

NorthJersey.com, Bergen freeholders may not have given adequate notice for close meetings (11.9.12)

The Bergen County freeholders on Friday voted to appeal rulings on two lawsuits filed against the board by County Executive Kathleen Donovan.

Two freeholders refused to take part in the meeting, saying that it violated the state's public meeting law by failing to properly give the public 48 hours' notice.

Republican freeholders Maura DeNicola and Robert Hermansen also criticized two recently elected Democratic freeholders, Steve Tanelli and Tracy Silna Zur, who were invited to attend the meeting as observers.

"I am so fed up with people who just don't know how to run a meeting," said Hermansen, who lost his bid for reelection Tuesday.

Freeholder Chairman John Mitchell said the notice of the meeting was sent out on Thursday, although he acknowledged that would have been less than 48 hours' notice.

A public notice was published in The Record on Friday stating that there would be an "informal conference" of the freeholder board to discuss whether to authorize the two appeals. There was no mention of the meeting on the freeholders' website, which normally lists all meetings and agendas.

Mitchell said the matter originally was scheduled to be discussed in closed session on Wednesday night, but that meeting was canceled because of the approaching nor'easter. He added that the matter was urgent because the deadline for filing the appeals is Tuesday.

"We were on a deadline and we were caught by the storm this week," Mitchell said, adding that the matter will be formally voted upon when the freeholders hold a public meeting on Wednesday

Asked why Friday's meeting could not have been held at a later date, Mitchell said he wanted to expedite the matter and find a time when the freeholders could meet.