



Mayor Brindle's Opening Remarks September 8, 2020

Good evening, everyone, and thanks for joining us virtually tonight. Please remember that public comment will only be accepted via Zoom, although we are live streaming for viewing only on Facebook. The replay will also be available afterwards on Facebook, YouTube, and TV 36.

CONFIRMED CASES

- Today, there are 194,667 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Jersey to date, with another 307 still under investigation. Union County has reported 17,238 cases in total, with Westfield reporting four new cases since my last update on Friday (two on Saturday, and two on Monday) -- bringing our total to 372 since our first reported case in March. I'd like to clarify the inclusion of out of state college students in Friday's report. We report the numbers as we receive them, which means anyone who claims Westfield as their residence when being tested will show up in our report, regardless of where they were tested. When we have additional location information, like that of out of state college students included in our reports, we will provide it in order to help everyone understand which cases may or may not have an impact on community spread.

STATE UPDATES

- Governor Murphy has added Delaware, Maryland, Ohio and West Virginia, and removed Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands from the list of quarantine states. There are now 35 states on the list, which can be viewed in full at www.covid19.nj.gov/travel.
- The voter registration deadline in New Jersey is Tuesday, October 13. The State now has an online voter registration form up and running, where residents can register to vote, confirm registration, and set up an account to track a mail-in ballot. Visit www.nj.gov/state/elections.

LOCAL UPDATES

- Please join us Friday evening at 6:00PM for our annual remembrance ceremony at the 9/11 memorial, where I will be joined by community faith leaders to reflect on the tragic events of that day and the 12 Westfield residents who were lost. All attendees are asked to wear face coverings and maintain social distancing.
- Beginning today, Westfield Memorial Library is now open at 9:30 each morning, and has begun partial use of its computers to residents. For additional information on their protocols, visit www.wmlnj.org.
- We have another very full agenda tonight, which is indicative of the progress we continue to make in many areas. Tonight is the second reading of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, and

in response to some very constructive resident feedback, we introduced a revised version of this ordinance last month, which also had the benefit of providing additional time for public input. In addition to the comments provided at the last two meetings on this topic, members of the HPC, Council members, and I have all fielded emails and phone calls to collect feedback and provide clarity. Ultimately, I believe we found a very balanced and sensible approach to preserving our historic homes and the concerns of property owners. As I've said before, I recognize that for some this is not politically popular, but its intent is supported by many and consistent with the commitment I made, along with many on this Council, to make historic preservation a priority. This ordinance will ensure that going forward we have some sensible review processes in place before we lose any more historically significant buildings to tear downs.

- Additionally tonight, as a companion to the revised historic preservation ordinance and in response to suggestions we've received, we are voting on a resolution that will ultimately enable the Town to provide five year tax abatements on the value of improvements to historically designated homes. Similar to the process we just went through for our downtown, we will be voting on a resolution referring a town-wide "area in need of rehabilitation" study to the Planning Board for review. An ordinance will then be drafted that would apply the "area in need of rehab" designation to only historically designated homes to allow for the tax abatement, providing further incentive for property owners to consider voluntarily designating the historic homes that meet the HPC criteria.
- Tonight, we're also going to hear from Recreation Commission member Brad Rothenberg to update us on a variety of initiatives, including the Edison School field project, Sycamore Playground, and some general parks updates, including the much discussed Brightwood Park bike paths.
- We are also voting on a resolution that will allow for shared bike lanes on Prospect between W. Dudley and E. Broad, which is the beginning of the implementation of the recommendations from the 2019 Bike/Pedestrian plan.
- On the road paving front, tonight we'll vote on a resolution to award a contract for the resurfacing of Scotch Plains Avenue, the majority of which will be offset by a State Transportation Trust Fund grant. In spite of our budget cuts, we are currently on track to pave just over seven miles of roadway this year, both through Town and County projects and those being completed by Elizabethtown Gas due to the 2019 road paving ordinance, as part of our ongoing commitment to invest in our infrastructure.
- We will also vote on a resolution to award a contract for crossing guard management services for a second year with All City Management Services (ACMS), which has been a valued partner in overseeing this program, recruiting and retaining many existing guards, providing training, and analyzing our needs so that this set of responsibilities no longer detracts from the time and resources of our Police Department. The Town Council's Public Safety, Parking, and Transportation Committee recently reviewed the program with ACMS management and our Police Department, and determined in conjunction with the Finance Policy Committee that the

program has some restructuring opportunities due to the differences in this year's school schedule and anticipated decrease in daily student foot traffic. We will work with the Board of Education to communicate the current list of posts ahead of school starting on Thursday.

- As POW/MIA Remembrance Day approaches on September 18, the Council will formally recognize this day via resolution to honor the many servicemen and women who are gone but not forgotten. My dad is one of those MIA servicemen so I am grateful to the Council for their support.
- And finally, as the school year gets underway this week, I want to thank our Health Department for their ongoing work with the Board of Education to prepare for the return of students. In a year like no other, teachers, administrators, parents, and students are doing more than ever before to adapt to uncertainty. It's not easy for anyone, and we will all be navigating this new normal together. I have spoken to Regional Health Director Megan Avallone regarding a process to ensure that we have daily updates regarding any school related COVID cases so we can respond quickly if necessary to mitigate community spread. As we have seen over the past six months, I have no doubt our community, and in particular our parents, teachers, and students will once again rise to the occasion to ensure the best possible outcome for all.

Before getting to tonight's business agenda, I want to remind everyone that I will once again be enforcing Robert's Rules this evening to ensure we stay on topic and the meeting runs efficiently. Any comments that are not relevant to the particular business at hand, should be deferred to after Council committee reports and not in this meeting. The public will only be allowed to comment during the public comment portion for a specific ordinance, or later in the general comment portion, but can speak only once on a particular topic. I have an obligation to manage the Council meetings and will do all that I can to ensure we stay on topic this evening.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.