

Monday, Oct. 21, 2024

Mayor's Newton Update

This evening Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Yeo and I presented to the City Council our Capital Improvement Plan for the next five years, FY2026 to FY2030.

The following are my remarks:

If Josh Morse, our Commissioner of Public Buildings, Jim McGonagle, our Commissioner of Public Works, and Nicole Banks, our Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Culture, and their teams at times seem a bit breathless, there's a good reason. The amount of capital infrastructure work we have accomplished in the last 7 years, the amount that is underway currently, and the plans for more in the next 5 years can take your breath away.



Since January 2018 when I became Mayor, our team with the support of all of you, our Honorable City Council, have invested more than \$423 million in just buildings and grounds projects throughout Newton, of which more than \$90 million came from the state and federal governments and utility companies. We worked hard to find grants and leverage funding. Building Commissioner Josh Morse doesn't think it's terribly speculative to suggest that we have invested, and are investing, more in infrastructure over the past 7 years than any 7-year period in the history of Newton and it's not even close.

Newtonians are already happily using:

- The new building for our preschool - the Newton Early Childhood Program and the addition at Oak Hill Middle School
- The two new Gath Pools and splash pad, and



- Three new sets of field lights and three new synthetic turf fields at our high schools.



We're well on our way with:

- Four fabulous school projects at Lincoln-Eliot, Horace Mann, Countryside and Franklin Elementary Schools.
- The framing of the Cooper Center for Active Living is almost done, and,



- The vision and feasibility study for the comprehensive Police Facility Improvement Project is well on its way.

Furthermore, in addition to operating investments of \$9.5 million annually in our roads and sidewalks, we directed an additional \$17 million of American Rescue Plan Act funds to improve roads, calm traffic, repair sidewalks, and make bicycling safer. That's more than \$80 million dollars of road and sidewalk work.

Here we are in October 2024 in the very final stages of our American Rescue Plan Act investments and we directed approximately \$40 million dollars of these funds into permanent improvements in our infrastructure.

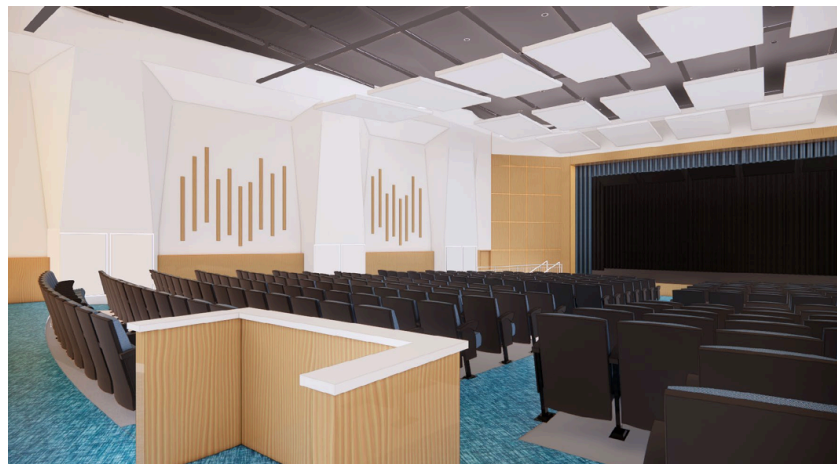
- Over \$22 million of ARPA investments all together went to our schools, with significant positive impacts on a wide variety of school infrastructure. We put ARPA funds to work at every single school building, with capital improvements in school buildings, ventilation systems, technology across the district, athletic fields and lighting, playgrounds, and maintenance projects.
- More than \$17 million went towards Roads & Sidewalks– their condition, safety and accessibility. See Arnold Road and Country Club Road, freshly paved with a new bump-out and sidewalk.



- We invested more than \$5 million in the Library Children’s Room, the Cooper Center for Active Living, Police Headquarters and more, and,
- Another \$5 million improved our athletic fields, parks, gardens, trails and courts.

In the coming five years, we have a whole array of great investments planned. You will find in the Capital Improvement Plan funding for:

- A Christina Street Shared Use Bridge near the end of Needham Street in Upper Falls
- A Spears Community Garden in Nonantum
- Oak Hill Park Playground Improvements in Ward 8
- A New 450 seat Auditorium at the Lincoln-Eliot School for our first true community and schools shared performance venue.



- Captain Ryan's Park Improvements in West Newton
- Improvements to the Crystal Lake Beach in Newton Centre
- A New Fire Ladder #3 for all our safety, and,
- Again, much more.

Importantly, 30% of the projected capital project spending in the CIP over the next five years improves our Water, Sewer and Stormwater Infrastructure. We finish up our water meter replacements, upgrade our sewer pump stations and tend to our critical covered water storage facility on Waban Hill.



We are getting underway on the massive amount of work ahead of us in our stormwater system to implement an EPA-required Phosphorus Control Plan to protect the Charles River and do even more to protect ourselves from flooding.

With the help of Maureen Lemieux, our CFO, and Jonathan Yeo, our COO, and votes by the City Council, I have used the City's annual budget and occasionally other funding sources to pay the debt service for the bonding of our capital infrastructure, including really big projects like the \$54.9 million for the new Lincoln-Eliot Elementary School. With careful budgeting and planning, we have the funds available for all of our current work and the funded projects in this CIP you are receiving tonight, while keeping our annual debt service payments just where we want to be at around 5% or 5.5% of our overall annual budget.

Please keep in mind that for future really big projects, we will need override funding otherwise our annual debt service payments would grow to an uncomfortable place, crowding out our other operating budgets and operating services we provide. Newtonians stepped up for override funding for major projects in the past – the new Angier, Zervas, Cabot, Countryside and Franklin Elementary Schools and the Fire HQ and Station 3, as examples. Upcoming projects such as the Police Headquarters Facility Renovations and additional elementary schools such as Ward/Underwood will also need such funding by Newton voters. By all of us working together we will make these investments in Newton's future when the time comes.

In closing, with Halloween approaching, it's apt to point out that infrastructure is the skeleton upon which all our work is done. Teachers can teach better, and students can learn better in up-to-date school buildings. Our climate is better served by energy efficient buildings that are fossil fuel free. Residents who are walking, biking or driving are safer and bounced around far less in well designed, well constructed, and well maintained roads and sidewalks. Athletes of all ages

will have their soccer ball go where it's intended if the turf – grass or synthetic – is in good shape and we'll have more hours available with good lighting. Reinvesting in technology lets us do our homework or city and school work more effectively and efficiently.

So, this Capital Improvement Plan is all “treat” and no “tricks.” Happy Halloween everyone! *(And if you know who did this fabulous window painting last year, please let me know!)*

Mayor Ruthanne Fuller

Click [here](#) to read the Capital Improvement Plan and to see COO Jonathan Yeo's Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan PowerPoint presentation.

Click [here](#) to read the Long-Range Financial Plan and Five-Year Forecast that I presented on October 7.



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

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