

# Park parking still a sticking point

By Chris Sykes  
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One councilman has stated he is still focused on what he called the parking problems around Monte Irvin Orange Park.

At Large Councilman Rayfield Morton said he raised the need for greater accessibility to the parking lots on the north and east sides of the park during the last City Council meeting after witnessing something that seemed to contradict words spoken by Essex County Executive Joseph DiVincenzo Jr.

In 2009, during an appearance before the council to discuss the proposed reservoir project in West Orange, DiVincenzo told residents who live near the park he would work to alleviate their parking concerns. Morton, however, said he encountered something recently which seemed to contradict those statements.

"I was coming up Central Avenue and saw they were putting a permanent curb in there so that now people can't drive in the park at all," Morton said, referring to a private crew hired by the county. "I called Joe D, but I got his assistant and I told him that they had closed the east-north wing of the parking lot. I told him I had asked them to keep that entrance open because of the church activity and residential parking my constituents need."

The church Morton referred to

was St. Matthew AME Church along Oakwood Avenue, across from the park's east side. However, Morton claimed the aide said no new sidewalks were being installed.

"The argument got heated and I got the guy so angry that he drove up to the park to see for himself and had to call me back later and tell me that I was right," said Morton. "We talked to the guys doing the construction work and they said that they had been hired by the county.

Morton said the unnamed aide told him that he would go back to DiVincenzo and find out what was going on.

"I don't have time to play because there's too much junk going on in the town already," he said. "I'm waiting to see how this all turns out."

Calls to the County Executive's office for comment were not returned by press time. This is the third time the parking issue has been presented during a council meeting.

During a meeting in July 2009, Morton and At Large Councilwoman Donna K. Williams discussed an attempt to reopen parking lots inside the park. The council members claimed the consensus among neighboring residents was that more parking in the park was necessary so participants of events would not have to park on the surrounding streets.