

NEWARK – April 23, 2020 – Mayor Ras J. Baraka held a wide-ranging press conference today at New Jersey Performing Arts Center at 11 a.m. to discuss the City's many efforts to slow the spread of the deadly COVID-19 disease and mitigate its impact on the physical and financial health of Newark residents, while calling on help from the federal government to avoid cuts in City services.

"We need help," Mayor Baraka said, pointing out that federal relief packages offered billions to large corporations and businesses, but little to help medium-sized cities like Newark. "If we don't get help, we may have to look at furloughs of our City employees and possibly buyouts," which could impact vital City services in dealing with COVID-19 crisis.

In the early stages of the pandemic, the city put in several of its own stimulus/aid packages to help residents. Those packages, and the additional burden on health, public safety and sanitation services have put a significant dent in the City budget.

The Mayor said he was asking the federal delegation including Sens. Robert Menendez and Cory Booker, and Reps. Albio Sires and Donald Payne, Jr., to push legislation to get replacement funding for the City. The Mayor also noted his support for the legislation being introduced by Senator Menendez which would allocate \$500 billion to state and local governments in all U.S. states and territories. It would prioritize funding to the hardest hit states, using a formula that considers state population, infection rates, and revenue loss and it would increase the flexible use of funding so it can be spent to plug unforeseen revenue gaps.

Mayor Baraka and members of his administration answered questions about the City's shelter-in-place orders and enforcement, health department services, inspection and sanitizing of senior centers, and short-term housing for people without addresses or others who needed to be quarantined.

While the health and well-being of all Newark residents was the Mayor's top priority, the Mayor created a \$6 million stimulus/aid package to make grants and forgivable loans available for Newark's small business owners and their employees, homeowners and homebuyers, landlords and tenants, and the culture and non-profit community. For more information on these programs go to <https://www.newarknj.gov/news>

As a result of these investments of Newark's budgetary funds, Mayor Baraka is asking for federal help to replenish lost revenue so the City can continue the upward trajectory of growth and services it was experiencing before the COVID-19 crisis and support new, ongoing needs the virus created.

The Mayor began the press conference by talking about the proactive, and costly steps the City had taken to control the spread of the virus. The informational deck that was presented is attached.

BACKGROUND

From the moment federal officials announced Newark Liberty International Airport would be a landing site for planes arriving from China in early February, Mayor Ras J. Baraka's administration began preparing for the onset of the COVID-19 virus and its potentially devastating impact on the City's residents and businesses.

With behind the scenes planning utilizing every City department, Mayor Baraka put health and safety protocols in place, allowing for swift and proactive response when the disease began its insidious march through New Jersey. What follows is a timeline of the Mayor's actions from the moment Newark's first COVID-19 case was confirmed.

- March 14: Newark receives confirmation of its first Coronavirus positive resident.
- March 15: Mayor Baraka announces City's first case of Coronavirus in City and through Executive Order, places a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures and extends deadlines for tax payments, water and sewer bills.
- March 16: Mayor Baraka orders non-essential businesses to close by 8 p.m. and orders restaurants to end sit-down service and offer take-out/delivery services only. All City senior and recreation centers are closed and visitors are banned from entering senior residential buildings. Mayor also bans gatherings of 50 people or more, including church services and cultural events.
- March 17: Mayor Baraka cancels all public gatherings and holds a virtual town hall with Dr. Mark Wade, the City's Health Director. Orders schools close for 30 days, as he begins preparing City for long fight with invasive and extremely contagious COVID-19 disease.
- March 18: Further sweeping action is taken as Mayor Baraka imposes a mandatory 8 p.m. curfew mandatory, the full closing of non-essential businesses and asks Newark ShopRite to give seniors and medically vulnerable dedicated hours to shop.
- March 18: To keep residents directly and fully informed, Mayor Baraka begins his live daily Coronavirus briefings at 5 p.m. on City Hall Facebook page.
- March 21: Using Public Safety technology and Health Department information to track victims of COVID-19, Mayor Baraka orders strict shelter-in-place rules for the three hardest hit areas of City, telling residents to stay inside except for essential needs or medical emergencies.
- March 25: Mayor Baraka announces a dramatic series of financial interventions totaling \$6 million to support residents and small businesses severely impacted COVID-19 shutdown. They include \$2 million in small business grants, \$1 million to "Live Newark" for homeowners and prospective homebuyers, \$1 million in rapid, short-term housing for the homeless and City's other most vulnerable residents, a fund for landlords and commercial building owners whose tenants can't pay rent, a \$750,000 arts initiative investment, and a \$1 million investment in community-based non-profits that serve Newark residents. The small business

grant program is announced on March 26 and the rest follow until April 20 when the non-profit aid program is announced.

- March 26: Mayor Baraka widens the strict shelter-in-place mandate to include entire City, promising aggressive enforcement as police monitor vehicular traffic and patrol city to break up gatherings on streets.
- March 31: Mayor Baraka launches a cooperative operation with East Orange, Irvington and Orange to lockdown borders and keep travel between towns limited to work or emergencies. Mayor Baraka also calls for a “Newark Day of Prayer and Fasting.”
- April 1: Fire fighters begin cooking meals for seniors – 50 meals per day.
- April 10: City hits half-way mark on lead line replacement, crossing the 9,500 mark in little over a year. Despite COVID-19 crews are replacing about 90 while wearing PPE and maintaining proper social distancing.
- April 13: Mayor Baraka announces “Be Still Mondays” and asks for all businesses to close, including downtown corporations, through May 11.
- April 14: A new website is launched bringing together comprehensive information for Newark residents/businesses on how to go about getting help to deal with COVID-19 crisis and how to stay safe. Website: Newarkcovid19.com
- April 18: Mayor Baraka gave away masks to residents at Weequaic High School (one of five locations).
- April 23: Mayor Baraka hosted COVID-19 update/press conference at NJPAC.

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