

April 22, 2020 | Mayor Adrian O. Mapp, Live Facebook Q&A

1) I was reading TapInto Plainfield and the COVID-19 virus numbers as of 4/21/20 has risen to 1,108 and 1,326 in self-quarantine. I'd like to know how you verify that the individuals are actually self-quarantined and not out and about in the neighborhood. I ask because the number of cases are going up which makes me think they're spreading the disease especially since on 04/01/20 we have 108 and 20 days later we have an additional 1,000 cases. Please verify how you're verifying that they're in isolation.

As far as that question is concerned, I don't know if there's a way with the resources we have for us to verify or police people that are in self-quarantine, but I will ask Director Brown to weigh in on that question:

Director of Health and Social Services, Shep Brown: That is certainly one of the challenges of this pandemic is to make sure those who are sick are quarantined.

Director of Police, Lisa Burgess: It's difficult to police this situation of quarantine, but I can suggest for people to wear their masks in public or even in your homes, this would help us with the stop of the spread of the virus.

2) What will be the application process and evaluation criteria used for the Plainfield relief fund?

The pieces are being put in place as we speak.

Director of Economic Development, Valerie Jackson: The application process is going to be simple. It is a one-page form that we're using. The criteria will mimic the NJ EDA grant program and again, it's from \$3500-\$10,000. You must be a UEZ business because we're using UEZ funds. You will have the opportunity to join UEZ to be entitled to fund. We will have a three-person committee to review the applications. It's our intent to have a check to the person within 10 days.

3) Will Plainfield be assisting its residents with facial masks with instructions on proper cleaning care handling?

Yes, we will be assisting residents who don't have a face mask or form of facial covering. We will be distributing face masks. We have ordered 20,000 masks, and hopefully they will arrive soon. In the meantime, we will be distributing the masks we have at the moment.

4) Motorcycle groups often gather in the HS parking lot. What is being done to control this?

Director of Police, Lisa Burgess: We are looking into different avenues of how to address this issue. The first priority is the safety for riders and police officers. If we can safely enforce, we will. Let us know this information if you know where there are meetups. We are looking for means to address this in the safest way for the community. Please call the non-emergency number at 908-753-3131 to report. I

would also like to remind the residents that these bikes are illegal (the four wheelers and dirt bikes). They cannot be registered properly, so they should not be driven on the roadway.

5) Will you still use drones for social distancing purposes?

Yes, we will. We have a plan that's being worked on and as soon as we are ready to go live with the drones, that will be communicated and our residents will know.

6)How is the courthouse moving forward with cases?

The courts are closed until May 2. We will continue to communicate to residents with updates. The courts are not under administrative control of city. It is one of the branches of government independent from our administration.

7) Where are tests being given?

Director of Health and Social Services, Shep Brown: In Union County, you can go to Kean University. The number to call is: 908-214-7107.

Mayor Mapp: That is for drive through testing which is currently being conducted at Kean University. There will be mobile testing in Plainfield; We will be putting that number out on Friday and it will be in all Plainfield news outlets.

8)Given the increasing number of COVID-19 testing in Plainfield, is the State of NJ reconsidering its decision to not reopen a portion of the Muhlenberg hospital given the nearest hospital is not accessible to underserved populations in Plainfield?

That decision was already made. Most of the construction projects have been placed on hold but as soon as that hold is lifted, construction will resume at the Muhlenberg site and we will continue to work on residential units as well as a 200,000 sq. ft of a medical mall.

9) To ensure social distancing from my neighbor, I need to know if I need a permit to put a fence in my backyard, how do I do so if I can't go in person?

Director of Public Works, Oren K. Dabney: The office is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8am-12pm at City Hall. The number to call is 908-482-3188.

Mayor Mapp: Please call city hall to get all the guidance you may need on that question.

10) Are we waiting for the governor to give the total “stay in” order to control the increase in cases?

We have been doing everything possible, putting out robo-calls around the clock asking people to stay at home, to wear face masks, etc. There is a plethora of information being put out trying to encourage people to practice hygienic behavior. We are doing our part as a governmental entity to put controls in place that will help us flatten the curve. We are doing all we can. I can assure you that the city, county, and state are doing their part to help flatten the curve and get this virus under control so that the governor can reopen the state and we at the municipal level can open our municipalities.

11) Do stores have the authority to raise the prices of their products? Because there are stores where a case of water costs 8 or 9 dollars.

Price gouging is illegal. Anytime stores raise their prices by more than 10% that is considered price gouging. If you are aware of any such incident in our city, I want you to report it to our Plainfield police department so they can check the situation to put a lid on that exploitation. You can also call NJ consumer affairs at 973-504-6240, the office of attorney general at 609-292-4925, and citizen services at 609-984-5828 to register any price gouging complaint.

12) What is the City of Plainfield doing with businesses that are open and essential to make sure they’re complying with COVID-19 regulations? Are cops and city officials doing routine checks?

Director of Police, Lisa Burgess: Yes, the police department are doing checks of essential and nonessential businesses that shouldn’t be open. For the past week or so, there have been several violations that have been issued and forwarded to the office of the attorney general. If you do find that there are businesses that aren’t complying with the governor’s executive order, then you can give us a call and we will respond and look into it. The prosecutor’s office and the attorney general’s office are taking these complaints very seriously and have been allowing us to issue summonses for those violations.

13) Have you thought of getting together with other mayors around the state to insist that the governor completely shuts down the state?

All of us as mayors in the state have been doing everything we can to enforce the governor’s executive orders as well as our own. I believe that we at the local level are doing all that we can to make sure that people shelter in place, stay at home, and don’t come to the streets to be a nuisance. I believe that Governor Murphy has done an excellent job during this pandemic. And so, I commend him for all he’s done and continues to do on a daily basis. We cannot shut down the entire state. Where would people get food, medicine, and the necessities to keep us alive? A complete shut down is out of the question, it wouldn’t work, and it would create more harm.

14) Can you share if the employees in your admin have gone to apartment buildings in Plainfield and posted notices about COVID-19 resources available?

Director of Police, Lisa Burgess: There are several buildings we have gone to including the senior buildings where we've spoken to the management teams. We've talked about putting out letters to residents and taught residents about regulations. Today we gave phone calls to violators letting them know our concerns. We haven't done every building but the ones we get complaints about. Please give us a call and we will address the issue in question.

15) What can I do if I wanted to request installation of speed bumps?

I will suggest calling Director Dabney about anything to do with infrastructure, streets, speed bumps, or anything having to do with work on our roadway. I would further suggest calling Director Burgess if you have an issue relative to public safety. Director Burgess can be reached at 908-753-3131 (Non-emergency number). Director Dabney can be reached at 908-753-3375.

16) Is there a website or online service dedicated to the dos and don'ts during this pandemic?

We have put out many resources that will address this question.

Director of Communications, Jazz Clayton-Hunt: We have a page on the website dedicated to COVID-19 response. We post daily updates and links to resources. We also put out a resource newsletter in addition to the other newsletters we put out Monday and Friday, now we do one on Wednesday that has resources that deal with jobs, unemployment, relief for hardships, etc. We also post those links on social media.

17) What is the process of tracing people who have come in contact with infected residents? And how do you determine who needs to be quarantined?

Director of Health and Social Services, Shep Brown: Once we've been notified of an infected resident, we check their status, go down the list of things that are identified as COVID-19, then we recommend them to physicians or ask them to self-quarantine.

Mayor Mapp: We do reach out once we know someone has been tested positive. We find out who are the people they were last in contact with so that we can inform those individuals especially if they live in Plainfield. If they don't live in Plainfield, we reach out to the health department in the cities where those people live. We take it very seriously.

18) Many of our church members and others in the community in need are asking how they can receive essential food from food banks without going there physically. We've been trying our best to deliver essential goods but we can't keep up with all those asking for assistance. Most of these people are isolated due to pending COVID-19 diagnosis or are diagnosed with the virus with strong symptoms. Also, apps like Instacart are not working due to high demand and they have no delivery times available.

Please reach out to the Chief of Staff and we will work with the pastor to try to bring a solution to that question.

19) What do you believe is driving the increase in positive cases?

I believe that the people in Plainfield have through some means been able to get tested and I don't think that Plainfield is any different from other municipalities. The numbers around the state are incredibly high and I believe that Plainfield will be better served when we begin to see testing done here in Plainfield. The numbers may appear high, we don't know what the true number really is. I believe there are people living in very close quarters and don't have the ability to socially distance. That may be one of the drivers. From what I have observed, we have been enforcing social distancing and our streets have been empty for the most part. The messages that we've put out I believe are working. I can't answer with any degree of certainty of what is driving up the numbers other than to say that we are a very densely populated city with people living as families in close quarters. That could also be one of the reasons. I am concerned that our numbers can be even higher if the people who are not able to access testing were to be tested. I am hoping and praying daily for the health and wellbeing for the residents in our city.

20) Is there a process of meeting the needs of homeless citizens during the pandemic?

We are going to be looking out for our homeless population to the best of our ability. We will be distributing care packages to our homeless population. There are several items listed. We are also working on getting donations which will help those in need. There are a number of items that will go a long way that will help them take care of themselves in terms of sanitizing and working to be free of the virus.

21) Is crime down as a result of the pandemic?

Crime has been down consistently year after year ever since I took office. It is down because of what we've put in place since my administration took office. We have consistently and aggressively taken on the issue of crime and it has gone down by 50% since my administration took office. If the question means if there has been a further impact on crime as a result of COVID-19, then Director Burgess can answer:

Director of Police, Lisa Burgess: Crime has continued to decline since 2014 and since these last weeks or so I have been monitoring our crime stats and crime continues to decline in the City of Plainfield.

Mayor Mapp: I certainly don't want to leave anyone with the impression that it's the COVID-19 driving crime down. Its deliberate actions from this administration and the City of Plainfield police department that has lowered crime. It has resulted in a dramatic decrease in crime year after year.

22) What's being done about the crowd of men by the McDonalds in the morning? They don't wear masks or practice social distancing.

Director of Police, Lisa Burgess: We have spoken to them and I monitor that situation. If there are times where we're missing this, please give us a call. I have checked with higher ups to see if that's a violation of the executive order and them being there for work purposes; if it's for work, it's not in violation of the executive order. The masks are an executive order by the mayor. Loitering is in violation of the order if you're not out for essential purposes. Please call us and make us aware.

23)What can we do as a community to help, can we give food or masks? Can we make masks and hand them out?

We are all in this together. Anything anyone can do to help, we welcome that. We need personal protective equipment, food supply, and anything that you who are out there who can hear me, who's participating in this live chat, we ask you to send us your donations of checks, food, or other supplies. You can drop off food and tangible supplies at any one of our 3 fire houses between 9AM-6PM. Send your check donations to city hall. If you're making masks, we welcome that. Any and all donations are welcome.