



December 2010: Election Update and Other Important News

IMPORTANT -- PLEASE NOTE:

Your privacy is important. If you do not wish to receive emails from Jeff Grayzel, please click the unsubscribe link on the bottom of this page and your email address will be removed within 48 hours. Thank you.

Dear Neighbor,

I hope you will take a few minutes during this busy holiday season to read through this last newsletter of the year about the many changes playing out in our municipality.

Results of Local Election on November 2

For those of you who might not know the results of our local election, I am very sorry to report that my former Township Committee colleague, Ron Goldberg, lost his reelection bid. Mr. Goldberg was defeated by former Mayor Peter Mancuso by a margin of 4,088 to 3,708.



The voter turnout was much higher than anyone had predicted this year. It was an "off year" election with no big names at the top of the ticket, so turnout was projected to be low. Yet 25% more voters turned out this year in the local election than had historically in past "off year" elections. Perhaps Mr. Mancuso's 43-year history in the Township brought out a lot of his old friends. More likely, Goldberg was collateral damage from national (and local) sentiment – or dare I say "rage."

At any rate, the benefits of "checks & balances" we had by Mr. Goldberg's presence on our Committee are now denied to the Township's citizens. Further, we have lost a hard working, well trained manager who is highly ethical and fiscally responsible. Mr. Goldberg was having a very positive effect on the performance of the Committee and the Township employees.

Ron has devoted a lot of time to our municipality. His wife had remarked to me that he treated it as a full-time job even though it is supposed to be (quite) part-time in nature. His knowledge and his wisdom will be sorely missed. It is quite disheartening that such a dedicated Committeeman would be voted out of office. Clearly, not enough residents of our municipality realized the benefits they had from Ron's leadership.

I wish Mr. Mancuso well and hope that he will be putting in as much time on behalf of the community as Mr. Goldberg did. The municipal budget will be another tough one this year and more belt-tightening will almost certainly be needed. Residents should be prepared for further cut-backs.

Mr. Goldberg's term ends on December 31, and his last public meeting as a Committeeman will be this Wednesday December 15. Mr. Mancuso will be sworn in at the Township meeting scheduled for January 5, 2011.

Proposed Honeywell Development Project

Another big piece of news in town is the proposed redevelopment of the Honeywell company office complex on Columbia Road.

The Morris Township Planning Board held a Special Meeting on November 29 to review details of

Honeywell International's plans to redevelop the 147 acres than houses its headquarters. About 150 people turned out, the largest turnout for any meeting in Morris Township that I can remember!!

Honeywell, which employs 1,200 people at the Columbia Turnpike site, filed a proposal with the planning board requesting a rezoning of the property from Office/Lab to mixed use.

There are no detailed development plans at this time, just "concept plans." The first step for Honeywell is to get the mixed-use rezoning passed. Then they would come back for new and separate hearings on specific development proposals. The only part of the plan that seemed fairly certain was that they would be demolishing 8 of the current 11 buildings at the site. It appears that after the Planning Board rules on the specific rezoning to be allowed on the property, Honeywell will turn around and sell off the various parcels to different developers.

There are two conceptual General Development Plans under discussion:

- One version calls for 893,000 square feet of office space, a 250 room hotel measuring 162,500 square feet and 313 town houses totaling 615,500 square feet. A graphic of the proposed layout can be found here:

http://www51.honeywell.com/campus_redevelopment/common/images/Concept_A_big.jpg

- Another plan calls for 825,000 square feet of office space, the hotel, 230 townhouses and a continuing care retirement community consisting of 416 units. This layout can be seen here:

http://www51.honeywell.com/campus_redevelopment/common/images/Concept_B_big.jpg

A fiscal analysis report presented by the developer said the project could produce \$3.6 million in additional revenues for the township, school system and county, compared to what the property currently produces in property tax revenues. The Township's portion of the revenues from that land would rise from \$336,000 currently to a projected \$1.29 million, the report said. The hotel is projected to pay annual taxes of \$275,000, the report said.



Despite the large number of townhouses proposed, the "expert witness" for Honeywell said only 39 children are projected to live in there, a finding that was met with skepticism by many of the residents attending the meeting.

I personally have some major concerns with this development, which I commented on at the public meeting on November 29:

- 1.** The development is too intense and too dense for Morris Township. Our community is one of single-family homes. Many of us moved here for the open spaces. This project will crowd a lot of people onto a small piece of land will put more cars on our already congested local roads. Some will be seduced to take the promise of all the new tax revenue, but it comes at a big price in the form of a lower quality of life that is hard to put a value on.
- 2.** The costs to the municipality could outweigh the benefits. All of this new building will require municipal services. At a time when we have cut-back on our police department, fire

department, Department of Public Works, etc. in order to balance the budget, this new development will require us to add back personnel and possibly require the purchase of new equipment – all of which has a cost. Further, if the school system cannot handle the influx of new schoolchildren then the entire school district would be left with the large expense of building a new school. (Note: this has not yet been verified, but I would love to hear from the school district on this)

3. If the condominiums do not get sold in this terrible real-estate market then the municipality could be left with a real eye-sore of a partially built development project. (The Township already has two examples of unfinished “eyesore” townhouse developments on Old Turnpike Road and on Deborah Drive – and we do not need more!)

4. As Mr. Goldberg previously warned, Affordable Housing requirements are uncertain at this time. By rezoning to add “residential” to this formally OL zone, the Township could be forced to include high density housing or take on cost to meet affordable housing requirements.

5. One other concern voiced by some residents is the possible soil contamination at the site from when it was owned by Allied Chemical (predecessor to Allied Signal, which then merged with Honeywell), and that it could contaminate the ground-water if it got disturbed after all these years. The developer promised that appropriate testing would take place prior to any construction.

The full text of the daily record article on the Honeywell development, including a quote from me, can be found here: http://www.jeffgrayzel.com/pdf/News_120110.pdf

There will be a continuing hearing of this matter at the **Planning Board meeting scheduled for Monday February 7th**. Please mark your calendar to hear more about this proposal which has the potential to change the fabric of the east side of our Township.

Congratulations to our new Fire Chief

The longtime Fire Chief, Craig Goss, retired as Fire Chief several months ago. Chief Goss, who is a Township resident, said he would become a member of the volunteer force.

Deputy Chief Scott Lovenberg, who was acting Chief the past few months, was formally promoted to Chief at the November Township Committee meeting. Congratulations to our new Fire Chief.



It is not clear yet whether the deputy Chief position will be filled, but my personal guess is that it will not be due to budget considerations.

New Township Administrator

The longtime Administrator of Morris Township, Mr. Fred Rossi, is retiring at the end of this year. The Township recently announced that Police Chief Quinn was selected as the new Township Administrator. Concurrently, Chief Quinn has announced his retirement from the Police Department after 32+ years of service.

Congratulations to Mr. Quinn on this new assignment. He has administered our police department very well since he took over the top position there several years ago, and I expect he will do a similar exemplary job as Township Administrator.

Obviously, there will need to changes to the Police command structure once Chief Quinn steps down. Nothing has been announced yet, but I expect we'll hear shortly.

Driving Tip

There was an unfortunate accident a few days ago in Morris Twp when a driver swerved to avoid a deer

and lost control of her car. It is a reminder to always be on the lookout for deer at the side of the road – especially at dusk. If a deer jumps in front of your car the best thing to do is to keep driving straight even if you need to hit it head on. The worst accidents, like this one, happen when people try to swerve around them.

Here is the brief news story as covered in the Daily Record: <http://www.dailyrecord.com/article/20101213/COMMUNITIES/312130002/Morris-Twp-cops-Newark-woman-killed-after-car-hits-deer>

Christmas Tree Sale at the Hillside Firehouse

The Hillside Hose Company is once again holding its annual Christmas tree sale. A very large assortment of high-quality trees and wreaths are available, and the prices are quite reasonable.

The Hillside firehouse is located a 132 Western Avenue in Morris Township.

All proceeds benefit the fire company – meaning that all proceeds benefit Morris Township residents. Please support the community by buying your Christmas Tree at the Hillside firehouse.



Leaf collection continues

The DPW is currently collecting leaves by “sector”. The Township is divided into 3 sectors, and you can find your sector here:

<http://www.morristwp.com/pdfs/dpwsector2.pdf>

Check the Township website to find out which sector is active: <http://www.morristwp.com>

Also, here is a notice from DPW about what you are allowed to put out for collection:

http://www.morristwp.com/dept_dpwcollectionservices.asp#fall

Please remember to keep your leaves on the curb and out of the paved portion of the street. This is important so that storm drains do not get clogged with leaves and cause flooding situations in the event of a large rainstorm. It also keeps the street clear for passage of emergency vehicles.

Upcoming Committee Meeting...

The last Township Committee meeting of the year will take place Wednesday, December 15th at 8:00pm at the Municipal Building.

This will be Ron Goldberg’s last meeting on the Committee. If you are one of his fans (as I am), then please come out and give him a round of applause for the tremendous job he has done as a Committeeman serving and supporting the residents of Morris Township.

Please come out to show your appreciation for Ron Goldberg!

As we saw with the Planning Board meeting regarding the Honeywell development, the presence of residents at Township meetings 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/morrisTownship>

Contact Jeff...

I will continue to communicate with the public on a periodic basis. However, if you ever have a question or an issue you would like to discuss, then please feel free to contact me by e-mail. I will continue to respond to e-mails sent to Jeff@JeffGrayzel.com

**NEXT
TOWNSHIP
MEETING:
Wednesday
Dec. 15th**

Please feel free to forward this e-mail on to others. If you know someone who would like to subscribe to future issues, please have them contact me at Jeff@JeffGrayzel.com

Best wishes to everyone for a happy and safe holiday season.

Your neighbor,
Jeff

© 2010 - Jeff Grayzel

[Jeff's Web Site](#) | [Contact Jeff](#)

©2010 Jeff Grayzel