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First Selectman to Those Gathering in Groups at Darien Parks: Don't You Make Me Shut Them Down

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First Selectman Jayme Stevenson says people using town parks need to avoid gathering in groups to prevent spread of COVID-19 — or she'll have to shut them the parks down, which she said would be a shame.

As of Wednesday, it partly started: The Darien Parks and Recreation Department has already shut down use of tennis and paddle courts at town parks at Stevenson's direction, as announced in this tweet:

"Socially distancing is the most important thing for us to do right now," Stevenson said. "We can stop this virus in its tracks if we all pledge to ourselves and one another that we're going to follow the appropriate social distancing protocols."

Stevenson urged parents to tell their children to stop gathering in groups in their neighborhoods or elsewhere in town, and she said that at this time play dates are a bad idea, as well:

"It would be a terrible thing for any one of us to have the virus, not be symptomatic and transfer it to one of our friends, one of our loved ones, our parents, our grandparents — somebody with a medical condition.

"So please: You cannot gather."

First Selectman's Statement on Gathering at Parks

On Monday, Stevenson discussed the problem with people congregating too closely in groups at town parks and outside the town's schools.

Here's what Stevenson said about at the Monday Board of Selectmen meeting about people congregating at town parks:

Socially distancing is the most important thing for us to do right now. We can stop this virus in its tracks if we all pledge to ourselves and one another that we're going to follow the appropriate social distancing protocols.

I was very proud of our community on Saturday. I drove through the parks and beaches. Everybody was doing a really good job. Lots of families out together. That's wonderful.

However, yesterday [Sunday], there was a lot of news — and I saw — some actual pictures of groups of adults and groups of teenagers and college-age students gathering at our beaches.

Folks, we simply cannot have this.

It would be a terrible thing for any one of us to have the virus, not be symptomatic and transfer it to one of our friends, one of our loved ones, our parents, our grandparents — somebody with a medical condition.

So please: You cannot gather.

I know the governor's guidance is that folks shouldn't be gathering in groups of 50 or more. That's very outdated advice at this point, and I do hope he updates his executive order. The president has recommended not gathering in groups of 10 or more.

At this point, I urge the town of Darien to simply not gather.

This is time that we are forced to be with our families. I think that there's some silver linings and some really beautiful opportunities in that, but in order to keep our community safe, we have to do the right thing, and we have to hold back from having parties and getting together for cocktail parties at the beaches.

And parents, you need to help our children understand in whatever ways meaningful and appropriate for you.

You can't have play dates, and you can't let your kids gather outside in the neighborhood, as much as we'd like that to be happening. Right now, it simply can't.

So I'm really asking for your cooperation in that.

I don't want to close the parks and beaches, but if folks don't follow the rules, I'll be forced to close the parks and beaches. And that would be a shame, because the outdoors is a very therapeutic place for us to be — certainly not today (in Monday's rain) but this weekend was beautiful, and I love seeing people out enjoying the fresh air and all of the wonderful mental health benefits that that brings.

So help me — or help us — out. Keep us safe. Stay at home and don't gather.

Watch the Video

You can watch and hear Stevenson's statement on the park gatherings on this DarienTV79 video from timestamps 16:29 to 18:59:

[Board of Selectmen 3-23-20](#) from [Darien TV79](#) on [Vimeo](#).