

CWA Local 1081

Fax

TO: Al Fusco
FROM: David Weiner
DATE: November 6, 2009
**RE: OPRA Request Re. Final Report of Government Review Task
Force Final Report**
Pages, Including Cover Sheet: 6
**COMMENT: Please note the content of the attached letter written Mr.
DiVincenzo in this exact regard.**

3. The Rev. Reginald T. Jackson, Pastor of St. Matthew's AME Church in Orange, Executive Director of the Black Ministers Council and President of the Essex County College Board of Trustees.
4. Phillip G. LeBel, PhD, Professor of Economics at Montclair State University.
5. Ernest C. Reock, Jr., a Professor Emeritus and former Director of the Rutgers University Center for Government Services.
6. Steven H. Klinghoffer, a resident of Short Hills, President of WPI Communications, Inc., a Springfield-based company that publishes development tools for professionals and the Commissioners for the Essex County Improvement Authority since 2000.
7. Richard W. Roper, a resident of Maplewood, the founder and President of the Roper Group, a public policy consulting firm specializing in economic and social policy research and analysis.
8. Peter Shapiro, Managing Director of Swap Financial Group, an independent advisor and arranger of interest rate derivatives in the United States governmental agencies.
9. Maria Vizcarrondo, the then President and Chief Executive Officer of the United Way of Essex and West Hudson and the present Director of the City of Newark's Department of Child and Family Wellbeing (formerly the Department of Health and Human Services).

Sincerely,

David H. Weiner, President
CWA Local 1081

**Essex County Government Review Task Force
Meeting Summary
September 7, 2006**

Present: Stephanie Bush-Baskette, Maria Vizacarrondo, Phillip LeBel, Richard Roper, Ernest Reock, Rev Reginald T. Jackson, Dan Kaslow

Absent: Peter Shapiro, Anthony Coscia, Chimezie Ozarumba

Meeting started at 9:35 am

- Stephanie Bush-Baskette – Chaired the meeting. First item to discuss revised Shared Services Report.
- Richard Roper and Dan Kaslow provided an overview of the shared services report.
Highlights:
 1. Benefits of Shared Services
 2. Use of Shared Services by Essex County Municipalities
 3. Issues that Impede Shared Services
 4. Recommendations
 5. Definitions of Shared Services

It was recommended to highlight one or two examples of cost savings and better services in the report (police dispatch).

- Stephanie Bush-Baskette – Second discussion item Property Tax burden report.
- Ernie Reock – provided an overview of the Property Tax Burden Report.
Highlights:
 1. Essex Compared With Other Counties
 2. Components of the Essex County Property Tax
 3. Chart – Total Property Tax in Constant 2005 Dollars for County, Municipal and School
 4. Chart – Average Equalized Property Tax Rates for County, Municipal, and School
 5. Chart – Property Tax Purposes per Capital in Constant 2005 Dollars, Essex County and Other NJ Counties
 6. Chart – Equalized Property Tax Rate for County Purposes, Essex County and Other NJ Counties
 7. Chart – Components of the Essex County Property Tax Levy in Constant 2005 Dollars
 8. Chart – Components of the Essex County Property Tax Rate
 9. Appendix B – Essex County and Other County Property Tax Data, 1974-2005
- Task Force – Recommended a professional be hired to edit and produce the final report.
- Next Meeting to be scheduled after task force as the opportunity to submit comments of all sections of the report via email.

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ESSEX COUNTY EXECUTIVE DIVINCENZO ANNOUNCES THE CREATION OF GOVERNMENT REVIEW TASK FORCE

Volunteer Group Will Study How County, Municipalities and School Boards

Can Work Together to Control Costs

Newark, NJ – Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. announced the creation of an ad hoc Government Review Task Force and introduced the volunteer members who will be serving during a press conference in his office on Wednesday, February 2nd.

"Our Government Review Task Force will look at how the three levels of government that impact residents' tax bills – County and municipal governments, and the Boards of Education – work. They will study how costs can be controlled, and seek new solutions to help reduce the property tax burden on our residents," DiVincenzo said.

Property taxes are the number one concern of Essex County residents. Making this his administration's top priority, DiVincenzo implemented an aggressive plan to streamline County government and deliver services more effectively and cost efficiently. A total of \$31 million in spending was cut in 2003 and 2004, the first two years of DiVincenzo's administration. These savings were achieved by streamlining operations, eliminating unnecessary contracts and positions, and cutting expenses. The County Executive has continued to follow a hiring freeze that was initiated in June 2003. He also worked with officials from the Essex County Improvement Authority, Essex County Utilities Authority, Essex County Vocational School District and Essex County College to follow his example and reduce their operating budgets. In the Vocational schools and County College, reductions were made in administrative areas so classroom instruction was not affected.

Millions of dollars in future construction and financing costs were saved by expediting the completion of major capital projects, such as building the new Essex County Correctional Facility, renovating the Historic Essex County Courthouse, completing the remediation of Riverbank Park and restoring Verona Park.

The County Executive also has worked aggressively to obtain alternate funding sources. In the last two years he has partnered with 17 local park conservancies and received almost \$19 million in Green Acres grants to fund a comprehensive initiative to improve the Essex County Park System. The NJ Department of Transportation and Port Authority each allocated \$6 million grants to Essex County to construct public parking garages in West Orange and Newark, respectively. These new structures, both opened in 2004, have provided much-needed parking for commuters. DiVincenzo has also created partnerships with Congressman Bill Pascrell and The Prudential Foundation to support the new Essex County Environmental Center and with the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority and the State to support the expansion and renovation of Essex County's South Mountain Arena.

These efforts were noticed by Moody's Investors Services, a prominent Wall Street ratings firm, that upgraded Essex County's bond rating to Baa1 with a Positive Outlook from Baa2 with a Positive Outlook. This is the first time in Essex County's history that it has received an upgrade in its bond rating from Moody's.

"The creation of the Government Review Task Force is the next step we are taking to identify innovative ways Essex County, our municipalities and school districts can work together for the benefit of our taxpayers," the Executive noted.

"Citizens are discontented with rising property taxes. We want to look at the numbers and find out where the burden is coming from and how it falls on our taxpayers," said Peter Shapiro, Managing Director of Swap Financial Group and former Essex County Executive. "We are going to conduct an objective, fact-based review of the County and the 22 municipalities and their school districts. We will be looking county-wide and do this very openly and without any prejudice of the

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issues," added Shapiro, who was named Chairman of the volunteer Task Force.

"There is a need for a study of this nature. There is not a lot of information out there," he added.

The Task Force's nine volunteer members have diverse backgrounds, and come from the fields of labor, education and the private sector. "The task force members are very qualified professionals, who each bring their own unique perspective about government and how it should work," DiVincenzo said.

Serving on the Government Review Task Force are:

Stephanie R. Bush-Baskette, Esq., PhD, a resident of West Orange, is the Director of the Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies at Rutgers University in Newark. She also has served in various capacities in municipal and State government, and in national and academic organizations.

Anthony R. Coscia, Esq., a resident of North Caldwell, is Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Port Authority of NY/NJ, a partner in the law firm of Windels Marx Lane & Mittendorf, and Director of Interchange Financial Services Corporation.

The Rev. Reginald T. Jackson is Pastor of St. Matthew's AME Church in Orange, Executive Director of the Black Ministers Council and President of the Essex County College Board of Trustees. Under his leadership, St. Matthew's created its own community development organization.

Phillip G. LeBel, PhD, is a resident of Montclair and Professor of Economics at Montclair State University. He teaches in the field of applied micro-economics and public finance, and has consulted with The World Bank, U.S. State Department and U.S. AID on African economic policy issues.

Ernest C. Reock, Jr., a native of Belleville, is a Professor Emeritus and former Director of the Rutgers University Center for Government Services, and was a member of the New Jersey Property Tax Convention Task Force in 2004. He has authored numerous reports on municipal government organization, legislative apportionment and public school finance.

Steven H. Klinghoffer, a resident of Short Hills, is President of WPI Communications, Inc., a Springfield-based company that publishes development tools for professionals. He also has been a member of the Board of Commissioners for the Essex County Improvement Authority since 2000.


Richard W. Roper, a resident of Maplewood, is the founder and President of the Roper Group, a public policy consulting firm specializing in economic and social policy research and analysis. He has held senior level positions in local, state and federal government agencies and is the author of several articles and reports on social, economic, political and government operations issues.











Peter Shapiro, a resident of South Orange, is Managing Director of Swap Financial Group, an independent advisor and arranger of interest rate derivatives in the United States. His clients include corporations, non-profits and governmental agencies. Shapiro served two terms as Essex County Executive.

Maria Vizcarrondo-DeSoto, a resident of Newark, is President and Chief Executive Officer of the United Way of Essex and West Hudson. She has vast experience working in government, education and non-profit sectors, and has a track record of building effective collaborations throughout the community.

The task force is scheduled to begin meeting in March.

###

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 **Events**

-  [Essex County Environmental Center Fall 2009 Special Events](#)
-  [Figure Skating Mini Camp: November 5 & 6](#)
-  [Riker Hill Art Park Open House and Sale: November 7 & 8](#)