



October 7, 2020

Freeholder Dir. Joseph Derella
Cumberland County Board of Freeholders
164 W. Broad St.
Bridgeton, NJ 08302

Dear Freeholder Director Derella:

This summer, you announced the closing of the county jail and the cancellation of the county's capital construction of a new jail.

All of these announcements were made without a single public hearing or vote on these pressing matters of public policy. How the county houses, transports, and treats our inmate population matters to the public and me. I've been clear in my opposition to closing the jail - but neither the inmates, nor their families and counsel, nor tax paying public and bondholders have not had an opportunity to be heard, and be a part of any type of conversation and or discussion on such an important matter. In fact, these decisions have been made under some sort of a dark shadow within a veil of secrecy. Not to mention against a backdrop of an FBI investigation looking into the Cumberland County Improvement Authority, among other county agencies.

You have failed to be open and transparent with sitting and duly elected Cumberland County Freeholders, the Public, our devoted employees, our inmates, and their family's. Your decision making is suspect at best. You have published no plan about how you intend to go about this scheme. You have presented nothing to the board. We have voted on nothing that would give either you or anyone any authority to lay any employees off, let alone to close the jail.

Additionally, there are 121 public employee jobs on-the-line; they too deserve an opportunity to speak before us. We have over 300 inmates, their family's and their counsel. They need an opportunity to speak before us.

Consequently, PBA Local #231 has a hearing on their order to show cause regarding your proposed layoff plan on October 19 before Assignment Judge Benjamin Telsey. The PBA also has an additional complaint pending before the state's Civil Service Commission.

All of this is to say that rushing to hold an emergency meeting of the Cumberland County Board of Freeholders on October 9 to vote on an inmate transfer agreement with Atlantic County is a rush to judgement. Too much is uncertain at this time - and this is not a decision that we can walk back. It deserves careful consideration and before we hold a vote we should (1) hold a

public hearing (2) pause to hear from Judge Telsey, and (3) await a decision from the Civil Service Commission. Hear from all those involved.

Please cancel Friday's emergency meeting, hold a public hearing on the jail, and allow the other levels and branches of government to weigh-in before we hold a vote.

Sincerely,

Jack Surrency
Freeholder