

Cameras a good idea, despite politics

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Does anyone remember Arthur Chu?

He was the Jeopardy champion from last year who got everyone's knickers in a twist for his offbeat style of play.

"Board jumping" was what his detractors called it, his habit of not following the unwritten rules that one simply marched through clues in order of value. Chu would have none of it. He would start at \$1,000, move backwards and forwards, hopping to other categories, always on the lookout for the elusive "Daily Double." He caused a panic among the orderly minded, but really, all he was doing was employing a new strategy to a game that thrives on strategy and he succeeded admirably. And most importantly, the game didn't die.

In Morris Township something similar is happening.

Cathy Wilson, a Democrat running for Township Committee in a predominantly Republican town, has found a new and interesting way to campaign – by also not following the rules. She uses the monthly Township Committee meetings to stage monthly campaign speeches. She does this by bringing in her own cameraman she has hired to videotape the committee meetings; the videos are rebroadcast on Cablevision. Wilson makes sure to get up at every meeting to speak and, voila! She gets to make a stump speech at every meeting using the committee as a backdrop even though it is the committee's time to govern the township.

While Wilson speaks, the committee fumes, or at least Mayor Daniel Caffrey does. He has called Wilson out after almost all her commentaries.

But what has morphed into the somewhat farcical stunt it has become, it didn't start out that way.

As far back as 2014 when she first ran for office, Wilson has called for the televising of meetings by the committee itself as the best way to get township information to residents. She was met with resistance every step of the way, with claims by the committee there was no public interest in televising meetings to explanations the cost would be too high.

Wilson presented a petition to the committee with hundreds of names of people wanting the cameras and claimed the cost could be almost nothing.

The committee eventually gave in a bit, taking the audio it always makes for record keeping and putting it on the township website for all to hear. But that is where it stands. And now both sides seem

entrenched.

It is our opinion that no matter how politicized the taping has become, the Township Committee should find a way to broadcast the meetings.

The Morristown Council has broadcast meetings for years using Morristown High School audio-visual students to do the taping.

Other neighbors – Madison, Hanover Township and East Hanover – have all started video-taping in the past 10 years.

Concerns about politics had always been there. There was always the fear the cameras would be used for political grandstanding.

In Hanover and East Hanover, the sitting elected officials consistently balked until the outcry became too great.

But the genuinely interesting fallout for broadcasting is that there has not been any. Once the cameras were in place, political sniping about them simply ceased. It's as if both sides realized what is good for the goose is good for the gander and now the thought not televising the meetings is unthinkable.

In East Hanover they even built three cameras into the ceiling to tape the Township Council from different angles, perhaps to capture the council members' better sides.

It may not happen this year in Morris Township, the temperatures are a bit hot right now. But in the long run cameras in committee chambers should be seen as a positive step forward.