



Mayor Brindle's Opening Remarks October 13, 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 215,085 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Jersey to date, with another 392 still under investigation. Union County has reported 18,316 cases in total, with Westfield reporting no new cases since my last update on Friday -- keeping our total at 401 since our first reported case in March.

STATE AND COUNTY UPDATES

- Today, Governor Murphy announced \$100 million in additional Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to support New Jersey residents and businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The bulk of the money, \$70 million, will be distributed to restaurants, microbusinesses, and other small businesses through Phase 3 of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) Small Business Emergency Assistance Grant Program; an additional \$10 million will be used to help small businesses purchase Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) through the NJEDA Small and Micro Business PPE Access Program; \$15 million will go to support renters through the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program; and \$5 million will support food banks and other hunger relief efforts. Full details can be found [here](#).
- The Governor also announced that indoor contact practices and competitions may resume for medium and high-risk sports, with proper health and safety protocols in place. Full details can be found [here](#).
- The NJ Department of Human Services unveiled a \$12 million rental/mortgage assistance program for families that have suffered financial hardship due to COVID-19 and haven't been eligible for, or received, prior housing assistance. New Jersey residents can now apply for up to \$25,000 to help pay housing costs if they have been unable, or will be unable, to make payments due to the ongoing pandemic. For details about qualifications, please visit the State's website.
- The new Union County COVID-19 Emergency Restaurant Grant program, established by the Freeholder Board, provides a total of \$2 million to qualified restaurants located in Union County on a first come, first served basis. Restaurants impacted by COVID-19 are eligible for grants of up to \$20,000 each. This program provides reimbursement for expenses related to compliance

with Governor Murphy's Executive Orders on restaurant operations during the COVID-19 public health emergency, including items for facilitating outdoor dining, social distancing, and disinfecting a facility. The online application portal will open at 9:00AM on Wednesday, October 14.

LOCAL UPDATES

- Once again, I'd like to remind everyone about the resources available regarding voting in the upcoming General Election. Today is the deadline to register to vote in New Jersey. You can visit nj.gov/state/elections to register or to confirm your registration. As a reminder, this is primarily a vote by mail election in our state, meaning that voting by machine will only be available to those with disabilities. You may drop off your completed ballot at a secure drop box (the closest one located at the Fraser Building on North Avenue), at your polling place on Election Day, or via US Mail. I encourage all residents to visit the Union County Clerk's website, which provides details about registration, ballot drop boxes, mail-in ballots, voting in-person by provisional ballot, instructional videos, and more. Please review the information to familiarize yourself with all procedures and related deadlines.
- I will be participating in a walk with seniors, along with Chief Battiloro, on October 21 at 10:30AM in Mindowaskin Park. The walk will begin at the gazebo, where free safety vests will be distributed to all seniors and caregivers. There will also be a brief presentation by the Westfield Police on walking safety. If you wish to attend, please RSVP by calling 908-301-1287 or emailing westfieldnjseniors@gmail.com. Attendees will be required to practice social distancing protocols and wear a face mask. Thanks to Lifelong Westfield for organizing this effort.
- October means it's AddamsFest season! This year, Councilwoman Mackey and her team of volunteers re-imagined this event as "Alt AddamsFest" to provide creative and pandemic-friendly ways to commemorate the legacy of Charles Addams and build upon the tradition and spirit of the last two years' highly successful events. While we obviously can't gather for everyone's favorite beer garden this year, there are many other events on the schedule -- including the Haunt Your House Contest, the Wicked Windows, Dudley's Drive-In, the Tamaques Haunted Trail, the Maniacs' Carving Chat & Contest, and more. Tickets have been selling quickly, with more being made available this week. You can get all of the latest information by visiting addamsfest.com or following [@AddamsFest](https://twitter.com/AddamsFest) on social media.
- At a time when our schools and teachers need our support more than ever, I wanted to share a wonderful initiative that the Westfield Education Fund launched this week called "Spreading Thanks to our Teachers." With this lawn sign fundraiser, WEF is encouraging families to display a public thank you to our teachers and students for being true heroes in this challenging year. The signs will be available for display starting in late October for \$30 each, and all proceeds fund innovation for our schools. For more information, visit westfieldedfund.org/lawn-signs.
- I'd also like to thank our Mental Health Council for sponsoring an upcoming webinar, in collaboration with the School District, that will provide tips and strategies for parents on how to help your kids manage stress and anxiety during this pandemic. If you're asking yourself "Is this

typical behavior or should I be worried?" then this seminar is for you. The webinar will be on October 22 at 7:00PM, and you can find more information about the webinar and the zoom meeting on our website.

- Tonight, we will continue to lay the groundwork to provide incentives for residents to voluntarily designate their historic homes by providing five-year tax abatements on the value of their improvements. In order to do that, we will first vote on a resolution to designate the entire Town as an area in need of rehabilitation, and then will vote an ordinance on second reading providing for the implementation of the Five Year Tax Exemption and Abatement Law, which applies the rehab designation to historically designated homes only. This ordinance simply amends the tax abatement previously implemented for the Downtown's Special Improvement District and will expand it to now include historically designated properties within the Town. As a reminder, this tax abatement only applies to the value of improvements to properties and therefore does not impact current tax revenue paid to the town.
- Finally, join Chief Battiloro and me tomorrow morning at 9:30 for a Facebook Live discussion, where we'll talk about recent police activity in Town, some of the department's current initiatives, Halloween guidance, and more. If you have a question you'd like us to address, please submit it either in advance online, or tomorrow in the Facebook Live comments.

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.

Thanks, as always, for your interest, outreach, and engagement.