



Borough of Hillsdale

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John J. Ruocco, Mayor

April 5, 2020

My fellow residents, as we approach Passover, Easter, and Ramadan, I want to thank you for your efforts to comply with restrictions that are in place to combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus. I wish I could tell you that the worst is over and that our holidays will be normal, but I would be lying.

I am so proud of Hillsdale's first responders---our police, volunteer fire fighters & ambulance workers--- for the jobs they are doing. They are more frequently exposed to the virus than most, with the possible exception of health care workers. As they go about their jobs protecting us, other members of the municipal government such as our administrative, emergency management, local health officials, public works, and library staff have done a great job at organizing our local response.

The number of positive cases reported in Hillsdale continues to climb, consistent with neighboring towns. As of Saturday, it stood at 47 individuals. My own family has been directly affected, as my son and his wife are presently fighting to regain their health after testing positive. Thankfully, my grand-daughter seems unaffected, as the very young seem to have a natural resistance to the worst symptoms. My wife and I do a lot of praying these days.

Our small business owners in town are suffering. Some restaurants and businesses have closed temporarily, some permanently, I am told. Our national economy is in a tailspin. Both Congress and the Federal Reserve are taking massive steps to aid those individuals hardest hit and to soften the financial effects on businesses, big and small. The rescue package is unprecedented, and not without significant costs. Those will be borne by all of us in the coming years, and hopefully in a way that will preserve American capitalism and entrepreneurial spirit. But right now, these measures are needed to ensure that the recession does not get worse. We can take solace from the fact that today's economy is far more global than 90 years ago, and recoveries are much quicker.

The Hillsdale Council will shortly decide on action designed to reduce the expected municipal property tax increase from 2% to zero. In some towns, there is consideration being given to delaying the payment of property taxes. While that idea is appealing, it is a far more complicated action, requiring extensive coordination with county, state, & education officials. In the meantime, we are putting off all non-essential business, and delaying to the last feasible moment a decision on Memorial Day events. Re-opening Stonybrook will depend on whether restrictions are lifted.

You all know the routine: social distancing, frequent hand-washing, staying home, refraining from touching your face, and most recently, wearing a face cover when in public. If your family is like mine, the staying at home part is the toughest. But I can see during my exercise walks and biking through town that the residents of Hillsdale "get it."

There will be more turmoil and sacrifice ahead. Winston Churchill is reported to have said that when going through hell, you should keep on going. That is what I plan on doing. That is what I

ask you to do. And when we emerge together as a community, we will be able to say “this was our finest hour.”

John J. Ruocco