

NEWS RELEASE

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With Pandemic In Decline, Warren County Ends Weekly Mayors Call

(WHITE TOWNSHIP, NJ – May 18, 2021) – Warren County is ending its weekly COVID-19 conference calls for mayors as the pandemic slackens and New Jersey prepares to cancel the Public Health Emergency.

Over the past 433 days since Warren County established its COVID-19 Task Force – about 62 weeks – there have been 82 conference calls with the mayors bringing them information and helping them understand and deal with 139 executive orders from the Governor, 14 administrative orders, 26 NJ Department of Health guidance directives, and 21 directives from the NJ Department of Community Affairs.

“For the past year, Warren County has worked as one team in confronting the COVID-19 pandemic. Our weekly calls with municipal leaders have led to consistent messaging and important data being disseminated to their respective communities,” said Warren County Board of County Commissioners Director James R. Kern III, who participated in the calls as commissioner liaison for Health and Public Safety.

“Topics ranging from outbreaks in the towns to executive order compliance all were discussed within this group,” Kern continued. “Having insight from our County Health Officer Pete Summers, legal interpretations from the County Prosecutor Jim Pfeiffer and his staff, economic aid updates from Commissioner Jason Sarnoski and the glue holding it all together, County Administrator Alex Lazorisak, was crucial in our success. As a former mayor myself, I know this information was essential to municipal leaders. As the darkest days of this pandemic our behind us, I am proud of what Warren County did, and look forward to brighter days ahead,” Kern added.

“I’m grateful to all our mayors for sharing their time with us each week,” said Summers, who leads the Warren County Health Department. “Their insights into the concerns of their communities were invaluable in guiding our efforts,” he added.

Just as county officials were grateful to municipal leaders for their part in relaying important information to the public, mayors expressed thanks to the county for its work. “The efforts of all of the Warren County officials to keep the mayors and township officials advised on

a weekly basis during the COVID pandemic has been extraordinary,” Frelinghuysen Township Mayor Christopher Stracco remarked.

“Each and every municipality benefitted by the County’s time and energy spent on this unique and once in a generation challenge. The tireless work of our County Commissioners, Health Director and Public Information Department has made this challenge manageable,” Stracco continued, adding, “The weekly calls made us all realize that we were not on our own, and that sense of community and support was invaluable.”

Hope Township Mayor Timothy McDonough agreed, noting, “During these very challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the most important things elected officials must do is to get the correct information out to its residents. Thank God for our Warren County officials and their weekly calls keeping us all informed.”

“There are so many counties in New Jersey that struggled when the pandemic broke out to relay information to their residents quickly and effectively. That did not happen in Warren County,” said Knowlton Mayor Adele Starrs.

“The Warren County Commissioners and Health Officials stand as an example of how government agencies should operate in a pandemic – they met with area mayors weekly, providing needed data and translations of all the executive orders, which mayors then shared with residents. Thank you for helping Warren County residents manage the last year armed with the information we needed and showing us what good government looks like,” Starrs remarked.

As New Jersey’s numbers on COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and vaccinations all are trending in the right direction, Gov. Phil Murphy and his Administration have begun working with Senate President Steve Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin on legislation that will end the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency in place since March 2020, while also ensuring that the Administration retains necessary tools to manage the ongoing threat to public health, as well as recovery and vaccination efforts.

The Public Health Emergency was initially declared on March 9, 2020 through Executive Order No. 103. Last week, Governor Murphy signed Executive Order No. 240, which extends that Public Health Emergency for another 30-day period, ending in mid-June. Under the Emergency Health Powers Act, a declared public health emergency expires after 30 days unless renewed. If legislation is finalized ahead of the renewal date, the Public Health Emergency will be allowed to expire.

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