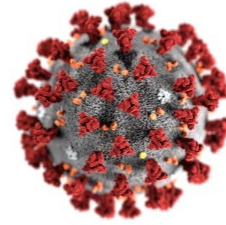




## Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update December 8, 2020



### COVID-19 UPDATES

- As I shared last week, I am providing Westfield's COVID-19 case updates each Friday, when we receive the data from the Department of Health, which includes rapid test results. On a statewide basis, the trends continue to worsen in terms of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. The seven-day average for daily positive tests in New Jersey is now above 5,000 for the first time, up 26% from a week ago and 135% from a month ago, with recent modeling by State health officials suggesting the peak may come closer to mid-December. Today, New Jersey reported its highest hospitalization number in nearly seven months, as new admissions continue to outpace those being discharged. More locally, at Overlook, COVID hospitalizations are up nearly 75% in the last four weeks. Governor Murphy also reported a 74% non cooperation level with contact tracers statewide.
- Governor Murphy's latest executive order went into effect yesterday, which limits outdoor gatherings to no more than 25 people, with exceptions for religious or political activities, as well as for funerals, memorial services, and wedding ceremonies. In addition, the pause on indoor sports began on December 5, which remains in effect through January 2. Full details can be found [here](#).
- The New Jersey Department of Health said people arriving in New Jersey from elsewhere now need to quarantine for 10 days instead of the previous 14, with exceptions for those traveling from Connecticut, Delaware, New York or Pennsylvania. If residents receive a negative result from a test administered from three-to-five days after arrival, the quarantine can end after seven days.
- The December 15 deadline is nearing for the Union County CARES Act Non-Profit Grant program, which provides financial support for eligible non-profit organizations to reopen, or remain open safely while providing County residents with support and services during the pandemic. For more information, visit [ucnj.org/non-profit-grant-application](http://ucnj.org/non-profit-grant-application).

### LOCAL UPDATES

- On a local note, I'm saddened to announce the death of Joe Handy, a valued employee of the DPW for 23 years. Joe lost his courageous battle with cancer late last week, and was working up until a few weeks ago in good spirits. He will be missed by all who knew him. Please join me in keeping his family in your thoughts.
- I'm pleased to report that we received numerous applications from residents to volunteer on our Boards and Commissions for 2021! We are in the process of going through the applications we received from so many talented residents and hope to make notifications next week, with formal appointments to occur at the 2021 Reorganization Meeting on January 5. I'd like to thank the many volunteers who have provided and continue to provide such a valuable service to our

community. Special recognition goes to Recreation Commission Chairman Gary Fox, who chaired his last Recreation Commission meeting last night and has elected to step down after 13 years (three as Chair), to indulge in some well deserved leisure time, including time with his new granddaughter. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Darielle Walsh for her 13 years of service on the Planning Board. Darielle is the consummate volunteer, and there is not a board, committee, or organization that has not had the benefit of her time and talent. Thanks to Gary and Darielle for their years of dedication to Westfield.

- Join us on Facebook Live this Thursday evening at 6:30 for the menorah lighting ceremony to celebrate Hanukkah with the Union County Torah Center-Chabad. Due to COVID restrictions, this is a virtual event and we ask the community not to attend in person, just as we did with the lighting of the Town Christmas tree.
- The online auction of the gorgeous butterflies from the Art Takes Flight exhibit continues through Thursday, with all proceeds going towards the funding of future public art initiatives. Please visit [32auctions.com/westfieldbutterflies](https://32auctions.com/westfieldbutterflies).
- The “Be the Light” initiative to combat local hunger continues through December 19. Thanks to everyone who has already made a donation or placed an online auction bid for the items donated by John Rzeznik. For more information on how you can help, please visit [westfieldunitedfund.org](https://westfieldunitedfund.org).
- Last week I participated on a panel hosted by Downtown NJ with several state legislators to discuss long overdue liquor license reform in NJ. The need for reform has never been more apparent than during this pandemic, where many of our independent restaurants are struggling to get by, and many don’t foresee an opportunity to recoup lost revenue to be able to stay in business, even when business eventually resumes close to normal.

Several reform bills have been introduced through the years, but have stymied in the legislature primarily due to lobbying from the restaurant association who want to protect the investment of current license holders, a very legitimate concern. Protecting current license holders, however, shouldn’t have to come at the expense of new restaurateurs, or the economic development prospects of our towns.

Legislators are once again looking at creative ways to accommodate all stakeholders, but now with a greater sense of urgency. Senator Vin Gopal has introduced a bill that allows restaurants to purchase annual permits to provide beer, wine, and cider tableside with food at sit down dining establishments.

This bill also provides a tax credit for current license holders to compensate for the expected loss in value resulting from the creation of the new restricted licenses.

Tonight we are voting on a resolution to support this pending legislation, joining a bipartisan coalition of Mayors and governing bodies around the state who would like to see our legislature act on this immediately. As a follow up, the Mayors of LD21 anticipate meeting with our own local legislators to lobby for their support.

- Lastly, please take the time to read the remarks I delivered at tonight's Town Council meeting about the resolution to designate Streetworks Development LLC, a subsidiary of Hudson's Bay Company, as the developer for their privately-owned Lord & Taylor properties, as well as for the South Avenue and North Avenue train station municipal parking lots and the municipal parking lot across from the Post Office, referred to as Lot 7. This is an exciting next step in the journey to reimagine Downtown Westfield, which began with the Master Plan Reexamination process two years ago. Because of the importance of this topic, I devoted most of my opening comments to this issue. I encourage everyone to visit the Redevelopment Information Center on our website, which provides an overview of the steps we've taken to date and FAQs, as well as video replays of my recent Facebook Live discussion on the topic and the presentation given by Streetworks Development at our November 10 Council meeting. I look forward to the community's ongoing engagement as we explore what is truly possible for our long-term vitality.

I have one final ask, and this is for everyone to Be The Light for each other during these dark days, and will make a final plea to consider donating to our Be The Light Hunger Drive to ensure that those in need will have food on the table this season. Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Holidays! It remains a privilege to be your mayor.