

Friday, Dec. 15, 2023

Mayor's Newton Update

“Yes” on the Funding for NewCAL

Two City Council Committees, Public Facilities and Finance, voted unanimously on Monday night to approve the full project funding for a new building for Newton's older adults with opportunities for Newtonians of all ages as well.



The full City Council will take the final vote on Monday, Dec. 18, at 7:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers. (Click [here](#) for info on attending the meeting virtually on zoom.)

When I first ran for Mayor, I made the commitment that, if elected, we would build our seniors a new center to replace the far too small and poorly designed former library building they had been using. Within days of taking office in January of 2018, we were hard at work laying the foundation for the start of this senior center, which we dubbed NewCAL – the Newton Center for Active Living.

So many people have worked tirelessly with the Council on Aging, Senior Service Directors Jayne Colino and now Mignonne Murray, and our Public Buildings Commissioner Josh Morse. This includes the City Council, many members of Committees and Commissions, neighbors, and more. Thank you!

On Monday morning, we opened bids for a general contractor for NewCAL for the second time. The decision to delay the project slightly to rebid was not taken lightly, but it did result in a total project budget that is \$7.5 million less than the lone bid received in September. Monday's lowest bidder was J&J Contractors.

We now begin the process of executing a contract, pulling permits, and beginning construction in January. We'll share a detailed project milestone schedule once we have it finalized with our general contractor.

Moving Forward on Two New Elementary Schools

Countryside Elementary School

We got a “yes” vote Wednesday for \$21 million from the State to help fund the new building for the Countryside Elementary School at 191 Dedham Street.

The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) voted unanimously for the project scope, budget and project funding agreements with the City of Newton for

a new Countryside. Newton voters approved the remainder of the funding in a March 2023 debt exclusion override vote.



The state approval arrives just weeks after final City Council sign-off on Site Plan Approval and City bonding authorization. We now move into the final design phase with lots of help and input from the Countryside staff and community, the neighbors, the MSBA and more. Stay tuned for more details.

Lincoln-Eliot Elementary School



We officially broke ground on Wednesday for construction of the \$55 million renovation and addition for the new home for the Lincoln-Eliot Elementary School at 150 Jackson Road. The shovels were honorary last week but the “real” construction team starts in earnest now. This is the culmination of more than five years of hard work by the Newton

Public Schools and Lincoln-Eliot community, the School Committee, City Council, the City’s Public Buildings team and many others.

The ribbon cutting at Lincoln-Eliot will be in September 2025 when we welcome Kindergarten to Grade 5 students to their new classrooms, residents to a new community/Lincoln-Eliot shared auditorium, and youngsters to a great set of playgrounds and a new playing field.

Update on Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit Projects

Developers can choose to ask for a permit from either the City Council via the special permit process or instead to apply for a 40B comprehensive permit with Newton’s Zoning Board of Appeals.

The Massachusetts Chapter 40B Affordable Housing Law allows developers in Massachusetts who include a required percentage of affordable housing in their

proposed development projects to bypass certain local zoning requirements and to apply for “comprehensive permits” (known as 40B projects) through the community’s Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). They can bypass certain local zoning requirements via the 40B process until the community can demonstrate that it has met the State’s required minimum threshold for affordable housing, called the “safe harbor” status.

Newton’s Safe Harbor Status

We are getting closer to the required 10% threshold for 40B safe harbor.

Newton’s Planning and Law staff carefully track the City’s status with regard to the 40B safe harbor threshold. The ZBA may claim safe harbor if at the time of a 40B application filing, the City can demonstrate that 10% of year-round housing is eligible for the state’s subsidized affordable housing inventory (SHI) or 1.5% of developable land area is dedicated to housing eligible for the state’s subsidized affordable housing inventory.

With the ZBA’s recent approval of the Northland Charlemont project (370 units), the City is very close to reaching the 10% safe harbor threshold. The City of Newton is currently about 17 units short.

Please know that when the City reaches this threshold, it would not affect any of the 40Bs that have already filed with the ZBA. (In addition, developers can continue to file 40B applications after we meet safe harbor but the ZBA has more latitude in their approval criteria.)

Staff will issue a detailed memo to the ZBA prior to the January 10, 2024 ZBA meeting.

New 40B Application on Crafts Street in Newtonville/Nonantum

Boylston Properties submitted an application to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for a new 40B project at 78 Crafts Street in Newtonville on Monday.

The Boylston proposal is for four multifamily buildings and a separate two-story parking structure (with 266 parking spaces in total) on a 4.76 acre site comprised of 11 parcels off of Court and Crafts Street. This site is adjacent to both the Newton Public Works yard and an as yet to be developed senior housing development the City Council approved last year. (Read more about this project [here](#).)

The proposed development by Boylston Properties would include a total of 307 apartments, ranging from studios to three-bedrooms, of which 62 (20%) would be affordable at 50% of the area median income (AMI). (Click [here](#) for Massachusetts 2023 Affordable Housing Income limits.)

The ZBA will hold a public hearing within 30 days of receiving a complete application, as required. The public hearing before the Zoning Board of Appeals is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 10.

At that time, similar to other large 40B projects, the City expects to request peer reviewers to assist with the review of stormwater/site design, traffic, and building design which is paid for by the developer.

The full 40B application for this project can be found [here](#).

Northland Charlemont Project Approved by the ZBA

The Northland Charlemont 40B Project, located at 160 Charlemont Street just off Needham Street, was originally filed by Northland Development on Sept.23, 2022. The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) approved it with conditions this past Oct. 25, 2023.

The development includes 370 apartments. Of these, the development includes 93 permanently deed-restricted affordable rental units, 74 of which will be affordable to households earning up to 80% of Area Median Income, and 19 of which will be affordable to households earning up to 50% of Area Median Income. The Project as approved also includes:

- **Community Offsite-Improvements:** The Developer will construct a shared use path and associated improvements along the southern side of Charlemont Street and will add a rapid rectangular flashing beacon signal ("RRFB") at Christina Street which enhance pedestrian safety around the site and provide critical pedestrian and cycling connectivity.
- **New Public Open Space:** The Project includes the creation of new public open space along the project's eastern boundary, also serving as a buffer to the single-family residential neighborhood to the east. The project's open space accommodates shared uses for active and passive recreation while providing pedestrian and cycling links between Charlemont Street, Christina Street, the Charles River, and points south to points north of the site including Needham Street and other villages within the City of Newton consistent with our Comprehensive Plan.
- **Mitigation Funding:** The developer has committed to providing mitigation funding in the aggregate amount of \$1,503,153 to the City for off-site transportation, pedestrian, or safety improvements or mitigation in the vicinity of the Project. Additionally, the developer will pay \$901,051 to the City for infrastructure improvements for sewer inflow and infiltration (I&I).
- **Sustainability:** The project will be Passive House certified. The developer will conduct an embodied carbon analysis, and 20% of the parking stalls will be equipped with electric vehicle charging stations.

528 Boylston in the ZBA Process

The Toll Brothers 40B project on Route 9/Boylston Street at 528 Boylston Street was filed with the City on April 26, 2023 after receiving project eligibility certification from the state.

The six-acre site currently contains a landscaping laydown area (Sam White & Sons), vacant land, and two two-family homes.

To assist the City of Newton's review of the project, the Planning staff engaged consultants to analyze specific issues and impacts related to the project, including parking and transportation, engineering, sustainability, stormwater, and design. The developer pays for the peer reviews.

The ZBA has held four public hearings so far.

During the course of the public hearings and as a result of input received from the Zoning Board of Appeals, community members, City Planning staff, and the peer reviewers, the developer changed their original plan. The project now includes fewer units than originally proposed and the building has been reduced in size and pushed further away from neighbors along Hagan Road. More specifically, the applicant originally proposed a residential-only building with 244 units and 385 parking stalls, with 61 of the units to be deed-restricted and permanently affordable to households up to 80 percent of Area Median Income (AMI). The most recent proposal reduces the total number of units to 198 and reduces the parking to 243 spaces. The new design also increases the rear setback and reduces the overall gross square footage of the project. Fifty (50) of the total units (25%) are now slated to be deed-restricted to remain permanently affordable.

The next ZBA hearing is scheduled for January 24, 2024 and the full application can be found [here](#).

41 Washington Street in the ZBA Process

The 41 Washington Street 40B Project near the border with Brighton was filed on August 15, 2023 with the City of Newton after receiving project eligibility certification from the state. The current proposal by the applicant, 41 TusNUA, proposes to reconfigure the existing two-family home into four units and to construct a four-story addition with twelve units to the rear of the dwelling, for a total of 16 units which are intended to be sold as condominiums.

As required to be eligible for 40B permitting, four of the 16 units (25%) would be deed-restricted to remain permanently affordable to households at up to 80 percent (80%) of Area Median Income (AMI).

Since filing, there have been two hearings held with the ZBA. During this time, the City has engaged consultants and received peer review reports with detailed analysis of the project's impacts and design related to stormwater, transportation, and landscaping. The City provided input to the applicant on these issues at the public hearing last month and is waiting for the applicant to respond.

The next public hearing is scheduled for January 10, 2024 and the full application can be found [here](#).

15-Acre Dudley Road Property Back on the Market

Last fall the owner of an almost 15 acre property located between Dudley Road and Brandeis Road adjacent to Newton South High School gave the City an opportunity to consider making an offer.

Our Planning team put out a call for expressions of interest from developers who would be aligned with our interests. We were interested in preserving open space, creating affordable housing, and providing the City with a portion of the site for school or city purposes. After evaluating nine potential partnership proposals, the City endorsed a proposal put forth by NOW Communities/Civico Development with a plan for preserving open space with clustered housing and reserving a portion of the site for Newton.

In spite of the best efforts of the Now/Civico group and the property owner to arrive at a mutually acceptable agreement, the property owner decided to relist the site for sale. We're grateful to both of them for taking the time to explore this alternative.

Firefighters Rescue Man from Burning Home

Newton Firefighters rescued a man trapped inside a burning home on Allen Road in Waban Wednesday morning and transported him to Mass General Hospital with serious injuries. A second man home at the time of the fire escaped on his own..



A Newton firefighter was also taken to Mass General, and thankfully, he was treated and released.

Fire and smoke were visible when firefighters arrived at the split-level residence at approximately 9:40 Wednesday morning. They quickly located and pulled the man to safety and then extinguished the fire. A cause for the blaze has not yet been determined. The Newton Fire Prevention Unit and officials from

the Massachusetts Fire Marshall's Office are investigating.

I am grateful to Fire Chief Greg Gentile and to all the firefighters who responded so expeditiously and effectively and we give special thanks and prayers to the injured Firefighter.

Our new Director of Transportation Ned Codd joins our Department of Public Works on Jan. 2. Picking up the baton from Jason Sobel, Ned is both an engineer and a planner. He brings to Newton extensive experience in the private and public transportation sectors, including managing projects with a focus on

Complete Streets design and safe multimodal access; traffic operations and safety; pedestrian safety and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements; bicycle facilities; public transportation, including rail and bus; and the interface between highways and local street networks. We are impressed with Ned's passion for developing creative roadway design solutions that improve safety, access, and mobility for all roadway users: drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders, including vulnerable travelers like younger, older, and disabled people. Welcome aboard Ned.



Happy Anniversary Newton

At noon on New Year's Day, I have the honor of swearing into office 24 City Councilors, six of whom will be starting their first term.

I will also be swearing in eight members of the School Committee, two of who will be serving their first term.

The Council will move into the next term with the leadership of their newly elected President Marc Laredo and Vice President David Kalis and the School Committee with Chair Chris Brezski and Vice Chair Emily Prenner. I know all of us are committed to working together to move this good City of Newton forward in a positive way.

This year's inauguration holds a special distinction we are also beginning the celebration of the City of Newton's 150th anniversary.

Swing by City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Avenue) and bring along children as we have some cake, enjoy some music, and have a few fund surprises on the second floor in in the City Hall War Memorial on Monday, Jan. 1 immediately following the inauguration ceremony – likely to be around 1:45 p.m.

As we look forward to 2024, I wish everyone a wonderful holiday season and a healthy and happy new year.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. The LigerBots robotics team with students from Newton North and Newton South High Schools is hosting a hands-on **STEAM activity expo for kids and a robot zoo**. Stop by this Saturday, Dec. 16 at Newton North High School from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The day will also include the FLL **LEGO League Championship** from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with as many as 48 teams competing.



P.P.S. Celebrate the season with the Newton Upper Falls Area Council and Little Luke's Café at **Carols, Cocoa & Cookies in Pettee Square** (at the intersection of Oak and Chestnut Streets) tonight, Friday, Dec. 15 from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

P.P.P.S. There's still time to get to the **Wells Ave. Y**, where they are celebrating their first birthday with a **free open house** today, Friday, Dec. 15 from 5:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. at 135 Wells Avenue. Stop by for free, full use of the facility, to take a class or a tour, to play pickleball, to swim in the pool and more. Click [here](#) for more info and a full schedule of free classes.



P.P.P.P.S. **Trash, Recycling and Yard Waste Collection Updates**

- This was the last week of curbside yard waste collection. Newtonians are welcome to **drop off yard waste** at the Resource Recovery Center, 115 Rumford Ave. Winter hours are Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (The Resource Recovery Center is closed on Sundays and holidays.)
- **Curbside trash and recycling will be delayed one day on Christmas, Monday, Dec. 25 and on New Year's Day, Monday, Jan. 1.** (i.e., the Monday route will be collected on Tuesday and so on through the week.)
- **Curbside Christmas tree collection** begins during the week of Tuesday, Jan. 2 and continues through the following week, ending on Friday, Jan. 12. Place your tree out on the curb by 7:00 a.m. on your collection day during this two-week window. Evergreen springs from wreaths (with wire or plastic framing removed) will also be collected with trees. Please make sure all decorations and lights are removed from trees and do not place them in



plastic bags. Christmas trees and evergreen sprigs will be chipped into mulch.



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