

April 29, 2020 | Mayor Adrian O. Mapp, Live Facebook Q&A

1) Why am I not able to utilize the Rock Ave. facility in place of bulk pickup? Residents are home and it would make sense for residents to bring items to Rock Ave. instead of bulk pickup.

PMUA Director, Erick Jackson: While we continue to modify our efforts at PMUA to meet the public need, we continue to do the things that we think are in the community's best interest. Originally, we didn't have the capacity to do any bulk pickups at all. We still cannot go out and pick it up, but if residents desire to bring their bulky waste to the transfer station in lieu of free pickup, we can accommodate that way and we can facilitate them by them calling the main number at 908-226-2518. They will need to provide proof of residency and ownership of property, and then we will accept their waste in lieu of pickups. We will continue to adjust their schedules to meet that need.

2) What is the percentage of people who have been recovered?

719 people have recovered, making a 48% recovery rate.

3) How many calls has the city received since implementing the mobile testing?

I don't know how many calls exactly, but what I can tell you is that there have been several calls. As a result of those calls, the Union County mobile unit has responded to a number of homes and conducted the tests, and in doing so, they came across situations where it was vitally important for those individuals in those homes to be tested, because the situation was rather grave. I am so pleased that we have partnered with the county to make testing with mobile unit available to residents.

4) I know the state and city has made it mandatory to wear masks. If I go walking or jogging, do I need to wear a mask even if there are no people near me?

Absolutely. Everyone who goes into the public should be wearing a mask. It is for your protection as well as the protection of the general public. Even though someone may not be around you, if you have the virus, it will linger in the air for some period of time before it hits the ground, and so, it is extremely important for everyone who goes out into the public to wear a face covering. This virus is still present, our numbers are still escalating, and we expect that to continue especially now that we have a mobile unit in the city. We have not peaked in the city, I'm sad to say, so let's take all of the precautions to protect ourselves, our families, and the general public.

5) Do you plan on making donations to the Plainfield rescue squad especially with PPEs?

I believe our OEM coordinator Kenneth Childress has been working with the Plainfield rescue squad and we have provided PPEs to them. If there is a need at this time, I would encourage the leadership of the

rescue squad to get in touch with our OEM coordinator and we will do all that we can to make sure that we will the need where it exists.

6) Are there going to be modified hours for the vital statistics office for people who want to apply for marriage licenses and/or obtain certificates? I've been trying to reach out to someone and I'm not getting any response from the emails I sent.

Director of Health and Social Services, Shep Brown: We've had challenges around opening office for Vital Statistics. We will be opening starting tomorrow Wednesdays and Fridays for full days. The goal is to catch up with what we already have, the next step is to address those who are coming. If you have a wedding coming up, we will prioritize that and make sure you have your license in a timely matter. We will work hard and diligently to address everyone.

7) Will city and school parks/ Hubstine be opened as of May 2 now that Governor Murphy has opened state parks and Union County has opened county parks as of May 2?

The answer is no. We are not comfortable with opening our parks at this time because we still have concerns about social distancing and given the fact that Plainfield's numbers are as high as they are, I don't believe that the time is right for us to reopen our parks. I think it would invite the assembling of people and pose a risk to our population at large. There is no plan in place right now for us at the municipal level to reopen our parks. We will address this in the coming weeks. Our parks will remain closed until there is an announcement from city hall. Union county parks systems will be open on May 2, however, we will not be guided by that date. Our city parks remain closed.

8) How will extending the deadline to pay taxes until June 1 affect funds that will be sent to the Board of Education and Union County?

It is unfortunate that although the executive order has allowed for relief to tax payers by way of extending the grace period, it did not allow municipalities a grace period on the payment of taxes to the school district or county. We will have to pay those taxes to school district and county as per statute.

9) Can we still get roll off dumpsters dropped to us?

PMUA Director, Erick Jackson: We ask that residents continue to call our main number. We will deliver the roll off at the time of their request.

10) It appears that over 50% of the fatalities have occurred in nursing homes. Any thoughts on proactively using the mobile testing at those sites rather than wait for them to call?

Nursing homes are handled very differently. At present, our focus is on the residents of the city that aren't in long term care facilities. I believe there is another plan in place in our state for these facilities.

Our focus is on getting all of our residents who are not in nursing homes tested- those who have shown symptoms. The best we can do is try and find out exactly what is happening at the nursing homes, but it falls under a different jurisdiction. We will do our best to provide testing to as many residents as possible.

11) Are masks being given to laborers on Front St.?

We are giving masks to anyone who we encounter who is not wearing one. We stopped on Front St., in the area of McDonalds a couple days ago, and distributed masks to those not wearing a covering. This is for any resident in Plainfield: If you're not wearing a mask and we see you as we're out there distributing masks, you will receive one and be encouraged to wear it. Yes, we are giving masks to day laborers and everyone who needs it.

12) Will court houses be open?

Courts will reopen at some point in time, we just don't know when. It is not under our local jurisdiction. When we hear from our administrator of courts in NJ and the county, we will communicate that. I'm sure they will reopen; the question is when.

13) What is Plainfield's population?

The last info from the census is that it's over 51,000. That number is updated from time to time. Although the last was a little shy of 50,000, the updated census numbers are over 51,000 people, and we know it's more than that.

14) How were the care packets distributed to the homeless individuals? How many "care packets" were distributed? Are there additional "care packets" to be distributed? How can these individuals receive a "care packet"? Are there any initiatives being considered to get these individuals off the street to encourage them to practice "social distancing", maintain healthy hygiene, including frequent hand washing, and wearing and maintaining of a facemask?

We have distributed hundreds of packets to our homeless and senior buildings, there is no way for us to know where every homeless person is, and since homeless individuals are somewhat mobile in terms of where they are, we will do our very best to go to those locations where we know they normally are, and we will do everything we can to make sure packages are distributed. We really have no way of knowing whether they've been distributed to all homeless individuals. We are doing our absolutely best to find out where they are and meet their needs.

Director of Police, Lisa Burgess: It is difficult to know where they are. If someone knows of someone you can call: 908-753-3225 and we will try to locate that individual if they give us a good area.

15) There is a large number of undocumented people in Plainfield. How is the city helping them since they are unemployed and can't apply for unemployment benefits?

Many undocumented individuals are employed. It doesn't mean that because you're undocumented, that you're unemployed. In terms of how we can help those who can't provide for themselves, we have established the Plainfield COVID-19 Relief Fund. We've put rules in place and will send the application form in coming days. Individuals in need of assistance can apply. You have to prove you are a Plainfield resident and that there is a need, once you do that, we will help those who are living in our city who are in need of assistance.

16) What happens when my registration is expired and the police gives me a ticket? The motor vehicle commission agency is closed.

Director of Police, Lisa Burgess: There is a grace period for registration on the governor's executive order. If you received a ticket prior to the pandemic, it would not be covered. If you received a ticket within this time period and within the grace period, you will come to court and it will be adjusted accordingly.

17) Is there a plan to create certain hours for different parks?

As I mentioned earlier, there is no plan to reopen parks anytime soon. I will have internal discussions among cabinet members and come up with a plan to phase in the reopening of our parks. Right now, our parks remain closed.

18) Is there a curfew still in place?

The governor's executive order is still in place and hasn't been lifted. And people are expected to stay off the streets and stay in their homes unless they need to go out for essential purposes (grocery shopping, visits to the pharmacy, or need to work for essential reasons). As of now, nothing has changed in terms of the governor's executive order other than the fact that he has made an order about state parks opening effective May 2. Any restriction on movement of people, I am not aware of any changes as far as that. As it stands in Plainfield, any executive order that I've issued still stands. The curfew for young people has always been 10PM curfew for youth. The governor's executive order has it until 8PM unless you are an essential individual or are going out for grocery shopping or to the pharmacy.

19) Has anything been put in place for reaching the numerous apartment complexes with census and testing site information?

Director of Communications, Jazz Clayton-Hunt: We are currently in conjunction with the census. We have door hangers coming speaking to the census information and that will be distributed at housing authorities and apartment complexes around town. As far as the testing information that was sent to

the housing authority for distribution and further distribution at the apartment complexes, there would need to be a discussion with the OEM department to coordinate getting those posted.

20) Will my child have to wear a mask to school?

Until we receive guidance from health authorities that suggest we don't have to wear masks, I encourage all residents in the City of Plainfield to continue to wear coverings whenever you go out in public or are in large gatherings. When you are at school, there is no social distancing. Unless you hear differently from the experts, I would say continue to wear your face masks.

21) Are there any initiatives to help the homeless?

We have no facilities in Plainfield or hotels to house the homeless. We don't have any means within the City of Plainfield to house the homeless population here.

Director of Police, Lisa Burgess: Director Brown and I have been speaking numerous times and trying to find a solution. Right now, there is nowhere taking the homeless. We will continue to visit this and will continue working on it. We've been working on it since before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mayor Mapp: We will speak to the state as well. Earlier this week, the governor announced that it will lease hotel rooms to house people that have been affected with the virus. If it comes to point where they need to commandeer hotels to make rooms available for patients, they will do that. It is something we can look into with our contacts at the state level.

22) Will children have to repeat their grade?

I wish I had an answer for you. The school district is not under my jurisdiction. I don't know how that will work, I wish I can help with an answer, but I can't. I encourage you to call the superintendent to find an answer. If we can get one, we will communicate it out to the public.

23) Are we preparing for the second wave?

We have plans in place in terms of making sure we are equipped should there be a second wave. We will take all precautions we can just in case this virus stays with us or goes away and returns. We don't want to be caught without PPEs as so many municipalities found themselves in during the last month. We will be better prepared the next around. We had to scamp for PPEs but the city has adjusted to situation. I am proud of our first responders and administration team for work during last several weeks to make sure we keep Plainfield as safe as we can under circumstances. We will do our best to be prepared should there be a second wave.

24) Has your administration been in touch with apartment complexes to share vital information about COVID-19?

We have been in touch with complexes in city, worked closely with public housing and senior facilities, and we have disseminated as much information as we can by robocalls, newsletters, our weekly resource guide, and I believe that residents of these units are updated by governor. I believe that they do have more information than people may think We will continue to do our part to keep people informed and updated with information that we have as it comes to us.

25) How long will the mobile testing unit be in operation?

The mobile testing unit will be available for an indefinite period of time until it is no longer needed. When we see the numbers beginning to go down in terms of daily numbers that we see and what is being done around the state, we will be guided by that and by healthcare professionals. I expect the mobile unit to service Plainfield for as long as it's needed.

26) How are parents supposed to handle when children go back to school for those who have asthma?

I would suggest that that question be directed to the school district. The school has nurses on staff to deal with medical issues. I will not pretend that I have any jurisdiction over the school district. I would encourage the person to reach out to school district, members of Board of Education, and to the school superintendent.