

Township Council Update
4/28

- Thank you again for joining us for our third remote Council meeting. On behalf of myself and the Council, we hope everyone is staying well and safe. We have now been in stay-home quarantine for more than a month and I know everyone is feeling weary and wondering when things will return to some semblance of normal.
- While it is unclear how soon the stay-home order will be lifted, I want to once again thank everyone in Roxbury for standing up to this unprecedented challenge with courage and resilience.
- It is important to remember now is not the time to relax the social distancing precautions that have helped us to slow the spread of the Covid-19 virus and to flatten the curve. We urge you to please continue to adhere to all the social distancing guidelines.
- That said, I can report that we have begun discussions to figure out how Roxbury will emerge from this crisis and what that will look like. We do know that some form of social distancing will be with us for some time. As our plans are developed, we will continue to keep everyone updated.
- Right now, the Council and Township staff remain focused on public safety, which continues to be our top priority. With that, it

is my unpleasant duty to give you an update on where we stand in Roxbury.

- As of today, the number of confirmed cases in town has now reached 218. And, tragically, the number of confirmed deaths stands at 5.
- As we did last week, please join me in a moment of silence for those we have lost and for the families in our community that have been touched by this terrible pandemic.
- Thank you. Once again, I ask that you keep the patients and staff at Merry Heart, which is Roxbury's only long-term care facility, in your thoughts and prayers. Like other LTC facilities, Merry Heart is dealing with the devastating impact of the virus. Kathy and I recently drove by Merry Heart and saw a family on the sidewalk waving to someone inside. It broke our hearts.
- Still, it has been gratifying to see the community respond to Merry Hearts' call for help by delivering personal protective equipment. Morris County also stepped in last week to provide them with much needed PPE. Our Township Health Department is monitoring their situation and offering the Township's assistance.
- Township staff continue to respond to residents' questions and to keep our essential services running -- either remotely or by reporting each day to their jobs. They are available to answer

resident questions by phone or by email. Please visit the township's website for a complete staff directory.

- I wish to express the Council's gratitude to Township Manager John Shepherd and the staff for their dedication.
- I am very pleased to report that the two township employees who contracted the virus are doing well. One has completely recovered and the other continues to recover. We are grateful they are doing well and thank them for their service.
- Please also join me in once again thanking our essential workers, first responders, and health care heroes for placing themselves in harm's way every day to protect our community.
- John Shepherd and I continue to regularly participate in meetings with federal, state, and county authorities. Our health officials, Office of Emergency Management, police, and first responders are also working closely with their counterparts on the state and county levels. In addition, the township manager and I have also participated in discussions with the mayors of surrounding communities and with other local officials.
- Based on those conversations, Roxbury appears to be fairing as well as – if not slightly better – than our neighbors. This is a difficult assessment, I know, given the tragic number of confirmed

cases and lives lost. But I think it also shows that our community is doing a good job adhering to the social distancing rules.

- This past week, I met with members of the clergy to discuss Roxbury's needs and how to address them. I'd like to thank the Interfaith Council and the Reverend Carrie Morgan of the First Presbyterian Church of Succasunna for bringing us together. We had a good meeting and plan to meet again.
- John and I have also met with the Chamber of Commerce and our Rotary Club to discuss the needs of the community, including our small business community. Everyone is helping and eager to do more. They are working hard in the community – helping people get through these very difficult times and we are deeply grateful for their leadership, assistance, and prayers.
- There are so many people, groups and businesses helping in the community it would be difficult to mention them all tonight – but we will recognize them and we will show them our undying gratitude – from the restaurants feeding our families and first responders, to the people making masks for health care workers and battered women shelters. These acts of courage and kindness will be acknowledged.

- In fact, School Superintendent Loretta Radulic and I have recently discussed a town-wide event recognizing our heroes when it becomes safe.
- As I said, there are a lot of activities going on around town to help, including this morning at Horse Shoe Lake, where more than 190 families received a wide variety of much needed fresh food. Our deep gratitude to Morristown-based Table of Hope Mobile Food Pantry, for bringing the food bank to Roxbury, along with the assistance of Habitat for Humanity.
- There was no requirement to pre-register and there were no income guidelines to receive food. Standing in that line, you could not help but be moved watching volunteers place food in the cars as they passed by. God bless them.
- Township staff, our police and Office of Emergency Management did a great job making sure the food distribution went smoothly.
- I also need to recognize a pet food give-away the township sponsored – there was one last week and one this morning at Horse Shoe Lake. Thank you to Pet Goods in Roxbury, St. Huberts of Madison, and many Roxbury residents for donating the pet food. Also, a special thanks to Township Staff Sue Blanchard who helped organize the pet food giveaway.

- Our Social Services has always been there to help our families in need. They continue to do so and they continues to need our help. If you can, Social Services could use large cans of crushed, puree and whole tomatoes, tomato paste, tissues, diapers – newborn to age 1, baby wipes, ladies’ razors, ladies’ deodorant, body wash, and mouthwash.
- As a reminder, Social Services is now open on Wednesdays and Fridays from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. We have temporarily closed on Mondays because we hadn’t seen much demand on that day and it gives our staff and volunteers a much needed break.

Executive Orders

- Recently, there have been some questions about the types of construction projects and other activities that are permitted under the governor’s executive orders.
- You may have noticed work continuing at Ledgewood Commons and other sites around town. The governor’s order does allow projects to continue if they will provide essential services. That includes stores like Walmart and the restaurants being constructed at Ledgewood Commons. In addition, the Habitat for Humanity affordable housing project on Main Street is exempt from the order.

- Roxbury staff are closely monitoring compliance and are reviewing projects on a case-by-case basis to determine what projects may continue.
- We continue to believe that the Ledgewood Commons project has always been viewed as an economic engine for Roxbury that will ultimately benefit our local economy, including our small business community – something that will be important as we emerge from this crisis.
- We have also heard concerns expressed by residents about people not following social distancing in our parks.
- Recreational activities in our parks, such as basketball courts and playgrounds, remain closed for the safety of the public. However, our walking and biking paths, and trails remain open. I'd like to thank the community for largely observing the social distancing rules on the very few days of sunshine we have had.
- Our police are doing an outstanding job enforcing the social distancing rules, but we continue to need everyone's cooperation. If the rules aren't being followed, we must revisit our decision to leave the paths open.
- Current guidance requires that you remain at least six feet apart on the paths and trail. While face coverings are not required,

remember the point of wearing a mask is not to protect you. You wear it to protect vulnerable members of our community.

- As we promised at our last meeting, we have revisited our decision to close the Community Garden, which we know provides a much-needed outlet for residents, as well as a source of fresh produce. Our plan is to reopen the Garden on May 1, but with some social distancing rules, which will be distributed to gardeners and posted on the Township's website. I'll ask Deputy Mayor Fred Hall to give a brief outline of those guidelines.
- Thank you, Fred.
- We are constantly reviewing our response to this unprecedented situation.
- Finally, if you have any concerns or questions, please contact Township Manager John Shepherd, me, or any member of the Council. Our contact information is also listed on our website.
- Please remain safe, be brave and God bless.

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