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Volunteering in Morris Township will be easier under new ordinance

by [Sarah Schillaci](#)/For The Star-Ledger

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MORRIS TOWNSHIP -- Applying for a spot on the Planning Board, Open Space Committee or other municipal committee should become more straightforward next month, after township officials put the finishing touches on their version of the "Citizen Service Act."

The proposed ordinance would streamline the application process to serve on the various boards that make decisions about development, recreation and services in the township.

Committee Member Jeffrey Grayzel, who introduced the ordinance with Committee Member Ronald Goldberg last month, said the ordinance would further open up government and give residents an equal shot at serving their community.

The ordinance was slated for adoption by the committee Wednesday night, but was postponed until October to for further revision.

"What we have pretty much is the meat and potatoes, but we can still put the dressing on," said Committee Member Raymond Snyder.

The proposed ordinance would create a registry of vacant appointed township positions. Appointed positions include those on a variety of municipal committees, commissions, boards or agencies, such as the Recreation Advisory Committee, the Historic Preservation Commission and the Board of Health. Anyone interested in joining a board would submit an application to the municipal clerk.

The act requires that openings should not be filled until 45 days after it is posted, giving residents time to submit applications. It also mandates that all applicants be notified of whether they were appointed to the board. Now, residents learn about positions largely through word-of-mouth.

"It's the people in the know who get the appointments," Grayzel said. "This makes it easier for everyone."

The Citizen Service Act has been adopted in nearly 20 municipalities across the state as a result of efforts to increase citizen participation by the Citizen's Campaign, a nonprofit based in Metuchen. Plainfield was the first town to adopt the act, in 2006, and since then towns such as Newark, Perth Amboy and Paterson have instituted the ordinance.

At Wednesday's meeting, resident Lee Goldberg said he supported the act, saying it would provide more insight and deliberation into the application process.

"It's a win for everyone," Goldberg said

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