

## **Hunterdon Freeholders Succeeded In Meeting Key Challenges In 2019**

During 2019, the Hunterdon County Freeholder Board lived up to Freeholder Director Suzanne Lagay's projection, at the January 7th re-organization meeting, that the 2019 Board would be, "a strong fiscally conservative governing body that proves with careful analysis, investing in the future is profoundly conservative."

History was made on January 7, 2019 when Lagay was unanimously selected by her colleagues for a second tour of duty as Board Director, marking the first time in the County's 305-year history that a woman has served as Director twice. Lagay also served as Director in 2016.

And additional history was made that day, when Freeholder Sue Soloway was sworn in as only the fourth woman to ever serve on the County's governing board.

Lagay and Soloway were joined by Freeholders John E. Lanza, Matt Holt, and Shaun Van Doren on the five-member Freeholder Board for 2019.

Starting with holding the County tax rate flat for the fourth time in five years, a clean audit report for the third straight year, expanded shared services benefiting the taxpayers, economic development successes, and the preservation of significant open space and farmland acreage, the 2019 Freeholder Board's strategic fiscal actions positioning the County well for the future, have proven Freeholder Lagay's projection prescient.

Director Lagay stated, "A flat tax rate, budget control, and a clean audit have resulted from hard work done by the Freeholders, and the County's Department Heads and staff, over the last few years.

One achievement in which I have considerable pride is the fact that the 2019 budget is \$330,000 less than the 2013 budget that Freeholder John Lanza and I inherited when we joined the Board. As I said when the budget was adopted in May, what else in anyone's life is less costly now than it was six years ago?"

In addition to planning for the future, the Freeholder Board also proved adept at dealing with instant issues encountered by the County.

When confronted by the problem caused by the NJDEP's failure to provide funding for black fly suppression along the Delaware River, the Freeholders stepped up to provide the Pennsylvania DEP with funding to gain spraying along river to suppress black flies that negatively affect the quality of life for residents.

The Board fought back against the state's cut to education aid to most of the County's school districts, organizing an on-line petition signed by nearly 1000 residents calling on Trenton leaders to reverse the cuts.

Hunterdon's Freeholders also successfully stood firm against the abuse of eminent domain by the Penn East pipeline project which resulted in a federal court decision that prevents the pipeline company from taking state and county preserved land.

"There were many challenges during the course of the year and I can say with great confidence that my colleagues on the Board always put the interest of the residents of Hunterdon County first," concluded Lagay, who after serving two three-year terms on the Freeholder Board, chose not to seek re-election in 2019.