

Community Update

May 11, 2021

COVID

- Good evening and welcome to our Township Council meeting. On behalf of the Council, we hope everyone is well and safe.
- We have some good news on all fronts tonight concerning the pandemic. First, here in Roxbury, the rate of increase for people who contracted Covid-19 since our last meeting on April 27 has dramatically slowed down -- from 2,476 to 2,509 – 33 new cases. A far cry from the hundreds of new cases we were reporting just a few weeks ago.
- Excellent news, but we cannot let our guard down now. Please get vaccinated if you have not already, practice physical distancing, and wear a mask when in large crowds. It is now possible to walk into most places that offer the vaccine without an appointment.

State Restrictions Lifted

- Throughout the state, restrictions are being lifted or soon will be lifted that have prevented us from going to school, returning to work, and being with family and friends for more than a year.
- The state's Health Commissioner recently announced that with COVID-19 cases on the decline, more than 7 million vaccines administered, and the good weather allowing more outdoor activities, we are able to take steps to carefully reopen.
- The state has made the following changes that went into effect Friday, May 7:

- The limit for outdoor gatherings will increase to 500 persons, up from 200.
- Large venue outdoor capacity will increase to 50 percent for venues with 1,000 fixed seats or more; as long as six feet of distance is maintained. That is up from 30 percent capacity for venues with a 2,500 fixed seating capacity.
- Currently, indoor catered events are limited to 35 percent of capacity, or up to 150 persons. The capacity limit for those events, including proms, will be raised to 50 percent, or up to a maximum of 250 individuals. The capacity limit for indoor political events, weddings, funerals, memorial services, and performances will also increase accordingly.
- Dance floors at private catered events would be permitted to open with masking and social distancing requirements in place. Dance floors would remain closed at bars and other related businesses, such as nightclubs.
- Carnivals and fairs have been treated like gatherings, and thus subject to more restrictive limits, may now operate at the same capacity as large outdoor amusements.
- The prohibition on indoor bar seating will be lifted, with final guidance on necessary safeguards, such as spacing and the use of plexiglass, to follow from the New Jersey Department of Health.
- The restriction on self-service food, like buffets, at restaurants, would be lifted, but individuals will still be required to remain seated while eating and drinking.

Additional Openings

- Additionally, barring an unexpected uptick in COVID-19 numbers, the following changes will go into effect on Wednesday, May 19, largely in line with actions taking place in the neighboring states of New York and Connecticut. These include:
 - Complete removal of outdoor gathering limit. Attendees at outdoor gatherings will still be required to remain six feet apart from other groups.
 - The Indoor gathering limit will be raised to 50 persons, up from 25 persons. The limit applies to general social gatherings, such as birthday parties and events in people's homes.
 - Commercial gatherings and gatherings organized and operated by an overseeing entity, such as conferences, expositions, meetings of fraternal organizations, job trainings, and events hosted by senior centers, will be subject to the 250-person indoor gathering limit that applies to indoor catered events if all attendees can remain six feet apart.
 - Complete removal of all capacity limits for indoor and outdoor businesses, and houses of worship. Any business, whether indoors or outdoors, that is subject to a capacity limitation will instead be guided by the rules regarding six feet of distance between persons or groups of persons. This would include:
 - Indoor dining
 - Houses of worship and religious services
 - Gyms

- Personal care services.
- Indoor and outdoor amusement and recreation businesses.
- Indoor catered events, funerals, memorial services, performances, and political activities will be limited to 50 percent of a room's capacity, up to 250 individuals.
- Beginning on Wednesday, May 19, the 250-person limit will remain in place, but there will be no percentage-based capacity restrictions. Individuals and groups will need to remain six feet apart, and
- The capacity limit for large, indoor venues will increase from 20 percent to 30 percent and the definition of a large venue would shift from those with 2,500 fixed seats to those with 1,000 fixed seats.
- The requirement that individuals or groups of individuals that purchase tickets together remain six feet apart would remain in place.

Reopening Town Hall

- Closer to home, I am very pleased to announce that beginning this Thursday, May 13th, Township Manager John Shepherd will be reopening Town Hall at 1715 Route 46 in Ledgewood -- with some safety precautions. This is the first time we will be unlocking the doors to town hall since the beginning of the pandemic.
- In addition to Town Hall, the Township's other buildings which are normally open to the public, such as the Recreation and Health departments at Horseshoe Lake Park and the Public Works building, will also be open to the

public beginning Thursday. Our goal is to return to the greatest extent possible to normal operations to serve our residents.

- To protect our staff and residents, each public entrance will have a sign stating: “Masks are required to obtain service. Please practice social distancing.”
- And, as I like to remind everyone, the township’s staff – many of whom came to work every day during the pandemic – did and continue to do a highly commendable job helping get us through this health emergency.
- They deserve our appreciation and thanks for their efforts.
- Also, Library Director Radwa Ali asked me to remind everyone that it is no longer necessary to have an appointment to visit the Library, moving us closer to normal. However, they will still offer curbside pickup. The library continues to be a major contributor in helping us all get through the pandemic.
- And, in line with returning to normal, tonight I am pleased to have Deputy Mayor Fred Hall and Councilman Jim Rile with me in Town Hall. While John Shepherd and I, along with our Clerk Amy Rhead, and IT Leader Rob Kuncken, have met several times in Town Hall, this is the first time since the Township Council went remote that members of the Council have met in person.
- Next week, we expect to have other members of the Council here and eventually, we will invite members of the public to meet here, too. One step at a time.
- Meanwhile, we will continue to offer the Council meeting remotely through Zoom, both audio and video.

Kennedy School

- In another sign things are improving, I was honored to be invited to Kennedy School last Monday, May 3, to recognize teachers at the start of Teacher Appreciation Week.
- It was especially nice to be outside at school's front door to hand out certificates of appreciation to the teachers because it was the first day of the school district's return to full day, in-class instruction. I once again want to commend the district for returning to in-school instruction.
- From what I experienced Monday, every teacher and student I had the pleasure to meet could not have been more excited or happy to be back at school.
- Special thank you to the Kennedy School PTA and, in particular, Mileidy DiGioia and Tanya Shoudy, for inviting me. Also, a big thank you to Kennedy School Principal Nicole Acevedo, who greeted every child with a huge smile as they arrived at school.
- Thank you for letting me be a part of your special day.

Day of Prayer

- Last Thursday evening, I was also honored to attend the National Day of Prayer ceremony that was sponsored by the Roxbury Interfaith Council. The ceremony was held outdoors in the pavilion at Horseshoe Lake. It was also live streamed to the community.
- Joining me were Deputy Mayor Fred Hall and Councilmen Jim Rilee and Mark Crowley.
- It was a simple but beautiful event – which was exactly what we needed right now. After the challenges of the past year, it was good to give thanks

for Roxbury's many blessings and to remember the more than 2,500 people in town who contracted Covid, those we lost, and the families they left behind.

- Rev. Carie Morgan of the First Presbyterian Church presided over the ceremony and was joined by the Rev. Yun of Succasunna United Methodist Church; and Bishop David Burns, Ledgewood Ward, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.
- Music was provided by Angie Stierch, worship leader at Succasunna United Methodist, and Jamie Vergara.
- Rabbi-Cantor Inna Serebro-Litvak of Temple Shalom of Succasunna was not feeling well and unable to attend. We wish her well and hope she is feeling better soon.
- The Roxbury Interfaith Council has been an important force during the pandemic, helping to care for those in the community who need our support.

Memorial Day

- Memorial Day is right around the corner and the Roxbury Memorial Day Committee is currently planning our 2021 Memorial Day Ceremony. It will be held on Monday, May 31, at 11 a.m. at the Veterans' Memorial on the island at Horseshoe Lake, 72 Eyland Avenue, Succasunna. Roxbury Township and the Roxbury Veterans of Foreign War Post 2833 are hosting this ceremony of remembrance.
- Unfortunately, for the second year and due to the pandemic, we will not have a parade. We can all look forward to having the biggest Memorial Day parade Roxbury has ever seen next year.

- All are invited to attend this Memorial Day ceremony honoring the memory of those Veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving our country.
- In the event of rain, the ceremony will take place at the nearby picnic pavilion. Current COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions will be in effect.
- For questions, please contact Michele O'Halloran in the manager's office.

Docks

- Next is a quick note to answer the social media clamor about all the construction equipment at the beach at Horseshoe Lake. We are building new docks. As DPW Director Rick Blood recently explained: "It was time."
- The project, however, is being delayed because of a lumber shortage. Please note that the lumber is scheduled to be on site by the middle of this week and the contractor will resume construction. The slight delay is not expected to delay the start of swim season when the dock will be utilized, which, of course, is all you and I wanted to know.
- Summer is coming.
- Thank you for your attention. Now back to our agenda.

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