



# TOWNSHIP OF LONG HILL

COUNTY OF MORRIS

GILLETTE, HOMESTEAD PARK, MEYERSVILLE, MILLINGTON, STIRLING

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## **Following is the transcript of the Mayor Rae's Public Service Announcement March 29<sup>th</sup>, 3:45 PM**

This is Brendan Rae, Mayor of Long Hill Township on March 29<sup>th</sup> with an important Public Service Announcement.

As I have reported previously, the level of Long Hill Township's COVID-19 preparedness is, and continues to be, high. Just as we have done in Long Hill and other municipalities, State government, administration and employees have worked tirelessly to build the infrastructure that is, and will be, required to combat this Emergency. However, as we fully expected, the numbers of confirmed cases are increasing and will continue to do so over the coming weeks. This news should not be a cause for panic or alarm; but it should be cause for steely resolve. No matter how bad the news may seem, this is the critical juncture at which we must redouble our efforts to strictly adhere, and make sure that others strictly adhere, to the only measures that will slow this pandemic - social distancing, good hygiene, and the reduction of our social interactions to the smallest groups possible. Physical distancing is social solidarity.

This is not the time for complacency or despondency. If we succeed in our mission, the medical infrastructure will ultimately be able to handle the onslaught of ill patients who require hospitalization; we will buy ourselves time for the implementation of widespread testing protocols that will defeat the virus spread; and the time we buy may well be sufficient for ongoing clinical trials of drugs to read out and so enable much needed pharmacologic interventions. For our friends, families, neighbors, and fellow residents, we are involved in a life and death struggle. Positive action will shorten the length and decrease the severity of this pandemic; inaction will cost lives and perpetuate untold misery.

In Long Hill Township over the course of the next few weeks you will see us turn our focus to 2 important initiatives: firstly, a greater effort to identify and reach out to our most at risk resident groups with a view to maintaining them as comfortably as possible at home to minimize their chances of exposure; and, secondly, in a related, but more broad-based program, we will address the untoward psychological effects of the physical distancing measures we have taken to combat the spread of COVID-19. The pandemic, itself, and the social distancing that is necessary for the prevention of the spread of disease comes at a cost in terms of our emotional and psychological wellbeing. These impacts have the potential to be significant and the importance of adequately addressing them will only grow as the Emergency continues.

In regard to our at risk populations - seniors, immunosuppressed individuals, and others with special needs – we ask that if you are a member of a high risk group or know of someone who may be, please call the hotline at (908) 647 8000 Extension 995 and leave a message with your contact information. Messages left on the hotline are monitored regularly and all calls are returned in the shortest time possible. The rapid identification of residents who are in high risk groups will enable the Township to assess immediate needs and monitor them on an ongoing basis so it can adjust its response if and when it becomes appropriate. Volunteerism is a hallmark of life in Long Hill and I give a special thanks to the many community groups that have formed spontaneously over the past few weeks to assist in the vital efforts to maintain the health and wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents by doing such things as grocery shopping and picking up essential medical supplies.

The Township in partnership with local mental health professionals, will soon roll out a multi-pronged mental healthcare program designed to promote social contact to overcome the negative consequences of physical distancing. The overarching goal of this program will be to decrease the sense of isolation, anxiety, and fear that can be a natural consequence of these measures. Over the past few days, the response from the professionals in our mental health community here in Long Hill has been overwhelming and we look forward to the success of the many ways by which we will be able to engage residents to overcome this issue.

In the meantime, there are a variety of means available to us to decrease the emotional toll of this Emergency and we can implement them immediately in our daily lives. Walking and other forms of outdoor exercise can boost mood by altering endorphin levels; the positive effects of moderation in our eating and drinking habits cannot be understated; means to facilitate meditation and relaxation such as apps and on-line resources are invaluable; and don't forget to use technology to decrease the sense of isolation and anxiety by connecting with others – virtual dinner parties, book clubs, discussions. Helping to set up conference calls for older individuals who don't have access to on-line resources through websites such as freeconferencecall.com can be a viable means to allow them to

maintain contact and communication with one another in a group setting. Importantly, while doing our best to stay informed, we should all do our utmost to limit our consumption of the ubiquitous, nonstop and not always uplifting coronavirus news.

In regard to this last point, please be sure to visit the Long Hill webpage at [www.longhillnj.gov](http://www.longhillnj.gov) and click on the COVID-19 page for the most up to date and reliable local and national information on the Emergency.

In summary, please continue to practice strict social distancing and the sound methods of good hygiene that have become part of our lives. While doing this, keep in mind that social distancing does not mean isolation. Yes, this situation is serious and, yes, we will overcome it. But remember, that while we are doing it, we are all connected to one another and the smallest act of kindness or compassion, whether it be a helping hand or just a smile and hello from 6 feet, can have a long lasting and important effect on how a friend, stranger or loved one feels. From my vantage point as I see the commitment of the Township government, the dedication of its employees and volunteers, and the outpouring from you, my fellow residents, in terms of your compassionate and often selfless response, I know that it is our best selves that we are bringing to the fight and for this I am truly happy and grateful.

Thank you and stay safe and healthy.

Brendan P. Rae  
Mayor  
Long Hill Township