

Grayzel Remarks
Township Committee Meeting
3/21/2012

Thank you to the BPU Commissioners for coming to Morris Township to meet with the Township Committee and our residents.

Our community recently experienced the loss of former Mayor Jan Wojtowicz, who served our community in various positions over the course of many, many years. My condolences go out to his wife Jean and the rest of the Wotojwicz family.

This past February 1 marked the 35th anniversary of the Southeast Morris County Municipal Utilities Authority, otherwise known as SMCMUA. The utility was originally formed in 1977 to supply and distribute water to Morristown. The utility now encompasses six municipalities, including Morris Township, and provides water to 100,000 people.

For those of you who are not aware, the New Jersey State League of Municipalities is a voluntary association created to help communities do a better job of self-government through pooling information resources and brain power. It is authorized by State Statute and since 1915, has been serving local officials throughout the Garden State. All 566 municipalities are members of the League. Over 560 mayors and 13,000 elected and appointed officials of member municipalities are entitled to all of the services and privileges of the League. One of the roles the League plays is To be a “lobbying” group for local municipalities with regard to state legislation and other State matters.

The League’s top property tax relief priority for 2012 is the restoration of funding diverted from Energy Taxes that is supposed to be for local use but has been improperly taken by the State of NJ for use in the State budget. The statutes provide for the distribution of all but a fraction of the energy taxes back to local governments.

I would like to be clear that this is not something new, as over the years, the State has taken increasing amounts each year, from \$72 million in State Fiscal Year 2005 budget and increasing each year to \$505 million in State Fiscal Year 2011. For over ten years, each year the State’s portion of the sales tax on energy and the energy utilities Corporation Business Tax has continued to grow. So instead of being spent on local programs and services and used to offset local property taxes, the money has been spent as successive Legislatures and Administrations have seen fit.

I don't doubt that the State of NJ has put the money to good use. But they are not the uses intended in the original laws. Keeping these funds in the State budget will not benefit the local residents of Morris Township. It will not promote prudent budgeting, by locally elected and locally accountable municipal officials that have been elected by the residents of Morris Township.

Thus, I urge the Township Committee as well as our local residents to speak to our State Legislative representatives – Assemblyman Bucco, Assemblyman Carroll, and Senator Bucco – and urge them to support the restoration of these property tax relief funds for local purposes.

Lastly, the local baseball season kicks off on April 14 with opening day for both the American League and National League programs. This year I am moving up the managerial ranks by managing a Minor League team at the AAA level in the National League. I am very excited about my new assignment. Practices are underway and I know that lots of kids are looking forward to the first call of “play ball”. I hope that all the players have a great season.

Thank you.

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