

Community Update
January 12, 2021

- Good evening and welcome to tonight's Council meeting. The beginning of 2021 has certainly reminded us that we are living in difficult times.
- First, I need to let you know the sad news that John Shepherd, our Township Manager, lost his father, James Shepherd, on Saturday, January 9. Mr. Shepherd was 81. On behalf of the Council and Township staff, we send our deepest condolences to John and his family and we ask all of you to please keep them in your thoughts and prayers.
- Tonight, let us begin with the deeply disturbing events that took place in Washington, D.C. this past week. We watched in shock and horror as the doors and halls of our Capitol were breached – an outrageous assault on democracy and the law.
- Those responsible must be held accountable and criminal charges must be filed against those who broke our laws and threatened our Republic.
- While it may seem the assault on our Capitol was far away and that there is little we can do, it must serve as a reminder that our freedom comes with obligations, among them that we must treat each other with respect regardless of whether we agree.
- The anger and intolerance that has marked much of our public debate must end. The attack on our Capitol is not who we are as Americans and it certainly does not reflect who we are in Roxbury.
- We may not be perfect in Roxbury, but we can assure you that everyone's opinion is welcomed and valued before this Council.

- We may not always agree, but no one on this Council will ever mislead, or disregard and disrespect an opposing point of view. We believe that diversity of opinion and respect for each other are among the strengths of our community.
- Like so many of you, we were deeply saddened by the awful images of rioters ransacking the Capitol. For those who have visited those hallowed halls, it was particularly painful to watch the desecration of that beautiful and historic place.
- Let us pray that it is never allowed to happen again.

COVID

- Turning now to our COVID report. The second wave and holiday surge of the COVID-19 virus continues to run through Roxbury at a disturbing pace. Since last week, the number of confirmed cases went from 1,128 to 1,289 – an increase of 161 cases in just one week.
- On the bright side, our public health nurse, Jim Craig, reports that today, only 12 new cases were reported – the lowest number in at least a week. A hopeful sign.
- At this point, there should not be anyone who does not know that the most effective way to prevent community spread is to wear a mask – properly – and to remain six feet apart from others, avoid large gatherings, and clean your hands frequently.
- And yet, people appear in public around Roxbury who are not following the rules – not wearing a mask or wearing it below their nose, and not following social distancing guideline. This apparent lack of concern for the safety of others is difficult to understand.

- We once again ask for the community's understanding, cooperation, and patience as we continue to fight the spread of COVID-19 in Roxbury.

Vaccine

- Fortunately, progress is being made in Morris County to get people inoculated against COVID.
- The state recently announced an expansion in the phased rollout of New Jersey's COVID-19 Vaccination Program. Effective on January 7 – last Thursday -- sworn law enforcement, firefighters, and other first responders who are part of Phase 1B are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccination.
- We are pleased that the vaccine is now being made available to our police and first responders, who are constantly putting themselves in harm's way by being exposed to the virus. There are specific criteria concerning who is eligible that can be found on the Township's website.
- In its announcement, the state said priority was given to serve those at highest risk of work-related exposure to acquiring COVID-19. Police and fire personnel are often at extremely high risk of contact during their daily work with COVID-19 infected people and infected materials.
- The state wants you to know that in its phased rollout, phases overlap and build systematically. In other words, people eligible in Phase 1A (healthcare personnel and long-term care residents) remain eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccination. Additional information about Phase 1A eligibility can also be found on the township's website.
- The New Jersey Department of Health expects availability of COVID-19 vaccines to remain limited in the near-term, so the expansion from Phase 1A to Phase 1B will be staggered.

- Phase 1B will also include frontline essential workers and some high-risk populations, including those aged 75 or older. Further guidance about the definition of Phase 1B beyond first responders is forthcoming.
- Once again, additional information about Phases 1A and 1B eligibility can be found on the township's website.
- Thank you again for joining us tonight. Now, let us return to our agenda.