



Mayor Brindle's Opening Remarks March 23, 2021

Good evening, everyone, and thanks for joining us virtually tonight. Please remember that public comment will only be accepted via Zoom, although we are live streaming for viewing only on Facebook. The replay will also be available afterwards on Facebook, YouTube, and TV 36.

COVID-19 UPDATES

- Yesterday, Governor Murphy reported that there likely won't be any additional announcements in the near future about loosening restrictions due to the recent increase in COVID numbers, with New Jersey unfortunately leading the nation in new cases per capita. The seven-day average for confirmed COVID-19 cases in New Jersey is up 11% from a week ago and up 29% from a month ago, the highest level since February 5, and the rate of transmission is 1.09. On the vaccination front, New Jersey has administered 3.56 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine — including more than 1.26 million people considered fully vaccinated. As always, more detailed information about statewide numbers is available on the NJ COVID-19 Dashboard.
- On April 1 at 11:00AM, a Zoom discussion entitled "COVID Vaccine: Fact or Fiction?" will be held for seniors and other vulnerable members of the community looking to obtain more information. The panel of experts will include Dr. Lawrence Budnick, President of the Westfield Board of Health; Megan Avallone, Regional Health Director; Ellen Shelley, Vulnerable Populations Coordinator for the Board of Health; and Dr. Pamela Brug, Westfield resident and Vice President of the New Jersey Black Women Physicians Association. To obtain the Zoom registration information, please email westfieldnjseniors@gmail.com, or call 908-301-1287. Limited space will also be available for on site viewing in several locations, which requires advance registration as well. Thank you to the collective efforts of the Board of Health, Lifelong Westfield, the Westfield Community Center, the Westfield Neighborhood Council, and the MLK Jr. Association of Westfield for making this important event possible.

LOCAL UPDATES

- I hope you had a chance to enjoy the Glo See Saws while they were in town! Thanks to the DWC for bringing joy to people of all ages and, most importantly, for bringing foot traffic to our downtown businesses, many of whom reported record sales days since the exhibit was installed. I'd especially like to recognize DWC Promotions Chair Erin Ben-Hayon for suggesting bringing this brilliant exhibit. With the arrival of spring, I'm looking forward to the many exciting plans that the DWC has in the works for our residents and visitors to enjoy.
- I was proud to join hundreds of concerned neighbors on Sunday evening at the #StopAsianHate rally in Cranford to show support for our Asian American and Pacific Islander brothers, sisters, friends and neighbors. It was gratifying to see so many participants standing in solidarity with

the AAPI community to publicly denounce any and all forms of bigotry, hate, and prejudice. I was joined by Councilwoman Linda Habgood along with members of the Westfield Area Chinese American Association (WACAA), an organization that has devoted countless hours of volunteer service to Westfield. The WACAA has been in touch with our Human Relations Advisory Commission (HRAC) and are planning a peaceful protest in Westfield this Saturday at 1:00 at Mindowaskin Park. Please come out and join them in solidarity.

The AAPI community has the unwavering support of this administration, and I want to be clear that there is zero tolerance for any types of hate or bigotry in our community. I am grateful to the WACAA and HRAC for their ongoing work to keep the lines of communication open about the harm in these acts, as we continue to strive for a more inclusive community.

- It's now time to move on to tonight's agenda, which includes the introduction of the 2021 municipal budget. I want to thank Town Administrator Jim Gildea and CFO Scott Olsen, who worked diligently over the last few months with each Town department to minimize our costs as much as possible without sacrificing services to residents. Special thanks also goes to each department head who worked diligently to identify cost savings where they could, and demonstrated significant resourcefulness and nimbleness in light of these unprecedented times. I'd also like to thank the Finance Policy Committee -- Councilwoman Linda Habgood, who serves as Committee Chair and whose experience as a finance senior executive in the private sector has provided immeasurable value to this process, as well as Vice Chair Councilman Mark Parmelee, Councilman David Contract, and Councilman Jim Boyes -- for their many hours of work to produce a budget that reflects the substantial challenges of 2020 and the many exciting opportunities for 2021 and beyond.

As you will see, we are very fortunate to be in a strong financial position this year in light of the revenue impact experienced by us and many municipalities as a result of the pandemic. I am grateful that we expect to receive \$2.9MM in American Rescue Plan funds over the next two years, which has given us the confidence and additional flexibility to move forward on Town priorities for this year, while also well positioning us in 2022 and beyond to be able to implement some of the transformational initiatives we've been working towards over the past two years.

We're also introducing the capital budget earlier than usual in order to get projects started and completed sooner -- including an unprecedented volume of road paving to span the next three years. Jim and Councilwoman Habgood will be sharing all of the exciting details.

With that, we'll get to work. I want to remind everyone that I will once again be enforcing Robert's Rules this evening to ensure we stay on topic and the meeting runs efficiently.

Thank you.