

A blue banner for the Visiting Nurse Association of Northern New Jersey. On the left, a photo shows a young woman in a blue VNA uniform assisting an elderly couple. In the center, the text "Highly recommend" is written in large white letters above five yellow stars. Below the stars, a list of services is provided: "Skilled Nursing • Hospice • Certified Aides", "Physical, Occupational & Speech Therapy", and "Elder Care • Family Caregiver Services". A yellow button below this text says "Request a free, no obligation consultation". On the right, another photo shows a young woman in a blue VNA uniform assisting an elderly woman. To the right of the photos is the VNA logo, which consists of the letters "VNA" in a stylized white font with a stethoscope around the "A". Below the logo, the text reads "Visiting Nurse Association of Northern New Jersey", "1-800-WE VISIT", and "vnannj.org".

“Highly recommend”

★★★★★

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Physical, Occupational & Speech Therapy
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Request a free, no obligation consultation

VNA
Visiting Nurse Association
of Northern New Jersey
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https://www.newjerseyhills.com/morris_news_bee/opinion/letters_to_the_editor/morris-plains-deserves-leadership-that-looks-forward/article_ec23ca85-44cf-4a18-81b2-87b26b8e1954.html

Morris Plains deserves leadership that looks forward

Oct 8, 2026

TO THE EDITOR: This November, Morris Plains needs a change in mayoral leadership and the moment could not be more urgent. Operationally, the borough often runs smoothly on the surface. But in council meetings, Planning Board discussions, and community conversations, one thing has become unmistakable: the current mayor lacks a meaningful vision for Morris Plains’ future.

With rapid development, rising traffic, increasing strain on regional natural resources and hyperscale data centers appearing next to neighborhoods, Morris Plains cannot afford leadership that simply hopes things stay the same. We need plans for the holistic revitalization of our downtown; improving walkability, bikeability, and safety; reducing traffic and leveraging our underutilized train station; regional collaboration to ensure sustainable growth; and forward-looking Master Plan updates to ensure our town is shaped proactively – not reactively – in future decades.

Residents have been left battling development proposals that began with the 2018 Route 53 fragrance factory plan that had since been replaced by two large warehouses approved overnight and still sitting empty. Then came the proposed self storage facility that might have welcomed all to the Morris Plains gateway to downtown but was thankfully denied despite the mayor's support. And most recently, the double lane drive through McDonald's was approved with the mayor casting the tie breaking vote. After months of hearings and hundreds of residents voicing concerns about traffic, pedestrian safety, and pollution, he voted yes – leaving community input and downtown safety behind.

The mayor has argued that the development was permitted under B 2 zoning. It is true that restaurant drive throughs were added in a flawed 2023 ordinance pushed through without adequate transparency or public engagement (and has since been amended to remove drive-throughs). Nancy Verga was one of only two council members who voted against it, insisting it needed deeper review by the Planning Board due to questions she, other council members and the public raised.

All of us in the Borough Hall on the night that the zoning ordinance was discussed thought for sure it was going back to the Planning Board. But of course, as we well know now, it was simply voted on and passed. And importantly, regarding the drive-through that became possible with that ordinance, an allowed use does not guarantee or mandate approval of a specific application – especially one requiring variances. Towns across the country have denied similar projects on legitimate safety grounds. Morris Plains could have done the same. Our own Master Plan supported denial. Yet again, no vision.

Additionally, for months, residents pressed the mayor to remove an illegal pile of demolition debris at the old Friendly's site – material crushed and milled without a DEP permit. On Dayton Road, a broken fence and scattered garbage from the same property have remained out of compliance for two years despite repeated complaints to the mayor. Some issues get addressed; others seem to languish indefinitely.

The core issue is not isolated missteps – it is the absence of a forward-looking plan for Morris Plains at a time when change is accelerating around us. That is why I strongly support Nancy Verga for mayor this November. I have worked closely with her on

environmental sustainability and walking and biking connectivity initiatives. She brings a clear, actionable vision for a truly flourishing Morris Plains. Her professional communications background and her experience as councilwoman as well as Council President demonstrate her ability to engage the community with transparency, collaboration, and genuine proactive engagement to create a better future built on a broader vision.

If you want the next decades shaped with foresight – grounded on listening to and working with residents – rather than driven by isolated reactive responses to all of the rapid change unfolding around Morris Plains, vote for Nancy Verga on Nov. 3.

TOM BATTAGLIESE

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