

# Thursday, April 4, 2024

## Mayor's Newton Update



### Sleet and Wind and Trees ... Oh My ...

Our City Forester and Deputy Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Culture, Marc Welch, started preparing yesterday for the weather event today.

Marc begins by studying our multiple weather forecasts. He looks at wind gusts in particular, as well as how soggy the ground already is and the amount of new rain (and over what time period) that is expected. Armed with these forecasts, he then determines how many City of Newton Forestry staff members to have on hand and for which time periods and lines up access to contract crews if needed.

By 7 a.m. this morning, we had eight locations with tree issues. By 1 p.m. that had grown to reports in 45 locations. This included 5 whole trees down and several locations with substantial portions of trees down. A number of homes and cars were damaged.

When multiple calls come in simultaneously, Marc prioritizes human safety and then impacts on structures and major arteries as well as locations with whole trees or large branches down. Currently, we have been able to turn our attention to smaller limbs.



### Great ARPA Projects Ahead

As we are finalizing our FY2025 City Budget, we are also closely examining the progress made and final decisions to make on the \$63.6 million we received from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021. To date we have allocated 98% of the funds to 55 projects spread across the City.

We have a number of exciting ongoing ARPA projects, and with the weather warming up (despite the sleet/snow today), we are getting started on even more.

### Road Paving



This construction season we will be utilizing \$3.6 million of ARPA funds to support our paving program across Newton. This ARPA funding translates into 51 residential roads to be paved this year.

### Gath Pool



Construction is underway for two new pools and a splashpad, supported in part by \$1 million dollars of ARPA funding. We will be cutting the ribbon in time for the summer swim season in June.

### Newton Highlands Village Design



We are using \$1 million of ARPA funding on the design for our Newton Highlands Village Enhancement project. Our goal is to improve the roadways, sidewalks, lighting, benches and more to support a multimodal, business-friendly, resilient, inviting village center in Newton Highlands.

### Newton Thrive



\$2 million of ARPA funding is helping low-income Newton families with both immediate assistance as well as ongoing coaching and support so these families move on to permanent economic self-sufficiency.

Additional examples of ongoing and upcoming projects include:

- Accessibility in Playgrounds & Street Crossings - \$0.5 million
- Affordable Housing Energy Efficiency - \$3.0 million
- Police Headquarters Improvements Design - \$0.5 million
- Pettee Square Improvements in Upper Falls - \$1.1 million
- Washington Street Improvements - \$2.8 million
- Traffic Calming Projects - \$2.0 million

We have until the end of 2024 to obligate the remaining \$1.5 million dollars of ARPA funds.



ARPA was a \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus package signed into law by President Biden on March 11, 2021 to further respond to the economic and health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. ARPA provided funding for a wide variety of purposes, including to local governments to help cities and towns respond to the public health emergency, and to make up for lost revenues and mitigate the fiscal impact of the pandemic.

My goal for the ARPA investments has been to seed initiatives that will help Newtonians and our villages not just stabilize and recover but permanently be a better place. We are investing these funds, not just spending them, to help make Newton more inclusive, more livable, more vibrant, more green and more sustainable in the decades ahead. We continue to invest these funds using the lens of equity, ensuring all geographic areas of Newton, all ages, all races, and all people are supported, with a special focus on those most hurt by the pandemic.

We've done some amazing work already. Examples include:

- Library Childrens' Room Expansion & Renovation - \$1.6 million
- NPS Elementary Reading Curriculum - \$2.0 million
- Building Ventilation (Schools, Fire, Police) - \$2.2 million
- Newton South & North Field Lights - \$1.4 million
- Emergency Housing Relief Program - \$0.6 million
- Residential Road Paving - \$4.9 million (\$3.6 million more slated)

In total about \$22 million or 35% has been invested in Newton Public Schools related projects, supplementing the pandemic-related financial support that NPS received directly.

You can click [here](#) to see more details on Newton's ARPA investments.

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## Open Building Permits?

Do you own a home in Newton?

Are you considering buying or selling a home?

If so, take a few minutes to check your home on our on-line property portal (<https://newtonma.portal.opengov.com/>) (and then in the top right hand corner, click on "Search") to see the permits that have been pulled for work on the house. (For example, plumbing, electrical, roofing, windows, remodeling, renovations, insulation, structural ....) See if all the permits are marked as "Completed," meaning that all final City inspections have been completed and the permit is closed.

If a permit is listed as "Active" that means that the permit is open, and final inspections have *not* been completed.

Open, active permits can cause immense stress and delay for homeowners in the process of selling their home. Sometimes a permit for some decades old project

is still open; in most cases this happens because the contractor who did the work never scheduled a final inspection to close the permit.

If you check the portal and see an active permit, please reach out to our Inspectional Services Department so we can work with you on closing it out. Stop by their counter here at City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor), call them at 617-796-1060, or email them at [ISD@newtonma.gov](mailto:ISD@newtonma.gov).

By the way, if you are having any work done on your property, do not make final payment to the company doing the work until your work permit has been closed. Too often homeowners pay their contractor before the permit is closed, and don't realize until they try and sell their property. Just because the contractor says the job is complete, doesn't mean that the work is done. You are always able to see whether the application is "Active" or "Completed."

Do your due diligence; check the portal:

<https://newtonma.portal.opengov.com/>

... then in the top right hand corner, click on "Search" and type in the address.

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### **Needham Street: Overnight Paving with Detours**

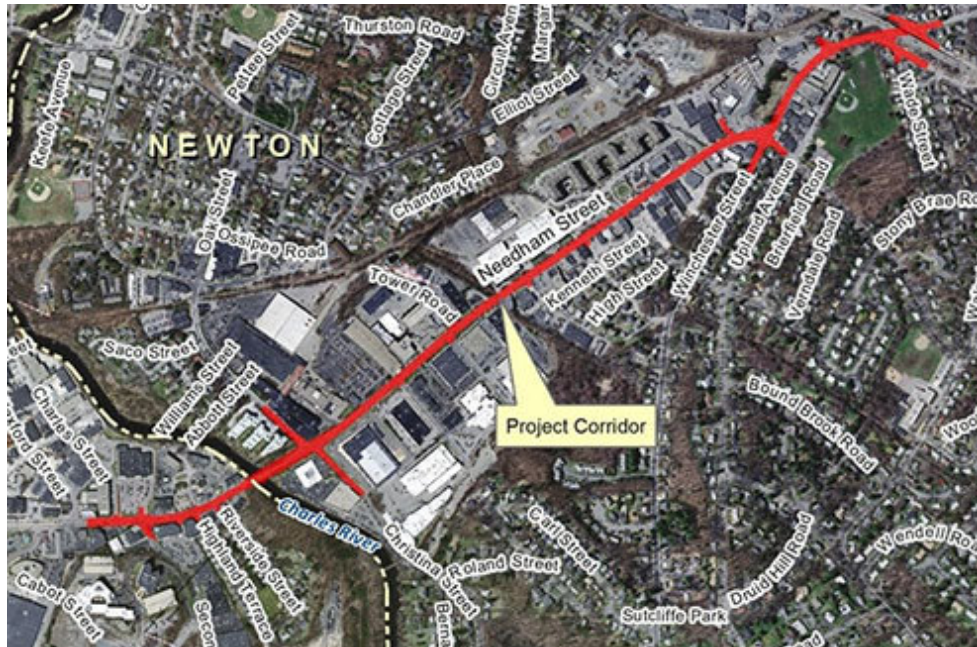
Full depth roadway reconstruction on Needham Street from 191 Needham Street down to the Bridge over the Charles into Needham will begin overnight this Sunday, April 7, and will continue overnight from 8:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. the following morning for approximately a month. (This construction step improves the base of the road with final paving following later.)

Contractors for MassDOT will do the road work in three sections, with detours in place. Newton Police will be on site to facilitate the traffic along with information on electronic message boards.

Click below for details on the three sections of work and the detour maps:

- The first section of work will extend from 191 Needham Street to just before the Oak Street and Christina Street intersection. [See Section 1 Detour Map](#)
- The second section of work will consist of the Oak Street and Christina Street intersection. [See Section 2 Detour Map](#)
- The final section of work will be the Bridge over the Charles River. [See Section 3 Detour Map](#)

For more information on the project, please visit the website at <https://www.mass.gov/needham-newton-corridor-project>.



### Up Next

The contractor will resume installation of curbing, sidewalks, and driveways on Needham Street between the Winchester Street and Needham Street intersection and the Nexus Plaza (between Jaconnet and Industrial Place) before installing final pavement and final pavement markings.

When will all the work on Needham Street be complete? MassDOT is saying May 2025.

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### **Preventing the Spread of Respiratory Viruses**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) has updated their [guidance for preventing the spread of respiratory viruses](#), including COVID-19, flu, RSV, and colds, to align with the CDC's updated guidance.

To prevent the spread of respiratory viruses:

- Get vaccinated for flu and COVID-19.
- Stay home when sick.
- Practice good hand hygiene, i.e. wash your hands.
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze. Use a tissue or your inner elbow, not your hands.
- Avoid crowded areas; if you are in a crowd, try and maintain physical distance.
- Increase fresh air.

If you have a fever, sore throat, cough, runny or stuffy nose, or other symptoms of a respiratory virus, stay home until you have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines AND your other symptoms are improving. Get tested for COVID-19 and flu. (Talk to your healthcare provider

about getting treatment if you test positive.) In addition to washing your hands and covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze, clean high-touch surfaces (such as countertops, handrails, and doorknobs) often.

For at least the first 5 days after you resume normal activities after a respiratory illness:

- Take extra precautions to help protect others from getting sick.
- Avoid crowded indoor spaces.
- Wear a mask anytime you are indoors around other people.
- Wash hands, and covering your coughs and sneezes.
- If your fever comes back or any other symptoms start to get worse, stay home until you have been fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines AND your other symptoms are improving.

If testing positive with no symptoms:

You can still spread the virus even if you're symptom free so, for at least the first 5 days, take extra precautions to protect others from getting sick:

- Avoid crowded indoor spaces.
- Wear a mask anytime when indoors around other people.
- Wash hands and cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Choosing to stay home for 72 hours may help reduce the chances of spreading the virus to others.
- If you get a fever or any other symptoms of respiratory illness, stay home.

If you know you've been exposed to someone with a respiratory virus:

- You do not need to stay home as long as you remain asymptomatic.
- Consider wearing a mask and avoiding crowded places.
- Monitor yourself for symptoms.

**Respiratory Virus Guidance Snapshot**

**Core prevention strategies**

- Immunizations**: Illustration of a person receiving a vaccine.
- Hygiene**: Illustration of a person washing hands.
- Steps for Cleaner Air**: Illustration of a person using an air purifier.
- Treatment**: Illustration of a person talking on a phone with a pill bottle.
- Stay Home and Prevent Spread\***: Illustration of a person in bed.

**Additional prevention strategies**

- Masks**: Illustration of a person wearing a face mask.
- Distancing**: Illustration of a person maintaining distance from others.
- Tests**: Illustration of a person using a rapid test kit.

**Layering prevention strategies can be especially helpful when:**

- ✓ Respiratory viruses are causing a lot of illness in your community
- ✓ You or those around you have risk factors for severe illness
- ✓ You or those around you were recently exposed, are sick, or are recovering

**\*Stay home and away from others until, for 24 hours BOTH:**

- Your symptoms are getting better
- You are fever-free (without meds)

**Then take added precaution for the next 5 days**

## Runners on the Way



The 128<sup>th</sup> running of the Boston Marathon on Monday, April 15 is less than two weeks away.

30,000 official runners from countries around the world will be coming through Newton, which has the longest stretch of the marathon and includes the iconic Heartbreak Hill (which in fact is a series of hills!).

45 of those runners are part of Team Newton. Each one of these runners and the non-profits they are raising money for have a direct connection to Newton. View Team Newton [here](#), which includes exceptional Newtonians like Newton South senior Michael Chang running for the Newton Schools Foundation, and Jen Dowling running for Athletes Unlimited Newton.

WCVB Channel 5 featured Jen Dowling and Athletes Unlimited Newton, an amazing organization that offers recreational programs to people with disabilities in Newton, in a program last week.



### Road Closures

On Marathon Monday, the **road closures** in Newton begin at 8:00 a.m. along the route and stay in place until approximately 7:00 p.m. Please plan ahead for alternative routes as Newton is bisected by the course. Also plan for traffic delays as no cars will be allowed to cross the Marathon route until the course is reopened.

**Parking restrictions and tow-zones** start at midnight before race day, extending until 7:00 p.m. along the entire Marathon route, including the Carriage Lane of Commonwealth Avenue, as well as quite a few streets around the course route. Parking restrictions will also be in place on portions of all streets that feed into the Marathon route. All effected streets will be posted with No Parking - Tow Zones signs. Click [here](#) to see the full list of road closures and parking restrictions.

Don't worry if you see **low flying aircraft(s)** along the Marathon route in the days leading up to April 15. They are conducting Surveillance/Safety checks that have been authorized by the F.A.A. and are a usual part of security and emergency preparedness activities.



Hats off to so many people in the Newton Police, Newton Fire, Public Works, Parks, Recreation and Culture, and Health & Human Services Departments who have been working for months on logistics and safety plans.

Please remember that “If you see something, say something.” Call the Newton Police Department at 617-796-2100 or dial 911.



An almost **total solar eclipse** will be visible from Newton this Monday, April 8.

In Newton, the eclipse will begin shortly after 2:00 p.m. and will last until about 4:30 p.m. The weather forecast is promising and, according to NASA, the max coverage here will be 92.5% around 3:29 p.m.

Our Health team at City Hall reminds all of us: **do not look directly at the eclipse without proper eye protection.** (Regular sunglasses are not sufficiently safe during an eclipse because they do not block ultraviolet and infrared rays which can damage your eyes.) For more guidance and info from NASA, click [here](#).

## Washington Street Pilot

We have been gathering input for several years on reworking Washington Street between Chestnut Street in West Newton and Lowell Avenue in Newtonville.



We've heard from many people that they are interested in making that section of Washington Street more attractive, and making it safer for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers while retaining enough parking for customers of the businesses.

Join us on Thursday, April 11 to see the design plan which is at the “75% complete” level. The proposed roadway design, coordinated through both Newton’s Planning and Public Works Departments and our consultant Howard Stein Hudson, will be presented at a virtual information meeting starting at 6:00 p.m. Please click the link below to join the meeting:

<https://newtonma.gov.zoom.us/j/85316186110>

Or One tap mobile :+13092053325,,85316186110#

The Washington Street design concept, endorsed by the City Council Public Facilities Committee, adds plantings to help screen and buffer the turnpike,

retains much of the parking on both sides of the street, installs new and highly visible pedestrian crossings, provides new accessible bus stops on the south side of the street, allows for left-turn pockets at key intersections, and establishes a two-way buffered bike lane on the south side of the street close to the Mass Pike, while achieving the goal of a safer Washington Street for all users.

To learn more about the project, [click here](#).

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## **Newton Police Department Accreditation**

The Newton Police Department is nearing the culmination of an 18-month process to become fully accredited through the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission's (MPAC) Accelerated Accreditation Program. The final step is a two-day on-site assessment on April 23 - 24.

Accreditation is a voluntary process whereby a police agency meets and maintains a wide variety of standards for law enforcement professionals, including everything from procedures related to crime scenes and crash sites, training on interactions with persons having mental health issues, hiring, and job descriptions. The MPAC Accelerated Accreditation Program has 128 mandatory standards, as well as 120 "optional" standards. (NPD must meet all the mandatory standards and 65% of the optional ones.)

Meeting these standards and being accredited is another example of how the Newton Police Department is striving to promote accountability within the Department and demonstrate their commitment to maintaining the highest standards.

As part of the Accreditation process, NPD is encouraging anyone in Newton to provide feedback and submit written comments about NPD's policies, procedures, operations and facilities to the MPAC at:

Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission  
110 Haverhill Road  
Amesbury, MA 01913

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## **Reminder: Newtonville Commuter Rail Station Community Meeting April 10**

A significant game changer for Newton would be more frequent and accessible commuter rail service from the MBTA.

The design funds have been secured to upgrade our three MBTA Commuter Rail stations in Newtonville, West Newton and Auburndale to make them fully-accessible and to reconfigure the platforms for more frequent service.

The MBTA is now pursuing federal funding to reconstruct an improved station in Newtonville, with a commitment to move forward with reconstructing the

additional two stations after completing Newtonville.

A virtual community meeting where the MBTA will discuss plans to move forward with Phase I of the Newton Stations Accessibility Improvements Project will be next Wednesday, April 10 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

At the meeting, MBTA officials will review existing conditions, provide a project overview, give a project update, discuss grant funding opportunities, and talk about next steps. The MBTA team is leaving plenty of time for Q and A.

Click [here](#) for more information and to register for the Zoom meeting.

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## #NewtonNoPlaceForHate

Almost three weeks ago, a family in Newton Centre experienced a hateful act of vandalism.

All Newtonians should be able to feel safe in their homes and comfortable putting out signs on their property expressing their views without fear of being targeted.

But a hate crime occurred. Someone ripped up and graffitied over a display in this family's front yard, in this case images of hostages.

The family is welcoming the community to join them on Sunday and show that hate won't win in Newton.

Join us on Sunday, April 7 at 12:30 at 255 Homer Street.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

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P.S. The citywide winter **Overnight Parking Ban ended on March 31**. That means that vehicles can again be parked overnight where allowed.

P.P.S. Slots are available for Newton's **Community Document Shredding and Drug Take-Back Day** at Newton's Resource Recover Center, 115 Rumford Avenue on April 13 from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Bring unwanted documents to be shredded (residential materials only, no business material), or expired or unused medication to be properly disposed. Advance sign-up is required. Call Customer Service at 617-796-1000 to make an appointment.

P.P.P.S. A town hall on **U.S. - China relations** featuring Dr. Kurt Campbell, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, is being hosted by the New England Chinese American Association and the Newton Education Support Network next week on Tuesday, April 9 from 7:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. Join the two-part meeting here in the War Memorial auditorium at City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Avenue) or watch from home (the link for the first hour is here:



<http://www.ncuscr.org/content/livestream>, and the link for the local conversation with experts on international relations, local officials and members of our local Chinese community beginning at 8:00 p.m. is here: <https://tinyurl.com/52h5vbbs>)



P.P.P.P.S. Put your dancing shoes on and join Newton Parks, Recreation & Culture for a new 55 and over six-week **ballroom dancing class**. The class, held in partnership with Dance Stream Studio in Newton Highlands, will teach the lively moves of the Cha Cha and the slower passionate Rumba. Classes run on Thursdays from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. at 54 Lincoln Street beginning on April 25 through May 30. Click [here](#) for more info and to register.

P.P.P.P.S. **Scammers are always on the prowl**. The Newton Police Department recommends the following to protect yourself from financial loss: Be aware that scammers can manipulate CALLER ID on phones so incoming calls may falsely appear to come from government agencies, utility companies, banks, or the police. Their advise is to just hang up or ignore phone calls, emails or text messages that are squirrely, such as asking to purchase a prepaid gift or debit card, use cryptocurrency, transfer money by wire, or send a money order to pay law enforcement, the IRS for owed taxes, a utility company, social security officials for fraudulent activity/warrant arrests involving your number, or a hospital or for emergency treatment for a loved one.

**Just Hang up!  
It is a Scam!**



P.P.P.P.P.S. The **Tanglewood Marionettes** are back in the City Hall War Memorial, 1000 Comm Ave on Thursday, April 18 with a performance of ***Sleeping Beauty*** at 11:00 a.m. Click [here](#) for more info and to purchase tickets.

P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Interested in volunteering for **NewtonSERVES** on Sunday, May 5 to help spruce up parks, school grounds, open space areas and conservation lands? Register through Wednesday, May 1. Click [here](#) for more info and to register.





P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Join Newton Conservators and the Newton Parks, Recreation, & Culture Department for a free **Introduction to Orienteering Clinic** on Saturday, April 6 with different start times: Session 1: 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., Session 2: 10:45 a.m. - 12:15 a.m. Orienteering is like a hike and a scavenger hunt mixed together. Click [here](#) to register (ages 7 and

older).

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