

Mayor's Update

Current Cases

A total of 406 Newton residents have tested positive from COVID-19 through the end of the day Thursday, April 16, 2020, an additional 31 from the day before, Wednesday, April 15, 2020 when we stood at 375. Our last update, which was for Tuesday, April 14, 2020, noted the City had 360 positive cases.



You can find the updated case count each weekday online at www.newtonma.gov/covid19. Our next update will be on Monday with information through Sunday evening.

COVID-19 testing in the Commonwealth hit a positive milestone yesterday with a reported 8,750 new tests administered, the largest single day tally since testing began, according to the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency. While we are all anxious for more testing availability, MEMA also reports that our state leads the country in per-capita testing with a total of 140,773 COVID-19 tests conducted. If you think you should be tested, your first call goes to your healthcare provider. Some urgent care centers are also offering testing. If you are an essential worker, check in with your supervisor for special testing locations for grocery store employees, healthcare providers or first responders.

If you have symptoms that you think may be COVID-19, you can check online for free and get information about next steps to take at www.buoy.com/mass.

Thanks Newton-Wellesley Hospital

Newton-Wellesley Hospital is a critical partner to Newton in ensuring our safety and well-being.

We have been working very closely with the people at Newton-Wellesley Hospital. Smart, dedicated, brave healthcare professionals are serving the residents of Newton and the Commonwealth so effectively and so compassionately during this public health emergency. I'm not exaggerating when I say they are heroes.

I'm thankful to have been in regular communication with the hospital's leadership team. More importantly, I'm deeply grateful for the significant collaboration between Newton-Wellesley Hospital and Newton's Health and Human Services Department, our Police and Fire Departments, our emergency medical service Cataldo, and the many assisted living facilities here in Newton.

On a more personal level, I hear often from patients and their families about the acts of kindness from so many at Newton-Wellesley Hospital.

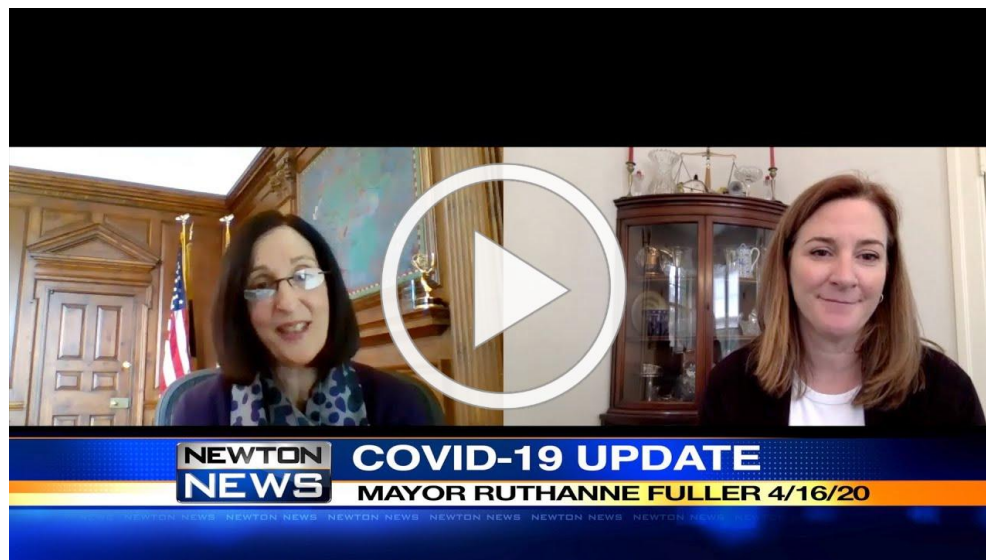
Let me share a few updates they provided me:

- Newton-Wellesley Hospital was treating 115 COVID-19 positive patients along with an additional 26 suspected COVID-19 patients as of mid-day today,

Friday, April 17. Of those who are positive, 23 require critical care. Also, currently 93 NWH employees in various roles have tested positive.

- NWH has successfully treated and discharged 108 COVID-19 patients who are now recovering at home – a testament to the lifesaving abilities of Newton-Wellesley’s doctors, nurses and other staff.
- Thanks to many weeks of hard work, the hospital’s administrative and clinical leadership is confident Newton-Wellesley Hospital has created sufficient space, supplies and staffing to provide high-quality care to COVID-19 patients through the peak of the pandemic and beyond.
- The hospital has placed a high priority on creating the ability to test staff, patients and community members - as appropriate and following the guidelines for providing tests. NWH is typically conducting about 170 tests every day.
- Newton-Wellesley has vastly expanded its virtual care and telemedicine options to continue safely providing other medical care to non-COVID-19 patients and has conducted more than 10,000 virtual visits since the pandemic began.
- The hospital offers an array of helpful resources for community members. Consider trying these: the [Partners HealthCare COVID-19 Screener](#), [Information regarding the Partners COVID-19 Hotline in English and Other Languages](#), and [Guidelines for Caring for Family Members with COVID-19 at Home](#).

If you would like to support the hospital’s efforts, you can find more information [here](#).



(Video: NewTV News Director Jenn Adams interviewed Mayor Fuller on COVID-19 on Thursday, April 16, 2020.)

A Tight City of Newton Budget

Even as we are grappling with the significant health consequences of COVID-19, including the gut wrenching deaths here in Newton, we are focusing on the devastating impact on the economic health of our residents, businesses and their employees, and the City itself.

Economists in Massachusetts this week predicted a range of potential impacts and

none of them were good. The projections for the number of people in Massachusetts who will be unemployed ranged from 14.7% to 17.8% to 20%. (Notably, retail sales in the month of March in the Commonwealth fell a record 8.7%. Hotel room occupancy in Greater Boston plunged from 77.6% in the first week of April one year ago to 11.4% the first week of April 2020.) Experts are now predicting that the economic effects will be worse than the recession of 2008/2009; in that period, Massachusetts state tax revenues dropped approximately 10% and Unrestricted Aid to cities/towns was cut by more than 20%.

With these grim predictions combined with a high degree of uncertainty, I am in the process of putting together the City's Fiscal Year 2021 Budget. The City of Newton runs on a fiscal year with the next one beginning July 1, 2020. With the leadership of our Chief Financial Officer, Maureen Lemieux, we had just about put the finishing touches on our budget and had met with the City Council and the School Committee leadership in late February.

Then, our world changed.

I will deliver a revised Fiscal Year 2021 Budget that reflects our new realities and my guiding principles to the City Council via Zoom on Monday, May 11, 2020 at 7:45 p.m.

The financial impact to the City's revenues due to the COVID-19 economic shutdown will be significant. The City usually budgets more than \$50 million annually from sources that will now be adversely impacted by the pandemic. These include such areas as State Education Aid (a.k.a., Chapter 70) (\$25M), Unrestricted State Aid (\$6.4M), Rooms & Meals Tax Revenues (\$4.4M), Motor Vehicle Excise Tax Revenue (\$13.5M), Parking Meter Collections (\$1.3M), Parking Violation Tickets (\$1.3M), and Interest Income (\$2.5M). The partial shutdown of the economy will have a negative impact on each of these revenue sources with our current projections showing a loss of \$9.3M to next year's City of Newton revenue compared to what we were projecting just one month ago.

To deal with this projected reduction in anticipated revenue, we are using a multi-pronged approach. We have analyzed cash flow carefully. We are slowing or stopping spending except on necessary expenditures. We are fine-tuning all our revenue assumptions. We have developed a series of scenarios and are budgeting expenses accordingly; we will be conservative as we know it is easier to relax spending constraints during the course of the year if revenues are higher than anticipated than to scramble to make cuts if we experience a shortfall. We are taking into consideration all line items from hiring levels, vacancies, and retirements, to discretionary expenditures, to major capital and equipment investments and purchases. We will adjust our departments' budgets based on strategic decisions, prioritizing key services, including spending categories addressing the pandemic. We are working closely with the leaders of the Newton Public Schools to determine potential budget adjustments to our largest department while continuing our deep commitment to teaching and learning. We will monitor our revenues and expenses frequently in the months ahead, with close analyses of budgets-to-actuals. We are prepared to make adjustments, if warranted. We are also making decisions knowing that this financial crisis is likely to impact more than just this fiscal year.

We will use these guiding principles in all of our financial decision-making:

- We will focus on our vulnerable populations - our younger and our older residents, those who are experiencing health and financial hardships, people

who are vulnerable due to life and special circumstances, and our small business owners.

- We will continue to provide unparalleled essential City services, supporting our first responders and our educators.
- We are intent on keeping our employees healthy, safe and employed.
- We will be open and straight with everyone about the challenges and the decisions.
- As a budget reflects our values, we will make our decisions so we weather this difficult period with compassion for our residents, business community and employees.

These are very difficult, uncertain, and, yes, troubling times.

I have great confidence, though, that working together we will pull through and continue to be a good City, a kind community and a strong and safe municipality.



(Photo: Today at the American Legion Nonantum Post 440 Carol Pingree, Ken Poirier, and a group of dedicated volunteers served over 500 at the Mobile Food Bank.)

Update on When to Pay Newton Real Estate, Motor Vehicle and Water/Sewer Bills

As you may remember, I have already adopted the most generous legislation

possible recently passed at the state to allow residents and property owners (including businesses) more time to pay their taxes and other municipal fees without incurring late fees and/or penalties during this difficult time.

The Massachusetts Department of Local Services just provided a few clarifications on each of these extensions:

4th Quarter Property Tax Bills

I have extended the due date of the 4th quarter property tax bills from May 1 to June 1. This applies to all real estate and personal property tax bills that were due on May 1. The due date is extended to a date specified by the state as “**not later than June 1, 2020.**” In addition, I have taken advantage of the state law that allows me to waive the payment of interest or other penalties on late payments of real estate and personal property taxes **until June 29, 2020.**

I know this is confusing. The bottom line is that 4th quarter real estate and personal property tax bills paid by June 29, 2020 will not incur any additional fees.

Excise Taxes, Betterment Assessments, Water/Sewer Bills

The due dates for Excise Taxes, Betterment Assessments and Water/Sewer Bills cannot be extended. However, in effect, I have postponed the due date for these other various payments that were originally due after March 10, 2020 to June 29,

2020. I did this by waiving the payment of interest and other penalties on late payments that were due after March 10, 2020 and paid **before** June 30, 2020. This June 29th due date applies for any excise tax, betterment assessment, water or sewer bill, or for any other bills.

Please be careful. This means that all these types of bills **must be paid by June 29th** in order to be eligible for the waiver of interest or late fees. If you pay on June 30th or later, please be forewarned that you will be responsible for the interest/late payment fees effective from the due date for the bill.

Let me give you an example. A property tax bill's due date was extended to June 1, 2020. If it is paid on June 29, 2020, interest will be waived. If it is paid on June 30, 2020, interest will run from the due date of June 1, 2020 to June 30, 2020. If the bill is paid July 15, 2020, interest will run from June 1, 2020 to July 15, 2020.

Still have questions? (You might!) The State has issued an FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) to provide answers regarding the extension of these due dates. The complete FAQs can be found [here](#).

You can also call the City of Newton Treasurers Office and speak to someone at 617-796-1330.

Grants to Help the Homeless and Those at Risk of Homelessness

Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), the City of Newton will receive \$578,393 in additional Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). We are making \$558,150 available as of today through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

These critical emergency assistance funds will be awarded to nonprofit organizations to use to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the impacts of COVID-19 among individuals and families who are homeless and at risk of homelessness. The funding can be for direct services for those currently in emergency shelters, operating costs or building renovations for shelters, new temporary shelters, and rental assistance and housing relocation and stabilization services for homeless individuals and families and those meeting HUD's definition for being At-Risk of Homelessness.

Organizations can respond to the RFP by completing a short application which can be found on www.newtonma.gov/ESG. The deadline is April 30, 2020.

Patriots' Day Information (Monday, April 20)

Stay Safe; Stay Off the Course

I hope everyone finds some respite during this long weekend. For the joggers among us, please don't run the Boston Marathon on Monday. Follow the Stay-at-Home advisory and save your energy for the new date on September 14, 2020.



Running will create burdens for our First Responders in Newton's Police and Fire Departments who are doing so much to keep Newton safe during this COVID-19 crisis.

One-Day Curbside Pickup Delays Due to Holiday

With the Patriots Day holiday on Monday, remember the **one-day delay in trash, recycling and yard waste collection** all week. Monday's route will be collected on Tuesday, and so forth.

Celebrate a #VirtualMarathon, Celebrate #NewtonTogether

I know you all of us wish that we could welcome the 124th Boston Marathoners as they passed through Newton this Marathon Monday. For a safe and healthy alternative, join [Historic Newton](#) for a #VirtualMarathon. Historic Newton, the Wellesley Historical Society, and the Natick Historical Society will be posting historical photos of the marathon. Would you like to participate? If you have any appropriate photos, please post them Monday on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram using the hashtag #VirtualMarathon and tag Historic Newton.

Also, don't forget to join your neighbors in posting homemade [#NewtonTogether](#) signs in your windows. Get creative and share the incredible joy, strength, and resiliency of Newton. Just because we can't gather for the Marathon this year, doesn't mean we can't [connect!](#)

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. The Registry of Motor Vehicles has further extended the deadlines for expiring licenses, permits, inspection stickers and passenger vehicle plate registrations. While extensions had already been made for expirations of these in March and April, those expiring in May are now also extended. In addition, the original 60 day extension for March and April expirations has been extended to 120 days. More information is [here](#).

P.P.S. Looking for some classic 'old school' radio days entertainment? [Newton Theatre Company](#) is now offering free live performances on their Zoom Radio Hour! Join NTC for the classic radio noir play, "Sorry, Wrong Number" on Thursday, April 23rd at 8:00pm. To register, click: <https://bit.ly/NTCRadioHour>



P.P.P.S. Looking to stay fit and active? The [West Suburban YMCA](#) continues to connect with the community virtually! Free fitness and exercise classes for all levels are offered weekly on Facebook Live and Zoom (that's a Zoom Zumba class in the photo). Individuals can also join the West Suburban YMCA's new WSY Wellness group on Facebook to connect with others and find written workouts and pre-recorded video

workouts to try at their own pace. Learn more and find the virtual wellness schedule here: <https://www.wsymca.org/coronavirus-updates-info/virtual-ymca/wsy-wellness>

P.P.P.P.S A bit of a wintry mess will be here for a short while. Snow accumulations of one to three inches are coming tonight but will melt off quickly tomorrow in the rain.

