

## Freeholders shelve plan to privatize services at county nursing home

Posted by [kcocuzzo](#) October 22, 2008 23:01PM

Warren County freeholders tonight took off the table a proposal to privatize services at the county's highly regarded nursing home.

After the 2-1 vote that essentially gives Warren Haven nursing home a reprieve through 2009, a spillover crowd that had come to bury the freeholders ended up praising them.

Even Freeholder Everett A. Chamberlain's football coach from Morris County, who has a 91-year-old mother at Warren Haven, showed up to support the nursing home.

The freeholders said they received only one bid to privatize the dietary, laundry and housekeeping operations, and weren't convinced that privatization would allow them to maintain the same level of care at the nursing home in Mansfield Township.

Many in the audience had testimonials about the family-like environment and the care their relatives have received.

"My mom deserves the best care, and she's getting it at Warren Haven," said Jim Lalley of White Township, whose 91-year-old mother resides at the nursing home.

Lalley's brother, Ray, who coached Chamberlain at West Morris High in the 1960s, also had a daughter with multiple sclerosis who was comforted at Warren Haven.

"It's the best nursing home in New Jersey," he said.

Forty years ago, the home didn't have such a good reputation.

John Sozanski as a firefighter and emergency services worker in Washington Borough used to bring people to the nursing home, known then as the "poor house."

But a previous freeholder board made raising the standard of care a priority, and the nursing home's reputation has grown.

"All you are going to do by privatizing is gut that," Sozanski said.

Elaine Reichart, who has an aunt at the nursing home, said the staff at Warren Haven is a "well-oiled team."

"You break that team, you degrade the quality of service for those people who can't defend themselves," she said.

Freeholders Richard D. Gardner and Chamberlain agreed to take the privatization proposal off the table. Freeholder Director John DiMaio dissented, saying he wanted to leave options open until freeholders were through the budget process.

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