



Newsletter #29 ~ January 2010

IMPORTANT -- PLEASE NOTE:

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January, 2010 Update

Dear Neighbors,

I wanted to let everyone know of the disappointing results of the Special Meeting of the Township Committee that was held last Wednesday, December 30. The sole purpose of the meeting was to discuss and vote on the Public Contracting Reform Ordinance, a local "pay-to-play" measure for Morris Township. This legislation was voted down by a 3-2 vote along party lines, with the 2 democrats voting for higher ethical standards in our governing body and the 3 republicans voting to continue business as usual.

See the Daily Record newspapers articles below (links provided) to get an unbiased review of the meeting results, and read the excuses and misinformation the Committeemen used to justify their "no" votes. Please also be sure to read the Editorial, which states that this was "**a setback on ethics reform**" in Morris Township. You will also read that twenty residents were in attendance at the meeting, and I thank all of them for taking time out of their work-days to attend this important early-morning meeting. Fifteen residents made public statements, and all were supportive of this legislation and urged the Township Committee to vote for it.

**Township
Committee
rejects
Pay-To-Play
ordinance
by a 3-2
margin.**

In September I introduced, and Committeeman Ron Goldberg seconded, the Public Contracting Reform Ordinance at our Township Committee meeting. This local legislation is significantly stronger than the NJ State pay-to-play law. Municipalities are allowed to pass local legislation exceeds the State requirements. Since the State law is weak, a stronger local law is quite necessary.

A hearing on the Public Contracting Reform Ordinance was originally scheduled for the Township Committee meeting of December 16th, but a clerical error put us out of compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, With only 2 weeks left in the year we were forced to schedule a special hearing during the holiday period (when many people are not reading the newspapers and certainly not paying attention to local politics).

As I have told you in past newsletters, this ordinance is based on a model prepared by the non-partisan Citizens Campaign organization (see their website at www.jointhecampaign.com). Local ordinances just like this one have been passed by almost 70 governing bodies around the state of New Jersey – including Morristown and Parsippany. See below for more details on how this local-level pay-to-play measure goes well beyond the State of New Jersey Pay-to-Play laws.

My hope was that we could pass it in Morris Township, as well, to ensure that our municipality maintains the highest ethical standard. I had also hoped that we would serve as a role model for how

all municipalities should operate as well as helping to set a new standard for the rest of New Jersey, which in many places is plagued by the exchange of political contributions for lucrative public contracts. Instead of helping to raise the bar, the majority of the Morris Township Committee voted to operate at a lower standard.

As one member of the public stated: "There is no good reason not to vote for this". Yet, each of the dissenting Committeemen did find their own excuses not to vote for it.

All of you should know that this, as always, was not about party politics (as my opponents always claim it to be). It is neither red or blue. It is about **Good Government**. We have read about pay-to-play in Democratic-majority town in NJ and we now have the signs in Morris Township. This was a missed opportunity to put a bipartisan lid on it in our township.

About Pay-to-Play...

Absent of proper controls, public contracting is increasingly dominated by "pay-to-play" practices where large campaign contributions are traded for lucrative government contracts. In the process, taxpayers pay more for lower quality services and local elections become too costly for everyday Americans to contemplate running. Public contracting reform severs the link between campaign contributions and government contracts, ensuring that merit and cost effectiveness drive the contract process while leveling the playing field to run for political office.

Key Components of this ordinance are:

- Sets limits on contributions from professionals, such as attorneys, auditors, and engineers in the year prior to negotiations.
- Bans all political contributions by contractors from the beginning of negotiations through the performance of the contract.
- Limits contributions to \$300 to town candidates and local political parties, \$500 to county political parties, PACs and \$2,500 in aggregate.
- Includes contracts awarded through a "fair and open" process.
- Individuals who break the law, or try to circumvent it are banned from receiving no-bid contracts for 4 years.

I believe we should maintain the highest ethical standard in Morris Township -- and to help set a standard for all of New Jersey.

For more information on pay to play, see this link on my website:

<http://www.jeffgrayzel.com/pdf/PayToPlay%20talking%20pointsfact%20sheet.pdf>

Daily Record newspaper coverage...

The Daily Record provided good coverage of this issue.

Here is the article from the Daily Record on the special meeting:

<http://www.dailyrecord.com/article/200912301341/UPDATES01/91230044>

Here is an editorial by the Daily Record on the vote in Morris Township:

<http://www.dailyrecord.com/article/201001020600/OPINION01/91230027>

In order to provide my readers with both "sides" of this issue, the following is a letter to the editor from Mayor Scott Rosenbush on why he voted against the ordinance:

<http://www.dailyrecord.com/article/201001010600/OPINION02/91230060>

The Daily Record got it right in their editorial comment that this was "a setback on ethics reform" and that "Whether unions should be covered by pay-to-play restrictions is a legitimate point. But the answer is not to reject the ordinance. The answer is to pass it and then work on an amendment".

Click here
for an
editorial
by the
Daily
Record
on the
vote in
Morris
Township »

Upcoming Committee Meeting...

The first Township Committee meeting of 2010 will take place this **Wednesday, January 6th**. The draft agenda is available online at

http://www.morristwp.com/agendas/org_meeting_agenda_12-06-10.pdf

This is the annual "Township Reorganization Meeting" where the next Mayor is elected by the Committee and he announces his appointments to various Boards and Committees. In addition, the new, 2010 Committee will contract for professional services (including several lawyers, our Prosecutor, Planner, etc). The outcome of the December 30th pay-to-play ordinance vote would have been very meaningful at this point as several of the professionals we will hire contributed -- during the performance of their contract -- to the campaigns of several of our Morris Township Committeemen. Under the Public Contracting Reform Ordinance, such contributions are prohibited.

I urge everyone to attend our Township Committee meetings. It is the best way to stay informed on how our local government is operating.

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

Best wishes to all for a happy and healthy 2010.

JEFF

Former Committeeman, Morris Township

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

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