

Thursday, Sept. 14, 2023

## Mayor's Newton Update

### Hurricane Lee

We have been watching the radar closely in the last few months, including tracking Hurricane Lee this week. We get frequent updates from Newton's weather service as well as from MEMA and the National Weather Service.



We have an incident command structure in place with our emergency operations team led by Newton Fire Chief Greg Gentile. We all watched the horrific flooding that occurred on Monday night in Leominster. Please know that Fire, Police, DPW, Forestry and Health and Human Services teams are ready in case we experience flash flooding, downed trees and wires, or other storm related emergencies.

The latest information from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) currently shows Hurricane Lee's impacts similar to a moderately strong Nor'easter with 1 to 3 inches of rain in eastern Massachusetts and some power outages and downed trees likely. The forecast shows wind gusts of 45 to 55 mph along I-95, with gusts peaking mid-morning on Saturday and gradually diminishing through Sunday morning.

If you lose power, please call Eversource at 1-800-592-2000 or report the outage online [here](#). (Eversource also has a mobile app, Eversource Energy, that can be downloaded for free from Google Play or the App Store.)

Find flood safety information at [mass.gov/flood-safety](https://mass.gov/flood-safety).

### Cheers to Breweries

Craft beverage entrepreneurs may soon find it easier to locate in Newton.

The City Council is voting on Monday on eliminating several barriers to commercial brewing, winemaking and distilling in the Garden City.

For example, we have had a regulation, likely from 100 years ago during the nationwide prohibition of alcohol, which prohibits the bottling of alcoholic beverages within Newton city limits.

On Monday, Sept. 11, the Council's Zoning and Planning Committee voted to approve the updates. Cheers!

## Update on the Replacement of Water Meters

The Water Meter Replacement Project is underway.

This is good news. We won't have to read our own meters and it eliminates the estimated water and sewer bills that many Newton property owners have been receiving due to the issues with the meter transponders.

The City replaced all residential water meters during 2010-2012. Simultaneously, we installed meter reading transmission units (a.k.a., water meter transmission units (or "MTUs")) on the outside of the property. The MTUs allow Newton's Department of Public Works Utilities employees to collect remotely usage data for billing without entering homes/businesses. The system worked well until 2019 when a significant number of the water meter transmission units began to malfunction and did not transmit readings.

Thankfully, the meters have not been malfunctioning; they are accurate.

It's now time for the meters as well as the transmitters to be replaced citywide.

We're using an installation contractor, Baystate Winsupply, to do most of the replacements. (Our Newton Utility crews will also do some.) All Baystate Winsupply employees will have a photo ID badge and clearly marked vehicles.

The meter installers are currently replacing meters and transmitters in the northwestern portion of Newton in West Newton and Auburndale. (Click [here](#) for a dashboard and map of the water meter replacement program.)

Approximately 2,000 residential meters have been installed since work began in mid-June. Baystate Winsupply estimates it will need 18 to 24 months to replace all 29,000 meters.

Every Newton water customer will receive a letter on City letterhead with information on how to schedule an appointment for installation *when replacement crews are going to be in their neighborhood*. There is no charge for the standard installation. Installation of the new meters is mandatory for all water customers.

Appointments with Baystate Winsupply will be scheduled through their website or toll-free telephone number provided in the letter. The letter will include a work order number unique to each customer. Please make sure to keep an eye out for this important letter. (Please do not contact the City to schedule an appointment; we'll just send you over to Baystate Winsupply.)

Standard installation will take approximately 30 minutes to complete and water service will have to be temporarily shut off to perform the work.

### Discrepancies Between Estimated Use and Actual Use

Some of us have received multiple water/sewer bills with *estimated* reads. If you did not go down to your basement, read your meter and send the information to

us, you are likely to receive a catch-up bill when the new meter/transponder is installed. (In other words, the actual read when the new meter/transponder is installed may be higher (or sometimes lower) than the estimated reads.)

Please know that the *water meters* have been accurately reading water usage throughout your estimated read period; the transponders just have not been automatically transmitting the information to our Billing Division.

If you have received an estimated bill, the City will perform a daily analysis of the water consumption to ensure that any catchup bill accurately reflects the appropriate rate tiers for water through the estimated read period. (The City of Newton charges different rates based on the amount of water used; these are called rate tiers.)

Once your new meter and MTU are installed, your next water/sewer bill will be based on the actual meter read.

You *will* have to pay for the water you have used during the period when you were receiving estimated reads.

### 12-Month Payment Plan

If you receive a catchup bill because the actual read is higher than the estimates, the City is offering customers two payment options.

One agreement/payment option spreads the balance owed equally over 12 months. The other payment option allows for minimal monthly payments for 11 months with a final balloon payment in month 12.

Both payment options do not charge interest for that 12-month period.

Customers can request either option via email at [waterbilling@newtonma.gov](mailto:waterbilling@newtonma.gov) or in person at the Water Billing Department located in Newton City Hall at 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton.

If your actual read is LOWER than the estimates, the City will immediately process a refund.

### Customer Portal

The new system also includes a customer portal for residents, a new feature that will allow all of us to view our water usage data, create usage alerts, and set a water budget.

The customer portal will also allow property owners and the City to identify leaks in our plumbing systems easily and quickly, helping us to conserve water and reduce excessive water bills when a leak occurs on your property (e.g., a toilet that keeps running).

Our water meter vendor is anticipating the release of the customer portal this fall and the City will roll out the portal to our customers as soon as it is available.

## More information

Please click [here](#) for more information. Do you have a question? Email us at [waterbilling@newtonma.gov](mailto:waterbilling@newtonma.gov).



*Milling work began on Waverley today .*

## **Reducing Plastics**

Newton banned plastic bags in 2018 and polystyrene foam in 2020. Why? To reduce our use of plastics and the attendant costs of disposing of them and the inevitable litter.

The City Council is on the verge of voting on an updated plastics ordinance at their next meeting on Monday, Sept. 18. (You can attend the hybrid meeting in person starting at 7:45 p.m. in Council Chambers on the second floor of City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Avenue), or watch on zoom at <https://newtonma.gov.zoom.us/j/81428189170> or on NewTV (Comcast 9, RCN 13, 629, Verizon 33)).

If passed, this ordinance will make significant changes:

- All retail stores that sell single use dishware (e.g., paper plates, plastic utensils, etc.) and packing materials must ensure that these items are reusable, recyclable, or compostable.
- Full service, sit-down restaurants will be required to use reusable dishware.



- All food establishments are required to distribute food & drinks in dishware and containers (if larger than 4 ounces) that are reusable, recyclable, or compostable.
- All food establishments shall only distribute single use dining items (e.g., straws, napkins, utensils, chopsticks, condiments, etc.) upon request or at self-service stations.
- The City of Newton, including our public schools, must serve foods & drinks prepared on-site in dishware/containers that are reusable, recyclable, or compostable and may only distribute condiment packages upon request.
- The intentional release of helium balloons is strongly discouraged.

If passed, Newton would join Andover, Brookline, Concord, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Northampton, and Williamstown in requiring that food service ware be reusable, compostable, or recyclable. Many other communities around the country (in California, for example) and the world (including Canada and several countries in Europe) already have similar bans in place.

We asked for the input of restaurants and retailers as we drafted the ordinance. For the most part, they are comfortable with this step forward.

I'm pleased as we increasingly understand the long-term deleterious impacts of plastics and we have viable alternatives for all the items we are disallowing. A special shout-out goes to Councilor Vicki Danberg for spearheading this effort, including working closely with our staff in Health & Human Services, Sustainable Materials, Newton Public Schools and Law, and reaching out to the impacted businesses.



*The City of Newton is hiring - School Nurses and School Traffic Supervisors (Crossing Guards), Police Officers and Dispatchers, DPW Heavy Machine Operators, Election Workers and more. See a full list of job opportunities with the City of Newton [here](#).*

### **Protect Yourself From Respiratory Viruses**

Anyone can get the flu and even healthy people can get very sick and spread the virus. Getting a flu vaccine is the single best way to protect yourself and your family.



The CDC recommends a flu vaccine every year for everyone over the age of 6 months.

### Newton Health and Human Services Free Flu Clinics

Newton's Health and Human Services staff is hosting four community flu clinics at Newton City Hall War Memorial Auditorium (1000 Commonwealth Avenue on the second floor).

Appointments are preferred, but we welcome walk-ins. Insurance information is requested, but not required.

For more information on the flu vaccine, click [here](#). Questions? Contact Newton Health and Human Services Department at 617-796-1420. (Interpreter services are available.)

#### Newton Community Flu Clinics

*These clinics are open to anyone over 6 months.  
Regular and [high-dose](#) (65+) vaccines will be available.*

Tuesday, Oct. 17, 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 23, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

[Register here.](#)

#### Senior Flu Clinics

*These clinics are intended for seniors but are open to anyone over 18.  
Regular and [high-dose](#) (65+) vaccines will be available.*

Friday, Oct. 6, 10:00 a.m. to noon.

Friday, Oct. 13, 10:00 a.m. to noon.

[Register here.](#)

### COVID-19 Vaccine

The CDC released their [recommendation](#) on Tuesday for updated COVID-19 Vaccine for the Fall/Winter Virus Season.

CDC recommends everyone 6 months and older get an updated COVID-19 vaccine to protect against the potentially serious outcomes of COVID-19 illness. Receiving an updated COVID-19 vaccine can restore protection and provide enhanced protection against the variants currently responsible for most infections and hospitalizations in the United States.

Newton Health & Human Services is once again partnering with the Holtzman Medical Group to offer the updated COVID-19 vaccine for anyone 6 months and older. Stay tuned for the exact dates.

### RSV Vaccine

[Respiratory syncytial \(RSV\)](#) is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms and most people recover in a week or two. RSV can be

serious, however, especially for infants and older adults who are more likely to develop severe RSV and need hospitalization.

Vaccines are available to protect older adults (60+) from severe RSV. Talk to your health care provider to see if this is a good choice for you. For more information regarding the RSV vaccine, click [here](#).

## Helping Students

Big thanks go to Newtonian John Hazard Connor for his donation of a silver BMW X3 valued at \$500 to the Career and Technical Education program at Newton North High School.

The donation provides 15 students now enrolled in the program with hands-on repair and maintenance experience. Future students in the program will also have a chance to work on the engine, transmission, alternator, brakes, steering and suspension, and other parts of the car.

Donations are accepted if they meet the requirements of the Newton Public Schools Gifts, Grants, Bequests and Fundraising Policy, and serve a purpose consistent with our educational program.

The Career & Technical Education program is amazing. Educators offer Newton's high school students the opportunity to develop vocational and technical skills for both the world of work and post-secondary education. The programs are wide ranging, including automotive technology, business, carpentry, culinary arts, design & visual communications, drafting, early education & care, graphic communications, and TV media arts.

Interested in making a donation to the automotive technology or carpentry programs? Please call the Career & Tech Education program office at 617-559-6256 for more information.

Warmly,

Ruthanne



P.S. Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown tomorrow, Sept. 15, marking the start of a new year for some of us. **Shana tova** and a good, sweet and healthy new year.

P.P.S. Enjoy music on two stages, train rides for toddlers, tasty treats from area restaurants, games, crafts, vendors, and more at the annual **Newtonville Village**

**Day, Sunday, Sept. 24.** Join the fun on Walnut Street in Newtonville Village Center from noon to 4:00 p.m.



P.P.P.S. Want to share cuttings from some of your house plants? How about trading a plant with another Newtonian? Drop by the **Newton Free Library's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Plant Swap** on Saturday, Sept. 23 from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. to meet fellow houseplant enthusiasts and maybe find a new plant to bring home. Click [here](#) for more information.

P.P.P.P.S. Do you or your organization have an idea for a project that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions? **Climate Change Microgrants** of \$250 to \$1,000 are available through a partnership between the City of Newton and The Village Bank. More information and an application form are [here](#).



P.P.P.P.P.S. Learn about **Aging in Place in Newton** and get your questions answered at a virtual presentation on Thursday, Sept. 28 from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. You'll hear from Allison Godsey, Director of *Newton at Home*, Jeanne Shapiro, Information & Referral Supervisor of *Springwell*, and Emily Kuhl, Case Manager of the *Newton Department of Senior Services*. Register in advance for the Zoom program at <https://newtonma-gov.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0uf-qqqz8jHtMkqBBTVftFAFOeISsnejt9>.



P.P.P.P.P.S. Join us on Monday, Oct. 9 at Newton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual **Indigenous Peoples Day Ceremonial Celebration** with music, dance, art demonstrations, children's activities, delicious food and over 50 Indigenous-owned businesses and non-profit organizations. Festivities on Monday, Oct. 9 are from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Albemarle Park (250 Albemarle Road). Find more information [here](#).

*(Photo: With Hiawatha Brown at last year's Indigenous Peoples Day Ceremonial Celebration.)*



P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Youngsters in Grades 3 – 8, join us for “a scary good time.” Registration is open for Newton’s 24<sup>th</sup> annual **Halloween window painting** on Saturday, Oct. 28 on windows in 6 villages. Thanks go to Newton Community Pride & Learning Express for sponsoring this much-loved Newton Halloween tradition and Paula Gannon, Newton’s Director of Cultural Development, for making it happen. Get more information and sign up [here](#).



P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Team Newton Senior Center will **Walk to End Alzheimer's** on Sunday, Oct. 1 from 10:00 a.m. to noon. The team will meet at Brigham House, 20 Hartford St. in Newton Highlands and walk around the neighborhood. Interested in joining the team or making a donation? Find more information [here](#). Questions? Contact Team Captain & Newton Senior Services Case Manager Emily Kuhl at 617-796-1672 or [ekuhl@newtonma.gov](mailto:ekuhl@newtonma.gov).

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Wellesley dog Maggie and her family must be very grateful to the Newton Fire Department. With an assist from Wellesley Police, Newton fire firefighters plucked Maggie from the churning waters of the Charles River before she was swept back into the rapids. **Woof, woof NFD!** Click on the video to watch.





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