

From the desk of Vice Mayor Weinroth

2020 Recap

The New Year is a time for resolutions and new beginnings. In ordinary years, we would reminisce about what transpired during the year, while contemplating our hopes and dreams for the New Year.

However, 2020 has not been an ordinary year.

It was January 21, 2020, that the Center for Disease and Control (CDC) confirmed the first U.S. coronavirus case in a resident of Washington State who had recently returned from Wuhan, China.

From there, the virus moved rapidly, and the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global health emergency by the end of January. By mid-March, a pandemic was declared because of its worldwide spread.

Due to the need for isolation, routine activities were suspended to help “flatten the curve” of infections. Schools and businesses were shuttered, recreational activities ceased, and everyone (except essential workers) were asked to stay home.

The impact of “hitting the pause button” on our lives continues to reverberate throughout our community, largely because so many jobs were lost.

The challenge of putting food on the table, paying rent or making mortgage payments has become overwhelming for many who were self-sufficient, resulting in despair and depression for many.

We can take pride in the mobilization of the many volunteers who helped make the pain bearable for the most vulnerable among us. Almost immediately, community volunteers stepped up! Food

drives and feeding sites opened, social media campaigns for assistance were plentiful, and many other initiatives were established to help those in need.

In late March, the federal government approved the Coronavirus Act Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Over \$2 trillion was earmarked to address the economic and social impacts of the pandemic and included steps to mitigate the spread.

The CARES Act provided an infusion of funding into the unemployment system, forgivable loans to businesses predicated on their retention of their employees, and individual stimulus checks.

Palm Beach County received approximately \$260 million in CARES Act funds to be used for pandemic-related expenses. Allocations included testing sites, food supplies, small businesses, broadband infrastructure, and personal protective equipment (PPE). Additionally, funds were provided to the health department, school system, municipalities, cultural and nonprofit organizations.

Probably the most important news of 2020 is the COVID-19 vaccine. There is finally hope on the horizon with the Moderna and Pfizer vaccinations already taking place and others expected shortly. The process of eradicating the virus and ending the pandemic has begun.

It is also important to acknowledge the true heroes of 2020 – our frontline workers and first responders. Thank you to all of them for risking their lives providing essential services to our community.

I would also like to extend gratitude to the county's emergency managers and staff for their dedication and commitment. They have worked tirelessly during the past year in mitigating the virus while keeping our local economy working and providing resources to those in need.

Post-pandemic, we will be a stronger community for having weathered this storm, together!

COVID-19 Vaccine: What we know....

As of this writing, the following is a brief update on the initial phase of COVID-19 vaccine distribution in Palm Beach County.

The Florida Division of Emergency Management and the Florida Department of Health are handling the vaccine Phase 1a rollout that includes the following:

- ***All vaccines will be given free of charge.***
- **Hospital health care workers** - Palm Beach County hospitals are expected to begin receiving deliveries of the vaccine the week of December 21. These vaccines are for the hospital medical personnel and other hospital staff.
- **Nursing homes and long-term care facilities** – CVS and Walgreens are the exclusive providers of vaccinations at these facilities. We have been advised that most of the facilities in the county have been contacted, and vaccinations are starting the week of December 21.
- **Front-line medical personnel, fire-rescue, other healthcare workers**

The county's health department is expecting a limited number of doses next week to begin vaccinating these worker populations with priority for those who administer the vaccines.

As additional doses are received, the county will prioritize law enforcement and other critical workers.

This is a rapidly developing effort with new information coming each day from the state. We will provide updates as they become available.