

Message from the Mayor, May 8, 2020

Covid-19 behavior slips due to

warm weather and weariness

Congratulations to all those people who wore masks and maintained six feet of separation as they enjoyed the newly re-opened pathways last weekend at Morris County's nearby Loantaka Preserve and Giralda Farms.

But standards slipped as the newly re-opened county parks, golf courses and Chatham Township's public tennis courts continued to attract crowds during the warm weather all week. Police were forced to evict a baseball team from Shunpike Field, multiple tennis pros giving group lessons at the Township's tennis courts, and groups of lacrosse players who ignored the locked gates at Couger Field.

The careful behavior needed to defeat the coronavirus pandemic was not always evident. If anyone needed a reminder that the fight against Covid-19 was not over, the weekly numbers released by our Regional Health Department were a somber reminder. From Monday through Friday, Chatham Township reported 7 new confirmed cases of Covid-19 and 3 new deaths, bringing Township's totals to 129 confirmed cases and 28 deaths.

As further confirmation of the need for serious precautions, Governor Phil Murphy this week extended the public health emergency for another 30 days, and declared that school closures will remain in effect at least through the end of the school year.

On a positive note, Gov. Murphy reported that the rate of hospital admissions and the percentage of positive test results across New Jersey continue to decline. And he expects that Jersey Shore beaches and boardwalks could re-open by Memorial Day Weekend, which is only three weeks away.

But Health Officials have repeatedly warned that any progress limiting the effects of the coronavirus pandemic could be quickly reversed if we let down our guard too soon. Remember that parks are open for passive use only, which means we all can enjoy a walk, a jog or a bike ride, but no group activities are allowed. Playgrounds, restrooms, clubhouses and other facilities remain closed. Parking lots at state and county parks are limited to 50 percent capacity to avoid overuse. Plan your outings to avoid the busiest times. And if you find a crowd at your preferred destination, go to Plan B.

Please follow these common sense guidelines to avoid exposing ourselves and others to infection. Enjoy these new opportunities to get outdoors, but be careful, exercise good judgment and stay safe.

Michael Kelly

Chatham Township Mayor