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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
DATE: March 17, 2011

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MAYOR REDD TO REHIRE 50 POLICE OFFICERS AND 15 FIREFIGHTERS

Rehiring Of Public Safety Personnel Addresses Short-Term Public Safety Concerns; Mayor Supports Move To Advance Public Safety Regionalization and Shared Services

CAMDEN – Reaffirming her commitment to public safety, Mayor Dana L. Redd today announced that the City of Camden will rehire 50 police officers and 15 firefighters, following an agreement with the administration of Governor Chris Christie that will make \$2.5 million available to the City from a South Jersey Port Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) for FY2011. At the same time, Mayor Redd announced her support for moving ahead with plans to explore regionalized police services in Camden County as a long-term solution for public safety and the fiscal challenges confronting the City of Camden.

“Public safety is our primary obligation as elected officials,” Mayor Redd said. “Thanks to Governor Christie’s support and assistance, I am pleased to announce that we have come up with a solution that would allow the City of Camden to rehire 50 police officers and 15 firefighters.”

The availability of \$2.5 million in Port PILOT funding will ensure that the City can supplement existing patrols and staffing through the spring and summer months. Beyond that, Mayor Redd said, a long-term solution to public safety staffing must be studied and implemented.

“In difficult fiscal times like these, we must work harder, be more creative and realistic to find the best, most cost-effective ways to meet our public safety obligations,” Mayor Redd said. “I pledge to continue working with the Governor’s Office and county and local officials to find and implement a regionalized public safety and shared services plan.”

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Mayor Redd pointed out that any plan for regionalized public safety or shared services must address key factors such as:

- Enhancement or expansion of public safety services;
- Cost effectiveness and efficiencies;
- Job opportunities for City residents; and
- Fairness to existing Police Department personnel while working within fiscal constraints

“We need to continue having open and honest dialogue about the fiscal challenges facing municipalities across our State and consider innovative new approaches, such as regionalized public safety services that will help us maintain public safety while being mindful that financial resources are shrinking,” Mayor Redd said. “We will fully study public safety regionalization and shared services and only advance concepts that benefit the residents of our City. But make no mistake, we are serious and will find long-term solutions.”

“Thanks to recent federal public safety grants, strategic reorganization of the departments, and this additional aid from the Governor, the City will now have 20 percent more police officers patrolling the streets and nearly the same number of firefighters responding to emergencies since January's layoffs,” said Congressman Rob Andrews. “While this is welcome news for those living, visiting, working or studying in Camden and those serving the City, we must continue to pursue every option to restore as many jobs as possible and help the City return to stability.”

The Mayor, being left with no other options, proceeded with a layoff plan which occurred on January 18, 2011, to close a \$26.5 million City budget deficit. Then, on February 8, 2011, Mayor Redd amended her introduced proposed and balanced FY2011 budget that would have brought back approximately 47 police officers and 13 fire personnel positions. City Council voted against the Mayor's amended budget. City Council later crafted a budget that did not include additional funds to rehire public safety personnel.

The decision to rehire 50 police officers and 15 firefighters is made for the benefit of Camden City residents and is exclusive of any federal grants. The South Jersey Port PILOT is a transitional grant to support public safety in the City of Camden while work to develop and implement regionalized and shared public safety services moves forward. While the City and the police and fire unions have not reached an agreement on concessions, Mayor Redd's door remains open for further discussions on achieving meaningful concessions.

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