

A blue banner for the Visiting Nurse Association of Northern New Jersey (VNA). On the left, a woman in a blue VNA uniform stands behind an elderly couple. On the right, a woman in a blue VNA uniform stands behind an elderly woman. The text "Highly recommend" is at the top in large white letters, with five yellow stars below it. A list of services is in the center: Skilled Nursing • Hospice • Certified Aides, Physical, Occupational & Speech Therapy, Elder Care • Family Caregiver Services. A yellow button says "Request a free, no obligation consultation". The VNA logo is on the right, with the text "Visiting Nurse Association of Northern New Jersey", "1-800-WE VISIT", and "vnannj.org".

“Highly recommend”

★★★★★

Skilled Nursing • Hospice • Certified Aides
Physical, Occupational & Speech Therapy
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https://www.newjerseyhills.com/morris_news_bee/news/meet-the-candidates-morris-plains-borough-council/article_94ae9b2a-4894-4f1a-afe1-127d8259b0e1.html

Meet the candidates: Morris Plains Borough Council

By MERCER SANTOS

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MORRIS PLAINS



BOROUGH COUNCIL

MORRIS PLAINS – Four candidates are running for two open seats on the Morris Plains Borough Council.

Incumbent Republican Art Bruhn and Republican Sheryl McNichol face Democratic candidates Lee Connor and Rosaria DeNova.

The Morris NewsBee sent identical five-point questionnaires to each candidates. Their responses, which follow, have been edited for clarity only.

Lee (Lusardi) Connor (D):

Why are you running for Morris Plains Borough Council?



LEE CONNOR

I love Morris Plains and I want to see it continue to thrive. I'm far from alone in that — it is a sentiment I hear over and over as I canvass neighborhoods.

I also hear residents' fear that we will not be able to retain the small-town community atmosphere that people move here and stay here for. Major planning decisions, made without community input, have disrupted residents' quality of life. Hard financial decisions, such as how to properly fund our community pool, have been kicked down the road for years.

We can do better. That will start with truly engaging our smart, committed,

generous residents to do a thorough revise of our Master Plan. We need to plan ahead to ensure we have the Morris Plains residents want.

To be an effective Councilmember, you need to be both a leader and a strong team player. I'm running for Borough Council because I have the time, energy and experience to tackle our challenges, create opportunities and celebrate the strength of our Borough.

What experience or qualifications have uniquely prepared you for this position?

I believe in making a difference wherever you can, and I've put that belief into action through professional and volunteer leadership.

Professionally, I've held executive-level editorial roles with global media companies and regional New Jersey businesses. My career has been focused on asking the right questions, analyzing complex issues and providing information that empowers people to act.

Locally, I co-founded Plan Better Morris Plains to advocate for smart, sustainable planning and public voices in the wake of controversial development decisions. Our group livestreams and archives public meetings, keeps residents informed, and has built valuable relationships with land-use and traffic experts.

I served for six years as president of the Morris Plains Board of Education, then as president of the Education Foundation of Morris Plains, where fundraising efforts have enabled more than \$175,000 in grants to our schools.

I've also served on the board of Impact100 Garden State as communications chair, helping to advance a women's collective giving organization that has awarded more than \$4.5 million to area nonprofits.

As a candidate, I attend public meetings, research the issues, and work to understand the challenges facing our borough.

I show up, do the work, and bring a breadth of experience to the job. I'm ready to put my experience and energy to work as a Morris Plains Councilmember.

What is the single biggest challenge facing Morris Plains right now and how do you plan to address it?

Morris Plains faces the same big challenges as our neighboring towns: increased traffic volume, overdevelopment, rising costs and the issue of how to keep our borough green and sustainable.

What we don't have in common with some of our neighboring towns is an adequate planning process to face these issues.

Our Master Plan is due for review in 2028. This review should be comprehensive, gather significant community input, use up-to-date best practices and start now.

We need a five and 10-year plan to guide decisions for maintaining and improving Borough infrastructure.

We need a traffic circulation plan to protect our residential streets from drivers using them to bypass Speedwell Ave.

We should create a volunteer environmental commission to help coordinate the various efforts in the Borough to protect our natural resources and open space.

The Borough should be actively supporting the nonprofit Downtown Morris Plains and should reactivate its Business Development Committee.

All of this can be done in a financially responsible way and help us retain the charm and small-town nature of our community.

What actions would you take to ensure that Morris Plains continues to collaborate with its neighboring areas like Morristown and Morris Township?

Because we have so much in common with our neighboring towns—our advantages as well as our challenges—we all benefit from collaborative action.

I would advocate for an established structure of coordination and consultation to see where the Borough, township and town can work together.

The three major priorities are, in my opinion: shared services and expertise, traffic management, and flood and stormwater management.

What do you believe the current council has done well and what would you like to see improved?

Almost without exception, our current council members have stepped up to make a difference in their areas of responsibility. Thanks to them, we are seeing greater transparency in Borough decisions, improved ordinances and applications and streamlined borough procedures. The majority of them have been engaged and willing to ask hard questions.

I have great respect for these elected officials. There is more work to do and I and look forward to working closely with them as a councilmember.

Rosaria DeNova (D):

Why are you running for Morris Plains Borough Council?



Photo courtesy of Rosaria DeNova.

I am running for Borough Council because I believe that when things aren't working, you don't just put up with them—you roll up your sleeves to solve them. My commitment to serving began in my teens working in municipal government, and a cancer diagnosis at age 19 deeply sharpened my vision, teaching me that resilience is a commitment you live every day. As a 20-year resident, I bring that same grit and gratitude to everything I do, always working to bridge gaps and

collaboratively repair things that are not working.

Morris Plains is an amazing community; we come together to help our neighbors in big and small ways every day.

However, our community is expressing real frustrations that demand its leaders to work to solve problems. We deserve leaders that regularly attend council meetings and also participate in the revenue and expense workshop discussions to cast a vote on how our tax dollars are obtained and spent. Residents deserve their voices being represented in our community's decisions and that can't happen when the people who are asking for your vote simply fail to show up to council meetings. You can't claim to represent the community's best interests if you aren't in the room for its most important decisions. For the past two years as an engaged citizen, I have been regularly attending council meetings and budget workshops. If elected, I am committed to being a council representative that is present, prepared, and ready to serve.

What experience or qualifications have uniquely prepared you for this position?

Fifteen years ago, I created our town's first social media group, helping to solve a large information vacuum and connected our community online. Through my volunteer efforts in town, I overhauled our communications to better connect and inform our families at Teen Center. I had the privilege of providing input for improvements needed

into our town's volunteer background check process. Through the Municipal Alliance, I created our annual Family Fitness Event—an effort that honored me with the 2025 Volunteer of the Year Award from the New Jersey Governor's Council. On the Farmers Market Committee, I collaborated to create market events, rebuilt our social media, modernized operations, created a partnership with Downtown Morris Plains to spotlight our local businesses, and manage our finances. This year, my extensive volunteer experience was also leveraged on a committee exploring potential software improvements and new use cases for our Borough.

Professionally, as an IT systems architect and project manager for 11 yrs, I was trusted to design and implement mission critical systems while also managing multi-million dollar project finances, large-scale assets, and people resources. This experience taught me how to navigate complex organizational structures and use best practices to deliver results.

An award-winning small business owner of 17 years and a published children's book author, I understand firsthand the drive and focus needed to deliver an outstanding customer experience, while appreciating the risks involved with being an entrepreneur.

With a proven track record of getting things done, if elected, I would be deeply honored to bring this dedicated approach to the Morris Plains Borough Council.

What is the single biggest challenge / issue facing Morris Plains right now and how do you plan to address it?

We all love our close-knit community. To keep our borough thriving, we must tackle three key challenges together: land-use decisions, rising operational costs, and aging infrastructure with proactive planning.

This work starts with listening to and including our residents to update our outdated Master Plan, ensuring future development genuinely reflects what residents want while preserving our cherished small-town character. At the same time, we face rising costs across services and repairs to our aging infrastructure.

By combining proactive planning with rigorous budget oversight, grant writing, active pursuit of private/public partnerships, as well as investigating the feasibility of PILOT programs; we can stretch our tax dollars further to keep Morris Plains the safe, beautiful, and welcoming community we all love.

What actions would you take to ensure Morris Plains continues to collaborate with its neighboring areas like Morristown and Morris Township?

To ensure Morris Plains continues its strong collaboration with Morristown and Morris Township, I would focus on practical partnerships that benefit taxpayers and residents.

We need to coordinate proactively on regional issues like traffic management along shared corridors, emergency mutual aid, and regional planning to ensure growth is managed cooperatively across the Greater Morristown area.

What do you believe the current council has done well and what would you like to see improved?

I appreciate the current council's dedication to maintaining transparency and fiscal responsibility.

I would like to see a more proactive, cross-functional approach to decision-making so that key issues are thoroughly vetted before reaching a final vote. A clear example of why these workshops are needed occurred at the October 15th council meeting, when the Mayor requested the release of \$7 million for the police station renovation without providing the council with the supporting documentation needed for them to make an informed decision; which resulted in a tabling of the request until further details are provided.

To accomplish this, I would recommend holding publicly noticed, discussion focused workshop sessions. This approach would respect the Sunshine Law while ensuring council decisions are well-informed and collaborative prior to final voting.

Finally, to strengthen public trust, this election season highlighted the need for clearer standards around campaign contributions. I encourage the council to craft and adopt a local 'pay-to-play' ordinance that prohibits donations from entities doing business with the Borough and prevents potential conflicts of interest going forward.

Arthur J. “Art” Bruhn Jr. (R):



ART BRUHN

Sheryl McNichol (R):

The Morris NewsBee did not receive responses from Bruhn and McNichol.

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Editor, Morris NewsBee