

Message from the Mayor, April 29, 2020

Parks, Golf Courses Re-Open,

But Need for Caution Remains

We have good news today across multiple fronts in the fight against the Coronavirus pandemic – provided we proceed with care to safeguard the health of ourselves and others.

Chatham Township had 0 new confirmed cases and 0 new deaths in the 24 hours ending Wednesday night, leaving our totals at 110 cases and 18 deaths. Since last Thursday when we reported 103 confirmed cases and 17 deaths our totals have increased only minimally in a week .

But that's not the only good news.

– State parks and golf courses can re-open at sunrise Saturday morning, May 2, based on an executive order issued by Governor Phil Murphy on Wednesday, April 29.

– Morris County's Loantaka and Giralda Preserves also will open Saturday morning. The popular walking trails at both these parks were closed last month due to the volume of people on the pathways. People are urged to use good judgment, avoid congregating in groups, and to use the pathways at off-peak times.

– Municipal parks remain unchanged. Playgrounds and athletic fields are closed for all group activities; however passive use such as walking or jogging is allowed with safe social distancing.

– Property taxes due May 1 can be postponed until June 1 if municipalities so choose under a separate executive order issued by Gov. Murphy. The Township Committee will hold a special meeting at 3 p.m. on Monday, May 4, to consider granting that extension to assist any residents suffering financial hardship due to the pandemic. The Board of Education made this action possible by its willingness to delay until June 4 the receipt of school taxes collected by the Township .

– The Chatham Township Compost Area re-opened last Saturday and received 444-vehicle loads of branches and leaves. Our thanks to everyone for their patience. The obviously popular Compost Area will remain open every Saturday from 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.

– The Community Garden will open effective Saturday morning with detailed rules and sign-in procedures. All gardeners have been contacted with details and are urged to abide by the current rules. They will be reviewed and adjusted as conditions permit.

The relaxation of many restrictions at all of these locations makes it even more important for everyone to abide by the safeguards required by executive order. We are entering a very sensitive period as adjustments are made to the near total shutdown that has existed for the past seven weeks. Any increase in the number of coronavirus infections could result in a return to more stringent restrictions.

All residents must maintain safe social distancing of at least six feet from each other, wear masks in public, wash hands frequently, avoid touching your face, stay home when ill, and contact your physician if symptoms begin to escalate and there is a potential need or medical intervention.

And despite some relaxation, many restrictions remain in place. Parks are open for passive use only. No group sports are allowed. Playgrounds, restrooms, clubhouses and buildings remain closed. Parking lots at state parks are limited to 50 percent capacity to avoid overuse.

The success of these slightly relaxed rules will depend on how intelligently we all abide by the restrictions. If we can't follow these common sense guidelines, not only do we expose ourselves and others to infection, we risk another shutdown of all our outdoor resources just as the weather turns warm and the need for fresh air and exercise increases.

Please be careful, exercise good judgment and stay safe.

Michael Kelly

Chatham Township Mayor