



BOROUGH OF DUNELLEN

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Message by the Mayor Jason F. Cilento May 2020

I would like to begin this month's *Message by the Mayor* by thanking the people fighting COVID-19 on the frontline each and every day. We extend our gratitude to our local emergency services: our Rescue Squad who is on call 24/7 during this crisis and has been doing an exceptional job under unprecedented circumstances, as well as our Fire Department and Police Department. These men and women are putting their health and well-being at risk in their selfless acts to serve and protect us. We applaud them for their service.

I would like to extend appreciation to the Dunellen Office of Emergency Management and its coordinator, Homer Mosley, and his team of volunteers. I believe Homer has been doing a great job, more remarkable in that he only came to this position in January 2020. I applaud his patience and willingness to perform a most challenging job. Another big thank you must be given to Alex Miller, our Recreation Director and Senior Coordinator, who since day one has been by my side to ensure we continue to provide services to Dunellen's most vulnerable: our senior citizens and disabled individuals, as well as assisting me in the coordination of the Dunellen Pop-Up Food Drive to serve our neighbors in need. The food drive was a huge success and I thank Pastor Roy and the Living Hope Outreach Center for opening their doors and hearts to the community, as well as a big thank you to all the volunteers who contributed many hours taking in food and sorting through it. It's truly inspirational how Dunellen always comes together, not only in good times, but in hard times, too. We are Dunellen Strong!

I extend gratitude to our borough administration under the management of Bill Robins, our Clerk's Office, Tax Office, Municipal Court, Construction/Zoning and our Public Works. Many borough employees are working remotely as well as alternating on-site schedules to ensure government still functions the best it can under these circumstances. Maintaining health and safety protocols is difficult for all of us, but necessary if we wish to function near to our full potential. I also extend thanks to each of the council members who have stepped up to the plate to assist throughout this pandemic, whether it be volunteering to drop off groceries to seniors, working at our Pop-Up food drive, assisting the various emergency service agencies they are liaisons to, helping me with scientific information, starting volunteer initiatives around town, making sure committee assignments are getting done, and answering constituents' questions and concerns. We have all pulled together as a team for the betterment of our residents and community. Thank you for that.

We should also recognize all the nurses, doctors, and healthcare workers who are fighting COVID-19 every day. We thank you, as well as all the essential workers who are helping make

the world go 'round for all of us. We should also appreciate our teachers and school administration, who at whirl-wind pace had to adjust to a remote learning system, adapting at a very rapid rate to ensure our students not only in Dunellen, but across the state receive the education they so rightfully deserve. Another recognition I would like to give is to the Dunellen School District who assisted the Borough on IT matters during this crisis. We thank them for helping us in this area.

COVID-19 Information: Middlesex County Public Health Department is the lead Agency in all investigations regarding confirmed COVID-19 cases, including all close contacts. If it is determined that a member of the community has been in close contact with any individual who has tested positive for COVID-19, the County will reach out to the individual(s). For daily COVID-19 Dunellen updates, please visit: http://www.dunellen-nj.gov/news_detail_T30_R11.php

Please note that the State of New Jersey is not releasing recovery data at this time, and therefore, neither is the Middlesex County Public Health Department. My office will continue to be in contact with the Middlesex County Public Health Department and will share whatever information is permitted by law.

If residents should have questions regarding COVID-19, they are encouraged to call the NJ State Health Call Center at 1-800-222-1222 or you may call the Middlesex County Health Department 24/7 at (732) 745-3100. You may also visit the New Jersey COVID-19 Information Hub at: www.covid19.nj.gov.

Also, during this time of emotional and yes, physical crisis, I remind you that your family, friends and neighbors are also frightened and confused. Keep an eye out for them; call them regularly by telephone or Skype or Facebook; let them know that if they are in trouble, to let you know and you can make a call. You can also reach the crisis text line by texting "NJ" to 741741; call the family helpline at 1-800-843-5437; the domestic violence hotline at 1-800-572-7233; or the mental health line at 1-866-202-4357. We encourage you to utilize these resources during this challenging time. You matter, and we want you to be safe.

COVID-19 Q&A with Mayor Jason F. Cilento: If you have questions regarding COVID-19, please submit them by the google form link (below) by Sunday, May 3rd 4PM and I will post my video response on Tuesday, May 5th on my Mayor's Facebook page: [facebook.com/mayorcilento](https://www.facebook.com/mayorcilento)

Link: <https://forms.gle/6SbRGMqdsJdwBJni8>

May 4th Council Meeting Information: The meeting of the Mayor and Borough Council will be held on Monday, May 4, 2020 at 7pm by Go To Meeting.

You can call in through the phone number that is listed below.

Time: 7:00 pm

Dial-in Telephone Number: 1+669-224-3412

When asked, put in the access code below:

Access Code: 768-299-149

For more information on the May 4 virtual meeting please visit: http://www.dunellen-nj.gov/news_detail_T30_R10.php

Congratulations to the Dunellen School District: I was informed by Gene Mosley, Superintendent of Schools, that Dunellen High School was ranked in the top 40% of nearly 18,000 public high schools in America. Dunellen is #146 in New Jersey, ahead of 14 schools in Middlesex County including; Piscataway (#159), Middlesex (#166), North Brunswick (#188) and Colonia (#230). We should all be very proud of our district. I firmly believe that the facility improvements in the next few years will only further assist Dunellen to secure a higher ranking in the near future.

Eat Local Fridays!: Join the Borough Council and I every Friday in supporting our local restaurants by ordering curbside or delivery. Please remember these businesses are run by our fellow family, friends & neighbors. They support our community in many ways. Let's show our support! Here is a link to Dunellen Downtown Management Organization's Dine-In Dunellen Guide: tinyurl.com/dineindunellen

Capital Projects: Our engineers inform us that they are preparing bid specifications for the Grove Street Road Improvement Project and we hope to see some repaving later this summer. Likewise, the engineers have completed their preliminary work on the South Madison Avenue Roadway Improvement Project, and they will be submitting cost estimates to the borough for review. Last year we received a grant to repave Lincoln Avenue and we will soon apply for additional funds for that project in hope of offsetting the entirety of the project to grant funding.

New Jersey Transit Update: Our meeting with New Jersey Transit officials in early March has borne some fruit. Transit reports to us that they have examined the three tunnels/bridges and have noted some cracks and leakage. They report that none of these defects in any way compromises structural integrity, but they have listed the Washington Avenue Bridge to receive concrete repairs in we hope the not too distant future.

Redevelopment: The Borough has entered into a formal Agreement with 528 North Ave Urban Renewal LLC for the building of 40 new apartments at 528 Bound Brook Road, the bend where North Avenue turns into Bound Brook Road going west toward Middlesex Borough. This is very exciting as it will bring new life to an area of town in need of rehabilitation. The builder promises us that it will be an environmentally friendly structure, including electric vehicle parking, with attractive street-side landscaping and streetscape improvements. In addition, the developer has generously offered to make park enhancements to Morecraft Park due to the park's proximity to the project site. This enhancement will also benefit all in our community, as well as the school district which uses Morecraft Park for physical education classes.

Census 2020: Remember to respond to our federal government's request for Census 2020 information. Knowing who we are is the first step in helping all levels of government bring you the vital services to which each citizen is entitled. For example, the number of congresspersons allocated to New Jersey is dependent on our population. If we gain in population, we might gain additional representation in Washington, D.C. And all kinds of agencies and non-profit organizations use the data collected to create beneficial programs. For more information on Census 2020 and what Dunellen is doing to contribute to this national enterprise, go to: http://www.dunellen-nj.gov/news_detail_T30_R12.php

Make Some Noise!: Dunellen has joined its neighboring communities, Green Brook, Middlesex, Warren and Watchung in recognizing the service of our essential workers by making some noise each Thursday at 7:00 pm for our local heroes. We owe our gratitude to the healthcare workers, first responders, teachers, postal service workers, grocery store clerks, pharmacists, scientists, and all those on the front line providing essential services to us during the COVID-19 crisis.

In our efforts to recognize these heroes, all residents and business owners are encouraged to go outside between 7:00 pm to 7:05 pm and ring a bell, blow a whistle, honk your horns, bang a pot or clap your hands to thank those who have served us. Let's continue showing our support in this way every Thursday evening at 7:00 pm. Thanks for your participation, and let's make all of New Jersey hear the sounds of our town and neighboring communities!

Dunellen Downtown Management Organization COVID-19 Business Resource Page: Part of the Dunellen Downtown Management Organization's mission is to assist Dunellen's local businesses. They have compiled a list of resources to help Dunellen businesses navigate the challenges COVID-19 has brought to the retail/service industries. Visit the link here for resource information: <https://tinyurl.com/DDMO-COVID19>

Always know I am only an email or phone call away. Please use me as a resource. I may not have all the answers, but I will help find you the appropriate agency or authority that will get you the correct answer. We will get through this, no matter how hard it may seem right now. Be safe and stay well my friends.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason F. Cilento". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "C".

Jason F. Cilento, Mayor
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