



2010 Fourth Quarter Update ~ October 2010

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Dear Neighbors,

It has been several months since I last wrote to you in June. As I stated previously, since I was not re-elected I cannot continue reporting on Township Committee meetings from a Committeeman's perspective. However, I promised that I would publish commentary on an occasional basis -- and obviously from a different perspective.

At this time, I feel that Morris Township residents need to know the latest events down at town hall, so I wanted to update you on a couple of developments.

2010 Municipal Budget – and its effects



The 2010 municipal budget was finally passed in July, and then required some modifications in August to completely close a budget deficit that still existed. More than half the year had already passed by the time it was implemented – so more than half the personnel savings opportunities for the year had passed us by.

As I mentioned in my previous communication to you, this was a tough budget year for Morris Township (as it was for virtually every municipality around the State of NJ). Morris Township had a \$3.25 million gap between the April 2010 departmental budget requests and projected 2010 revenues. To put this into perspective, the budget gap amounts to almost 10% of the \$34.6 million appropriated in the 2009 budget

I discussed this with Committeeman Ron Goldberg to learn (1) how the huge budget shortfall suddenly materialized, (2) what is being done to close the gap, and (3) what all of this means to you.

First, the shortfall did not “suddenly materialize”.

On the revenue side, Governor Christie warned of state cuts last year. The actual announcements were in March, but we knew it was coming. Morris Township lost \$1 million in aid and grants. Other sources of revenues, such as fees collected in construction permit fees and low interest on our money in bank accounts, were also down. However, the reduced construction fees were trending down during 2009, as anybody could have predicted. The other portion of the deficit related to reduced property tax collections, which was finally known with certainty in February 2010. But given that a majority of this reduction was due to commercial real estate tax settlements, this could have been predicted much sooner -- and that needs attention in the future.

On the spending side, although there was a small net head-count reduction in 2009, the cost of personnel was not addressed until the current financial crisis hit. Personnel costs are more than

half of our annual budget. In fact, Goldberg said that it was only because of his continual insistence that department heads were finally given responsibly for their entire budget in 2010 -- including personnel costs. He said he also insisted last December that departments submit a 2010 budget not to exceed 85% of their 2009 budget. So why did the budget request come in at 100% of the 2009 budget? Why was the haggling still going on in June? Because it took months for the Township Committee to finally listen to Goldberg.

Second, Goldberg further said that we have a minor and easily corrected forecasting problem -- but a serious executive planning and implementation problem. Forecasting needs to be consolidated, formatted and scheduled so it can be a more useful management tool. Even if forecasting had been done early, the Mayor and Township Administrator were unable to quickly and effectively communicate and enforce the 85% budget directive Goldberg had suggested.

Third, so by the time July rolled around and the budget was passed we were already more than halfway through the budget year. As the budget process dragged from month-to-month-to-month the window of opportunity (i.e. the remaining months in the year) shrank -- and the number of jobs cuts and service cuts needed to pay for the entire budget shortfall increased to levels that did not have to be so drastic.

This brings us to what this all means for our residents.

Residents of Morris Township will see reductions in service and a municipal tax increase this year. The approved budget took the complete 4% cap on spending increases, which when translated to our tax rate equals **a 6.7% increase!!** This equates to an increase in your tax bill of about \$80/year on a house assessed at \$390,000. The new tax rate is retroactive to January 1st which is why your first tax bill will look that much higher.

Here is a sampling of what was cut from the 2010 budget:

2010 Personnel cuts include:

- Reducing headcount in the fire department by one fire fighter.
- Outsourcing the fire inspection responsibilities to an outside firm, which eliminated 2 positions.
- Reducing headcount in the Police Department through attrition by 3 people (combination of officers and office staff).
- Reducing headcount in the Department of Public Works by 6 workers, which includes two retirements.
- Reducing headcount in the building department (permitting and inspection responsibilities) by 4 employees.
- Eliminating the Deputy Clerk position and the Special assistant to the Township Administrator.
- Eliminating **7** other clerical positions across the Township.

Some of the service and cost reductions and fee increases that have been implemented for 2010 are:

- Reducing Police presence inside Frelinghuysen Middle School.
- Eliminating curbside pick up of yard waste and wood-shipping services.
- Large fee increases (including doubling fees, in some cases) of many recreation programs in the Township.
- Eliminating our participation in Colonial Coach

There have also been many key management changes because department heads from several important areas have either retired or will do so by the end of this year:

- Township Administrator, Fred Rossi
- Fire Chief, Craig Goss
- Chief Financial Officer, Julia Hasbrouck

- Superintendent of the Department Of Public Works, Jim Stoia

Scott Rosenbush wrote a "Mayors Budget Article" which gives many more details on the budget and the process to finalize it. This article can be found on the Township website at:

<http://www.morristwp.com/pdfs/mayorsbudgetarticle2010.pdf>

Morris Township must continue to put its financial house in order, as 2011 will be another tough year. Let's hope the 2011 budget process is better managed that it was in 2010. Otherwise, Morris Township residents will experience additional service cuts.

We need people on our Township Committee who are looking out for us -- not looking the other way. Goldberg also told me he was already looking forward to next year, and he has asked for a pro forma 2011 budget in order to identify problems or opportunities created by the 2010 budgeting.

What I am up to

I have been enjoying my time off from local municipal responsibilities by spending more time with my kids and catching up on the long "to do" list that accumulated while I was in office (and had to spend a considerable amount of my personal time on Township business). The list is smaller but it never seems to go away!

This Fall I finally had the opportunity to coach kids soccer, and I am the head coach of a 6-7 year-old Morris United Soccer team. It seems like I was perpetually campaigning every Fall, but since I had this year "off" I decided the time was right to start coaching soccer. I have loved watching the kids improve from week to week. In the Spring I look forward to moving up from T-ball coach to Little League coach since my youngest son is at the age to move up too.

I continue to stay involved on matters involving our municipal government. I attend the Township Committee meetings regularly. I am also an appointed member of the Morris Township Trails and Pathways Committee, which is having its next meeting on November 3. I have also applied for several other volunteer positions on municipal committees and boards.

Through the "Open Appointments" application process created when I introduced legislation for as a Committeeman, I have applied for positions on the Planning Board, Board of Adjustment, and Environmental Committee. Both the PB and BOA have a full slate of members, but there are two openings on the Environmental Committee. Unfortunately, the Mayor has not seen fit to appoint me to the EC in the six months since I submitted my application. It is very disappointing that the Mayor will not appoint

General Election on November 2

The upcoming election has a race that is very important for Morris Township residents: an election for one of five seats on the Township Committee.

First let me remind you of how our local government works. We have the "Township" form of government, which is one of the seven different forms of government allowed in New Jersey. In this form of municipal government Morris Township is governed by a Township Committee of five members. We do not have an elected Mayor, such as in Morristown and Morris Plains. Rather our Mayor is selected by the five Committee members from amongst themselves. This is called a "weak" Mayor, which means that he has little executive power and cannot make decisions independent of the other four Committeemen. With no elected Mayor, the only check & balances that we have has to come from within the Township Committee itself.



Ron Goldberg is finishing up his first 3-year term on the Township Committee and is up for reelection. As the lone Democrat on a Committee with four Republican members, Ron has been providing the little bit of "balance" we find in our local government.

Opposing Ron is a man who is very practiced at mismanagement. Hoping to take out the lone opposition voice on the Township Committee, the Republicans are bringing back a familiar name – Peter Mancuso -- albeit familiar for the wrong reasons.

Many of you will recall that Morris Township used to have a wonderful “charity” carnival every Memorial Day weekend. The carnival was cancelled 4 years ago because its corporate Chairman, Peter Mancuso, did not file tax and administrative documents for almost a decade. Peter Mancuso, who was Chairman of what he (at the time) falsely claimed to be a not-for profit corporation, mismanaged the carnival into non-existence. To this day, the public does not know what Mancuso did with all the money he collected in carnival receipts. As for the scholarships he said his organization gave out, Mancuso has not accounted for the money the carnival collected and has refused requests to release the names of the scholarship winners. So one can only wonder whether or how many scholarships were issued, or whether the money went to those “connected” to Mancuso.

Here are two Star Ledger articles from 2006 and 2007 giving some details of Mancuso’s mismanagement of the carnival and its money. Please READ them:

Star Ledger article, November 2006 “*Group that raises funds at carnival accused of not renewing registration*”. Read it here:

http://www.jeffgrayzel.com/pdf/Star%20Ledger_Carnival_111906.pdf.pdf

Star Ledger article, April 2007 “*Morris Township Day’07 is in jeopardy*”. Read it here:

http://www.jeffgrayzel.com/pdf/Star%20Ledger_Carnival_042907.pdf

Given Ron’s strong performance on the Township Committee this past year, combined with Mancuso’s tainted history of financial mismanagement of our carnival, I personally think Ron Goldberg is the better choice in this election.

I believe that Ron Goldberg has been working hard for all of our residents and that he is doing an excellent job. He deserves to be re-elected on November 2nd.

Other news and events

- **Morris Township Municipal Building closure:** Due to budget cut-backs and furloughs our municipal building will be closed several Fridays over the remainder of the year. See the complete announcement here:
<http://www.morristwp.com/pdfs/furloughdays2010.pdf>
- **Leaf collection to start shortly:** Despite the budget cut-backs, Township leaf collection will begin shortly and continue through (probably) December. The start date has not yet been announced, so watch the Township website for your sector’s schedule. Of note, yard waste is to be kept separate from the leaves, as sticks can cause jamming of the leaf collection equipment and result in delays if the machines need to be stopped for clean-out. Yard waste can be brought in containers to the DPW yard off Hanover Avenue.
- **Morris Township Recreation programs:** Due to budget constraints the Fall-Winter recreation brochure was not “snail-mailed” to residents through the postal service as has been done for many, many years. Many people do not know that it can be found online at:
<http://www.morristwp.com/pdfs/RecBrochure2010-11FallWinter.pdf>
- **Pumpkin Illumination at Vail Mansion:** On Saturday evening Oct. 30 at 6:00pm bring your own pumpkin to the Vail Mansion on South Street in Morristown. Anyone can participate by simply bringing an already carved jack-o-lantern to the Vail Mansion before 6:00 pm. Pumpkins will be lit as soon as it get dark (6:15). The more pumpkins the more spectacular it will be! Afterwards there is Spooky Storytelling In the lobby of the



Community Theater from 7:00 –8:15pm (with free cider and hot chocolate)



- **The Morris County Tourism Bureau** has a wonderful website with lots of local events listed. Check it out at: <http://www.morristourism.org/>
- **The Morris County Park Commission** has numerous activities listed on their events calendar – too many to be listed here. See the calendar at <http://www.morrisparks.net/calendars.asp>
- **Recycling**: Another reminder that Morris Township now recycles plastics 1-7. Help keep plastic out of our landfills by putting them in your recycle bin. More info can be found here: http://www.morristwp.com/pdfs/ABC's_of_Recycling1-7_May_Rev.pdf
- Morris Township has eliminated Saturday Recycling Depot hours, but Monday through Friday hours remain. Sidewalk collection is still in accordance with the published schedule. More info: http://www.morristwp.com/pdfs/Recycling_Depo_%20Saturday_Cancellation.pdf

Upcoming Committee Meeting...

There is only one Township Committee meeting scheduled for the month of October. It takes placetonight Wednesday October 20th at 8:00pm at the Municipal Building. There is actually not much on the agenda this month so there will be lots of time for the public commentary section at the meeting for residents to ask the Township Committee any questions they have about anything relating to Morris Township.

Please try to attend one of our Township meetings to see how your local government operates. Your presence 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...

Although I will not be communicating with the public as frequently as in the past, please feel free to contact me by e-mail with questions or comments about anything happening in Morris Township. I will continue to respond to e-mails sent to Jeff@JeffGrayzel.com

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

Enjoy the nice Fall weather!

Your neighbor,
Jeff

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TONIGHT...
NEXT
TOWNSHIP
MEETING:
Wednesday
Oct. 20th

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

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