

Add attorneys to the county payroll

To the Editor:

It is shameful that the Freeholders are contracting out the county's legal services to Mr. Gaetano M. DeSapio for an exorbitant amount instead of hiring a salaried full-time attorney.

I requested a 1099 form for Mr. DeSapio under the Open Public Records Act (OPRA). It showed that he received a total of \$845,286 for legal services performed for the county in 2008. If all of Mr. DeSapio's 1099s are pulled, taxpayers would be shocked by the fees he's received from county taxpayers over the years.

My solution for this exorbitant

cost is to hire a lead attorney for \$150,000; hire a county attorney for \$100,000; hire a paralegal for \$50,000; and terminate the services of Mr. DeSapio effective immediately. It will save half a million dollars.

I believe that three Freeholders would be agreeable to terminating the services of Mr. DeSapio. Call the Freeholders and encourage them to terminate Mr. DeSapio's services before the next election. If they agree and do not subsequently terminate him, voters will have the option to vote these Freeholders out of office.

I attended a Freeholders' meeting on Aug. 04 and listened to the Freeholders diatribe with Sheriff Trout's request for new badge holders, off-duty badges and a yearly magazine subscription. (All law enforcement agencies are given IDs or badges for non-working hours. Sheriff's officers are on call 24/7.) The total cost of the holders and badges is \$2,000 and \$25 for the magazine, "Deputy and Court Officer Magazine," which is a guide to safety and court security measures through the National Sheriffs' Association.

The administrator, Ms. Yard, denied Sheriff Trout's voucher requests regarding the badges and other items. Undersheriff Maloney asked Mr. DeSapio to put in writing the legal basis for denying requisitions already budgeted for items such as badges. Mr. DeSapio said he'd get back to the Freeholders af-

ter researching the subject. In other words, Hunterdon County will most likely have to pay Mr. DeSapio more money for his legal services, which might cost more than the badges and badge holders that were requested.

Freeholder Mennen offered to pay for the \$25 subscription cost out of his own pocket because the Freeholders refused to release the appropriated funds already approved.

Freeholders Melick, Mennen and Peterson denied a request to override the administrator's denial of vouchers for badge holders and badges; Freeholders Holt and Sworen abstained.

It should be noted that Freeholder Melick never liked any sheriff in Hunterdon County in the last 25 years and has been undermining the Sheriff's Office for years. He voted to take control of the county jail from the Sheriff's Office in the 1980s and created a bureaucracy called the Department of Public Safety (PDS).

The communications and the county jail are under this department. This should have never happened. The county jail and communications should be under the Sheriff's Office — more expense to taxpayers and less effectiveness for Homeland Security. Perhaps Freeholder Melick is jealous that he is not a constitutional officer.

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