

2019 Montgomery Township Committee Reorganization Remarks

COMMITTEE MEMBER CATHERINE GURAL

Good Evening to everyone – I want to thank you all for coming from near and far to be a part of this event. Thank you to Attorney General Grewal for being here, and Assemblymen Zwicker and Frieman, who have served as mentors to me since I began this journey. I am also grateful to have Joe and Kathy Fidler here to support me. Joe and Kathy have stepped in to be like parents to me since I was 18 years old. It means so much for me to be able to share this with them as a small gesture of gratitude for their love, kindness, wisdom, and influence. It is not an exaggeration to say that the world is a kinder place with them in it.

I am excited to share this new responsibility with Sadaf, Marvin, Ed, and Kamran. It's wonderful to see my friend and now colleague, Sadaf Jaffer, become the first female South Asian Mayor. I am confident that we are well positioned to make meaningful progress in the coming months and years.

I grew up in Central New Jersey and have been back and forth, renting neighboring towns until 2010, when my husband, son, and I were finally ready to buy our first home. In those early years, Montgomery was an aspirational place for us. Almost 9 years ago, we were fortunate to have found our place, a townhouse off Blue Spring Road. Since then, our family has grown by two little girls, filling our little dream home with more love, happiness, and joy than I could ever have imagined. And a lot of laundry. And so much glitter.

I have always approached issues and problems with optimism and the idea that "this can be fixed". I believe the saying that a problem well defined is a problem half solved. So many good things have been accomplished in Montgomery throughout its rich history, but we also need to be realistic about the issues we see coming down the road and come up with actionable, scalable, and sustainable solutions. Building on the progress that has already been made with the future in mind is paramount to this success. I am committed to respecting our past, and partnering with the people of Montgomery on a vision for the future.

Working collaboratively with my colleagues on the committee, my hope is to bring my professional skills and my personal experiences into the fold to continue the good work that's been done and improve areas that need attention. Including as much of the community as possible into our current processes is one of our shared goals as newly elected committee members, and I plan to make myself available to the community for input and feedback.

I would like to acknowledge our professional staff and Police Department who have been accessible, knowledgeable, and helpful as we approached today's reorganization. I cannot emphasize how important and valuable the individuals are who work for our Township. We are immeasurably lucky to have so many dedicated and long time staff members. It gives me great confidence and peace of mind to know that these are the folks making our town work on a day to day basis.

I come to the township committee ready to work, learn, and lead. My career has been built on trying new things and stepping out of my comfort zone. As a servant leader, I look to those in the community to help us shape our town as we move forward. The values that we share are evidenced by organizations like Montgomery Mosaic, which highlights our diversity and increases our awareness and tolerance of different cultures and perspectives. This new role is an opportunity to add a fresh perspective to the township committee and navigate a new course through an uncertain but hopeful future. It's imperative with so many new exciting projects in flight, to monitor their progress, mitigate their risks, and see them through to execution.

I know that this role is going to keep me away from my two young girls at times, and I hope that years from now they look back on this period and know that while my reasons for running were many, I mainly stepped up and did this for them – to help make their home an even better place to live. My 6 year old daughter's middle name is Eleanor, after Eleanor Roosevelt. Her views on children and government always stuck with me:

“Our children should learn the general framework of their government and then they should know where they come in contact with the government, where it touches their daily lives and where their influence is exerted on the

government. It must not be a distant thing, someone else's business, but they must see how every cog in the wheel of a democracy is important and bears its share of responsibility for the smooth running of the entire machine.”

As I embark on this journey, government will be no distant thing to them. I hope to show them what is possible when people are determined to make positive change, when people come together to support and serve their community in this way. This was evidenced with my oldest child, Simon, who voted for the first time this year, and had the opportunity to vote for his own mom.

Finally, I have to acknowledge my best friend, my husband Todd, who not only supports everything I tell him I want to do, but manages his own career, child care, and our household while I am doing it. He sets a daily example for our children of what hard work, responsibility, patience (most of the time) and nurturing look like. Whether it's finishing my undergraduate degree while working full time and campaigning, to serving on township committee, none of this would be possible without his love and support. His constant refrain of “I've got this” is comforting, because I know that he always does.