



Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update March 2, 2021



CONFIRMED CASES

For the month of February, the Department of Health received 232 cases of COVID-19 in Westfield. Of these cases:

- 64 had no known exposure
- 50 were unable to be reached
- 41 had a positive household contact
- 23 were diagnosed in a prior month but reported during February
- 18 had a known exposure
- 7 were associated with youth sports
- 7 were hospitalized (ages 90, 81, 78, 72, 67, 65, 23)
- 6 refused to be interviewed
- 5 were associated with work
- 5 remain under investigation
- 3 were associated with a party
- 2 were associated with travel
- 1 was associated with a long-term care facility

The ages of these cases ranged from under one to 96 years old, broken down as follows:

- Age 9 and under: 17 cases
 - Age 10-19: 51 cases
 - Age 20-29: 32 cases
 - Age 30-39: 29 cases
 - Age 40-49: 30 cases
 - Age 50-59: 37 cases
 - Age 60-69: 17 cases
 - Age 70-79: 10 cases
 - Age 80-89: 5 cases
 - Age 90 and above: 3 cases
 - Age unconfirmed: 1 case
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- Of these 232 cases, 57 were received since my last update (on February 19) through February 28. The most highly impacted age group for the month was ages 10 through 19, representing 22% of the newly reported cases. Westfield's total number of cases to date is 1,838.
 - Sadly, I must report that there has been an additional fatality -- a 78 year-old male who was hospitalized -- bringing our total to 54.
 - Regional Health Officer Megan Avallone reports that while all but two regions in New Jersey dropped from a high to moderate activity level, our region is experiencing a high level of activity, although Westfield is currently at a moderate level. Even though we are seeing a decrease in

cases, last week New Jersey ranked second in the nation for the highest number of cases per capita --- so the reality is that things are improving but we are still very much dealing with a pandemic.

- In terms of vaccinations, statewide, 1,410,548 first doses and 721,131 second doses have been administered to date. Last week, 53,800 people per day were vaccinated in New Jersey, up 10% from the prior week. 38.4% of the state's prioritized population has been vaccinated with at least one dose. In Union County, 11.8% of the population has received first doses and 5.9% of County residents (31,425) are fully vaccinated. This week, the State is scheduled to receive 70,000 doses of the single dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine. In addition, CVS Pharmacy and Rite Aid will be allocated 22,500 Johnson & Johnson vaccine doses in New Jersey through the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program.
- Governor Murphy announced yesterday that vaccination eligibility will be expanded on March 15 for additional frontline essential workers and high risk groups, including educators, childcare workers, public and local transportation workers, public safety workers who are not sworn law enforcement or fire professionals, migrant farm workers, members of tribal communities, and those experiencing homelessness. On March 29, frontline essential workers in the following categories are also eligible for vaccination: restaurant, food processing and distribution industries, grocery personnel, warehouse workers, remaining eldercare workers, hospitality workers, elections workers, clergy, postal and other shipping workers, and judicial system employees. Full details can be found [here](#).

LOCAL UPDATES

- I'd like to reiterate the comments I made on Thursday supporting the collaborative effort across the community to find a path to safely expand in-person instruction in our schools. While the Board of Education operates independently of the Town, I remain committed to being part of the solution in any way I'm able within my jurisdiction. I am very pleased to see that the collective feedback from local leaders across the state has had an impact with regard to getting teachers eligible for vaccinations. With elementary and middle schools in Westfield going back five half days over the coming weeks, progress is clearly being made, and I am grateful to Dr. Dolan, the Board of Education, and the Regional Health Department for their ongoing work -- and to the parents in the community for engaging on a topic of great importance to so many. As with any difficult situation, we will find tensions running high and different points of view presented. Please remember that we're all neighbors and we all want what is best for our children in terms of safety and education.
- In case you missed it last week, the Town Council is considering a proposal in response to a request we recently received from AT&T expressing its interest in installing a cell tower near the Houlihan/Sid Fay fields. We are taking this request seriously based on a number of factors, and are considering this as a potential innovative solution to solve ongoing parking, public safety, and facility issues at no cost to taxpayers.

The specific cell tower location that would be proposed is adjacent to the far side of the Houlihan/Sid Fay parking lot, abutting the railroad tracks and near the PSE&G substation on the Clark side of the tracks. In return for allowing a party to install a cell tower, the Town would require the provider to pay for the proposed Houlihan/Sid Fay improvements recommended in the Strategic Parks Plan, which

includes a new parking lot with a potential of up to 77 additional parking spots, an enhanced entrance/exit, installation of bathrooms, and coverage of the costs to make the facility fully ADA compliant.

The concession arrangement would then also require that, after a grace period commensurate with the cost of the improvements installed, the wireless provider would also pay the Town an annual lease payment at a rate to be negotiated for the remainder of the long-term lease period.

At the recommendation of the Code Review and Property Committee, the Town will issue an RFP to bring on a consultant, at no cost, to advise the Council on negotiations with interested wireless providers. After work with the consultant is sufficiently advanced, the Council will determine whether or not to issue an RFP to cellular service providers. Once provider responses are received, the public will be alerted and asked for input, all of which will be evaluated in the decision on whether or not to move forward.

Rest assured that no contract will be awarded unless it is recommended by the consultant, passes muster with our Town governing body, and adequately addresses questions or concerns from neighbors, parents and the sports leagues. I know there are many sensitivities when it comes to cell towers; however, it would be best to act proactively to ensure that we maximize the benefit to Westfield taxpayers AND maintain controls in the process, knowing that a cell tower in that vicinity may be inevitable. In this case, we have the opportunity to resolve a long standing safety issue at Houlihan/Sid Fay field and additionally reap the benefit of having someone else cover the costs. For additional information, please review the initial FAQs on our website at <https://bit.ly/3khTYtr>. We will be sure to keep you updated as information becomes available.

- The Town is seeking volunteers for the Westfield Bicycle Advisory Board, a newly updated committee intended to leverage the experience and interest of residents seeking to consistently advance bicycle safety and culture on behalf of the community. Applications are open through March 12 and can be found at www.westfieldnj.gov/BicycleAdvisoryVolunteer.
- Finally, don't miss Glo Downtown — Featuring Impulse — The Westfield Seesaws. Downtown Westfield will be glowing this March with fifteen giant, illuminated sound-producing seesaws that up to four people can ride at a time. The Impulse seesaw art installation, funded entirely by grant money and sponsorships, is coming to the North Avenue train station lot from March 5 - 21, along with many retail and dining promotions from our local businesses. Please show your support by coming downtown to check out the fun and spending local! Face coverings and social distancing are required to participate. For more information, visit westfieldtoday.com.