March 20, 2020

Ladies & Gentlemen,

I hope all is well with all of you and your families. I wanted to update you on where things stand and let you know that your township's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is meeting regularly and disseminating all of the information that is regularly received by all respective federal, state and county health and safety agencies as well as law enforcement support. We will continue to post these daily updates, seven (7) days a week at 3:00pm.

With regard to reaching out to our senior community, I have been informed there are some emerging volunteer groups looking to help our seniors going forward. "Basking Ridge Helping Basking Ridge" (BRHBR) is currently organizing and working amongst themselves with guidance from our Board of Health in terms of safety measures, and also will be working with our Township and OEM staff in determining the appropriate level of support needed to help our seniors and those most vulnerable to the virus. I understand BRHBR is making every effort to make sure they get it right the first time so that they can have an immediate positive impact once these volunteer services are up and running. There are still many details that need to be considered and many safety measures to be put in place to make sure we are all helping, and not hurting, in our endeavor. Some of the details that have been provided thus far include:

- A resident-led volunteer effort to help seniors and isolated residents during this COVID-19 crisis is underway through a public Facebook page “Basking Ridge Helping Basking Ridge”;

- An e-mail address will be set up (and posted on said Facebook page) for residents to share names and numbers of those who may need help during the crisis;

- Local vendors will be asked to help with discounted senior meals;

- Collections of non-perishable donations will be organized along with a drop-off point (or more) in town;

- Information and alerts for residents will be shared various methods: RAVE, e-mail, Public Access TV, possibly a hotline for recorded daily messages;
• Other initiatives are being suggested through the public Facebook page “Basking Ridge Helping Basking Ridge.” Such initiatives include sewing of face masks, music outreach, and online exercising.

• OEM will be apprised of all efforts to ensure that duplication of efforts is mitigated and resources are used efficiently.

Additionally, we are always looking at what we can do to help our local smaller businesses during this time of crisis. While the role of municipal government is specifically limited in nature, we have many intelligent, knowledgeable and caring residents and businesses who have voiced some creative ways to try and help our local businesses. I encourage all of our local business owners/leaders as well as everyday residents to come together (online for now), and start thinking of proactive practical solutions that could help benefit our friends and neighbors who are also our local business owners. It is times like these throughout our history where private citizens have stepped up to help, along with their government, to serve as informal public/private partnerships for the betterment of our community and all those who live in it.

I know I can speak on behalf of the Township Committee when I say that we will continue to do all we can to facilitate better communication between ourselves and our citizenry to continue making sure we get empirical information to you in real time. Our Township and OEM staff and Health Department will continue to coordinate the necessary functions in supporting our up and coming volunteer groups, and we will work with and support appropriate and applicable initiatives presented to help our local businesses going forward where we can.

Again, everyone stay safe, continue to practice the necessary precautionary measures of sound hygiene and social distancing, and please, stay positive. We are doing everything we can to stay on top of this continuing crisis. God bless you all and take good care.

Very sincerely yours,

Jim Baldassare
Bernards Township
Mayor