

Freeholders OK Ordinance Giving Raises to Directors
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Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

COUNTY – The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders last week introduced an ordinance that will authorize raises to 10 department directors between \$2,000 and \$3,000. It is the first time in four years that the board has issued raises to directors. The freeholders also approved a resolution for a 2-percent pay increase for non-union employees in 2013. The public hearing and adoption vote on the ordinance will be Thursday, December 20.

According to a copy of the ordinance obtained by The Westfield Leader, County Manager Al Faella will receive a \$3,000 increase to \$158,100. He was promoted to county manager in August 2011 from director of parks and community renewal, replacing George Devanney, who retired. Mr. Devanney's salary was \$168,336.

Other increases are as follows: County Counsel Robert Barry, \$152,504, a \$3,000 increase; Director of Engineering, Public Works and Facilities Joseph Graziano, \$121,685, representing a \$7,300 hike; Public Safety Director Andrew Moran, \$116,069, up \$2,276; Human Services Director Frank Guzzo, \$133,967, an increase of \$2,627; Director of Correctional Services Brian Riordan, \$119,646, an increase of \$2,300; Runnells Specialized Hospital Director Joan Wheeler, \$132,796, up \$2,600, and Finance Director Bibi Taylor, \$122,400, a \$2,400 increase. Ms. Taylor replaced Lawrence Caroselli, who retired, in 2011. He was making \$132,771.

Matthew DiRado, the husband of former freeholder clerk and current Deputy County Clerk Nicole DiRado, will be paid \$122,399, an increase of \$2,400, as director of administrative services. Last December he received a boost of \$25,529 when he was promoted from director of the Division of Personnel Management and Labor Relations to acting director of the Department of Administrative Services. He replaced Elizabeth Genievich upon her retirement. Ms. Genievich was paid \$146,357. Director of Parks and Community Renewal Ron Zuber will receive a \$2,280 salary increase to \$116,280. Like Mr. DiRado, Mr. Zuber also was promoted last December from community organization specialist to acting director of parks and community renewal, an \$11,804 increase.

Freeholder Dan Sullivan defended the raises for non-unionized employees. "They haven't had a raise in five years, and like anyone else, their costs have gone up; the health care costs especially – the contributions they have to make now in their paychecks. After five years, I think that it is a small increase, and well deserved for the hard-working people that we have," Mr. Sullivan said. "These raises do not include the freeholders at all," Mr. Sullivan added.

The freeholders will continue to earn \$29,500, with the chairman earning \$31,500 and the vice-chairman \$30,500. They have not taken an increase since 2006. Cranford resident Jim Buettner said the statement that workers had not had an increase is inaccurate, noting that county employees received lifetime health benefits the past few years. The benefit was first offered to unionized workers in exchange for zero wage increases a few of the years within their union contracts. The benefit was later offered to non-union workers.

Mr. Buettner said the benefit has cost the county over \$100 million. The freeholders also passed a resolution authorizing that raises for noncontractual employees be increased based on the Consumer Price Index of 1.7 percent. Mr. DiRado said the board had not increased the CPI percentage for raises since 2006, with the board last authorizing non-union raises at the end of 2007 for 2008.

Summit Councilman Tom Getzendanner explained that Summit does its salary adjustments annually. “We don’t let them bunch up for five or six years and we do so on a much smaller amount than 1.7 percent,” he told the freeholders. The freeholders also approved a resolution to accept a \$1,350,000 state Green Acres grant for development of Oak Ridge Park in Clark. Mr. Graziano said the money is a matching grant, meaning the county will have to spend the same amount of county funds for a minimum project total of \$2.7 million.