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Michael Ivey sworn in to serve on Morris Plains Borough Council

By CLAUDIA CEVA Staff Writer
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JOAN GODDARD



Michael Ivey was officially sworn in to serve on the Morris Plains Borough Council on Thursday, Jan. 30.

MORRIS PLAINS – Michael Ivey of Leamoor Drive is the newest member of the Borough Council.

He was officially sworn in by Mayor Jason Karr to his seat on the dais, which he will hold through the end of 2025, alongside his wife Kerri and three children on Thursday, Feb. 6.

He replaces former Councilwoman Joan Goddard, who stepped down at the beginning of this year to take care of her ailing husband.

The council is majority Democrat, including Karr, Ivey, Councilmen Bill Houston and Tyler Pontier, and Councilwoman Nancy Verga. Council President Sal Cortese and Councilman Art Bruhn are the lone Republicans.

Ivey thanked the council for selecting him to serve among the three candidates submitted by the Morris Plains Democratic Committee, which also included Heather Buchma and Rosaria DeNova.

He also made sure to thank his family for their support in this new venture.

“I recognize that this is not the standard way to become a council member, so I want everyone to know that this year will not only be for me to get accustomed to how the town operates, but also to gain the trust of the residents to show that I have their best interests at heart,” he said.

He said he looked forward to meeting more community members and listening to their concerns.

“I want Morris Plains to be a place where these guys would also want to raise their own kids,” Ivey said, gesturing to his children who were standing in front of him.

Goddard Gets Her Flowers

At the tail end of the meeting, Goddard was recognized for her six years of service to the council.

She began her tenure on Jan. 31, 2019, sworn in at the time to an open seat due to Karr becoming mayor. She was elected to her first full three-year term that November and again in November 2022.

Karr said she served as chair of the public health, sanitation and sewers committee, public works committee and buildings and grounds committee, was a member of the website development committee and the business development committee.

Karr said she “probably was known best for being the new manager of the farmers market, adding many new vendors and activities to help it become a huge success” that it now is.

“My sincerest thanks for all your dedication and hard work with the members of the Borough Council,” he said. “It’s people like you that truly make this community a community of caring.”

He and the council then presented her with a rocking chair, a traditional parting gift the governing body gives to its retiring members.

Goddard thanked the people of the community for their generosity over the years and said it was difficult to make the decision to not continue as a member of the council.

She said as a young child she dreamed of helping people one day, and getting to serve on the council fulfilled that dream.

People who have never served in that capacity do not realize how much work actually goes into it, she said, from preparing for the meetings to helping to hire new police officers and acquire new equipment for the fire department and more, all in the name of making the town run.

“I know I stepped down from my role, but I’m still on the Centennial Committee, I’m going to be helping out in some capacity with the farmers market, and I’m going to continue to be involved,” she assured all those in attendance.

Goddard said while the borough and council have come a long way since she first stepped into office, there’s still a long way to go.

Each of the council members took turns thanking her for her years of service to the community.

Cortese said he and Goddard worked together on the committee that negotiated the latest bargaining agreement with the police department.

“It was nine months of tremendous work, sometimes 10-20 hours a month, and I can tell you she was instrumental, dynamic, she brought the corporate side into that and it helped so much in the negotiation,” he said.

Houston said she and Verga played a large part in his decision to run for office and thanked her for “paving the way” toward the positive changes the council has made throughout her tenure.

Pontier echoed that sentiment and said he could feel the passion Goddard had for Morris Plains.

“I really connected with that and it really made me want to stand up, as well, and be that voice for my family and for the residents of Morris Plains,” he said.

Verga thanked her for being a mentor when she first joined the council in 2020 and led by example with professionalism.

“I think because of your communication skills, we really opened up and started having more collaborative conversations as a council and not being afraid to come forward with a different opinion, and I really think, as a result of that, we made better decisions as a council,” she said.

Bruhn said he appreciated the professionalism and quick wit Goddard brought to the dais.

Ivey said when Goddard reached out to him after she resigned to ask if he wanted to be in the running to replace her, he was taken aback, but he came to appreciate the push it gave him to put his name forward.

MORE INFORMATION



Goddard resigns from Morris Plains Council

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