

Community Update
July 13, 2021

- Good evening and welcome to tonight's meeting of the Roxbury Township Council. I am Mayor Bob DeFillippo and on behalf of the Township Council, I would like to welcome those of you who are here in person as well as those joining us through Zoom.
- I would also like to wish everyone a happy Fourth of July and hope that you were able to enjoy the holiday weekend between the several storms we experienced. More on those storms and the damage they caused in a minute.

Fourth of July

- This Fourth of July was particularly poignant because unlike last year when everything was cancelled, we were able to gather together once again with family and friends to celebrate the nation's independence. In my travels throughout our town, it was hard not to notice how many residents were holding backyard Fourth of July bar-b-ques and graduation parties. It was a pleasure to see people out and about, especially in our businesses and restaurants, which appeared busy.
- This was possible because we continue to emerge from the pandemic shutdown that gripped our community.

COVID

- Today, I am happy that I can continue to report the number of COVID-19 cases in town over the past two weeks continued to slowly go down. Between our last meeting and today, the number of confirmed Covid cases went from 2553 to 2560 – just seven new cases.

- That is extraordinary when you consider that back in the spring, we were seeing new cases increase by as much as 200 people every two weeks.
- Once again, on behalf of the Township Council, I would thank everyone in the community for your cooperation and patience as we fought to beat back Covid.
- Unfortunately, I must once again caution everyone that Covid is not quite done with us. Even seven new cases are unacceptable. The reality is that those who were infected were people who had not been vaccinated.
- While we encourage everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated, people are free to make up their own minds. That is your right. But, if you choose not to get vaccinated, we urge you to continue to practice social distancing to protect yourself and the community. The new variant tearing through the country is reported to be easily spread and particularly deadly.
- Nevertheless, it was very gratifying to see so many people out in the community over the past two weeks. Residents are out at the beach at Horseshoe Lake. And our parks are filled with children and adults participating in summer camps and sports programs.
- I know we all agree that it feels good to get back to normal -- at least during the times it has not been crazy windy and raining.

STORMS

- In fact, according to JCP&L, two relatively rare weather phenomena struck our area within hours of one another on Tuesday, July 5: a line of thunderstorms that produced what meteorologists call a “river of wind,” and a late-night line of thunderstorms that produced over 900 cloud-to-

ground lightning strikes in a single 60-minute period, according to the National Weather Service.

- This was followed 72 hours later by the arrival of Tropical Storm Elsa, along with an extended period of heat and humidity. JCP&L's weather team reported Elsa dropped rainfall amounts exceeding 3 inches in certain areas and produced wind gusts peaking at nearly 70 mph with sustained gusts in the 30-45 mph range.
- At the height of the outages, a total of 233,300 customers in the JCP&L service area were without power.
- In Roxbury, there were about 815 customers without power at the height of the storm on July 7. At the same time, and by way of comparison, JCP&L reported that Booton had 2,731 outages and Mount Arlington had 1,076. Other communities had fewer, such as Jefferson with 267 outages and Rockaway Township with 182.
- JCP&L said that by July 8, they had restored service to all but 37 customers in Roxbury.
- As of now, we believe that everyone in Roxbury has had their power restored, except perhaps a few individual homes. If you are still without power, please contact Township Manager John Shepherd.
- We were in constant contact with JCP&L representatives throughout the storm, and our township staff was out in the community clearing roads and ensuring public safety.
- For instance, on Tuesday night, July 6, a storm ripped through Roxbury, knocking out power in the Landing area. Township Road Department crews responded quickly to clear the fallen trees.

- But here is an interesting note: our township crews are not allowed to clear trees from roadways if wires are involved. They must get JCP&L to clear the wires first, which can take some time. That is why it sometimes appears no one is doing anything to clear the roads after a storm.
- Once the wires were cleared, our crews worked over the next few days to clean up behind the power company crews. As a reminder, it is never a good idea to go near downed power lines.
- The areas most impacted by the storms included:
 - Shippenport ramp onto Landing Rd North bound
 - Orden Dr. & Canal St. in Landing
 - Mt Arlington Blvd & Yellow Barn had trees and poles knocked down.
 - Mooney Mt. area & Poets Peak
 - Halsey St. in Kenvil
- Our police and first responders also were out during the storms to help residents and to assist with downed trees and power lines and directing traffic at those locations.
- Throughout the storm, Township Manager John Shepherd and I were in contact with our JCP&L representatives, as well as the leaders of surrounding communities.
- For the most part, JCP&L did a commendable job preparing, responding, and communicating during this storm – a vast improvement from last year’s response to Hurricane Isaias, which led to numerous meetings

with state officials and the utility, and a resolution from this Council demanding JCP&L improve its storm restoration response.

- On behalf of the Council, I would like to commend our township road crews, who did an outstanding job during this storm.
- In sharp contrast, we have not heard from either Optimum or Verizon about their efforts during the storms to restore cable, internet, and cell phone service. We will continue our efforts to get those utilities to respond to our concerns.

Berkshire Valley Road

- In another matter that occurred earlier today, a dump truck hit and seriously damaged the railroad bridge over Berkshire Valley Road. As a result, the road has been closed and will not reopen until the bridge is repaired.
- Morris County is heading-up the repair efforts, and John Shepherd and I have been in touch with county officials today. Morris County Engineer Chris Vitz estimates that the road at the bridge will be closed for approximately one month.
- Local traffic will be able to utilize Berkshire Valley Road to get to their homes and businesses, as will emergency vehicles, but traffic will not be able to pass under the bridge nor will trains be travelling over the bridge. That rail line is owned by the county and leased to private operators.
- The County is working closely with the Township and our police department to determine detour options and to ensure that the bridge is repaired as quickly and safely as possible. Nevertheless, this

regrettable incident will certainly be an inconvenience for area residents. The township manager's office will provide more information as soon as it is available.

Police Detective William Manisa

- Finally, congratulations to Roxbury Police Detective William Manisa. As it has been widely reported in the local media, Detective Manisa was among several law enforcement officers praised this week by the Morris County Prosecutors Office for helping to solve a long-dormant case that took place three decades ago in Roxbury.
- Speaking on behalf of the Council and a grateful community, nice job detective. You make us proud.
- Thank you again for joining us tonight, and now back to our agenda.

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