

Message from the Mayor, May 27, 2020

Coronavirus trends still serious,
but heading in the right direction

After ten days without a single fatality or even a single new reported case of Covid-19, Chatham Township this week reported one fatality and seven new cases, all association with local Long-Term Care Facilities.

The latest tally brings Chatham Township's totals to 137 confirmed cases and 30 deaths as of Wednesday, May 27. As attention regionally and nationally focuses more and more on relaxing precautions, these numbers are a reminder that the Coronavirus is still very much with us; too often with tragic results for the most vulnerable among us. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family of this most recent neighbor who has succumbed to this virus.

In explaining the sudden jump of seven new cases, Local Health Director Michael Fitzpatrick said mandatory testing ordered by the Commissioner of Health for residents and staff at all Long-Term Care Facilities was completed by the end of last week and must be repeated every two weeks. Mr. Fitzpatrick predicted all municipalities with Long-Term Care Facilities will most likely see increased numbers of cases every few weeks as the cycle of mandatory testing continues.

Despite this week's numbers, Health Director Fitzpatrick is very positive about how the fight against the Coronavirus is going locally.

All of the indicators are trending the right way, Mr. Fitzpatrick said. Mandatory testing at Long-Term Care Facilities is typically identifying people with Coronavirus before they display any symptoms. The number of new cases is down significantly. And the number of people statewide hospitalized with Covid-19 has dropped from 6,432 on April 26 to 2,761 one month later on May 26.

The state is expanding its program of contact tracing to help limit the spread of Covid-19. But Morris County Prosecutor Fredric M. Knapp warned residents that criminals are using the Covid-19 emergency to carry out a new scam, posing as contact tracers to steal money and personal information.

Contact tracing involves trained health professionals and volunteers who interview people who have been diagnosed with Covid-19 to determine who may have recently been in contact with them. They

then contact the people who have been exposed and can advise them to quarantine to help prevent spreading the virus.

Prosecutor Knapp warned that scammers send messages to potential victims saying they have been exposed to someone with Covid-19 and they need to click a link on the email to learn more. When that link is clicked, malicious software is downloaded onto the person's device, giving hackers access to their target's private information.

Legitimate contact tracers do not send messages with links and do not ask for personal information such as Social Security numbers or bank account numbers. "Criminals are taking advantage of these unprecedented circumstances and the public trust to steal from our residents. Please do not become a victim of these scammers," said Prosecutor Knapp.

Whether dealing with the Coronavirus or dealing with scammers, the message is to be vigilant. Continue to use your face mask and maintain six feet of social distance. Wash your hands frequently, avoid unnecessary trips and large gatherings of any kind.

We have not yet defeated the Coronavirus pandemic, but the limited number of new infections shows that we in Chatham Township are making progress toward that goal. We can't let down our guard and undo all of the good we have accomplished.

Be careful, exercise good judgment and stay safe.

Michael Kelly,

Mayor, Chatham Township