



Mayor Devra Keenan

Municipal Building
2261 Route 206, Belle Mead, New Jersey 08502-0001

Phone: (908) 359-8211

Fax: (908) 359-3051

E-Mail: mayor@twp.montgomery.nj.us

Website: www.twp.montgomery.nj.us

County Administrator Colleen Mahr
Somerset County
Somerset County Administration Building
20 Grove Street
Somerville, NJ 08876

March 1, 2021

Dear Administrator Mahr:

As Mayor of Montgomery Township during the COVID-19 pandemic, I feel an enormous responsibility to ensure that our residents are vaccinated as soon as they are eligible. I am writing out of concern that the county's use of Raritan Valley Community College as the county's sole vaccination site is not meeting the needs of Montgomery's 23,000+ residents, many of whom live more than 20 miles from RVCC.

On February 17th Montgomery's Health Officer Stephanie D. Carey co-authored a letter to the county health officer, Dr. Namitha Reddy, urging Somerset County to establish a "south county" site as soon as possible, either in Montgomery or Hillsborough. I want to add my strong endorsement of this proposal, and further recommend its location in Montgomery under the management of our health department.

Public health officials must balance two important values in rolling out vaccines—efficiency and equity. While the single site may provide efficiency benefits, it undermines our ability to get the vaccine in the arms of vulnerable people who lack transportation and internet access, particularly those living at great distances from vaccination sites. It is for this equity reason that New Jersey located a "community-based" site in nearby Franklin Township dedicated to residents of the immediate area.

Montgomery Township also has vulnerable populations who cannot reasonably access the RVCC location. We believe there is a compelling case for locating a satellite site in Montgomery, including:

1. Many Montgomery residents live 20+ miles from the RVCC site and there is no public transit heading north toward RVCC for those, particularly the elderly, who lack automobiles.
2. About 32% of Montgomery residents are foreign born, compared to the county average of 25%, and foreign-born residents tend to have more difficulty accessing health resources.
3. Our health department was among the first to hire a vulnerable population coordinator who has already identified over 300 vulnerable residents requiring assistance in obtaining a vaccination.
4. Montgomery Township's Health Department is the only health department in our county with national public health accreditation, and one of only five in the entire state of New Jersey.
5. Our health department has doubled its staff to 14 since the pandemic and is available to dedicate significant resources to a "south county" vaccination site.

6. Through shared services agreements with Mercer County municipalities, Montgomery's Health Department already has administered nearly 600 COVID-19 vaccine doses, while meeting the state's 72-hour administration guideline for 100% of doses administered and collecting race/ethnicity data for 97%. Statewide averages for both statistics are about 80%.

As you know, Montgomery has been a leader in offering shared services to neighboring municipalities, and we would welcome the opportunity to provide vaccines not only to our residents but also to other Somerset County residents, particularly from nearby Hillsborough and Franklin townships and the Borough of Rocky Hill.

In the February 17 letter, which is attached for your reference, we offered three Montgomery locations that would work for a satellite site. They are:

- Montgomery Fire Company Station 45;
- Otto Kaufman Community Center; or
- The facility of a local faith partner.

All of these are in the northern half of the town and hence more accessible to other Somerset County residents. Other locations may be available as well.

Our Health Officer, Administrator, and I are available to meet virtually with key county personnel to talk through the logistical details of our proposal. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Devra Keenan
Mayor, Montgomery Township

Copies to:

Somerset County Commissioner Director Shanel Robinson
Somerset County Commissioner Deputy Director Sara Sooy
Somerset County Commissioner Melonie Marano
Somerset County Commissioner Paul Drake
Somerset County Commissioner Doug Singleterry
Somerset County Health Officer Dr. Namitha Reddy
Montgomery Township Committee
Montgomery Township Administrator Donato Nieman
Montgomery Township Health Officer Stephanie D. Carey
Montgomery Township Board of Health