



## **Bill Houston & Tyler Pontier Statement on Ordinance 14-2023 & McDonald's Proposal, June 19, 2024**

On Monday, June 17, 2024, the Morris Plains Planning Board was supposed to hear an application for a McDonald's drive-through restaurant at the site of the old Friendly's (415 & 435 Speedwell Avenue). Planning Board President Sue McCluskey stated that the application could not be heard as the board professionals (Engineer, Planner, and Traffic) received the documents too late for a timely review. (Video from the June 17, 2024 meeting is here: <https://youtu.be/lzDBt8r4wil?si=-evkuFfXSJXvs3R&t=579>) It was proposed that the application could be reviewed at the next Planning Board meeting on July 15, 2024. However, the Planning Board can, and often does, call a special meeting for high-profile applications. That meeting must be announced on the Borough Bulletin Board and the Borough Website.

Last October, the Morris Plains Borough Council passed an Ordinance that allows for these types of drive-through restaurants to exist. At the time Bill (and then-candidate Melissa Goyeneche) issued the below statement. Bill and Tyler have issued this statement in response to McDonald's application.

The Ordinance - [Ordinance 14-2023](#) & [Schedule C](#) - states that "Drive-through restaurants are permitted principal uses in the B-2 & B-3 zones". (Schedule C, Item 6). In October of 2023, the Ordinance passed by 4 votes (Cathy Kelly, Dennis Wagner, Sal Cortese, and Art Bruhn) which approved and allowed this type of drive-through to exist - to 2 votes (Nancy Verga and Joan Goddard) who asked for a re-examination of the entire ordinance and its permitted uses. These are exactly the types of uses that Bill & Tyler would call for to be reexamined prior to passing an Ordinance.

In the zoning map\* (page 2) and subsequent Google map images - the B2 & B3 zones referenced in the ordinance can be seen.

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### Borough of Morris Plains





Excerpt from the original Houston & Goyeneche statement, October 8, 2023:

**“Morris Plains Council Vote Demonstrates the Need for Change”**

*A message from Missy Goyeneche and Bill Houston, Candidates for Morris Plains Borough Council*

On Thursday, October 5, 2023, the Morris Plains Borough Council passed [Ordinance 14-2023](#) which updates and re-defines the types of businesses allowed in [non-residential zones](#). A public hearing was held, and the ordinance passed by a Council vote of 4-2.

We do not agree with the approval and feel that this ordinance needed to be sent back to the Planning Board and Master Plan Committee to be reconsidered and amended in order to preserve the quality of life we enjoy in Morris Plains. This feeling was shared by many residents at the public meeting as well as by “no” votes from Councilmembers Joan Goddard and Nancy Verga.

The ordinance updated nearly 30-year-old language and allows for new businesses like co-working spaces, wineries, and art studios, but it also opens the door to unwanted developments like large distribution centers and ill-defined warehousing spaces. However, it did not go far enough to balance the need to achieve a thriving, pedestrian-friendly downtown and business districts with the quality-of-life Morris Plains residents deserve.

The [NJ State Planning Commission](#)'s guidelines warn against including generic definitions of “Warehouse”, which would allow “high cube,” “last mile,” and “large distribution centers.” All of these are businesses that residents have repeatedly voiced concern and objection to.

The guidelines also call for community engagement, such as holding public meetings (both in person and streamed online) and posting information on the town's website. It is our view that only a bare minimum effort was made to inform the residents of Morris Plains about a major plan for our community and did not allow ample time for residents to research and discuss the impacts of this ordinance.

Councilmembers Art Bruhn, Sal Cortese, Cathie Kelly, and Dennis Wagner all voted to approve this ordinance as-is with no amendments or considerations or address any concerns of residents present at the meeting. Councilmembers Joan Goddard and Nancy Verga voted to send the ordinance back to the Planning Board and the Master Plan Committee to reexamine some of the definitions related to Warehousing.

Issues like these directly impact Morris Plains residents' day-to-day life. If elected, we would involve residents in more dialog and discussion, and share information more proactively. We would have joined Joan Goddard and Nancy Verga in voting “no” on the ordinance's passing and recommended that the Planning Board and the Master Plan Committee re-review this ordinance and amend it with tighter definitions and allow more public input.”

\*The zoning map referenced is dated 2022. The zoning map introduced in Ordinance #15-2019 is dated 2019. With relation to the B2 & B3 zones the map is relatively the same with the 2022 map providing more definition around sub-zones.

<https://morrisplainsboro.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Morris-Plains-Zoning-Map-2019.pdf>