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Friday, May 5, 2023

## Mayor's Newton Update



### NewMo Fares Increasing

As I mentioned in my Budget Address on Monday night, we've been looking closely at our shared ride service, Newton in Motion or NewMo.

Overall, it's been highly successful, helping older residents, teenagers, employees, and others with affordable, safe, convenient, and environmentally sensitive transportation at a very affordable rate for the user. We know that many people depend on NewMo for transportation around Newton as well as for medical appointments.

NewMo started as a service for older residents in 2019, our first priority and still our highest. In 2021, we expanded to provide service anywhere in Newton to everyone age 13 and older and we recently celebrated the system's 100,000<sup>th</sup> ride.

NewMo is expensive to operate, however.

We have level-funded the senior portion of NewMo with \$275,000 in the City's operating budget since its inception, and that is not going to change. The rest of the costs – the majority – have been funded by state and regional grants and, to a lesser degree, by developers who offset their traffic impacts with payments to support NewMo.



Knowing how important this service is, especially to our older residents, that some residents would like to see improvements with the system, and that one-time grants are increasingly difficult to secure -- we need to make changes.

One early change is to increase fares.

Beginning on Monday, May 15, NewMo basic fares will increase from \$2 per ride for all riders to \$3 for seniors and \$4 for most other riders. Fares will also be going up for subsidized rides for low-income residents from 50 cents per ride to

\$1.00. (Free rides that had been offered to brand new users were discontinued already.)

A second step is to re-bid the service. Our current contract is in its final year and we want to provide the best service at the best price. We also need the service to be financially sustainable so we will consider a number of models.

We will be working hard on ways to try to maintain and improve the service over the next several months. As we do so, we are especially committed to helping older residents have access to reliable and affordable transportation.

### **Ward and Underwood Elementary Schools: Facility and Enrollment Study Launched**

The Ward and Underwood Elementary Schools both have outdated buildings that are nearly 100 years old in adjoining district [areas](#) on the east side of Newton.

In addition, enrollment at both schools is small and is projected to decline over the next several years. With enrollment at such low levels, educators are concerned about challenges with staffing, scheduling, class sizes and social opportunities that could impact the quality and diversity of students' educational experience.



*(Photo: Ward Elementary School)*

Newton Public Schools initiated the Underwood and Ward Facility and Enrollment Study to look at the future of the two schools. I allocated \$100,000 in ARPA funds to hire consultants, Perkins and Eastman Architects,

who will work with a task force to identify options to address facility, educational and enrollment challenges.

This initiative will provide reports and recommendations for several potential scenarios, including but not limited to:

- Renovation of both schools.
- New construction for both schools.
- Renovation of one school and new construction of the other.
- New construction for the Ward or Underwood Elementary School to be the new home for both schools, resulting in consolidation of the two schools.
- Redistricting Ward and Underwood Elementary School students into other elementary schools.

*(Photo: Underwood Elementary School.)*

As we move forward, first and foremost in our minds will be the best educational outcome for our students.



The initiative will employ a collaborative process with community members to identify feasible short and long-term options to preserve high quality instruction and positive learning conditions for all

Ward and Underwood students while addressing current challenges.

The Task Force will meet monthly. They are open meetings and welcome people to join in. Meetings with staff and parents & guardians at both schools have been scheduled. Community meetings offering opportunity for neighborhood input will also be scheduled. The goal is to have a recommendation to the School Committee by the end of the year in December 2023.

Learn more about the Underwood and Ward Task Force goals, process and timeline, and sign up for updates [here](#). Task Force presentations and meeting minutes will also be posted.

Questions? Email [npsunderwoodwardstudy@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:npsunderwoodwardstudy@newton.k12.ma.us).

*The Newton Police Department introduced their new NPD Autism Awareness Shields at a ceremony on Friday at Captain Ryan Park in West Newton. The seatbelt covers help first responders easily identify someone who may be non-verbal, unable to recognize danger or unable to ask for help. Thanks go to Ginny Gardner and Terry Sauro for launching this program and to State Rep. Kay Khan, Police Chief John Carmichael and retired officer Bruce Apotheker for their help. Pick up a seatbelt cover at Police Headquarters, 1321 Washington Street or at the Mayor's Office in City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Ave.*



*(Photo: With, from left, Bruce Apotheker, Ginny Gardner, State Rep. Kay Khan, Terry Sauro, Patrick Devlin, Police Superintendent George McMains and Lt. Amanda Henrickson.)*

### **Election for City Council & School Committee on Tuesday, Nov. 7**

Voters during this year's Municipal Election on Tuesday, Nov. 7 will elect all 24 members of the City Council and all 8 members of the School Committee. (City Councilors and School Committee members run every two years while Mayoral candidates run every four (and will be on the 2025 ballot).)

Nomination papers for candidates running for these positions became available a few days ago on Monday, May 1.

As of noon today, incumbent Ward 2 Councilor Emily Norton and Ward 6 Councilor Brenda Noel have announced *they will not run for re-election*. Candidates David Micley has pulled nomination papers to run for the Ward 2 Councilor seat and Martha Bixby and Jack Lovett have pulled papers to run for the Ward 6 Councilor seat.

Incumbent School Committee Vice Chair Kathy Shields representing Ward 7 and School Committee member Paul Levy representing Ward 6 have also announced that *they are not seeking re-election*. No candidates have yet pulled papers for these seats.

The following *incumbent City Councilors* have pulled papers to *run for re-election*: Ward 1 Councilor-at-Large Alison Leary and Councilor-at-Large John Oliver; Ward 2 Councilor-at-Large Susan Albright and Ward Councilor Tarik Lucas; Ward 3 Councilor-at-Large Andrea Kelly, Ward 3 Councilor-at-Large Pamela Wright and Ward Councilor Julia Malakie; Ward 4 Councilor-at-Large Lenny Gentile and Ward 4 Councilor Josh Krintzman; Ward 5 Councilor-at-Large Deb Crossley, Ward 5 Councilor-at-Large Andreae Downes and Ward 5 Councilor Bill Humphrey; Ward 6 Councilor-at-Large Alicia Bowman, Ward 6 Councilor-at-Large Vicki Danberg; Ward 7 Councilor-at-Large Marc Laredo, Ward 7 Councilor-at-Large Becky Grossman, and Ward 7 Councilor Lisle Baker; Ward 8 Councilor-at-Large Rick Lipof, Ward 8 Councilor-at-Large David Kalis, and Ward 8 Councilor Holly Ryan.

The following *incumbent School Committee Members* have pulled papers to run for re-election: Anping Shen from Ward 3, School Committee Chair Tamika Olszewski from Ward 4, and Emily Prenner from Ward 5.

Candidates running for the 16 at-large seats on the City Council and all 8 seats on the School Committee must get 150 signatures from registered voters in Newton to appear on the Nov. 7 Municipal Election ballot. Candidates running for the eight ward seats on the City Council need 50 signatures from people living in the ward they will represent.

Candidates must live in the Ward they are running to represent. Voters from across the City elect two at-large City Councilors from each ward and one member of the School Committee. Ward Councilors are elected by voters in their ward only.

Candidates have until 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 25 to return their signatures to the City Clerk's Office. Election staff in the City Clerk's Office then have until 5:00 p.m. on Aug. 8 to certify that each candidate has the required number of signatures from registered Newton voters in order to appear on the election ballot.

Interested in running? Find more information [here](#).

**A Message from Newton Police**



I want to share a synopsis of community alert from the Newton Police Department:

### **Area Students Participating in "Senior Assassin" Game**

*Could you guess which is the real gun in the photos below from 5 to 10 feet away?*



*A few days ago, our police officers were dispatched to an area playground for a report of a "male party coming out of the woods carrying what looks like a firearm." At the time of the report, between 25 to 40 children were playing in the area.*

*Our patrol officers quickly located the person, a juvenile Newton resident, that was in possession of a "Glock" style pistol water gun. The juvenile responded responsibly to officer commands and explained they were playing in a "Senior Assassin" game. This game is a form of hunt/hide and*

*seek/tag that uses water guns to hit targets.*

*What may seem like a fun game can turn extremely dangerous and create fear in community members if participants use what appear to be real guns.*

*We thank the caller for being vigilant and showing concern for the numerous children playing in the area yesterday, our patrol officers for their swift and professional response, and the juvenile and their parents for understanding the seriousness of the situation.*

*We ask that parents talk with your children about the potential dangers associated with this game and not allow the use of any water guns that could be mistaken for a real gun/firearm.*

*Let's work together to keep our community safe!*

### **Fair Housing Awards**

Yesterday we gathered at City Hall to honor two outstanding residents with the Sheila Mondschein Fair Housing Award.

*(Photo: With, from left, Ted Hess-Mahan, Kathy Laufer and Esther Schlorholtz.)*

With Newton Fair Housing Committee Chair Esther Schlorholtz, members of the committee, City Councilors, and Newtonians passionate about fair housing, we honored Ted Hess-Mahan and Kathy



Laufer. Ted and Kathy have spent decades working to make housing and our City more equitable and welcoming for all people. They have committed themselves to the goal of the landmark 1968 *Fair Housing Act* which makes it illegal to discriminate against a person in the purchase, sale, rental or financing of housing.

Over the past six years, Newton's Housing and Community Services Director Amanda Berman has also been a tireless champion for affordable and fair housing. I am grateful for all she accomplished here in Newton. We will miss her, and I wish her well as she leaves City Hall to spend more time with her young children and to start her next chapter.

Warmly,

Ruthanne



P.S. Join Newton Social Services and Youth Services staff next Wednesday, May 10, for a workshop on **Supporting Communication: A Mental Health Workshop for Teens & Parents**. Teens and their parents/caregivers will be together to explore healthy communication.

Co-hosted by Samaritans, the workshop runs from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Newton Free Library, Druker Auditorium, 330 Homer Street. Click [here](#) to register.

P.P.S. Calling all bike riders in grades K to 6 – join the **Bike Skills Rodeo**, this Sunday, May 7, at Newton South High School from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Review bike skills and learn new ones with Massachusetts Safe Routes to School instructors and at stations staffed by volunteers from Bike Newton and Newton Safe Routes to School. Register in advance through the Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture Department [here](#). (Photo: Last year's Bike Rodeo).



P.P.P.S. Join International Jewish Music Festival winners **Ezekiel's Wheels Klezmer Band** and world-renowned dance leader Avia Moore for an evening of dancing, burgers and more on Friday, May 19 from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. at the Hyde Community Center bandstand, 90 Lincoln Street, Newton Highlands. Whether a veteran Yiddish dancer or someone who's never even seen a Yiddish dance step,

all are invited to join hands and dance the night away.

P.P.P.P.S. The **Newton-Needham Pan Mass Challenge Kids Ride** is back in person on Sunday, May 21 from 8:00 to 11:30 a.m. for ages 2 to 15. Have fun on a one-mile loop and a tot loop through Newton's Wells Avenue Office Park and help raise money for cancer research & treatment at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Get more information (including a virtual option) and register [here](#).



P.P.P.P.S. The Lasell University women's basketball program is offering **basketball skills clinics** on Tuesday evenings in May. Sessions run from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. for students in grades 3 to 8, and from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. for high school students. Sessions are \$30 each. Click [here](#) to sign up and find more information about other skills clinics offered at Lasell.



Mayor Ruthanne Fuller | 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459

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