

Friday, June 9, 2023

## Mayor's Newton Update



### Village Center Zoning

We're at an exciting time when the City Council is on the cusp of making a substantive update to the City's zoning ordinances.

Staff in our Newton Planning Department, with the help of experts in urban design and the economics of development, have engaged for two plus years with residents, businesses and City Councilors, especially Zoning and Planning Committee (ZAP) members, on ways to improve zoning for our village centers.

City Councilors and staff have the shared goals for the rezoning of fostering community, allowing more housing, addressing climate change and pumping new vitality into the heart of Newton's villages.

In the midst of our work, the State passed a MBTA Communities rezoning law to address the high cost of housing and a shortage of 200,000 units in Massachusetts. The state law requires communities along the MBTA to create zoning districts with close proximity to the MBTA stations where multi-family housing is to be permitted *by right*.

Newton, with 3 commuter rail stations and 7 T stations on the Green Line, is in the first group of communities that must comply – our deadline is Dec. 31, 2023. The City Council must adopt the MBTA compliant zoning by the end of this year.

This law is not a choice that communities can decide to opt in or out of. Attorney General Andrea Campbell issued an advisory in March that made it clear that adherence to the law is mandatory.

Under this state law, the City of Newton must have voted on by right multi-family housing zoning “capacity” (see below) to allow 8,330 housing units by the deadline of Dec. 31, 2023. (Multi-family means a building with 3 or more units.) The State determined the number of new units that new zones must accommodate (8,830 units).

In the next few weeks, the City Council Zoning and Planning Committee will be holding **two important public meetings** on the proposed zoning. Join us to hear details about the plan as well as give your input.

The Planning staff will present information about the zoning proposal to the City Council on Tuesday, June 20 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

On the following Monday, June 26 starting at 7:00 p.m., ZAP will open a formal public hearing on the rezoning proposal. City Councilor and ZAP Chair Deb Crossley has indicated that the public hearing will remain open and be continued to the fall for further opportunity for comment.

Both meetings can be attended in person or on zoom. Find the information on how / where to attend or speak [here](#).

These are important zoning changes that the City Council will decide by the end of this year. They present an incredible opportunity for us to shape our City’s future.

To help explain this initiative, its goals, and anticipated outcomes for the proposed zoning, I worked with the Planning Department staff to provide some Q&A in advance of the upcoming meetings.

*What was the impetus for looking at new zoning for our village centers?*

Newton’s village centers are critically important to our quality of life. They also offer so much in the way of opportunity to meet Newton’s housing, climate, transportation, economic development, arts & culture and community gathering goals. These opportunities are more difficult to achieve because our current zoning framework for Newton’s village centers makes it hard to have housing above stores (think of 28 Austin Street in Newtonville where housing is located above Henry Bears Park toy store and Café Nero but required a special permit

rather than being done by right). This type of “mixed use” zoning is historically desirable and is great for both the occupants of the housing (often smaller units and therefore more affordable living, close to stores and transit) as well as for the surrounding village businesses (which benefit from a larger customer base).

#### *What is an Overlay Zoning District?*

The proposed updated zoning uses a village center “overlay zoning district” which is layered on top of our existing zoning districts. A property owner may choose to build under the existing zoning or opt into the overlay district; if opting into the overlay district, then more housing can be built but with its own set of design standards.

#### *What design standards would be required of new buildings in the Village Center Overlay Districts (VCOD)?*

The proposed zoning encourages incremental growth by limiting the maximum building footprint in each district, regardless of lot size. This ensures that new buildings will not be out of scale with existing buildings. The proposed zoning also limits heights and the uppermost story to a half story. Design requirements include a top story set-back or a pitched roof option, wider sidewalks, new public open space on larger projects, ground floor retail with transparent storefronts, larger setbacks next to residential districts, and screening for parking and dumpsters as well as prohibits parking in front of buildings, limits on the location and number of new driveways, and provides incentives for design features like bays and balconies.

#### *What village center areas are included in the proposed village center overlay districts and why were they chosen?*

The focus of the proposed zoning has been centered around 12 of our village centers with established commercial/retail districts and that could both appropriately accommodate and benefit from future incremental housing development (Auburndale, Four Corners, Lower Falls, Newtonville, Newton Centre, Newton Corner, Newton Highlands, Nonantum, Thompsonville, Upper Falls, and Waban). The zoning proposed for each village center was carefully developed to take into account the unique geography and scale of each commercial district.

In total, the area being considered for new zoning is 3.5% of Newton's total land area.

*What size buildings would be allowed in each of the proposed zones?*

In general, building heights would be capped at four and a half stories (set-back for the top floor) on main commercial streets, with some exceptions for buildings with higher percentages of affordable units.

The exact dimensions of what size buildings would be allowed in particular zones and what they might look like can be found [here](#).

*How does the proposed Village Center Overlay Zoning align with the MBTA Communities Law?*

As one of the communities served by the MBTA and classified as such by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, the City of Newton must have multi-family housing zoning “capacity” (see below) to allow 8,330 units by December 31, 2023. The proposed Village Center Overlay District (VCOD) zoning would bring Newton into compliance with this law. More information can be found [here](#).

*If this zoning is adopted, how many housing units would likely get built and when?*

Newton currently has approximately 10,000 units of multi-family housing and another 2,500 units permitted, but not yet built (over half of which are currently on hold due to the economic cycle we're in). (Altogether, we have approximately 33,000 units of housing, most of which are one-family homes.)

Using the MBTA's formula for full-build out capacity, Newton's proposed MBTA compliant district would have a zoning capacity for 10,000 additional units.

At first blush, that number sounds like a lot. However, it is really important to understand that what could conceivably get built is extremely unlikely to all get built. The MBTA formula of 8,330, for example, assumes every single parcel is a

clean slate with no building on it and is redeveloped with the maximum possible number of housing units and zero parking spaces.

In the past 20 years, with an extremely favorable economic climate and incredible housing demand, just over 1,300 units of multi-family housing have been built in Newton.

Zoning provides the framework of what would be allowed to be developed on a given property. The actual decision to redevelop a property and the timing associated with it have always and will continue to be incremental.

*How would the zoning affect the Newton Public Schools and other City services?*

We welcome the opportunity for families to move to Newton and educate their children here especially as the number of NPS students have been declining and are expected to decline even more.

We also know that recent multi-family developments have not added many school-aged children to our classrooms. For example, at Trio in Newtonville on Washington Street with 140 units of housing, there are 18 students enrolled in the Newton Public Schools.

We also know that new housing takes years from moving from a concept to actual housing, which allows us to coordinate closely with the Newton Public Schools and plan accordingly for any new students.

The City has sufficient water supply and sewer capacity through the MWRA and we are currently well into both a water and sewer line upgrade and replacement program throughout the City.

In addition, this is village center rezoning, locating housing near public transportation and resulting in less dependency on driving, putting less burden on our roads. We're focusing on a built environment that is safe for driving, walking, riding and rolling and that is attractive to a lot of different types of residents.

*Will there be any affordable housing requirements associated with the proposed zoning?*

Any housing development of more than 6 units in the proposal would be required to provide from 15% to 20% of the units be made permanently affordable. The proposed village center zoning also would provide a building height bonus for projects providing 25%-30% of the units as affordable. More information on housing affordability can be found [here](#).

*If I own property in a proposed zone, where can I find more information?*

The Planning Department has prepared a lot of materials on the proposed zoning, including a series of informational briefs, all of which can be found on the City website [here](#).

The Planning Department welcomes inquiries, including from property owners in a proposed zone. You are welcome to call 796-1140, come in to City Hall Room 202, or email our staff at [Zoningredesign@newtonma.gov](mailto:Zoningredesign@newtonma.gov).

\*\*\*\*\*

I am proud of the efforts of the Planning staff and the City Council Zoning and Planning Committee members who have so thoughtfully updated our zoning so we can achieve so many of the City's larger goals, have well designed housing for older residents downsizing, young adults coming home after college, or families seeking a safe, welcoming community with great schools. The zoning enhances our village centers and helps our small businesses. The zoning also allows us to achieve the City's compliance with the important goals of the Massachusetts MBTA Communities Law. This helps with congestion and moves us towards climate sustainability. I'm excited.

### **Commissioner of Inspectional Services Anthony Ciccariello**

I am pleased to promote Deputy Commissioner Anthony Ciccariello to the position of Commissioner of Inspectional Services.

Anthony will succeed John Lojek who is retiring as Commissioner of Inspectional Services on June 30 after 18 years of outstanding service to our City. Over those 18 years, Commissioner Lojek's leadership transformed our Inspectional Services into a professional, knowledgeable, responsive department through his own

efforts and, in part, because he had just the right person serving as his Deputy for the past 6 years, Anthony Ciccariello.

*(Photo: With newly promoted Commissioner of Inspectional Services Anthony Ciccariello to my left and members of the ISD staff.)*



Anthony has the professional qualifications, personal qualities, breadth of experience, and depth of knowledge needed to take the next step and run this important and very active department. The Commissioner ensures all building in our City is done safely and legally in accordance with federal, state and local regulations, oversees a staff that issues approximately 10,000 permits annually, and collaborates intensely and daily with a wide variety of people and staff across City departments.

Anthony is a person of integrity. He is fair and balanced. He is accessible, approachable and calm, even unflappable. He is respectful of the wide variety of people with whom ISD interacts. He has the respect and trust of department staff. He is a hard worker. He is smart. He is curious. He stays on top of new building code issues, including those related to energy.

Let me give two specific examples of Anthony's excellence. Since assuming the role of Deputy Commissioner and serving as the Department's Plans Examiner, he has issued every new commercial building, large addition, and new home permit in the City. This includes city projects such as schools and other public buildings. Anthony knows our code and all its ambiguities. He says "no" when necessary in a respectful way and works with a wide cross section of people to help them find a safe and legal way to "yes."

Anthony also played a pivotal role on the team that implemented our state-of-the-art online permitting and management information system, NewGov. This is a massive undertaking, streamlining and simplifying the permitting process by allowing residents, contractors, and businesspeople to apply for building approvals, work permits and licenses online. NewGov has also been a huge step forward for transparent information sharing, making the history and progress of work being done across Newton readily accessible to anyone anytime.

To make this important decision about the next leader of Inspectional Services, I invested a significant amount of time listening to a wide range of people about the strengths and challenges of our Department of Inspectional Services, and the characteristics of that our City needs in our next Commissioner. This group spanned builders, lawyers, architects, and other professionals with whom the Department and the Commissioner often interacts. I also spoke with the many people internally that our Commissioner and Department coordinates and collaborates with, such as department heads and other key staff. Lastly, but very importantly, I sought valuable feedback from the very staff our Commissioner supports and manages. In addition to the long process of seeking this feedback, Anthony also met with key leaders within our organization to discuss his interest and goals for this position and the Department. These conversations were helpful.

The City of Newton is in a wonderful position because we had just the right person as our Deputy, and we will be so well-served as he becomes our Commissioner. I look forward to the City Council confirmation process in the coming weeks.

*We cut the ribbon on the new “butterfly” community pavilion at Cabot Park on Saturday, celebrating the successful collaboration between the City of Newton and the Mass College of Art and Design and its Community Build Studio. Special thanks to Newton resident and Mass College Professor Paul Hajian. Find more information on how to reserve the pavilion [here](#).*

*(Photo: With Graduate Dean Lucinda Bliss, Director of Facilities Howie Larosee, Professor Paul Hajian and graduate students Luke Pinkham, Jessica Smillie, Ashley Seiderman, and Jean-Sébastien Vachon)*





### **More Candidates Pull Papers for City Council & School Committee Election**

Several more candidates have pulled nomination papers to run in the Tuesday, Nov. 7 election since we last reported the information. The November 2023 election is for all 24 members of the City Council and all eight elected members of the School Committee.

City Council and School Committee members are elected every two years; School Committee members have a four term limit or 8 years. (The City Council (and the Mayor) have no term limits.) The Mayor, who also sits on the School Committee, is elected every four years and will be on the ballot in 2025.

Incumbent Ward City Councilors Emily Norton in Ward 2, Chris Markiewicz in Ward 4 and Brenda Noel in Ward 6 have announced they are *not running for re-election*.

As of noon today, Candidate Daniel Gaynor has pulled papers to run for Ward 2 Councilor, joining David Micley. Doris Ann Sweet and Bruce McVittie have pulled papers to run for Ward 4 Councilor, and Paul Coletti pulled papers to run for Ward 5 City Councilor.

Incumbent School Committee member Cove Davis representing Ward 8 has announced she will not seek re-election, joining Vice Chair Kathy Shields representing Ward 7. School Committee member Paul Levy from Ward 6 who had previously announced he would not run again recently announced he will run, and has pulled papers to seek re-election.

Stefanie Solomon has pulled papers to run for School Committee from Ward 7 and Barry Greenstein pulled to run from Ward 8.

In summary, 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 and Ward Councilor Maria Greenberg;

Ward 2 Councilor-at-Large Susan Albright and Councilor-at-Large Tarik Lucas;

Ward 3 Councilor-at-Large Andrea Kelley and Councilor-at-Large Pamela Wright and Ward Councilor Julia Malakie;

Ward 4 Councilor-at-Large Lenny Gentile and Councilor-at-Large Josh Krintzman;

Ward 5 Councilor-at-Large Deb Crossley and Councilor-at-Large Andreae Downes and Ward Councilor Bill Humphrey;

Ward 6 Councilor-at-Large Alicia Bowman and Councilor-at-Large Vicki Danberg;

Ward 7 Councilor-at-Large Marc Laredo and Councilor-at-Large Becky Grossman, and Ward Councilor Lisle Baker;

Ward 8 Councilor-at-Large Rick Lipof and Councilor-at-Large David Kalis, and Ward Councilor Holly Ryan.

The following *non-incumbents* have pulled papers to run for Ward Seats on the City Council:

Ward 2, David Micley and Daniel Gaynor; Ward 4, Doris Ann Sweet and Bruce McVittie; Ward 5, Paul Coletti; Ward 6, Martha Bixby (Jack Lovett who pulled

nomination papers has announced he is not running); and Ward 8, Stephen Farrell.

The following *incumbent School Committee Members* have pulled papers to *run for re-election*: Rajeev Parlikar from Ward 1, Chris Brezski from Ward 2, Anping Shen from Ward 3, Tamika Olszewski from Ward 4, Emily Prenner from Ward 5, and Paul Levy from Ward 6.

The following *non-incumbents* have pulled papers to run for the School Committee: Stefanie Solomon in Ward 7 and Barry Greenstein in Ward 8.

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](#).



*Franklin Elementary School Principal Mark Chitty, teachers and staff met this week with Commissioner of Public Buildings Josh Morse and members of the Franklin Elementary School design team for a visioning session on plans for a new school. The meeting was an opportunity for them to provide input and help shape the design for a new Franklin School. With support from voters in March who voted “yes” for the debt exclusion to fund the project, plans are moving forward with a groundbreaking expected in the summer of 2025.*

## Newton *Thrive* Kicks Off June 13

We're excited to kick off *Newton Thrive*. Our economic mobility initiative in partnership with EMPATH (Economic Mobility Pathways) is having an informational meeting on Tuesday, June 13 for service professionals and interested residents.

I seeded this initiative with funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to provide under-resourced families disproportionately impacted by the pandemic with individual, intensive support for economic stability and mobility.

Join us. Come learn about the new initiative that offers eligible Newton families the opportunity to receive two years of one-on-one mentoring, \$250 of monthly cash assistance and more from program leaders and a current EMPATH program participant.

Families must live in Newton, be pregnant or have children 18 years of age or younger and have an income at or below 50% of the median area income (\$70,100 for a family of four) to be eligible for this program. In addition, participants must be interested and able to work in the U.S. and be willing to meet with a mentor regularly in-person or virtually.

The child-friendly June 13 meeting is in-person from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Weeks House, 7 Hereward Rd., Newton Centre.

Learn more about the initiative and RSVP to attend the meeting at [empathways.org/newton](https://empathways.org/newton).



**NEWTON THRIVE**  
Newton's Economic Mobility Initiative

*In partnership with*

**EMPATH**  
Economic Mobility Pathways

A new program that offers eligible Newton families the opportunity to receive 2 years of **one-on-one mentoring, \$250 of monthly cash assistance, and more!**

To be eligible, you must:

- Live in Newton, MA
- Have children under 18 in your household or be pregnant
- Be 18-60 years old
- Have an income at or below 50% of the area median income (AMI)
- Be interested & able to work in the U.S.
- Be willing to meet with a mentor regularly, in-person or virtually

Scan the QR code below or visit [empathways.org/newton](https://empathways.org/newton) to learn more!

Unable to attend the meeting but want to learn more? Click [here](#). Questions? Email: [newton@empathways.org](mailto:newton@empathways.org).

## The Rituals of the End of the School Year

This was a week of school year end rituals from thanking our school crossing guards (including Joan Leary, 35 years on the job, including at Franklin) and van & bus drivers who help get our students to and from their classrooms safely, to being grateful to have the chance to shake the hand of every member of the Newton North and Newton South Classes of 2023 as they received their diplomas. I had a photo with NSHS Class of 2022 graduate U.S. Marine Mitch Friedman who was cheering on his younger brother, Parker, a member of the, NSHS Class of 2023, along with their dad, Ben, a member of the NSHS Class of 1989.



In between, I finally got to meet my Williams Elementary School 5<sup>th</sup> grade pen pal Aaron in person (who happened to be the Principal for the Day!).

As the Class of 2023 celebrates, underclass members are going through another year end ritual, preparing for their final exams.

Just in time for high school finals, the Newton Free Library will open for extended hours until 11:00 p.m. for **Teen Study Nights** on Monday, June 12 through Wednesday, June 14. The library will have school supplies on hand, special de-stressing activities, and snacks including bagels, ice cream and pizza. Newton

Police Dog Leo will make special appearances and students can take a break from studying to join the [Typewriter Poetry Group](#) on Tuesday, June 13 from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. and use old-school typewriters to write poems on the spot for library patrons. Find more info [here](#).

Thank you to our educators, staff, traffic supervisors and drivers, congratulations to all our graduates, and good luck to everyone taking finals in the coming weeks.

Warmly,

Ruthanne



P.S. Come together to **celebrate Juneteenth**. The celebration marks the emancipation of enslaved Americans. Enjoy all age friendly activities including food, music, and dance at the Hyde Playground, 90 Lincoln Street, Newton Highlands on Monday, June 19 from noon to 4:00 p.m. Thanks go to our many hosts— Families Organizing for Racial Justice (FORJ), the Newton Coalition of Black Residents, Myrtle Baptist Church, the Newton Indigenous Peoples Day Committee, CAN-DO, Newton Youth Success

Collaborative, the Harmony Foundation, Newton Upstanders and the City of Newton Human Rights Commission.

P.P.S. Make our community even safer by turning in unwanted guns at the **Newton Gun Buyback** on Saturday, June 24, 9:00 a.m. to noon. The event is hosted by the Newton Police Department, the Middlesex County Sheriff's Office and the Newton Gun Violence Prevention Collaborative at 196 Jackson Road, Newton. Grocery gift cards from \$25 to \$200 will be given for each firearm. (The previous Newton Gun Buyback was pre-pandemic in 2019 when 46 firearms and



## NEWTON GUN BUYBACK

Hosted by the Newton Police Department, Middlesex Sheriff's Office, and the Newton Gun Violence Prevention Collaborative

**Saturday, June 24**

9 am – 12 pm

196 Jackson Road, Newton  
(old Aquinas College parking lot)

**Make our communities even safer  
by disposing of any unwanted guns!**

approximately 2,500 rounds of ammunition were turned in.) The Newton Police Department is also providing free gun locks during the month of June. For more information about obtaining a free lock, contact Lt. Amanda Henrickson at 617-796-2103 or [ahenrickson@newtonma.gov](mailto:ahenrickson@newtonma.gov).



P.P.P.S. As part of Pride Month, come **celebrate Queer Culture** at City Hall on Saturday, June 17 from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00p.m. to learn about Queer Culture through history, art and conversation in a welcoming environment. The celebration is presented in partnership with City of Newton Health and Human Services, the

Newton Human Rights Commission and the Youth Commission, Lasell University, and the New Art Center. Events will include an art display, music, a resource fair, a panel highlighting queer high schoolers of color, and more.



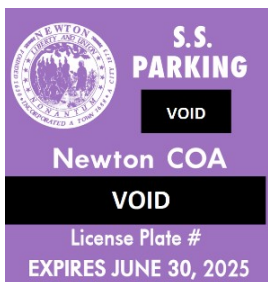
P.P.P.P.S. The **Newton Farmers' Market** is back at Cold Spring Park on Tuesdays and at Newton North High School Lowell Street lot on Saturdays starting the week of June 18 through mid-October. Shop for farm fresh vegetables, free range turkey, dumplings, sweets and so much more. The Cold Spring Market on Tuesdays at 1094 Beacon Street begins on June 20 and is open every week from 1:30 to 6:00 p.m.

The Saturday market at Newton North, 352 Lowell Avenue, begins on June 24 and is open from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Find a list and schedule of vendors [here](#).

P.P.P.P.P.S. Take a walk with the Friends of Hemlock Gorge and Newton Conservators on Sunday, June 11 from 10:00 a.m. to noon for a guided tour to **explore Hemlock Gorge**. Visit the historic Echo Bridge, learn the history of the area and enjoy the stunning views. (Note that the walk includes some steep slopes and uneven terrain.) Meet at the Hamilton Place entrance parking lot off Central Avenue on



the Needham Side of the Charles River. Parking is also available in the Mills Falls lot at the intersection of Chestnut and Elliot Streets.



P.P.P.P.P.S. A reminder that the current blue **Senior Parking stickers** expire at the end of this month on Friday, June 30. New red stickers allowing residents age 65 and over to park for free in the City’s municipal parking lots (with some restrictions) are available for purchase at \$6 per vehicle through our Department of Senior Services. Click [here](#) for instructions, and call Senior Services at (617) 796-1675 if you have any questions. The new stickers are valid

for two years through June 30, 2025.

P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Rock to the Beatles, Crosby, Stills & Nash, Bob Dylan and many more sung by the hugely talented **Highland Glee Club** and a full live band at *Love In '23* on Saturday and Sunday, June 17 and 18. The concerts begin at 7:00 p.m. each night at the Hyde Bandstand, 90 Lincoln Street, Newton Highlands. (The concerts are free. Donations are gratefully accepted.)



P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Join me and The Newton Elks on Wednesday, **Flag Day**, Wednesday, June 14 outside the War Memorial at City Hall to celebrate Old Glory and all that the stars and stripes stand for.

**Previous P.S.s Happening Soon**



P.S. **Historic Newton's Mary Morganti's Annual Plant Swap**, Saturday, June 10, 10:00 a.m. to noon at the Durant-Kenrick House and Grounds, 286 Waverley Ave. Find more info [here](#).

P.P.S. Lots of free fun for all ages, including touch-a-truck with the Newton DPW and Fire Department, at the **Newton Highlands Village Day**, Sunday, June 11, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Lincoln Street.



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

[Unsubscribe jmulvey@newtonma.gov](mailto:unsubscribe_jmulvey@newtonma.gov)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by [rfuller@newtonma.gov](mailto:rfuller@newtonma.gov) powered by



Try email marketing for free today!