

## Shoreview Panelists See Bright Spots, Pitfalls of COVID-19 Impact on Jersey Shore

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**Galloway, N.J.** –Jersey shore businesses that could adapt to COVID-19 regulations were able to weather the unprecedented summer season, speakers at the 1<sup>st</sup> annual Jersey Shoreview said during the Zoom webinar Oct. 22 presented by the Lloyd D. Levenson Institute of Gaming, Hospitality and Tourism at Stockton University.

Prospects for the winter and next year, they added, will depend on the status of the coronavirus, consumer confidence, and businesses' ability to continue to be creative and adapt.

“Stay focused and don't give up hope,” said Jim Ziereis, vice president hotel sales, Tropicana Atlantic City. “Creativity will be necessary to move us along.”

The event was moderated by Anthony Catanoso, president and principal owner of Steel Pier in Atlantic City. Panelists were Michael Brennan, executive chef at Josie Kelly's Public House in Somers Point; Vicki Clark, IOM, president of the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce; Oliver Cooke, associate professor of economics at Stockton University and editor of the South Jersey Economic Review; and Jim Ziereis, vice president hotel sales, Tropicana Atlantic City.

The first part of the discussion focused on the summer season that just ended, followed by prospects for next year.

Catanoso cited the frustrations of business owners with the “moving goalposts” of COVID-19 regulations that made it difficult to operate and plan.

“We struggled,” he said, citing the difficulty of finding enough seasonal workers when people might have made more money just collecting the economic stimulus funds.

Ziereis said the inability to offer entertainment and host larger groups was discouraging and events like trade shows may be affected into 2021 as industries work to recover. He said outdoor activities helped, as did internet and sports wagering, but he is hoping 2021 will bring the opportunity for some larger events because customers still like the complete experience at a casino hotel that they cannot get online.

Speakers also said there were some positive trends from COVID-19, such as outdoor dining, which could become a more permanent part of Jersey shore dining and enhance business going forward.

“In the past, Atlantic City did not have as much outdoor dining as other cities like New York,” Brennan said. “I think that will become more part of the new normal.”

Clark said Cape May County did not have as successful season as they had hoped, but did better than expected as some summer homeowners relocated to the shore fulltime and new customers arrived who wanted to stay closer to home.

“When the U.S./Canadian border closed, we lost that business,” Clark said. “But they were replaced by new customers who had never been to the Jersey shore.”

She said camping became very popular, as did outdoor dining, which was helped along by the relaxation of local liquor regulations.

Cooke said from an economic macro level, the summer overall was not great, but was better than it could have been as employment picked up and businesses adapted. He said public health and the progress of the coronavirus and a vaccine will determine the future.

“At the end of the day it is the consumer who decides what they are comfortable with,” Cooke said. “A lot are already comfortable. Others will continue to hold off.”

A video of the hour-long event is posted on the LIGHT website at [stockton.edu/LIGHT](http://stockton.edu/LIGHT).

Jane Bokunewicz, coordinator of the Levenson Institute, said they hope to make the Shoreview an annual fall event to coordinate with the Jersey Shorecast held in the spring.

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