

STATEMENT RE THE ANDOVER SUBACUTE AND REHABILITATION CENTER

With respect to the recent developments at the Andover Subacute and Rehabilitation Center, we would like to express our heartfelt sympathy to the families who have suffered loss as a result of COVID-19. Our sympathies are compounded by the fact that patients at the subacute center, like so many throughout the country, have passed away without the presence of their families to provide love and comfort in their final days.

With respect to the information that has now been reported as to the Andover Subacute and Rehabilitation Center, it is important for our residents to understand certain facts and information. By way of background, the center is not owner operated or funded by the Township. It is a private Health Care Facility. The center provides different levels of long-term care and rehabilitation and contains approximately 700 beds between the two facilities. By law, the Township does not have any oversight or jurisdiction over the center. The center, like all similar nursing homes and rehabilitation centers, is licensed by the New Jersey Department of Health. The center must maintain a certain number of doctors and registered nurses on staff available for the treatment of patients. The State routinely conducts compliance inspections and in the case of the Andover Subacute and Rehabilitation Center, their license is presently active and is up for renewal June 1, 2020.

From the perspective of Andover Township, our Emergency Response Team has been on call 24 hours, 7 days a week monitoring the COVID-19 health crisis. On Friday evening, April 10, 2020, the Police Department was notified by the Sussex County Department of Health and Human Services that there were concerns with respect to the conditions at the center. This Police Department reached out to the NJ Office of Ombudsman as well as to the NJ State Department of Health.

On Saturday April 11, 2020, our Office of Emergency Management received an initial request for additional supplies for the facilities. This request was immediately fulfilled along with a site visit during the early morning hours of April 12, 2020 with the assistance of the Sussex County Board of Health and the County Office of Emergency Management.

On April 13, 2020 an anonymous tip was received regarding a deceased body being located within a shed just outside of the facility. A site visit was conducted and upon arrival there was no deceased body located within a shed. While conversing with staff members, it was learned there was assistance needed in temporary storage of the deceased bodies. There were originally 17 bodies within the facility, of which 2 had been transported by a local funeral home, 13 transported via assistance from local EMS

agencies to a refrigeration trailer located at Newton Medical Center and 2 deceased bodies remained at the facility for transport the following day.

This is truly a tragic development and situation that is ongoing at the center, and, while the Township does not have the right to manage or intervene, we have urged the appropriate oversight authority, the State Department of Health, to immediately inspect this facility. The State has intervened and managed similar situations throughout the State over the past 30 days where they have reallocated staffing or patients to address the shortage of medical supplies, equipment and staffing. The State has been emphatic about its sole authority and responsibility in these areas of this emergency. Municipalities have been warned and told by the State that it is within their sole discretion and jurisdiction to manage these facilities and we urge the State Department of Health to take such action. This afternoon the Governor advised that a team has been deployed to the facility and the Attorney General is to conduct an investigation of the events at the facility.

It is also important to know that with respect to the rest of the residents of our community, over 80% of the cases that have been reported in Andover Township are at the isolated location of the Subacute and Rehabilitation Center and over 90% of the reported deaths as a result of COVID-19, are also attributed to this center. As we are well aware, this is a world-wide pandemic and we are grateful to all of our First Responders who have worked diligently to assist and protect the citizens of Andover Township.

We have also been advised by the County Health Department that information relating to the Subacute and Rehabilitation Center, while tragic and heartbreaking, is one which is isolated to the center.

It is important for our residents to know that Andover Township is one of the few municipalities in Sussex County that is fully staffed at every level to provide emergency services to our residents. We are grateful to the team that has been available to our residents in the past and is here to assist our residents in these unprecedented times. That team is comprised of Chief Danielson and the Andover Township Police Department, the Andover Township Office of Emergency Management, the Andover Township Fire Department, the Lakeland Emergency Squad, the Sussex County Department of Health, the Andover Township 911 Center and the Andover Township Administration.

We will continue to monitor the Subacute Center, advocate to the State Department of Health and advise residents as to all matters relating to this State of Emergency. We have been in contact with the owner today and will continue to work with the facility in order to assist.