

Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2024

Mayor's Newton Update



Great News from Newton's Lead Pipe Inventory

Over the past year, the Newton Department of Public Works (DPW) team has been conscientiously surveying all our water service lines that deliver water from the public mains into private properties as part of a nationwide mandate by the Federal Government to locate, inventory and eventually have property owners replace all remaining lead water pipes.

As the national reporting deadline of Wednesday, Oct. 16 approaches to complete this lead pipe inventory, we have great news to report in Newton.

Newton's water provided by the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA) from the Quabbin and Wachusett Reservoirs is lead free (and continues to be tested frequently). Test results from City of Newton properties have been consistently in compliance with the strict federal limits not only for lead but also for copper.

All of the MWRA water mains and all of the City of Newton water mains are lead free.

After inventorying approximately 24,000 private water service lines that take water from the publicly owned City of Newton mains into our private homes, offices and businesses, our DPW Utilities Division team has identified just one lead service line and eight potential lead service lines remaining in the City. The DPW is working with these property owners so they can replace any of the nine service lines that are lead. Zero interest loans will be available to get the replacement work done.

DPW has only 108 water service lines that remain unidentified. That number is going down steadily.

Once the October 16 federal deadline is reached, the City will publish online the small list of these properties in the known lead, or unknown material, categories. We will let the property owners know and work with them on next steps.

We are grateful for a \$93,376 grant from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection that helped fund the lead service line inventory and our reporting requirements.

Why is lead in water pipes important?

Lead was a primary material used for drinking water service lines as far back as ancient Rome. Lead pipes were installed in the United States from the late 1800s to the mid-20th century primarily because lead is perceived to be extremely durable yet bendable and noncorrosive.

The Environmental Protection Agency last November strengthened the Lead and Copper Rule to protect both children and adults from the effects of lead poisoning. Even low levels of lead exposure have been linked to damage of the central and peripheral nervous system, learning disabilities, shorter stature, impaired hearing, and impaired formation and function of blood cells, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Children are particularly at risk because their small bodies mean ingestion of low levels of lead particles have a significant and irreversible health impact. (Find more information at [cdc.gov/lead.](https://www.cdc.gov/lead/))

Presidential Election

Our Newton election staff received more than 20,000 official Nov. 5 Presidential Election vote by mail ballots from Secretary of State Bill Galvin's office this afternoon. They will begin mailing them out to Newton voters tomorrow and it will likely take to the end of next week to sort/stuff/seal and send them to voters who have returned their vote by mail applications.

Are you voting by mail? Remember to (1) fill in the ovals and (2) then sign the vote by mail ballot envelope before mailing it to or dropping it off at City Hall. Please be mindful that mail is taking several days to be delivered, so allow extra time for your ballot to arrive at City Hall. Your best bet may be to drop your completed ballot off at City Hall in the secure mailbox at the circle in front of the main entrance at 1000 Commonwealth Avenue. (Also, you cannot deliver your mail in ballot to your usual polling place on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 5. Instead, on Election Day, drop off your mail in ballot at City Hall.)



Important Election Dates:

- Last Day to Register to Vote in the Nov. 5 Presidential Election is Saturday, Oct. 26 by 5:00 p.m. Click [here](#) to register.
- Last Day to Apply for a Vote by Mail Ballot is Tuesday, Oct. 29.

- Early, In-Person Voting begins on Saturday, Oct. 19 and continues through Friday, Nov. 1 at City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Ave. (Weekend hours at City Hall are 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and weekdays are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) Early voting will also take place at Newton North High School, 457 Walnut Street, on Saturday and Sunday Oct. 19 and 20, and at Newton South High School, 1 Lions Way (formerly 140 Brandeis Street) on Saturday and Sunday Oct. 26 and 27. Polls at the High Schools will be open for early voting from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Polls will be open across the City on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 5 from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Click [here](#) to find your polling location, and [here](#) for a map of Newton polling locations.

For more information on how to return your ballot, voting locations, and other important details, please visit our website at newtonma.gov/elections or contact our Elections team by calling 617-796-1350 or email us at elections@newtonma.gov.

Angier – A National Blue Ribbon School

Wow. Kudos to the Principal, Dr. Orla Higgins Averill, and the entire Angier Elementary School community on being selected as a National Blue Ribbon School, one of a very small and special group of schools tackling big issues in a big way.



Angier joins eight other elementary, middle and high schools in Massachusetts recognized by the U.S. Department of Education for their overall high achievement or success in closing the achievement gap among diverse groups of students.

The educators at Angier have excelled in supporting academic excellence by all their students by enhancing a culture that gives every student a sense of belonging and a chance to thrive and supporting each student's learning style.

Dr. H, as she is affectionately known, told the School Committee, "We don't need a blue ribbon to know we are a special community, but it sure feels nice."

Thank you to everyone in this special community of teaching and learning, belonging and supporting.

Flu and COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics

The Newton Health and Human Services Department is offering two vaccine clinics for our community in October.

We are offering a Children-only flu and/or COVID clinic (with free COVID vaccine received from the State). Current recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are that everyone 6 months and older should get the annual flu vaccine and an updated 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine.

We are also offering an Adult-only flu clinic. (Sorry, we do not have access to COVID vaccines for adults.)

The clinics will be in the Newton City Hall War Memorial Auditorium (1000 Commonwealth Avenue on the second floor; follow the signs). Insurance information is requested, but not required.

Children-Only Flu and/or COVID Clinic

This clinic is open to anyone 6 months through 18 years old.

Appointments are required.

Flu and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines will be available.

Tuesday, Oct. 15, 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

[Register here](#) (Scroll to the left to view all clinic date options)

Adults-Only Flu Clinic

This clinic is open to anyone 18 years and older.

Appointments are preferred, but we welcome walk-ins.

Regular and (65+) flu vaccines will be available.

Friday, Oct. 18, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

[Register here](#) (Scroll to the left to view all clinic date options)

For more information on the flu vaccine, click [here](#). For more information on the COVID vaccine, click here [here](#). Questions? Contact the Newton Health and Human Services Department at 617-796-1420 or health@newtonma.gov. Interpreter services are available.

Free COVID Tests Available

Free at-home COVID-19 tests are once again available to order from the federal government by clicking [here](#).

Each order includes four individual rapid antigen COVID-19 tests. There is a limit of one order per residential address. Orders will ship free via USPS.

Click [here](#) or [here](#) for more information and details, including when to test, what to do based on your test result, other testing options, extended shelf life and updated expiration dates.

Fostering Respectful Public Dialogue

Superintendent Dr. Anna Nolin and I write together as school and city leadership to share an opportunity to help our community more effectively navigate the complexities of our times. Across Newton, we hope our residents, educators, and students can work, live, and learn within a framework of respect and respectful dialogue and with a learning orientation. We hope to strengthen our understanding about other people's points of view. Indeed, the Newton community is at its best when we are open to learning, listening, and seeking creative solutions across differing beliefs and viewpoints.

We invite city and school members to join us in fostering respectful public dialogue so we can navigate the challenging issues we are facing, such as the war in the Middle East, First Amendment rights, zoning, school curriculum, housing costs, and budget priorities. By learning together with skilled trainers, we aim to help our community navigate difficult discussions and collaborate on decisions that balance the many needs in Newton from schools to services to public safety and more.

An Invitation to Action

The City of Newton and the Newton Public Schools with an assist from the City Council, led by Councilor John Oliver and his working group, are working together with [Essential Partners](#) (EP). Founded in 1989, their work will assist us in repairing frayed trust, reinforcing community cohesion, fostering healthier public conversation, and improving collective decision-making. Essential Partners will engage with city officials, school leaders, educators, parents, and community members in a cohesive long-term program that will engrain healthier practices into the fabric of our community.

There is much work to be done over the coming months and we look forward to sharing each step. A planning team with members from City Hall, the Newton Public Schools, and the City Council is now closely working with Essential Partners. The work we will engage in with Essential Partners will be tailored to the specific needs of our community and will take place over multiple phases and many months.

A First Step

While we will have multiple touchpoints, Essential Partners will begin their work with our community on Tuesday, Nov. 5, the Presidential Election Day, when

schools will be closed and NPS will be providing Professional Development, primarily for educators but also for community members.

We invite you to sign up for one of two 3-hour workshops. This highly interactive workshop will anchor participants in the theory of communication across differences and provide a new framework to foster more constructive conversations. Participants will learn and practice tools that strengthen the skills of dialogic listening, inquiry, reflection, and speaking to promote healthier dynamics, encourage meaningful interpersonal connections, and halt the spread of polarization in classrooms, schools or neighborhoods.

Tuesday, Nov. 5 at Newton South High School

- Session A: 8:00 – 10:55
- Session B: 12:05 – 3:00

Each session can accommodate up to 50 people for a total of 100 trained educators and community members.

This is just one opportunity for community members to be involved. We will roll out additional sessions in the coming months. If you are interested in future trainings, e-mail us to go on the list at reengagenewton@newtonma.gov.

In addition, we're planning additional opportunities to complement these trainings. We hope to listen and learn together at neighborhood gatherings in our villages. Superintendent Anna Nolin and Mayor Ruthanne Fuller, along with other electeds, would love to attend. A Community Read is also in the works as part of this. Stay tuned.

Supporting Our Students

NPS reached out to our student leadership, cultural groups, and clubs for feedback on needs at this time. While they had no specific actions planned as of this week, they advised us that classes and routines should carry on as usual. They indicated that the routines of school should be preserved, as these routines serve as a comfort to many.

We know, of course, that students and staff may, in light of the one year anniversary of October 7th and current events in the region and locally, need varying levels of support. We will be prepared to follow their lead and need in this time period. Every school has counseling and/or social work supports and crisis teams are also available for additional support.

Our primary focus is, and always will be, the education and well-being of our students. As a public school system, our responsibility is to provide a rigorous academic education, foster critical thinking, and support the social and emotional development of our students. While world events undeniably affect us all, our role is to create an environment where students can explore, question, and learn with a foundation in evidence, respect, and thoughtful discourse.

We fully recognize the complexity and importance of the issues facing our world today. Our classrooms remain spaces where students can engage with these issues in a thoughtful, balanced, and age-appropriate manner. Our educators may facilitate conversations that respect diverse perspectives and equip students with the skills to navigate an increasingly complex world. But mostly, we will provide support and continue to move ahead with our academic and instructional core mission.

To sign up for an Essential Partners workshop, email Hattie Kerwin Derrick, City of Newton Director of Community Engagement & Inclusion at hkerwinderrick@newtonma.gov or Superintendent Nolin at nolina@newton.k12.ma.us.

Hammond Pond Parkway Construction Update

State construction crews have advanced a dramatic transformation of Hammond Pond Parkway in the last six months. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) corridor has been converted from four lanes of traffic to two, and a new multi-use path for walking and biking is taking shape along the western side of the roadway.

The DCR goals are to make travel along Hammond Pond Parkway safer for everyone and to provide better access to the trails and open space on either side.

Here's what's been accomplished so far between Beacon Street and Rt. 9 on Hammond Pond Parkway:

- Roadway construction is complete, mostly: The roadway is nearly complete. Construction crews are working now to install curbing along both sides of the parkway. Lanes will remain open for vehicles. In the spring of 2025, a milling and paving project is planned for the section of roadway near the Beacon Street intersection.
- Shared use path: The DCR hopes to complete the paved, protected, shared-use walking-biking path on the western side this fall.
- Walking path: The walking path along the eastern side of the parkway should also be completed by year's end.
- Traffic signals: New traffic signals to replace the existing ones will be installed at Beacon Street and at the parkway access to the Chestnut Hill Mall and the Towers of Chestnut Hill. A new user-activated signal will be

installed at a new, accessible pedestrian crossing to connect walking trails on either side of the parkway, just north of the Boston College property.

- Streetlights: New streetlight poles and fixtures are scheduled to be installed early next year. If needed, DCR's contractor may add temporary street lighting for safety until the new streetlights are operational.
- Morning traffic backups (northbound) at the Beacon Street intersection: Project managers are aware of these backups. The backups may continue until the new traffic signals are installed this winter.
- Snow removal: MassDOT will oversee snow removal along Hammond Pond Parkway. Snow may be plowed from the shared-use path on the western side, but its surface will not be treated with salt or sand to protect the conservation area. Snow may not be plowed from the walking path to avoid damaging its permeable, stone-dust surface.
- When will the project be complete?: DCR is telling us that the shared-use path and walking path should be open for public use before year's end. Additional work will proceed over the winter and spring. Final paving and painting of the roadway is scheduled for summer 2025.

We're grateful for this Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) project with a State investment of \$12 million and their ongoing efforts to improve access, safety, and conservation along DCR parkways. Click [here](#) for more project information.

These state-funded improvements to Hammond Pond Parkway will create better pedestrian access to approximately 230 acres of protected open space stretching between Newton Centre and Chestnut Hill.

Consider taking a walk in Webster Woods even as DCR finishes up. We worked hard to preserve permanently this tract of forest, the largest one in Newton. The Webster Conservation Area webpage offers [trail maps](#). Public parking is available in the [northern section of the surface lot](#) behind the Shops at Chestnut Hill. The [Newton Conservators' webpage](#) also provides lots of great information about Webster Woods.

Newton Thrive Update

An important goal of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding that came to the City of Newton was to help residents negatively impacted by the COVID-19

pandemic.

In February of 2023, utilizing ARPA funding, we created a program named Newton Thrive to improve the economic mobility of 50 low-income Newton families negatively affected by the pandemic.

With the help of the non-profit Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath), we partnered with these 50 Newton families with one-on-one coaching to address economic issues ranging from debt reduction, employment and education/training, savings accumulation, transportation and childcare.

All of the fifty Newtonians were earning less than 50% of our area median income and had at least one child in the household under the age of 18. They committed to weekly mentoring for two years.

Newton Thrive completed its first full year of operation with meaningful outcomes.

A recent progress report (that can be found [here](#)) for Newton Thrive shows 71% of the families have been able to pay down debt, 55% have set a monthly budget, 51% are participating in an education or training program, and 33% have completed job search activities. One Newton Thrive family shared, "I have cleared my debt, worked on my credit, and also managed to get a car – all things I didn't think were possible".

I'm grateful that the ARPA funding allowed our community to support low-income families in a meaningful way, with another year of mentoring still ahead.

Mail and Check Fraud

In Newton, reported incidents of fraud and check fraud increased from 13 cases in 2021 to 102 in 2022 and then to 170 last year in 2023.

We continue to hear about more and more checks being stolen and cashed by fraudsters.

What steps can you take to prevent check fraud?

- Convert check payments to digital or electronic payment channels.
- Keep check stock and any blank checks in a safe place.
- Never sign checks in advance while leaving the amount and payee blank.

- Use mail boxes inside United States Postal Service Offices or deposit your mail containing a check in mail boxes close to pick-up times.
- Check your accounts online to make sure checks you have written are cashed for the intended amounts.

If you are paying your City of Newton property tax or water/sewer bills, the City of Newton offers secure, online payment on our website at newtonma.gov. If you are writing a check, the payment drop box in the front circle at City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Avenue) is video monitored 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and payments can be made in person at Newton's Treasury Department on the first floor of City Hall during business hours, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

If you become a victim of mail theft or fraud, report the incident to Newton Police at 617-796-2100. Be mindful, however, that unfortunately these crimes are exceptionally difficult to solve.

Newton's Financial Future

On Monday, October 7, I will present the City's Five-Year Financial Forecast and Long-Range Financial Plan.

Why is this Financial Forecast and Long-Range Financial Plan so important?

A well-managed, fiscally-sound City is essential to providing exceptional teaching and learning to our more than 11,700 students, delivering top-notch city services to our residents and people who work here, helping our residents and businesses prosper, and making important updates to our infrastructure.

The needs of our students skyrocketed during the onslaught of the coronavirus and have not waned in the past few years as we have emerged from the pandemic. We must wrestle with how to provide funding for necessary initiatives and investments in the Newton Public Schools, as well as public safety, social and health services such as food, housing, and mental health resources, library and cultural services, parks and recreation opportunities, and services for older adults. We must make continued investments in our roads and climate initiatives, including improving safety for pedestrians & bicyclists as well as safety for residents and businesses as we face more extreme heat & cold, rain & snow.

Simultaneously, this Long-Range Financial Plan must allow us to balance our current needs and future obligations – including debt for important capital investments and retiree benefits for our employees, all while retaining our Aaa credit rating from Moody's Investors Service.

Please join us at 7:45 pm on Monday, October 7 either in person at the City Council Chamber on the 2nd floor of City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Avenue) or

tune in to NewTV online at [Newtv.org](https://www.newtv.org) or on cable television (Comcast 9 | RCN 614 (HD) | Verizon 33) to watch as we lay out our strategy for the next several years.

We will continue to evaluate carefully the many needs within our community and the opportunities we have. We will be judicious in our deliberations and transparent in our decision making. We will maintain parity between the growth rate of our revenues and expenditures, and above all else, we will be focused on the goal that every investment we make will be in the best interest of the people of this good city.

A Good, Sweet and Healthy New Year

Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown tomorrow, Wednesday, Oct. 2 - marking the start of a new year for many of us.

Shana tova and a good, sweet and healthy new year.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

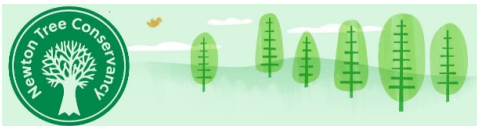


P.S. Interested in signing up to receive from the Newton Public Schools their **NPS District News** and **NPS Community News & Updates**? Here's how to subscribe to [NPS Community News & Updates](#) on ParentSquare. Don't be fooled by the platform's name; the information is not just for "parents" but rather for anyone who wants to learn about school happenings.

P.P.S. Celebrate **Hispanic Heritage Month** at the Newton Free Library, 330 Homer St. Join the fun at *Bilingual Storytime* recommended for youngsters ages 1 to 5 this Friday, Oct. 4 from 10:30 to 11:00 a.m. in the Children's Program Room. On the following Friday, Oct. 11, 10:00 to 10:45 a.m. children ages 2 and up can join Esther Gomez for songs, games and more at the *Spanish Fun Program* designed to help youngsters learn Spanish through play. Click [here](#) for more information.



P.P.P.S. **Shuttle buses will replace service along the MBTA Green Line D Branch** between Kenmore and Newton Highlands stations this weekend, Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 5 and 6. All shuttle buses are accessible for people with disabilities. Click [here](#) for more information and alternative travel options.



P.P.P.P.S. Interested in a free sapling to plant in your yard? The **Newton Tree Conservancy (NTC)** is giving away small **sapling trees** from their nursery in Nahanton

Park's Community Garden (entrance is off Winchester Street; see the [map](#)) this Saturday, Oct. 5 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. They are offering many oak species as well as other varieties such as Sweetgum and Eastern Redbud that can easily fit into a car trunk. Click [here](#) to register for a specific time slot to choose your trees. NTC Directors will be on hand to discuss your space, suggest appropriate trees, and share planting and care tips.

P.P.P.P.S. Stop by for apple cider pressing, basket weaving, candle dipping, fiddle music and so much more at **Hayfest, Historic Newton's annual fall festival** this Sunday, Oct. 6 from noon



to 4:00 p.m. Travel back in time and enjoy 19th century Newton in the backyard of the Jackson Homestead, 527 Washington Street.



P.P.P.P.P.S. Join the Friends of Wellington Park this Sunday, Oct. 6 (rain date Sunday, Oct. 27) for live music, a magic show, pumpkin decorating, free food and drink and much more at **Wellington Parkfest**. The fun begins at noon and runs through

3:00 p.m. at Wellington Park, at Kilburn Road and Henshaw Street in West Newton.

P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Keep an eye out for the thousands of walkers who will make their way through Newton this Sunday, Oct. 6, for the **Boston Marathon Jimmy Fund Walk** as they raise funds to support cancer care and research at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.



P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Celebrate Indigenous peoples at the **4th Annual Indigenous Peoples Day Ceremonial Celebration** on Monday, Oct. 14. Festivities begin at 11:00 a.m. at Albemarle Field in Newtonville and continue through 5:00 p.m. with volunteer-run events, live music, food, cultural dances and presentations and many local indigenous vendors and non-profits. Click [here](#) for more information.

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Three fall traditions in Newton are happening this month:

- Register now for the 23rd running of **Paddy's Road Race**, The Shillelagh Shuffle, a premier New England road race that attracts over 2,500 participants to benefit Newton Athletes Unlimited. Races begin at 9:00 a.m.

on Sunday, Oct. 20 in West Newton. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

- For 49 years, Newtonians have celebrated the changing of the seasons at the annual **Harvest Fair** in Newton Centre. The kid’s carnival with rides and games is on Saturday, Oct. 19 from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Come back the next day, Sunday, Oct. 20 from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., to shop local stores and vendors, stop by Green Newton’s Green Expo, enjoy live entertainment on two stages, paint a free pumpkin, enjoy the second day of the carnival, and much more. Click [here](#) for more information.
- Join in the 25 years of **Halloween Window Painting** on Saturday, Oct. 26 (rain date, Sunday, Oct. 27). Early registration is now open for Newton students in grades 3 to 8 to paint their masterpieces on the outside window of a local merchant. Click [here](#) for more information.

Past P.S.s Happening Soon:

P.S. Green Newton’s third **Sustainable Street Tour** is this Saturday, Oct. 5 from 10:00 a.m. to noon in Newtonville right across Walnut Street from Newton North High School at 34 Clyde St. Learn about heat pumps, solar panels, EV chargers, and more from your neighbors who will share how they made their homes more energy efficient. Click [here](#) for more info.



P.P.S. **Newton Community Farm’s Fall Family Fun Day** is this Sunday, Oct. 6. Activities begin at 9:30 a.m. and run through noon at the farm, 303 Nahanton Street. Click [here](#) for more information.



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

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