

# NEWS RELEASE

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## Sarnoski Sworn, Gardner Named Director as Freeholder Board Reorganizes

(BELVIDERE, NJ, Jan. 2, 2017) – The Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders named Richard D. Gardner as director for 2017 as the Board conducted its annual reorganization meeting at the Courthouse in Belvidere.

Freeholder Jason J. Sarnoski, who was re-elected in November, took the oath of office for a third three-year term, while Freeholder Edward J. Smith was named Deputy Director for the year.

Also taking the oath of office was Warren County Sheriff James McDonald, who was elected in November.

State Sen. Michael Doherty (R-23<sup>rd</sup> District) administered the oath to Sarnoski and Gardner, while Washington Township Committeeman Michael Kovacs swore in McDonald, who is a retired Washington Township police chief.

In addition to setting a temporary budget, approving an annual meeting schedule, determining which departments and agencies each freeholder will serve as liaison to, and voting on other annual reorganization business, the freeholders unanimously established a Heroin and Opioid Addiction Awareness Task Force to combat the abuse epidemic. The board



*Warren County Freeholder Jason J. Sarnoski, center, recites the oath of office for a third term, while accompanied by his wife, Tammi, and children Skyler and Jason. State Sen. Michael Doherty administered the oath of office, as he had when Sarnoski was first elected and then re-elected.*

previously announced it planned to form the task force, and volunteers from the community are being sought. Residents interesting in participating are asked to visit the Warren County website at [www.co.warren.nj.us/personnel/VolunteerOpportunities.html](http://www.co.warren.nj.us/personnel/VolunteerOpportunities.html) and click to download the Volunteer Application, fill it out and return it to the address listed on the application.



*Freeholder Richard D. Gardner is sworn in as Director for 2017 by state Sen. Michael Doherty.*

In remarks delivered during the meeting, Sarnoski noted that the heroin and opioid abuse problem is “one that is not new, but needs new eyes.” So many good people have been working so hard on the problem, he said, and the new task force is hoping to build on their great work by raising awareness about the problem, seeking to prevent abuse and addiction, and finding more ways to provide treatment.

“This may well be our greatest enemy in Warren County,” Smith said of opioid addiction, noting that some fall into drug abuse after taking prescription pain killers for medical reasons.

“We must eliminate the stigma tied fast to this,” Smith said, and make sure people get the treatment they need to kick opioid addiction.

All three freeholders pledged to continue their fiscally conservative ways in the year ahead. “We operate a very conservative board, and that’s going to stay steadfast. However, we must be responsive to the changes that affect county taxpayers,” Gardner noted.

“The hard work that we have done in Warren County has paid off,” Sarnoski remarked. “We realized the lowest spending in almost a decade, the lowest library tax,

lowest open space tax in more than a decade, and the lowest debt of any county in the state.”

But continued fiscal vigilance is required, and Sarnoski noted, “We will not bend to unfunded demands from the State.”

Smith said he will assume board liaison responsibilities for public safety, the courts and the prosecutor’s office, and will focus on New Jersey’s bail reform laws that went into effect Jan. 1 but include significant unfunded mandates that are a financial burden to the county. Warren and other counties have filed action seeking financial relief from the state, and Smith said he will continue to press for state assistance. Gardner said that residents surrender some of their money in taxes, adding, “It’s up to us to make sure it’s utilized in the best way, and this freeholder board will continue to do that.”



*James McDonald is sworn in as Warren County Sheriff by Washington Township Committeeman Michael Kovacs as Phillipsburg Police Sgt. James McDonald, Jr. holds the Bible.*