May 8, 2020

Mayor Shelley Brindle

Westfield Town Hall
425 East Broad Street
Westfield, NJ 07090

Dear Mayor Brindle:

I am writing to thank you and the Township of Westfield for deciding to reopen the township’s parks and recreation areas to limited activities last weekend. This follows the Governor Executive Order to reopen the State parks and leave it up to the counties and municipalities to open their parks.

Parks offer the opportunity for township residents to relax, have fun, exercise and enjoy the warm weather. Parks also offer a refuge from the stress we are all experiencing during this pandemic. However, the Alliance Center for Independence requests that the parking restrictions at the parks, especially at Tamaques Park, be modified to allow individuals with disabilities with handicapped (more appropriately called accessible parking)placards/plates to park in designated accessible parking spots within the park.

A notice posted on the township’s website indicated that the parking lots will remain closed and parking on the street in residential areas near the park is prohibited. The notice also says “We ask that, in using the parks and fields, you walk or bike to nearby locations as part……” Unfortunately, these policies exclude people with physical and other disabilities, as well as seniors, from enjoying the parks. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, such policies are considered discriminatory towards people with disabilities.

A disabled resident of Union County has contacted Recreation Director, Don Bogardus expressing his concerns, but we wanted to write to you directly to ensure that this situation is resolved very soon. Other consumers of ours have contacted ACI regarding this issue.

The Alliance Center for Independence is a non-profit organization that assists individuals with all disabilities in Union, Middlesex and Somerset counties. We welcome the opportunity to work with you and parks officials on how **everyone** can enjoy Westfield’s parks.

Thank you

Carole Tonks

Executive Director