

BOROUGH OF DUNELLEN



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Message by the Mayor Jason F. Cilento April 2020

To paraphrase the great American Revolutionary War patriot Thomas Paine, "These are the times that try people's souls." Just as our Founding Fathers in 1776 faced an implacable enemy, so do we face in 2020 a formidable foe. And just as we did 244 years ago, the American people must today stay united, stalwart and possessed with calm but fierce determination.

As I write this message to the residents of Dunellen, the Coronavirus, or COVID-19, has devastated our nation, wreaking havoc on our health care system and forcing the close-down of many facets of our economy. All of you have been instructed in best practices for minimizing the contagion of the disease. These measures include rigorous personal hygiene and respect for social distancing. Many of you are working from home, working alternating shifts, or have been sent home from businesses that can no longer remain open and thus cannot afford a payroll. The Federal Government has passed a two trillion-dollar aid package, but even so the financial pain is profound for many of our people.

On a significant note, I remind you that our businesses downtown will need our support throughout this crisis, and even more so, after this is all said and done. Please consider purchasing items online, buying gift-cards, and/or taking advantage of many of our downtown food establishments' take-out/delivery options. The majority of the businesses downtown are mom and pop shops, owned by our family, friends and neighbors and have been here for generations. Supporting local means you are supporting those directly in our own community. They have given time and time again to non-profit organizations in Dunellen, to our school programs and to our overall community; our call is now to help them, and to help our local economy.

Events are moving fast but I want to relate to you what measures the Dunellen Municipal Government has taken. My Office has been in constant contact with the Dunellen Office of Emergency Management, the Dunellen Police and Fire Departments, the Dunellen Rescue Squad, the Dunellen Department of Public Works, the Dunellen School District and Superintendent Gene Mosley, the Middlesex County Health Department, the County OEM, and the Borough Administrator's Office. I have been in touch with our Congresswoman, Bonnie Watson Coleman, State Senator Nicholas Scutari, and Assemblypersons James Kennedy and Linda Carter. I have been on conference calls with the Governor's Office, U.S. Senator Menendez & U.S. Senator Booker, as well as with the Middlesex County Freeholders.

I receive daily email updates from many Federal, State and County agencies which are shared among all the emergency services. I think we are as informed as we can be, and all our Dunellen people are working together to plan and effectuate the best course of action in our municipal response to this virus.

I encourage everyone to keep up-to-date on Covid-19 and the Borough's response by going to our website: www.dunellen-nj.gov, and hitting the link on our website's homepage for Coronavirus. The direct URL is: http://www.dunellen-nj.gov/news_detail_T30_R11.php

This page includes all of Governor Murphy's Executive Orders, links to the New Jersey State Department of Health, the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) and to Middlesex County resources. These links are being constantly updated so they should be referred to everyday. As of now, the Municipal Building is closed to the public, but most offices are being staffed. Someone is in the Clerk's Office Monday – Friday, 9:00 – 4:00, and you can reach them by calling 732-968-3033. Individual departments are setting their own hours so I advise that you call that department directly (their numbers are in the Web site directory page) or call the Clerk's Office and they will help.

Governor Phil Murphy through his Executive Orders has decreed that only essential businesses can remain open:

These essential businesses include:

- Hospitals, health care facilities and stores within the facilities
- Grocery stores and liquor stores
- Farmer's markets and farms that sell directly to customers
- Food banks
- Pharmacies
- Medical supply stores
- Gas stations and convenience stores
- Banks and other financial institutions
- Pet supply stores
- Hardware and home improvement stores
- Laundromats and dry-cleaning services
- Car dealerships, but only for auto maintenance and repair and auto mechanics
- Mail and delivery stores
- Stores that principally sell supplies for children under 5 years old
- Physical therapy offices
- Restaurants and bars can offer takeout and delivery services only
- Mobile phone retail and repair shops
- Bicycle shops, but only to provide service and repair
- Livestock feed stores
- Nurseries and garden centers
- Farming equipment stores

Medical facilities such as doctor's offices, hospitals, dentist offices, long-term care facilities, physical therapy offices and other medical offices can remain open.

However, there should be no gatherings of any kind — no weddings, no funerals except very immediate family, no in-person business meetings — which previously had been limited to 50 people. There is no travel ban but people should try to stay home between 8 p.m. and 5 a.m. unless they're commuting or have a reasonable reason to be out.

Retailers also are allowed to continue their businesses online.

I cannot emphasize enough that it is the policy of the Borough of Dunellen to adhere strictly to all of the orders emanating from Governor Murphy. The Governor has stated: "We are hearing too many reports of some nonretail businesses which are violating both in fact and in spirit the order requiring 100% work from home with limited exceptions. Some businesses have gone so far as to deem all of their employees essential to force them to report to work. Others are simply refusing flat out to follow the order. Let me be clear. My executive order is not a polite suggestion. It is an order. No one, and I mean no one who can do their job from home should be going to work in an office. We must have 100% compliance. This is about public health and it's about people's lives, your employees' lives, their families' lives, and your life."

I believe Dunellen has stayed ahead of the curve regarding preventive measures against COVID-19, even at times ahead of the State and Federal government, putting into place strong guidelines to help flatten the curve since our first notice on March 13th. The following is what we have implemented:

- We issued directives for borough employees to remain within their own departments unless business required in-person communication, while standing six feet apart.
- We closed municipal buildings to the public.
- We commercially cleaned all borough facilities and plan to continue this service.
- We cancelled our April 6th council meeting and plan to hold our April 20th council meeting by teleconference.
- All boards, committee and commission meetings are cancelled until further notice.
- We discontinued our senior bus services until this all passes.
- We cancelled all public and private events at the senior center.
- We worked with businesses in Dunellen to provide hours for seniors and the disabled so we may limit the most vulnerable in our community's contact with the general public.
- Our Dunellen Senior Coordinator is working with volunteers to provide pick-up/drop-off grocery shopping for immobile seniors and disabled residents. To volunteer and/or find out more information, email: amiller@dunellenborough.com
- We closed all playgrounds, fields and courts to the public to discourage public gatherings and promote social distancing.

We have begun to provide some borough employees with the opportunity to work from home with remote access and alternating scheduling, and I personally thank the Dunellen School District for assisting us in setting up this technical infrastructure. For borough employees who

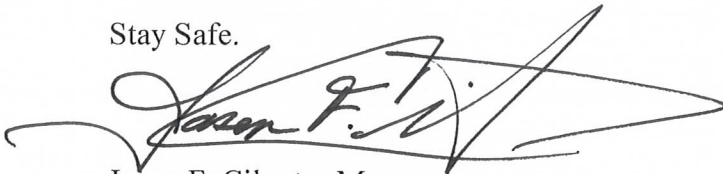
are unable to work remotely, we are implementing alternate scheduling so we can continue to provide essential services to residents while also protecting our borough employees and dedicated public servants. I am thankful for their commitment to our borough and their efforts in this fight do not go unnoticed.

Americans are a compassionate people, no more so than in Dunellen. 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.

We thank our first responders, including the rescue squad, the fire department and the police department, as well as our office of emergency management. We also thank our nurses, doctors and healthcare workers who are out there every day working to reduce the effects of COVID-19. Finally, to those in the workforce helping to provide essential services at grocery stores, gas stations, and pharmacies, you are helping make this period of self-isolation easier for us all, and we thank you, too.

We should all be self-isolating as much as we can, but that does not mean that we must also be lonely. They used to say, "Reach out and touch someone." Well, telecommunications in the Year 2020 gives this phrase an ironic, but maybe more than ever new meaning. Think about it: calling someone to say "Hi" is good for them, and good for you.

Stay Safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason F. Cilento", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

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