

VISION FOR MORTON TOWNSHIP
November 26, 2008

It is with a great deal of pride and humility that I accept the challenge to lead our newly elected Morton Township Board. I believe the voters have elected individuals who are dedicated to uniting our community and serving its needs. The education and experience that each member brings to this Board makes us uniquely qualified to provide exceptional services. Thank you to our outgoing members for their years of service. They have left the Township in stable economic shape in an economy that has been less than rewarding to many government boards.

I envision our Board as responsive and open to all of our residents. In the next few weeks, I will ask the Board to establish at least three new advisory committees who will meet and begin to shape changes that the electorate wants. Some of the committee responsibilities will be statutory while others will be advisory. It will be our challenge to make sure the representation on committees is fair and well rounded. If you have an interest in serving your community on a committee, please let me know.

The first committee will function as a Township Civil Service Commission. Their first challenge will be to act as a compensation committee to set elected official salaries. They will also make recommendations as to open office hours, benefits, and staffing levels. They will look at the benefit of contracting out services versus having our own employees perform them. Compensation for our volunteer employees should also be explored. These include fire fighters, first responders, committee members, and voter assistants. I will ask that the current practice of paying per diem compensation to our regular staff be reviewed with legal counsel as the practice appears to be contrary to law. All employees should be compensated fairly and legally.

The second committee will act to create a Capital Improvement Plan. This six-year plan is recommended by the Michigan Township Association to assure planned funding needs years in advance. I would want this committee to look at road repairs, street lighting, signage needs, safety concerns, housing and commercial needs, and future major improvement needs for our fire and EMS departments.

The final committee will be challenged to create a Morton Township Recreation Plan so we can begin looking at government and private grants to benefit our youth. We don't always have to build or buy facilities or property. We can financially assist our youth by helping to defray some of their personal costs that may be required for them to participate in youth sport and recreation programs already in place. I will encourage partnering with the Mecosta Area Committee, the Canadian Lakes Association, and the Village of Mecosta. They all have made some progress in helping out our youth. It is now the Township's turn to get involved.

Morton Township has a very diverse make-up. There are many challenges we face so all taxpayers can be served. It will take understanding on the part of all to realize we

must address issues important to all. We have full and part time residents; we have a native population as well as people from all over the world.

Several of our residents would meet any political candidates definition of “high income.” We also have one of the largest “low income” populations in the State. We have taxpayers that leave us for the winter to avoid the harsh weather and another group that looks forward to playing in our snow. Some call us home and others call us vacation. Morton Township has historically been very divided by geography. We have separate communities in Canadian Lakes, School Section Lake, Tri-Lakes, and Mecosta Village. I will stress unity in all of our decisions. I will continually ask that you join me in being aware of the needs of all of our citizens.

Morton Township pulled out of prior mutual aid programs with Mecosta County and our surrounding townships. We have lost trust, funding and services as a result. I will immediately begin to mend fences and build partnerships again with our neighbors. The County has given us positive indications that future funding can be resumed.

I want to see our residents feel comfortable and welcome when they visit the Township offices.

I want to see groups utilize our buildings and services. You can expect to see open houses and public hearings. You can expect much more communication on our website and in our mailings. I want you to be familiar with the wonderful work performed by the volunteer firefighters and emergency first responders.

I believe strongly in doing business locally. We need jobs for our children. I will pursue new endeavors for our industrial park. For months, politicians have made promises about getting Michigan’s economy started again. I will follow up on these promises to ensure Morton Township benefits from future state and federal initiatives.

I look forward to the challenge of preparing a meaningful budget that will continue to be conservative. If we are taking in more monies than we need, I will not be afraid to ask the Board to look at reducing the burden on our taxpayers. I will look at all sources of revenue to make sure they are justified. I will again encourage you to come to the Annual Meeting in June to critique our plans. It is my intention to pursue a state license as an assessor, so I can be of assistance to all of you in future property tax matters. Please be patient as this will take a few years to accomplish.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or ideas. I intend on being in the office most hours of each day. My email address is supervisor@mortontownship.org. My office phone number is 231 972-7138. My home phone is 972-0408.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Jim Quinlan, Morton Township Supervisor