



Newsletter #11 ~ June, 2008

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June 2008 Newsletter

Dear Neighbors,

I am pleased to be sending you this latest update in a series of E-newsletters containing commentary on our Township Committee meetings and other helpful information about our municipality. This newsletter covers the Township Committee meeting of 6/18/08 and also provides updates on some community issues. If you did not see the prior newsletters, you can view them at www.JeffGrayzel.com. Click on the "newsletter" link.

Make sure you catch all of the upcoming events in our community. See the listing under "Other items of interest" near the end of this newsletter.

June 18 Township Committee Meeting...

You can view a copy of the June 18 Township Committee meeting agenda via a link to our Township website: http://morristwp.com/agendas/twpcomm_06-18-08.pdf

Presentation of 2008 Municipal Budget

The first item on the agenda was the presentation of the 2008 municipal budget. A draft of the 2008 budget was formally introduced at the last meeting of the Township Committee, and has been posted on the township website for the past 4 weeks. The Township's Finance Committee, whose members are Scott Rosenbush and Rick Watson, gave a summary presentation to residents attending the June 18th meeting. You can view (and download) a copy of the budget overview on our township website by going to this link:

http://morristwp.com/budget/2008Budget_prop_and_sum.pdf



Following the presentation the public was allowed to ask questions of the budget or to make comments related to the budget. We had several residents who came up to the microphone:

- The first resident asked about the "surplus" line in the budget and why we are not using more of it. He was told that \$6.0M out of the \$7.4M would be spent, but that \$1.4M would be kept for contingencies and emergencies. This amount represents about 5% of our operating budget.
- The second resident discussed the split of library operating costs between Morristown and the Township. He was told that Morris Township pays 66% of the library costs and Morristown contributes the other 34%. However, with all the new housing units coming online in Morristown their share is expected to rise (and ours will drop) over the coming years.

- The third resident made a couple of suggestions about ways to raise Township revenues.
- The fourth resident suggested that the police department purchase some motorcycles, which use less gasoline to operate than a police car.
- The fifth resident questioned the 25% leap in sewer rates, and wondered why this was not better planned.

After the public finished asking questions, individual Township Committee members commented on the budget. I was asked to go first, and I read aloud some remarks I had prepared in advance. The following is a summary of what I said:

- This was the first municipal budget process in which I have participated. Last year, the budget was completed prior to my taking office on May 16.
- I do not think the tough decisions were made to deliver significant reductions in spending. Not a single significant cut was made in this budget versus last year. Not a single significant one.
- All around us corporate America is getting more efficient. They are doing more with less. In Morris Township we need to change the way we operate in some respects. I have spoken to these needs over the past year during my time on the Township Committee.
- I think that we should have examined our headcount more thoroughly across all of our departments. In order to better understand how each department operates, I had personally asked for justifications for headcounts in certain departments. More work still needs to be done to better understand where we are properly staffed and where we are not.
- The reality of the times is that costs are going up and state aid is going down. So here in Morris Township we must get better at what we do. We must do things more efficiently, and we must try to do it at lower cost. Some of the changes I propose would include:
 - More job sharing across departments.
 - Shifting headcount from over-staffed areas to those areas that are in need.
 - Possible headcount reductions through attrition.
- I recognize that when employees hear some of this they worry about their jobs. But my message is that quality of work, productivity, and professional development should also guide how we staff and organize, and how we structure our compensation plan. Then compensation would be fairer -- and the work environment would be even better.
- At our public budget work session on June 4th, Mr. Goldberg spoke of the compensation system we employ in Morris Township. I followed up with my own comments about how we compensate our employees, and made a suggestion about how we might operate going forward. While I appreciate all the hard work our municipal employees do, we need a better way to reward those that excel or put in extra time on the job.
- Next year we need to have an improved budgeting process. Two weeks ago we had our only group "working session" but it came late in the process. This kind of work session needs to be done earlier in the process, and we probably need to have more than one, to enable all 5 Township Committee members have ample opportunity to discuss appropriations.
- I do not find in this budget any meaningful movement towards operating more efficiently. I cannot accept this document as a planning tool for operating our municipality, and I must vote against this budget.

Ron Goldberg followed me and read his own prepared remarks. The following summarizes Mr. Goldberg's comments:

- Disagrees with 2 aspects of the proposed budget: (1) the increase in tax rate it produces, and (2) that it is not informed by a comprehensive capital asset replacement plan, or long range operation plan everywhere it needs to be.
- 1. The proposed municipal budget would raise our municipal taxes by nearly 4%. But, our spending or taxing can simply not be allowed to grow 4% or more each year as if the number 4 is a baseline like zero. A 4% increase compounded annually for 10 years becomes a 48% increase. We can't just keep asking for more and more tax dollars from our citizens to close the revenue gap. To slow the rise of municipal and property taxes, our new budgets must:
 - Cut expenditures enough to make up for reductions in revenue.
 - Find efficiencies by which to reduce operating costs.
 - Set the goal of becoming the low cost government by becoming more and more efficient and delivering the right services and the right amount of services at lower cost.
 - Look for savings opportunity where we DO have control and where the money is spent today.
- 2. This budget is not informed by a comprehensive capital asset replacement plan driven by long term operation plans from all our departments.
 - We're taking it a year at a time and spending on capital equipment we can't be sure will be needed in 5 years.
 - However, we will need new pools, major sewer plant work, more parking areas in the coming 5, 10, 15 years.
 - It's not just the utilities which lack a long term capital replacement plan, all of our buildings -firehouses, police station, muni hall- are in the same boat. We're taking it a year at a time and spending on capital equipment we can't be sure will be needed in 5 years. This year we authorized purchasing 3 emergency generators so all 5 fire houses could be so equipped. We do not know how we will operate in a few years. But we spend on capital items for all 5 houses anyway.

I believe my recommendations which were not accepted continue to have merit. I made the following recommendations:

- Specific head count reductions
- Specific reductions of ratio of supervisor to worker
- Holding non-union employee COLA to 3.5% versus 3.85% until we can develop and institute a merit, professional development and COLA-based pay scale.
- When I learned that our Finance Committee was recommending a small pay cut instead of pay increases for our elected officials, I embraced the approach and I asked for it to be applied more broadly.
- We should hold back capital purchases not supported by a long term operation plan.
- Township vehicles should not be taken home unless the driver is on call.
- Eliminate duplication of capital equipment and vehicles across departments.

Let's get on with needed changes in areas where we have control of spending to enable us to break out of the "4% a year is OK" mold.

No other committee members had prepared remarks (beyond the initial presentation), but Mr. Rosenbush, Mr. Watson, and Mr. Nace each responded to the remarks Mr. Goldberg and I had made. We, in turn, rebutted.

The Clerk then took a vote and the budget was approved by a 3-2 margin, with both Ron Goldberg and me voting against adoption of the budget ordinance.

Ordinances for Final Consideration

The meeting continued with "Ordinances – Public Hearing, Final Consideration, and Adoption". These relate to ordinances previously introduced with the introduction of new ordinances at a

prior Township Committee meeting.

There were several ordinances for Public Hearing and Final Approval at the June 18 meeting.

The first ordinance established the salaries and compensation for our employees in the International Brotherhood of Teamsters union, which covers our municipal employees in the DPW, sewer facility, and parks maintenance groups. Contract negotiations that had been ongoing since October 2005 were finally concluded in April 2008. This contract is effective for the period of January 2006 – December 2009.

The second ordinance creates a No Parking Zone along Emmett Avenue. This street is a busy connector street from MLK Boulevard to Speedwell Avenue, and it was recommended that no parking be allowed to make this roadway safer.

The third ordinance incorporated mandated changes required by the State of New Jersey to comply with updated State wastewater management regulations.

The fourth ordinance related to an immediate increase in our municipal sewer fees. During discussion of the ordinance, Committeeman Grayzel reiterated his comments from the last meeting that nowhere in the ordinance or its explanation had the Township Committee explained to the public exactly what the increase was going to be. I then informed the public that the increase was going to be an immediate 25% increase in the sewer fee, and that the fee was being raised from \$452 to \$565 per year per household (and business). I remarked further that I thought the budgeting for the sewer department had been mismanaged and capital reserves had been allowed to drop to a very low level. We had been allowing our sewer utility to run at a deficit for several years now, and better financial management practices needed to be put in place moving forward. For more information about the sewer fee increase please see this link:
<http://morristwp.com/pdfs/sewerincrease.pdf>



The fifth ordinance was a salary ordinance establishing new salaries for our non-unionized municipal employees (which mostly cover the administrative functions of the Township). Traditionally, our non-union employees are not given salary increases until our budget is approved. Since the budget was being voted on at this meeting, the accompanying salary ordinance was also voted on.

The sixth ordinance was a bond ordinance which will supply funding for various municipal capital projects including roadwork projects, drainage projects, police equipment, fire equipment, etc. The total bonding for these various projects total \$3,149,060.

The seventh ordinance was a bond ordinance which will supply funding for various sewer utility capital projects including upgrades to pumps, control systems, roadway sewer/drainage improvements, etc. The total bonding for these various projects total \$1,146,175.

The eighth ordinance was a bond ordinance which will supply funding for various swimming pool capital projects specifically related to replacement of pool filter equipment. The total bonding for these various projects total \$95,000.

The ninth ordinance allows for municipal expenses that go against the defined NJ State "cap" on specific municipal expenditures be increased from a 2.5% increase to a 3.5% increase in expenditures. As background, the State of NJ imposes two separate limits on increases, referred to as "caps" by state legislation, on municipal budgets increases. One is a limit on the total amount of increases to municipal expenses, and the second is a limit to the increase in tax collections allowed. There are certain items that are excluded from the "cap". This ordinance relates specifically to the cap on municipal expenditures, and NJ State legislation allows municipalities the leeway to raise the cap from 2.5% up to 3.5%. As far as I know, most

municipalities pass ordinances of this type to raise this cap limit. The above was not explained to the public at our Township Committee meeting, and I apologize for not doing it myself, so I am taking the opportunity to do so now.

A copy of any of these ordinances may be obtained from our Township Clerk by calling 973-326-7430.

Ordinances for Introduction

There was only one ordinance for introduction at this meeting. This ordinance dealt with the installation of stop signs at seven locations around town.

This ordinance will be publicly debated at our next meeting on July 16 when we hold a formal public hearing on each of the ordinances introduced at this meeting.

This concludes the ordinances for introduction. I remind you that all of these ordinances will have a public hearing at our July 16 Township Committee meeting, at which point the public will be able to ask questions about each individual ordinance.

Resolutions

Several Resolutions were then passed. The title of each of these resolutions can be viewed on the agenda:

http://morristwp.com/agendas/twpcomm_06-18-08.pdf

There was discussion of three resolutions on the agenda:

- Permit Extension Act – see Jeff’s commentary below.
- Services Agreement with Morristown – this relates to new house on Woodside road that straddles both Morristown and Morris Township.
- Opposing NJ State Legislation S-1137 relating to the scope of union negotiations.

The resolution on the Services Agreement with Morristown was not voted on and was sent back for further revision. Copies of all of the resolutions passed may be obtained from our Township Clerk.

Public Commentary...

Every Committee meeting has a “public commentary” portion during which any member of the public can make a statement concerning anything related to Township matters, or ask the Township Committee anything they wish.



- The first speaker was a resident of Sherman Avenue who complained about speeding cars on her street. She stated that 60% of the homes on the street had children aged 17 or under, and that this was a safety issue for the neighborhood. She presented the Township Committee with a petition containing 41 signatures from neighborhood residents who are concerned about this situation.
- There were five other neighbors from Sherman Avenue who also got up and spoke. They feared for the safety of their children, and several of them asked for a speed bump or speed table to be installed on the street.
- Another resident spoke of a similar situation on Fairchild Avenue, where speeding creates an unsafe for the children playing in the yard at St. Virgil’s School.
- The last resident to speak agreed with the resolution on the agenda to oppose the Permit Extension Act (NJ State legislation).

I urge more citizens to come to the Township meetings to ask questions and to air their comments. Doing so at a public forum gives you the opportunity to get an immediate

response from the Township Committee, and often times helps the Committee improve regulations related to the issues at hand.

Jeff's Commentary...

The final portion of each meeting allows for each member of the Township Committee to make any general comments they please. I made the following comments:

- I commented on the resolution on the agenda that would have the Morris Township Committee oppose the Permit Extension Act (S1919/A2867) proposed by the NJ State Legislature, which I had requested be placed on our agenda. The Permit Extension Act would extend all developers' state and local permits and approvals for up to 9 years (January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2014) regardless of merit. It would include extensions even for permits that expired more than 2 years ago. I stated that I am philosophically opposed to giving anybody an automatic extension. Any extension request should require a hearing, even if it is an abbreviated hearing, so that the public can comment on such a request.

Note: our municipal resolution opposing the Permit Extension Act passed by a 5-0 vote. Two days later the state legislature agreed to a significantly weaker version of this Act that would give automatic extension in only limited situations.

- I had the opportunity earlier this week to attend the DARE graduation at Frelinghuysen middle school. D.A.R.E., which stands for Drug Abuse Resistance Education pertains to more than its name communicates. It is a highly acclaimed program that gives kids the skills they need to avoid involvement in drugs, alcohol, gangs, and violence. D.A.R.E. was founded in 1983 in Los Angeles and has proven so successful that it is now being implemented in 75 percent of our nation's school districts and in more than 43 countries around the world. D.A.R.E. is a police officer-led series of classroom lessons that teaches children from kindergarten through 12th grade how to resist peer pressure and live productive lives that are drug-free, alcohol-free, and violence-free.

The program at Frelinghuysen School is run by Officer Jason Lawlor and Officer Steve Summerer, both of whom do an excellent job with the kids. At the graduation ceremony the winners of the essay contest came up on stage, and read some very moving essays.

I congratulate Officers Lawlor and Summerer for a job well done, and I wish all of our kids the best of luck as they move on, and hope they have learned how to say "no" to drugs, alcohol, and violence.

Note: The D.A.R.E. program is not in place at Morristown high school. Since the middle school is in Morris Township our police department has jurisdiction over the school and any officers that participate in programs there. The opposite is true in Morristown, where the Morristown police department has not stepped forward to continue this program even though they have been urged to do so.

Other Commentary from Township Committee members...

Ron Goldberg made the following comments:

- I went to the DARE Graduation at Frelinghuysen Middle School Monday. Talk about upbeat! It's clear that Officer Steve and OJ, Officer Jason have connected with the kids. I want to thank them for establishing trust and giving our kids some skills to help them make choices.
- Attended the 10 Towns Great Swamp Watershed Management Committee Anniversary meeting at Jim Slates invitation. Jan Wotowicz presided and Ben Spinelli from the Office of Smart Growth was guest speaker. And he brought a little sense to the confusion that occurs when we try to observe Highlands Act, COAH 3rd round and State Plan. But what

I want to say now is, "Thank you." to Jim Slate who represents us very well there.

- Noted that the first anniversary of Jeff Grayzel's swearing in as a Committeeman had just passed. Congratulations to Jeff and I wish you many more such anniversaries.

Scott Rosenbush made the following comment:

- He noted that the DARE program (see above) is not continued at Morristown High School, so kids lose contact with the program after leaving the Middle School.

Rick Watson made the following comments:

- He stated that we need to review ridership data for the Colonial Coach community bus service to ensure that this is a worthwhile service to provide to the community.
- He complained that neither the Daily Record nor Star Ledger properly publishes notices of our community events such as our upcoming concert series.

Mayor Nace made the following comment:

- He noted that the Newsbee is the only newspaper that regularly attends our Township meetings. As an acknowledgement of this we should be having them publish more of our legal notices (such as ordinances) that currently get published in the Daily Record.

Closed Session

The Township Committee then recessed into "closed session" which occurs when there are legal or personnel matters that cannot be discussed in public. Minutes of the closed session are released to the public when the matters discussed are resolved. The Township Attorney John Mills announced at the Township Committee meeting (prior to recessing into closed session) that the closed session would deal with personnel, land acquisition and legal matters.

THE FOLLOWING SECTION CONTAINS GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT HAPPENINGS AROUND MORRIS TOWNSHIP:

Council on Affordable Housing (COAH)

The NJ State Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) Published new rules earlier this month that changed Morris Township's "Mount Laurel" requirements (which is named after the first municipality that had affordable housing requirements placed upon them 15 years ago).

There has been extensive coverage of this new state legislation (which many are calling a "mandate") in the newspapers so you may have read about these significant new housing requirements. The following article from the Star Ledger provides additional information on various aspects to the new affordable housing regulations:

<http://www.nj.com/starledger/stories/index.ssf?/base/news-10/1213677330131090.xml&coll=1>

Previously Morris Township had a surplus of fair share housing units. After the change in legislation it is projected that Morris Township will have a deficit of 150-200 affordable housing units, which we will have until 2018 to provide. More information on this can be found below in my discussion of the Planning Board, and I will keep residents apprised of any new developments in my newsletter next month.

Building Applications Around Town

A couple of months ago I introduced a new section with some information about building around town.

If residents are opposed to certain types of developments, they need to voice their opinions in-person at the hearings. In order to keep the community informed about other development proposals in Morris Township, I would like to start communicating to the community the various projects



that are before the Planning Board and the Board of Adjustment. I will only highlight the larger projects and not get into details on the minor ones, such as a homeowner adding a front porch to their home).



The Board of Adjustment held its regular meeting on June 23 at which time they continued a hearing for 219 Madison Avenue, a proposal to turn the 3 service bays of the gas station into a quick mart and Dunkin Donuts shop. About 25 residents came out to oppose this development, and the public questioners took many hours to complete their questioning of the developers. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00pm and a vote on this proposal was postponed until the August meeting.

The next Board of Adjustment meeting will take place on July 28. The agenda for this meeting can be found online at the township website a few days prior to the meeting.

The Planning Board held a regular meeting on June 16. The Planning Board heard testimony for two development proposals. The first was for a subdivision proposal to subdivide one lot into three on Valley View Street and Shadyside Street. The Board got a project overview from the project engineer, who spoke of the significant steep slopes on which this project is proposed. This testimony lasted for about 30 minutes after which the Board and the public were able to ask questions of this first presenter. Further testimony on this application will continue at the July 21 meeting.

The second development proposal was for ninety-two townhouses at 250 James Street (site of former Verizon Wireless office building). Discussion of this project was superseded by a detailed discussion of the new NJ State COAH regulations (see explanation in section above). The Planning Board discussed how to incorporate the new affordable housing requirements into future development proposals (including the one at 250 James Street). The Board will continue these discussions at the July 21 meeting, at which point the developer of 250 James Street may or may not proceed with presenting his application for this project.

The next Planning Board meeting will take place on July 21. If you live near these properties, you may want to come to the next meeting to hear their proposals. The agenda for this meeting can be found online at the township website a few days prior to the meeting.

All of the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment meetings start at 7:30pm at our municipal building and are open to the public. As with all public meetings, I urge our residents to attend so that they can have a say in how our township is managed and how it is developed.

Other items of interest:

There are many items of interest this month. Please read through this long, but interesting, list!

- The Recreation Dept's summer Playground Program just started on Monday June 30 and continue into August. You can sign your child up for any of these weekly programs by visiting our Recreation Annex at 24 Woodland Ave (next to Ginty Field) between the hours of 9am-1pm. Call the Recreation Department at 973-326-7371 for more information.
- The Recreation Dept has announced their Morris Twp summer concert series. The first concert was just held this past Tuesday July 1st. See this link for the complete list of all concerts throughout the summer: http://morristwp.com/pdfs/concert_08.pdf
- The Department of Parks & Recreation has announced the first two "Big Screen Movie" nights. They will take place outdoors on Wednesday July 9 at Cornine Field (next to Streeter pool) and July 23 at Ginty Field. The movies start at dusk, but the movie titles have yet to be announced. For more information about any of our recreation programs, please call the Recreation Department at 973-326-7371.
- As part of the July 4th festivities, the Washington Association is hosting a free fireworks

performance at Sunrise Lake in Lewis Morris Park. The show begins at dusk.

- Our municipal swimming pools are now open and memberships are still available.

For more information on pool memberships please call the Department of Parks & Recreation at 973-326-7371. For those of you who are unaware, many renovations to our pool facilities are being completed prior to the season. You can find a summary of these improvements at

<http://morristwp.com/pdfs/poolimprov.pdf>

- Curbside container collection of leaves, grass, and brush is an ongoing service provided by our DPW through the Fall. Pick-ups are on alternating Wednesdays (i.e. every house get a pick up every other week). By putting your brush and twigs out for this collection you also reduce the amount of trash that goes into our Solid Waste Disposal stream, which costs much more to dispose of. So using this service instead of putting these items in the trash save us all on taxes. Please review the following update as to how your rubbish should be placed at the curb: http://morristwp.com/pdfs/Brush_4-22-08.pdf
- As stated above, sewer service fees are going up effective immediately. Payments are due no later than July 15, but a grace period until July 25 has been extended for those that fail to pay the full amount of the new fees. For more information about the sewer fee increase please see this link: <http://morristwp.com/pdfs/sewerincrease.pdf>

Upcoming Committee Meeting...

The next Township Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday July 16th (there is only one meeting in July). I urge you to attend!! Your presence improves the quality of the proceedings, and your questions require the Township Committee to be responsive to our citizens.

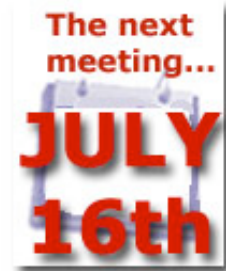
Other Township meetings and events can be found online on our municipal calendar: <http://plus.calendars.net/morristwp>

Please feel free to forward this e-mail on to others. If you know someone who would like to subscribe, please have them contact me at Jeff@JeffGrayzel.com .

As always, if you have any questions about any of the above or if you have a comment you would like to share with me then please send me an e-mail to Jeff@JeffGrayzel.com .

Thank you for taking the time to read through this lengthy newsletter. I hope it has helped you be more informed about what is going on around our town.

JEFF



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