



## UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

THURSDAY, APRIL 13, 2023  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

### CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Granados presided over the meeting and called the meeting to order at 6:28 P.M.

### ROLL CALL

Roll call showed Chairman Sergio Granados, Vice-Chairwoman Kimberly Palmieri-Mouded, Commissioner James E. Baker, Jr., Commissioner Joseph C. Bodek, Commissioner Angela R. Garretson, Commissioner Bette Jane Kowalski, Commissioner Lourdes M. Leon, Commissioner Alexander Mirabella, and Commissioner Rebecca Williams were present.

Also present were County Manager Edward T. Oatman, County Counsel Bruce H. Bergen, Esq., and Clerk of the Board James E. Pellettiere.

### PRAYER AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The prayer and salute to the flag were led by Clerk of the Board Pellettiere.

### STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

The statement of compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act was read by Clerk of the Board Pellettiere.

### APPROVAL OF COMMUNICATIONS

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Note and File

Chairman Granados called for a motion to approve the Communications. On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

Chairman Granados turned the meeting over to Vice-Chairwoman Palmieri-Mouded to offer remarks on the County's 2023 budget being introduced under Resolution No. 2023-349.

Vice-Chairwoman Palmieri-Mouded addressed the public:

*Good evening. As Chairwoman of the Fiscal Committee, we have been working over the last several weeks conducting reviews of the 2023 Executive Budget, under the advisement of the County Commissioners, County Manager Ed Oatman and all of our Department Heads.*

*Tonight, I am happy to introduce the Union County 2023 Budget at \$528,894,565.03 and the Levy is \$367,295,299.43, which holds a zero percent tax increase for the fourth year in a row. The County of Union's system has been successful in alleviating cost increases during economic downturns, stemming from inflation and post-pandemic recovery. We worked together to prioritize our efforts in strengthening the safety and programs for our residents, while maintaining all of our essential services and employees with no lay-offs. We are also maintaining our credit rating at AAA, which is the highest obtainable, further demonstrating our strong fiscal footing.*

*Some of our notable accomplishments include: Union County's healthy surplus allowed us to fund and open up the first County-run certified lab in conjunction with Kean University for diagnostic testing and critical public health research during the pandemic; tens of thousands of households within Union County have benefitted from our food distribution programs over the past two and a half years with over 18 million meals provided; in an environment where the average State Health Benefits increase for CY2023 is 21.6%, the County of Union was able enter into shared service agreements with Union College and the Vocational Technical High School for health benefits coverage under the County's self-insurance plan as a cost-saving measure for both public education institutions.*

*We are continuing to realize the savings from the shared services agreements with Essex County wherein we augmented service delivery for Juvenile Detention and Adult Corrections in 2019 and 2021.*

*Understanding the need for long-term financial planning, the Union County Board of County Commissioners continuously streamlined County operations and reduced its pensionable obligations without sacrificing quality of service. In a climate where state and local governments throughout New Jersey are set to pay nearly 10% more for workers enrolled in the Public Employees' Retirement System and the Police and Firemen's Retirement System, the County of Union is happy to announce its pension bills for 2023 are set to decrease by 0.74%. This budget also funds the Chairman's "Building a Stronger Union County," initiatives for 2023, which include mental health programs and services, housing*

*or rental assistance programs, strengthening workforce relationships, building an inclusive county, enhancing parks, recreation/roadways and supporting our children and youth.*

*Today's budget is a result of a collaborative effort, the culmination of months of planning, community outreach, and hard work. I want to thank my Board of County Commissioners for their support, the Department of Finance and Department Heads for their hard work in the budget process. Thank you.*

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#### **PUBLIC COMMENT PORTION**

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The meeting was opened for the purpose of commenting on resolutions being offered for adoption and on any governmental issue that a member of the public feels may be of concern to the residents of the county.

Ann Margaret Shannon, of Union, and President of the Union Township Education Association, highlighted the organizations mission to educate and encourage others to take civic action when the need arises. She noted that she disapproved of the Board's decision to change the County seal, adding that she was of the opinion that the County's original seal should have been included as an option on the online poll. She advised that the UTEA had partnered with Union Township's Historical Society for many years as a way to educate residents about Hannah Caldwell and the important role played by the Township of Union and Union County in the American Revolution. She noted that she, like many other residents, were proud of Hannah Caldwell's sacrifice and the current Union County seal.

Johnny Rosser, of Union, and one of the founders of Vauxhall's Historical Society, advised that he was not in favor of changing the Union County seal. He noted that Union County's seal provided a unique depiction of the County's history and its role in the American Revolution. He acknowledged the argument that the current seal was not historically accurate, adding that the importance of Union County's seal lied in its symbolism and meaning. Mr. Rosser also noted that the current seal was authorized by the Board of Freeholders in 1933. Similar to the change from Freeholder to Commissioner, he inquired about the potential cost associated with changing the Union County seal.

Kathleen Dowling, of New Providence, and a member of Moms Demand Action, noted that she had been a dedicated gun-violence prevention advocate for five years since the shooting in Parkland. She advised that she was in favor of changing the Union County seal as she believed Hannah Caldwell should be honored with dignity and respect, unlike the murder depicted in the current seal. She noted that the seal was not historically accurate and did not honor the bravery of Hannah Caldwell as she attempted to protect her children in the face of an armed soldier. She added that the desire to change the seal did not erase history, but rather honored her bravery in a more respectful way. She thanked the Board for their attention to this issue, reiterating her support and the support of Moms Demand Action relative to the

decision to change the seal. She added that she looked forward to better representation of Hannah Caldwell's ultimate sacrifice during the American Revolution.

Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi and President of Union County's Historical Society spoke relative to the history of Union County, noting that it was originally a part of Essex County and one of just six original counties in the colonies, and later, in the State of NJ. She provided pictures of the seals for the other five original counties, noting that each memorialized and highlighted the history of the county as well as the contributions they made to the birth of our nation. In comparison, she noted that the two new seal designs being voted on did not appropriately highlight Union County history. Additionally, she expressed her concerns that the quadrant seal design depicted a scene reminiscent of the terroristic attacks on the World Trade Center Towers in 2001, recognizing the many Union County residents lost that day. She noted that while unintended, she expressed her doubt that the Board would want to promote such a disturbing and triggering image. Relative to the seal design that prominently featured the Union County Courthouse, Clerk Rajoppi advised that the seventeen-story tower primarily housed the NJ Judiciary, with two exceptions, her Office and the U.C. Surrogate's Office, adding that she did not believe this image adequately reflected the contributions of Union County either.

Chairman Granados noted an NJ.com article from 2011 in which Clerk Joanne Rajoppi was quoted "It's not that I don't like it" she said. "I don't think it portrays the county or is a symbol of everything the county is. I think it's very important to honor people, and especially Hannah Caldwell, but not in such a negative way."

Salaam Ismial, of Elizabeth, noted his continued efforts since 2020 to have a monument erected at the site of the Union County Courthouse to commemorate the events of 1741. He advised that he had met with the County's Department of Parks & Recreation as well as the Office of Cultural & Heritage regarding the 1741 Project, but no progress had been made on the issue. He noted the history of Elizabethtown and its strong ties to slavery, adding that it was important for history to be remembered, including the history of slavery in NJ. Relative to the changing of the Union County seal, Mr. Ismial vocalized his support for the residents in favor of keeping the current seal, noting the importance of remembering history and encouraging the study and understanding of it.

Barbara La Mort, of Union, commended Mr. Ismial and the 1741 Project for achieving their goal of educating many County residents on the events of 1741. Ms. La Mort reiterated that she was not in favor of changing the current Union County seal. She noted that while giving the impression of a choice, the online poll with the new designs was reminiscent of an election in a communist country in which the outcome was pre-determined, adding that a fair election would have included the existing seal as a 3<sup>rd</sup> voting option. She encouraged the Board to read a book entitled *Apostles of Disunion* by Charles Dew which detailed the efforts of several state-appointed Commissioners whom traveled through the South urging uncommitted slave states to join in succession and form a new Southern nation. Ms. La Morte closed by acknowledging the importance of persevering history as a means to prevent future generations from committing the same atrocities of the past.

Councilmember Jaime Levine, of Summit, thanked the Board for their continued efforts and tremendous leadership. Specifically, she thanked the County's Department of Engineering and Parks & Recreation for their efforts in rehabilitating the pond at Briant Pond. She added that Summit residents were excited to see work start early on the project.

Union County Historical Society Vice-President, Charles Shallcross, of Union, advised that he did not agree with the decision to change the current Union County seal. He inquired about why the current seal was not included in the online poll alongside the two new options. He recognized the dangers of changing history, noting disturbing nationwide efforts to remove statues, noting the removal of statues of Robert E. Lee and likewise the removal of statues honoring George Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas Jefferson, and Christopher Columbus. He noted that while these individuals were not perfect, they nonetheless made up the fabric of American History, and should continue to be honored accordingly.

Clyde Dunning, of Elizabeth, commended everyone from the public for showing up and fighting for their respective causes and beliefs. He quoted the scripture and noted the importance of making decisions today to reconcile the mistakes of the past. He appealed to the Board to erect a monument at the site of the Union County Courthouse to remember the three slaves that tragically lost their lives.

Maria Echeverria, of Elizabeth, asked questions relative to several resolutions. Relative to Reso Nos. 2023-355 & 356, she asked why the County's Prosecutor's Office was not open to the public. Relative to Reso No. 2023-365 & Reso No. 2023-374 she asked for additional information related to these items. Relative to Reso No. 2023-372, she expressed her concerns relative to organ donation.

Relative to Reso Nos. 2023-355 & 2023-356, First Assistant Prosecutor Tansey advised that in order to access the Prosecutor's Office, absent of an emergent situation, an appointment was required. He advised that due to the sensitive nature of business being conducted within the facility, the building was secure and visitors were required to clear security and metal detectors before being granted access. He added that there was always security at the front desk to assist with general inquiries and provide general information. On a side note, First Assistant Prosecutor Tansey advised that his sister had been fortunate enough to receive an organ donation that saved her life.

Relative to Reso No. 2023-365, Assistant Director Dinsmore advised that this item was meant to change the grant account year from 2021 to 2022, adding that these monies would be used to fund career support services through the American Job Center.

Relative to Reso No. 2023-374, Chairman Granados noted that this item would recognize April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023 as "National Therapy Animal Day" throughout the County of Union.

Relative to organ donation, County Manager Oatman advised that he was a proud organ donor, adding that he had the utmost confidence in health care institutions.

Bruce Paterson, of Garwood, asked questions relative to several resolutions. Relative to Reso No. 2023-344, he asked for Assistant Director Dinsmore to elaborate on this item. Relative to Reso No. 2023-348, he asked for additional information. Relative to Reso No. 2023-360, he asked about the terms of the collective bargaining agreement and asked how many employees would be affected by this action. Relative to Reso No. 2023-364, Mr. Paterson asked why a County resident could not be hired for the position. Relative to Reso Nos. 2023-367 & 2023-368, he asked for additional information on these items. Relative to the Union County seal, Mr. Paterson agreed that the two new seal options failed to represent Union County appropriately. Mr. Paterson also made comments relative to Reso Nos. 2023-349, 2023-355, & 2023-356.

Relative to Reso No. 2023-344, Assistant Director Dinsmore advised that this item was meant to amend an existing contract to include monies for additional staffing. She noted that when the initial contract was conceived, monies were allocated for an administrator position, adding that the cited change would include monies for a nurse administrator as well.

Relative to Reso No. 2023- 348, Director Taylor advised that the wording on this item was the required state caption. She further advised that this related to the 1977 CAP, adding that the County was not subject to the 1977 CAP Bank in the 2023 Budget, but rather the 2010 CAP. She added that under both CAPs, the County would be banking the COLA to use as a financial tool. Director Taylor also added that the County would be banking \$2.6 million, noting that the CAP bank had not been utilized in 2021 nor in 2022.

Relative to Reso No. 2023-360, Director Scutari advised that this collective bargaining agreement included a 2% raise across the board for 2022, 2023, 2024 and would affect 44 employees in 2023.

Relative to Reso No. 2023-364, Deputy County Manager Wagner advised that the cited person was currently a County resident and County employee. She noted that Ms. Cerbone was a highly valued employee and the County was granting a residency requirement waiver for her due to personal, family-related hardships.

Relative to Reso No. 2023-367 & 2023-368, Counsel Bergen confirmed that the County did not currently have a solar energy program and or consultant. He advised that these items would authorize the County to start the competitive contracting procurement process to potentially utilize solar energy to power certain County facilities.

Carlos Santos, of Mountainside, advised once again that he was not in favor of changing the current Union County seal. He also reiterated his prior request from a few weeks ago and asked for the current seal to be included in the current online poll being conducted by the County. He also encouraged the Board to include the seal change on an upcoming ballot so that residents could decide on the potential change.

Kelly Komar, of Roselle, referenced the online petition she started on Change.Org in opposition of changing the Union County seal and wondered whether or not any of the Commissioners had viewed any of the comments opposing the change. She

expressed her frustrations to keep the current seal. In light of claims that the County had been considering changing the seal for approximately 20 years, Ms. Komar questioned why the County attempted to copyright the seal in 2011. She argued against claims that the current seal did not honor Hannah Caldwell appropriately, adding that the medal used by the Daughters of the American Revolution's also depicted Hannah under the threat of a British soldier. Ms. Komar added that Union County's seal did not depict a murder, but rather a martyr. Relative to the 1741 Project, she expressed her desire that a monument be erected to bring awareness to the tragic events, noting the importance of remember, reflecting, and teaching future generations about the past.

Mark Harowitz spoke relative to Hannah Caldwell and the significant role she played in Union County history as well as American history. He noted that on June 23, 1780 at the Battle of Springfield and shortly after Hannah Caldwell's murder, British invasion efforts were stopped by American General Greene and approximately 2,000 Continental troops and NJ Militia. He advised that following the Battle of Springfield, British forces never returned to invade NJ for the remainder of the American Revolution. He closed by asking the Board to reconsider their decision to change the current seal.

Ronald Martins, of Linden, noted his opinion that the current Union County seal was not only unique, but also thought-provoking. He advised that he was inspired to learn more about the seal and Hannah Caldwell after discussing Caldwell Parsonage with a friend. On another note, he encouraged the Board to consider creating multi-use trails and greenways using unused rail lines to facilitate travel throughout the various municipalities in Union County. He suggested using the rail line that ran from Bayway Refinery through Linden and Roselle, concluding in Cranford on South Ave.

County Manager Oatman advised that discussions with Conrail were ongoing relative to repurposing unused rail lines as trails and greenways. He added that some of these rail lines were still considered active by Conrail and could not be used for this purpose.

Charles Shallcross confirmed that Boxwood Hall was declared a national historical site in 1938.

There were no additional questions or comments from the public.

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#### RESOLUTIONS FOR ADOPTION

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The following Resolutions were offered for adoption:

- 2023-339 COMMISSIONER JAMES BAKER JR:** Authorizing the Union County Board of County Commissioners to establish a Local Emergency Planning Committee to supervise and ensure the emergency planning district's compliance with Executive Order No. 284 and the federal Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-340 COMMISSIONER JAMES BAKER JR:** Authorizing the County Manager to qualify and authorize towing operator licenses for Tumino's Towing and Road Service, Sisbarro Towing & Recovery LLC, and Highway Service Corporation for the 36 month license period of January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2025.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-341 COMMISSIONER JAMES BAKER JR:** Amending Resolution 2022-991, to increase total acquisition costs by an amount not to exceed \$3,300.00 to cover the County's agreed share of expenses for the Roselle Park EMS Building in a total cost not to exceed \$767,566.00.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-342 COMMISSIONER BETTE JANE KOWALSKI:** Authorizing the County Manager to grant permission to the City of Linden to close Wood Avenue from Route 1 & 9 and Gibbons Street on Sunday, October 22, 2023 from 12:00 pm to 7:00 pm to host its annual Halloween Parade, with a rain date of Sunday, October 29, 2023.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-343 COMMISSIONER BETTE JANE KOWALSKI:** Authorizing the County Manager to grant permission to the Township of Berkeley Heights, PAL to hang a banner across Springfield Avenue from April 10, 2023 to May 8, 2023 advertising the Berkeley Heights PAL Golf Outing.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-344 COMMISSIONER REBECCA LYNNE WILLIAMS:** Amending Resolution 2022-1099, a contract with Center for Family Guidance, PC, Marlton, NJ for the addition of administrative staffing for the period of January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023, and to increase the contract award in the amount of \$164,338.00, for a new total contract amount not to exceed \$333,925.00.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-345 COMMISSIONER REBECCA LYNNE WILLIAMS:** Amending Resolution Number 2021-138, an agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture, the Animal Plant, Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA, APHIS, WS) for the purpose of reducing wildlife damage to human health and safety, property, and natural resources in Union County, to reflect a change in account numbers only.



On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-346 COMMISSIONER REBECCA LYNNE WILLIAMS:** Authorizing the County Manager to execute a License Agreement with DEWLAX, Inc. to hold a Girls' Lacrosse Tournament at Oak Ridge Park on May 7, 2023.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-347 VICE CHAIRWOMAN KIMBERLY PALMIERI-MOUEDED:** Authorizing the County Manager to affirm the County of Union's compliance with the Governing Body Certification of Compliance with the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's "Enforcement Guidance on the Consideration of Arrest and Conviction Records in Employment Decisions Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964" in accordance with State law, when submitting the budget for approval, the County certifies that our hiring practices comply with the EEOC requirements.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-348 VICE CHAIRWOMAN KIMBERLY PALMIERI-MOUEDED:** Exceeding the County tax levy limit and to establish a CAP Bank (N.J.S.A. 40A: 4-45.14).

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-349 VICE CHAIRWOMAN KIMBERLY PALMIERI-MOUEDED:** Introducing and Approving the Annual Budget of the County of Union for the Fiscal Year 2023.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-350 VICE CHAIRWOMAN KIMBERLY PALMIERI-MOUEDED:** Authorizing the County Manager to award subcontracts as listed on the Union County Youth Services Commission Spending Plan to provide program services based on the Juvenile Justice Commission Points of Continuum: Prevention, Diversion, Detention, Disposition and Reentry in the total amount not to exceed \$261,267.00 for the contract period of April 17, 2023 through December 31, 2023.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-351 VICE CHAIRWOMAN KIMBERLY PALMIERI-MOUEDED:** Amending Resolution 2022-1077, a resolution authorizing individual agreements with various agencies to deliver the activities, programs and services under the Union County Youth Services Commission Spending Plan, to reflect a change in account numbers only.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-352 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Amending Resolution Number 2022-1020, a contract with Royal Printing Services, West New York, NJ, to reflect a change in account numbers only.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-353 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Amending Resolution Number 2022-976, a contract with B & B Press Inc., Lebanon, New Jersey, to reflect a change in account numbers only.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-354 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Amending Resolution Number 2022-977, a contract with Full Service Mailers, Hackensack, NJ, to reflect a change in account numbers only.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-355 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Authorizing the County Manager to apply for and accept funding for the State of New Jersey, Office of the Attorney General's FFY21 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Grant Program for project titled County Office of Victim Witness Advocacy in the amount of \$446,688.00 in federal funds with a required match of \$111,672.00 for a project total cost in the amount of \$558,360.00 for the period of July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-356 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Authorizing the County Manager to apply for and accept funding for the State of New Jersey, Office of the Attorney General's FFY22 STOP Violence Against Woman Act (VAWA) Grant Program in the amount of \$34,495.00 in federal funds with a required match of \$11,498.00 for a total project cost in the amount of \$45,993.00 for the period of July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-357 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Authorizing the County Manager to apply for and accept funding for the State of New Jersey, Office of the Attorney General's Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program to support the Multi-Jurisdictional Gang, Gun, and Narcotics Task Forces for the period of July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 in the amount of \$105,150.00.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-358 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Amending Resolution 2022-567, a contract with Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc., (D/B/A/ Life Technologies), Waltham, MA, to reflect a change/addition of account number only.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-359 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Amending Resolution 2021-205, a contract with SOE Software Corporation d/b/a Scytl, Tampa, FL, for the purposes of providing additional updates for the Union County Virtual Poll Worker Training platform in the amount of \$3,450.00 for a new contract amount not to exceed \$87,082.00.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-360 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Authorizing the County Manager to sign any and all documents necessary to enter into a Collective Bargaining Agreement with the IBEW Local 1158, effective January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2024.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-361 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Authorizing the County Manager to sponsor the Union County Educational Services Commission and Overlook Hospital, by providing monetary assistance for the Union County Project SEARCH Program to cover travel and training for nine (9) students with NJTIP at Rutgers, NJ Transit tickets, and Licenses for Virtual Job Shadow.com, in an amount not to exceed \$30,000.00.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-362 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Authorizing the County Manager to award a contract to Business Automation Technologies (D/B/A Data Network Solutions), Little Silver, NJ, through the Educational Services Commission of NJ #65MCESCCPS, for Internet Services for Data Network for the period of January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023 in an amount not to exceed \$11,865.00.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-363 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Amending Resolution Number 2023-0325, authorizing an application for and to accept funding from the State of New Jersey, Department of Community Affairs, Division of Local Government Services, under the Local Efficiency Achievement Program (LEAP) Implementation Grant, to reflect a reduced amount requested from \$400,000.00 to \$373,000.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-364 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Approving a request for a waiver of the County's residency requirement for Rita Cerbone, Department of Economic Development.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-365 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Amending Resolution 2023-285, a contract with Community Access Unlimited for Supportive Services for customers of the American Job Center, to reflect account number changes only; all other terms and conditions of the prior resolutions and contract remain the same.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-366 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Amending Resolution Number 2023-293, which appointed Bernadette Griswold and Jenny Davis Toth to the Workforce Development Board for a term ending June 30, 2026, to reflect a corrected term beginning July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2025.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-367 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Authorizing the County Manager to utilize the competitive contracting procurement process to procure Solar Energy Audit Services.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-368 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS:** Authorizing the County Manager to utilize the competitive contracting procurement process to procure solar equipment and / or enter into a Power Purchase Agreement.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

#### COMMISSIONER SPONSORED RESOLUTIONS

- 2023-369 COMMISSIONER BETTE JANE KOWALSKI, CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS, & THE ENTIRE BOARD:** Offering this Board's congratulations as the historic Boxwood Hall, located in the City of Elizabeth, upon celebrating its 80th anniversary on April 10, 2023.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

- 2023-370 VICE CHAIRWOMAN KIMBERLY PALMIERI-MOUEDED, & THE ENTIRE BOARD:** Recognizing the month of May 2023 as "Mental Health Awareness Month" in an effort to increase outreach and education regarding mental health and reduce the stigma often associated with mental illness.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-371 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS, & THE ENTIRE BOARD:** Offering this Board's sincere condolences to the family of Carolann Bednar during their time of sorrow.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-372 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS, COMMISSIONER ALEXANDER MIRABELLA, & THE ENTIRE BOARD:** Recognizing the month of April 2020 as National Donate Life Month in Union County; and further encouraging Union County residents to register as organ, eye and tissue donors and to honor those that have saved lives through the gift of donation.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-373 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS, & THE ENTIRE BOARD:** Congratulating the 2023 Unity Award recipients upon being honored by the Union County Human Relations Commission.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

**2023-374 CHAIRMAN SERGIO GRANADOS, & THE ENTIRE BOARD:** Recognizing April 30, 2023 as "National Therapy Animal Day" throughout the County of Union celebrating the wide variety of ways in which therapy animals can make a difference in the mental and physical wellness of children, adults, and seniors alike.

On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Kowalski, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

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#### COMMISSIONER REPORTS AND COMMENTS

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Commissioner Bodek encouraged seniors and their caregivers to attend the County's ASK Program, noting that County staff from the Division of Aging would be on-site at local libraries and community centers each month to provide information and resources relative to available services for aging residents from Union County. Commissioner Bodek also reminded residents about the County's recycling programs taking place through the spring, summer and fall. He noted that services would include document-shredding, scrap metal, and household hazardous waste events. On another note, he reminded residents that the County was continuing its Fresh Start Mobile Program to bring basic services to residents in need. To close, Commissioner Bodek encouraged residents to get their COVID-19 vaccines to curb the spread of the virus, noting that changes would be forthcoming relative to the hours and days of operations at the County's COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites.

Commissioner Leon advised that in recognition of Arbor Day 2023, the Board would be hosting an award's ceremony presentation for the winners of the Annual Poetry Contest at the next Commissioners' meeting on April 27<sup>th</sup>. She noted that this contestant, in partnership with Union County's Shade Tree Advisory Board, encouraged environmental stewardship and tree conservation among students, adding that she was looking forward to hearing the youth read their wonderful poems. Commissioner Leon further advised that awards would be given to the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winners for each grade respectively. She noted that Arbor Day was first introduced in Nebraska in 1872 and was now nationally observance. She added that this year it would be celebrated on April 28<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Kowalski thanked the members of the public for their participation in the evening's meeting and for the rich, historical facts they shared. Relative to the Union County seal, she reassured Kelly Komar, the creator of the online petition, that the Board was considering the petition in its ongoing discussions relative to the change. As the Union County Commissioner Liaison to the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, Commissioner Kowalski advised that Union County was partnering with NJTP to conduct a study on the placement of EV charging stations in the State over the next ten years. She advised that the County would be hosting a Zoom meeting on April 25<sup>th</sup> to secure public input to this effect. She noted that by December 2025, the State of NJ hope to have 330,000 registered passenger EVs as well as 400 public fast chargers in no fewer than 200 locations throughout the state. Commissioner Kowalski further advised that the next part of the study would focus on the accessibility of level two and level three DCFC chargers for public use. She noted that the County and Liza Betz, the Union County's Transportation Planning Manager, were committed to being at the forefront of transportation innovation and technology. To close, Commissioner Kowalski encouraged residents to view the County's Falcon Camera to catch a glimpse of the four eggs that were recently laid, noting that she looked forward seeing the eyases once they hatched.

Commissioner Baker advised that County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi would be hosting a notary public training seminar on Friday, May 12<sup>th</sup> at the John H. Stamler Police Academy in Scotch Plains. He noted that seats were limited and registration was required, adding that a \$10 registration fee applied. Commissioner Baker further advised that attendees were expected to adhere to the strict dress code at the John J. Stamler Police Academy, noting that men were required to wear collared shirts and sneakers and jeans were not permitted.

Commissioner Mirabella advised that in honor of National Poetry Month the Board would be hosting a discussion on April 18 at the Patricia M. Kuran Cultural Arts Center in Fanwood featuring Pulitzer Prize Winning Journalist and Poet Tina Kelley. He added that the event was free but pre-registration was required. Commissioner Mirabella noted that Tina Kelley previously worked for the NY Times, Star Ledger, and NJ Monthly Magazine among others publications, adding that she was awarded a Pulitzer Price for her coverage of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. He advised that National Poetry had become a worldwide literary celebration and the Board was proud to support these efforts presented by the County's Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs with funding from the NJ State Council of Arts. On another note, Commissioner Mirabella recognized the County's Fiscal Committee, including County Manager Oatman, Vice-Chairwoman Palmieri-Mouded Finance and Director Taylor for their efforts in presenting another County budget with a 0 increase for the 4<sup>th</sup> year in a row. He noted that this

achievement was no small feat, adding that the County continued to maintain its triple AAA bond rating as well. He advised that this budget illustrated the capable management and financial strength of Union County. In response to earlier comments, Commissioner Mirabella noted his support of the County's ongoing discussions related to repurposing old rail lines to provide convenient walking and biking trails for residents, adding that he was a strong supporter of such initiatives. Relative to the Union County seal, he advised that while he was not in favor of changing the current seal, he hoped that this matter could be resolved while also allowing for the concerns of residents to be heard. To close, Commissioner Mirabella apologized for interrupting the public speaker making unfounded claims about organ donation. He recognized that these claims could negatively impact how people viewed organ donation, and felt compelled to set the record straight.

Commissioner Williams thanked everyone from the public for participating in the evening's meeting, adding that she was still in favor of changing the Union County seal. She noted that she did not like the image depicted on the current seal and argued against claims that changing the seal would alter history and minimize the contributions of Union County and Hannah Caldwell in American History. She mentioned other individuals in American History that were assassinated, adding that the moment of their deaths were not used to memorialize them. Commissioner Williams also noted the role of slavery and indigenous persons in American history, adding that this history was rarely highlighted. She shared that she preferred the quadrant design with Hannah Caldwell's portrait, adding that if selected, adjustments could be made to that design to remedy the placement of the Courthouse tower and plane. On another note, Commissioner Williams invited residents to attend the County's Film Ready Workshop at Kean University on April 14<sup>th</sup>. She advised that the workshop was designed as a five-step program that would prepare and enable municipalities within Union County to effectively accommodate on-location filming as well as market their communities as filming destinations. She added that the event at Kean University was the first step in certification as attendees would receive information about the economic benefits of hosting on-location filming and training as well as guidance from industry professionals. She noted that information related to ordinances and permits would also be discussed and attendees would receive a tool-kit to attract and welcome potential productions to their communities. She advised that in partnership with the Board of Commissioners and Union County's Motion Picture & Television Advisory Board, Union County was looking forward to launching this initiative to attract filming productions.

Commissioner Garretson acknowledged Kelly Komar and her efforts relative to the Union County seal and thanked her for continuing to support the efforts of Salaam Ismial and the 1741 Project. She noted the instrumental role she personally played in updating the term Freeholder, adding that it was important to garner widespread support as a means to evoke meaningful change.

County Manager Oatman noted that the Change.Org petition had received 1,800 online signatures in comparison to the 5,000 votes received for a new design through the County's online poll. He advised that the County's online poll was exclusively open to U.C. residents, whereas the Change.Org petition was open to everyone.

Vice-Chairwoman Palmieri-Mouded thanked the members from the public for participating in the evening's meeting and sharing their concerns relative to changing the Union County seal. She noted that her children had recently come home very excited following a classroom activity in which they learned about the current seal and voted for the new seal on the County's online poll. She advised that even though her children were previously familiar with the seal, they had never shown any interest in the topic until it was addressed in school. She noted that the discussions relative to changing the Union County seal provided students with a valuable learning experience and she was happy to hear and consider the differing perspectives on the matter. On another note, Vice-Chairwoman Palmieri-Mouded advised that Trailside Nature & Science Center in Mountainside would be hosting a family-friendly presentation on Saturday related to wildlife with award-winning author Marty Essen. She also reminded residents that on April 30<sup>th</sup>, the County would also be hosting its Annual Wild Earth Fest at Trailside Nature & Science Center, which would include a variety of activities for children, including crafts, food, music and more.

Chairman Granados advised that while the concept of the two new Union County seal would remain unchanged, the County reserved the right to alter the placement of the images on the quadrant design as cited on the online poll. He noted that one of the new designs included a portrait of Hannah Caldwell, adding that this portrait was also featured on the Union Townships Historical Society website. Chairman Granados further advised that rolling out the new seal would be a gradual process and confirmed that the County would continue to use inventory with the existing seal until items were exhausted. He noted the 1,800 signatures received on the Change.Org petition in opposition of the change, and confirmed that the County's online poll for a new seal had garnered over 5,000 votes from Union County resident. Chairman Granados advised that during his discussions with Union Township's Historical Society, he had relayed his strong support for partnering with schools across the County to teach students about Hannah Caldwell and the significant role of Union County in the American Revolution. He reaffirmed that the decision to change the County seal was not meant to erase history, but rather honor Hannah Caldwell and her sacrifice in a different way as depicted by one of the new seal designs. On another note, Chairman Granados advised that in honor 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance Month in April, the County would be hosting a free expungement clinic and job fair on April 20<sup>th</sup> at Warinanco Sports Center. He noted that volunteer attorneys would be on-site to provide information and guidance relative to the expungement process. He added that employers like PepsiCo, Amazon, Wakefern/Shoprite, and FedEx among others would also be on-site to discuss employment opportunities with attendees. He further advised that Veterans could also attend and receive assistance relative to upgrading their discharge papers.

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#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

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To the extent known, the following item will be discussed in Executive Session:

- 1) Attorney client privileged discussion as to possible litigation concerning election procedures.



County Counsel Bergen stated that pursuant to provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, a public body may enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing certain enumerated subjects.

He stated that the Board wished to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing Attorney client privileged discussion as to possible litigation concerning election procedures.

He stated that the minutes of the Executive Session shall be separated from the minutes of the Open Public Session and that the minutes of the Executive Session, redacted as appropriate and necessary, shall be available in approximately 30 days. He stated that the Clerk of the Board shall retain the original minutes until such time as the confidential limitations have been removed, at which time they shall be made available.

He stated that upon affirmative vote of the majority of the members present, the Board may enter Executive Session and upon the Board's return may or may not take formal action on the matters discussed.

Chairman Granados called for a motion to enter into Executive Session. On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Vice-Chairwoman Palmieri-Mouded, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

Chairman Granados called for a motion to return from Executive Session. On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Commissioner Williams roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

County Counsel Bergen advised that he had nothing to report following Executive Session.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Granados asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. On a motion made by Commissioner Mirabella and seconded by Vice-Chairwoman Palmieri-Mouded, roll call showed nine members of the Board voted in the affirmative.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 P.M.

**UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
2023 MEETING SCHEDULE  
REORGANIZATION MEETING - THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 2023 at 6:00 pm  
Union County Courthouse- 2 Broad Street. Elizabeth**

**AGENDA SETTING SESSION**

January 26, 2023  
February 9, 2023  
February 23, 2023  
March 16, 2023  
March 30, 2023  
April 13, 2023  
April 27, 2023  
May 11, 2023  
May 25, 2023  
June 8, 2023  
June 22, 2023  
July 13, 2023  
August 17, 2023  
September 7, 2023  
September 21, 2023  
October 12, 2023  
October 26, 2023  
November 9, 2023  
December 7, 2023  
December 21, 2023

**REGULAR MEETINGS**

January 26, 2023  
February 9, 2023  
February 23, 2023  
March 16, 2023  
March 30, 2023  
April 13, 2023  
April 27, 2023  
May 11, 2023  
May 25, 2023  
June 8, 2023  
June 22, 2023  
July 13, 2023  
August 17, 2023  
September 7, 2023  
September 21, 2023  
October 12, 2023  
October 26, 2023  
November 9, 2023  
December 7, 2023  
December 21, 2023

  
James E. Pelletiere, RMC, QPA  
Clerk of the Board

Please note that the County Commissioners' meetings are to be regularly held on Thursday evenings and are scheduled to be held on the same evening, with the

Agenda Setting Session to commence at 6:00pm and the Regular Meeting to commence as soon as possible after the Agenda Setting Session, unless otherwise noted.

All meetings are to be held in the Commissioner Meeting Room within the Administration Building, 6<sup>th</sup> floor located at 10 Elizabethtown Plaza, Elizabeth New Jersey, 07207.

Due to the Covid-19 coronavirus concerns, County Commissioner meetings may be held remotely via Zoom webinar under the procedures conducted, as published, in 2021. If said procedures are deemed necessary, the Clerk of the Board will revise this Public Notice according to law.

Persons requiring a sign language interpreter should contact the Office of the Clerk of the Board at 908-527-4140.