

Mayoral Address

Jeff Grayzel

Morris Township – January 2, 2019

Good Evening Neighbors, Friends, and Welcomed Guests.

We are so glad to have many dignitaries and distinguished guests with us tonight and I would like to acknowledge them:

LISTING OF DIGNITARIES

So let me start off by simply saying WOW!

This day has been a long-time coming – and quite a journey. Thankfully, the King of Recounts did not need one this year.

Two people who have been nearby throughout the entire trip are Noel Robinson and Chip Robinson. Noel has been living in Morris Township for 33 years, and her son Chip was born and raised here. I am honored to have had them swear me in tonight. Thank you both for your help and guidance.

My family has also been at my side through this journey. Both my boys used to be my designated door-bell ringers during my early campaigns, which made things much easier when a resident was already waiting for me at their door with a piece of literature already in their hand as I came up their front walk. My oldest son is 17 now and going off to college soon. Needless to say, as teenagers, they let it be known this year that they were done ringing doorbells. I was on my own. Thank you to Lynn, Jacob, and Alex for being at my side through this journey.

And I am blessed to have both my parents healthy and still very much a part of my life. My two teenage boys don't like to take much advice from

their Dad, but I want them to know that I would not be in this position tonight if my parents had not positioned me to do something like this. I am very lucky to have them here with us at this momentous occasion.

Tonight I am honored to take this center seat as the Mayor of this great town for 2019. I have waited a long time to sit in this seat. Now I have shown that persistence CAN lead you to your goals.

I am grateful to the public for again electing me to the Township Committee. I promise our residents that I will try my hardest to implement the government values I have campaigned on. This will be my third term on the Township Committee being a steward of the public's trust. I have learned much in my previous 6 years on the Committee and now I am ready to lead our municipality as Mayor.

I believe in the saying that you can't know where you're going if you don't know where you've come from. I learned a tremendous amount during my prior 2 terms which included a lot of institutional knowledge gleaned from my predecessors.

I have had the privilege of serving with many long-serving Committeemen and Committeewoman that had a lot of experience and knowledge. During my first term I served with Kathleen Hyland, Rick Watson, Bob Nace and Scott Rosenbush – all of whom had the title of Mayor multiple times during their years of service. I learned from all of them. More recently I have served with our Mayor Emeritus Peter Mancuso, who has already helped guide me as I take on these new responsibilities.

I must add that it is ironic and unfortunate that the person I learned the most from also chose to kick me when I was down after having lost my last election. Those of you who were here at that reorganization meeting several years ago may recall his harsh words. So I am hopeful that Scott Rosenbush will be watching this meeting after it is posted to YouTube – thanks to the efforts of our new Deputy Mayor Cathy Wilson – so Scott too can hear the great things we have planned for our town in the coming year.

We are all lucky to live in a town that is SO well run. Our administration and our employees do a great job. Business Administrator Tim Quinn runs a very efficient operation here at town hall. I see him as a combination of a captain steering our big ship as well as a mechanic who keeps that machine well-oiled. We are lucky to have him. Our attorney John Mills has given us good guidance through the years, always showing the utmost respect for me and everyone who he deals with, and I look forward to his continued counsel this year. And all our department heads are to be commended for the jobs they do on a day-to-day basis to provide the quality services that our residents have come to expect. Our residents should be ASSURED that they will see NO changes in the day-to-day operations of our town.

However, as I met with residents all over town this past year, it is clear that many residents DO want to see us change the way we do things on several other fronts. These include:

Communication

Overdevelopment

Traffic and speeding

And more shared services to help us reduce costs.

Fellow residents, we have heard you loud and clear, and I can tell you that THIS Township Committee WILL be addressing these concerns this year.

From day 1 when I started my first campaign I spoke about OPEN government. To me, that is more than just better communication with our residents – which we WILL do. It is also about seeking out resident input when we need to make tough decisions. That is true open government and we will do that too.

Our goal is to set a new gold standard in the way a municipality communicates with its residents and seeks their input prior to making big decisions. At our January 16 meeting we will lay out elements of our new communications plan, and you will get a preview of this tonight from Deputy

Mayor Cathy Wilson. This plan includes televising Township Committee meetings on Cable TV and opening up these monthly meetings to provide more detailed explanations to residents about our ordinances and other items on our agenda that affect our municipality.

As for Overdevelopment, we are facing several large developments already underway or proposed. We need to ensure that these are properly integrated into the fabric of our town.

Additionally, better planning is so important to me that this year I will also take a seat on our planning board in addition to my responsibilities as Mayor. My goal is that any new development has an element integrated into its plan to get people out of their cars and onto their feet and bikes. We have enough cars on our roads and any new development will need to limit traffic impacts.

Related to the traffic issue, I am pleased to announce a brand new Standing Committee tonight that is titled "Traffic and Circulation". This will not only deal with cars, but also with bikers, hikers, walkers and public transportation. You will hear more about this from Cathy Wilson who is leading this effort.

And with regard to speeding, I am hopeful that Morris Township can finally follow the lead of Morris Plains and Morristown by starting a pilot program of testing speed humps on two or three streets.

As for shared services, we are going to formalize and expand this initiative by creating a new Standing Committee focused on shared services. We will build on our very successful joint court into other areas. We will not only be talking to surrounding municipalities, but also to the school district and the county government about sharing services.

We have many other initiatives that we will kick off this year. One is another brand new standing committee focused on what we are calling "Environment, Energy and Sustainability". Later this year will also be working on a multi-faceted initiative relating to our senior citizen community.

And we are not just going to start communicating more with our residents. We are also going to start communicating more with the towns that are around us AND our County government that is supposed to be helping all of us manage the burgeoning developments that are on Morris Township's own borders along county corridors. We would like the county to take a bigger role in mediating between communities where developments in one community adversely affect another community. As an example, the Park Avenue and Hanover Avenue corridors are already at gridlock for several hours a day – and there is still more development coming on each of those roads. We need to do better. To this end, we are expanding our previously titled “legislation” committee to now be titled “Legislation, Government Liaison, and Grants”.

In addition, there used to be a working group called SEAMLESS which stood for Southeast Morris League for Strategic Solutions. This group acted as a forum for our adjoining municipalities to share issues, problems and solutions with each other on a wide range of topics. This group ceased meeting over 8 years ago. I have already spoken to Mayor Bob Conley of Madison and Mayor Bruce Harris of Chatham Borough about restarting this group and they have been quite receptive.

We will also have several challenges this year. As we heard over the past several months the Township came to an agreement with the NJ courts on our Affordable Housing requirements. We negotiated a good settlement and now need to implement that settlement by the year 2025. Incorporating these new affordable units into our community has meant that the Township has proposed large developments that accommodate a portion of their units as affordable in order to meet our obligation. I would like to explore possibilities of easing the density requirement of these new developments while still meeting our obligations.

We will also have some budget challenges this year. For example the state of NJ will be requiring increased pension payments from all the municipalities to help make up for the deficient state funding of our pension obligations. We will also have increased health care costs after two years of no increases. Recycling is also an issue across the United States.

China used to take a tremendous amount of recycled materials from the United States. But they have stopped buying these materials and this has resulted in the bottom falling out of the market. So we used to get paid for our recyclable material but this year it will actually cost us money to dispose of the recyclable materials. There are other budget challenges as well which I will inform the public of over the next couple of month as we put the budget together.

In closing, I would like to again thank everyone out there who helped me get to this point. I look forward to your continued support as we work our way through the many new initiatives we have planned for this year. I am very much looking forward to being your Mayor this year and working with the great group of colleagues I have on this Township Committee as well as the excellent employees we have working for us in our town.

Here's to a successful 2019. Thank you!

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Mayor's Closing Remarks:

As you can see, we have set some lofty goals for ourselves this year. I think this team we have up here on the dais has the ability to meet those challenges.

I previously spoke about governing with certain values. Openness and inclusiveness are two of those values. I believe I am up here in order to implement the will of the people. I will seek resident input into our decision-making process.

This year we are going to start exploring different ways of getting that resident input – YOUR input. We hope to have a few neighborhood meetings throughout town and other initiatives that work towards that goal of having a gold-standard in resident communications.

But the best way to voice your concerns and have a discussion about the issues is to come to our monthly meetings that take place on the third Wednesday of every month. So I hope to see all of you come back here at our next meeting in two weeks on January 16.

But seriously, I really do want all of you to come to an occasional third-Wednesday throughout the course of the year, and I look forward to many good discussions out in the open at our Township Committee meetings.

I wish all of you a wonderful 2019 and thank everyone for coming out tonight.

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