

**Board of Chosen Freeholders**

County of Hunterdon
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MEDIA RELEASE**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****DATE: April 21, 2020****Contact: Shaun C. Van Doren, Freeholder Director**Shaun.vandoren@co.hunterdon.nj.us

Hunterdon Freeholders' Budget Freezes Tax Rate At 2018 Level

Van Doren: 'Key Part Of Economic Recovery Plan'

The Hunterdon county tax rate will be frozen at the 2018 level again this year, even with additional COVID-19 emergency response costs, under the 2020 budget introduced by the Hunterdon County Freeholders, at the April 21st Board meeting that was held by teleconference.

"Holding the county tax rate at the 2018 level again this year is a key part of the County's plan for economic recovery. With all else that is going on, our business and residential taxpayers need this," Freeholder Board Director Shaun C. Van Doren stated at the meeting.

The 2020 county tax rate will be 31.5 cents per \$100 of property valuation, the same rate as in 2019 and 2018, under the \$89.348 million county budget.

Van Doren added, "The effort in holding the county tax rate flat over the past two years comes from the conservative, business like philosophy in which this Freeholder Board has been engaged for many years.

It comes from controlling costs, which occurs by knowing where the spending is - through a dedicated financial control system, adhered to by all county units and overseen by the Finance Department. And an overall framework of – how can the mandated and necessary services of county government be delivered efficiently."

Freeholder Matt Holt, who along with Van Doren serves on the Budget Committee, noted, "Our policy over the past number years of tight, conservative budgeting continues to payoff for taxpayers, as the \$89.348 million 2020 budget is still \$10 million less than the nearly \$100 million budget from 2006. In fact, the 2020 budget is even lower than the county budget from a decade ago."

Holt added, "If you extrapolate out that 2006 budget with a 2% increase per year, as other counties have done- that budget today would be \$130 million, compared to the 2020 Hunterdon budget of \$89.348 million introduced tonight."

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Van Doren pointed out, "While holding the tax rate flat for a second consecutive year, the budget encompasses increases in costs to support the response to the COVID-19 pandemic - \$100,000 has been added to a one time account set up under the Freeholders' budget, where it can be closely monitored. Additional budget allocations have also been added for emergency management and for the Health Department."

The public hearing on the budget will be held at the May 19, 2020 Freeholder Meeting, at 5:30 pm. Van Doren stated, "We'll take our guidance from the Governor's directives and public health officials, but the public should expect that meeting to most likely be conducted remotely."

The 2020 Hunterdon County Budget is available on-line at www.co.hunterdon.nj.us.