

## EDITORIAL: Karr, Goddard, Verga for Morris Plains

Oct 27, 2022

A lot of the talk around Morris Plains has been about the state of the downtown and for good reason.

The COVID-19 pandemic hurt businesses all over the world, and Morris Plains was not spared.

Collins Pub closed, and owner Dominick Alberto cited Covid as the dagger to the heart after almost 50 years in business. Friendly's remains vacant.

Republican Borough Council candidates Jennifer Keating Meehan and Jim Myers have spoken at length about wanting to do more to strengthen the downtown and drive in more businesses, and we applaud them for that.

In an election cycle with plenty of talk about national politics trickling down into local arenas, they've found an issue that they're passionate about in their town, and they've made it a central part of their campaign. We're confident that they'll work hard at this if they win.

In many ways, this year's election will be a referendum of what voters in the Community of Caring think about the direction of their downtown. Do we like what the Mayor and Council are doing, or do we want to try something new?

We think there's reason for optimism.

Over the past year, we've had plenty of openings such as Woodam Korean Barbecue which occupied a space which was vacant for about nine years. Across the street, Kiori Kitchen opened Saturday, Oct. 22.

If one Japanese restaurant isn't enough for you, there's also Tokyo Ramen which opened over the summer on Route 10 in a shopping center which has been fertile land for dust for many years. While there are still vacancies, there's now Morris Plains Plaza Pharmacy and Live

Care in this strip mall.

And soon, they will have a new neighbor in Autodidact Beer who hasn't announced an opening date yet but is in the process of moving in. When it's all said and done, this will be four vacancies out of 10 storefronts, compared to the previous eight vacancies just a couple years ago.

Speaking of neighbors, Uncle Guiseppe's has cemented its place as the third anchor of Briarcliff Commons.

Also, Alberto is in the early stages in his plans to reopen Collins at the former Morris Plains T-Shirt store, another property that's been vacant for several years.

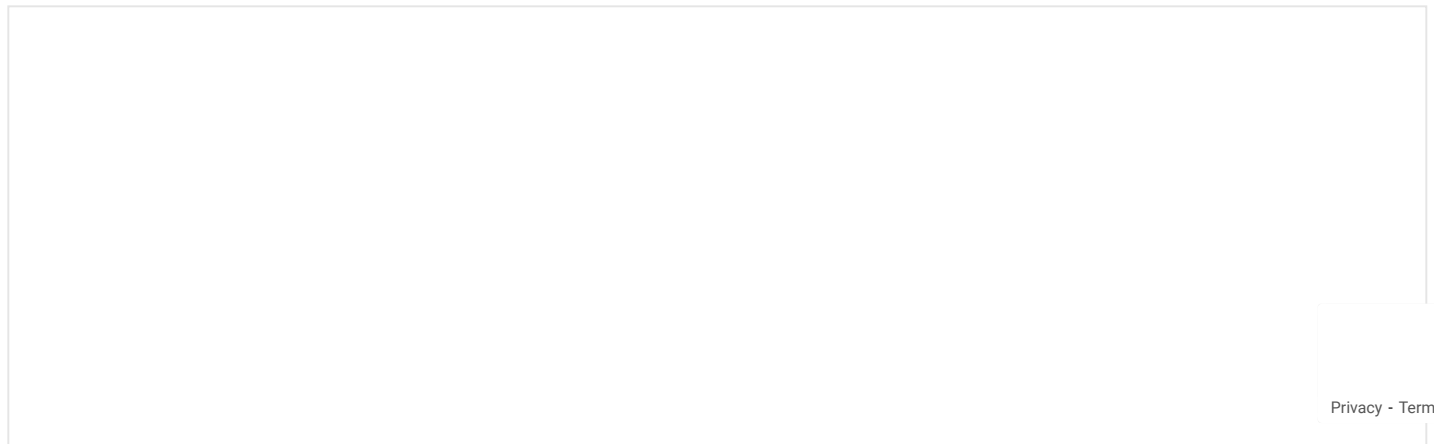
In short, we've been invited to more grand openings than we've had the time to attend. And we've had plenty of fun at the ones we have been able to go to.

This doesn't come out of thin air. Everyone on the dais has contributed to this turnaround, including Democratic Councilwomen Joan Goddard and Nancy Verga who are up for re-election. As Goddard said in a June story we wrote, they formed a bipartisan committee to enhance the downtown and commercial districts.

Democratic Mayor Jason Karr, who is up for re-election against Republican Councilman Art Bruhn, noted in a story we wrote in June that his first four years were "engulfed with Covid" but that more than 25 businesses have opened since he became mayor. We'd like to applaud his leadership through this time.

So we're endorsing Karr, Goddard and Verga on Nov. 8.

#### MORE INFORMATION





Collins Pub owner eyes reopening at former tee-shirt store

Morris Plains candidates ready for general election campaign