

## Mayor's Update



### Northland Vote on March 3?

The date of a vote on the future of the Northland site located at the end of Needham Street at Oak Street will be set by the City Council at its next meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 21. The Council may set the date to coincide with the Presidential Primary on Tuesday, March. 3.

The Election Commission met last Friday night and approved language for the Northland referendum ballot question:

*Shall the following measure which was passed by the City Council be approved?*

*A measure which changes the zoning of parcels of land located at 156 Oak Street, 275-281 Needham Street and 55 Tower Road (commonly known as the Northland Project) from Mixed Use 1 District (MU1) to Business 4 District (BU4). The zoning change would allow for the construction of the Northland Project as described in a special permit and site plan approval granted by the City Council.*

The referendum came forward when a group of residents collected the required number of signatures which required the City Council either to put the question before Newton's voters or to have the City Council rescind its zoning approval to allow housing, restaurants, retail space and offices at the site.

Last week the City Council unanimously voted against rescinding its vote to change the zoning at Northland. In a Committee of the Whole, the City Council then voted 15-7 to hold the election on March 3. After that vote, five City Councilors who opposed the March 3 date in favor of holding a separate election at a later date, used a parliamentary procedure to charter (i.e., postpone) the final vote until the next scheduled City Council meeting on Jan. 21. After the final vote was chartered, City Council President Susan Albright said that a vote by the City Council on Jan. 21 would still leave enough time for a Special Municipal Election to be added to the Presidential Primary on March 3.

If the vote is held in conjunction with the Presidential Primary, five days of early voting would be available. (A later date could not include early voting because the state has not authorized that mechanism for such elections.)

The cost to add the municipal election in conjunction with the Primary is approximately \$32,917. The cost of holding a stand-alone Special Election would be \$145,902, according to a memo to the City Council from City Clerk David Olson. (You can read his memo [here](#).)



(Congratulations to this year's Human Rights Commission Student Award winners, Imani Fonfield, Alex Kolodney, Daniela Divo, HRC Chair Hattie Kerwin Derrick, Skye Tausig and Sadie Winton.)

## Tax Relief for Older Homeowners

Are you an older resident and a homeowner? Are you interested in finding out if you are eligible to defer real estate tax payments to make it easier for you to stay in your home?

Applications for the Tax Deferral Program for Persons Age 65 or Older are now being accepted. Last year we raised the maximum annual gross income level for Newton's older residents to qualify for the program from \$60,000 to \$86,000, making many more eligible.

This tax deferral program allows homeowners 65 years and older who meet the \$86,000 maximum income requirement, and some property ownership requirements, to defer paying property taxes until the home is sold.

To qualify for the tax deferral program, a property owner:

- Must be over 65 years of age as of July 1, 2019
- Must have had primary residence in Massachusetts for ten years and owned property in the state for five years
- Must have occupied the property as of July 1, 2019
- Must have a total gross income of less than \$86,000 per year.

Upon qualifying, property owners can delay payment of any portion of the property tax bill (excluding the Community Preservation Surcharge), up to 100% of the tax bill and up to 50% of the home's value.

The property taxes plus interest based on the federal discount rate, 3.0 percent (as of June 30, 2019), would be owed to the City when the house is sold.

Each year's tax deferral is independent from each other, so the homeowner must apply each year. Residents may elect to defer one year and not the next.

Apply pretty soon as applications must be approved by April 1 to qualify for that year's tax deferral.

More information about the program is [here](#). Questions? Call the Newton Assessor's

## Fire Drills

For the past couple of weeks, Newton firefighters have had a great training opportunity. They battled theatrical smoke as they searched for a 130-pound dummy trapped in a “burning” home in Oak Hill.

While the smoke and fire were simulated, the experience felt real. The home, slated for demolition, was offered by a contractor to the Newton Fire Department for training drills to help our crews keep their skills sharp.



One drill started with the VEIS (Vent, Entry, Isolate, Search) technique which involves going into a burning structure through a second-floor window and evacuating trapped people to waiting crews on the ground.

In another drill, the house was again filled with thick theatrical smoke, and firefighters used thermal cameras to find “victims” that were trapped in the three stories of the home.



## State of the City

The state of our city is strong.

We have excellent schools, low crime rates, a broad range of services, financial stability with triple A bond ratings, new school buildings, and a wonderful community.

I also see changes coming and challenges ahead.

Next Tuesday I will give the State of the City Address and outline my vision for taking charge of those changes and leaning in to those challenges.

Join me in the City Council Chambers next Tuesday, Jan. 21, at 7:45 p.m. at City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Ave.

## Lifeguard Course



Interested in lifeguarding this summer? The Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture Department is offering a Lifeguard Training course over February school vacation week. The course is an American Red Cross program for individuals being certified for the first time.

The course will be held at Newton North High School on February 17, 18, 19, and 20 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. To participate, students must be at least 15 years of age by the last day of the course and be able to pass a prerequisite swim test on the first day of the course.

The training will include water rescues, lifeguard procedures, breathing emergencies, spinal injuries, CPR/AED and First Aid. Successful completion of all course hours, the final written test, and the final practical exam will result in a 2-year professional Lifeguard Certification.

Visit [newtonma.myrec.com](http://newtonma.myrec.com) for more information and to register for the \$325 course.



*(Recognizing the hard work done by Newton's Director of Cultural Development Paula Gannon, Assistant Director of Cultural Development Danielle Moriarty (on her second day of work!) and Lori Lass, assistant in the Cultural Development Office at last night's CREATE Newton community reception. Want more information about CREATE Newton? Click [here](#).)*

### **Bring a Bag, or Pay 10 Cents**

Forgot to bring a reusable bag to the store with you? It now costs 10 cents for a bag in many Newton stores, and that will expand to all stores in Newton starting on July 1.

The 10-cent charge for recyclable paper bags provided by the retailer went into effect at Newton's largest stores (3,500-square feet or bigger such as CVS and Star Market for example) on Jan. 1 and will affect approximately 500 retail establishments when all stores in Newton begin charging customers for bags on July 1, 2020. (The 10 cents will be kept by the retailer to help pay for the recyclable/reusable bags.)



Why did the City Council do this? It will encourage all of us to use reusable bags rather than single use ones.

### **No More Lime Bikes**

As expected, Newton's bike share operator, Lime, has let us and our 15 partner communities know they are discontinuing the dockless bike share program.

Working with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and neighboring communities, we are looking at vendor options to continue a bike share program in Newton. With Arlington, Watertown and Chelsea, we submitted a joint grant application to MassDOT's Workforce Transportation Program to help cover the costs of bringing another bike share program, probably one with docks, to Newton and the region. We'll let you know if that grant comes through.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Join us this Monday, Jan. 20, at Newton's 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Community Celebration: Know Your Neighbor.

The celebration begins at 9:30 a.m. at the First Baptist Church Newton Centre, 848 Beacon St., Newton Centre. Following the program, stay for the Community Coffee and Engagement and Activism Fair. A drop-in children's craft and storytime hosted by StoryStarters will run concurrently. Continue the conversation with FORJ (Families Organizing for Racial Justice) at their monthly meeting on Thursday, Jan. 23, 7:00 p.m. at Newton North High School's Little Theater.

P.P.S. Interested in finding a great summer camp? Come to the Newton North High School cafeteria on Sunday, Jan. 26 from noon to 4 p.m. for the City of Newton Camp Fair. Check out camps offered by our Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, Newton Public Schools, Historic Newton and the Newton Free Library.

**NEWTON'S 52ND ANNUAL MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. COMMUNITY CELEBRATION: KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR**

**MONDAY • JANUARY 20 • 9:30AM**  
**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF NEWTON**  
848 BEACON STREET, NEWTON CENTRE, MA, 02459

Join us after the event for **Community Coffee: an Engagement and Activism Fair** to learn more about local resources, ways to get involved in Newton, and to **get to know your neighbors**. Refreshments provided.

Children and their caregivers are invited to attend a 10:30am craft and story time hosted by StoryStarters.

Continue the conversation with **FORJ** (Families Organizing for Racial Justice) at their monthly meeting on **Thursday, January 23rd, 7pm**, at a location to be determined.

**THE ROTARY CLUB OF NEWTON WILL BE COLLECTING TOILETRY DONATIONS FOR NEWTON'S FOOD PANTRIES**

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
[www.newtonma.gov/mlk2020](http://www.newtonma.gov/mlk2020)

SPONSORED BY:

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