Friday, October 6, 2023

Mayor's Newton Update

Supporting the Newton Public Schools

Here in Newton, residents, parents, and business owners understand that Newton Public Schools are the bedrock of our community. Many of us moved here and paid a premium for our homes or our rent, and did so happily because of the Newton Public Schools.



Together we have faced difficult times during the past three years – a pandemic, isolation, social/emotional

health challenges, learning loss, job losses, inflationary cost pressures, and concerns about flooding, heat waves and global warming. We were fortunate to benefit from millions of dollars of federal funds and we have tried to use those wisely as we recover, rebound, and reinvest in our community.

Fortunately, the City's bank account has also benefitted recently from the resolution of several large property tax legal challenges. As a result, we now have one-time tax overlay funds available in the amount of \$26 million. This amount of tax overlay funds is truly unprecedented and therefore we cannot expect this level of annual funding going forward.

I have proposed a plan where we will transform these one-time funds into ongoing financial support for the next eight years to boost the operating budget of the Newton Public Schools. (At the end of the eight years, NPS will not face a financial cliff, and the devastating cuts and layoffs that would come with it, as we will have simultaneously tackled another financial albatross, full funding of our pension system.) This plan helps alleviate the NPS budget pressures now, *and* in the future.

This plan will add funds to the NPS budget – funds that will otherwise not be available for operations.

Since I docketed the item in August, the issue has been discussed before the City's Council's Finance Committee and the full City Council. The matter is back before the City Council's Finance Committee this Tuesday, Oct. 10.

I know how deeply the City Councilors support our most precious resource, our children.

We will also boost our investments in infrastructure – roads, schools, police facilities, sidewalks, stormwater systems and more – with future proposals that will go to the City Council.

But right now, our decision is whether to invest more in the future of our children.



Thanks go to Newton BSA Troop 209 member Owen Serra who has made it easier for us to find our way through the 67 acres of Cold Spring Park off of Beacon Street. He recently installed nine wayfinding posts at intersections through the park.

Owen worked with the Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture Department staff and the Friends of Cold Spring Park to get posts installed as part of his Eagle Scout service project.

Winter Overnight Parking Ban Update

The City Council's Public Safety & Transportation Committee on Wednesday unanimously rejected a petition request by a group of residents to remove the City's winter overnight parking ban. The overnight parking ban runs from December 1 through March 31 and prohibits parking on City streets from 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m.

Any change in the overnight parking ban, including a total lifting as requested in the petition, continues to allow an emergency parking ban in case of heavy snow, icing or other emergencies.

The petitioners collected 5,485 certified signatures from registered voters in Newton, enough to require action from the City Council. The City Council has the choice to repeal the parking ban as requested in the petition, leave the ban in place, or pass some other measure such as changing the terms of the current ban or implementing a trial period for lifting the ban.

As Mayor, I had the authority to lift the overnight parking ban during the winter of December 2020-March 2021 under the COVID-19 State of Emergency. We had no problems that winter with the parking ban lifted. (Once the State of Emergency ended, any changes to the overnight parking ban need to be decided by the City Council, rather than by the Mayor.)

We've received a lot of feedback on both sides of this issue.

Roughly 75% of our mail has run in favor of lifting the ban. As one parent wrote, "I have small children, the prospect of dragging them out of the house at crucial points of the day simply to move or retrieve a vehicle – with no threat of precipitation – seems absurd and downright unjustified."

Others support the winter parking ban, especially those living on narrow streets. Wrote one resident of Nonantum, "Unlike some of Newton's other villages, we live in crowded conditions, we have narrow streets, and small housing lots. Elimination of the ban will create a problem with snow removal, which will create limitations on the ability of public safety vehicles (fire trucks and ambulances) to provide service to our community. It will also lead to people trying to protect spaces that they have cleared of snow."

Several City Councilors also raised concerns about lifting the ban. Councilor John Oliver raised the possibility that people from neighboring communities would park their cars on Newton streets overnight, taking spaces from Newton residents. Councilor Julia Malakie said lifting the parking ban would make Newton more attractive and thus more expensive, potentially raising rents and sale prices at properties as on-street parking would be available year round.

The Committee discussed the option of lifting the ban temporarily for two years during which information and data could be collected to determine whether it should be permanently lifted. This option was rejected by a majority of Committee members who raised the concern that it would be extremely difficult to reinstitute a ban if people got used to being able to park on their street all winter. (Watch the Committee meeting here starting at minute 12.30.)

If the full City Council also rejects the petition to lift the overnight parking ban at their next meeting on Monday, Oct. 16, then the petitioners will need to collect an additional 2,616 signatures, or 5% of registered voters, to add a question on permanently lifting the winter parking ban on the next municipal election ballot in November 2025. (They missed the deadline to put the question on the municipal election underway by mail now and finishing up on Nov. 7.)

Leaves, Pumpkins, and Storm Drains ...

It hasn't felt like fall this week, but the cool weather is returning next week – and with it, falling leaves.

Our DPW team is collecting **yard waste** curbside through Friday, Dec. 15 on the same day as trash and recycling is collected. Please have yard waste curbside by 7:00 a.m. on your scheduled day or after 4:00 p.m. on the day before. (To help keep our employees safe, make sure no individual bag or barrel weighs more than 50 pounds.)

Yard waste pickup is weather dependent. I understand it can be a nuisance, but routes and pick-up times for yard waste can change with the weather and, alas, without prior notification. But you can easily find out what we're doing as collection changes are updated in real time on our *Recycle Right Newton App*. (The App can be downloaded free in the <u>App Store</u> or <u>Google Play</u>.)

Any yard waste not collected on its regular collection day will be collected the following day or on a subsequent day as soon as possible.

Newton residents can also drop-off yard waste at the **Resource Recovery Center** at 115 Rumford Avenue; check hours of operation <u>here</u>.

Also, please know that state law bans the disposal of yard waste in trash. Placing yard waste in a blue or green cart may result in rejection. Find the City's waste collection guidelines here.

What happens to all our leaves? Newton's yard waste is hauled to one of three commercial composting facilities in Massachusetts – and there's a lot of it. Last year we collected 28,860 cubic yards of waste which is approximately 5,400 tons.

We're also looking forward to the **Annual Pumpkin Smash** at the end of this month at City Hall. Save the date for Saturday, Nov. 4 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. with a rain date of Nov. 5. Stay tuned for more details coming next week.

<u>Tired of Raking? Try "Leaf-Cycling"</u>

Leaves left untouched on lawns and in yards won't break down over a winter. But, there is an alternative to raking – it's called leaf-cycling and all you need is a lawn mower.

Raise the mower deck to the highest setting and mow over the leaves, crossing over them once or twice. Up to 6-inches of leaves can be "mowed" at a time, depending on the type of mower you have. Push mowers can handle smaller amounts but are still effective.

The resulting leaf mulch on the surface of the lawn will only last for a few days. The tiny pieces of leaves will sift down through the grass and provide future weed control and essential nutrients, which in turn may save you money and time. Come spring, you won't notice the leaf bits, and your lawn may be healthier and greener.

Help Us Keep Storm Drains Clear

Storm drains blocked by leaves swept into the streets can cause flooding and create safety issues for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians.

Please consider removing leaves from storm drains near your home if feasible; you may also call Newton Customer Service 617-796-1000 (M-F 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.) or the Newton Utilities Division 617-796-1640 (M-F 7:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.) to request a storm drain be cleared.

In 2022 we swept all streets in Newton 8 times. We are currently on track to match that this year. Street sweeping clears up leaves and other debris making bicycling safer and preventing phosphorous from decaying leaves from going into the stormwater system. Find our street sweeping schedule here.

Make sure leaves from your yard are bagged, mulched or composted and not raked into the street unless they will be collected concurrently by you or by your landscaper.

Questions about Appliance and Bulky Waste and Other Curbside Collection?

Find information about Appliance and Bulky Waste Collection, Recycling, and Blue Cart Do's and Don't in the curbside collection brochure here.

Monday Holiday

Reminder: There will be no trash or recycling collection on Indigenous People's Day, this Monday, Oct. 9. Pick-up will be delayed one day, and collected on Tuesday through Saturday next week.

The Newton Cultural Council recently celebrated the 2023 grantees. They awarded fifty-four projects with funding in 2023 from monies allocated by the state's Mass Cultural Council and the City of Newton. Check out the <a href="https://district.nih.go.nih



(Photo: With left to right, first row: Clara Chan, Cheryl Weber, Glenda Fishman, second row: Chris Pitts, Emily O'Neil, Robert Linsky, Marie Longo, Sam Belisle, top row: Amelia LeClair, Grey Held, Commissioner Nicole Banks, Paula Gannon. Photo credit: Cynthia Cole.)

Newtonians Eligible for Low Interest Loan Disaster Relief

Newton homeowners, renters, small businesses, and non-profits are eligible for disaster assistance after the Aug. 8 storm that dumped 2.77 inches of rain on our neighborhoods in less than two hours causing flash flooding across the City.

The U.S. Small Business Administration announced that assistance in the form of low interest loans is available to those in Middlesex County, where Newton is located, impacted by the storm.

Interested in learning more? Click <u>here</u> for a Fact Sheet and click <u>here</u> for more information on disaster loan assistance.

West Newton Square Traffic Flow

Home to Newton's Police Department and the Newton District Court, as well as a wide array of shops, restaurants and gathering places, West Newton Square is one of Newton's most vibrant villages. Since the West Newton Square enhancement project was completed in 2021, it's never looked better.

However, the many different roads feeding into the Square and the nearby access to and from the Turnpike continues to create a difficult traffic challenge for folks travelling through.

We're grateful to everyone who has reached out with input and suggestions about how to improve traffic.

Newton's Department of Public Works, after a lot of input and extensive analysis, is reconfiguring some lanes on Washington Street within the West Newton Square area to improve overall Washington Street corridor operations, including intersection backups which can block crosswalks for pedestrians and delay throughput for all traffic.

The plan includes adjusting pavement markings, traffic signal head equipment, and signal phasing to convert several exclusive turn lanes into shared through/turn lanes. More specifically:

- Washington Street at Cherry Street Changing eastbound exclusive leftturn lane to shared left-turn/through lane. Changing westbound exclusive right-turn lane to shared through/right lane
- Washington Street at Highland Street Changing westbound exclusive left-turn lane to shared left-turn/through lane
- Washington Street at Chestnut Street Changing westbound exclusive leftturn lane to shared left-turn/through lane

The changes will take place overnight this Sunday, Oct. 8 from 10:00 p.m. until the work is completed early on Monday morning, Oct. 9.

Our team will continue to monitor traffic flow after implementation as part of ongoing signal fine tuning efforts.

October is Cyber Security Month

We all should practice our best cyber-security hygiene year-round, but our IT team from City Hall recommends using October, Cyber Security Month, as a reminder to protect ourselves. Best practices include:

Enable Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)

We need more than a password to protect our online accounts and enabling multi-factor authentication makes a system significantly less likely to be hacked. MFA requires anyone logging into an account to use a two-step process

to prove their identity. (For example, when you log into a secure account and use your password, the site also sends a text to your phone with a required code). This extra step makes it twice as hard for criminals to access an online account. When it's available (perhaps from your bank), always turn it on.

<u>Use Strong Passwords</u>

Creating, storing and remembering passwords can be a pain for all of us, but passwords are the first line of defense against cybercriminals and data breaches. Use passwords that are long, unique, and randomly generated. It's easy to maintain your passwords with free, simple-to-use password managers.

Recognize Phishing and Report It

Phishing is a type of cybercrime where a scammer tricks people into sharing sensitive information (e.g., bank account or credit card info) or into fraudulently installing malware. The scammer may pose as a close personal contact, legitimate company, charity, or public institution. If a link looks a little off, *think before you click*. Before clicking any links or downloading attachments, take a few seconds (like literally 4 seconds) and ensure the email looks legit.

Here are some quick tips on how to spot a phishing email:

- Does it contain an offer that's too good to be true?
- Does it include language that's urgent, alarming, or threatening?
- Is it poorly crafted writing, riddled with misspellings, and bad grammar?
- Is the greeting ambiguous or very generic?
- Does it include requests to send personal information?
- Does it stress an urgency to click on unfamiliar hyperlinks or attachments?
- Is it a strange or abrupt business request?
- Does the sender's e-mail address match the company it is coming from? Look for little misspellings like paypal.com or anazon.com.

Unsafe Email Attachments

Many people use email in their personal life and their workplace. You can get an email from your aunt with her stew recipe or an email from your boss with a guest list for the office party. But what if the email isn't actually from your aunt or boss?

Cybercriminals often pretend to be someone you know to get you to click unsafe attachments, such as fake DOC files or PDF files. Some of the most common attachments used for attacks are DOC files and PDF files. Learn how to identify unsafe email attachments and protect yourself:

- Fake DOC attachments: Older Microsoft Word DOC files are commonly
 used in cyberattacks. . The email usually looks legitimate and gives an
 urgent reason for you to open the file. If you open the file, a pop-up window
 will display asking you to enable macros. If you accept, the macros will be
 able to install malware on your device.
- Fake PDF Attachments: PDF files are sent over email every day, making them perfect tools for cyberattacks. One popular type of attack is when

cybercriminals put an image in a PDF file to trick you into clicking it. For example, it could be an image that looks like a video with a play button. The image will be something that catches your attention, like a cooking video from social media or a cute cat video. Unfortunately, clicking the image could send you to a website designed to steal your sensitive information.

How to Stay Safe

Follow the steps below to stay safe from dangerous email attachments:

- If a suspicious email appears to be from someone you know, contact them
 over the phone or in person. Check to see if the email is legitimate before
 putting yourself at risk.
- Avoid DOC files in general. They use an outdated format and contain too many security risks. The newer DOCX format is the current standard and is much safer.
- Always think before you click. Cyberattacks are designed to catch you off guard and trick you into clicking impulsively.









Nestled in Nonantum is the Chapel Bridge Park, a 250,000-square-foot office, lab and research and development space. The thriving complex is currently 98% leased and houses companies including the national headquarters for beverage company Spindrift as well as LabShares, Carelon, NESCA and BioSensics, to name a few.

(Photo: Clockwise from top left, Chapel Bridge Park Property Manager Steven Rizzuto and Bulfinch Marketing Manager Christina Page and Managing Director Leasing Michael Wilcox,

with LabShares CEO Phillip Borden, with Joanna Vanden, VP, People for Spindrift, and with Julia Coleman, Senior Project Manager at Carelon, a brand new tenant at Chapel Bridge Park.)

Election is Underway

Mail-In ballots for the Tuesday, Nov. 7 Municipal Election to elect a new City Council and School Committee are starting to be mailed by the City Clerk's Office today.

There are four contested races for Ward City Councilor – in Ward 2 (David Micley and Dan Gaynor), Ward 4 (Doris Ann Sweet and Randall Block), Ward 6 (Martha

Bixby and Lisa Gordon), and Ward 8 (Holly Ryan (incumbent) and Stephen Farrell).

There are two contested At-Large City Council races – in Ward 5 (Andreae Downs (incumbent), Rena Getz and Deb Crossley (incumbent) and in Ward 6 (Alan Lobovits, Alicia Bowman (incumbent) and Vicki Danberg (incumbent).

There are no contested seats on the School Committee which will have two new members: Amy Davenport in Ward 7 and Barry Greenstein in Ward 8. Click here to see sample ballots from each of the City's eight wards.

Vote by Mail for the Nov. 7 Municipal Election

Vote by mail applications, which included an option to receive mail in ballots for all 2023 elections, were mailed to all voters in Newton in January. If you filled out that option and returned the application, a ballot will automatically be mailed to your home. (Approximately 14,000 voters in Newton have opted for mail-in ballots.)

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 a mail in ballot online here. The application must be signed and returned to the Newton City Clerk's Office, 1000 Comm. Ave., by Tuesday, Oct. 31 at 5:00 p.m.

Ballots must be signed and returned to the Newton City Clerk's Office by mail, or in one of two secure drop boxes located outside the front door of City Hall. Ballots can also be dropped off in person at the City Clerk's Office on the first floor of City Hall.

To be counted, mail-in ballots must be returned by 8:00 p.m. when polls close on election day, Nov. 7. PLEASE give plenty of time for the U.S. Post Office to get your ballot back to City Hall.

Find more information on mail-in voting here.

Track your mail-in ballot <u>here</u>.

Early In-Person Voting for Tuesday, Nov. 7 Municipal Election

In-person early voting for the Nov. 7 municipal election will be held at City Hall for five days:

Saturday, Oct. 28 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Sunday, Oct 29 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday, Oct. 30 from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 31 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Wednesday, Nov.1 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Election Day In-Person Voting on Tuesday, Nov. 7

Vote in person at the polling location in your Ward on election day, Nov. 7 from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Not sure where you vote? Click <u>here</u>. Find a map of Newton polling locations here.

Check your voter status <u>here</u>. The deadline to register to vote for the Nov. 7 election is Saturday, Oct. 28 at 5:00 p.m.

MassDOT Newton Corner Improvements Public Meeting

For over a year, MassDOT has been working on a project to develop short- and medium-term improvements to Newton Corner. On Tuesday, October 24 at 6:30 p.m., MassDOT will host an



PUBLIC OUTREACH-WORKSHOP

TRAFFIC SIGNAL AND SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS AT INTERCHANGE 127 (NEWTON CORNER)

NEWTON, MA

interactive, virtual public meeting to share several potential changes to this challenging labyrinth to help improve safety and circulation for people traveling by car, public transit, cycle and on foot. The public will be asked to provide feedback on the concepts. Please bring your voice and ideas.

These changes will begin to address the longstanding concerns of Newton Corner residents, businesses and visitors.

Here is a flyer for this meeting

As many Newtonians well know, Newton Corner changed dramatically in 1965 when the Mass Turnpike came through, with an interstate highway interchange displacing a vibrant village center. Please save the date, and <u>save this web page</u> to participate in the meeting. (You will be able to register for the public meeting about a week in advance.)

For more information about this project, <u>click here</u>.

Indigenous Peoples Day Celebration on Monday

Join us on Monday, Oct. 9 at Albemarle Park (250 Albemarle Road) for Newton's third Annual Indigenous Peoples Day Ceremonial Celebration. It's free and family friendly. We'll watch cultural dances, enjoy great music, eat delicious food, peruse products from over 50 Indigenous-owned businesses and non-profit organizations, and help amplify the voices of Indigenous Peoples. Festivities begin at 11:00 a.m. and last through 5:00 p.m. Find more information here.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. We see hate crimes escalating around our country and here in Newton. Join us this



Wednesday, Oct. 11 at City Hall from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. for an important discussion on addressing this escalation by forming alliances of understanding and action. *Interrupting Antisemitism and Hate in Our Community* is sponsored by the City of Newton, the Newton Human Rights Commission, the Harmony Foundation, and the Temple Reyim and Temple Emanuel ADL Kulanu Groups (kulanu is Hebrew for "all of us"). Attendees are encouraged to join the discussion in the War Memorial at City Hall, 1000 Comm Avenue in person. However, if that's not possible, please feel free to join a secure webinar here using Passcode 491653.



P.P.S. The **Newton Harvest Fair** is next Sunday, Oct. 15 from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. in Newton Centre. Shop unique crafts, learn about local businesses, enjoy live music, stop by the GreenEXPO, and choose from different cuisines at a

variety of food trucks and restaurants. The **Kid's Carnival** will be open both Saturday, Oct. 14 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. with rides, games and fair food.

P.P.P.S. Learn more about **plans to enhance Newton Highlands** next Thursday, Oct. 12 at 6:30 p.m. for the fourth public meeting about the project. The Newton Department of Public Works team and representatives from Planning and the design firm Environmental Partners will discuss community feedback received to date as well as designs to invest in this vital village center for safety, attractiveness and accessibility. Join the meeting in person at City Hall or on zoom at: https://newtonma-gov.zoom.us/j/89074283005?
pwd=aXR6Q1JKREhFdUFhd1J0TkxFY2w4dz09#success, Passcode 866571. A special thanks to all the residents, property owners, tenants and other Newton Highlands stakeholders who have provided lots of input.

P.P.P.S. The ABCD (Action for Boston Community Development) Home Energy Assistance Program – also known as **Fuel Assistance** – provides financial assistance to income eligible households to help pay heating bills. New applicants can apply online here. Returning applicants should have received recertification paperwork in the mail. Need assistance with your application? The Newton Social Services Division staff can help. Call 617-796-1420 with questions or to schedule an appointment.

P.P.P.P.S. Students across Newton invite all of us to "purple out" on Friday, Oct. 27 and join them in wearing purple during **Domestic Violence Awareness Month**. The Purple Wing Project is a group of young people in Newton and across Massachusetts advocating against, raising funds for and spreading awareness about the intersection of domestic violence and gun safety.

P.P.P.P.P.S. The West Suburban YMCA is opening its new **Teen Center** at the Church Street Y, 276 Church Street, with a launch party for young people ages 12 to 14 on Saturday, Oct. 13 from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. with free food and games. The event is a great opportunity for youngsters to meet the Teen Center staff and learn more about the center and programs.

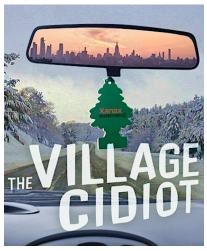
P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Historic Newton will premiere the original documentary *An Uncommon Education: The Allen School* about the pioneering educational experiment in West Newton during the mid-1800s. Learn more about this little-known slice of history where, during a time when slavery was still the law of the land, the West Newton English and Classical School admitted Black and



foreign students as well as women. The film premieres on Saturday, Oct. 21 at 7 p.m. at the Allen Center, 35 Webster Street, West Newton. Tickets are on sale here.

P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Know a young person or adult in Newton who has improved the quality of life in our City by promoting greater understanding of race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, or ancestry? How about a person who has worked to reduce discrimination in areas such as housing, employment, or education? The Newton Human Rights Commission (HRC) is seeking nominees for its annual **Newton Human Rights Award** which recognizes an individual's overall commitment to human rights work. The HRC also recognizes Newton high school students for their involvement and advocacy in human rights issues. Visit the hRC's website to learn more and submit a nomination to hrc@newtonma.gov by Friday, Nov. 3.

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. *The Village Cidiot*, a one-woman comedy about a New York City couple that moves to a tiny town in the Berkshires, is brought to two venues in Newton by the **Newton Nomadic Theater**. The show is tonight and tomorrow night, Oct. 6 and 7, at the Allen House, 35 Webster Street, West Newton, and next weekend, Friday and Saturday, Oct. 12 and 13 at Gregorian Rugs, 2284 Washington St. in Upper Falls. Tickets are available here.



P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Get to know Newton with the Charles River Regional Chamber's video designed to showcase some of Newton's wonderful businesses.



Past P.S.s happening soon:



P.S. Enjoy live music, local arts, performances, train rides and more at **Newtonville Village Day**, this Sunday, Oct. 8, noon to 4:00 p.m.

P.P.S. Newton Health and Human Services' Community **Flu Clinic** is open to anyone over the age of 18 this Friday, Oct. 13, from 10:00 a.m. to noon at the Newton City Hall War Memorial Auditorium. Register here if possible but walk-ins are welcome.





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

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