

## Mayor's Update



Our firefighters early this morning fought a serious fire on Cook Street in Nonantum where flames completely engulfed the attic of a two-family home. Thankfully, neither residents nor firefighters were injured. (Firefighters rescued one cat, but unfortunately another was lost.) Firefighters also prevented damage to the homes close by.

The call came in to the Newton Fire Department around 1:30 a.m. from someone who saw the flames. Fire had already vented through the roof when the first engines arrived.

NFD immediately struck a second alarm and soon sounded a third.

Three people were home and escaped when they heard smoke detectors before firefighters arrived, according to Fire Captain Eric Fricke. This as a reminder of how important it is to have working smoke detectors; they save lives.

As I listened over the fire/police radio, it was clear that the firefighters were working in tough, dangerous conditions. Snow and ice covered the ground and they found the nearest fire hydrant on Cook Street frozen. Ice encased firefighters' helmets and gear.

I'm grateful to Chief Bruce Proia who served as the scene commander, the entire fire department, and to our emergency partners in Brookline, Boston, Needham, Waltham, Watertown, Wellesley and Weston who backed up our engine, ladder and rescue companies.

In addition, Newton Police, Newton Dispatch, Newton DPW, Newton Utilities and Cataldo Ambulance helped at the scene.

The Newton fire investigating team determined the fire started on the first floor, apparently due to an electrical issue.

### Snow and Ice Update

We've had a difficult few days. The weekend storm left us with 6 inches of snow that turned into hard-packed ice. Plus, we faced frigid temperatures. We worked hard: 120 DPW employees have put in 6,490 hours so far and worked literally 24/7 since Saturday at 9:00 p.m. until 3 p.m. today. Yet, icy conditions bedeviled us on many

streets and sidewalks.

Crews continue to scrape and salt throughout the City. We'll have 8 sanders out tonight through 7:00 a.m., and two loaders and two trucks hauling snow from Auburndale, Newton Corner, Newtonville and West Newton.

With the temperatures rising fast and rain in the forecast, we're also turning our attention to flooding. Crews have been using backhoes and loaders to clear storm drains.

We know the roads, sidewalks and curb-cuts still need work and we'll stick with it.

We know how hard it is to clear the ice and we still urge each of you to make your sidewalk passable.

### **Good-bye to a Class Act**

Elizabeth Dromey, our outstanding Director of Assessment Administration, has made the decision to retire effective February 25th.

After more than 30 years here in the City of Newton, she is looking forward to more time with her family and has exciting travel plans.

Elizabeth is a class act. She is professional and knowledgeable, thorough and diligent, calm and steady. She has earned the respect and trust of not only her co-workers at City Hall and peers throughout the Commonwealth but our residents and business owners (a tall order given her professional responsibilities). Plus, she is a lovely human being -- kind and caring.

I cannot thank her enough for her public service and her leadership.

### **New HR Director**

I'm pleased to announce that Michelle Pizzi O'Brien, currently the Director of Human Resources for the Town of Norwood, will be joining us as the Director of Human Resources.



Ms. Pizzi O'Brien has deep experience with labor and employee relations. She has served as the Director of Human Resources for Norwood since 2006 where she built their Human Resources Department and town-wide personnel functions from the ground up. She managed collective bargaining, implemented town-wide training programs, oversaw health insurance and other employee benefit programs, and developed best practices and personnel

policies and procedures. Before her role with Norwood, Pizzi O'Brien worked in the Human Resources Bureau for the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and began her career in the City of Waltham's Human Resources Department as a Personnel Coordinator. As a result, she has a strong set of skills and the deep experience and leadership qualities needed for this critical department.

Ms. Pizzi O'Brien holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Regis College in Weston and a Masters in Public Administration from Northeastern University. In addition to her education and experience, she is also very active in many professional associations

including being a member of the Board of Directors for the Massachusetts Municipal Personnel Association.

Ms. Pizzi O'Brien also has deep personal connections to Newton as it was the community her mother and family immigrated to in the 1960s as new Americans, where her parents met and were later married in 1975, and where she spent her youth visiting her grandparents in the village of Auburndale.

Michelle Pizzi O'Brien not only brings solid experience and a personal connection to Newton, she also has wonderful personal qualities as well. She is warm, positive and energetic. She cares deeply about employees and believes in public service. She knows how to collaborate and to lead simultaneously, an unusual quality. I am excited to partner with her and expect, with the approval of the City Council, for her to begin March 11<sup>th</sup>.

### **Seven Housebreaks in One Day**

We had seven residential breaking and entries in a section of the Newton Highlands/Newton Centre area last Friday, Jan. 18.

The thieves struck one home and tried to enter another on Athlestone Road, three on Halcyon Road, two on Oxford Road and one on Rowena Road. Police believe the break-ins are the work of the same burglar(s) who are breaking into homes along the Southeast corridor of Massachusetts. The suspect(s) enter the homes usually between 3:00 and 8:00 p.m. through a 2nd floor rear window or an unlocked downstairs window. Most homes are left ransacked with jewelry or other valuables stolen.

The Newton Detective Bureau is investigating the break-ins and Chief MacDonald has increased patrols. He advises residents to secure free-standing ladders outside their homes, so they can't be used to access second floors, and to lock all windows.

If you have information, call the Detective Bureau at 617-796-2104 or use the Police "Tip-Line" at 617-796-2121. If you see something, say something.

### **Learn More About Zoning Redesign**

The City Council is partnering with the Planning Department to host a meeting in every ward for people to learn more about the proposed zoning ordinance.

Come out to a meeting, learn about the proposed zoning for your property and your neighborhood. Ask questions and give the Planning Department feedback.

The next meeting is in Nonantum on Thursday, Feb. 7, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at the Ciociaro Social Club, 144 Bridge Street. The complete schedule is [here](#).

The First Draft Zoning Ordinance, final Pattern Book, and other information about the project can be found at [www.newtonma.gov/zoningredesign](http://www.newtonma.gov/zoningredesign). Questions can be directed to [zoningredesign@newtonma.gov](mailto:zoningredesign@newtonma.gov) or by calling the Planning Department at 617-796-1120.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. The weather delayed the delivery of the modular “box” apartments to Austin Street in Newtonville this week. They are now arriving next Wednesday, Jan. 30.

