



# Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update April 22, 2020



## CONFIRMED CASES

- Today, there are 95,865 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Jersey, with another 1,045 still under investigation. Currently, the County reports 10,484 cases, with Westfield reporting three more confirmed cases for 184 to date.
- For a more detailed breakdown of statewide numbers, visit the [NJ Department of Health COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

## STATE UPDATE

- Governor Murphy plans to sign legislation requiring hospitals to report to the New Jersey Department of Health all demographic data for all individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19, as well as those who have been admitted, who have died, and who have tried unsuccessfully to get tested.

- New Jersey will continue its tri-state partnership with New York and Connecticut to work on a contact tracing program, which will be vital to any serious reopening efforts.

## LOCAL UPDATES

- Today, Union County Manager Ed Oatman advised us that the federal government wired \$97+ Million to Union County as part of the first COVID-19 relief package. There is currently no guidance or rules for how the money can be spent, only that it cannot be used for budget shortfalls, and is intended only for COVID-19 related expenses. These funds will be maintained in a separate account until comprehensive guidance governing expenditures is provided by the federal government.
- I participated in a conference call yesterday with Congressman Tom Malinowski and several other mayors in his district. We agreed to co-sign a letter calling upon the House and Senate leadership of both parties to allocate dedicated municipal funding in the next CARES package (expected to come up for a vote in early May). Without targeted stabilization funding, it could be difficult for many towns to continue providing critical services to residents.
- As a reminder, municipalities are the tax collectors for all services, and are legally obligated to pay the school districts and the County for the full amount they're due, regardless of our tax collection rate, which we anticipate to decline. In Westfield, since the Town only receives 16% of property taxes we collect, we could experience a cash flow crunch if tax collection rates fall in any material way.
- The second wave of federal assistance is meant to help municipalities; however, the proposed legislation limits funding to towns with a population of over 50,000. Congressman Malinowski's bill, H.R. 6467, would provide \$250 billion in stabilization funds to localities with no population threshold, which would make Westfield eligible for support to cover expenses attributable to the COVID-19 epidemic, including lost revenue.
- The Conservation Center re-opens tomorrow and Friday from 9:00-2:30. To date, we've sold more than 1,000 permits, which is in line with past years' trends for April. To once again manage demand, minimize wait times, and facilitate social distancing, we will temporarily suspend online permit sales tomorrow at 8:00AM. The DPW will monitor the demand at the Center, and we will re-open permit sales as capacity allows. In addition, if you received your decal last week and will be returning to the Center tomorrow or Friday, consider arriving in the afternoon if your schedule is flexible. The placement of new decals takes more time and creates a longer wait, which tends to be more common in the morning. For the latest updates on permit availability, visit [westfieldnj.gov/conservation](https://westfieldnj.gov/conservation). It's also important to note that we continue to discuss the anticipated timing of reinstating the Saturday and Sunday hours that we had planned for ahead of the pandemic, and will communicate those details once they are finalized.
- Finally, on this 50th anniversary of Earth Day, it's important to acknowledge that one of the silver linings of this pandemic is experiencing a cleaner planet. Let's aspire to work together post-crisis to keep it that way! Many thanks to our Green Team and Councilman David Contract for their leadership on our Town's many inspired sustainable initiatives, which I outlined in a letter to the editors of our local media outlets today: <https://bit.ly/2XVMvHm>.