

Friday, Nov. 1, 2024

Mayor's Newton Update



Election Tuesday

Today, Friday, Nov. 1, was the last day to cast your ballot early, in person in the Tuesday, Nov. 5 Presidential Election. Early, in person voting closed at City Hall at 5:00 p.m.

In-person voting is available again on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 5, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Not sure where you vote on election day? Find your polling location [here](#), and find a map of Newton's polling locations [here](#).

As of Wednesday afternoon, the Newton City Clerk's Office reports that approximately 5,000 voters have cast their ballots early, in person since early voting began on Saturday, Oct. 19.

The Newton City Clerk's Office has also been working for weeks mailing out approximately 28,000 ballots to Newton voters and is continuing to process the approximately 16,250 that have been returned as of Wednesday afternoon. They will continue processing ballots arriving daily by mail and by people dropping them in the secure ballot drop box at City Hall (in the front circle by the fountain).

If you returned your ballot by mail or by dropping it at City Hall, you can check its status by using the *Track My Ballot* website [here](#).

If you still have a mail-in ballot that needs to be returned, be careful about the timing of putting it in the mail. Technically, ballots can be post-marked on (or before) Tuesday, Nov. 5th and they must arrive at City Hall by Friday, Nov. 8 and they will be counted.



You might want to consider dropping the filled out and signed ballots in our secure ballot drop box in front of City Hall until 8:00 p.m. when polls close on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 5. Please know that by law you can NOT bring your mail-in ballot to the polling locations spread around Newtown next Tuesday; rather, the mail in ballots can only be returned by mail or by dropping them off in the secure ballot drop box in front of City Hall on Election Day.

Questions? Check the Newton Election page at newtonma.gov/elections.

Newton election results will be posted at newtonma.gov as they are become available, usually starting around 9:00 p.m. on election night. We will also send out the full results for Newton that evening.

The Newton All City Troubadours recorded a terrific voting PSA for the Newton Community. Thanks to Bigelow Middle Schools Director of Instrumental Music Ed Harlow for sharing. Click on the photo below to watch.



Commonwealth Avenue Reconstruction in Auburndale

The Commonwealth Avenue and Commonwealth Carriage Road Improvements Project in Auburndale is a major roadway reconstruction project for roughly 0.4 miles between the Marriott driveway and Higgins Street.

It entails reconstructing the Commonwealth Avenue mainline with a single travel lane in each direction and reserving most of the Carriage Road for park land, pedestrians and bicyclists. All traffic will travel on the Commonwealth Avenue mainline, rather than making confusing crossovers to and from the Carriage Road.

(Photo: Drone photo of the project area.)

The Carriage Road will be completely reconstructed. By Lyons Field, the Carriage Road will serve as a local access road and for parking. The Carriage Road will be transformed completely between Islington Road and the Marriott driveway into a new sidewalk, a new bicycle path, and a new large linear park.

Reimagining the Carriage Road in Auburndale had been a goal of Auburndale neighbors and the City for many years. The City designed the project using Community Preservation Act and other funds; we received federal funding through the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the



Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is managing the construction project. In a separate project that will begin next year, MassDOT will also be renovating the Commonwealth Avenue bridge over the Charles River, improving the Auburn Street intersection area (introducing a roundabout), and

extending the linear park and bicycle path.

The project corridor includes four improved pedestrian crossings – at the Marriott driveway, Woodbine Road, Islington Road, and Ash Street. Each crossing will have a crosswalk with fully-accessible pedestrian curb ramps, pedestrian median refuge islands, and rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs), the pedestrian beacons with yellow flashing lights.

The goals are to enhance significantly safety and access for all modes by putting all vehicle traffic onto the Commonwealth Avenue main roadway, reducing the width to one travel lane in each direction, reducing traffic speeds, and replacing the Carriage Road with a combination of park land, a shared use path, and access roads with parking near Lyons Field.

The project is currently roughly half complete. Much of the work on the Commonwealth Avenue mainline has been completed, including a new accessible sidewalk along the southern edge of the roadway. The cross street connections to Commonwealth Avenue are currently under construction, with the old signal at Ash Street to be removed in the next two months and the street connection to the Carriage Road to be restored.

Major work on the Carriage Road, bicycle path, and park land will be done in 2025. The project is expected to be substantially complete by the end of 2025, with landscaping and some minor finish work to be completed in spring 2026.

This project will be followed by a subsequent Commonwealth Avenue and Carriage Road reconstruction in the next segment of the roadway to the west, between the Marriott driveway and the Newton – Weston line.

Want more details? The City has a web page for the project – newtonma.gov/carriageway – with the project plans, along with supporting analysis and presentation materials.

Motor Vehicle Excise Taxes

Every year motor vehicle owners receive an excise tax bill. What exactly is it?

Chapter 60A of Massachusetts General Laws imposes an excise tax for everyone registering a motor vehicle or a trailer in Massachusetts. The excise is levied annually. (Non-registered vehicles are also subject to tax as personal property.)

Massachusetts has the excise tax levied by the city or town where the vehicle is principally garaged, and the revenues become part of the local municipal tax revenue.

The amount of the excise tax is based on the valuation of the motor vehicle. Valuation amounts are the manufacturers' list prices for vehicles in their year of manufacture. Interestingly, present market value, price paid, or condition are not considered for excise tax purposes. Rather, the State's excise tax law ([M.G.L. c.60A, s.1](#)) establishes its own formula for valuation for state tax purposes whereby *only* the manufacturer's list price in the year of manufacture and the age of the motor vehicle are considered.

How much do you owe each year for your motor vehicle? The State applies a certain percentage of the manufacturer's list price when determining the amount of the excise tax due. The percentages are:

- In the year *preceding* the designated year of manufacture (i.e., a brand new car released *before* model year): 50%
- In the designated year of manufacture: 90%
- In the second year: 60%
- In the third year: 40%
- In the fourth year: 25%
- In the fifth and succeeding years: 10%
- Once the value of the vehicle is determined, an excise tax at the rate of \$25 per thousand dollars valuation is assessed.

Here is an example:

What would be the excise tax over six years of a vehicle with a suggested Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price (MSRP) of \$50,000?

\$50,000 MSRP

<u>Year</u>	<u>Excise %MSRP</u>	<u>Excise Value</u>	<u>Excise Tax</u>
1	90%	\$45,000	\$1,125.00
2	60%	\$30,000	\$750.00
3	40%	\$20,000	\$500.00
4	25%	\$12,500	\$312.50
5	10%	\$5,000	\$125.00
6	10%	\$5,000	\$125.00

Note: Cars 5 years old *and* older are valued at 10% of MSRP for as long as they are registered.

Excise tax is assessed annually, on a calendar year basis, by the Assessors of the city or town in which the vehicle is principally garaged. In Newton, our City of Newton Assessing Department staff process over 70,000 excise tax bills annually. (The major excise billing occurs in February for vehicles that are registered as of the first of the year and the RMV sends the City new files every couple of months as additional cars are registered.)

If the motor vehicle is registered after January 31, it is taxed for the period extending from the first day of the month in which it is registered to the end of the calendar year. For example, if a vehicle is registered on April 30, it will be taxable as of April 1, for the nine months of the year (April through December) and the excise due, therefore, will be 9/12 of the full excise tax. (fyi: In no event shall the excise tax be assessed for less than \$5.00, nor shall an abatement or refund under Section 1 of Chapter 60A reduce an excise tax to less than \$5.00.)

Abatements

You may sell or trade your motor vehicle during the year, or perhaps it is stolen and you have canceled your registration. Maybe you have moved and, likewise, you have registered your vehicle in a new state. In that case, you will want to have a reduction in your excise tax. That's called an abatement.

Newton's Assessors office must receive abatement applications within 3 years after the excise is due OR within one year after the excise is paid.

Here is an example. Assume that an excise tax bill is due on February 25, 2024. The abatement deadline would be February 25, 2027 OR one year after the payment of the bill, whichever is later.

More specifically, under what circumstances might motor vehicle excise abatement be warranted?

Abatement applications can be filed if:

- The owner believes the Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price (MSRP) determined by the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) is

incorrect, or

- The vehicle was traded, or
- The vehicle was stolen, or
- The vehicle was sold during the year in which it is being taxed and the registration was properly cancelled, or
- The owner moved from the City of Newton to another city or town, before January 1
- If the owner moved to another state and registered the vehicle and cancelled the registration in Massachusetts, or
- The registration is cancelled; remember, it is most important to return the plate(s) to the Registry of Motor Vehicles and to obtain a return plate receipt.

When an abatement is granted, excise bills are prorated by the month. In other words, the owner is responsible for the excise accrued through the month in which the car was last registered to them.

We have a lot of information on our website; click [here](#). In addition, the State has a lot of information; click [here](#).

Cooper Center for Active Living

The new Cooper Center for Active Living in the heart of Newtonville on Walnut Street is moving along with the shell of all three floors in place, and a preview of the wonderful view from the third-floor terrace. Click below for a tour with Newton's Commissioner of Public Buildings Josh Morse.



Vaccine Recommendation Updates

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its COVID-19 and its pneumococcal vaccine recommendations last week.

COVID-19

Individuals 65 years and older and those who are moderately or severely immunocompromised are now recommended to receive a second dose of the new 2024-25 COVID-19 vaccine six months after their first dose. The CDC has also introduced flexibility for immunocompromised individuals to receive additional doses (three or more) if advised by their healthcare provider. For more information on the COVID-19 vaccination update from the CDC, click [here](#).

Pneumococcal

The CDC now advises adults to receive the pneumococcal vaccine starting at age 50, lowering the previous recommendation from 65 years. Pneumococcal bacteria can cause serious illnesses, including pneumonia, meningitis, and bloodstream infections. For more information about the pneumococcal vaccine update from the CDC, click [here](#).

Honoring Our Veterans

On Veterans Day a week from next Monday, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, we will pause and honor our military veterans who are serving and who have served our country at home and around the world.

United States Marine Corp veteran and former City Councilor Jim Cote is this year's keynote speaker.

Join us at the American Legion Nonantum Post 440, 295 California Street, at 11:00 a.m. for the ceremony. Consider supporting our troops with donations of nonperishable food, healthy snacks, drink mixes or coffee. Cell Phones for Soldiers will also collect used cellphones for our troops.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. This is the weekend we fall back in time. Remember to **turn clocks back one hour** on Sunday, Nov. 3 at 2:00 a.m. Also, a reminder that Massachusetts law requires cyclists to have a front white light and a rear red light and reflector while riding when it is dark. For added visibility, a good idea is to use the lights during daylight, too.



P.P.S. Join the United India Association of New England to celebrate **Diwali Festival of Light** this Sunday, Nov. 3 at Newton South High School, 1 Lion Drive (formerly 140 Brandeis Road), from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. Enjoy the cultural program along with food, shopping, candy gift bags for kids, and more.

P.P.P.S. **Winter hours at the Rumford Avenue Recycling Recovery Center** begin today, Friday, Nov. 1 through Monday, March 31. Winter hours are Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Click [here](#) for more information.

P.P.P.P.S. Parents are invited to join **Newton Police Officers at "Back 2 School"** on Thursday, Nov. 7 at 6:00 p.m. at the Newton Free Library, Druker Auditorium, 330 Homer St. Meet your students' School Resource Officers Jellinek, Lazarakis, Colella and Panica and Outreach Officers Lau and Keefe, learn about cell phone safety, discuss concerns and ask questions.



P.P.P.P.P.S. **Newton Nomadic Theater** presents the Tony and Pulitzer nominated play *A Walk in The Woods*, a funny yet disturbing tale of the developing relationship between two arms negotiators during a walk in the woods outside



Geneva, Switzerland. The play will be performed at the Waban Library Center, 1608 Beacon St., on both Friday, Nov. 8 and Saturday, Nov. 9 at 7:30, and again at Dunn Gaherins Pub & Restaurant, 344 Eliot Street on Sunday, Nov. 10 at 3:00 p.m. Click [here](#) for more information and tickets.

P.P.P.P.P.S. The **Newton Free Library** wants to **hear from patrons** as it plans for the next five years. What resources would you like the Library to offer? What types of programs or events interest you? Share your thoughts by clicking [here](#) and filling out the library's short Community Survey. Paper copies are also available to fill out at the Library.



P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Interested in learning more about the **Newton Highlands Village Enhancements** being designed to improve sidewalks and roadways, provide gathering spaces, beautify with art, benches, lighting, historic markers and landscaping, and more? The 6th Public Meeting will be held on Thursday, Nov. 14 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Come in person to the Newton Free Library, Druker Auditorium, 330 Homer St., or attend virtually on Zoom. Click [here](#) for the Zoom link and for more information about the project.

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. This year's Newton Neighbors annual gift card drive has been renamed to honor the memory of a man who was one of the original drivers of this wonderful organization. **The Bruce Hugh Wilson Giving Thanks Card Drive** is a grocery gift card drive during the holiday season to distribute through local organizations to families facing food insecurity in Newton and local communities. Click [here](#) to learn more.



Past P.S.s Happening Soon:

P.S. **Newton's Annual Pumpkin Smash** is this Saturday, Nov. 2 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Ave. Come smash your pumpkin, touch-a-truck, donate unwanted candy or costumes, and grab a bite from a local food truck – all while helping to "Green Halloween." All our smashed pumpkins



will be composted by Black Earth Compost, reducing waste and greenhouse gas emissions and creating a valuable amendment for our soils. Pre-register for the event [here](#).

(Photo: With some spirited City Hall employees on Halloween.)



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