



Township of Belleville
New Jersey

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Belleville Farmers Market Issued Summons For Failing to Observe Social Distancing Orders

BELLEVILLE, NJ – April 3, 2020 – The operator of a crowded farmers market was issued a summons today for violating Gov. Phil Murphy's executive order to observe social distancing during a state of emergency.

The summons was issued at about 2 p.m. at Garden Farm Market at 345 Franklin Avenue.

Police Chief Mark Minichini said that his department had been receiving complaints that customers inside the market were not keeping the mandatory 6-foot separation from other shoppers.

Office of Emergency Management Coordinator Martin Lutz gave the operator of the market that sells fresh fruit and vegetables a warning about the need to maintain social distancing in response to the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic.

"We got a second complaint, went there and found they were not following the guidelines," Minichini said. "So, OEM Coordinator Lutz issued a summons with the assistance of the Belleville Police."

The summons (A:9-49H) was issued for failure to enforce social distancing requirements during a state of emergency.

Murphy signed Executive Orders No. 107 and 108 on March 21.

No. 107, or the so-called "Stay At Home" Order directs all New Jersey residents to remain home until further notice. The order provides for certain exceptions, such as obtaining essential goods or services, seeking medical attention, visiting family or close friends, reporting to work or engaging in outdoor activities.

No. 108 invalidates any county or municipal restriction that in any way will or might conflict with any of the provisions of Executive Order No. 107.

Murphy declared a state of emergency on March 9 for the whole state, and Belleville declared a local state of emergency on March 17.

More than 100 small-business owners were invited to take part in a teleconference with Belleville Township officials last week. During the conference, Mayor Michael Melham urged business owners to take precautions to ensure social distancing. One suggestion was to put markings on the floor near the checkout area to keep customers spaced out. Another suggestion was to station a worker outside the door who would limit the number of customers that could enter at one time.

“By issuing the summons, it shows we mean business,” Minichini said. “We’re going along with the governor’s order. This is no joke. We want to keep people healthy. We want them to be able to get their essential goods, like food. However, we need to do it in a safe manner. We mean business. If the stores aren’t going to comply, they will be issued a summons. If we have to come back for additional violations, we will shut them down.”

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