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### Pay-to-play law introduced in Morris Twp.

*Law could toughen rules; parties divide on procedure*

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Editor

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**MORRIS TWP.** – After wrangling on straight party lines over the proper method of crafting legislation, the Township Committee last Wednesday introduced an ordinance designed to toughen pay-to-play rules in the township.

The ordinance calls for full disclosure from entities contracted for township work.

Democrat Jeff Grayzel and fellow Democrat Ron Goldberg sparred with Republican Mayor Scott Rosenbush on how an ordinance should be presented after Grayzel called for introduction during his public commentary portion of the meeting

Both Grayzel and Rosenbush are up for re-election and each have running mates looking to unseat the other incumbent - Bruce Sisler for the Republicans, Mary Marley-Reidy for the Democrats.

At the Wednesday meeting, Rosenbush said an ordinance is generally directed to department heads to receive their input and then put together by the township attorney for introduction during the ordinance introduction portion of the meeting.

But in this case, Grayzel had only sent the ordinance to the township clerk several weeks earlier and had discussed the matter with Republican Township Committeeman Ray Snyder, who is on the township's Legislative Committee along with Grayzel. No comments from any department heads were ever submitted.

Grayzel suggested the ordinance could be studied between introduction and the public hearing in about a month's time for department head review. Rosenbush at first balked at the introduction request but finally agreed to support introduction when the committee agreed to hold the public hearing a month later than usual at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 16 to give everyone a chance to look at it.

State statute says all firms seeking business with the township must submit a business entity disclosure form if a contract exceeds \$17,500 before a public service contract may be awarded, according to Township Clerk Cathleen Amelio.

Grayzel's ordinance does not include a contract cost ceiling.

Goldberg called the procedural difficulty, "deeply disappointing" and said the ordinance had been available to committee members for weeks.

In a statement made after the meeting, Grayzel said, "To continue my quest for open and responsible government, I have introduced a municipal-level pay-to-play act, the Public Contracting Reform Act, that would place limits on political contributions by those doing business with the township. This act will expand on state regulations and sever the links between political donations and government contracts,

and ensure that contracts will instead be driven by merit and cost-effectiveness.”

“Even though the legislation had been vetted by the township’s Legislative Committee of Ray Snyder and Grayzel,” he added, “introduction was achieved only after an initial objection, lead by Scott Rosenbush, who refused to put this item on the meeting agenda. The newly introduced ordinance would, if adopted, set limits on contributions from professionals such as attorneys, auditors and engineers and ban contributions by contractors. The act will expand on regulations already required by the state of New Jersey. It will close loopholes in state law that would allow municipal political candidates to evade political contribution limits and accept post-contract contributions, and that permit contractor contributions to be funneled from a county political party to municipal candidates.”

In response, Rosenbush said Grayzel’s urgency on the ordinance could be directly linked to the election season.

“What reason do we need this ordinance?” Rosenbush asked. “How does it differ from current law? It is incumbent on Mr., Grayzel to explain to the Township Committee why he thinks it sufficient and why current laws are not. He has not done that.”

Rosenbush added he had no objection to the ordinance, just that it should have been reviewed by committee staff and legal council beforehand and it was not.

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