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## Warren County Reorganization

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reorganization meeting began with an invocation by state Sen. Douglas J. Steinhart, a ceremonial proclamation from Town Crier William Joseph, the Pledge of Allegiance, and Dani Finken of Phillipsburg singing the National Anthem and God Bless America.

“Locally, 2025 was a great year,” Ciesla said, explaining the commissioners crafted a fiscally responsible budget that provided needed services, preserved farmland, fought the State for funding for the 911 Communications center, fixed roads that were severely damaged by storms, and last summer paid off the last of its bonds, becoming debt-free. “And of course, we spent a year celebrating the 200th birthday of our wonderful Warren County. Thank you to all our wonderful County staff and volunteers of making all that happen,” Ciesla added.

This year, the County moves from marking the bicentennial of its founding to commemorating the nation’s semiquincentennial, “a celebration of 250 years of freedom in the best country in the world,” Ciesla said. While the County is planning some ways to memorialize “this momentous occasion,” Ciesla remarked, “We encourage all of you to come up with ways to celebrate our nation’s birthday, too.”

After listing priorities for the coming year that include upgrading emergency management communication infrastructure, supporting local businesses by focusing on tourism to highlight what makes the county unique, and improving ways to communicate with the public, Ciesla noted, “We will do all of this with an eye on the bottom line, of course. We understand that our revenue is really your hard-earned money.”

Sarnoski began his remarks by thanking his family and friends for their support, and thanking the voters for electing him for a record-tying sixth term. Only Sarnoski and former Freeholder Richard D. Gardner have been elected to six three-year terms since Warren County in 1917 switched to a three-member board with its freeholders – later renamed commissioners – elected at-large.

“I am honored by the trust and confidence you have placed in me, and I pledge to continue working tirelessly to uphold the values and priorities that make Warren County such an exceptional place to live, work, and raise a family,” Sarnoski said.

Sarnoski called making Warren County debt-free “one of our greatest achievements,” noting “This is not merely a financial statistic. It is a powerful statement about prudent governance and fiscal responsibility.”

Sarnoski continued, “Being debt-free means we are not burdened by interest payments or long-term obligations. It gives us flexibility to respond to emergencies, invest in infrastructure, and plan for the future without passing unnecessary costs onto taxpayer. This is a legacy worth protecting.”

Looking ahead to the coming year, Sarnoski remarked that “Our priorities remain clear: Maintain fiscal responsibility, safeguard our debt-free status, and deliver services that enhance the quality of life for every resident of Warren County. Together – with transparency, collaboration, and a shared commitment to excellence – we will meet these challenges and continue to make Warren County a model of good governance.”

Kern said that his priorities as a county commissioner are straightforward: public safety, preservation, and smart growth that keeps this part of the state the special place that it is.

Public safety comes first because it is the underpinning of everything else, Kern asserted, as residents expect their county to be prepared, coordinated and responsive. He noted that in recent months there have been important discussions with law enforcement leaders, municipal officials and municipal prosecutors, and state representatives focused on crime trends in Warren County and across the region. “The County must support local departments, strengthen regional cooperation, and ensure modern systems, technology and communication are in place so agencies can work together effectively,” he said.

Preservation is the next essential priority, as Kern said we must protect what makes the county strong and livable: “Our communities, our farmland, our open space, our parks, and our natural resources.”

Kern added, “The County must become more aggressive and intentional when it comes to land preservation. That includes preserving farmland to support agriculture, protecting land for recreation, and safeguarding open space for future generations.”

Kern called for establishing an improvement authority to connect the priorities and provide a voluntary tool for municipalities to finance capital projects. “Strong public safety supports quality of life. Preservation protects the places people care about. An improvement authority gives us the tools to do both responsibly,” Kern said.



Warren County Commissioner Jason J. Sarnoski, center, is sworn in to a sixth term by county Surrogate Michael J. Doherty as Sarnoski's wife, Tammi, holds the Bible for him.



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