

# NEWS RELEASE

County of Warren, New Jersey



## Freeholder Director Smith Honored at Final Meeting

(WHITE TWP., NJ – December 12, 2018) – With high praise, a proclamation and a standing ovation, Warren County said goodbye to retiring Freeholder Director Edward J. Smith at his last meeting.

Smith, a Franklin Township resident, opted not to run for re-election after serving two terms. His successor, Pohatcong Mayor and Freeholder-elect James R. Kern III, will take the oath of office for a three-year term on Jan. 1, 2019.

His two colleagues on the board, Freeholder Jason J. Sarnoski and Freeholder Richard D. Gardner, surprised Smith at the beginning of the meeting by reading and approving a proclamation honoring Smith, then presenting him with a framed copy. The meeting was packed with well-wishers including state Sen. Michael Doherty and Assemblyman John DiMaio, both former Warren County freeholders, who also presented



*Warren County Freeholder Director Edward J. Smith displays the framed proclamation presented to him by Freeholder Richard D. Gardner and Freeholder Jason J. Sarnoski at his last meeting before he retires from the freeholder board.*

a Joint Legislative Resolution paying tribute to Smith.

“You’re the best freeholder Warren County’s ever seen,” said DiMaio, noting that Smith, well-known for his intensity and passion, “made Warren County a much better place than he found it.”

Smith would identify problems and bring solutions, said Doherty, for whom Smith previously served as an aide and then chief of staff.

First elected in 2012, Smith served as Director of the three-member board in 2014 and 2015 as well as the current year. Speaker after speaker – elected officials, county employees, and citizens who

have crossed paths with Smith – noted that he worked tirelessly on issues and accomplished much during his two terms.

The freeholder proclamation noted that Smith spearheaded passage of the first voter-approved bonding resolution by any county in the state, allowing Warren County citizens a more direct say in the level of their future public indebtedness. He also pushed for the successful sale of the County-owned nursing home, saving millions of dollars and creating a tax ratable while still providing important services for county residents.



*Warren County Freeholder Director Edward J. Smith receives a standing ovation from well-wishers at his final meeting before retiring after serving two terms on the freeholder board.*

During his tenure the County opened a new County Library Headquarters and a state-of-the-art County Library Branch, and Smith also helped to advance a state bill to streamline the transfer of county college credits to 4-year state colleges; aided in Warren County Community College's expansion; facilitated the expansion of Warren County's landfill; kept Warren County's budget balanced; and significantly reduced County debt.

He was named Freeholder of the Year by the New Jersey Conference of Mayors in 2016 and the Maurice Fitzgibbons Freeholder of the Year by the New Jersey Association of Counties (NJAC) in 2018; and received the Good Scout Award from the Boy Scouts of America in 2016. In August, Warren County Community College dedicated the Edward J. and Eileen Smith Drone Lab, named for Smith and his wife, who also attended the meeting. Smith has been an advocate of establishing the drone program at the college, seeing it as an opportunity to train residents for jobs of the future.

Through his work with NJAC, Gardner said he has gotten to know many freeholders, but “Bar none, this gentleman is the hardest working freeholder in the State of New Jersey.”

Saying he was sorry to see Smith retire, Gardner noted, “It’s been a pleasure and an honor to serve on this board with you.”

Sarnoski highlighted Smith's "dogged determination" and said his colleague was "literally a full-time freeholder" who "knew what he wanted to do and he did it." Calling him a mentor and a great friend, Sarnoski said, "I'm going to miss you."

Kerry Kirk Pflugh, a Warren County resident who is Director of Local Government Assistance in the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, recalled the meeting where she first encountered Smith, explaining the freeholder spoke for 45 minutes "without taking a breath," telling her all the ills of the DEP and the problems facing the county. When he finished, there was nothing she could say but "Ed, you are one passionate guy."

Kern said he has been Smith's shadow for the past year, seeing all the work Smith has been doing day in and day out. People have asked him what it's like to replace Smith, Kern said, but "You don't replace Ed Smith. Ed Smith is irreplaceable."



*Freeholder Director Edward J. Smith, at his final meeting. Smith is retiring after serving two terms.*



*Assemblyman John DiMaio and Sen. Michael Doherty presented a Joint Legislative Resolution to Smith honoring his service.*

State Republican Chairman Douglas Steinhardt, a former mayor of Lopatcong Township, said he has seen plenty of other politicians who are motivated by a desire to climb the ladder to higher office but Smith is only motivated by good government. "He wears his heart on his sleeve and only aspires to do good" out of love for his country, state and community, Steinhardt said.

"This is just overwhelming, to say the least," said Smith, who choked

up with emotion several times during the meeting.

At the close of the meeting, Smith wished Kern well in the position and noted that while he and his fellow freeholders "buted heads more than once," they worked well together.

"Gentlemen, it's been a pleasure," Smith told his colleagues, and turning to the audience, said, "To all of you, thank you."

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**HONORING EDWARD J. SMITH  
WARREN COUNTY FREEHOLDER  
JANUARY 2013 – DECEMBER 2018**

**WHEREAS**, Edward J. Smith was elected a Warren County Freeholder on November 6, 2012, took the oath of office on January 1, 2013, and was re-elected on November 3, 2015 to a term expiring December 31, 2018; and

**WHEREAS**, Edward J. Smith, as a resident and business owner, saw a need for change in government, and some of the issues prompting his scrutiny were tax increases, underground oil tank regulations, bonding without voter approval, and the Highlands Act; but when he spoke out he frequently was told that if he didn't like it, he should run for office, leading him to conclude that with his formal education, business experience, self-directed study of the law, and skills of problem solving, negotiating, and thinking "outside of the box", he should do just that; and

**WHEREAS**, over the span of two terms, his accomplishments as a Warren County Freeholder are many, including: Passage of the first voter-approved bonding resolution by any county in the state, allowing Warren County citizens a more direct say in how their tax dollars are spent and the level of their future public indebtedness; negotiating the successful sale of the County-owned nursing home, saving millions of dollars and creating a tax ratable while still providing important services for county residents; opening a new County Library Headquarters and a state-of-the-art County Library Branch; helping to advance a state bill to streamline the transfer of county college credits to 4-year state colleges; aiding in Warren County Community College's expansion; facilitating the expansion of Warren County's landfill; keeping Warren County's budget balanced; and significantly reducing County debt; and

**WHEREAS**, during his tenure, Edward J. Smith served as Freeholder Director in 2014, 2015, and 2018; was named Freeholder of the Year by the New Jersey Conference of Mayors in 2016 and the Maurice Fitzgibbons Freeholder of the Year by the New Jersey Association of Counties in 2018; received the Good Scout Award from the Boy Scouts of America in 2016; and Warren County Community College dedicated the Edward J. and Eileen Smith Drone Lab in 2018;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders honors Edward J. Smith for his years of distinguished service, congratulates him on his retirement, and wishes him many happy years enjoying life with his wife, Eileen, children and grandchildren, as he pursues his many other interests, including flying his plane, motorcycling, road trips, and completing household projects.

*Jason J. Sarnoski*

*Board of Chosen Freeholders*

*Richard D. Gardner*

*Board of Chosen Freeholders*