

**COVID-19: MAYOR'S UPDATE**  
**REMEMBER THE MEASURES THAT PROVED SUCCESSFUL**

Like a raw wound that hasn't yet healed, Rockaway Township residents no doubt have visceral memory of the immense challenges, changes and risks we were presented with this past spring, as we grappled with the primary spike in COVID-19 cases across the United States, New Jersey, and here in the Township. Though this awful pandemic never went away, the actions we collectively took during the spring months paid dividends, as rates of disease and death declined considerably in our area over the course of June, July and August. Together, we prioritized the health of our families and neighbors, began wearing face cover, kept our distance from others and engaged a number of other measures as recommended or required by State authorities.

Though the summer months brought lower incidence of COVID-19 to our region, autumn has presented us with new challenges and a jarring return to daily and weekly rates of disease that we have not seen since the initial and deadly stages of this pandemic. Nationally, we have topped 11 million cases, with over one million cases reported in the last seven days alone. On November 15, New Jersey saw over 4,500 new cases – the highest daily total since the advent of the pandemic. Here in Rockaway Township and in our adjacent communities, COVID-19 is escalating at rates we haven't seen since April.

At this very moment, as cases of COVID-19 skyrocket both regionally and across the country, it is incredibly important that we remember the measures that helped get us to a better place in terms of disease transmission. It is critical that out of an abundance of caution, we shake off any 'COVID fatigue' that some may feel after months of restrictions and modified living. We can all agree that the world is a much more comfortable and inviting place when we can send our children to school, dine at our favorite eateries, shop freely at retail stores and travel safely without fear of illness – but once again, it is going to take our collective efforts if we wish to mitigate the risk and get back to our routine activities.

There *is* good news on the horizon: Last week, Pfizer announced the development of a COVID-19 vaccine that is reportedly 90% effective, and just yesterday, Moderna Therapeutics issued a press release citing similar efficacy with the vaccine their scientists have developed. That said, it will be months before an effective COVID-19 vaccine is widely available to the general public. My administration is working hard with the Rockaway Township Division of Health, as well as our County and State partners, to keep residents as safe as possible, but we are counting on the cooperation of residents, businesses and officials to once again flatten the epidemic curve. For the time being, our best weapons against COVID-19 include our continued diligence in practicing evidence-based methods of disease prevention.

To that end, my request of our residents is straightforward. If we wish to control this deadly wave of disease, we must augment the continued hard work of our public health and medical professionals with the simple but essential measures that have proven to be effective: Continue to wash your hands frequently and use hand sanitizer when you cannot. Disinfect frequently touched surfaces rigorously. Practice social distancing and wear proper face cover. Be cognizant of COVID-19 symptoms and commit to staying home when sick.

It is with genuine gratitude that I thank our residents for their role in helping contain the local effects of this pandemic. It will be a difficult few months before we may benefit from a viable COVID-19 vaccine, so it will take a sustained and concerted effort. But I know Rockaway Township's residents are more than capable of doing their part – *together*. Thank you, and please stay safe and healthy.

Very truly yours,

Mayor Michael Puzio