

## Message From Mayor Michael Kelly

### Chatham Township Responds to First COVID-19 Case

To the People of Chatham Township:

During this Coronavirus emergency that has been declared on the national, state and countywide levels, we have all received guidance from the experts on what to do and what not to do.

As Mayor, I am not going to repeat all of that information. You have heard it on the news, and you have received it in your inboxes. If you are not getting the latest local updates, please go to our website – [chathamtownship-nj.gov](http://chathamtownship-nj.gov) – and click on the red “Community Alerts” button and sign up for our ACTNow notifications from our Health Department, Police and Office of Emergency Management.

But what do all those Emergency Declarations mean for each of us personally in Chatham Township?

First, Chatham Township reported its first confirmed case of COVID-19 over the weekend. Privacy laws prohibit the release of specific information about any patient, but that shouldn't change how we react to this news. We should already be practicing safe social distancing of six feet of separation from everyone outside our immediate household. If we've been exposed we don't want to expose others, and if they've been exposed we don't want to expose ourselves. The first confirmed case in Chatham Township is also no surprise because we all knew it was coming. Every town around us already has more than one confirmed case, and Chatham Township will undoubtedly have more before this Coronavirus emergency is over.

**Update: Two more Chatham Township residents tested positive for coronavirus on Sunday night.**

As Gov. Phil Murphy emphasized in his executive order over the weekend, the number of confirmed cases in any community does not reflect the likely number of people in a community infected with the Coronavirus. Each confirmed case reflects the increased availability of testing, and measures progress by health

officials as they identify infections and work to reduce future transmissions.

The Governor's executive orders on Saturday boils down to a simple directive to stay home as much as possible. During this declared emergency, we should go out only on necessary trips for essential supplies, or for short outings to get exercise and fresh air. And during all of these outings, we all should practice safe social distancing by keeping six feet from anyone who is not part of our household.

Our strategy is to keep the people of Chatham Township informed and safe. The key message is encourage care and caution, not to cause fear or panic.

We have talked in previous messages about how dedicated and well trained our first responders are. We owe our Police Officers, our volunteer Firefighters and our volunteer Rescue Squad members a debt of gratitude. One of the biggest reasons why we must be doing everything in our power to avoid infection is to protect the dedicated first responders who put their own health on the line to come to our aid whenever needed. Our thanks go out to all of them.

In compliance with the Governor's order and Morris County's directives, Chatham Township has closed all playground equipment, including Castle Park and the Skate Park where children cannot comply with the six-foot separation requirement.

Our parks and athletic fields are open for all activities that do not violate the six-foot social distance limits, but are closed for all group activities. For example, consider a walk, jog, run or a catch with a household member at any one of our parks or athletic fields. Avoid any group activity such as a basketball game.

Morris County also is keeping its parks open, including the walking and biking paths of the Loantake Preserve and Giralda Farms. Take advantage of these great local resources. Or for a more quiet woodland experience, consider one of the many trails of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, or visit the Green Village Pond Conservation Area.

Take care of yourselves, but please remember to also take care of your neighbors, especially those who are older or who may have underlying health issues. Check on them. Offer to get their groceries if they are hesitant to expose themselves by going to a supermarket.

Our local ShopRite has reserved its first hour of business from 7-8 a.m. for senior customers age 65 and older and those who are handicapped with mobility challenges. Please respect and appreciate Shop-Rites' efforts and don't

forget to maintain six feet of separation in the aisles and at the checkout registers where customers are asked to bag their own groceries to maintain space from the cashiers. Remember to bring your reusable bags which should be frequently washed to avoid any concerns of cross contamination.

Support local businesses as much as you can. The Governor's order has closed all nonessential businesses but necessary businesses remain open. Restaurants continue to operate under their normal business hours but with take-out service only. All of our local stores and businesses are operating under extremely stressful restrictions, and if we want them to survive we need to support them now.

Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, soaping them vigorously for 20 seconds.

If you are experiencing symptoms of coronavirus such as fever, coughing and shortness of breath, call your doctor immediately. If it is an emergency and you need immediate assistance, dial 911. Alert the operator that you are experiencing coronavirus symptoms so our Police Officers and emergency personnel can arrive prepared.

All Municipal Offices – including Town Hall, Police Headquarters, the Department of Public Works and our Sewage Treatment Plant – are closed to the public. “Save a Trip” information is posted on the Township website with instructions on how to conduct business without physically visiting a municipal office. Our Recycling Center is open during its regular Tuesday morning and Saturday morning hours. Our Compost Area will open as normal starting the second week of April. And the DPW is now accepting telephone orders for mulch deliveries. If you have a question, call the appropriate department's phone number.

Public meetings for the next two weeks are being postponed and rescheduled for all municipal boards and committees.

The Township Committee meeting for March 26 is still on, pending further information on how committee members and the public will be able to participate remotely.

If you have any concerns, the NJ Department of Health has established a 24-hour toll-free number, 800-822-1222.

There are multiple ways for concerned residents to obtain answers to **general questions** about COVID-19:

- Sign up for alerts when new information is posted on our Chatham Township website. Please sign up for ACTNow alerts as well, both sign ups can be found at [www.chathamtownship-nj.gov](http://www.chathamtownship-nj.gov).
- Visit our Chatham Township Facebook page where information is posted daily.
- Call: 211
- Call (24/7): 1-800-962-1253 (Due to a high volume of calls, wait times can be substantial.)
- Visit the Website: [Covid.nj.gov](http://Covid.nj.gov)
- The Atlantic Health Nurse Screening Hotline number, 1-862-260-3199, is available seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. A highly trained Atlantic Health medical professional will answer the call, consult with the patient, and provide direction to obtain needed resources.
- The NJ Department of Health has established a 24-hour toll-free number, 800-822-1222.

None of these hotlines can provide referrals for COVID-19 testing, as kits are limited and there are restrictions as to who may be tested.

All of this information is current as of today, Sunday, March 22. It will undoubtedly change. The Township is participating on daily conference calls with county, state and Board of Health officials to stay on top of rapidly evolving information. When any of this information changes, we will bring it to you in every way we can.

Take care of yourselves, your families and your neighbors. Thank you and be well.

Mayor Michael Kelly  
Chatham Township