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On the Cover: Downtown Jersey City keeps its vibrant dining scene
going—safely—through the pandemic. Read about it on page 20.
My first experience with the League goes back nearly 40 years, when my father, the engineer of the great Borough of Roselle, took personal time to daytrip to Atlantic City for a municipal conference. I later learned he did so to attend the Consultants period at the League Conference. He returned home late that same day optimistic about grant funding for a necessary road project in our hometown. A problem was identified and the League was a conduit and resource for solutions.

Fast forward to the present: After 24 years employed at the League I have stepped into the position of Executive Director and Editor-In-Chief of New Jersey Municipalities. I look forward to sharing many tools and resources particularly developed from surviving and thriving times of trouble. And I also look forward to working together on finding solutions to some brand-new issues that are creating challenges for local governments around the state, nation, and world.

To help you navigate these challenges, we’ve done what we have never done before at the magazine: a Summer issue. This special issue drills down to the subjects you are facing and will continue to face in an uncertain future in the wake of COVID-19. We begin our issue with a look at legislative solutions intended to address the “revenue starvation” that will confront municipalities in the upcoming years. Local governments have experienced a record decline in revenue from permitting fees, licensing fees, parking revenue, and court fines. You also face income losses due to declining returns on investments, along uncertain upcoming property tax collection and state aid revenues. Simply put: local governments need the flexibility to limit the impact on property taxpayers.

Helping municipal employees and facilities reopen safely and adapt to new expectations for public safety will be critical in the management and recovery process. This issue provides information about useful topics, including communications, technology, and infrastructure. We touch on how events such as the 2020 Census and the 100th anniversary of Women’s Suffrage continue toward their goals by exploring new outreach efforts.

This is just the tip of the iceberg of COVID-19’s impact on municipalities and citizens alike. I invite you to use this publication and our website, www.njlm.org, to see how your peers are making their communities run. We will continue to update our information resources to provide you with the information and tools you’ll need throughout this long recovery process.

As always, the League remains committed to be a solution-oriented resource for you.

Michael Cerra
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Coronavirus relief for municipal governments

According to a new survey on the financial impact of COVID-19 on America’s municipalities from our Federal partners, the National League of Cities, pain is being felt in local governments around the country. The survey of 1,100 municipalities across the nation showed that 74% have already started making unavoidable cuts and adjustments in response to the projected $360 billion revenue loss for cities over the next 3 years.

“The survey found that 65% of cities are being forced to delay or completely cancel capital expenditures and infrastructure projects, which will not only stifle job growth and slow local economic activity, but further jeopardize economic recovery efforts in communities across the nation,” said Clarence Anthony, CEO and Executive Director, National League of Cities (see story NLC and NJLM efforts on page 6).

Financial flexibility and relief are increasingly important to municipalities addressing revenue shortfalls and expenditures directly attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic. Typical budget tools for New Jersey Governments do not allow for recovery of lost revenue, so without legislation to address the shortfall, municipalities face extreme measures that would gut local government and eliminate critical public service.

Even with drastic action, such as furloughs and cutting of services, budget gaps will still occur. Depleting surplus and reserves will have disastrous long-term fiscal consequences that would not only lead to higher property taxes but also impact bond ratings.

**New Jersey legislative solutions**

Governor Murphy signed it into law. P.L. 2020, c. 60 authorizing the borrowing of up to $9.9 billion in State general obligation bonds to address the State’s financial problems that have arisen as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The law permits up to $2.7 billion to be authorized between now and the end of September, which is the end of the extended fiscal year 2020, and the remainder could be borrowed between October 1 and June 30, 2021, which is the new State FY21.

At press time the NJ Supreme Court was due to hear oral arguments based on a NJ GOP challenge to this new law on August 5. Regardless of the outcome, the legislation did not authorize borrowing from the federal government on behalf of local governments. Separate legislation is expected to address municipalities’ financial problems arising from COVID-19.

Of the dozens of pieces of legislation related to management of the impacts of coronavirus, A-3971/S-2475 is one of particular interest to local officials. This bi-partisan legislation is sponsored by Senators Singleton, Gopal and Scutari and in the Assembly by Assemblyman Dan Benson, Speaker Craig Coughlin, Assemblyman Wayne DeAngelo and Assemblywoman DeCroce.

This permissive coronavirus relief bill authorizes the issuance of coronavirus relief bonds (CRBs) by municipalities and counties due to loss of revenue and/or unanticipated expenses directly attributable to COVID-19 pandemic occurring within 24 months after the end of New Jersey’s COVID-19 Public Health Emergency and State of Emergency.

Authorizing the issuance of CRB bonds would be the same as refunding bonds under the Local Bond Law. However, Local Finance Board approval would not be required unless the bond issuance exceeds 30% of the prior year’s budget or the repayment term is longer than 10 years.

CRBs will allow municipalities to spread the unexpected financial burden of the next 24 months over at least a 10-year period, protecting taxpayers from facing large tax increases.

A-3971 passed the Assembly on May 14 and the Senate companion, S-2475, passed the Senate on July 30. As we went to print, Governor Murphy conditionally vetoed A-3971. While the Governor commended the sponsors for “their efforts to provide local governments with an essential tool to help them maintain fiscal solvency during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic” he was concerned with creating “a new, additional financing mechanism for this singular purpose.” Instead the Governor wants to build upon existing local budgetary and debt structures.

We have concerns with the conditional veto and are working with the sponsors and administration in hope of crafting a mutually acceptable solution.

**Supporting Your Recovery Efforts**

While the future of A-3971 is uncertain, there will be more legislation under the gold dome in months to come.

Throughout the recovery process, the League will support and advocate for legislation to help local governments recover and continue to serve residents.

Please keep in touch with our Legislative staff to keep them abreast of your concerns.
ADDRESSING THE PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

The MEL and its 19 affiliated joint insurance funds were established to address serious emergencies and have developed the organizational skills and accumulated the resources needed to address this crisis.

2021 BUDGET RATE FREEZE

At its June meeting, the MEL adopted a rate freeze for the 2021 budget to assist its affiliated JIFs next year.

MEMBER MUNICIPAL BOND ISSUANCE

The MEL recently established a Joint Cash Management and Investment Pool (JCMI) that has already purchased over $100 million in debt securities issued by member municipalities and authorities to help stabilize the volatile bond market.

CLAIMS

Each JIF has made arrangements to ensure that claims are paid in a timely fashion. Special NJ provisions protect career and volunteer public safety workers and all other employees and volunteers.

SPECIAL COVID-19 CLAIMS COMMITTEE

The MEL also established a special committee to resolve matters related to the coronavirus and providing direct access for members to address these issues. The committee will also research questions related to FEMA recoveries.

SAFETY TRAINING

The MEL offers numerous online safety training programs. Course details are available online in the MEL Safety Institute Course Catalogue on the MEL website.
The National League of Cities’ (NLC) Cities Are Essential and the League’s Munis Are Essential efforts are working to help local governments weather the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to NLC, nearly 100% of cities with populations above 50,000 will see a revenue decline this year. They also estimate that between 300,000 and 1 million public-sector workers could be laid off or furloughed.

The Cities Are Essential program (https://covid19.nlc.org/cities-are-essential/) is focused on helping communities gain federal aid and support to facilitate a reopening of the national economy. It’s estimated that at least $500 billion in direct federal funding will be needed to protect families, municipal workers, and America’s economic future.

The League’s customized version of the program, Munis Are Essential, kicked off with a press conference at the end of June. The event featured League President James Perry Sr., Committeeman, Hardwick; League 1st Vice President Janice Kovach, Mayor, Clinton Town; NJLM Past President Al Kelly, Mayor, Bridgeton, and President of NJ Urban Mayors; and NJLM Executive Board Member Michael Venezia, Mayor, Bloomfield, and NJLM Executive Director Michael Cerra.

“We are looking at a next year and possibly 2022 impact to our financial houses within our communities and that is something that has to be addressed,” Kovach noted. “And we need the state and federal government to help us with that. Working together makes it easier, but it doesn’t fix the financial problems we’re dealing with.”

It’s estimated that at least $500 billion in direct federal funding will be needed to protect families, municipal workers, and America’s economic future.
Ways to support the Cities Are Essential/Munis Are Essential campaign

Send a letter to your Member of Congress, especially for communities that are in our target states.

Encourage businesses and organizations in your community to send a letter of support.

Amplify your message on social media to build awareness about this campaign and its ask.

Essential services
“Regardless of...decreases in revenues, municipalities must continue to provide essential services,” Perry added, noting there is uncertainty about how long local governments can continue to provide them without relief from the federal government or State Legislature.

“Unfortunately, because of the way our communities are set up, we don’t qualify for any of the CARES funding, so we were not able to receive any of those funds,” Kovach said. No municipalities in the state qualified for direct CARES funding. “We are all struggling here; we are all on the front line,” Kovach said.

Venezia noted: “We stretched our health, public safety, and public works functions to their limits. Even at the worst of times we were only down about five to 10 employees out of about 350.”

But this success came at a cost. Venezia estimates that the city paid more than $400 thousand for personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitizers, and overtime. Those costs are being addressed through FEMA, the CARES act, and CDBG grant funds. “All this work, however, cannot replace the financial impact of the loss of revenue now that we predict will occur in the fall with tax payments.”

Bloomfield has lost roughly $3 million in revenue from the pandemic, including nearly $1 million in revenue from parking alone. Venezia’s biggest concern, however, is property tax collections. “If the percentage of our collections drop even 3% from our typical 98%, we lose over $1 million.” The city had a taste of things to come when 2nd quarter tax collection rate dropped to 95%, a loss of over $800,000.

This reduction could result in furloughs of up to 5% of municipal workforce, Venezia estimates.

Bridgeport’s status as a city in a rural area has resulted in severe impacts, “We are a farm town, and we have special needs (See Mayor Kelly’s column on page 8),” Kelly said. A lack of revenue combined with a small tax base results in insurmountable deficits as the community moves into recovery.

He concluded: “Our communities are facing unprecedented revenue starvation. We need federal and state help to overcome the deficits that we are now facing, and that we anticipate to face.”

@To view the full press conference, visit www.njlm.org/covid-19.
The Digital Divide in the Age of COVID-19

ALBERT B. KELLY, Mayor, Bridgeton; President, NJ Urban Mayors; Past President, NJLM

In the past, the struggle for equality and access might have been focused in certain areas whether education, jobs, health care, or finance. Up until the COVID-19 pandemic, the question of achieving progress in any one of these realms was considered largely in isolation from the others. Solving issues of access and equality in education, for example, were separate and distinct from how to do so in health care, or employment, or finance.

One thing the pandemic has revealed is that providing a level playing field in any one of these pressing areas has to start with providing solid, affordable, and consistent internet access to all residents regardless of where they live or how much they earn.

**Pandemic reveals weaknesses**

When the pandemic struck, there was a mad scramble to shift as much as possible online, whether working remotely from home, teaching, telemedicine, banking, or ordering groceries.

That’s fine and good if you have high-speed internet and all the devices needed to survive and even thrive online. But what if you’re at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder? Or what if you live in a rural area where the internet providers have decided it is simply not profitable to build out the infrastructure?

When the pandemic hit here locally, the school system did a good job of providing tablets to our students. The problem is that many hundreds don’t have internet access in their homes.

I recall an article from a couple of years ago by Colleen O’Dea for NJ Spotlight that reviewed data from the American Community Survey. She noted that less than 60% of households could go online in Bridgeton, Salem, Camden, Trenton, and Perth Amboy. This was in comparison to some 95% of households able to go online in 17 of the wealthier suburbs in central and northern New Jersey.

Things have not improved all that much since then. As we speak, there are 1,983 households in Bridgeton without internet access. This represents 31% of our communities’ total number of households.

Of Cumberland County’s roughly 50,000 households, 15% do not have internet access, which is highest among New Jersey’s counties. As for the reasons why, some of it centers on geography while some of it is about poverty. As for the statewide number, approximately 10% of New Jersey’s households lack internet access.

**Whys of the digital divide**

Before we can consider specific solutions, it may well be necessary to adjust our perspectives about the digital divide and internet access, especially when it comes to the social safety net.

One of the biggest problems for many low-income families trying help their school-age children keep pace is internet access and without that, no matter how good schools are with providing the technology for students to take home, there is no ability to do remote instruction.

As for the internet providers, they’ll provide some type of free introductory period, but once that expires and the monthly fees kick in, families either have to add that cost to their monthly burden or lose the service.

Another consideration during the pandemic is health. Many doctors wouldn’t see patients in the office, but instead set up telehealth visits online. How many didn’t get the help they needed because they couldn’t access a doctor online? Beyond that, how did this gap in care for some impact the health of the broader community? As we go forward from here, whether it involves employment, interacting with the court system, or engaging a host of services public and private, more and more of it will be online.

We have to fundamentally shift our thinking about internet access and all things digital. We need to acknowledge the internet is essential in the same way that we now consider plumbing, heat, and electric as essential.

Unless we address the digital divide made obvious by the pandemic, inequality will increase dramatically.

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**State Efforts to Build Access**

In July Governor Phil Murphy announced a plan to help close the digital divide for New Jersey students. “The pandemic has exposed a deep divide that must be corrected now and moving forward,” he said.

He noted: “Not every student has a laptop or other device. And not every student has reliable internet access,” adding that 230,000 students are at a disadvantage due to lack of devices or access.

To address the digital gap, the Governor announced the intention to use CARES act funds, coronavirus relief funds, and funds from philanthropic and business partners to fill the gap and meet the estimated cost of $115 million to close the gap and provide students around the state with access to digital devices and internet access.
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As New Jersey confronts the ongoing pandemic, municipalities, and businesses are asking the same question: when and how can we safely reopen our offices?

While public health remains everyone’s top priority, municipalities are actively returning both essential and non-essential workers to municipal complexes and other facilities. It is a balancing act, with administrators recognizing the need to keep public services moving as New Jersey’s COVID-19 numbers fall, while understanding their obligation to keep workers and community residents safe.

The environmental, health, and safety professionals are working with municipalities to manage the physical aspects of returning to work and also inform and educate their employees. In Asbury Park, Jackson Township, and Tinton Falls, we worked with local officials on initial analyses and risk assessments as well as full-scale implementation programs with numerous communication considerations.

Asbury Park

“Asbury Park was among the first municipalities in the state to issue an emergency declaration and close our municipal offices,” noted the city’s Mayor John Moor. “We temporarily transitioned to work-at-home for our employees, and we believe that our initial response helped prevent any occurrences of COVID-19 within our municipal workforce.”

Mayor Moor adds, “Now that we are transitioning back into offices, we know that physical considerations aren’t enough—it’s important that municipalities also adopt effective practices for communication and education.”

Educating workers is just one piece of the puzzle. Informing the public, especially regarding public facilities and departments that receive frequent visitors (e.g., tax collectors and courts) is also crucial.

Questions to consider
As the reopening continues, municipal officials are grappling with many questions.

• How do we effectively screen returning employees to make sure they are healthy?

• What type of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should we be supplying workers, and what guidance should we provide on its safe use?

• What are our building-capacity limits under COVID-19 restrictions, and how do we effectively stagger worker and visitor schedules?

• How do we best keep employees informed of new procedures for social distancing, personal hygiene, and other best practices?

• What do we do if an employee becomes sick, either at home or at work?

• How do we ensure business continuity if statewide numbers rise and we return to tighter restrictions?

• How do we help employees feel safe while at work?

Jackson Township

For Jackson, it was important that they not simply close and reopen, “but that we thoughtfully review our facilities from a professional industrial hygiene perspective for the safety of our employees and the public,” noted the township’s Mayor Michael Reina.

This involved technical considerations such as a brand-new website and online forms. New payment software was also designed and launched.

“Thermal cameras take temperatures at the door and masks are here for all who may need one,” he added noting, “With these enhancements, we also had an obligation to keep department heads, workers, and the public informed. This meant emails, video calls, and website communications, and also maintaining our regular schedule of Council meetings. Jackson Township is open for business.”

Talk out concerns
Getting municipal employees back to work began with interviewing key staff. Speaking with department heads, public-facing clerks and assistants, and other personnel revealed their questions and concerns.

An important part of the training was the opportunity for municipal staff to direct questions to health and safety professionals. Regardless of how safety-conscious a municipal administrator is, it often gives employees added peace of mind to speak with third-party experts.
In house: A police chief asked for advice on how to properly stagger gym times for his officers to work out. 

Public contact: An office worker worried that visitors waiting in line would be uncomfortably close to employee workspaces and asked how best to manage the queue.

In some instances, return-to-work activities included training sessions to provide up-to-date information on COVID-19 trends, risks, and precautions. The practices adopted by the municipality to protect the health of staff, their families, and the community were also shared.

It’s all about details

A key consideration throughout the planning process is remembering that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. Administrators, department heads, and other senior officials have their eye on the big picture, as they should. But the key to success lies in managing every small, day-to-day detail.

Two-way communication was vital in ensuring that these challenges—and countless others—were ironed out in advance, before buildings opened to the public.

In a non-pandemic world, communication best practices are effective tools.

Tinton Falls

“When it came to reopening our courtroom space for in-person meetings and other gatherings, we had to consider more than just how to space out the seats, said Borough Administrator Tom Fallon, Tinton Falls.

“An idea might look good on paper, but it’s important to have an ongoing dialogue with Council and Board members and other colleagues to gauge everyone’s comfort level before putting things into practice,” Fallon added.

In the COVID-19 reality, they can save lives. Reinforce your messages across multiple channels, such as email and posted flyers. When it comes to preventing infection, there is no such thing as too much communication.”
The goal of municipal building design is to create places that optimally support a full range of municipal governmental services, and provide residents with the highest level of service.

Pre-pandemic, municipal buildings were centers of community activity. A destination where government and residents came together and experienced democracy at work, though individual interactions or at public meetings.

Alexander McDonald, President of the New Jersey Municipal Managers Association (NJMMA) and Township of Millburn Administrator noted, “For the first time in anyone’s memory, public buildings closed. It feels unnatural. We’re here working for the public and the public should be able to enter.” Union Beach Administrator, Bob Howard, added, “public buildings were never intended to keep people away.”

Limiting interactions
Adhering to guidelines means limiting the range of personal interactions between government and the public. We are using design to resolve opposing goals caused by the pandemic, so government and residents can return to safe interaction.

The design process requires an architect to ask insightful questions in order to gain a complete understanding of a municipality’s unique needs and resident’s expectations. The pandemic is now causing us to add new questions focusing on health and identifying new needs.

Whether for a new building, renovation, or the adaptive reuse of a former retail building, it is now paramount for buildings to be perceived as a place for safe gathering. Design choices communicate health and wellbeing.

Flexibility for change
Containing construction costs requires efficient use of square footage, something social distancing may seem to discourage. Maintaining pre-pandemic construction budgets is possible, but will include tradeoffs. Creative solutions will make space work in new ways.

Municipal buildings are typically designed for a useful life of 50 to 75 years. Incorporating flexibility to allow future change is inherent in responsible municipal building design. It is too early to determine whether adaptations brought by COVID-19 will be temporary or permanent. We will therefore address them with flexibility in mind.

For example...
Libraries attract the most intensive public use. Much can be learned from how they’re adopting to new methods of service delivery. Montville Library Director, Allan Kleiman observes, “These months of pandemic have pushed libraries 10 years into the future.”

He envisions his library as the place to safely continue meeting prior resident needs and to address new ones. Touchless check-in/check-out will become the library norm; a premise
Check list

We are addressing many points to help municipal buildings return to their mission.

- **Assess Risk**: Health officials and design team work together to evaluate.
- **Air Circulation**: HVAC systems help limit airborne viral spread, including bio-ionization to clean system surfaces and UV lighting in the air stream, enlarging particles in the air so they are capturable by commercially available filters. The particles in the air so that commercially available filters can capture them.
- **Entrances and Exits**: These must be planned around temperature screening devices and protocols that can interfere with egress code requirements. Depending on the type and number of building departments, single and large lobbies that serve the whole building will be evaluated against smaller departmental lobbies.
- **Hands-Free Operations**: Now standard in bathrooms, these can be expanded to doors, water coolers, and more.
- **Sanitizing Protocols**: Must address active and passive conditions. Hand sanitizing stations will be in predictable locations and easily available. Material choices will consider choices to consider ease of sanitization. Interior transaction windows offer security benefits that extend to health-related separation. Flooring will be patterned to reinforce 6’ distance.
- **Building Circulation**: Common corridors have become important design considerations. In large buildings with many employees, corridors for two-way circulation can contain “passing zones” where people can step aside to safely talk further, as others safely pass. Regardless of building size, continuous corridors can offer one-way circulation. See-through glass at interior corridor corners can help prevent surprise collisions.
- **Workspaces**: Employees to determine for themselves what makes them feel safe. At the Millburn Municipal Building, employees choose from red, yellow, and green door indicators to convey whether others are welcome at all times, can enter with advance notice, or may not enter at all.
- **Public Meeting Rooms**: Density guidelines so greatly reduce the number of people who can attend public meetings in person, that a creative re-thinking of how to maintain personal engagement is required.
  - Larger meeting room lobbies stretch allowable in-person attendance with glass doors to the meeting room providing a sense of personal connection.
  - Large windows between public meeting rooms and the outdoors, so that-weather permitting—outdoor seating can connect even more citizens directly to the process.
  - Safe circulation allows citizens to rotate in and out of the meeting room as agenda items that directly affect them are called.
  - Large lobbies can be subdivided by operable partitions to offer separation at walk-up transaction windows.
- **Restrooms**: Count is determined by occupant load. Multiple stalls within one restroom make social distancing impossible. Multiple single-occupant restrooms will solve this problem.
- **Drive-thru and Walk-up Windows**: Now part of the design tool kit, allowing government to interact personally with residents while reducing risk for all.

adaptable to other types of object movement elsewhere.

For those who have had to adapt to working from home, Kleiman envisions business centers that offer rooms for small meetings, professional zoom backgrounds, and computers with keyboard and mouse covers that will be sanitized between users with available sanitary wipes.

Collaboration between municipal governments and architects can and will result in safe and healthy municipal buildings that will allow municipal governments to bring the public back.

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Partners Risa Perlmuter Goldstein, RA, PP, and Eli Goldstein, AIA, PP, LEED AP lead the Goldstein Partnership Architects & Planners. Founded in 1953 by S. James Goldstein, FAIA, the firm now in its 67th year of providing services to NJ Public Institutions and Local Governments.
entered the workforce just after the 1983 introduction of the IBM Personal Computer (PC). Personal computing in the 1980s was limited to business applications, for those willing to make a costly investment.

By the mid-1990s the PC began to catch on as a more affordable tool to increase efficiency with financial calculations and schedules. Internet and email were available to some of us in the late 1990s through archaic copper “dial up” phone lines. How painful was that? For those old enough to remember work life pre-Y2K, advances over the next 20 years could never have been imagined.

Here we are in 2020. Email has all but replaced telephone and paper correspondence. The phones we carry in our pockets have internet access and more computing power than most servers of the 1990s. So, where do we go next?

Increased reliance on computers, as a result of rapid advances in technology, created a lucrative new industry: cybercrime. While investing more and more resources to prevent criminals from getting in, we face an increasing desire from the public to access information, forms, and processes—anywhere at any time.

**Forced work from home**

Then here comes the game changer, COVID-19 forced us to learn to work remote from our homes. We did the best we could accessing data stored on servers, as those who already moved to the cloud made it look easy.

In Cumberland we moved our finance software to the cloud last summer, after struggling with the cost/benefit analysis and debate. However, all files (documents, schedules, correspondence, etc.) remained on network servers. At that time, telecommuting was not a consideration.

The cost of the cloud for our financial software was justified to limit cybercrime risk and for the value of timely vendor updates. New demand for accessibility and security of all data storage will now require us to migrate everything to the cloud.

**Microsoft Office 365, Teams, and Cloud File Storage**

In Cumberland upgrading to Office 365 is a priority. Teams then becomes the software of choice for virtual meetings. Teams is a stable, secure platform that provides full integration with all other Office 365 applications—Outlook, OneDrive, Excel, Word, PowerPoint, etc.

By upgrading to Office 365, all data can be migrated to the cloud from county servers, at no additional cost. Each Office 365 licensed user has a terrabyte of cloud storage; available anywhere at any time. Each licensed user can share access to data for specific folders or files, without intervention from our technology department.

**Financial software**

Now let’s focus on finance software regarding remote computing. As mentioned above, cloud computing makes this application available anywhere, at any time, to any authorized user.

This can apply to employees, residents and vendors.

**Property tax administration**

Property tax administration through a municipal web portal has been embraced by our residents for over 10 years. COVID-19 made it very clear that this access can be critical for cash flow.

Through a web portal, taxpayers review account balances and make payments by ACH transfer or credit card. Towns can send due date reminders and delinquent notices by email. Maybe someday the tax bill statute might be amended to allow for that process automation.

**Payroll**

An efficient payroll is a paperless payroll. All information can be transmitted through the internet including schedules, timecard (or time clock) reporting, time worked or time off approvals, direct deposit payments, and emailed pay stubs.

Employees can satisfy all their needs through a web portal including changing tax filing status, communicating with payroll staff, obtaining pay statement copies, researching pay history, and any other inquiries and transactions.

**Procurement and vendor payments**

State regulations finally authorize the use of a fully digital process to solicit, accept, review and award competitive bids. Imagine procurement and accounts payable with a completely paperless process: 1) digital approvals for requisitions and
purchase orders; 2) pdf attachments to requisitions or purchase orders to share quotes, invoices and other supporting documents; 3) pdf attachments to make all contracts available for review.

We can enhance the vendor experience and guide the accounts payable process through an accounts payable web portal. If a vendor can see their purchase orders, why not have the vendor attach a digital invoice? The software can then direct workflow to proper approvals. Faster and more accurate payments is plenty motivation for a vendor.

Procurement cards can also improve controls and efficiency in the procurement to payment process.

**The remote workplace is possible**

The future is here! Most of what I presented above is already being done, the rest we must pursue.

The private sector perfected the remote workplace. COVID-19 forced us to do the same. For the most part we fared well working from home.

In evaluating what went well and what should be improved, cloud computing (remote storage) can certainly help with resiliency (accessibility) and decrease our risk of cybercrime attacks.

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### New Normal: Virtual Meetings

COVID-19 made us very astute at attending virtual meetings.

We learned to save money using virtual meeting software, rather than costly traditional conference calls. The less tech savvy can still participate using their phones. The more courageous discovered the value of the video meeting.

Let’s compare a shared screen with a live meeting. How do we keep the entire group on the same page while sharing paper documents? Questions can require additional documents or research. Go to the cloud to open a stored document or software application. Keep the meeting flowing without the disruption of leaving to find information and make paper copies.

Training sessions, department head meetings, and staff meetings can all be virtual, avoiding lost travel time as well as associated vehicle mileage reimbursement. Even face-to-face conversations benefit from screen sharing to review and discuss documents; contracts, invoices, budgets, you name it. Or open the finance software and share your screen; general instruction made easy.

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In these unprecedented times, businesses, governments and individuals are uncertain about the future and the legal landscape is changing by the hour. We know you are trying to serve your clients and constituents, retain business and employees, balance budgets and work your way through the myriad of new laws and programs enacted since the pandemic. McManimon, Scotland & Baumann, LLC stands ready to support you in any way we can. Our attorneys are leaders in corporate law, debtor/creditor relations, bankruptcy, public finance and local government law, to name a few. We are constantly staying abreast of new developments in State and Federal law and we are crafting innovative solutions to the extraordinary challenges we are all facing. MS&B is here to assist you, your business or your community in addressing these unique legal challenges.

Our team is well-prepared to meet these uncertainties and to continue through these challenging and changing times to provide you with the same level of assistance and guidance you’ve come to expect of us.

For more information, contact Matthew D. Jessup, Jennifer L. Credidio, Leslie G. London or Anthony Sodono.
Municipal Bond Buying Program
Aiding NJ municipalities and stabilizing bond market during COVID-19 crisis and beyond

JON RHEINHARDT, Investment Chairman, Municipal Excess Liability Joint Insurance Fund (MEL); Administrator/CFO, Borough of Wharton; and Charles Cuccia, Treasurer, MEL Residual Claims Fund; Chief Financial Officer, Borough of Maywood

Every year, billions of dollars in municipal debt are rolled into municipal Bond Anticipation Notes (BAN) to help ensure the funding and continuation of critical projects such as road improvements, new equipment, and construction in towns and cities across New Jersey.

Historically, the stability of the municipal bond market meant that rolling debt into short-term notes was routine, at least until earlier this year when the impact of the coronavirus pandemic threw the market into turmoil. Many regular investors left the market due to uncertainty, and the few that continued to bid did so at higher interest rates, some hovering over 3%.

Rolling notes
Anxieties escalated, particularly for towns like the Borough of Ringwood that needed to roll their notes during the height of the pandemic.

“We had a $6.5 million Bond Anticipation note coming due in early April,” said Scott Heck, Manager of the Borough of Ringwood. “We were concerned whether or not we would get any bids in light of the economic uncertainty, or that the interest rate would be very high, which could seriously affect the community’s budget.”

Mendham Township had $4.8 million coming due in mid-May. “We were very nervous about what would happen,” said Karen Fornaro, Chief Executive Officer of Mendham Township. “We heard how volatile the market had been and decided to roll our notes a few weeks earlier just in case we didn’t get any bids.”

Finding ways to affordably finance debt became a top priority for municipalities across New Jersey.

MEL stabilization
Fortunately, the Municipal Excess Liability Joint Insurance Fund (MEL), the largest governmental self-insurance pool for property and casualty in the country, had developed a new program that would prove to be a game changer to aid local municipalities and help to stabilize the market.

The MEL, which serves nearly 65% of municipalities in the state, created the Joint Cash Management and Investment Program (JCMl) to purchase short-term (1 year) Bond Anticipation Notes at fair market prices to save towns money and enable the continuation of important local improvement projects.

“We had been working on getting this program operational when we received a call from the Governor’s office asking what we could do to help and how fast we could do it,” said David Grubb, Executive Director and Co-Founder of the MEL.

With more than $500 million in funds to invest, the MEL launched the program and entered the municipal bond market. The results were immediately tangible.

Finding ways to affordably finance debt became a top priority for municipalities across New Jersey.

“By entering the market and bidding more appropriate market interest rates, they were able to stabilize the rising interest rates in the market,” explained Dan Mariniello a Principal with NW Financial Group, a financial advisor to the MEL.

MEL has already developed a significant market presence. More than $95 million in notes for 26 municipalities have been purchased, which represents approximately 9% of the short-term competitive notes sold in New Jersey since April.

The Borough of Ringwood was among the first towns to benefit from the MEL program. “This program saved us directly with a great rate and also took away the financial uncertainty, and I am grateful,” noted Heck.

Mendham Township also found relief. “The MEL bidding on notes stirred some competition out there which was much needed. We received three bids in the same ballpark, and the MEL bid won. It was even better than 2019 which was fantastic, we were really happy,” said Fornaro. “Without the MEL who knows where it would have been.”

The creation of MEL’s JCMl program as made possible after special rules were adopted (NJAC 5:38-1) in 2019 by the
TIPS FOR ISSUING NOTES AND BONDS IN THIS CLIMATE:

- Municipalities should engage a Municipal Advisor to assist them in determining the best financing strategy (i.e. short-term notes vs. long-term bonds).
- For short-term notes, high credit quality issuers should have the notes rated and utilize a Preliminary Official Statement to generate the lowest possible interest rate.
- Municipalities should work with their outside professionals to ensure that they are keeping up with their continuing disclosure requirements and accurately repressing any failures to comply in their offering documents.
- Interest rates remain near historic lows, so this is an advantageous time to access the municipal bond market.
- Given the low interest rate environment, there may be opportunities to refinance outstanding bonds for budgetary savings.

Department of Community Affairs Division of Local Government Services to allow Joint Insurance Funds (JIFs) to expand investments to include the purchase of short- and long-term municipal debt.

To date, the JCI has focused bidding only on short-term debt from municipalities that are affiliated with MEL, which includes 388 municipalities across New Jersey. However, the success of the program has ultimately benefited all municipalities seeking to finance their short-term debt in New Jersey during this crisis.

“We are always looking for ways to assist our members, but we are also committed to developing programs that positively impact municipalities and the state,” said Joseph Hrubash, Deputy Executive Director of the MEL JIF.

“This is only the beginning,” said Grubb. “We will be able to do even more if bills A-3971 and S-2475 are passed, which would authorize towns to issue ‘coronavirus relief bonds’ to borrow money to cover shortfalls and unanticipated costs that are a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Since 1987 the MEL has saved New Jersey taxpayers over $3 billion dollars, and provided risk management, training, education, resources and guidance to municipalities, public entities and public officials across New Jersey. The MEL also offers a variety of free resources to all municipalities and the public through the website https://NJMEL.org.

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Municipal Bond Buying Program

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The pandemic has challenged New Jersey in unprecedented ways. Lives have been lost, jobs have vanished or been put on hold, and almost every aspect of daily life has changed. The hurdles created for municipalities seem never ending.

Local departments of health have been tasked with contact tracing and regulating reopening efforts while also continuing to educate the public during a time when accurate health information is imperative.

Local leaders have responded to the growing issue of food insecurity. Whether through coordination with their local school boards or creating new food programs to meet the increased need, many towns have found themselves taking on this and other new roles during the pandemic.

There has also been consistent concern in the public health arena around the physical and mental health of all New Jersey residents. Social distancing has put a strain on physical health as people remain at home. It has also increased social isolation, which in conjunction with the stress and anxiety of the pandemic, has had a direct effect on mental health.

Despite all of these challenges, mayors have risen up and responded locally to the global pandemic. One common strategy we’ve seen mayors deploy is leveraging their local partnerships to serve their communities.

Mayors’ responses

Fort Lee Borough was the first town in New Jersey to record a case of COVID-19. This meant that Mayor Mark Sokolich had to respond to a crisis barely recognized at the time.

Mayor Sokolich made it a priority to improve the way the Borough communicates vital information with residents. He recorded video campaigns and used Nixle to share information. The number of residents subscribing to these platforms skyrocketed from 500 to 7,000.

Boroughwide COVID-19 testing was also implemented. Significant coordination between the mayor’s staff, health department, testing volunteers, and housing complexes’ testing areas made it possible to test over 4,000 residents in three weeks.

Woodbridge Township Mayor John McCormac and local officials have provided residents with opportunities to participate in physical activities throughout quarantine. The local TV station coordinated increased broadcasts of “seniorcise” classes for older adults. Also, the municipal parks were kept open to allow for activities that adhere to social distancing guidelines. Woodbridge has also partnered with the fire department to host blood drives in the community and with local high school students to raise money and collect food for the food pantry.

The broad range of support of the health and wellness of this community provides resiliency that will outlast the virus.

Montclair’s former Mayor Robert Jackson oversaw the concerted effort to continue services to vulnerable populations, such as older adults, through senior center programs. A new network of volunteers enabled over 500 families to receive grocery deliveries to allow the highest risk residents to remain at home.

The library system developed virtual training to teach older adults how to use platforms such as Zoom to keep them connected to information and their loved ones.

City transportation programs have shifted to partner with Lyft to provide safer transportation to essential destinations. The dedication to continue serving residents has strengthened these programs despite the pandemic.

These are just a few examples of how New Jersey mayors and communities rushed to address their local needs. The pandemic brought health concerns to the forefront and required local leaders to assess the effectiveness and necessary modifications of their current systems and programs. Mayors had to address issues of access, equity, and leverage existing and new relationships to support their residents’ health and wellness.
We’re Here to Help

KPN is providing product resources related to COVID-19 for its members!

Government agencies and other nonprofit institutions can save time and money by piggybacking on quality contracts from KPN. All contracts are publicly and competitively bid and awarded.

For more information about the contracts or to become a KPN member visit www.theKPN.org or call us at (888)490-3182.
While we read article after article about the decline of malls, the demise of strip centers, and the struggles of big box stores, we have seen a resurgence of downtowns across New Jersey. Much plays into this revitalization, but it is largely attributed to demand among younger generations to live in more compact, walkable communities that are rich in amenities and offer transit access.

Commerce in these communities is supported by residents and visitors with disposable income looking to dine out and partake in experiential retail, aka “retailtainment.” In thriving downtowns, this desire for experience has been bolstered through event and placemaking strategies implemented by Business Improvement Districts (BID), chambers of commerce, and/or local governments.

**Capitalizing on open space**

When the backbone of your downtown thrives on human interaction, how do you continue to operate within the new COVID-19 social distancing reality?

Prevailing sentiment is that outdoor interactions are far safer than indoor, so the walkability of downtowns may just continue to be their saving grace. Most downtowns were already capitalizing on sidewalks, plazas, and back patios to extend the dining and shopping experiences outside in the warmer months. This notion has gone into hyperdrive as reopening has begun. With traffic significantly reduced, communities are taking back the streets to better enable social distancing and support their small businesses.

**Slow streets**

Streets are being shut down wholly or partially for recreation (aka slow streets) or to create “strEATeries” that enable restaurants to expand outside. Others are converting previously coveted parking spots to create “parklets” for public seating, dining, and/or shopping. These are not new concepts—the worldwide movement to reclaim the streets for people has been outpacing the US for decades. The cars versus people debate is now moot—prioritizing commerce is critical. This extra space will be the lifeline for many small businesses in the coming months.

Municipalities proactively supporting their businesses have passed resolutions loosening zoning and permitting requirements, and eliminating fees to expand into sidewalks, plazas, and other public spaces. Many BIDs are working with municipal officials to strategically close streets and/or convert parking spots (on and off street) into spaces for commerce.

Recognizing that businesses are already struggling financially, some BIDs are also supporting businesses with the purchase of materials to create inviting outdoor spaces. Communities should also be working now to define requirements and procedures that will enable businesses to extend the outdoor season using tents and heaters.

**Placemaking activities**

Downtowns should continue to support their downtown businesses through placemaking activities that reinvent their public spaces for people. Public art, for example, is being used to show support for businesses and essential workers, and for broader community morale. This art is taking many forms, from the relatively simple love notes in business windows, to commissioned building and street murals, and everything in between.

Communities are also stepping up efforts to make their downtowns more welcoming and comforting through planters and additional seating. They are enhancing the perception of safety with thorough and frequent cleaning of high touch areas. Finally, while large street festivals are not in the cards...
this year, smaller events will help draw customers downtown. Many downtowns are getting back to basics through the promotion of sidewalk sales, scavenger hunts, and shopper bingo, setting up small musical acts with portable speakers, and the like.

**Hybrid shopping**

Utilizing the outdoors is just one piece of the puzzle. Even before the shutdown, online transactions were eating away at brick and mortar sales. Smart retailers were already moving into a hybrid sales approach, capitalizing on consumer desire to “shop local” while also using online platforms and social media to promote and sell their goods and services.

The shutdown has hastened the need for small businesses to transition into the digital realm. BIDs are particularly well-positioned to assist, but chambers and local economic development committees should also be proactively helping their business owners by providing training in online commerce and digital marketing, as well as promoting their businesses through their own social media channels. Some BIDs are even working with online commerce sites to create virtual downtowns and obtain bulk discounts for those businesses that join.

Even with the best efforts of BIDs, chambers, and local officials, many businesses are going to succumb to the economic strain of the shutdown and continued reduced capacity. Downtowns need to be prepared for higher vacancy rates than we have seen in many years—much higher than the Great Recession. Many experts liken the downturn to resemble a natural disaster aftermath rather than a typical recession, which would put commercial vacancy rates, on average, in the 30% range statewide.

Whomever is responsible for managing your downtown—BID, chamber, economic development staff/volunteers—they will need to be visible and readily available to existing business owners, landlords, brokers, and potential new tenants. They should amp up efforts already in place during the shutdown and reopening related to placemaking, marketing, and technical assistance.

Towns should also consider facilitating, both through zoning and negotiations with landlords, the installation of pop-up shops to keep storefronts active.

The repercussions of the COVID-19 closures will be felt across all sectors for years to come. Recovery is going to be a slow process—the goal is not to prevent vacancies; it is to mitigate the impact on your downtown and its remaining businesses. With proactive and sustained efforts by BIDs, chambers, and/or the local government, downtowns can recover stronger than ever.

Courtney Mercer is the Executive Director of Downtown New Jersey (DNJ), a non-profit education and advocacy organization dedicated to the revitalization of downtowns. Since social distancing protocols were put in place, DNJ created a COVID-19 resource page and has been hosting regular online forums on a myriad of issues related to downtown and small business concerns. DNJ will also be hosting a panel at the 2020 NJ League of Municipalities Conference continuing the discussion presented in this article with a panel of experts. For more information about DNJ, visit www.DowntownNJ.com.

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**Develop Your Leasing Plan**

Downtowns should take a page from the mall playbook and start working on a leasing plan now.

A leasing plan includes a map providing a visual representation of vacancies in relation to existing businesses, anchors, amenities, and residents (i.e. shoppers).

It describes the demographics and spending power of the retail market area, information about retail leakages, traffic counts, and any other relevant information a commercial broker or potential tenant would find useful.

The plan also provides an overview of each vacant property, including a floor plan (if available) and a description of the physical characteristics, as well as details about zoning and rent.

Creating this plan depends on the cooperation of your landlords, that is why it is important to build those relationships now. Have the tough conversations about rent prices—the rent they could get in February, will not be the rent they can get now.

Don’t waste time chasing after absentee or uncooperative landlords. A proactive plan only helps your landlords—help willing participants first, the others will come along. And if they don’t, tap former and nearby tenants or landlords for missing gaps. They know more about their neighbors than you may think.
Margate City Fire Department
Diving into action during COVID-19 crisis

The Margate City Fire Department (MCFD) was established in 1903. Today a chief, deputy chief, four captains, four lieutenants, and 24 firefighters are assigned evenly between four shifts. We respond to over 2,100 calls a year, including approximately 700 to 800 fire calls and 1,200 to 1,300 EMS calls.

Preparations began as soon as we saw the potential for COVID-19 spreading to South Jersey. During preliminary meetings with public safety departments including police (MCPD), fire (MCFD), and the Office of Emergency Management, we evaluated the needs of each department and prepared for additional supplies and materials such as personal protective equipment (PPE). The fire department met with coordinators several times a week via teleconference.

Both the fire and police departments have continued to operate unimpeded by this pandemic. We instituted training specifically for the MCFD and the MCPD on the proper use of PPE for each incident response.

Reducing potential exposure
To reduce potential exposure to the virus, the MCFD also changed the way that we responded to fire and EMS incidents. This included separating personnel between our two fire stations to allow for social distancing and minimizing contact.

We changed from a two-day, two-night work schedule to a 24-hour work schedule. This limited the potential exposure or contact between personnel, specifically at the change of shifts.

Incident response areas were geographically split down the middle of our city. Station 1 personnel handled calls in one area, and Station 2 personnel covered the other remaining area.

Both stations, however, would respond to every reported fire.

The separation of personnel extended to training as well, as each station adapted and performed individual training drills vs. the norm of having everyone train together.

Even the deputy chief and fire chief separated. I remained stationed at Station 1, and the deputy chief was assigned to Station 2.

Some additional necessary changes included temporarily disallowing assigned vacations or shift trading in order to maintain a full staff and limit exposure to other shift members. This worked well, and we have now recently allowed members to return taking vacation time.

Safe reopening
As expected, City Hall had to close. Upon its opening, we ensured that all the necessary safety precautions were taken, including policies and PPE. Cooperation between departments, supervisors and employees was seamless.

It was imperative to keep the public apprised of changes and updates as they occurred. We communicated ongoing updates and information to our residents and visitors via social media, the Margate City website, and public service announcements.

Through this challenging time, the morale of the fire department has been overwhelmingly positive. The department has done everything possible to assure our personnel of their safety. The best PPE equipment and training has been provided to prepare them for any emergencies or incidents they may encounter.

MCFD could not have accomplished this without the cooperation of our personnel, the MCPD, the Mayor and Commissioners, our city employees, and the community.

We look forward to the day we can return to normal operations or what we will be calling the “New Norm.”

Keeping Spirits Up
The Margate City fulfilled its duties to keep residents safe, but also developed initiatives to keep residents’ spirits up. On Facebook we featured Spotlight Nurses.

In real life, MCFD parades brought cheer to birthdays and raised awareness for childhood cancer.

On Easter we helped the Easter Bunny tour the neighborhood and on Memorial Day we paid our respects at the city’s Veteran’s Monument.

Additionally, we assisted Jewish Family Services with their food pantry. We also served as an escort for delivering caps and gowns to our 8th grade graduates.

On Memorial Day, we travelled to our Veteran’s Monument; this was just a little way for the MCFD to say “We will never forget.”
The new decade, 2020, brought Census partners much excitement. We geared up innovative and creative ways organizations were going to promote the 2020 Census to get a complete and accurate count of their community. But it came to a sudden halt due to COVID-19. However, COVID-19 never stopped the enthusiasm; it just shifted the focus.

Our partners found new and innovative ways to communicate the importance of the 2020 Census through being socially responsible and using safety protocols including PPE, conducting Zoom calls, social media LIVES, car parades, and much more. They kept responsible social distance, shared creative ideas, and continued daily routines with adjustments.

Through all these trials and tribulations, the 2020 Census remained robust, confronting issues and concerns that are directly addressed by completing the questionnaire: funding and resources for hospitals, schools, roads, bridges, and local block grants. One area where Census messaging resonated during the pandemic was in the distribution of community resources.

**Working with hard-to-count areas**

Census community partners played a major role in working with hard-to-count areas. They undertook this responsibility, to provide provisions as well as reminding families the importance of the Census. They noted that the statistics and data produced by the Census directly impacts their ability to obtain the funding to provide services to residents and community members.

Dedicated Samaritans at food banks and food pantries nationwide kicked their operations into overdrive. At an April 21 food bank event, Mimijose “Mimi” Nambo, of the Atlantic City Boys and Girls Club on Sovereign Avenue, and chairwoman, for the Atlantic City Complete Count Committee (CCC), was in attendance to ensure that Census flyers and brochures were distributed along with food pantry bags, particularly in Spanish. She has been more than an active CCC member, she is a prolific, ardent, and outspoken advocate for the Census in her community and spreads the Census message via social media, and other media channels and groups.

The Friends of New Jersey Legacy Foundation’s held a Juneteenth virtual celebration with a Grab & Go component on Sunday, June 21, 2020. Kim Nesbitt produces this event every year. However, due to COVID-19, this year she had to outsource support to local organizations and churches. There were opening remarks from New Jersey Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver and Judge Glenda Hackett.

Approximately 16 churches and organizations participated, including Union Chapel AME Church of Newark. Reverend Anthony Mitchell worked with the U.S. Census Bureau Partnership Specialist, Kevin Derricotte to obtain Census materials, encouraging all attendees to complete their Census. Golden Krust provided a wide variety of meals and the African American Heritage Parade along with the Union Chapel AME Church of Newark sponsored and promoted the event through their social media pages. This effort resulted in over 300 attendees receiving Grab & Go dinners and Census materials.

The North Stelton AME Church of Piscataway with Reverend Dr. Myra Turner Billips and Reverend Dr. Eric R. Billips also worked with Derricotte to obtain Census materials. Since the pandemic, their church extended their regular food pantry service from twice a month to three times with an additional fourth day for the Juneteenth celebration. “Our patrons were very grateful,” stated Reverend Dr. Eric Billips. “On June 20, our in-house catering company J.A&M served about 150 people and on Father’s Day about 350. Business owner Justin Harris from Jus Hot Stuff sponsored hot sauce and volunteered, making the weekend total 300 people served.” The church holds Census and voting seminars urging the community to register to vote and complete the Census.

Starting in August, the Census takers will begin following up with households in select areas that have not yet responded to the 2020 Census, including Trenton, Parsippany, South Plainfield, and Newark.

We need to encourage everyone to pause and complete the 2020 Census for an accurate count that will make New Jersey stronger for the next 10 years.

© Visit www.2020census.gov to complete your questionnaire today.
Marching Ahead with NJ Women Vote

GREER LUCE, Chief Communications Officer, New Jersey Historical Commission

Over 100 years ago, American suffragists were in the midst of a political battle to achieve equal voting rights for women. As the suffrage movement surged forward on the heels of World War I, a pandemic struck. The 1918 “Great Influenza,” also known as the Spanish Flu, killed 675,000 people in the United States and an estimated 50 million people worldwide.

Working as nurses and contributing to a male-dominated labor force weakened by sickness and war, women were at the forefront of combating the Spanish Flu. For many, job opportunities provided independence and a new outlook on the role of women outside of the home. On August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment was adopted to the U.S. Constitution granting American women the right to vote.

One hundred years later we find ourselves in the grip of another devastating pandemic, COVID-19. In response to this current health crisis, many of the in-person events scheduled in 2020 to mark the centennial of the passage of the 19th Amendment in New Jersey have been canceled. NJ Women Vote: The 19th Amendment at 100, the state’s suffrage centennial partnership, has been working hard over the past few months to develop projects and programs that can still deliver on the initiative’s mission and goals in a safe and virtually accessible format.

In addition to considerations of safety, NJ Women Vote is working to provide historical context and a platform for current conversations about racial injustice. The history of women’s suffrage is intertwined with the history of racism in the United States. Black women, who experienced discrimination and ostracization from white suffragists, played a central role in the passage of the 19th Amendment. After 1920, however, equal voting rights did not extend to many Black Americans due to voter suppression, gerrymandering, and other tactics employed by political institutions fueled by racism.

“NJ Women Vote seeks to tell the full and complex story of the women’s suffrage movement while also celebrating the women who lead our municipal, state, and federal government today,” said NJ Secretary of State Tahesha Way, who serves as the initiative’s co-chair alongside NJ First Lady Tammy Murphy.

“This goal will continue to drive our new and innovative programming for the remainder of 2020.”

Celebrations Continue

**Suffrage Solo Slow Roll**
Over the course of August 2020, New Jerseyans are invited to get outside and bike, walk, or drive to local sites along the New Jersey Women’s Heritage Trail while practicing appropriate health and social distancing guidelines. Participants will have the opportunity to post a selfie and caption at each site. Special prizes will be awarded to those who visit the most sites. Campaign registration includes a t-shirt and curated guide to the trail.

**Women’s Equality Day**
NJ Women Vote will host a virtual Women’s Equality Day event, Building on our Past to Pave our Future, on August 26, 2020. Tune-in for a virtual panel featuring a dynamic line-up of women in NJ state government. We invite all New Jerseyans to celebrate the impactful role of women in shaping our state’s past, present, and future. The event will take place from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. and is free to attend with registration.

**Digital Voting Rights Project**
NJ Women Vote is engaging artists and humanities scholars to create digital content that addresses the theme of voting and suffrage, particularly related to New Jersey. Content will be compiled into an online exhibition and hosted on the NJ Women Vote website in advance of the 2020 presidential election.

**It Happened Here: New Jersey Video Series**
NJ Women Vote is sponsoring new episodes of the award-winning video series, It Happened Here: New Jersey, featuring topics in New Jersey voting rights history. Past episodes of the series can be found at www.history.nj.gov.

**Battles for the Ballot: New Jersey Voting Rights, Then and Now Virtual Conference**
NJ Women Vote invites all to the 2020 New Jersey History Conference, Battles for the Ballot: New Jersey Voting Rights, Then and Now, to be held virtually on Friday, November 13. As New Jersey marks the 150th anniversary of the 15th Amendment and the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment—against the backdrop of a presidential election year and a global pandemic—Battles for the Ballot will explore how the right to vote has changed over time and the meaning of participation and representation in a democracy.

To learn more about NJ Women Vote and these upcoming programs, please visit www.discovernjhistory.org/njwomenvote2020/ and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram @NJWomenVote100.
As a family-run, local business, Foley, Inc. understands you, your company and your many challenges. Whether you are just getting back to work or have been working all along, we know these last few months have been uncharted territory for all of us.

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