



January 2011: Morris Township News Update

IMPORTANT -- PLEASE NOTE:

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Dear Neighbors,

Please take a few minutes from this hectic season of snow and ice to read about the many changes playing out in our municipality.

Township Committee Meetings

The Township Committee held meetings on January 5th and January 19th. The January 5th meeting was the annual "re-organization" meeting. New Committeeman Peter Mancuso was sworn in to office, and many of the appointments to Boards, Committees and other positions were announced.

I would have provided you with the internet links to the meeting agendas on the Township web site as I have done in the past. However, it appears the Township has ceased posting the meeting agendas online. I have not seen one on the website in several months. Likewise, the Township calendar and listings of board and committee meeting dates are not posted.

It is very disappointing that the Township appears to have decided that communicating with and giving advance notice to the public is not a priority. We have regressed to the way it was before I became a Committeeman: the only way to have any idea of what is going on in the municipality is to somehow know when to attend a meeting and to be there, in-person.

It should be noted — that Morris Township, once again, has an all-Republican Township Committee. Once again we are without a single member to provide balance and a competing point of view. This is a very disappointing and troubling development. It should trouble everyone – including Republicans. I believe that government needs "checks & balances" at all levels, including the local level. We are without checks and balances in Morris Township once again.

New Police Chief

At the January 19th meeting, our new Chief of Police, Dennis Reilly was sworn in. The entire police force was assembled in service dress uniform, and Reilly was greeted by a color guard. Reilly has been with the Morris Township Police Department for 23 years, the last 3 as a Captain of our force. After he was sworn in, Reilly gave a very warm speech that lasted about 20 minutes. Morris Township residents are lucky to have such a fine leader in Chief Reilly. I congratulate him and know he will



Congratulations!

serve us well.

Read more about the swearing-in ceremony on the Morris Patch website:

<http://morris.patch.com/articles/police-take-center-stage-at-morris-township-committee-meeting>

Read a bio of our new Police Chief here:

<http://morris.patch.com/articles/capt-dennis-reilly-tapped-for-top-job-in-township-police-department>

Also at this meeting, Patrolman Thomas Nunn was recognized for 40 years of service with the Morris Township Police Department. Congratulations and "thank you" to Patrolman Nunn!

Proposed Honeywell Development Project

Another big piece of news in town is the proposed redevelopment of the 147 acre Honeywell company office complex on Columbia Road.

The Morris Township Planning Board will hold its next hearing on this matter on Monday February 7th. The Planning Board previously held a Special Meeting on November 29 to review details of Honeywell International's plans to redevelop the site that 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 if the site were rezoned, Honeywell would sell the plots not intended for their own use to 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 and will put many more cars on our already congested local roads. Some people may be seduced by the promise of increased tax revenue, but it would come with a cost: lowered quality of life. Some would argue this is priceless.
- 2.** The costs to the municipality could possibly 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!)

Some residents are also concerned about possible soil contamination at the site from when it was owned by Allied Chemical (predecessor to Allied Signal, which then merged with Honeywell), and if that 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

The continuation of the hearing of this matter will be at the Planning Board meeting scheduled for this coming Monday February 7th starting at 7:30pm at our municipal building (50 Woodland Avenue). 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.

**NEXT
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING:
Monday Feb. 7th**

Petition against Honeywell development

I have been informed of an online petition circulating. The petition states:

"We, the undersigned, urge Honeywell international and the Morris township government to NOT alter existing zoning at Honeywell International's (101 Columbia Turnpike Morristown NJ) and NOT to engage in a long term general development plan for the area.

Rezoning is inconsistent with community and state master plans for our area. Further, we call for a more realistic analysis of rezoning changes impact on TRAFFIC, POPULATION DENSITY, TAX BURDEN AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES that will negatively change the LIVABILITY of this

area and set a dangerous zoning precedent for Morris Township and our state. We register our disagreement with rezoning and unforeseeable consequences of a general development plan for this area.

We also note the potential negative consequences to our land and watersheds from development of the contaminated ponds and soil on the property."

If you wish to learn more about this petition, go to:

<http://www.gopetition.com/petition/41669.html>

Note: I am neither an originator nor a sponsor of this petition.

Read the Daily Record story on the petition here:

<http://www.dailyrecord.com/article/20110130/COMMUNITIES/110129030/-1/NLETTER01/Morris-Twp.-residents-rally-against-Honeywell-development-plans?source=nletter-news>

Read the Morris Patch story on the petition here:

<http://morris.patch.com/articles/petition-circulating-against-honeywell-redevelopment>

Valentine's Day Rose sale at the Hillside Firehouse

The Township Office of Emergency Management (OEM) team is once again hosting a rose sale in the days leading up to Valentine's Day. 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 at 132 Western Avenue in Morris Township.

All proceeds benefit the OEM organization – meaning that all proceeds benefit Morris Township residents. Please support the community by buying your roses at the Hillside firehouse.

Morris Township E.C. to establish community garden for residents

The township Environmental Commission, in cooperation with Morris County Park Commission, is working to establish a community garden for township residents in 2011. The garden will be within the township boundaries though no specific sites have been determined. Garden plots will be offered to residents based on a "first-come, first-served" basis. The garden will be administered by its volunteer members. Creation of the garden is subject to sufficient public interest and demand. For further information or to volunteer to help, please send an email with contact information to: morriscommunitygarden@gmail.com

Winter Safety Tip: Dig out your fire hydrant

With all the snow we have had, many fire hydrants are now buried. For the safety of your home and loved ones, it is recommended that you dig out the fire hydrant closest to your home. If there is an emergency in your area the fire department could lose precious minutes trying to locate and dig out the fire hydrant before being able to hook up their hoses.

See the request from our Fire Chief on the Morris Patch website:

<http://morris.patch.com/articles/request-from-fire-chief-scott-lovenberg-help-clear-hydrants>

DEP warns Morris County residents on Radon gas

Homes in Morris County are among those most at risk of dangerous levels of radon, the state Department of Environmental Protection warns. It is urging New Jersey residents to check for radon exposure via a simple test during January, which is National Radon Action Month.

For more information click here:

<http://morristown.patch.com/articles/dep-morristown-and-all-of-morris-county-high-risk-area-for-radon>

Lists of New Jersey certified testing and mitigation businesses and general radon information are available at www.njradon.org or call the Radon Section Information Line at (800) 648-0394 or (609) 984-5425.

To access the New Jersey Radon Potential Map go to:

www.njradon.org/radonin.htm



Other items of interest...

» Little league sign-up has begun. If you live on the east side of town please visit the American League site at **<http://maall.net/>**

If you live on the west side of town please visit the National League site at **<http://mnl.org/index.asp>**

Space is filling up so I suggest you register soon.

» On February 6 Fosterfields Historical Park presents "Winters Day On The Farm. The event will take place from 12-4pm at Fosterfields Farm in Morris Twp. Activities include wagon rides, Maple Tree tapping, live farm animals, ice-cutting, and other children's activities. For more information call the farm at 973-326-7645.

» As you may have heard, New Jersey will lose one of its Congressional seats due to the 2010 census results. The legislative redistricting process has begun to determine how to consolidate 13 Congressional districts into 12 (by next year). The first two public **[hearings were held to take testimony](#)** and get public input on the Legislative redistricting process. More info:

http://www.politickernj.com/back_room/redistricting-public-hearings-saturday

» Watch an enhanced version (with graphics) of President Obama's State of the Union address: **<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kl2g40GoRyg>**

Upcoming Committee Meeting...

The next Township Committee meeting will take place this Wednesday February 2nd at 8:00pm at our municipal building.

Please note that one would NOT be able to find this information online, since the online Township calendar is virtually empty!

<http://plus.calendars.net/morrisTownship>

I urge the municipality to begin informing the public of the meetings and events in our municipality.

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

**NEXT
TOWNSHIP
MEETING:
Wednesday
Feb. 2nd**

Your presence improves the quality of the proceedings, and your "in-person" questions require the Township Committee to be responsive to our citizens.

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

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

Your neighbor,
Jeff

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

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