

Community Update
Dec. 1, 2020

- Good evening and thank you for joining us tonight. This is Mayor Bob DeFillippo and on behalf of the Township Council and staff of the Township of Roxbury, we hope everyone had a pleasant and safe Thanksgiving. Roxbury has much to be grateful for – even during a year like 2020 has been.

COVID

- Tonight, unfortunately, I must bring to your attention a very serious spike in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in our town.
- Since our last Council meeting on November 10, the number of confirmed COVID cases in Roxbury has jumped from 485 to 726 – a staggering 241 new cases. Just overnight, the number of reported cases jumped by 17 – that is 17 members of our community who contracted COVID-19. We have never before experienced increases at this rate.
- The increase is alarming. And no one should be resistant or complacent about the need to practice social distancing.
- As many of you are aware, the increase in cases prompted the School District to close the high school and the junior high. At the same time, the Township closed its buildings and facilities to the public. In addition, township employees have returned to work-at-home when possible.
- As they did before, I am confident that our Township staff – led by Township Manager John Shepherd -- will be keeping the wheels of

government moving. And, as before, many of our employees will continue to show up for work every day.

- Let me assure you that none of these steps were taken lightly. They were made in close consultation with our Health Department and in compliance with state and CDC guidelines.
- We have heard and we understand the frustration from some of our residents and community groups about the precautions we have taken to protect residents by canceling several events this month. While that frustration is understandable, the cold, hard facts are that the second wave of the virus has hit Roxbury and we must take the necessary precautions to keep our residents safe – even if that means cancelling events that would have marked the holiday season.
- In this regard, we once again ask for the community’s understanding and cooperation. Public safety must be our top priority.
- Every resident of Roxbury has a responsibility to do their part by practicing social distancing by wearing masks, keeping six feet apart, washing your hands frequently, and avoiding large gatherings.
- Governor Murphy last night signed an Executive Order which pauses indoor practices and competitions for youth and adult sports from Saturday, December 5 at 6 a.m. through Saturday, January 2. The order also lowers the outdoor gatherings limit from 150 people to 25 people, effective Monday, December 7 at 6 a.m.
- The need to practice social distancing is something that is constantly stressed by our Township’s Public Health Nurse Jim Craig, who is a

registered nurse. I would like to spend a few minutes giving you an idea of what a typical day is like for Jim.

- Jim, who works in the Roxbury Health Department, which is led by Mark Caputo, is responsible for implementing public health programs for township residents. He follows directives and guidance from the New Jersey Department of Health.
- Since the beginning of the pandemic crisis – virtually without a break – Jim has:
 - Done contact tracing
 - Administered flu and other vaccines
 - Provided advice and guidance to the schools with respect to public health matters
 - Provided advice and guidance to the Township administration on public health
 - Assisted with the development of public health educational materials; and
 - Provided advice and guidance to Township residents on public health matters.
- In other words, Jim has been at the center of the fight against COVID in Roxbury. He knows how contagious COVID is because he has seen how contagious COVID is right here in Roxbury.
- He has visited families where one person infected everyone in the household. He has been in an assisted care facility where COVID spreads like wildfire and shows no mercy, and he has had to report the numerous deaths that have occurred in our town.
- I am telling you about Jim tonight because we owe him a tremendous debt of gratitude for being the point of the spear in the fight against COVID in

Roxbury, and also because we cannot let his efforts and the efforts of our other health care heroes be in vain.

- The only sure-fire way to slow this second surge of cases is the same as it was during the first surge – social distancing to protect yourself and your neighbors.
- Once again, we ask for the community's understanding, cooperation, and continued support.
- We also ask that you continue to keep the brave health care professionals and residents of Merry Heart in your thoughts and prayers. Like assisted living facilities throughout the country, it has been hard hit by COVID.
- Please keep all our selfless health care heroes and our essential service workers in mind during this holiday season for everything they have done and for what still lies ahead in the fight against COVID.

Shop Local

- Now, I like to turn to another important local issue – our business community.
- During this holiday season, please remember our local merchants, restaurants, and businesses. Our business community has always responded to the needs of the community. I would like to single out the work of the Roxbury Chamber of Commerce, for example.
- This pandemic has hurt our businesses and now it is our turn to show our support to them.
- When shopping for the holidays, patronize local merchants. We are fortunate to have a large, diverse, and healthy business community. Let us help them stay strong by shopping local this holiday season.

Social Services

- Finally, please remember the less fortunate among us. This is the busy time of the year for our Social Services Department. Each year they provide many of our families with much appreciated holiday meals. They cannot do that without your help.
- Right now, Social Services is asking for frozen hams and frozen lasagna. Roxbury has a long history of helping those who need help in the community. We know you will continue that tradition – especially this year when so many of us need help.
- Now, back to our Public Health Nurse Jim Craig. I asked Jim if he had a message for the community. Turns out he did, and I would like to close with his words.
- Jim said, “Together, as a community, we have worked hard to keep our families and neighbors safe. The light is at the end of the tunnel. Let us not let our guard down now. Wear a mask, social distance and avoid social gatherings.”
- Thank you, Jim, for that great advice and for your hard work and dedication. A vaccine seems to be close. Let us all be patient a little longer and follow social distancing guidance.
- Thank you for listening and please stay safe.
- Now, let us turn back to our agenda.