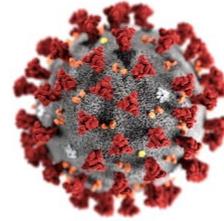




Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update October 6, 2020



CONFIRMED CASES

- Today, there are 209,342 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Jersey to date, with another 353 still under investigation. Union County has reported 17,944 cases in total, with Westfield reporting three new cases since my last update on Friday (one on Saturday, and two on Monday), bringing our total to 397 since our first reported case in March.
- For a more detailed breakdown of statewide numbers, visit the NJ Department of Health COVID-19 Dashboard.

STATE UPDATES

- The New Jersey Department of Health has issued guidelines for Halloween festivities, with an emphasis on wearing a face mask (costume masks don't count), limiting trick-or-treat groups, arranging treats in a safe way, avoiding large parties, and practicing hand hygiene. The full guidelines, which address public health precautions in more detail, can be found here: https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/NJ_Halloween_2020.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0ObjGbaRDlcl5m7RtNbVcUYW05jwRPYOI5StJYocteFgM2RG9diCaMXvE.
- The NJ Department of Human Services has increased the income threshold for families seeking child care tuition assistance during remote-learning school hours from \$75,000 to \$150,000. This will allow more families to receive the support they need to afford child care. For more information, or to apply, visit www.ChildCareNJ.gov/COVID19.

LOCAL UPDATES

- Ballots for the upcoming General Election were mailed to all registered, active voters in Westfield this past Friday by the County Clerk's office, and many residents have reported receiving them already. Please remember this is primarily a Vote By Mail election, and voting by machine will only be available to those with disabilities. Be sure to take the time to understand your options for submitting your ballot (by mail, secure drop box at the Fraser Building on North Avenue, or at your polling site). Here is some additional important voting information for your reference:
- The County Clerk has produced a how-to video on filling out a Vote-by-Mail ballot, which walks voters through proper procedure to complete and submit a ballot. This video, as well as other voting resources, such as FAQs and a list of secure ballot drop boxes, can be found at www.unioncountyvotes.com.
 - After you submit your completed ballot, you can track its progress at www.nj.gov/state/elections/vote-track-my-ballot.shtml.

- For those who have not yet registered to vote, the October 13 deadline is one week away; registration can be completed at www.nj.gov/state/elections/voter-registration.shtml.
- In response to the many inquiries about Halloween, barring any substantial change in the local COVID trends, we plan to follow the guidance issued yesterday by the New Jersey Department of Health--which calls for a common sense approach to limiting the size of trick-or-treating groups, safe distribution of treats, maintaining proper distance, and wearing face coverings. I know we are all looking forward to reclaiming Halloween normalcy for the kids in Town, and I will be conferring with Regional Health Director Megan Avallone and Chief Battiloro in the near future to determine if additional guidance is needed from a public health and safety perspective.
- Thanks to everyone who provided their input following the joint statement made by Chief Battiloro and me yesterday regarding the recent issues at Mindowaskin Park. While I appreciate the toll this pandemic is taking on the mental health of our teens and their need and desire to socialize normally, the bottom line is that vandalizing Town property, throwing rocks at vehicles, and disrespecting our Police Department is simply unacceptable. The park has always been closed at dusk during this time of year, and trespassing is not permitted for public safety reasons. I am thankful that the vast majority of teens in Town are respectful and rule-abiding, and that the actions of some should not be projected onto those who do their part to set a good example.
- Fourth quarter tax bills were sent out last week, which reflect the certified tax rate of 2.158% composed of the municipal, library, school, and county portions. Also included with your bill was an insert with highlights of the 2020 municipal budget, which provides some additional context about the first budget decrease in eight years, where tax dollars are appropriated, and how we are leveraging grants and other funding to make continued progress amidst a challenging economic environment. As a reminder, tax payments are due on November 1, with the standard ten-day grace period in place. As we did with second and third quarter bills, payment will be accepted through regular mail, online, or via drop box outside of Town Hall.

Thanks to everyone who stopped by Quimby Street on Saturday to chat with Chief Battiloro, Councilwomen Habgood and Mackey, and me. It's always great to meet in-person with residents, and I'll plan to host more of these events in the near future to address your questions or concerns.