

Taking Charge of Newton's Future



Dear Neighbors,

I'm very excited to begin work on the future of Washington Street with all of you, our local businesses, City Councilors, and the Principle Group, the consulting firm we just hired to create zoning along this important street that links neighborhoods from West Newton Square to Newton Corner.

I believe deeply in proactive master planning and zoning to guarantee developers conform to our vision for Newton.

Russell Preston and the staff at the Principle Group have a unique track record of effective, intensive neighborhood involvement. They will be helping us do something really difficult – develop consensus on the mix of office; retail and housing; building heights and density; automobile, bicycle, pedestrian and mass transit strategies; open space; and other issues from the vibrancy of Washington Street's village centers to encouraging arts & culture and small, local businesses. I want to thank the City Council for approving on Monday night my request to hire this firm.

I have to ask for your help too. There will be a lot of opportunities for all of you to be heard and to help shape the future of Washington Street. We need to look at a lot of different options, think deeply, talk thoughtfully (even when we start from contrary points of view), and come up with a great plan. Updates on Washington Street planning are on the City's [website](#).

Marathon Preparations

The Boston Marathon is 16 days away (Monday, April 16) and every day it seems I'm learning something more about how much we prepare for 30,000 runners coming through Newton. Of course there's some layers of security that I can't tell you about – suffice it to say that with the help of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, Homeland Security, the FBI, and State Police, we train and prepare for a huge number of scenarios.

Our Fire Department is ready to fight a fire anywhere in the city even though we're split into two parts along the course. Cataldo Ambulance will have their usual five ambulances dedicated to our citizens while covering the marathon with an additional 18 EMS units. Our Police Department will blanket the City and the course.

Here are a few other things I've learned. There are eight different alternative bypass routes the athletes can use in case Commonwealth Avenue becomes impassible. There will be 14 medical tents set up along the course, two with paramedics. The City's Emergency Operations Center at Fire Headquarters in Newton Centre will be up and running.

To make sure wheelchair athletes stay safe, 300 potholes are being filled along Commonwealth Avenue and the alternative routes. Street sweepers will be deployed in the days just before April 16 to make sure sand or debris doesn't trip anyone up.

The DPW will set up 600 metal barricades, 350 wooden and plastic barricades, 1,000 tow zone signs, 20 to 30 sandwich boards, and 7 message boards. They'll also put rope up blocking every driveway along both sides of the 5.7-mile route.

Then there's trash. The Parks and Recreation Department will use bungee cords to put 300, clear, plastic 55-gallon bags on light poles and trees along the race, since the traditional barrels will be locked for security. Once the race is over, those filled bags will be collected by the Parks & Recreation crews as well as approximately 10,500 gallons, or two truckloads of litter, left along the course.

Remember, the course is closed to traffic from 8:00 a.m. to approximately 5:00 p.m. on race day. (Look up for the military flyover at 9:50 a.m.!)

Spring is here – So are Leaf Blowers

Okay, I know. It snowed on Monday. But, really, the warm weather is here, and with it comes spring yard cleaning. You all should have received a pamphlet with your tax bill detailing the City's Leaf Blower Ordinance passed last year by the City Council. What you need to remember most, no matter the season, is that all leaf blowers need a manufacturer's sticker indicating that the top noise level will not exceed 65 decibels.

From the day after Labor Day until the day before Memorial Day, (that means now), gas, electric and battery-powered leaf blowers are allowed. In the summer starting on Memorial Day until Labor Day, gas powered machines are not allowed to be used, but one electric or battery-powered leaf blower per lot is allowed.

More detailed information is available on the City's website at www.newtonma.gov/leafblower.

The Village People (no, not *those* Village People)

I am excited to announce the formation of a group we're affectionately calling "The Village People."

With the help of several community leaders (e.g., Terry Sauro, John Rice, Jerry Reilly) who have enriched our city through events such as village days and other community-based initiatives, we're hoping to bring community-minded folks together a few times a year to brainstorm, share best practices, and generally cross-pollinate.



We invite both wily veteran event organizers and anyone with a spark of an idea in its embryonic stages to join us at our first meeting on Thursday, April 26th at 7:00 p.m. at the American Legion Nonantum Post 440, 295 California Street. If you have questions or would like to learn more, please contact Dana Hanson (our Community Engagement and Inclusion Director) at (617) 796-1104 or dhanson@newtonma.gov.

Small Choices, Big Impact

Join me for an important discussion next Tuesday evening, April 10, with former New England Patriot Chris Sullivan and his wife Kathi who will talk about addiction, mental health, and making good choices. The couple will share their powerful personal stories at Newton South High School from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.. This program is geared toward parents and their teenagers. More information is available at www.newtonma.gov/newtonpath.

Is There Something On Your Mind?

I'm holding one of my Mayoral Meet-Ups tonight (Wednesday, April 4) at the Lower Falls Community Center, which is the former Hamilton School (545 Grove Street), from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.. Come on over and let me know what's on your mind.

I'm also holding open office hours this Friday morning, April 6, in my office on the second floor at City Hall, from 8:30 to 10:00 a.m.. You can meet with me individually in the order of your arrival. Sometimes there's a wait, but it's a great opportunity to strike up a conversation with your neighbors!

There is a whole new schedule of Mayoral Meet-Ups and Office Hours through June online [here](#). Not a website person? Call Linda Plazonja (our Citizen Assistance Officer) at 617-796-1102 and she'll give you the information.

With the days getting a bit warmer and a bit longer, I look forward to all of us being out and about more. I hope to see you soon, perhaps this weekend at the [Newton Open Studios](#), or at the [Newton Free Library's Annual Spring Fling Gala](#) on Saturday night.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S.: Two important sign-ups are available right now: [Newton Serves](#) on Sunday, April 29 and the 44th Annual Honorable Theodore D. Mann Memorial Newton Mayor's Community Prayer Breakfast on May 23 (two ways to sign up—[online](#) or via [mail](#)). Spring gets busy, mark those calendars and sign-up today.

