

Community Update
March 9, 2021

- Good evening and thank you for joining us tonight. On behalf of the Council, we hope everyone is well and safe.

COVID Report

- We come to you tonight just about one year from the start of the COVID - 19 pandemic. One year since we began the process of social distancing, mask-wearing, and one year since we shutdown most of the country and began quarantining at home.
- Thankfully, we are beginning to see some encouraging signs – deaths and new cases nationally are at the lowest they have been in months. And more and more people are getting vaccinated. Although, it remains needlessly difficult in New Jersey for many.
- In Roxbury, however, we continue to see stubbornly high increases in confirmed cases. Since our last Council meeting on February 23, the number of confirmed COVID cases in town has gone from 1,733 to 1,903 – 170 cases in just two weeks.
- Our rate of increase has plateaued but at an unacceptably high level. We need to continue to work to get that number down.
- Our public health nurse Jim Craig strongly recommends that residents continue to practice social distancing -- staying six feet apart -- indoors as well as outside. Please wear masks, wash your hands, and avoid large crowds, especially indoors.

- Importantly, make sure to get vaccinated when it is your turn. As we have said before, we are so close to getting back to normal. The more vigilant we remain, the sooner we will beat this virus.

Vaccinations

- That said, the township continues to provide updated information about available vaccinations. Vaccination locations continue to expand in the Roxbury area.
- We remind everyone to frequently check the Township's website under the COVID-19 tab for the most updated Information Sheet for vaccination locations.
- Some recent updates include:
 - Walmart in Ledgewood is now offering the vaccine for adults at least 75 years old. Call the pharmacy to schedule an appointment. The phone number is listed on our website
 - Also, Wegman's pharmacy is offering the vaccine and multiple Walgreen's locations, including the one in Ledgewood, will begin offering the vaccine soon.

Public Outreach

- When the Township began this effort to help people get a vaccination, I was not sure how much we could do to help. Then, this week, I received an email from a woman who was trying to get a vaccination for her frail, 76-year-old sister-in-law, who lives in Roxbury. She told me her sister-in-law did not have a computer and could not maneuver her way through the state system even if she did.

- The woman who wrote me lived 2 hours away from her sister-in-law. She said she placed her on the state registration system and checked the state list of vaccination sites in Morris County but without success for any available slots.
- After pointing her to the Township’s website, Township John Shepherd recommend that the woman check the Walmart location, which had just opened, served people over the age of 75, and had a telephone contact to check on vaccine supply.
- The next day the woman told us she was able to schedule an appointment for her sister-in-law. “Thank you,” she wrote, “the township website is a great resource.”
- She added: “We shall see our way through this.” I want to thank John Shepherd, our Health Department, and IT department once again for putting the information together and making it available to the community – especially those who may need a little extra help.

Bucco Bill

- Let me make a sharp turn to another important matter. This week, state Sen. Tony Bucco called for the Legislature to fix the new marijuana legalization law by reversing a provision that prohibits police from notifying parents when minors are caught with cannabis or alcohol.
- I am confident we can all agree – as would most parents -- that the senator’s suggestion is sensible and necessary. I have also heard from Police Chief Marc Palanchi and Township Manager Shepherd. They join other law enforcement officials in supporting Sen. Bucco’s efforts.

- With the permission of the Council, I would like us to consider a resolution expressing Roxbury's support for the change put forward by Sen. Bucco.
- Thank you.

Optimum Hearing

- I want to let residents know that the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU) will hold a virtual Public Hearing on March 16, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. to investigate complaints about Altice/Optimum service.
- The poor service provided by Optimum and Altice is compounded by the fact that Verizon has refused to expand its service to certain sections of Roxbury. The Township Council, in particular deputy Mayor Fred Hall, have been vocal on this issue. Recently, Fred and I met with Verizon officials to renew a request that they reconsider and expand their service in town.
- Those who would like to participate in the virtual public hearing must register. Information on how to do that is posted on the Township's website.
- Anyone who wished to submit a comment should do so on or before 5 p.m. on March 23. Further details to file a comment can be found on the Township's website.

Mrs. Schwartz, et al.

- Finally, a couple of shout-outs to people making a difference in Roxbury.
- Long-time Roxbury resident Belle Schwartz was recently named Joanna Fabrics "Handmade Hero" for sewing hundreds of masks and sewing and knitting other necessities for people in the community. Thank you, Belle, for your contributions to the residents of Roxbury and congratulations on your well-earned recognition.

- Also, thank you to Paul Bellardini, owner of Luigi's Pizza in town, for sponsoring a Kiwanis Club food give-away this Sunday, March 14, at Kiwanis Park, 9 Markin Lane, Succasunna, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. This is one of several food-giveaway events that Kiwanis has held in town during the pandemic.
- Thank you all again for joining us tonight. Now back to our agenda.