TOWNSHIP OF LONG HILL

COUNTY OF MORRIS

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This is Brendan Rae, Mayor of Long Hill Township on Thursday April 23rd with an important Public Service Announcement.

The damage wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic goes well beyond the physical manifestations of the disease. The physical distancing and drastic reduction of social interaction that are necessary to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus can lead to feelings of isolation, loneliness and anxiety in a country where residents, just 6 weeks ago, enjoyed complete social freedom. In an effort to combat any untoward mental health issues that could potentially be associated with the protracted response to the COVID-19 Emergency, Long Hill Township has formed the COVID-19 Mental Health Coalition. The Coalition is a local group of experienced licensed therapists and counselors who have volunteered to assist the Township and its residents during this time of crisis.

Starting tomorrow, Friday April 24th, at 10 am, I am pleased to announce that the Township will open the Community Mental Health Hotline. This anonymous and strictly confidential hotline can be accessed 7 days per week by calling (908) 647 8000 Extension 998.   The volunteer counselors and therapists of the Coalition will lend a sympathetic and trained ear while providing assistance to help you cope with any psychological toll of the COVID-19 crisis. If you need additional support over and above the services of the hotline, our volunteers will provide you with referral assistance. If the line is busy, you can leave a message during hotline hours and the call will be returned.

Importantly, please remember that the Community Mental Health Hotline is a non-emergency service line. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis or medical emergency, please call 911 or go directly to the emergency room.

For hotline hours as well as all the latest local and national news about the Emergency, please check the COVID-19 Taskforce page of the Township website at www.longhillnj.gov.

In the 51st day since the first patient was diagnosed in New Jersey we are beginning to see indicators that our efforts and sacrifices at social distancing are bearing fruit with more positive news reports indicating that the spread of COVID-19 has been slowed. As a state and a nation there is now discussion about relaxing restrictions and opening up business again. Here in Long Hill Township, the COVID-19 Taskforce has begun to consider the measures it believes will need to be implemented to protect residents and Township employees and volunteers as the revitalization occurs.

The Taskforce has developed a list of recommendations for physical changes to Township buildings and the implementation of new safety protocols for employees and volunteers. In the next few weeks, it will begin to engage the Township's business community so it can establish a

collaborative approach to achieving the best possible safety environment for residents with the least intrusive but meaningful restrictions on business operations. At the same time, it will advocate as much as possible at the County and State levels for the vastly increased testing capabilities and improved contact tracing that will be necessary if we are to successfully return to some sense of normality.

Although there is good news about decreased virus transmission, we are still not near a point where we can think about declaring any kind of victory. We have come too far in this struggle to let complacency take us back to the days when the virus was able to spread unchecked. The success we see to date is therefore not a cause for us to rest on our laurels. Rather it should only cause us to strive to redouble our efforts at social distancing and ensuring that everyone around us does the same.

As always, stay safe and healthy and strong in your commitment to stop spread of COVID-19.

Brendan P. Rae
Mayor
Long Hill Township