

Wednesday, May 29, 2024

## Mayor's Newton Update

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### **Introducing Newton's New Health & Human Services Commissioner**

With our exceptional Commissioner of Health and Human Services Linda Walsh retiring in just a few weeks, I am so pleased that this vitally important department will be led by Shin-Yi Lao who currently serves as Newton's Director of Public Health Services, pending approval of my selection by the City Council.

Shin-Yi has an excellent educational background, professional experience, interpersonal skills and leadership qualities to serve as our Health and Human Services Commissioner.

Shin-Yi earned both a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill. She also earned a Master of Public Health degree from the Boston University School of Public Health. She continues to be licensed as a registered nurse and recently became a Certified Health Officer and Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian.

Shin-Yi began her career in Newton as a Public Health Nurse Educator eight years ago in 2016. Prior to joining our team, she served as a nurse with both UNC Health Care and Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program and as a program coordinator at Hebrew Senior Life in their Institute for Aging Research.

In April 2021, Shin-Yi was promoted to be Newton's Public Health Manager and since July 2022, she has led the City's Public Health Services division as its Director. In this role, she leads our public health efforts as well as provides training and supervision to our environmental health inspectors, our public health nurse educator and additional staff. In addition, she has advised and supported Linda Walsh in planning, researching, and supporting the department in all public health areas.

Shin-Yi is respectful and respected. She is poised under pressure. She is a superbly intelligent professional. She has excelled in each position she has held.

Her keen ability to remain calm and focused under pressure served our community well when COVID-19 engulfed us. Throughout the pandemic, Shin-Yi used her in depth of knowledge of public health to translate complex science into guidance that we needed, in ways we could all understand, even as the understanding of the virus evolved. She knew what information was important to convey and created (and frequently updated) the data charts that appeared on the HHS COVID-19 webpage. She writes well and speaks clearly.

Shin-Yi is a true collaborator in addressing public health issues that affect our community. She works effectively with partners from the Newton Police, Newton Fire, the Newton Public Schools, Coastal Ambulance, and Newton-Wellesley Hospital. She uses an interdisciplinary approach so together we can more effectively meet challenges ranging from substance use disorder to suicide prevention.

As a leader, Shin-Yi is a mentor within Health and Human Services. She brings out the best in people. She does her research, studies the data and moves forward with her team using best practices and protocols that meet the needs of Newtonians across our City, in our schools and at our businesses and restaurants.

I am pleased that Shin-Yi is excited to take on this role and I look forward to her helping the Department of Health and Human Services and our staff move forward as the needs of our community members and the challenges we face are broad, deep and constantly evolving.

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### **City of Newton Budget**

The City Council last Monday unanimously approved my proposed \$599 million City of Newton Budget for Fiscal Year 2025 which starts on July 1.

This strong, stable and sustainable Budget reflects our values in Newton. Investments in this budget allow us to address critical needs: supporting the students in the Newton Public Schools, moving forward with the two new Gath Pools and Splashpad at Albemarle and the Cooper Center for Active Living, rebuilding school buildings, increasing investments in road paving & traffic calming and parks & athletic fields, addressing flooding issues, advancing affordable housing, having top notch Police and Fire services, and more.

The actions of our Assessing and Legal teams over a decade ago resulted in a significant payment from Eversource last summer. We converted these one-time funds into a temporary revenue stream, which bolster our typical increase in revenues, helping us cope with inflationary pressures and increasing needs.

Huge thanks to the City Councilors who thoughtfully reviewed this budget over a month's long process. I'm particularly grateful to President Marc Laredo and Vice President David Kalis for setting the tone, and to Finance Committee Chair Lenny Gentile for managing the Budget process seamlessly.

I also want to say thank you to Newtonians, the people who live here and own businesses and property here. Your tax dollars fuel our City. It's you that we are all working to serve.

Interested in learning more about the FY2025 Budget? Find my Budget Analysis, budgets for individual departments in Newton, and more at

[newtonma.gov/budget](https://newtonma.gov/budget).

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*Join us this Sunday, June 2 - and bring your appetite - as we fete Newton's 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday with a pancake party at Newton Fire Headquarters, 1164 Centre Street in Newton Centre.*

*Celebrate with Fire Chief Greg Gentile and Newton Firefighters from 10:00 a.m. to noon.*

*We'll have lots of family friendly fun, including a chance to climb on fire trucks and test your skills with a fire hose – and, of course, free pancakes and plenty of maple syrup.*

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### **MassDOT's Plans for Newton Corner**

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) has two projects underway looking at the circle of converging roads and highway ramps over the Mass Pike in Newton Corner: a short-/mid-term improvement project and a long-term planning study. As these roads both down below on the Pike and up above in the circle are “owned” by the State, these are MassDOT projects; our residents, businesses and the City of Newton will provide input, while MassDOT and their consultants take the lead (and pay for both the design and construction entirely with and State and Federal funds).

Next week on Thursday, June 6, MassDOT is hosting the fourth and final virtual public meeting about their short-term and mid-term traffic signal and interchange improvements to address safety and operational deficiencies.

MassDOT is planning short-term improvements to improve traffic safety getting off of the Mass Pike and to address some of the issues around the notoriously difficult to navigate circle over the MassPike, where two turnpike ramps converge with four major roads (Centre, Park, Washington, and Galen). The mid-term improvements that are being explored include geometric changes to the roadway network as well as traffic signal improvements to make it a safer and better experience for all users.

MassDOT will present preliminary recommended alternatives and next steps for the short-term improvements at the June 6 meeting.

- Find more information about the short and mid-term improvements at <https://www.mass.gov/newton-corner-improvements-project>.
- Email questions or comments to [NewtonCornerImprovements@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:NewtonCornerImprovements@dot.state.ma.us).
- Register for the June 6 meeting on the MassDOT project webpage: <https://www.mass.gov/newton-corner-improvements-project>

MassDOT is also launching right now a new Long Term Planning Study of the Newton Corner area, with a longer-term planning horizon and much broader scope of improvements to consider.

MassDOT and their consultant VHB kicked off the Long Term Planning Study last week on Wednesday, May 22 with an initial meeting of the Community Working Group they created for the project. MassDOT invited federal elected officials; state elected officials; local elected officials and municipal staff from Watertown, Newton and Boston; the MBTA; local and state advocacy groups; and other stakeholder groups to participate in the Working Group.

The Community Working Group will provide local knowledge, perspective, and expertise; share information with the communities and organizations represented; review information; and provide feedback on the study evaluation and recommendations. Last week's meeting was well-attended by Newton City Councilors, Newton groups, and City of Newton staff. The Community Working Group will meet regularly in the coming months.

You can also weigh in directly. MassDOT will host four public meetings during the study and provide additional online engagement opportunities. We will make sure you know the dates & times of these public meetings when they are scheduled.

- Find more information about the Long-Term Project and sign up for project updates at <https://www.mass.gov/newton-corner-long-term-planning-study>.
  - Email comments or questions to [planning@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:planning@dot.state.ma.us).
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*With the warmer weather, Newton Police are seeing an uptick in reported motor vehicle break-ins with 12 reported citywide since May 1. Newton Police remind us to lock our doors, roll up the windows, and take valuables with you.*

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### **Mulch “Volcanoes”**

Marc Welch, Newton's Urban Tree Forester, is passing along a tip about how to mulch around the base of a tree trunk. Avoid mulch “volcanoes” where the piles of mulch surround and pile up against the bases of trees (and shrubs).

Proper application of mulch helps retain moisture and protect trees from mowers and string trimmers.

But when mulch is piled too close and too high:

- The tree bark is kept constantly moist, which leads to insect infestation, rodent damage, fungal growth, and cracks in the bark.
- Tree roots do not get enough oxygen, eventually compromising tree stability.
- "Adventitious" roots begin to grow above ground, instead of deep in the ground where they are meant to grow. Adventitious roots can turn into girdling roots which strangle the tree.

All this translates into a slow death for the tree.

To keep your trees healthy, remove mulch volcanoes by carefully raking mulch away from the trunk of the tree. Practice good mulching, by placing a ring (or "donut") of mulch around the tree, with no mulch piled up against the trunk. Use just enough mulch to suppress weeds and contribute to the soil.

Annually our Urban Forestry staff members, using proper techniques, apply mulch around over 2,000 young city trees.

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## **Congratulations NNHS and NSHS Class of 2024**

Your performances brought standing ovations. You scored on the field and in the gym. You embraced people who have struggled. You have fought against injustice. You've used your determined voices to stand up and be heard to sound the alarm on climate change and so many issues facing our future.

Life has thrown you curve balls and led you in unexpected directions. I've watched with admiration as you navigated worldwide events that rippled through Newton and challenges close to home that shook us to our core. We have seen your strength and resilience.

Through it all, you have doubled down on empathy and respect for others. You have shown the courage to stand up and be counted. You have tried to do the right thing.

Learning truly sustains our spirit. Stay curious. Read widely. Try to understand someone who has a different perspective.

Now, celebrate! Graduation is a sweet moment. Embrace this moment of accomplishment. Hold on to the optimism and excitement as you leave the familiar halls of Newton North and Newton South. Know that no matter what the

future holds, your community here in Newton is your foundation. We will always be your soft landing.

Plus ...

## Breaking Bread

*(Photo - With, from left, State Rep.*

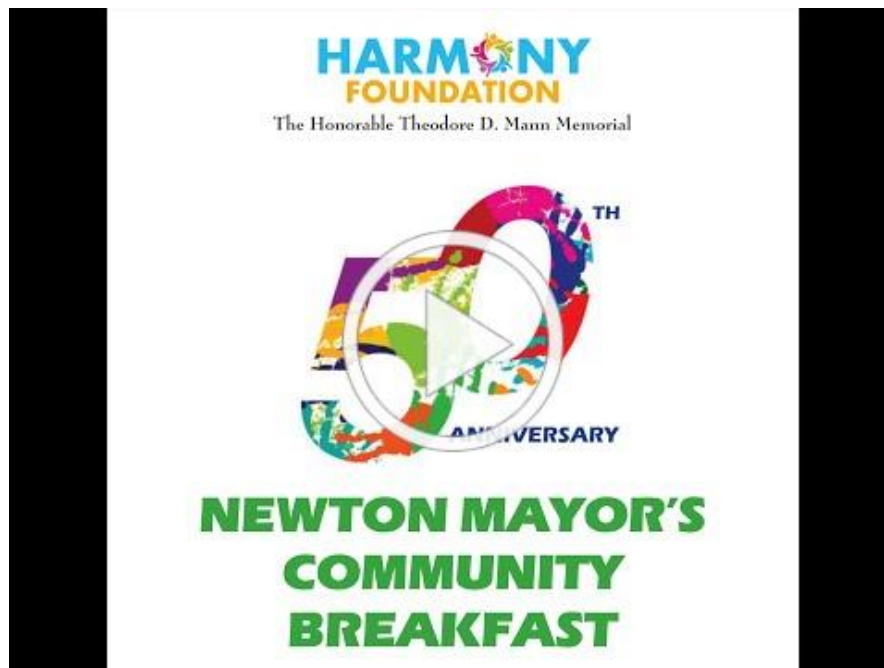
*Kay Khan, Mayor Ted Mann Community Service Award honoree Susan Paley of the Village Bank, City Council President Marc Laredo, District Attorney Marion Ryan, Acting U.S. Josh Levy, State Rep. Ruth Balser and Mayor Ted Mann Community Service Award honoree Karen Peirce, Newton's Associate Director of Special Needs.)*

Last Wednesday we gathered to break bread together at the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Mayor's Community Breakfast overseen by the Harmony Foundation. The morning brought together neighbors from across Newton representing our many faith communities, civic organizations, non-profits and businesses as well as Newton Public Schools educators and administrators and City employees representing virtually every part of our government.

Acting U.S. Attorney Josh Levy and a Newtonian gave an excellent keynote speech and it is definitely worth a listen. Click below to watch the NewTV broadcast of the breakfast. Josh Levy's remarks begin at 1:01:30 of the video.

Warmly,

Ruthanne



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P.S. Have a story to tell? The Newton Nomadic Theater will host **a story slam** on Thursday, May 30 at the West Newton Cinema, 1296 Washington St. starting at 7:00

p.m. Throw your name in the hat to tell a 5-minute story that “sets the scene,” or just enjoy the stories told by your Newton neighbors. All proceeds will benefit the West Newton Cinema Foundation. Find more information and purchase tickets [here](#).

**P.P.S. Walk for Independence** and support the Carroll Center for the Blind on Saturday, June 1. Choose a 1, 2 or 3-mile walk around the UMass Amherst Mount Ida Campus, 100 Carlson Avenue, and help raise funds to support the Carroll Center’s mission of empowering blind and visually impaired people to achieve independence and achieve fulfilling lives. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m., the walk kicks off at 9:30 a.m., and a post walk BBQ and activities are from 10:00 a.m. to noon.

**P.P.P.S.** Interested in what’s in bloom in the Bare Pond vernal pool at Webster Woods? Join Barbara Bates from **Newton Conservators for an easyish 1.5-mile ramble in Webster Woods**, 250 Hammond Pond Parkway, on Saturday, June 1, from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. (The trail is a bit rocky and muddy in places with a couple of steep inclines.) No pets allowed. Click [here](#) for more information.

**P.P.P.P.S.** This Sunday, June 2 our **Newton Police** will honor their fellow officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Join us for this solemn ceremony which begins at 9:00 a.m. at Police Headquarters, 1321 Washington Street.

The following Sunday, June 9, our **Newton Fire Firefighters** will hold their Memorial Service for members of the NFD family. Prior to the ceremony, refreshments will be served inside Fire Station 3, 31 Willow Street at 10:00 a.m. The Memorial Ceremony begins at 10:30 a.m. and will be held around the corner in front of Fire Headquarters, 1164 Centre Street.

**P.P.P.P.P.S.** Ride bikes for a great cause at the **Newton-Needham Pan Mass Challenge (PMC) Kids Ride** on Sunday, June 2 from 8:00 to 11:30 a.m. at the Wells Avenue Office Park, 180 Wells Ave. Join the fun riding routes available for all riders ages 2 to 15 and help raise money for the Dana Farber Cancer Institute. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**P.P.P.P.P.P.S.** Join us on Tuesday, June 4 to kick off Pride Month and **raise the rainbow Pride Flag** on the ceremonial flagpole at City Hall, 1000 Comm Avenue on the Homer Street side. Festivities begin at 5:30 p.m. Pride Month activities continue with a **Celebration of Queer Culture** at City Hall on Saturday, June 15 from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Bring the family to learn about queer culture through history, art and conversation in a welcoming environment. Organized by Newton youth, the celebration is presented in partnership with City of Newton Health and Human Services, the Newton Human Rights Commission and the Newton Youth Commission. Enjoy an art display, music, a resource fair, a panel with queer youth discussing how their queer identity intersects with the other identities they hold, and more.

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. The Newton Tree Conservancy is accepting applications for the **Fall 2024 Community Tree Plantings**. See an promising space along the grassy, berm section of a sidewalk along your street? Work with your neighbors and apply to get a new tree to plant on “planting day” in November. The deadline for applications is Sunday, June 30. Click [here](#) for more information on how to apply.

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Newton Community Education (NCE) has **summer spots available for campers K-12**. How about basketball led by high school coaches Paul Connolly and Corey Lowe? Or ceramics, coding, chess, vet school, public speaking, carpentry, or volleyball? [Scholarships](#) are available so everyone can participate. Click [here](#) for more information. Register at [NCE's website](#) or call (617) 559-6999.

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Join Indigenous Peoples Day Newton at the New Art Center between Thursday, June 6 and Saturday, June 8 to experience **Powwow and the People Who Bring It to Life**, an exhibit on Native American powwow, an exhibit of photos by local photographers Scott Strong Hawk Foster and Dr. Rob Adelman. Click [here](#) for more information.

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Join the Newton Cultural Alliance for an eclectic program of music, art, light dinner and drinks at the **10<sup>th</sup> Annual Strawberry Festival** on Saturday, June 8. Festivities begin at 6:30 p.m. at The Allen Center, 35 Webster St. Click [here](#) for more information.

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Celebrate African-American heritage and culture through food, music, dance and story-telling at **Newton Juneteenth Celebration** on Saturday, June 15 from noon to 4:00 p.m. at the Hyde Community Center, 90 Lincoln Street. The Myrtle Baptist Church choir will take center stage for a headline performance in honor of the historic Myrtle Baptist Church's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary – a huge milestone that coincides with Newton's 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Click [here](#) for more information.

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Have you noticed the beautifully painted outdoor pianos across Newton? Newton residents donated the nine pianos and professional artists painted them. The **Artful Pianos** are placed around our City for all of us all to play, admire and enjoy. Click [here](#) for more info and to find a piano near you.

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. **How are we doing as a City in delivering services equitably, inclusively and respectfully?** We're conducting a baseline audit assessment with the Newton community to find out. Please take the community survey and share your experiences regarding access to city services and programs, quality of services and programs, and satisfaction when interacting with City staff while obtaining services. Click [here](#) (and thank you!!).

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. The **Newton Farmers' Market** is back at Cold Spring Park on Tuesdays and at Newton North High



School Lowell Street lot on Saturdays starting the week of June 16 through mid-October. Shop for farm fresh vegetables, free range turkey, dumplings, sweets and so much more. The Cold Spring Market on Tuesdays at 1094 Beacon Street begins on June 18 and is open every week from 1:30 to 6:00 p.m. The Saturday market at Newton North, 352 Lowell Avenue, begins on June 22 and is open from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The Newton Farmer's Market accepts [SNAP](#) and [HIP](#) benefits. Residents can bring their EBT card to the market and a market volunteer can assist them. Find a list and schedule of vendors [here](#).

### Past P.S.s happening soon:

P.S. Watch free, live music on the front porches and yards in Newton Lower Falls, Auburndale and Waban Center at **Newton Porchfest 2024, Saturday, June 1 from noon to 6:00 p.m.** Click [here](#) for a full schedule of live performances. Click [here](#) for more information and to purchase tickets.

P.P.S. Interested in making your home more energy efficient? Consider taking the [Sustainable Street Tour](#), a short walking tour on Sunday, June 2 to meet Newton homeowners who can share their experiences with heat pumps, solar panels, and EV chargers. Newton "Energy Coaches" will also be available to answer questions. The tour runs from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at Montclair Road in Waban. (Start at the welcome tent directly across the street from Lincoln Field.)

P.P.P.S. The **Nonantum Neighborhood Association's 13th Annual Village Day** is on Sunday, June 2 from 11:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Coletti-Magni Park on Watertown Street between Adams and Chapel Streets.



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

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