Mayor's Update

Current Cases and Losses

Three hundred and sixty (360) Newton residents have tested positive for COVID-19 as of Tuesday afternoon, April 14, 2020. Of those residents, 43 percent are living in Newton long-term care or assisted living facilities. On Monday afternoon, our positive cases stood at 347.

This past week, Newton's Health and Human Services Department received notifications of 13 additional deaths. We now have a total of 25 Newton residents with COVID-19 who have died. The losses in our community continue to feel like a punch in the gut and our thoughts are with our Newton families during this time of grief.

The prevention steps we are taking as individuals and as a community remain very important. I strongly urge you to continue with stringent physical distancing practices in your daily life, including the use of face coverings in any situation where it is not possible to physically distance.

Starting today, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) is reporting COVID-19 data by city or town on a weekly basis as a part of its data dashboard available here. You will notice that the information reported by MDPH is different than the number reported by the City of Newton. (In today's MDPH report, they report 23 fewer positive cases in Newton than we do.) These differences are likely to continue and stem from when the information was retrieved from the state's communicable disease reporting system.

We have known for quite some time that Middlesex and Suffolk County have had the most positive cases. The city/town information provided by the state today shows where Newton stands:

Positive Cases in Descending Order by City/Town with MDPH Data
(Municipalities with More than 300 Cases as of 4.15.20)

Boston 4609
Brockton 1202
Worcester 886
Lawrence 814
Lynn 745
Chelsea 712
Lowell 598
Springfield 542
Cambridge 471
Revere 470
Everett 444
Malden 379
Quincy 369

Randolph 367
Medford 350
Newton 337
Braintree 308
Holyoke 305

The State also today provided another way of looking at data by city/town which provides a standardized way to compare the burden of disease in cities and towns regardless of the size of their population. It is the "Rate" or the number of cases per 100,000 people. The city with the highest rate is Chelsea which stands at 1,890 per 100,000 people followed by Brockton at 1,223. Newton, with a rate of 367 per 100,000 people, ranks as the 72nd municipality in the chart.

State health officials are now posting daily updates on available hospital and ICU beds at local medical facilities and alternative medical sites (or "Field Hospitals"). The daily hospital occupancy update is here. It shows that Newton-Wellesley Hospital, for example, as of yesterday had 95 hospitalized COVID patients (suspected and confirmed) of which 20 are in the intensive care unit (ICU).

Please know we are making every effort to ensure accurate, complete and timely reporting.

And, please know, that each of us has the critical role of helping reduce the transmission through physical distancing, washing hands frequently, and wearing face coverings when we cannot physically distance.

A Costly Storm in Many Ways

Monday's wind and rain caused an estimated 45 whole City street trees to fall in Newton, damaging homes and cutting off power. Winchester Street, Suffolk and Wiswall Roads and Lowell Avenue took a long time to clear because of the live wires and, on Winchester Street, the added issue of the number of poles that came down.

In the words of Newton's Superintendent of Urban Forestry Marc Welch, "45 trees is a significant number." By comparison, during the entire last fiscal year, Newton lost 31 trees.
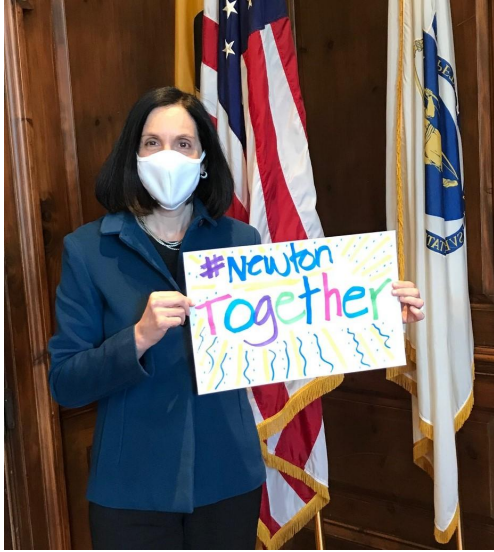
Marc and the Newton Forestry Team, along with our subcontractor, spent 36 hours and approximately $160,000 to clean up. At the peak, they had six bucket, five log and two chip trucks across the City responding to approximately 350 locations.

#NewtonTogether

How can we stay connected as a community in the face of COVID-19? Thanks to Newton resident Rakashi Chand, we have an idea.

On Patriots' Day/Marathon Monday, we invite all Newtonians to make handmade #NewtonTogether signs and display them in our windows.

Share the incredible strength and resiliency of Newton in a display of solidarity with our neighbors. Consider tagging your creations in the Facebook event or elsewhere on social

media with #NewtonTogether. For more information, click here.

Rakashi wrote to us a few days ago with the #NewtonTogether idea saying, "Let us bring our community together in a shared message of perseverance and pride. Let us inspire one another as we are and always have been an unwavering city, that has stood tall and united in the face of adversity and overcome again and again, every challenge, hardship, tragedy and crisis."

It's a powerful message. It's especially poignant as today is the seventh anniversary of the Marathon bombing. As we launch #NewtonTogether, we'll help each other be strong and pull through COVID-19 and these severe economic challenges.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. So many of us are carefully staying physically distanced from one another during this COVID-19 crisis.

We're doing so even when we're outside and enjoying Newton's parks and trails or sidewalks.

Here is excellent advice from the health experts: Stay home if you have any symptoms. "Carefully share" the sidewalk or trail so you stay 6' apart from people from other households. Wash your hands before/after being outside your home.