

Mayor's Update

Current Cases

As of Sunday evening, Newton's Health and Human Services Department (HHS) has received notice from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) of a total of 330 cases of COVID-19 among Newton residents. Of those 330 people, 45 percent are individuals living in Newton nursing homes or assisted living facilities. This proportion has been relatively consistent over the past week.



To give you a sense of how things have changed in the past few days, on Friday we reported a total of 282 Newton people with COVID-19. On Saturday, we had 316 cases. The total number of cases from Friday evening to Sunday evening increased by 48 people.

In the previous weeks, I've shared with you the link where the Massachusetts Department of Public Health posts its statewide case data [here](#). If you're interested in understanding how this virus is impacting people nationwide, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention posts case data [here](#).

The Falls at Cordingly Dam

I am sharing more heartbreaking news from the Falls at Cordingly Dam, an assisted living facility in Newton. As of this morning, April 13, 15 residents have passed away from COVID-19. The Newton Health and Human Services Department staff has been following 46 residents who have tested positive at The Falls (including the fifteen who died). Twenty-four employees have also tested positive. The Falls at Cordingly Dam has had all residents tested and the vast majority of their staff as well, with all of them having the opportunity to do so.

Newton Health and Human Services staff and I are partnering with the leadership at the Falls parent company, Benchmark Senior Living, as well as the Director of the Falls to support their concerted and ongoing efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 among their residents and staff. We will continue to support them.

To repeat some information from last week, Newton HHS public health nurses continue to connect regularly, often daily, with senior living communities as well as other congregate living type entities. These settings where people live in close proximity have increased challenges in preventing transmission of COVID-19 and often have residents who are more vulnerable to serious complications. We are providing these communities with guidance on protocols and staffing, helping with testing access and personal protective equipment, and connecting them with state agencies such as the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency.

This is a devastating time for the families and loved ones of those who have fallen ill and have died as well as those who are worried for loved ones. Together we share

our deepest sympathies and continue our efforts as a whole community to fight this fight.

High Winds, Trees Toppling

I'm sure you are hearing the winds whipping through Newton this afternoon. We are preparing for gusts of wind up to 70 miles per hour and sustained winds of 20 to 40 miles per hour along with heavy rain and possible thunderstorms through tonight. Coupled with the thawed ground and already wet soil conditions, these winds are resulting not just in broken tree branches but also, as of now, 25 whole trees coming down, causing downed power lines and lost power.

These winds and heavy rain are making travel conditions dangerous and could cause localized flooding in some areas of Newton. Because of COVID-19, we should all be staying home; with these weather conditions, we have another compelling reason to stay put.

(Photos by the Newton Fire Department of downed trees and damage on Auburndale Avenue, Walnut Street and Dedham Street from this afternoon.)

We have eight Newton forestry crews working through the night to respond and several contractors are on call. Since midday today, we have had three bucket trucks, 4 log trucks and 1 chip truck available to respond. Please note that some cleanup work may be slower than usual to keep everyone safe with physical distancing.



The Emergency Operations Center at Fire Headquarters is also activated using ZOOM to allow City departments, including Police, Fire, Dispatch, DPW, Forrestry, Inspectional Services and Customer Service, to communicate and coordinate storm response while practicing physical distancing.

As of 5:15 p.m. on Monday, there are 1,684 homes in Newton without power, according to Eversource.

If your power goes out, report it directly to Eversource [here](#), or call 877-659-6326. Stay away from all downed power lines, and if you see downed wires, call 911. And, again, please, stay home.

If you need other assistance, especially with a downed tree or tree branches, please call Customer Service at 617-796-1000. This line is open extended hours due to the storm. You can also use the 311 app on your smart phone or computer.

As always, in an emergency, call 911 immediately.

Deep Gratitude for Newton's Emergency Dispatchers

At the start of a week when we have the usual emergencies plus COVID-19 and heavy winds, I can't think of a more opportune time to say thank you for the vital work of our public safety telecommunicators – more affectionately and commonly known as emergency dispatchers.

(Photo: Mayor Fuller's Proclamation of Public Safety Telecommunicators Week and the Thin Gold Line flag flying in front of Police Headquarters showing support for Newton's emergency dispatchers.)



Approximately 400 times each day, our dispatchers who work out of Newton Police Headquarters answer emergency and non-emergency calls for assistance and information, perform dispatch and crisis intervention, ask questions and provide pre-arrival instructions – all while monitoring and operating computer and radio systems. They display compassion, expertise and professionalism as they help our residents and businesspeople in difficult situations and occasionally a child with a finger stuck in a toy.

Dispatchers are our “first” first responders. They serve as the single vital link to our firefighters, police officers and medics and the people in Newton whose safety is dependent on the quality and accuracy of the information our dispatchers relay.

I know you join me, Chief MacDonald and Chief Lucchetti in expressing deep gratitude and great respect for Newton’s twenty-three dispatchers during Public Safety Telecommunication Week here in our City.

\$1.7 Million in Federal Funds on the Way

The City of Newton will receive \$1,679,000 in crucial emergency funding assistance from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) through the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD).

While I’m constantly focusing on the immediate health needs of our residents and medical facilities, the past several weeks of necessary closures and physical distancing have also created serious economic and supportive service needs for our residents. As a result, more members of our community are suddenly facing difficulties in paying for food and housing; small businesses are struggling to stay afloat; and our nonprofit service providers are working overtime to support those affected by COVID-19.

Included within the CARES Act is \$5 billion dollars in Community Development Assistance Grant (CDBG) funding and \$4 billion in Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding. As Newton is a CDBG entitlement community, the City of Newton will receive approximately \$1.1 million in CDBG funding (CDBG-CV) and \$579,000 in ESG funding (ESG-CV).

This funding is critical to helping our City directly address the health and economic impacts on our residents, small businesses, and nonprofit organizations. The Planning Department has been working diligently on the strategy for quickly and effectively distributing these funds, consulting with representatives from our Health and Human Services Department and our on-the-ground human service and Emergency Solutions Grant subrecipients to identify the community's pressing needs as they relate to the impacts of the pandemic. Additional guidance from HUD on the use and administration of these funds is forthcoming.

Once these details have been finalized and received, I will share with you how we will allocate these dollars in the most impactful and efficient way.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Check out more online options to do something you love or to learn something new. Newton Community Education's instructors are providing online classes through Zoom. Visit newtoncommunityed.org to see the spring offerings and check back regularly for updates. New classes are being added regularly.

