

Thursday, April 11, 2024

Mayor's Newton Update

Newton's Water is Safe

It's been all over the news this week that the Federal Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, issued new stringent drinking water regulations for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, known as PFAS. These are a class of human-made chemicals used in various non-stick and water-proofing compounds. (Click [here](#) to read a PFAS factsheet from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.)

Many water systems in Massachusetts may struggle to comply, but please know we're okay.

The MWRA Water System which serves Newton and where our water comes from already meets the new standards. Click [here](#) to read the MWRA's statement.

We can all feel very comfortable drinking from the tap.

Next Year's City Budget

On Tuesday evening, April 16, at approximately 8:00 p.m. I will present a strong, stable and sustainable City of Newton Fiscal Year 2025 Budget to the City Council.

This budget reflects our values. Notably, we are increasing the Newton Public School budget by 5.2%, or \$14 million, for a total budget of \$282.6 million, which will immediately make a difference to our students with the addition of 46.2 full time equivalent educators and staff.

On the municipal side, a 5.1% increase allows us to boost road paving, ramp up staffing in Senior Services as we prepare to open the Cooper Center for Active Living in the fall of 2025, intensify our efforts to address flooding and phosphorous control in our stormwater operations, cope with inflationary pressures in trash and recycling costs, add tree maintenance specialists to do more tree work more efficiently, and much, much more.

Join us at the Council Chambers on the second floor of City Hall, 1000 Comm Ave, or watch the budget presentation on Zoom at: <https://newtonma.gov.zoom.us/j/89287311217#success> (meeting ID: \892 8731 1217), or watch a live broadcast on NewTV's government channel (Comcast 9, RCN 13, 614(HD), Verizon 33), or view a livestream on NewTV.org.

Boston Marathon on Monday

Newton proudly hosts the longest segment of the Boston Marathon racecourse for the 128th time this Monday, April 15.

Are you going to watch? Check out the Boston Athletic Spectator Guide: bstnmar.org/spectators.

Also, check out the 45 athletes who are part of Team Newton, raising money for non-profits that have a connection to our City. Click [here](#) to see the runners and which non-profits they're supporting.

Want to track a runner along the course on race day? Download the B.A.A. Racing App at the [Apple App Store](#) or on [Google Play](#).

Security is a top priority. The Newton Police ask that "If you see something, say something." Call the Newton Police Department at 617-796-2100 or dial 911.

A Warm Marathon

The weather forecast for Monday includes temperatures in the mid to high 60s – perfect for all of us watching, but hot for runners.

Click [here](#) for Warm Weather Running Advice from the B.A.A.

The Newton Fire Department, our ambulance service, and Health and Human Services are preparing to handle any heat related or other emergency on race day.

Road Closures and Parking Restrictions

Temporary road closures along the route start at 8:00 a.m. on race morning and will be in place until approximately 6:00 p.m. with parking restrictions in many places as well.

Below is a map of where roads will be closed and where parking will be restricted on race day. Red indicates a road closed to all traffic, Brown indicates no parking, Blue indicates one-way traffic, and Purple indicates residents access only. Click on the map and scroll down the page for an interactive version and then click on a specific street for more information.

Are you signed up for Code Red, the City of Newton's emergency notification communication system? Alerts are sent by phone, email, text and TDD. If you don't already receive the messages, please take a moment and create an account [here](#).

Cutting Through Red Tape for Small Businesses

The City Council Zoning and Planning Committee on Monday held a public hearing on a series of zoning amendments aimed at allowing small businesses that we're excited to have here open in Newton with less red tape.

The Committee members voted unanimously with one abstention to recommend the following changes to the full City Council which meets next week on Tuesday, April 16:

- Allow home businesses by-right in multi-residence (MR) zones which the current ordinance only allows by special permit.
- Create a new use, called Personal Instruction, for small instructional uses (dance studio, coding academy, music lessons, etc.) and allowing them by-right in business/mixed-use zones and by special permit in residential zones.
- Allow more retail and personal service uses (e.g., barber, salon, dry cleaning) along Needham Street and other similar areas of Newton where they are either currently prohibited or require a special permit.

Click [here](#) to read the Planning Department memo from Monday's hearing and review the proposed ordinance.

More Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs)

With expected approval of the Traffic Council tonight, we'll be adding new pedestrian-activated flashing yellow lights at more busy pedestrian crossings in Newton.

The seven new Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons, or RRFBs, will bring the total number across Newton to 53 since the first was installed in 2018 at Homer Street at City Hall Drive by the Newton Free Library.

The new locations include:

- Needham Street at Industrial Place (by Home Goods)
- 150 Needham Street (north of Jaconnet Street)
- 40 Needham Street (south of Easy Street)
- Oak Street at the Upper Falls Greenway
- Elliot Street at Linden Street

- Elliot Street at Cottage Street
- Hammond Pond Parkway (north of the Boston College Driveway)

So what exactly are RRFBs?

RRFBs are the pedestrian-activated flashing yellow lights you've likely seen at midblock intersections in Newton. They are placed on both sides of a crosswalk and include pedestrian crossing signs. They are designed to improve safety by increasing drivers' awareness of pedestrians crossing streets.

The rapid flashing yellow lights remain unlit until activated by a person using an audible pedestrian push button which emits a "chirping" sound to make them easy to locate for visually impaired pedestrians. The RRFBs flash with an alternating high frequency (affectionately known as a fast wig-wag flickering pattern) to alert the driver that pedestrians are crossing the street.

The LED lights flash long enough to allow pedestrians to safely cross the street in the crosswalk.

The safety data is really impressive. Federal research indicates RRFBs can result in motorist yielding rates as high as 98% at marked crosswalks. Studies have also shown that RRFBs can significantly reduce the number of pedestrian crashes.

What should a driver/motorist do at an RRFB?

When drivers see the RRFB has been activated, they must slow down and yield or stop if a pedestrian wants to cross or is in the crosswalk. Drivers should come to a stop at or before the painted crosswalk or other painted stop indicators. They must allow the pedestrian to pass through the crosswalk entirely before proceeding. This is true regardless of if the RRFB's lights have stopped flashing. Always allow the pedestrian to cross safely before proceeding.

Other drivers should never attempt to pass a stopped car at any crosswalk, including RRFB crosswalks. An out-of-sight pedestrian may still be crossing, so they must stay in place until the lead car drives through the crosswalk. Then they should verify for themselves that there is no one in the crosswalk before proceeding through it. Importantly, drivers should yield to pedestrians in crosswalks *even if* the RRFB has not been activated.

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife tossed 250 rainbow trout into Crystal Lake yesterday, a long-standing spring tradition. This year was a little better, however, because they used the new Levingston Cove observation/fishing deck.

Pettee Square in Upper Falls

Join us at Pettee Square on Tuesday, April 23 at 10:00 a.m. for the official groundbreaking. We expect to finish the work this calendar year. (Next summer, we'll be able to access the new splash pad going in on the edge of the Northland project adjacent to this intersection.)

The much anticipated work to improve safety and enhance Pettee Square located in the heart of Upper Falls at the intersection of Chestnut and Oak Streets has begun.

The improvements include:

- A raised table intersection with cross walks
- New traffic signals
- Relocated utility poles
- New paving following roadway milling and new pavement markings
- New concrete sidewalks with new ADA accessible curb cut ramps
- Upgrades to the drainage system
- Better lighting
- New benches
- More trees

This work will improve the safety of the intersection for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians. The area will be fresh and more beautiful and inviting for bocce ball players, people walking on the Upper Falls Greenway, and visitors to the restaurants and stores around Pettee Square.

Newton received \$2 million from the State's MassWorks Infrastructure Program to implement these plans and I also set aside \$1.1 million from ARPA for the City's matching funds to complete these improvements.

Spears Park Community Garden

Gardeners will be tending flowers and vegetables by next summer at a new community garden at Spears Park on the corner of Walnut Park and Washington Street between Nonantum and Newton Corner.

The Newton Community Preservation Committee on Tuesday approved \$150,000 toward the project at this one-third acre site and the City Council will vote on final approval in the coming weeks.

The garden has already received unanimous approval from the Parks & Recreation Commission.

Over the past two years, the Parks, Recreation & Culture staff has partnered with a Friends group to develop plans for our second community garden in Newton. The first is across the city at Nahanton Park with 120 leased community plots. Those plots have an ongoing waiting list, indicating that additional community garden space is desirable.

While plans are still being refined, they are set to include critter-resistant fencing and a compost station, a place for garden tool storage, a water source, and new trees. The garden will have accessible surfacing, and at least two of the thirty raised beds will be accessible to wheelchair users or those with mobility issues. The park will also include a bike rack, benches, social gathering spaces, and public art.

Kudos to City Councilor Maria Greenberg who was the catalyst for this garden and worked with State Rep. John Lawn to secure \$75,000 from state earmarks. Along with that funding and donations The Village Bank, Green Newton and the Hauser Trust, I have set aside \$150,000 from ARPA to complete the much anticipated community garden.

Are We Equitably, Inclusively and Respectfully Delivering Services?

Over the past year we've been working with our consultant, The Racial Equity Group (REG), to conduct a baseline audit assessment with City employees and the greater Newton community.

We want to hear from all of you.

We have created a community survey where Newtonians can share experiences regarding access to city services and programs, quality of services and programs, and satisfaction when interacting with City staff while obtaining services. Help us by taking the survey by clicking [here](#).

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Enjoy Newton's Earth Day

Festival on Sunday, April 21 from noon to 4:00 p.m. at Newton North High School (457 Walnut St.). Learn how to go greener, live more sustainably, and save energy in your home and on the road. Plus:

- Fun activities for the whole family - live music, a petting zoo, face painting, and more

- An electric vehicle expo where you can check out the latest EVs and chat with their owners
- Delicious and sustainable food

See a full list of activities at [GreenNewton.org/EarthDay2024](https://www.GreenNewton.org/EarthDay2024). Thanks go to the hosts of Newton's Earth Day Festival: Green Newton, the City's Climate Team, and Newton's EV Task Force.

P.P.S. April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and the [West Suburban YMCA](#) is participating in the **Five Days of Action** from Monday, April 15 through Friday, April 19 to raise awareness and inspire adults to take action to protect children from sexual abuse. Click [here](#) to learn more about the "Know. See. Respond." campaign.

P.P.P.S. **Book banning** in America is rising. From 2022 through 2023 the American Library Association reported a 92% increase in the number of individual titles challenged in public libraries. Join the Newton Human Rights Commission and Newton Free Library for a panel discussion examining book banning on Monday, April 29 from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the library, 330 Homer St. Panelists will answer questions as well as discuss how librarians build library collections and explore the importance of intellectual freedom. Click [here](#) for more information.

P.P.P.P.S. Are you a fan of music legends John Fogerty and Creedence Clearwater Revival? Join **Newton Family Singers** on Sunday, May 5 at 4:00 p.m. at Temple Beth Avodah (45 Puddingstone Lane) to celebrate anthems such as "Fortunate Son" and "Have You Ever Seen the Rain." The family-friendly and joyous concert promises to leave your toes tapping and heart singing. Click [here](#) for more information.

P.P.P.P.P.S. **Newton's Artful Pianos** will be installed in nine public locations this summer. The pianos have been donated and the painters are now at work. To keep these pianos in great shape for the summer months, **we're looking for dedicated "piano pals"** to care for them. If you can help tend to a piano near you, please email culture@newtonma.gov for details. In particular, piano pals are most needed in Auburndale, Waban, and at City Hall. Click [here](#) to learn more about Newton's Artful Pianos.

(Photo: Piano Pal Jerry Reilly who tended to the Upper Falls piano painted by Leslie and Grey Held in 2023.)

P.P.P.P.P.S. Sign up to run or walk to help Newton South High School athletes. Registration is open for the **Newton South Boosters Club 3rd Annual Lions 5K road race** on Sunday, May 19 starting at 9:00 a.m. beginning at Winkler Stadium Field, 1 Lions Drive (formerly 140 Brandeis Road). Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Past PSs Happening Soon:

P.S. Slots are available for **Community Document Shredding and Drug Take-Back Day** at Newton's Resource Recovery Center, 115 Rumford Ave., this Saturday, April 13, from 8:00 a.m. to noon. Call Customer Service at 617-796-1000 to make an appointment.



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

[Unsubscribe jmulvey@newtonma.gov](mailto:jmulvey@newtonma.gov)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by rfuller@newtonma.gov powered by



Try email marketing for free today!