

Mayor's Update

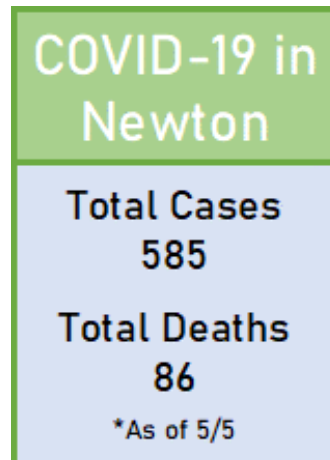
Current Cases and Losses

Five hundred and eighty five (585) Newton residents through Tuesday evening (May 5) have tested positive for COVID-19, an increase of 29 people from a week ago. A day ago, 577 Newton residents through Monday (May 4) had tested positive.

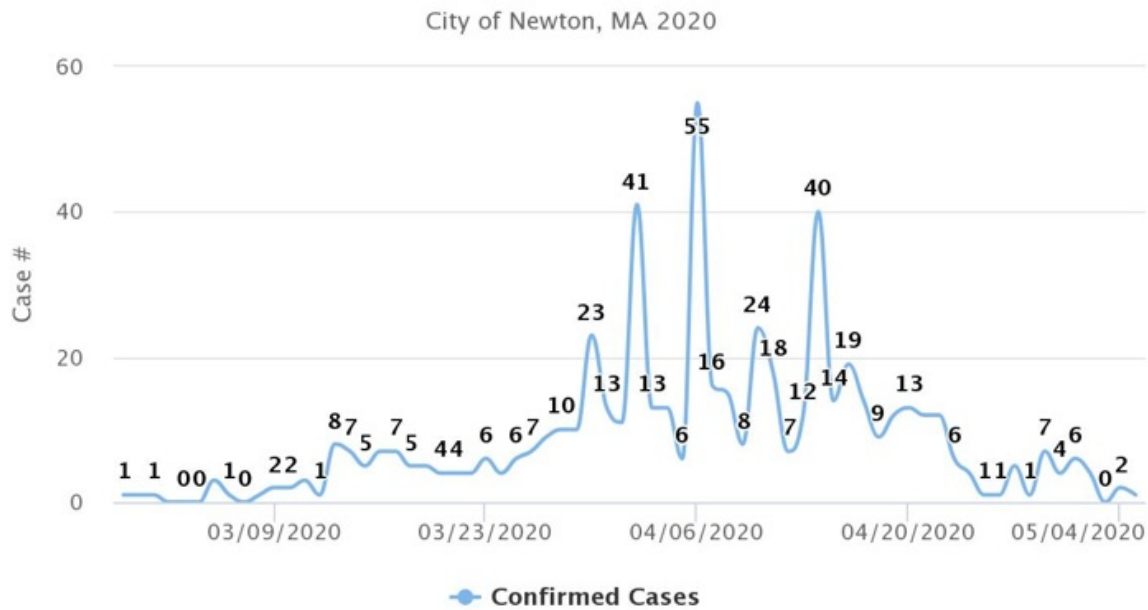


For the sixth week in a row, I must report with a heavy heart the loss of Newton residents. This week we were notified of fifteen residents who tested positive for COVID-19 and have died. What a heavy, heavy toll. Of the now 86 Newton residents known to have died with COVID-19, approximately 94% of them are age 80 or older. We think of – and ache for – those mourning the loss of loved ones in Newton and beyond.

The updated symptom onset graph with the preliminary data (through May 5) is below and is also posted to the Newton [COVID-19 data page](#). As you can see, this symptom onset graph looks like a bell curve with just a few cases at the beginning of March, significant increases over time, and then fewer cases more recently. We're seeing this decrease here in Newton and statewide due to the ongoing community mitigation efforts – staying at home, physical distancing, face coverings, hand washing, etc. – we have been actively practicing. We must continue to follow these practices, our statewide orders and health experts' recommendations as the pandemic continues.



Newton Cases by Symptom Onset Date



Cases through May 5, 2020

We have been sharing the increasingly hopeful percentages of Newton residents confirmed to have COVID-19 who have met the CDC criteria to discontinue isolation. This week, that post-isolation percentage has climbed to 71%, from 56% last week (April 29) and 50% the week prior (April 22). (These percentages don't include people in long-term care and assisted living facilities for which we do not have the data.)

There is yet another hopeful piece of data. Several weeks ago, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) began reporting COVID-19 data by city or town on a weekly basis as a part of its data dashboard. The MDPH report includes the "rate" or the number of cases per 100,000 people which provides a standardized way to compare the burden of disease in cities and towns relative to the size of their population. Newton started by having the 71st highest rate three weeks ago, moved to the 84th highest rate two weeks ago, then went to the 104th highest rate last week and now, we stand at 122. (There are 351 municipalities in Massachusetts.)

Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in MA by City/Town January 1 - May 6			
Rank in MA	City/Town	Count	Rate
1	Chelsea	2244	5957
2	Brockton	3179	3235
3	Lynn	2536	2513
4	Everett	1212	2497
5	Lawrence	1975	2239
6	Randolph	735	2147
7	Revere	1307	2145
8	Danvers	539	1887
9	Stoughton	485	1753
10	Lowell	2002	1713
17	Framingham	1159	1556
18	Boston	10729	1543
30	Waltham	872	1308
74	Watertown	305	919
83	Somerville	660	862
84	Needham	251	856
90	Weston	89	802
101	Cambridge	826	732
115	Wellesley	200	672
122	Newton	588	641
161	Brookline	308	478
State Total		72025	1033

Statewide testing data provides another hopeful indicator. Testing is increasing and the percentage of those tests that are positive is decreasing. Preliminary reports indicate 13% of the results returned on May 5 were positive, while a week ago on April 29, 18% of the results returned were positive. The week prior to that, on April 22, 34% of tests were positive. More statewide data is available [here](#).

Face Coverings

We hope if you picked up groceries or takeout recently that you wore a face covering. I'm glad to see so many Newton residents followed the Governor's face covering order even before it went into effect today. Kudos, also, to the cottage industry in Newton that has sprung up making masks to help protect us all.

Be careful, though, with face coverings. Face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. People

with medical conditions or disabilities do not have to wear a mask, and no proof or documentation is required. This includes people who cannot breathe safely with their nose and mouth covered due to a health or behavioral diagnosis, people who require supplemental oxygen, and people who communicate with those who rely on lip-reading. Children age 5 and older should wear masks per both the Governor's order and according to the guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Mask wearing for children older than 2 years old but younger than 5 is encouraged, but the decision is up to parents and guardians. Please ensure the face covering does not obstruct a child's ability to breathe.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health also reminds us that wearing a mask "does not replace important social distancing measures." Stay at least 6 feet apart from anyone not in your household and stay home except to exercise, pick up food or supplies, or work in an essential services job.

Guidance on face coverings and masks from the Office of the Attorney General and the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, including FAQs, can be read [here](#). You can read Gov. Baker's Order [here](#). Learn more about face coverings from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health [here](#).

COVID-19 Emergency Funding

I'm grateful to collaborate with the City Council which Monday night unanimously approved my request for \$750,000 in emergency COVID-19 funding.

This allows the City to continue to respond quickly to COVID-19 related needs being experienced by our residents, our businesses and our employees. The funds, some of which will eventually be reimbursed by the state, will help us take care of vulnerable people (e.g., providing food), pay employees who are working a significant number of overtime hours (e.g., conducting contact tracing), and purchase supplies to protect our first responders and essential workers (e.g., hand sanitizer). The funds will supplement the \$250,000 already approved by the Council and two \$100,000 grants from the state to the Newton Department of Health & Human Services.

The City will provide full transparency on expenditures and reimbursements, updating the Council every two weeks. The City's costs would have been even higher but for the generous donations of personal protective equipment (PPE) from many local residents and organizations. We're so grateful.

Construction

Governor Baker's stay-at-home advisory is still in place and non-essential businesses remain closed in order to minimize all unnecessary activities outside of the home during the state of emergency.

On Monday, however, Governor Baker changed the guidance on essential services in a sector where physical distancing, face coverings, hand hygiene, and cleaning can be maintained.

As a result, yesterday I changed the guidance on construction in Newton.

Effective today, Wednesday, May 6, all construction projects can resume but only if they comply with physical distancing, hand hygiene, employee health protections, and site risk prevention measures detailed in the state construction guidelines. Workers must wear face coverings indoors or outdoors whenever workers are

unable to maintain a distance of more than 6 feet apart.

Before commencing work, the contractors or owners must sign and send to Newton's Inspectional Services Department the form in which they acknowledge they understand and will follow Newton's COVID-19 Safety Guidelines for Construction Sites.

Newton's inspectors will do unannounced visits to job sites as well as routine inspections to ensure compliance.

Newton's COVID-19 Safety Guidelines for Construction Sites form can be found online [here](#).

Solar Panels

The City has power production agreements with two solar companies, Ameresco and Macquarie. These companies will install, maintain and finance roof-based and parking lot canopies on City and school property. This third phase of solar panels will not only allow the City to save money on electrical costs, but also will produce renewable power within the City, a key feature of the City's new [Climate Action Plan](#).

Ameresco has obtained all the state and local approvals for their projects. Three of the Ameresco roof projects have been completed: Zervas School, the Education Center and Fire Station #3 - Fire HQ. Zervas and Fire HQ are online while the Ed Center panels will be online as soon as a building shut down can be scheduled. The two Ameresco solar canopy projects at Newton North High School are on schedule for installation this summer.

The Macquarie projects are still pending approvals from the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources. We are hoping that these approvals are not delayed due to COVID-19. The Macquarie canopy projects are being planned for the summer and the roofs may be done in the fall.

When Phase 3 Solar is complete, the City's solar electricity production will nearly double to 20.8 million kilowatt hours per year. Combined with the Phase 1 and 2 projects, including the large solar panel farm at the Rumford Avenue capped landfill, the solar electricity production is equivalent to 40% of the City's total municipal demand.

Bill Ferguson, the City's Co-Director of Sustainability and our all-around energy expert, is the mastermind behind our efforts. Kudos Bill!

PHASE 3 SOLAR SCHEDULE

	Ameresco projects
	Macquarie projects

Roof Sites	Total First Year Output (kWh)	Behind the Meter or Front of Meter	Construction
1 Education Center roof	95,799	BTM	completed but not on line
2 Fire Station #3 and Headquarters	77,395	BTM	on line 3-31-20
3 Zervas Elementary School	216,094	BTM	on line 3-31-20
FA Day Middle School			cancelled
4 Angier Elementary School- Gym roof	98,208	BTM	summer/fall 2020
5 Williams Elementary School	149,041	BTM	summer/fall 2020
6 Cabot Elementary School	142,409	BTM	summer/fall 2020
7 Horace Mann Elementary School	66,161	BTM	summer/fall 2020
Total Phase 3 Roof sites kWh	845,107		

Parking Lot Canopy Sites			
8 Newton Free Library	404,794	BTM	fall 2020
9 North High School - Walnut Street	354,392	BTM	summer 2020
10 North High School - Lowell Ave	582,786	FTM	summer 2020
11 Pleasant Street lot, Newton Centre	120,656	FTM	fall 2020
12 Brown Middle School-Wheeler Road	313,500	FTM	summer 2020
13 Brown Middle School-behind	321,338	FTM	summer 2020
14 Oak Hill Middle School	197,117	BTM	summer 2020
15 Memorial Spaulding Elementary School	204,698	FTM	summer 2020
16 Education Center	335,119	FTM	summer 2020
17 Mason Rice Elementary School	200,824	BTM	summer 2020
Total Phase 3 Canopy sites kWh	3,035,224		

Total Phase 3 BTM Canopy Sites		1,157,127	
Phases	Annual kWh		% of Municipal Use
Phase 3 Total kWh-design	3,880,331		19%
Phase 2 Total kWh-actual	3,688,399	all FTM	18%
Phase 1 Total kWh-actual	734,813	all FTM	4%
All Phases kWh	8,303,543		40%
Municipal Total Use kWh	20,794,848		

46th Annual Mayor's Community Breakfast - Breaking Bread Virtually

Each spring, we come together and break bread to renew our commitment to this good City in a setting of reflection and spiritual unity. While we cannot meet in person this year, on Wednesday, May 27th at 8:30 a.m., we will gather virtually in a Zoom meeting for this longstanding tradition.

(Photo: Last year's Mayor's Community Breakfast--this year we will break bread in a virtual format.)

In conjunction with the Harmony Foundation and the Newton Interfaith Clergy Association, I invite

residents, public officials, community groups, business people and clergy of all faiths to join this virtual gathering. We look forward to coming together in these challenging times to celebrate our everyday heroes of the past few months and reaffirm our ties, neighbor to neighbor.

There is no registration fee but technology limits us to 1,000 participants so please register early at

bit.ly/newtonbreakfast. This year the online registration form invites voluntary contributions to benefit a variety of nonprofit organizations, particularly those who are making a difference during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information about this year's Theodore D. Mann Newton Mayor's Community Breakfast, please see the letter from the event planning committee [here](#). I look forward to being together on the morning of May 27th.



Newton Art Brings Hope

Two weeks ago, Dr. Michael Henry, the medical director of the Massachusetts General Hospital Bipolar Clinic and Research Program and a Newton resident, had an idea. Why not bring a dose of art to Boston Hope, the COVID-19 medical center constructed inside the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center?



Dr. Henry contacted Newton's Cultural Development Director Paula Gannon to inquire about the use of Newton's Fence Art banners. (The FenceART project is a collaboration between Newton Open Studios, Newton Community Pride and Newton Cultural Development Department.) Paula quickly turned to Ellen Fisher, Director of the FenceART project and co-director of Newton Open Studios. Ellen immediately contacted individual Newton artists to check on the availability and condition of their FenceART banners.

(Photos: Newton Cultural Development Director Paula Gannon and Ellen Fisher, Director of the FenceART delivering the art. And the Newton artwork hanging at Boston Hope)

A huge thank you goes to the Newton artists who immediately said yes: Christie Allan-Piper, Sherry Autor, John Bryer, Howard Fineman, Lisa Goren, Grey Held, Deborah Hiatt, Dora Hsiung, Robert Hsiung, Amy Kaufman, Mary Beth Maisel and Gene Pogany.



Just two days after Michael's inquiry, Paula and Ellen delivered a dozen banners to another Newton resident, Dr. Louisa Sylvia, a staff psychologist at MGH. Thanks to Louisa, the banners are now installed at Boston Hope for all to enjoy.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Are you a Newton senior experiencing a loss? The Bereavement Support Group with Betsy Simmons at the Newton Senior Center is now meeting online. The May meeting is Thursday, May 14, at 10:30 a.m. The group shares strategies for self-care and community support and new members are always welcome. Email Ilana Seidmann at iseidmann@newtonma.gov for the Zoom meeting number and/or the link to join tomorrow's meeting. Can't make this meeting? Ilana can add your name to the email list so you'll be informed of next month's date and time.

P.P.S. Please help us protect our beautiful open spaces. It's wonderful that our conservation areas are seeing so much use these days and providing so many of us with needed outdoor opportunities. We can all help care for these very special open spaces by biking elsewhere as bikes damage the trails and natural areas, especially during wet conditions. Walkers and joggers are welcome and should stay on the existing, official trails to avoid any damage to the surrounding natural areas. Your dogs are welcome on a leash and please, please, please pick up after them.

P.P.P.S. Our friends at the Senior Center celebrated *Poem in Your Pocket Day* with a poem written by 95 year old Newton resident Eleanora Goolkasian. I love the line about contagious smiles lending love and hope.

CORONA: SPREAD LOVE, NOT DISEASE

*We have never seen anything like this before
But please don't scurry to the door
There's no place to go and nothing to do!
The restaurants are closed; schools and markets too
The same goes for movies, libraries and much, much more
Life is no longer what it was before
We must find ways to help us through
Because we're facing something new
Contagious smiles lend love and hope
To those who've lost their way to cope
Why not cook up some healthy fare?
Don't just sit there in that chair*

*We must hope that jobs will again be plenty
In this frightful year of 2020
Children are told to stay away from each other
And cohort only with sister or brother
They talk through fences, rather than play
Because they've been warned to stay away
Wouldn't it be fine and dandy
If they could find a store still selling candy?
Think of what we've learned from this
And focus not on what we miss
This teaches us all how to brighten each day
For only together, can we face come what may*

