



Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update April 29, 2020



CONFIRMED CASES

- Today, there are 116,264 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Jersey, with another 617 still under investigation. Currently, the County reports 12,380 cases, with Westfield reporting another 4 cases for 221 to date.
- As always, a more detailed breakdown of statewide numbers is available online at the NJ Department of Health COVID-19 Dashboard.

FEDERAL, STATE, AND COUNTY UPDATES

- The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development announced that recipients of federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) to the self-employed, independent contractors and others who are not usually eligible for unemployment insurance benefits will start being notified of their PUA eligibility today, and the Department will begin making payments Friday. For additional information, visit [covid19.nj.gov](https://www.covid19.nj.gov), and type "self employed" in the search box.

- Today, Governor Murphy will sign an executive order to reopen New Jersey's state parks, and to allow golf courses and county parks to reopen on Saturday, May 2, with social distancing continuing to be mandated.
- Union County announced that it will open its parks on Saturday for limited and passive activities only. Additional details can be found on their website: <https://ucnj.org/>.

LOCAL UPDATES

- Following Governor Murphy's Executive Order to re-open state parks and to allow counties and municipalities to open theirs, the Town has consulted with Union County and the Westfield Board of Education to determine what makes the most sense for our community.

As you know, one of the biggest concerns was the potential overcrowding of our parks resulting from the closure of nearby County parks. With the County's decision to re-open their parks on Saturday, we believe this will help to alleviate this concern. As a result, parks and fields in Westfield will be re-opened to the public on Saturday, May 2, including those owned by the Town and by the Board of Education. As discussed last night at the Town Council meeting, the re-opening of these locations will be done incrementally, much in the way that they were closed, to help keep social distancing measures in place. Please note the following conditions:

1. Parking lots will remain closed. We ask that, in using the parks and fields, you walk or bike to nearby locations as part of the ongoing stay at home order that discourages all non-essential travel.
2. Parks and fields are to only be used for passive recreational purposes. Only individual activities are permitted, such as walking, jogging, and bicycling; for these activities, individuals may be accompanied by family members, caretakers, or other household members. Restrooms will be closed, as will all playgrounds, basketball, tennis, and pickleball courts. Organized sports, fitness classes, or other gatherings are not permitted.
3. Fields 1 and 2 at Tamaques will be fenced off due to seeding, aeration, and maintenance. In addition, Mindowaskin Park will remain closed until further notice due to current construction to restore the pathways.

As I noted in my remarks last night, the Westfield Regional Health Department continues to keep a vigilant eye on the community spread of COVID-19, and new case reporting indicates that it has not been completely mitigated. As a result, it is critical that we continue to emphasize that proper social distancing should be maintained in the parks and fields at all times. Face coverings are recommended as an additional precaution. I am very concerned that in spite of best efforts, it may be difficult to maintain proper social distancing with the upcoming forecast for a nice weather weekend. Please exercise special precautions to help us make this initial reopening a success for everyone by following the guidelines in place.

- In case you missed it at last night's Town Council meeting, we will be resuming Saturday hours (9-3) at the Conservation Center beginning this weekend, which will be in addition to the regularly scheduled Thursday and Friday hours of 9-2:30. Permits are being sold online only at westfieldnj.gov/conservation through 8am tomorrow, at which time we'll temporarily suspend sales to monitor wait times at the Center and evaluate capacity.

- Last night, the Council passed a resolution to extend the grace period on second quarter property tax payments, after Governor Murphy's Executive Order extending that right to municipalities. Please note that the due date itself is still May 1, with the grace period now extended beyond the usual ten days through June 1. Any payments received starting June 2 must be charged interest retroactive to the May 1 due date. In addition to mailing your payment or paying online (westfieldnj.gov/taxcollector), there is a newly installed temporary mailbox behind Town Hall where payments can be deposited.
- Huge thanks to our Senior Advisory Council for their continued outreach to our treasured senior population amidst this pandemic. On Friday, they will host their first Zoom video conference with seniors for a group discussion about how they are getting by at home through this pandemic, as many of them live alone. In addition, the volunteers of the Senior Advisory Council place 150-200 calls per week to seniors in town in order to provide some companionship and consistent contact. Any senior who would like to be placed on this outreach list can contact the Recreation Department at 908-301-1287 or via email at westfieldnjseiors@gmail.com.

Thanks, as always, for your comments, feedback, and concern for our community above all else. Wishing you all continued good health.