



Newsletter #10 ~ May, 2008

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May 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 5/21/08 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.

May 21 Committee Meeting...

You can view a copy of the May 21 Township Committee meeting agenda via a link to our Township website: http://morristwp.com/agendas/twpcomm_05-21-08.pdf

The May 21 meeting opened with a tribute to Monsignor Martin Rauscher for 50 years of service to the Church, for the last Eighteen years as Pastor of Church of the Assumption in Morristown.

Police Department Promotion and Award Presentations

The May 21 meeting continued with a several presentations by Police Chief Quinn. The first was the promotion of Detective Thomas Manning to the position of Lieutenant. Lt. Manning has been with the Township police department for 21 years, and during that period he has earned over 30 departmental awards.

I congratulate him on this well-deserved promotion.

Chief Quinn then presented the annual Police Department officer awards to the following individuals:

Patrolman (Ptl.) David Crowley – Lifesaving Award

On November 10, 2007 he responded to a report of a passenger in a car on West Hanover Avenue with a medical problem. He located the individual and after assessing his condition initiated CPR and saved the man's life.

Ptl. Sean O'Hare and Ptl. David Kosakowski – Lifesaving Award

On November 10, 2007 these patrolmen responded to a medical emergency call at Rod's Ranch House. On arrival, they found the person in question had a pulse but had stopped breathing. They assessed the situation and determined the man was not breathing due to a piece of meat caught in his throat. They opened the man's airway and provided rescue breathing to save the man's life.

Ptl. Adam Sutherland and Ptl. Steven Smith – Lifesaving Award



On April 22, 2008 these patrolmen responded to report of a woman in labor at a residence on Fanok Road. On arrival they assessed the situation and prepared for the delivery of the child. They delivered the child and insured the baby girl was breathing, and stabilized the mother and child until the arrival of medical personnel.

Ptl. Gary Webb – Honorable Service

Ptl. Webb led the department in DWI arrests for 2007 (13 out of 87 for the department) and is the recipient of the Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) award.

Lieutenant John Hall – 2007 Officer of the Year

Lt. Hall is commended for his work in bringing our Special Operations Unit to fruition (this is the team that trains for high risk situations) and coordinating the necessary training. He has demonstrated exceptional abilities and knowledge of tactical operations. Lt. Hall stays current on arrest, search and seizure case law and provides instruction, not only to our officers, but also to the recruits at the MC Police Academy. He is well respected among members of this agency and other law enforcement agencies for his professional knowledge and leadership.

Alcohol License Violation

The Police Department had recently presented a report relating to a Liquor License violation at Rod's Steakhouse (at the Madison Hotel). The Township Committee voted to have the municipal attorney prepare charges. A public hearing, which the public will be able to watch, will take place at an upcoming Township Committee meeting.

Morris Township Trails Plan

The recently-released Morris Township Trails Plan was formally presented to the Township Committee. We then voted to forward it on to our Planning Board for review and for their recommendation on how it might be incorporated into our master plan.

A copy of the Trails Plan can be viewed on the Township website at:

<http://morristwp.com/trails.html>

Introduction of 2008 Municipal Budget

A draft of the 2008 Municipal Budget was formally introduced to the Township Committee. The Township's Finance Committee, whose members are Scott Rosenbush and Rick Watson, gave a very brief summary of the top-line numbers, and said that a copy of the proposed budget would be placed on our municipal website within a few days so that the public could review it prior to its discussion at our June meeting

It was also announced that a public "working session" of the Township Committee to discuss budget matters would take place on Wednesday June 4 at 8:00 AM at the municipal building. The session, requested by Committeeman Goldberg, is open to the public based on the Open Public Meetings Act, but questions by the public will not be allowed. A formal reading of the budget will take place at our next Township Committee meeting on June 18 at which time

Of note, residents can now download a budget overview from our township website by going to this link: http://morristwp.com/budget/2008Budget_prop_and_sum.pdf

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 was just one ordinance for Public Hearing and Final Approval at the May 21 meeting.

This ordinance formally prohibits parking on private property. This is being implemented relative to the parking situation at the Convent Station train station so that people who park illegally in private parking lots (e.g. the church parking lot) can be ticketed.

A copy of this ordinance may be obtained from our Township Clerk.

Ordinances for Introduction

There were many ordinances for introduction at this meeting, several of which were directly related to the municipal budget proposal. These ordinances will be publicly debated at our next meeting on June 18 when we hold a formal public hearing on each of the ordinances.

The first ordinance introduced 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 introduced 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 increase safety on this roadway.

The third ordinance introduced was related simply to some changes required by the State of New Jersey to comply with updated State wastewater management regulations.

The fourth ordinance introduced relates to an increase in our municipal sewer fees. Of note for any senior citizens reading this newsletter, there is a reduction in fees for any senior citizen who qualifies for a tax deduction under NJSA section 54:4-8.40.



In discussion of the sewer fee ordinance, Committeeman Goldberg explained that the sewer utility was headed for deficit spending and had no fund for emergency. Therefore, fees needed to be raised to operate in a financially responsible way. However, he apologized for the need to raise residential fees so much in one jump. He explained that the trends were known and should have been acted on in previous years to keep increases gradual. Fees had not been changed for 10 years.

I (Committeeman Grayzel) then commented 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 capital budget for the sewer department had been mismanaged and allowed to drop to a very low level because we had been allowing our sewer utility to run at a deficit for several years now, and that better management practices needed to be put in place moving forward.

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 introduced. Since this is being introduced at this meeting, this accompanying salary ordinance was also introduced.

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" but this would require a lengthy dissertation on NJ municipal tax code. 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.

This concludes the ordinances for introduction. I remind you that all of these ordinances will have a public hearing at our June 18 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_05-21-08.pdf

Of note, prior to the formal introduction of the resolutions, I asked if the Township Committee could vote on each of the resolutions separately. The Mayor said he preferred to vote on all 17 of the resolutions in a single block vote. I said that I had several questions and comments that I wanted to direct to particular resolutions and that it would be easiest for me to do so, and for the public to understand, if we could read each resolution individually. My request was denied and the entire group of 17 resolutions was put up for a vote as a block.

The Mayor then gave me an opportunity to ask questions and make comments about all of the resolutions at one time. I asked questions relating to 3 resolutions, and I also had commentary specific to the audit resolution, which was as follows:

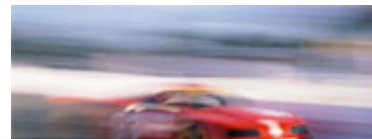
The audit resolution asks us to acknowledge the fact that we have read the audit, and specifically the section titled General Comments and Recommendations. However, there were no recommendations provided. The audit this year was deficient in that it lacked any insightful commentary that should have been provided by the auditor himself. Further, the lack of appropriate recommendations of any kind has not allowed us appropriate time to address and respond to a serious issue within the sewer utility. We have been forced to make a decision quickly due to the issue of timing our ordinances appropriately in order to put the rate increase into effect. Had this recommendation been made by the auditor earlier in the year or, better yet, in a prior year then the increase in the sewer rate would surely have been lower than what we will be forced to implement now. I ask that this Township Committee hold our auditor to a higher standard for subsequent budget audits, and those subsequent audits include insightful commentary in addition to boilerplate commentary, and that formal recommendations be included when appropriate.

Copies of all of the resolutions passed may be obtained from our Township Clerk.

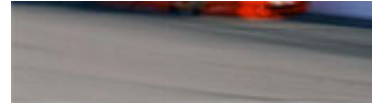
Public Commentary...

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 Kitchell Road. She spoke about speeding in her street and asked the Township Committee to consider installing a speed bump or other traffic-calming measure. Committeeman Goldberg told her that a joint meeting of Police and Engineering Department and Engineering Committee (Nace and Goldberg) which had been



convened by the Mayor at Mr. Goldberg's urging and which took place the previous week had already referred the matter to the Police Department for review. They will report back with their findings.



- The second resident to speak lived on Fairchild Avenue and also complained about speeding on his street. He was told that the police department was reviewing the situation and would issue a report shortly. Committeeman Goldberg reported the same joint committee outcome as he had to the first speaker. In addition, Mr. Goldberg said it was likely a stop sign would be installed, as suggested by the resident.
- The third speaker was the owner of The Palm Bar on John Street. He said he was coming before the Township Committee to ask for allowance of a newly built outdoor structure on their patio area, which he said had been built without a building permit. He was told that the structure looked to be an accessory structure and that this issue needed to be discussed and resolved with the township buildings department.
- The fourth resident complained about the timing of the traffic lights on Madison Avenue, particularly the one at the intersection at Normandy Parkway next to Friendly's. During the evening rush hour, traffic backs up very far along Madison Avenue. Many drivers are tempted to cut down the side streets in our neighborhoods, because the wait at the light is too long. He was told that the State of New Jersey controls the lights along Madison Avenue, because it is a state road. The State has been notified of this issue, but they are short-staffed and thus are very slow to respond to these types of things.
- The fifth speaker was a resident of Fairchild Avenue who complained about leaking gas lines all along Fairchild Ave. The gas lines are very old and are in need of replacement by PSE&G which is the utility that provides the natural gas service. He was told that the Township is aware of this situation and has been in contact with the utility to ask about their plans to address the situation.
- Also, in my last newsletter I failed to recognize a speaker who attended the April 16 meeting. He was a volunteer member of the Fairchild Fire Company who conjectured that a replacement generator for the Fairchild Fire House would be moveable, if necessary. He felt that this should remove Committeeman Goldberg's concern that there is no long term manning plan to justify Fire Department capital investments.

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 that the residents who spoke before us from Kitchell Road and Fairchild Avenue had both complained about speeding on their streets, and that they both would like us to consider putting in some kind of traffic calming measures. I reiterated that I personally have spoken about speed bumps and other traffic calming measures since I took my position on this committee in May of last year. I once again asked that the township come up with a policy on speed bumps, and that we move ahead quickly with a trial of installing a speed bump in 2-3 locations around town. We need to finally start making some progress on this in order to address our citizen's concerns. I recommend that we move forward with a trial as soon as possible at 2-3 known problem areas.
- I reiterated my comments related to the audit and the increased sewer fees, and said that in the future we need to pay closer attention to our capital balances to avoid reproducing this problem.

- With regard to the police promotion this evening, as Deputy Police Commissioner, I have had the opportunity to speak with Detective Manning on several occasions. I think he is well-deserving of this promotion and I congratulate him. This Township will undoubtedly be well-served by our new Lieutenant.
- With regard to the police awards, I frequently tell the public that we should recognize that our police officers and firemen put their lives in harms way every day. It is nice to see these officers being recognized tonight for their actions when they were faced with a difficult situation, and were able to respond in the heroic manner in which they did. I congratulate those officers who were recognized tonight for their efforts.
- Also relating to the police department, I spoke of the recently completed Police Unity Tour. The Police Unity Tour is a 300 mile bike ride from New Jersey (Jersey City was this years send off host) to National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington DC. The purpose is to raise awareness of officers killed in the line of duty and to raise funds for the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial fund for the museum to be built. The Unity Tour was begun in Florham Park in 1997 with 18 riders. This year the Police Unity Tour's 1000 members from across the country raised over 1.25 million dollars and to date have raised 5.5 million dollars for the Memorial. There are two main sendoffs, one from northern New Jersey of 500 riders and the other from southern Virginia of about 400 riders. There is also another sendoff from southern New Jersey of about 100 riders and we pick them up along the route. Both groups meet just outside of DC and we ride into the Memorial together. The NJ contingent left on Friday May 9th. Participating this year from Morris Township were police officers Steve Summerer, Rich Ferrone, John Hall, Dave Powell, Mark DiCarlo, Chris Tongring, Mark Osterhoudt, Gary Webb, Jim Perruso, Robert Hydock and Chief Tim Quinn.
- I mentioned that The Morris Minute Men First Aid Squad (which serves Morris Plains and the Township of Morris) has recently become a member of the New Jersey EMS Task Force. Today, May 21st the Task Force had a "Media Day" to showcase some of the equipment and highly trained members of this special new organization. It was held at the North end of Liberty State Park, which is also the designated staging area for this region and where the recent Jersey City PATH tunnel attack drill was staged. The New Jersey EMS Task Force is a well-led program to train experienced New Jersey EMTs to be able to respond expertly to state or regional disasters. The task force has become the go-to organization when something big happens in the region. I also took this opportunity to thank all of the men and women who are volunteers for the Minute Men, as well as for the Fire Department and EMS. They provide a vital service to our community.
- Lastly, I made another public request that the Township Committee meeting agenda be issued by the close of business on Monday at the latest. For this meeting the agenda was not issued until Tuesday morning, and because I was out of town all day Tuesday I did not have a chance to look at it until midnight just prior to the meeting day. My preference would be for all submissions to the agenda be submitted by Friday noon at the latest, and that the agenda be published either Friday afternoon or Monday morning. I cannot do my job properly if I do not have the time to review everything I am supposed to vote on at the meeting. It is also not fair to the public not to be able to view the agenda more than a day ahead of time. If we had a final agenda by noon on Friday then it could be posted on the website to allow residents to view it over the weekend. This would mean that the cutoff for additions to the agenda would be Thursday at noon. Of note, in a subsequent comment I was told by the Mayor that no changes would be made in our procedure and that he thought that 48-hours notice was sufficient time to prepare for our meetings. (I strongly disagree!).

Other Commentary from Township Committee members...

Ron Goldberg made the following comments:

- He complimented the presentation made by the Morris Township representatives who went before the Harding Township Committee at a public meeting in Harding to discuss the fate of the proposed recreation facility we had wanted to build off of Mount Kemble Avenue in Harding
- He announced that a Monday through Friday free electronic recycling drop site will soon be established at DPW on Jane Way. TV's up to 32" TV's will be accepted. Watch for an announcement, and thanks to Jim Stoia and Tom Eschmann for making the arrangements. This is good news as it will give us tonnage credit, uses a donated container and will keep TV's and hazardous metals out of our solid waste stream.

Scott Rosenbush made the following comment:

- He was pleased that an agreement has been made with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters union who cover the employees in our DPW, Sewer Dept, and Recreation Maintenance Crew.
- He reminded the public that the new energy-efficient bulbs are hazardous waste. They contain hazardous metals, and care should be taken to ensure they are not broken, which would happen if they were placed in the regular garbage.

Rick Watson made the following comments:

- He invited residents to join us in our Memorial Day festivities, including a parade from the municipal building to the Green in Morristown.
- He congratulated Mayor Nace for his work to bring the Trails Plan to fruition. The members chosen to be on the committee are appropriate, because they are people who will actively use those trails.
- He said that the auditor is not to blame for the fact that we had to raise the sewer fees. His role as an auditor does not include financial management functions.

Mayor Nace made the following comment:

- He said that Mr. Grayzel's comments regarding the audit were misplaced. He stated that the township has known for years that we would one day need to raise rates, and that maybe we should have taken smaller bites at the apple along the way instead of waiting to raise them now.

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 land acquisition and legal matters.

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

Update on the Mount Kemble Recreation Complex proposal

As some of you may have already read about in the newspaper, the Harding Township Committee has denied our proposal for two turf fields to be built on private land in Harding (land that adjoins Morris Township and located behind an office park on Mount Kemble Ave). Various reasons were given, which I will not go into at this time. We are all greatly disappointed with this result given the tremendous need for new playing fields in our community. Our Mayor is looking into possible alternative options to take back to the Harding Township Committee. If you are unfamiliar with this proposal, more details can be found on the township website at: <http://morristwp.com/notice-MtKembleLand.html>



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 will hold its regular meeting on Monday June 23 and will continue 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. A vote on this proposal will probably take place at this meeting. The agenda for this meeting can be found online at the township website a few days prior to the meeting

The Planning Board will hold regular meetings on Monday June 2 and Monday June 16. The Planning Board will continue hearing testimony for a subdivision proposal to subdivide one lot into three on Valley View Street and Shadyside Street, and (on June 16) ninety-two townhouses at 250 James St. If you live near these properties, you may want to come to the meeting to hear their proposals. The full agenda is still not available, but will be posted on the Township website about a week before the meeting: <http://morristwp.com/>

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!

- Tuesday June 3 is Primary Elections Day. There are contested races for both republicans and democrats for our NJ representatives to both the US Senate and US Congress. Polls are open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. at your usual polling station.
- On Wednesday June 4 at 8:00 AM there will be a public "working session" of the Township Committee to discuss budget matters that will take place on at our municipal building. The session is open to the public based on the Open Public Meetings Act.
- The Great Swamp Watershed Association (GSWA) and the Morris County Park Commission are planning to tackle pollution and clean up the Loantaka Brook in Morris Township on Saturday, June 7th, as part of National River Cleanup Week 2008. The public is encouraged and invited to help. The organized cleanup will take place from 9:30 am to 12 noon and volunteers should meet at the Loantaka Brook Reservation Kitchell Pond Area Pavilion in Morris Township. Anyone interested in helping to clean Loantaka Brook on June 7 should call Kelley Curran at 973-538-3500, ext. 16 or e-mail kcurran@greatswamp.org .
- Our municipal swimming pools will be hosting our annual "Splash Party" on Friday June 20 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Pool membership is not required but a small entrance fee is required at the door. Food and soft drinks are included with your entry. Details on the Splash Party can be found at the following link: <http://morristwp.com/pdfs/poolparty08.pdf>
- For more information on the party and 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 this link: <http://morristwp.com/pdfs/poolimprov.pdf>

- The Department of Parks & Recreation has announced their first summer "Family Movie Night" will take place outdoors on Wednesday June 25 at Ginty Field starting at dusk (approximately 7:30pm). The title of the movie has yet to be announced. For more information about any of our recreation programs, please call the Department of Parks & Recreation at 973-326-7371.
- Curbside container collection of leaves, grass, and shrubs is ongoing service provided by our DPW which runs from Spring through Fall. 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
- The Morris Township Firemen's Mutual Benevolent Association Local #70 is sponsoring two \$1,500.00 Scholarships for a Township resident graduating from high school in 2008. More information can be found online at: <http://www.fmba70.org/scholarship.html>
- For those of you the travel on Mt. Kemble Avenue (Route 202) please take note that there is construction taking place along a stretch near Springbrook Road for a period of several months. You can expect road closure and/ or detours during that period. More details can be found online at: http://morristwp.com/pdfs/RT202_Detour%202-25-08.pdf

Upcoming Committee Meeting...

The next Township Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday June 18th (there is only one meeting in June). 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 comments you would like to share with me then please send 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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