 P.M.

Deputy Clerk Doyle called the meeting to order. The following members answered roll call:

Freeholder Hayes-Present (1)

Freeholders Morey, Pierson and Thornton via remote access (3)

Statement of the Director:

“This is a notice read pursuant to the requirements of the “Open Public Meetings Act.” At least 48 hours advance notice of this meeting has been provided by posting of the same in writing on the bulletin boards in the County Administration Building, and the County Clerk’s Office and mailing a copy of the notice to the Cape May County Herald and the Atlantic City Press and filing the same with the County Clerk, all being done on Friday, July 31, 2020.”

Moment of Silence dedicated to Luke Lare.

Flag Salute- Led by Freeholder Pierson.

Agenda Items

Discussion:

1. Freeholder Discussions

Acting Administrator Donohue- Mr. Donohue began by thanking all department heads and county employees again, for stepping up during this difficult time, not only for county government, but for businesses and other organizations too. With the implementation of the ten percent reduction in O&E and the Capital Budget, the department heads had been extremely cooperative and responsive getting right to work with the Finance and Purchasing Departments.

Administration and department heads were prepping for a full return to work of all employees. Several departments had fully resumed to somewhat normal operations, and we are heading in that direction for all departments shortly, he stated. Currently, challenges were with the hybrid school schedules for children, with parent/employees needed at home, and high-risk employees to consider. Everything done so far had worked well for the county. Additional technologies assisting with the disinfection process were being considered, as more people were brought back into the workplace, he informed.

He acknowledged the Board of Elections and County Clerk’s Office for the extremely difficult work they had to do during the primary election. Cape May County was one of the first, if not the first, to have everything counted and ready to certify, he stated. It was an extraordinary election, and we are headed towards even more extraordinary election challenges, he further stated.

The aftermath of Storm Isaias had OEM and Facilities & Services busy. The Park/Zoo really took a pounding, but employees had the parks cleaned up very quickly. Atlantic Electric also responded quickly to get the County back on-line, despite some individuals saying otherwise.

August 18, 2020, (Continued)

He asked everyone to keep Kevin, Annette and Lindsay Lare in their thoughts and prayers in this time of grieving on the death of their 21-year-old son and brother, Luke Lare.

Freeholder Morey- Mr. Morey discussed what had transpired between the task force members, who met by telephone last week to discuss COVID and economic recovery. Kevin Thomas, Jeffrey Pierson and Joanne Carrocino, CEO of Cape Regional Medical Center participated. The numbers were looking very good. The hospital scenario had dramatically improved. The numbers were relatively stable and improving from the hospitalization standpoint, he informed. An important theme touched on was treatment, which was much more advanced and effective today as compared to a few months ago, per Joanne Carrocino.

He went on to explain that the businesses that were not yet open, such as indoor dining were now being looked at. With the fall months almost upon them, hardships could worsen for the businesses. He reminded that the businesses that were operating, many were doing so with reduced revenue. Being open did not constitute thriving, he stated. Most were looking to survive until May 2021. The task force was going to ramp up efforts there. The "Safely Together" Campaign would continue to contribute. They were engaged in trying to keep people safe as well as support the businesses, he stated. More data to come within the next 30 days.

Mr. Morey asked Administrator Donohue for his perspective on recovery efforts. Mr. Donohue responded the joint effort, coordination and cooperation of Health Department, Recovery Initiative's "Safely Together" Campaign, which spread through Public Information and Diane Wieland's Department, had contributed to Cape May County having one of the mildest outbreaks in the State of New Jersey. The efforts by the County, the mayors of the municipalities, the Chamber of Commerce, and the healthcare sector being proactive and aggressive early on had paid off, with having some of the lowest numbers. It is time to redouble efforts, not lighten up, he stated. Mr. Morey agreed.

Freeholder Pierson-Mr. Pierson had e-mailed the COVID-19 Actions List to his fellow board members earlier today, he informed. He detailed some of the numbers from the report. Cape May County had gone 26 days without a community death, until today, one death had occurred in Lower Township. Additionally, the county had gone 17 days without a long-term care facility death. The county was now down to less than 100 active cases, 93 as of yesterday. Of the 93 active cases, 19 of those were persons from out of town.

At Crest Haven Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, 9 staff members contracted COVID, and were isolated and treated. With that, only 1 resident at the facility tested positive and had to be put into isolation. The resident did not get seriously ill, but nevertheless was counted as an active case.

He acknowledged the nursing home, all county employees, Will Morey and Len Desiderio for their task force participation, Kevin Thomas and the Health Department staff, and Director Thornton for his support throughout.

Freeholder Hayes- The freeholder thanked Mr. Morey and Mr. Desiderio for their work on the task force. The report sent up to Trenton was unbelievable, she stated. It was recognized by NJAC for comprehensiveness and completeness. A lot of other counties used Cape May County's report as a template and created their own from it, she informed.

August 18, 2020, (Continued)

She gave a shout out to all employees, but especially the employees of the Library and Fare Free Transportation. Both departments had succeeded in accomplishing as much as was possible right now with the pandemic restrictions.

She informed those not already aware that a new cotton-top tamarin was born at the Park & Zoo. This was the first baby tamarin born there in over 15 years. During a visit to the zoo, you could expect to see the mother carrying her baby around with her.

Ms. Hayes asked the administrator if they were going to reconvene in person, with the public attending anytime soon. He responded no; the issue would be revisited again soon. When a trend of positive numbers was seen, they would move in that direction.

Freeholder Morey- The freeholder questioned whether it would be possible that they move forward with a branding and marketing meeting for the Airport facility, in partnership with the DRBA. Because freeholder presentations with other board members present were not prohibited, Mr. Donohue responded yes it could be accomplished.

Freeholder Thornton- Director Thornton commented that the entire Board would need to be present very soon, for a presentation and discussion of various issues. One issue that required more discussion was the public coming back into the building for meetings.

He commended everyone for a job well done throughout the pandemic. He made it known once again, how very proud he was of the County.

He informed that Denis Brown would be moving down to the other end of the building to work in conjunction with Diane Wieland and the Public Information Office.

The upcoming election and vote by mail situation was brought to the attention of the State by Director Thornton and Ocean County, during a recent conference call. The Board of Elections did not have the capability to count all the votes that would come in by mail. Freeholder Hayes and Mr. Donohue would need to reach out to the Election Board and County Clerk's Office, making sure they had enough equipment to count the votes by machine, he advised. The State had indicated they would help pay for some of the equipment. He wanted the equipment to be purchased immediately and to worry about reimbursement later.

Freeholder Pierson-Mr. Pierson suggested we do a resolution opposing a full mail in election, for the next meeting and send to the Governor. Freeholder Hayes advised the resolution had been done and was authorized at the last freeholder meeting.

Freeholder Hayes-She suggested she and Mike meet with the department directors and report back to the Board with the findings.

Administrator Donohue- He informed the Board of Elections and County Clerk were already being proactive, they had learned much from the mail in primary.

Freeholder Thornton- He predicted that challenges would be impossible with the election being held this way.

Moved by Ms. Hayes, seconded by Mr. Pierson to adjourn the caucus. Roll call: Freeholder Hayes, Morey, Pierson and Thornton (AYE-4) (NAYE-None) (ABSTAIN-None) (ABSENT-One). Carried.

August 18, 2020, (Continued)

Caucus adjourned at 3:34 p.m.

Deputy Clerk of the Board