



## Election 2008: A Look at the Morris Township race

### **From the Democrats: We've brought change**

(By Jeff Grayzel, a Democrat and member of the Morris Township Committee.)

Eighteen months ago, after a tie vote and a court battle, the results of a special election showed that Morris Township voters wanted balance and openness restored to the township committee. Last year, voters signaled they wanted to kick it up a notch and elected a second Democrat to the committee. Now, motions spoken with the community's new voice have a second.

Some things changed as a result of the election of Ron Goldberg and myself. Meetings have increased debate and discussion. Occasionally, discussion is even passionate. I ask purposeful questions at meetings so the public will hear an explanation of process or gain historical background. My detailed commentary informs the public. I also report on each meeting through an e-mail newsletter.

These measures are helpful, but are only small steps toward a more open, balanced, responsible and responsive municipal government. They are meant to challenge the status quo. These actions sometimes provokes defensive behavior, even retaliation.

It's clear to me that open, effective government requires elected officials whose minds are open to the possibility of real change. Otherwise, we are blocked from making true improvements by officials with a political party agenda rather than the people's agenda, or who continue doing what they have always done because of accumulated personal or political obligations.

Let's relate this to your tax dollars to make it real. Recent Morris Township Committee meetings became very contentious over the now approved townhouse development on James Street which triggered an obligation for Morris Township to provide affordable housing units. At issue was how to pay for it.

Of course, Grayzel and Goldberg were the troublemakers here, and of course they were criticized. To make a long story short, after the dust settled, the township taxpayers were left with the risk of having to cover \$1 million to \$2 million of costs to build the affordable housing, and the developer was left with the opportunity to sell 92 million-dollar townhouses. Go figure. How can that be the outcome, if elected officials are thinking straight and making decisions for the right reasons?

Here's a second real, pocketbook example: oversight of our sewer utility. Did you wonder why your sewer fee suddenly jumped by 25 percent three months ago? It was because the sewer utility was on the verge of running out of money. How can committeemen who have held their elected offices for more than a decade, and had sewer utility oversight responsibility for some of those years, not know that insolvency was just ahead?

It's all about "good government," government that is open and transparent. Think about this. It is contrary to the public interest to allow a long term power bloc of either party officials. Such blocs ultimately make decisions to preserve themselves instead of doing what's best for the citizens. We must all reject the politics of fear and suspicion, speak openly to the issues, and hold our officials

responsible and accountable.

We also need to bring into government people who believe in doing what is now and in the future right for the people, and reject those who would simply and blindly continue and justify what their political party has been doing for the last decade. That is why I am endorsing people like candidates Colette Chapman and Manfred Ricciardelli, who are looking forward --not backward --and are capable of accepting and accomplishing necessary change.

In this final week of campaigning, I hope our citizens will not be distracted by negative campaigning and personal attacks. Every negative speech cheats the public of an opportunity to discuss real issues. Every personal attack dishonors those willing to serve us (you!) and sacrifice.