



Borough of Chatham

**BOROUGH HALL
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Good evening,

Earlier today, Governor Murphy issued sweeping restrictions beginning at 8 pm tonight designed to discourage group clustering in public settings in an extraordinary effort to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus COVID-19.

As he put it, “we cannot allow the business-as-usual culture to continue” during this by all indications perilous time.

I believe the Governor is entirely correct to adopt these dramatic measures for the purpose of enforcing social distancing across the state – and in the Borough.

The announcement of such measures comes on a day in which confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Jersey (as of 2 pm) surged by 80 for a statewide total of 178 with two deaths.

In fact, today we’ve seen the largest single-day increase in confirmed cases in this state since the first reported one on March 4.

This outbreak is a challenge unlike any we’ve experienced in our lifetimes. Fighting it will require significant (but temporary) changes to our daily lives. We must take this contagion seriously. This is about saving lives.

As you know by now, for most people the COVID-19 causes merely mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. However, for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can lead to more serious illness, including pneumonia.

The World Health Organization has now declared COVID-19 a pandemic. This virus will proceed through a significant portion of the population and many of us will get it before a vaccine is developed.

But by making sure the spread of this virus is as slow as possible, we can reduce the number of people who will succumb to the disease.

A slow contagion is key to not overwhelming our healthcare system. The goal is to “flatten the curve” – a phrase I’m sure many of you are by now very familiar with. The idea is to reduce the peak of the disease to far more manageable bounds.

Today's Executive Order by Governor Murphy is intended to do just that. It implements aggressive social distancing measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in this state.

Among the directives, the Governor's order indefinitely closes all elementary and secondary schools (both public and private) as well as institutions of higher education. It similarly shuts all gyms, movie theaters, and performing arts centers.

The Governor's order also mandates that all non-essential retail, recreational, and entertainment businesses cease daily operations from 8:00 pm to 5:00 am. In addition, all food serving establishments, with or without a liquor license, will now be limited to offering delivery and/or takeout service only.

Consistent with the Governor's directives, I have instructed the various departments within Borough Hall to implement the following measures as a means for promoting the prescriptive guideline of social distancing, effective immediately and until further notice:

1. Access to Borough Hall is now restricted to employees, Borough volunteers, and elected officials. However, visitors may enter the front vestibule for the purpose of depositing fee payments, forms, or Borough correspondence during regular business hours (8 am to 4 pm). Meetings with Borough Hall staff are henceforth for strictly urgent matters and by appointment only.
2. A liberalized work-at-home policy for Borough Hall employees is to be devised and implemented no later than Wednesday, March 18.
3. Safety protocols for all DPW and engineering staff are to be devised and implemented no later than Wednesday, March 18.
4. A framework for conducting (largely) virtual Borough Council meetings is to be devised and implemented no later than Friday, March 20.
5. A framework for conducting virtual commission, board, and advisory committee meetings is to be devised and implemented no later than Friday, March 20.
6. A resolution allowing for emergency volunteers to assist the Office of Emergency Management is to be placed on the agenda for the next Borough Council meeting.
7. All Chatham Borough food and alcohol-serving establishments are to abide by the Governor's directive of offering strictly takeout and/or delivery service, effective immediately.

8. To facilitate such takeout and/or delivery service, the Police Department will designate certain parking spaces in front of Chatham Borough food and alcohol-serving establishments as “short-term parking” for strictly this purpose, effective immediately.
9. All parks and playgrounds will continue to be closed until further notice.
10. All gyms and athletic facilities are to be closed, effective immediately.
11. Finally, closure of all day-care facilities is strongly advised and may soon be required pending further review by Borough Hall.

In addition to the foregoing, I also wish to note the following:

1. The Chatham Borough Police Department has now implemented an extensive array of safety protocols for its officers and employees.
2. Similarly, the Chatham Emergency Squad has presently put in place numerous safety protocols and conducted a careful review of its supplies to ensure it is sufficiently equipped going forward.
3. The Chatham Borough Fire Department has likewise conducted a review of its equipment and implemented safety protocols to protect its volunteers.
4. Finally, the Borough itself has established a Coronavirus Task Force to continually monitor the spread of the virus, as well as to devise and implement safety measures/policies as needed and in response to changing circumstances.

Finally, I wish to emphasize the importance of both social distancing and common-sense hygiene measures (such as washing your hands).

This is no time to panic. But it is a time to be both vigilant and prepared. I assure you that Borough Hall will be doing everything in its power during the coming months to protect the well-being, health, and lives of every one of our residents.

But we need your help in this task. We must make every effort to be aggressive on the front end of this horrible outbreak and we must begin doing so now. If even one life is saved through our collective effort it is well worth it.

In closing, I should remind you that this situation with COVID-19 is evolving rapidly. So please do all you can to consult reliable sources frequently (if not daily) for updated information.

The Borough website (www.chathamborough.org) is one place to go for frequent updates issued by our own Health Department (a shared service arrangement with the Westfield Regional Health

Department). Other valuable sources are the Center for Disease Control website (www.cdc.gov) and the NJ Department of Health website (www.nj.gov/health).

We will get through this. Of this, I have no doubt. But by working together, we can ensure the best possible outcome for all of our residents. I am counting on each and every one of you to pitch in. In fact, I need you to do so.

Thank you and stay well.

Thaddeus J. Kobylarz
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