



Mayor Brindle's Opening Remarks June 30, 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 171,667 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Jersey, with another 642 still under investigation. Currently, the County has 16,386 cases, with Westfield reporting no new cases since June 17, keeping our total at 282.

STATE UPDATES

- As you likely heard, yesterday Governor Murphy announced that indoor dining will no longer resume on Thursday after COVID-19 spikes in other states were driven by, in part, the return of indoor dining. He does expect the majority of the State's announced restart dates for outdoor activities and limited indoor activities to continue if health trends stay on track.
- New Jersey expanded its list of states to 16 that meet the criteria for 14-day quarantine to now include California, Georgia, Iowa, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada and Tennessee.

LOCAL UPDATES

- Congratulations to the Jefferson School Green Team for their recent Student Recognition Award by the State for running a pilot program version of the Town's food waste recycling program. What a wonderful initiative by these students, who embraced sustainability and demonstrated leadership to help take care of our planet. Thanks to Jefferson Principal Dr. Hung, all of the participating students, parents, faculty and head custodian Mr. Kaler for their contributions to this wonderful effort. I believe that we have a teacher, Mr. Thompson, and a student, Marissa DiChiaro, on the Zoom who would like to say a few words.
- New Jersey's primary election will be held on Tuesday, July 7. Due to the pandemic, this is primarily a Vote by Mail election. Vote by Mail Ballots postmarked on or before Election Day, July 7, will be counted so long as they are received by July 14. In addition to returning ballots via regular mail, ballots may also be returned to a secure drop box location in the County, the closest one located at the Fraser Building on North Avenue. For those wishing to vote in-person with a paper provisional ballot, the polling locations are listed with additional details on our website at www.westfieldnj.gov/election.
- I'm thrilled to report that Mobile Meals of Westfield resumed operations yesterday after a temporary COVID-related closure, and is back to providing the extremely valuable service of

delivering meals to those in need. For questions about how to receive this service, or to volunteer, contact mobilemealswestfield@hotmail.com or call 908-233-6146. To donate, visit mobilemealsofwestfield.org.

- Thanks to everyone who visited Memorial Pool since its opening on Saturday, as we celebrate 50 years of this amazing facility this month. I'm happy to let you know that the Governor's recent Executive Order will allow us to open the spray features in the kids' pool on Thursday, with the slides to follow shortly afterwards. After an initial expected rush, our new online reservations system is working well to ensure we are compliant with limited capacity requirements. Like anything COVID-related, there is always an upfront adjustment period and some flexibility required, and I am extremely grateful to the Recreation Department for all of their hard work to ensure our pool is open on a fair and safe basis.
- Playgrounds will also open Town-wide on Thursday. As with any outdoor activity, we ask that you maintain proper distance and wear a face covering (except for children under two) to protect each other.
- Following the Governor's announcement about postponing indoor dining, we will once again open Quimby Street this weekend for expanded outdoor dining and retail. Given the holiday weekend, the street will close beginning Thursday afternoon. Please come out and continue to support our downtown businesses who are working so hard to navigate this new normal.
- Speaking of downtown, please remember that enforcement of paid parking in our municipal lots will resume on Monday, July 6. We will continue to offer free 15 minute street parking on bagged meters downtown to facilitate curbside pick up at the request of our local businesses. These spots are not meant for long term parking and will be ticketed when misused. Employees of downtown businesses should park in designated employee lots.
- I would be remiss if I did not remind everyone about the rising levels of COVID-19 in a number of states with far less restrictions than we experienced here in New Jersey. With summer upon us and many folks traveling, please be considerate of the community and adhere to the quarantine guidelines set forth by the State. I'm also receiving a number of messages from concerned residents about the lack of social distancing and face coverings downtown, and I want to reiterate that this virus is not behind us. If we can all continue to do our part by wearing face coverings, washing our hands, and maintaining proper distance, we will maintain and build upon our tremendous progress. Knowing your COVID-19 status is also critical to ensuring our community's health, I encourage anyone who may have been exposed to get tested. Visit covid19.nj.gov/testing for more information.
- We have a very full agenda tonight which includes the introduction of a solar ordinance allowing roof front facing solar panels under certain conditions, as well as a presentation of the redevelopment study of our municipal parking lots. Phil Abramson and Chris Colli from our redevelopment planning firm Topology will be making the presentation prior to the Council voting on designation.

- I also want to thank the public for their engagement surrounding the proposed Historic Preservation ordinance. I do, however, want to directly address some misinformation that has been circulating on social media. To clarify, there are two main objectives of this proposed revision: First, to bring our current historic preservation ordinance in compliance with State municipal land use law which currently leaves us subject to legal challenge. It also allows our Historic Preservation Commission to apply for Certified Local Government status and the state funding that comes with it; and, second, to ensure there is a fair review process in place for any proposed teardown of a historically significant property before it's too late.

Residents have repeatedly asked us to take steps to preserve the historical character of our neighborhoods, as all of us benefit from the value they bring to Westfield. As I've said before, I am supportive of measured and appropriate new construction, and recognize the importance of new homes to attract buyers who are looking for modern amenities and floor plans. But I think most agree that we would be remiss to not review homes with historical significance before they are demolished.

To be clear, not all older homes are worth saving, and the vast majority would not meet the high threshold of designation under the criteria set forth at the federal and state levels. The process for historic designation can only be triggered in one of two ways: either the HPC has proactively identified a home of historical significance, or a demolition permit has been requested for a home and the historic preservation officer has flagged it as potentially worth saving. In either case, the home must meet the federal historic preservation eligibility requirements, and most do not. The notion that the Town will simply be able to unilaterally designate any historic home or district is simply untrue.

The HPC will continue to work with property owners to encourage voluntary designation, as they have successfully done recently. In the last two years, with a renewed emphasis by my administration on historic preservation, the Council has designated two properties with property owner consent, and also Triangle Park and the Reeve House, both of which are located on Mountain Avenue. These represent the highest number of designations in the last 20 years. My administration will continue to prioritize historic preservation in a manner that is consistent with State law and the character of Westfield.

We will be re-introducing this ordinance tonight following an oversight in the last version that misstated the threshold year as 1924 -- the correct year is 1930. This is just the beginning of the process of gathering input, which will continue next Monday when the ordinance is introduced to the Planning Board for their input. We will post an FAQ in advance of Monday's Planning Board meeting that incorporates all of the questions we've received to date.

With that, let's get on with the business at hand.