

# Mayor's Update

## COVID-19 Updates and Losses

### Newton Cases

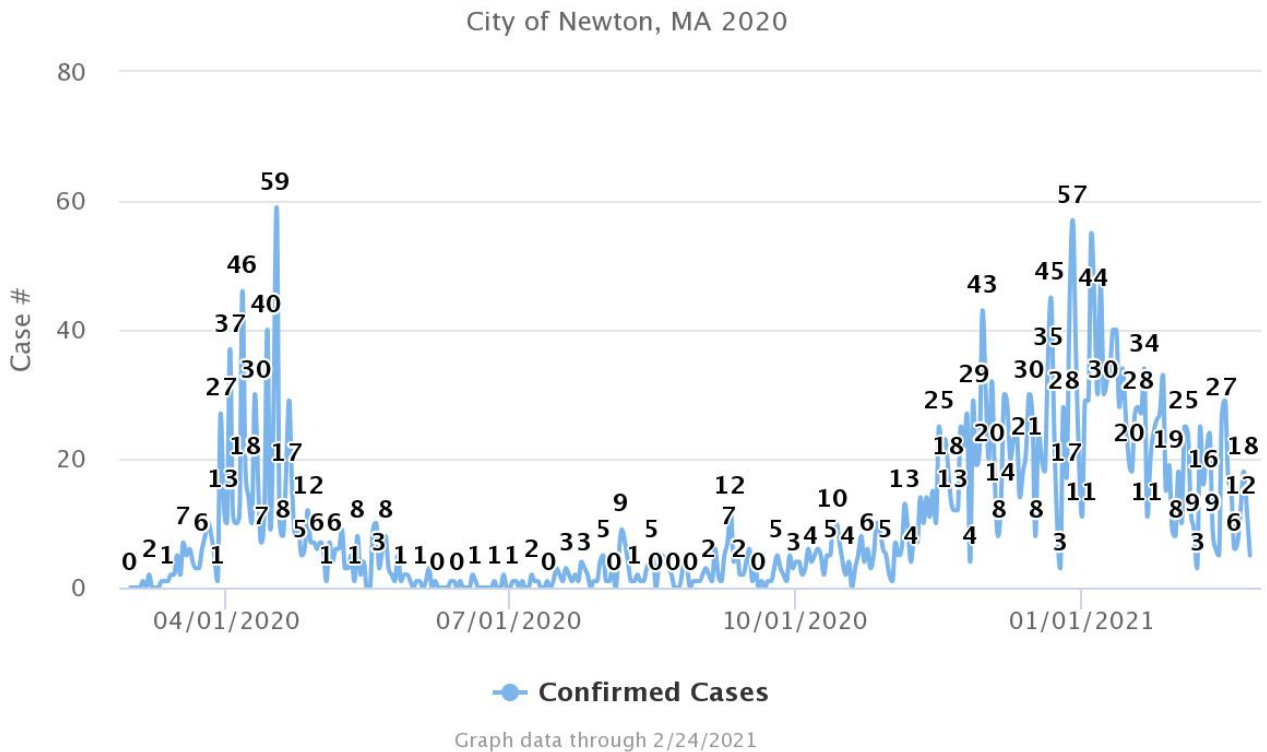
We had 102 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 over the past seven days from Feb. 17 - 24, a slight decrease from the 112 new cases diagnosed among Newton residents last week and a continuation of the positive trend we've been seeing. These additional cases bring Newton's cumulative total to 3,546 people.



Over the two week tracking period from Feb.7 - 20 used by the State for its reporting, Newton had 209 positive cases, compared to 206 during the previous two weeks, and 387 during the two weeks prior to that.

Our incidence rate in Newton held steady, and is again 16.3 cases per 100,000 this week, the same as last week, and down from 20.3 reported during two weeks prior to that.

## Newton COVID-19 Cases



Newton's positivity rate is also again under 1% this week. Of the 35,556 tests administered to Newton residents over the past two week reporting period, 0.66% came back positive. Our positivity rate was 0.74% during the previous

## COVID-19 in Newton

Total Cases  
3,546

Total Deaths  
201

\*As of 2/24/21

two weeks, and 0.84% prior to that. The statewide positivity rate is now 2.15% (with 1.23 million tests performed in Massachusetts during the current two-week reporting period.)

Find more statewide information on the Massachusetts Department of Public Health data dashboard [here](#).

As the numbers statewide are also continuing to improve, today Gov. Charlie Baker announced that next Monday, March 1, the State will allow more capacity in restaurants and other indoor gathering places. This returns us to where we were last October, November and early December (prior to the surge following Thanksgiving). In addition, Gov. Baker announced that on March 22, contingent on sustained improvements in public health data, the state will reopen a range of businesses with capacity limits, including indoor and outdoor stadiums, arenas and ballparks. A variety of other changes will go into effect at event venues and weddings, and in exhibition spaces, convention halls and public settings.

Please know that residents must continue to wear masks and the state's travel advisory and other public health orders remain in effect. Even as we reopen more and some of us get vaccines, all the safety protocols are still essential: wear masks, wash hands, distance physically and stay home when not feeling well.

Read the specifics on the State's reopening plan at [mass.gov/info-details/reopening](https://mass.gov/info-details/reopening).

### Boston College Cases

The Boston College community accounted for 40% of the positive COVID-19 cases in Newton over the past two week reporting period from Feb. 7 – 20 (84 of 209 cases), a slight increase from last week's 36%.

The Boston College [website](#) today shows 24 total positive cases reported starting on Monday, Feb. 22. These cases include those in the BC community living both in and outside of Newton. (BC community members living in dorms on the Boston side of their campus or in off-campus apartments outside Newton are not counted in Newton's data.)

These 24 total positive cases compares to 73 at this time last week and a total of 85 during the week of Feb. 15 – 21. Prior to that, the weekly cases since Winter Break were 95 (Feb. 8 – 14), 48 (Feb. 1 – 7), 75 (Jan. 25 – 31) and 36 (Jan. 1 – 24). We are pleased to see that BC's COVID cases may be heading in a better direction.

Boston College reports its case data [here](#).

### Losses

This morning friends sent me some Purim treats and a note from Congregation Shaarei Tefillah. I reread the note as I thought about the relentless toll wrought by this pandemic, and of news that one more person died with COVID-19 in our City over the past week, bringing our depressing cumulative total to 201. Let me share some of the words written by Rabbi Benjamin Samuels: "Never fail to find sweetness & flavor in life, hold onto faith & hope in times of challenge; exercise an attitude of

gratitude; and redemption begins by building the bonds of friendship, community & a sense of shared destiny.” Thank you Rabbi Samuels.

### Newton Public School Data

We have 16 people in the Newton Public Schools who tested positive for COVID-19 during the seven day period of Feb. 11 – 17, and another 6 who tested positive between Feb. 18 - 24, bringing the cumulative total to 272. This includes 13 students learning in person, 6 staff members working in person and 3 Distance Learning Academy/remote learning students. The Newton dashboard with week by week data is available [here](#).

### Schools Update

Newton Public Schools are in the process of intensively planning for full in-person classes for our elementary schools starting in late March/early April while thinking about the possibilities for our middle and high school students.

Zoom in to the School Committee meeting this coming Monday, March 1 for an update. The meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. Find the Zoom link information [here](#).

### Vaccinations

The State announced this week that it will again provide vaccines to hospitals for clinics, meaning Mass General Brigham (which includes Newton-Wellesley Hospital) will again open the Tripadvisor site next door in Needham as a vaccination clinic for patients.

The State is also continuing to focus primarily on mass vaccination sites, with Fenway Park, the Natick Mall and Gillette Stadium the nearest to Newton.

As such, the state has decided not to provide vaccines to the vast majority of local health departments, including Newton. This means that the Newton Health & Human Services Department is not receiving vaccine supplies for public clinics.

Check eligibility and get more information about vaccines at Mass.gov and make an appointment [here](#).

Get Newton specific vaccine information at [newtonma.gov/vaccine](https://newtonma.gov/vaccine).

With more than 1.5 million people in Massachusetts having received a vaccine, we're beginning to get some questions about what we should do once we've received the second shot.

Here's one of the [Frequently Asked Questions about Vaccination](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website:

*Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have gotten 2 doses of the vaccine?*

*Yes. To protect yourself and others, follow these recommendations:*

- *Wear a mask over your nose and mouth*
- *Stay at least 6 feet away from others*

- *Avoid crowds*
- *Avoid poorly ventilated spaces*
- *Wash your hands often*

*It's important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to help stop this pandemic as we learn more about how COVID-19 vaccines work in real-world conditions. Experts are also looking at how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities. We also don't yet know whether getting a COVID-19 vaccine will prevent you from spreading the virus that causes COVID-19 to other people, even if you don't get sick yourself. CDC will continue to update this page as we learn more.*

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## **Special Election for City Council on March 16**

With 13 days left until the Wednesday, March 10 deadline to request a mail-in ballot for the Tuesday, March 16 Special City Election to fill two City Council seats, just under 3,900 Newton residents have requested mail-in ballots.



The Newton City Clerk's Office will begin mailing ballots to those who requested them starting tomorrow.

Both are at large City Council seats so all voters citywide can participate in the election. You can vote in three different ways.

### Option 1: Vote by Mail

To vote by mail, take two steps.

First, apply to get a ballot by Wednesday, March 10. Find the application to vote by mail [here](#). The completed application can be mailed back to the Newton City Clerk's Office, or dropped in either of the two designated, secure drop boxes in front of City Hall.

Second, when you receive the ballot in the mail, fill it out and return it in the envelope provided. Don't forget to sign the envelope. The completed ballot can be mailed back to the City Clerk's Office, or dropped in either of the two secure, drop boxes in front of City Hall. The completed ballot needs to be returned by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, Tuesday, March 16.

### Option 2: Vote In-Person Early

You can vote early in-person at City Hall on Monday, March 8 through Friday, March 12, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Newton City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Avenue).

### Option 3: Vote In-Person on Election Day

Vote at your polling location on Election Day from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Not sure where you vote? Find your polling location [here](#).

Click [here](#) to see a sample ballot.

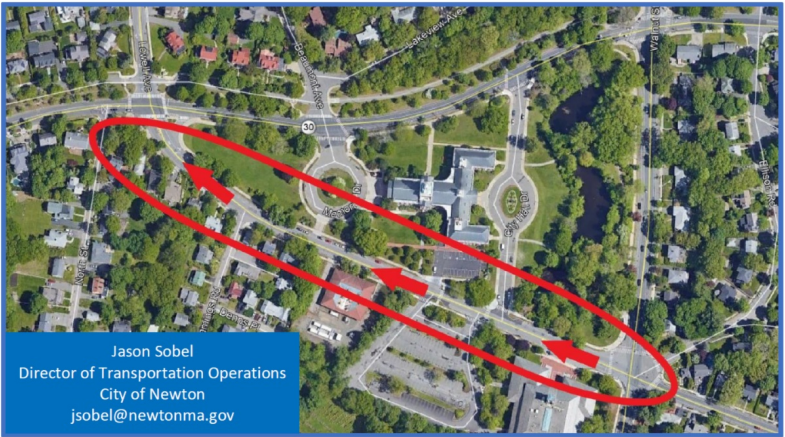
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## **Temporary Changes**



## on Homer Street

The City of Newton is rebuilding the Library parking lot to increase capacity and accessibility, improve drainage, and add solar canopies.



To help patrons with parking during construction, the City would like to

temporarily change a portion of Homer Street to a one-way roadway (essentially one block from Walnut Street to Commonwealth Avenue), so we can create more on-street parking with angled spaces. We are anticipating this temporary one-way roadway will be in place for 8 to 12 months.

Hear more about the plan at a Zoom meeting starting at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 11. Click on the map to register to attend the meeting.

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## Newton AI Fresco 2.0

Given the how much we love our favorite Newton restaurants, how important they are to village life and the difficult year they have endured, we are looking to build upon and expand our efforts to encourage outdoor dining, or as we call it, "Newton AI Fresco."

Last year we moved expeditiously so restaurants could expand seating into their adjacent parking lots and sidewalks, and even into parking spaces directly in front of their establishments. We also created communal outdoor areas in village centers with picnic tables where people could enjoy a take-out meal. More recently, we established a number of 15 minute take-out spaces in village centers to accommodate diners picking-up restaurant take-out meals.

Plans for a spring launch on April 1 include:

- Expanded On-Street Dining Space for Restaurants - Restaurants will now be able to request permission to expand into parking spaces beyond their frontage with written support from their abutting neighbors. Applications to begin the process are available online [here](#). Our Public Works Department and the Licensing Commission will do their best to provide responses within 5 business days. (Restaurants making no changes to their 2020 outdoor dining areas do not need to reapply.)
- Newton AI Fresco Communal Dining - Be on the look-out for big changes and upgrades to our communal dining spots in many of our village centers. Thanks to efforts from our Cultural Affairs Director Paula Gannon and our friends at Newton Community Pride, the City's outdoor communal dining areas will feature artistically painted bistro tables, umbrellas, solar lighting and other artistic elements. Newton AI Fresco sites for the upcoming dining season include:
  - Newton Centre - Newton Centre Green and the Langley "Triangle" Lot
  - Newton Highlands - Rodney Barker Square

- West Newton - Elm Street Parking Lot and Captain Ryan Park
- Newtonville – Austin Street Parking Lot
- Nonantum – Colletti Magni Park
- Expanded Dining on Union Street – Newton’s Economic Development and Planning staff, working in concert with a number of the diverse restaurants on Union Street and our Ward 6 City Councilors Danberg, Bowman and Noel, we have developed a plan for expanded on-street dining areas on Union Street in Newton Centre. The tentative plan, shown below, preserves much of the on-street parking spaces, allows for continuous traffic flow and carves out a few special expanded dining areas for restaurants. To assist with parking turnover in the Union Street area, beginning April 1, police will begin “gentle enforcement” of the two hour time limit for parking. Parking on Union Street and elsewhere in the city still remains free of charge.

### Proposed Union Street Layout



For all things “Newton Al Fresco,” please contact our Director of Transportation Planning Nicole Freedman, [NFreedman@newtonma.gov](mailto:NFreedman@newtonma.gov), who will try to answer any questions.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. COVID-19 has had far-reaching impacts on our older residents. Join District Attorney Marian Ryan for a Zoom discussion about these impacts, including the increase in scams and the impacts of isolation. Register for the webinar at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 16 at [https://actonma.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_hdCeL3tLT9KfKhpT0L7DvQ](https://actonma.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hdCeL3tLT9KfKhpT0L7DvQ) Contact Sheryl Ball at [sball@acton-ma.gov](mailto:sball@acton-ma.gov) or 978-929-6453 for questions or help registering.



P.P.S. Newton's Parlor Performance series is wrapping up with a final concert next Wednesday, March 3, featuring George Russell, Jr. A performer, composer, and educator, George has been recognized with the highest award that Berklee gives to faculty, the Most Distinguished Faculty Award. Tune in at 7:30 p.m. on the [Cultural Development](#) Facebook page for this midweek pick-me-up.

P.P.P.S. Lock your car doors. Yesterday we had a rash of six car break-ins in Newton Highlands. Newton Police are reminding everyone to lock their car doors and remove valuables. Crime data shows us that the overwhelming majority of car break-ins happen when cars are left unlocked.

