

## **QUESTIONS AS A RESULT OF THE PUBLIC HEARING** **APRIL 16, 2012**

On the pages below, the County has provided responses to questions raised at the April 16, 2012 public hearing regarding the sale of the Homestead nursing home. These questions were regarding substantive or factual matters involving the Homestead or the decision to pursue the sale of same. Several rhetorical questions were also posed by members of the public at the hearing. Since these questions would require opinions of individual Freeholders or speculation on the part of the Board, no specific responses are provided.

### **Karen MaGill of Lake Owassa**

What plans does the Board have for the monies that have been budgeted for the Homestead?

*County response: Savings resulting from the sale of the County nursing home will not be realized until the 2013 budget cycle. Discussion regarding the 2013 budget will commence through the Freeholder Budget Committee in late summer/early autumn 2012 with final decision made by the full Freeholder Board in early 2013.*

Will those monies be moved to the community to help with the community services for these people?

*County response: See response above.*

### **Ray Witte – Hampton Township**

Where will the County get revenue and what is the County going to do with the revenue?

*County response: The Freeholder Board will be discussing the potential for placing the revenues realized from the sale of the County nursing home in a separate trust account to be used for future one time capital costs (similar to the use of the proceeds from the sales of the Hall of Records, Board of Elections building, Tax Board building and the former Fire Academy). Any decision of the current Freeholder Board, however, is not binding upon future Boards.*

### **Paul Valerio – Frankford Township**

Can the County really sell the Homestead because of the deed restrictions on it? He said he had spoken to someone who said there were deed restrictions put on this property when it was donated by the Struble family who said that if the Homestead ever went out of the County's hands, the ownership was to revert back to the Struble family.

Does anyone know about this, has the County researched it and can anyone answer these questions?

*County response: A full deed search has been completed. Documents are posted on the County website.*

### **Bob Longcore – Newton**

How many dollars will this save and yet ensure that citizens have the services delivered to them that they now receive?

*County response: Based on current projections the savings for 2013 appear to be in the \$2M range.*

Has the Board projected a budget for the next 5 years?

*County response: A five year budget projection has not been done.*

What is the Board going to do with the money it might gain from the sale?

*See response above.*

### **Harry Dunleavy - Augusta**

Why the County cannot use the money it is putting aside to pay the severance of the people being laid off to keep the Homestead open?

*County response: Funds for severance costs must, in part, be budgeted in the 2012 County budget. Since the proceeds from the sale of the County nursing home were unknown at the time of budget adoption they could not be anticipated to offset severance costs.*

### **Joan Current - Sandyston**

Has anybody taken the time to contact the other 3 county-run facilities to see how they are keeping their heads above water?

*County response: County staff is in regular contact with other Counties in the State of New Jersey regarding their nursing homes and nursing home issues. A meeting of County Administrators and State Officials was held several months ago to discuss the state of County nursing homes and the impact of State Medicaid cuts. County nursing homes were more recently the subject of discussion at a meeting of the Board of Directors of the New Jersey Association of Counties and the New Jersey County Administrators Association. Subject was also discussed, at length, at the May meeting of the Six County (Morris, Warren, Passaic, Hunterdon, Somerset, Sussex) Coalition.*

“When Bob Longcore spoke about the ALMS House, she asked if the Board knew how old that house was and the history of it? If you do, then why is it not on the Historic Register?”

*County response: County is familiar with the date of construction and the use of the former Alms house. (Second question calls for speculation about prior Freeholder Board’s thoughts on subject and therefore no response is provided)*

### **Susan Williams - Sparta**

What is the rush to sell the Homestead?

*County response: The County has methodically and deliberately considering the sale seriously since last year. Each ensuing budget year becomes more difficult given the lack of growth in the County tax base, the collapse of non-tax revenues since 2008, the rising cost of public benefits and stringent State cap requirements.*

## **Tom Jones, Staff Representative of CWA 1032**

Was the Board was aware that there were consultants at the Homestead last Friday speaking to the employees and scaring the employees and that the Union was not informed that they were going to be there? Mr. Jones also asked who they were and what they were doing there?

*Consultants including Care Perspectives are regularly at the County nursing home. Care Perspectives has been engaged by the County to conduct ongoing operational review, monitor regulatory compliance and assist in preparing for annual State survey. The County Administrator has asked CWA representatives to provide additional and specific information at to the alleged conduct of either Care Perspectives or any other consultant working at the County nursing home.. To date no specific information has been received.*

Why did the Board make the choice not to answer questions?

*County response: The public hearing is for public comment. It is fairly standard practice particularly in hearings involving large numbers of constituents that questions are not answered at the time of the hearing. This allows for reasonable time management to allow the maximum number of people to speak and allows for informed and researched responses to specific questions. Additionally, the hearing was advertised and conducted under the statute specific to the sale of public assets. As such, it was not a public meeting in which the Freeholders had the ability to make formal decisions or take action.*

## **Joy Ennis, Fredon Township**

Have you talked to the counties that are buying back their nursing homes and do you know what they are buying the nursing homes back for?

*County response: We are only aware of one instance (Middlesex County) where a County sold its nursing home (in the case of Middlesex County the nursing home was sold to the County Improvement Authority) and subsequently re-acquired by the County. We are not aware of the rationale or motivations for the buyback.*

Who does the Board represent?

*County response: All persons residing and conducting business in Sussex County.*

Does the Board represent the business people of Sussex County? She said if it did, why did the Board award the real estate agency contract to a company located outside of Sussex County?

*County response: The Freeholder Board is proud to represent the businesses of Sussex County. The nursing home broker selection process was done via a competitive proposal process which included very specific criteria with respect to experience in the marketing/sale of public nursing homes. The firm selected demonstrated a vast amount of experience in the sale of public nursing homes across the nation and specifically in the State of New Jersey.*

Wouldn't it be better to have an agency from inside the County owned by somebody who lives in the County and pays taxes?

*See response above.*

Does the Board represent County workers?

*County response: Yes, if they reside within the County of Sussex.*

Does the Board represent the disabled or the elderly of this County?

*See response above.*

Does the Board represent the citizens of Sussex County?

*See response above.*

## **Cindy Muir**

What they were supposed to do with the War Veterans coming home and what they were supposed to do with the Veterans that were already here?

*County response: While we have no knowledge of specific regulations that require acceptance or preference for Veterans at either public or private nursing homes, the County is very much concerned about the care and well being of all Veterans. Unfortunately with only 102 beds (64% of which were occupied by Medicaid eligible residents in 2011) and an average stay of more than 800 days, there is very little opportunity for either the general public or the Veteran population to occupy a bed at a facility the size of the Homestead.*