

Mayor's Update

Current Cases

There are 758 Newton residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 through Sunday, May 31, according to preliminary case counts. This is an increase of nine people since we last reported data through Thursday, May 28. The preliminary case totals during the weekend were 750 positive cases through Friday, May 29, and 760 positive cases through Saturday, May 30. Please remember that case totals are preliminary and sometimes change as data discrepancies are resolved. As you can see from the lower case count today compared to yesterday, our total in Newton went down. This happens occasionally when, for example, duplicate cases are found or cases were assigned initially to the wrong city and then get reassigned.



Heartbreak and Hope

I joined hundreds and hundreds of people yesterday afternoon at 1:00 p.m. We gathered at City Hall in a rather spontaneous rally organized by resident Grace Kellman. Though we wore face coverings and stood far apart to maintain physical distancing, we could not have been more together in that moment.

We were assembled -- all races, all ages -- to take turns speaking from our hearts.

We heard the exhausted, frustrated, pained and fearful voices of mothers of Black children. One Mom said of her son who runs track at Newton North High School, "I won't let him run through the streets because I'm afraid someone will think



he's running away from committing a crime. ... This is the life we lead. ... I am in pain." We heard from Newton students who understandably, angrily and impatiently, implored our community to do better. We heard the collective outrage about the murder of George Floyd. We heard heartfelt, committed and compassionate voices for change as we here in Newton are not immune from the systemic racism and unconscious bias that taints our country.

I spoke, too, of how the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the tragedy of economic, health and housing disparities and of the crucial work to combat racism still ahead of us in Newton.

Some spoke; everyone listened; all of us gathered peacefully to voice our anger and despair; we all heard and affirmed the experiences of our neighbors that Black Lives Matter.

Twelve hours later, at 1:00 a.m., my husband, Joe, and I finally turned off the TV. We had watched minute by minute a peaceful protest march in Boston by thousands of people of all races transformed into a chaotic scene of flying bricks and water bottles and shattered glass and vandalized property. I understand urgency, frustration and anger but not violence, theft and destruction.

This was happening seven miles away, with 12 of Newton's police officers deployed in the Newbury Street area through our mutual aid arrangement with Boston. They may be in Boston again tonight. I'm worried for the safety of our officers. I'm dismayed that the righteous message of the protesters who have peacefully taken to the streets to demand change in our society is being drowned out. I despair that today's students will, as adults, experience the same disbelief that I now feel, that the issues that sparked rioting in my childhood hometown of Detroit over fifty years ago remain unaddressed.

For me, yesterday was a day of heartbreak. But, perhaps, it also offers a glimmer of hope. I believe that the collective will so palpable among the hundreds gathered at City Hall is felt by all of us in Newton.... That it is felt by people of goodwill across the Commonwealth and the country.... That it will lead us to redouble our commitment to justice, to reflect on our attitudes and actions, to banish racism from our minds and hearts and to help others do the same.... That it will cause our good City to become the truly welcoming, equitable and inclusive community to which we aspire. To quote from a recent email from the principal of our Franklin Elementary School, Joel Jocelyn, "When I observe our children's interaction with each other at Franklin, and the compassion and natural acceptance they show each other, irrespective of their races, ethnicities, or where they live, I see a ray of light out of this dark valley."

In the coming days, I will work with leaders from our Newton Police Department, Newton Public Schools, the Newton Human Rights Commission, Families Organizing for Racial Justice (FORJ), affordable housing advocates, the Newton Interfaith Clergy Association and others committed to this vital work of social justice to realize these hopes. Join me in the struggle to bend the arc of justice. As we all said last week at our Community Breakfast, this is the way of hope.

Please read the joint statement from the leadership of the City Council, School Committee and me [here](#) and Chief MacDonald's statement condemning the unacceptable actions of the Minneapolis police officers that led to the death of George Floyd [here](#).

Camps Not Opening This Summer

Today we shared the disappointing news with our camp families that we are not able to run any in person camps this summer.

We came to this conclusion after reviewing the newly released guidelines from the state regarding day camps and thinking carefully about the types of camps we offer and the available options to modify our programs in order to meet the expected critical public health safety guidelines from the state. Thus, we realized that we weren't able to operate our day camps safely this summer.

This cancellation is for all of Newton's Parks, Recreation and Culture camps

including Acres in the Falls, Albemarle Acres, Auburndale Station, Centre Acres, all CIT programs, Kids Korner, Outdoor Adventure, Specialty Camps, The Next Stop, Thundercat Sports, T-ville Trails, and Wilderness Survival as well as Golf lessons. We announced earlier the cancellation of Camp Echo Bridge, Camp Extreme and our Summer Vacation Camps.

I know this is bad news for so many families who rely on our programs to provide safe and stimulating activities for their children which is especially needed at this time. For many, our camps also allow parents to work.

We have some resources for you to consider for this summer:

- Virtual Camp Echo Bridge Newton's Camp Echo Bridge has gone virtual this summer and is offering a fun and exciting half-day morning program that will keep campers active and connected to their friends and the community. The mornings will include a mix of live and off-line camp programs that will be offered in blocks between 9 am and noon. These morning blocks include plenty of time to be in the great outdoors. On Wednesday and Friday, camp will host fantastic special events from 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Camp Echo Bridge will run July 6 – Aug 14. Families can sign up for any number of weeks they choose. To guarantee your camper's spot, you must register by Wednesday, June 10. To register, go to www.newtonmarec.com or contact Mark Kelly at mkelly@newtonma.gov with any questions.
- Babysitters Hundreds of camp staff are now available for babysitting this summer. If you are looking for a babysitter feel free to connect with other families and staff on:
 - Newton Babysitting Group on Facebook - Click [here](#)
 - Newton Parents Group on Facebook - Click [here](#)
 - Indeed.com – www.indeed.com
 - Care.com - <https://www.care.com> This site requires a fee for services
 - Sittercity.com - <https://www.sittercity.com> This site requires a fee for services
- Camps/Programs Later in the Summer We are hoping to be able to offer some in person programming this summer as the guidelines evolve. These programs might include short hour long classes or activities, or half-day or longer day programs depending on what is safe as the summer progresses. Any future programs that we are able to offer will be listed online for registration at www.newtonmarec.com

We will be doing the paperwork related to the cancellations and refund requests for all of our summer camps over the next few weeks. With the number of refunds we will be processing, please expect an extended turn around time to receive your refund.

I would appreciate your understanding and patience as we navigate through these difficult times. Please know that this was a very difficult decision and I share your disappointment.

Gath Pool, Crystal Lake Not Opening

I must also share another piece of disappointing news. We will not be able to operate either the Gath Memorial Pool or the Crystal Lake Beach this summer.

Knowing what we do about virus transmission, the necessary health guidelines and

restrictions in group settings for physical distancing and group sizes, the state guidelines, the size and layouts of our facilities and employee safety and thinking carefully about how we could operate and how people use our two aquatic sites, we have concluded that we aren't able to safely operate either this summer. Ultimately, this decision is about protecting the health of residents and our staff.

I know this is bad news for so many people and families who rely on Gath Pool and Crystal Lake to cool off, have fun, and get some exercise, all of which is especially needed at this time.

What does this mean for Crystal Lake this summer? Near the bathhouse, the beach will be closed, the sections of the dock that are stored on the land behind the bathhouse will be off limits and trespassing will not be permitted. In the Coves, we will be posting signs reminding people to maintain 6 feet of distancing and to wear face coverings when that distancing is not possible.

This is a disappointing decision but the right one for Newton. I look forward to the better days ahead including the eventual reopening of these facilities next summer.

Newton AI Fresco

The "Newton AI Fresco" program to assist restaurants with the start-up of outdoor dining is getting a kick-start this week. On Wednesday the City's Board of License Commissioners will meet to consider measures to enable all Newton restaurants to have outdoor seating both on their sidewalk areas in front of their establishments and in a portion of their privately owned parking lot if they are immediately adjacent to the restaurant property.

Any restaurant with enough sidewalk space to allow for proper clearance for those with disabilities (at least 3 feet between tables and the curb) will be allowed to use the abutting sidewalk in front of their restaurant for table service, as long as they obey all COVID-19 guidance from the state and sign a Release and Indemnification agreement with the City.

The Licensing Commission will also be discussing how to implement an Order released by Governor Baker today that makes it quicker and easier for the Licensing Commission to issue alcohol licenses for outdoor service.

The City will also be placing picnic benches in village center parks near multiple restaurants for take-out eating. We'll evaluate temporary closures of portions of public parking lots, street parking spots, and street segments to allow for expanding outdoor dining as well.

Governor Baker will announce on Saturday whether the health indicators will allow restaurants to proceed on Monday, June 8 with expanded outdoor dining. I'm keeping my fingers crossed but also working hard at City Hall to help make it possible.

Applications for Emergency Housing Assistance Due Soon – Wednesday, June 3

Need emergency financial assistance for housing costs?

Applications for the Newton Emergency Housing Assistance Program are due this Wednesday, June 3. Income-eligible Newton households who have experienced a loss of income due to COVID-19 may apply to receive up to three months of rental or

mortgage assistance (mortgage assistance only available to owners of affordable deed-restricted units).

Newton residents who are experiencing a reduced income as a direct result of COVID-19 and earn 80% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI) at the time their application is submitted are encouraged to apply. (For example, a family of four at the 80% AMI level has an annual income of \$96,250.) Households currently receiving rental assistance (e.g. Public Housing tenants, RAFT, Section 8, MRVP or other locally administered support) are also eligible for this program.

The funding assistance will cover 70% of an eligible household's monthly rent or mortgage. The assistance has a monthly cap of \$2,500 per household, or \$7,500 per household, for three months.

Metro West Collaborative Development is administering this program on behalf of the City of Newton. They are holding a Drive-Up Application Assistance Workshop tomorrow, Tuesday, June 2 from 4:00 – 6:00 pm at their office in Newton: 79 Chapel Street. Bring your documents, questions, or get started with your application from the safety of your car.

Unable to make the drive-up workshop? No worries - Contact Metro West at robyn@metrowestcd.org (preferred method) or 617-923-3505 x5 to begin the application process. The application deadline is the day after tomorrow, June 3, 2020; the lottery will be held June 10, 2020. The details of this program, including program guidelines, can also be found at www.newtonma.gov/housingrelief

Funding for 14 Non-Profits to Help during COVID-19

I am pleased to announce the recipients of approximately \$858,000 in federal COVID-19 CARES Act funds that were allocated to the City of Newton to help non-profits prevent, prepare for, and respond to the impacts of COVID-19. These non-profits will be able to help with the delivery of vital services to Newton's low and moderate income residents as well as area individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The City is supporting nine (9) organizations whose programs address Newton's most urgent needs related to COVID-19 and provide stability across the lifespan through an allocation of \$300,210 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. These urgent needs include food delivery to older residents, telehealth psychiatric services, emergency utility assistance, and specialized services to vulnerable populations, to name a few. The following organizations are receiving these supplemental CDBG funds: 2Life Communities, Barry Price Rehabilitation Center, Family ACCESS of Newton, Horace Cousens Industrial Fund, Newton Community Development Foundation, Newton Housing Authority, Newton Senior Services, Pathway to Possible, and Riverside Community Care.

More information on these service programs can be found [here](#).

The City also received supplemental Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to be used to provide emergency overnight and day shelter services, domestic violence support, emergency rental assistance, and rapid re-housing assistance to individuals and families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness in the Brookline-Newton-Waltham-Watertown (BNWW) region. These funds will support the work of five (5) regional homeless assistance agencies located in Newton (1), Waltham (3) and

Brookline (1). The following five organizations will be awarded over \$550,000 in funds: Brookline Community Mental Health Center, Community Day Center of Waltham, Middlesex Human Service Agency (MHSA), REACH Beyond Domestic Violence, and The Second Step.

More information on these homeless assistance programs can be found [here](#).

Warmly,

Ruthanne

