

Thursday, Aug. 31, 2023

Mayor's Newton Update

NewCAL Construction Costs - Ouch

Public Buildings Commissioner Josh Morse has the following update about the new senior center:

We are looking forward to the construction phase of our new senior center, NewCAL.

The Public Buildings Department has been working with the NewCAL project team over the past few months to prequalify and solicit bids for the construction of the new facility. Close to a hundred file sub bidders (a.k.a., trades) submitted their bids. There were seven general contractors who submitted their qualifications, and four of them were selected to submit bids to construct the new facility. All four general contractors expressed interest in submitting bids throughout the process.



Tuesday was the date the general contractor bids were due. Unfortunately, we only received one bid and that bid was significantly higher than our professional cost estimates. We have since spoken with the other three general contractors, and we have every reason to believe that by rebidding the project we will receive additional bids that are much more competitive and significantly lower than the single bid we received yesterday.

Our design team from BH+A and our Owner's Project Manager from NV5 will be working together to go back through the prequalification and bid solicitation process. I expect that this will take approximately 10-12 weeks to complete.

We realize that the 10-12 weeks to re-bid will push back the date of the ribbon cutting. But we believe we can have a terrific building at a substantially lower cost with the investment of 10-12 additional weeks.

We look forward to working through this process, securing a great team of contractors, and moving forward with the NewCAL Project as soon as possible.

COVID-19 and the Flu

COVID-19 is still circulating. After months of MWRA wastewater tracking data showing a relatively flat line, numbers starting creeping up in July and August. The data, has been a reliable predictor of COVID-19 prevalence in our area. (Click [here.](#))

As the weather starts changing and we start heading indoors, Newton's Health and Human Services staff is asking us to do our part to keep our community healthy by following the CDC's and Massachusetts Department of Public Health's advice:

- Stay up to date on your COVID vaccine (up to date means you have received the current bivalent vaccine)
- Stay home and test if you have COVID symptoms
- Wash/sanitize hands regularly

Dr. Ashish Jha, who recently completed his tenure as the White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator, says the best way to manage this virus without disrupting the healthcare system is for us all to stay up to date on vaccinations. "My hope is people just treat this as a routine thing they do every fall," he said on WGBH radio recently, comparing it to an annual flu shot. "Go get your annual COVID shot."

COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics

New COVID-19 vaccines are expected sometime this Fall. Newton HHS will again partner with the Holtzman Medical Group to offer COVID vaccine clinics. More information will be shared once the latest vaccine is available. For more detailed information regarding COVID vaccination, visit mass.gov/CovidVaccine or review the [COVID-19 Vaccination Recommendation Infographic](#).

COVID-19: What to Do If You Have Symptoms and/or Test Positive

If you have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, please stay home and [test](#).

Guidance for individuals who test positive has not changed: Stay home and isolate for at least 5 days. If you never had symptoms or symptoms are improving, you may end your isolation on day 6. You should wear a mask around others through day 10. You may remove your mask prior to day 11 if you have had two negative tests taken 48 hours apart.

People who are *exposed* to COVID-19 are not required to stay home as long as they have no symptoms. Those who can mask should do so until Day 10, and it is recommended that they test on Day 6 after the exposure.

Flu

The best way to prevent getting the flu is to get your annual flu shot. Newton HHS will be offering free community clinics for adults and children this Fall. More information will be shared in the coming weeks. Information on Newton HHS clinics, other locations to get vaccinated, and general flu information is also available online at newtonma.gov/flu.

New Voting Equipment

Voters may notice new vote tabulators when casting ballots in person in the upcoming Municipal Elections on Tuesday, Sept. 12 (Preliminary City Council Election in Wards 2 and 6 only) and on Tuesday, Nov. 7 to elect the City Council and School Committee.

City Clerk Carol Moore is thrilled to have the newly acquired ImageCast Precinct Vote Tabulators.

The design of the new tabulator is very similar to the AccuVote system used in past elections, but the new equipment is easier to navigate and more user-friendly.

One of the terrific features of the ImageCast Precinct Vote Tabulator is that voters will be able to see if their ballot has been cast successfully. Voters are advised to watch the LCD screen on the tabulator to confirm that their ballot has been successfully cast.



Election Workers at each polling location have been trained to assist voters, if needed, with the new equipment.

Preliminary Election, Tuesday, Sept. 12

If you haven't previously filled out an application to receive a mail-in ballot, you can either stop in at the City Clerk's Office on the first floor of City Hall at 1000 Comm Ave., or apply for online [here](#).

Place your completed mail-in ballot in the inner envelope and sign the envelope. Ballots can be returned by mail, placed in either of the two secure drop boxes at the front of City Hall, or dropped in person at the City Clerk's Office on the first floor of City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Mail-in ballots must be returned by 8:00 p.m. on election day to be counted.

Early In-Person Voting for Tuesday, Sept. 12 Preliminary City Council Election

Early, in-person voting for Ward 2 and Ward 6 voters will be held next week at City Hall on Tuesday, Sept. 5 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and on Wednesday,

Sept. 6 from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Voting In-Person on Sept. 12

Polls will open for the Preliminary Election in Wards 2 and 6 from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

You can find your ward and precinct [here](#), and your polling location [here](#).

Riverside Center

I visited yesterday with the new owners of the Riverside Center at 275 Grove Street as they look to the future of this important Class A office park comprised of 3 buildings with 512,000 square feet. Current tenants include Siemens Healthineers, Parexel, Atrius Health and AthenaHealth.

(Photo: With Kevin Sheehan, Phil Dorman, Hratch Adourian, owner of Kendall Kitchen and Tori Sabatino.)



Kevin Sheehan, Phil Dorman and Tori Sabatino of Greatland Realty Partners develop, own and manage a number of lab and office properties in Lexington, Weston, Marlborough and Cambridge. They don't intend to pursue lab tenants for the Riverside Center but rather focus on professional office space.

Hratch Adourian of Kendall Kitchen in Kendall Square has already opened a new café, [Kendall Kitchen](#), on weekdays for breakfast and lunch. Check it out!

By the way, the owners are also interested in using their large open atrium space and/or the café at Riverside Center for events and arts and culture activities.

Upper Falls Greenway

On one edge of Newton in Newton Upper Falls, the former Charles River Branch railroad line was transformed into a one mile "linear park" connecting Newton Highlands over to the Charles River. (Click [here](#) for a downloadable / printable map from the Newton Conservators.)

The City of Newton is collaborating with the Town of Needham to study the feasibility of extending the Upper Falls Greenway farther along the former railroad corridor that historically connected the two communities.

The Needham/Newton Community Way would extend the Upper Falls to Webster Street in Needham Heights, crossing the Charles River as well as Route 128/I-95. The extension would provide a new bicycle/pedestrian, or a new bicycle/pedestrian/electric shuttle bus connection, intended to serve the growing transportation and recreation needs in both communities.

The state-funded feasibility study is well underway. Learn more about this project at a meeting our colleagues in Needham will host on Thursday, Sept. 7 starting at 7:00 p.m. Click [here](#) to attend.

Find more info on the project, including the results of an April public survey, at NewtonMA.gov/communityway. The feasibility study and related documents will also be posted to this page.

Questions? Contact Newton's Director of Transportation Planning Josh Ostroff at jostroff@newtonma.gov.

Applications Being Accepted for Newton Thrive

[Newton Thrive](#) is Newton's Economic Mobility Initiative. It is a new program seeded with one-time federal American Rescue Plan Act funding. We are partnering with a terrific nonprofit, [Economic Mobility Pathways](#) (EMPath), to provide individualized support to 50 low-income Newton families on their journey to climb the economic ladder.

Newton Thrive is based on a proven model that creates lasting impact for families. EMPath provides one-on-one economic mobility coaching, utilizing EMPath's research-backed, trauma-informed approach, [Mobility Mentoring](#). Newton residents will be matched with an EMPath mentor with whom they will meet 1:1. Participants will also receive a \$250 monthly cash assistance while enrolled in the program for two years.

[Applications](#) for Newton Thrive are open and are being reviewed on a rolling basis until all 50 spots are filled.

Apply through this [interest form](#). You can also visit empathways.org/newton for all the latest information, including details on eligibility requirements and a schedule of community events the Newton Thrive team will be attending.

After 90 years, Bigelow Cleaners on Sumner Street in Newton Centre is closing its brick-and-mortar store and converting to a direct pick-up and delivery dry cleaning service. Co-Owner Peter Stavropoulos sends along a big thank you to all their customers.

(Photo: With longtime customer Judy Korzenowski and Bigelow Co-Owner Peter Stavropoulos.)



Gathering Together on Sept. 11

Newtonians will gather together to commemorate the lives lost in New York City, Washington, D.C. and Shanksville, Pennsylvania twenty-two years after a day of terror we must never forget.



We will gather to thank the heroes of that day – the firefighters, police officers, emergency medical personnel *and* the ordinary people – who on Sept. 11, 2001 ran selflessly toward the crumbling towers to save lives while risking their own.

We will gather, one community of neighbors, to hold close in our

hearts the shattered families of those lost.

Join the Newton 9-11 Memorial Committee and City at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 11 at the 9-11 Memorial, 1164 Centre Street in front of Fire Headquarters in Newton Centre.

A New School Year Begins

With an ever so slight chill in the air and dusk sneaking in earlier and earlier, a new season – and a new school year – begins.

The first days of school always feel like a fresh new beginning with all the excitement and hope for the new year for our students who are still recovering and emerging into the sunlight from the disruption of the pandemic.

Classroom doors open for students on Tuesday, Sept. 5. Walkers, cyclists, buses as well as parents and guardians driving students to school will be out in the mornings and afternoons.

Please give yourself extra time and pay extra attention as youngsters will be making their way to and from school.

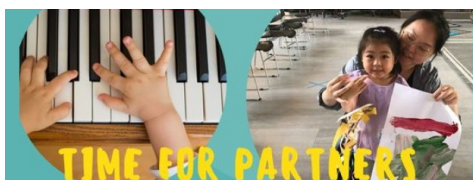
I know our valued teachers will do everything they can to make sure our students have a terrific year. Yes, this new school year is a bit different as we are in the midst of union collective bargaining negotiations with the Newton Teachers Association. (Click [here](#) to read communications from the School Committee regarding negotiations.) We will figure this out.

For all of us, here's to a happy and healthy school year ahead ...

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. I will present the **City of Newton's Long-Range Financial Plan and Five-Year Financial Forecast** to the City Council on Tuesday night, Sept. 5 at 7:55 p.m. Together with Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux, we will lay out a financially sustainable roadmap with steady, predictable and sustainable growth to meet the current and long-term needs of our City. Tune in on Zoom at <https://newtonma.gov.zoom.us/j/83878757617#success>, watch on NewTV (Comcast 9, RCN 13,629, Verizon 33) or join us in person in the City Council Chamber at City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Avenue).



P.P.S. Toddlers learn, explore and make new friends through art, music and play at **Time for Partners**, a program for children 18 months to 4 years (with an adult partner). Classes are in the War Memorial/Cultural Center Auditorium at Newton City Hall, 1000

Commonwealth Avenue, on Tuesdays and/or Wednesdays from 9:30 -11:15 a.m. starting on Tuesday, Sept. 12 through the end of December. Daily drop-in passes are available or sign up for the whole season. Learn more [here](#).

P.P.P.S. The fall **leaf blower season begins** on Monday. Gas or electric leaf blowers that are 65 decibels or below can be used Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Saturdays 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Residents can also use leaf blowers on their own property on Sundays from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Find more information [here](#).



P.P.P.P.S. Tennis doubles, anyone? The Friends of Newton Tennis' (FoNT) **Garden City Doubles Tournament** is Saturday, Sept. 30 (novice and intermediate) and Sunday, Oct. 1 (advanced). Join the fun while helping raise



money to improve Newton’s 67 courts. All skill levels are welcome. Register [here](#) before Tuesday, Sept. 26. Questions? Contact Tournament Director Tom Friedman at thomasharoldf@gmail.com.

P.P.P.P.P.S.Registration is now open for **New Art Center’s “Art as Therapy”** classes starting in October. The weekly sessions for adolescents in grades 6 through 8 who are struggling with anxiety, depression or adjustment are led by a registered art therapist and art instructor. Find more information [here](#). Questions? Email sarah@newartcenter.org.



P.P.P.P.P.S. Join the **Newton Conservators’ 3rd Annual Newton Monarch Festival** on Saturday, Sept. 9 from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. at Wellington Park on Kilburn Road and Henshaw Place in West Newton. (Rain date is Sunday, Sept. 10.) Festivities include butterfly oriented kids’ games, activities & crafts, a Monarch butterfly tagging demonstration, information on how to raise Monarchs, and a native milkweed seed and plant exchange. Find more information [here](#).

P.P.P.P.P.P.S. **Mother’s Milk Bank Northeast**, one of the largest donor milk banks in the country, is located right here in Newton Upper Falls. If you haven’t heard of them, nonprofit milk banks work with generous parents, screen and collect excess breastmilk, pasteurize and test it for safety, and then provide it to medically fragile babies for whom breastmilk can be lifesaving and to families who need lactation support. If you or someone you know might have milk to donate, reach out at milkbankne.org.



P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. **Sumner Tunnel reopens tomorrow**, Sept. 1 at 5:00 a.m., hopefully making trips home from Logan Airport smoother. Check mass.gov/sumnertunnel for project updates.



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