



Township of Belleville
New Jersey

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Belleville's Businesses, Restaurants Ready to Welcome More Customers Starting Today

State Relaxing Regulations on Outdoor Dining, In-Store Shopping

BELLEVILLE, NJ – June 15, 2020 – The hustle and bustle of shoppers and diners will fill township streets again starting this morning.

It will be a welcomed sight for small-business owners such as Frank Duaksis.

“We are very excited to have outdoor dining on our patio,” said Duaksis, owner of Michael's Roscommon House on Jeralemon Street. “We have enough seating for about 15 tables or 60 people. In the front of the restaurant, we're going to have a bar-like atmosphere where people can walk up and order their drinks and have a seat.”

Belleville, and the rest of New Jersey, is taking the next step on the road to re-opening. With the new cases of COVID-19 dropping and the capacity for testing and contact tracing continuing to expand, Belleville is welcoming back customers to non-essential retail stores and diners hungry for an outdoor experience.

Among other restrictions, restaurants will be required to keep tables at least six feet apart with no more than eight customers at a table. Expect to see plastic shielding erected in areas such as cash registers and bars.

Non-essential businesses will have their own set of guidelines designed to maintain social distancing. For instance, workers will still be required to wear face coverings and floor markings will keep customers six feet apart near the registers.

Mayor Michael Melham and Deputy Mayor Vinny Cozzarelli – both small-business owners in Belleville – helped launch the Belleville Economic Stimulus Taskforce (BEST) at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

By bringing together for the first time members of the Township's business community, BEST holds virtual meetings in which business owners shared information and business strategies as social distancing measures are slowly lifted.

BEST also helped Township's business owners pivot as Gov. Phil Murphy continues to relax some of his executive orders.

For instance, at the behest of some restaurant owners, the Township Council recently adopted ordinances relaxing some outdoor dining seating restriction.

Similarly, the Township Council waived some municipal fees in an attempt to encourage businesses to hold sidewalk sales.

"We have been diligent in supplying our business owners with the most up-to-date information coming out of Trenton," Melham said. "For instance, when the New Jersey Economic Development Authority announced last week that it was making \$45 million available in its Small Business Emergency Assistance Grant Program, we immediately alerted Belleville's business owners."

"The Mayor and Township Council have worked to support the small-business owners in any way we can," Cozzarelli added. "We want them to know that we consider them the lifeblood of our town."

That message rang loud and clear for people like Eddie "The Supplement Guy" Colon, owner of Body Delights. In addition to his sports nutrition boutique, he is planning to open a clothing store specializing in jackets in the fall.

"There's a great spirit here in this Township and the town is behind us 100%," Colon said. "They helped keep us get going when things were slow and business was slow and now, hopefully, things are going to turn around."

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