

Mayor's Update



Better Bus Project? We're Skeptical

We're pushing back on the MBTA proposed "Better Bus Project" that it says will improve bus service through Newton. I have deep concerns that rather than improving bus service in our City, this plan actually cuts service.

I've expressed my concerns and those of our transportation staff to MBTA General Manager Steve Poflak, and I'm working hard for changes to the four proposals for Newton that would impact seven routes. We will continue to press the MBTA and share in detail our specific concerns.

The MBTA is holding a series of public meetings and we're working to host one here in Newton so all of us can learn more about the proposal and express our concerns. That meeting is not yet on the calendar, but there is one scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 12 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Watertown Free Public Library, 123 Main Street.



Don't Be Fooled

We just rolled out Newton Power Choice, and unfortunately there are now scammers sending letters to Newton households trying to get people to sign-up for their more expensive clean energy programs.

Don't be fooled.

All correspondence from the City of Newton will have the green and blue Newton Power Choice logo and the City seal. If you don't see the logo or the City seal, it's not from us.

Remember, you can choose 100% Green with Newton Power Choice and make a substantial investment in local renewable, clean energy. If you opt-up, 100% of your electricity use will be matched with electricity generated and added to the grid by renewable energy projects in New England.

Join us!

Choose
100% Green

Newton
POWERCHOICE

newtonpowerchoice.com

Questions about Newton Power Choice? Get answers [here](#).

Long-Range School Enrollment: Steady

The school enrollment forecast is critical, and it's done thoughtfully, seriously and in-depth each year.

The Enrollment Analysis Report in November and the Enrollment Planning and Class Size Report issued this week show that while we have to pay attention to a few individual schools, the news is positive.

There are 65 fewer students enrolled in the Newton Public Schools this year, ending 13 years of increases (1,482 students were added between 2004 and 2017), and the five-year enrollment projections show the numbers remaining stable.

On Tuesday, the School Department presented the five-year enrollment forecast for each school and classroom. In general, enrollment at the elementary level is projected to remain steady or to decrease slightly, but we need to pay attention to Angier which is at capacity and at Pierce where numbers appear to be ticking up.

Middle school enrollment is projected to grow and then decrease over the next five years. Oak Hill, however, is projected to see a consistent increase because of the expanded Zervas School. That's also a school we have to keep our eye on.

High school enrollment is relatively steady for a couple of years and then starts growing in the fall of 2022. It keeps growing until 2026 and then levels out. Class sizes and the percent of classes with 25 or more students at both high schools are slightly lower than last year, and the two schools are quite similar. Balancing class sizes at the high schools will be critical when enrollments grow in a few years.

This year we also dug deeper to get a full picture of what enrollment will look like over the next 10 years. A professional demographer looked at all types of indicators, including the impact of potential new developments (Northland, Riverside, Riverdale and Chestnut Hill Square) on school enrollment. (Projects that have already been approved by the City Council, such as Austin Street and Washington Place, are included in the five-year forecast--again, our efforts to 'dig deeper' are focusing on yet-to-be-approved projects.)

The full report will be available in the next month or two, but the preview indicates that even if all four proposals are eventually approved by the City Council, enrollment would continue to be manageable with just a slight increase in students. Without the yet-to-be-

approved developments, projections show an enrollment decline.

That's good news for our schools, but it doesn't mean our work is done. We need to make sure all our school buildings are in good condition and we keep our eyes on class sizes to make sure they are appropriate in all our schools and all our grades.



Myrtle Baptist Church History Exhibit (1874-1908)

Opening Reception

Tuesday, February 5th at 7 pm

Newton City Hall First Floor Display Gallery

- Enter at main rotunda -

Celebrate the Myrtle Baptist Church

The Myrtle Baptist Church in West Newton, founded by freed slaves in 1874, is one of the oldest African-American Churches in New England. Celebrate its history and learn more about the church's fascinating past by visiting the exhibit on the first floor at City Hall through Thursday, Feb. 28.

The exhibit, Myrtle Baptist Church History (1874-1908), highlights the early history of the church and its pastors during the period following the Civil War.

We're having an opening celebration. Join Myrtle Baptist Church Senior Pastor Crowley, Assistant Pastor Rev. Johnson, Pastor Emeritus Rev. Haywood, members of the church community and me for an opening reception on Tuesday, Feb. 5 at 7:00 p.m.

The Future of Washington Street

Since last spring, we've been bringing together residents and business owners, elected officials and urban planners, transportation experts and open space advocates to decide the future of Washington Street.

The second draft of the vision plan and draft zoning for the Washington Street corridor will be presented at a meeting of the City Council's Zoning and Planning Committee on Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 7:00 p.m. on the second floor of City Hall.

Come early to have an opportunity to see key elements of the plan.

The first draft of the vision plan and zoning was presented at a public meeting last October. Our consultant, Principle Group, developed it after hearing from more than 400 people during 75 hours of "open studio" listening sessions.

The second draft refines the plan, incorporating the comments and ideas that arose after the first draft. There is still time for input before the third and final plan and zoning is created. Come and share your perspective. We're listening.

More information is [here](#).

Help us with Riverside

Join the City's Planning Department and consultants from Civic Moxie to kick-off the Riverside Visioning Plan process on Sunday, February 10 at 4:00 p.m., in the Williams

School gymnasium (114 Grove Street).

Riverside is at the end of the Green Line and by both 128/95 and the Mass Pike. A private developer is bringing in a proposal to redevelop it. We're creating a vision plan for the area to decide what makes sense for Newton. Come participate in a range of work stations and let us know what you would like to see at the site. Refreshments and children's activities provided!

Find out more about the Riverside vision plan process and sign up for email updates [here](#).

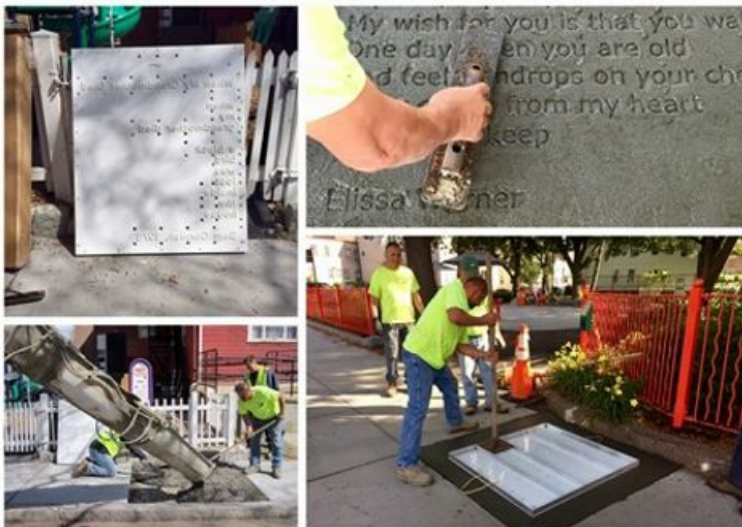
Potholes, Potholes and More Potholes

It's in the single digits today, and in a few days the temperature outside is expected to be in the 40s. That kind of temperature swing is a recipe for potholes.

City Engineer Lou Taverna explains that the sudden dip in temperature causes the water soaked into the asphalt to freeze and expand. The sudden thaw then causes sinking and potholes.

It's a perennial problem. During the first four weeks of 2018 there had been 330 potholes reported through the City's 311 system, and 30 tons of asphalt were used to repair them plus the ones found by our DPW crews.

If you see a pothole, [report it to 311](#). Don't assume we know where all of them are! Crews will be out working to get them filled as fast as possible.



Photos from City of Cambridge, MA

Make Poetry Concrete

Help us bring poetry out of books and into our everyday lives.

The City of Newton and Newton Community Pride have teamed up with MassDevelopment for a sidewalk poetry campaign.

We will select 10 original poems from those submitted to be permanently stamped into

the concrete on new sidewalks across Newton.

We need your poems, and/or your financial contribution to do this.

We need to raise \$7,500 by midnight, March 29 for this project to become reality. You can make a pledge [here](#). (If we don't make the goal, donations will be returned.) If we hit the mark, MassDevelopment's Commonwealth Places program will match the amount, and the \$15,000 will be used to make the poetry molds used to stamp the words into new sidewalks. Our DPW crews will take it from there and we'll be walking on words this summer.

Do you live in Newton, work or go to school here? Submit a poem! The deadline is



Calling all “Village People”

Last spring, we formed a group we’re affectionately calling “The Village People.”

With the help of several community leaders who enrich our city through events such as village days and other community-based initiatives (e.g., Terry Sauro, John Rice, Jerry Reilly), the group meets to bring community-minded folks together a few times a year. We brainstorm, share best practices, and generally cross-pollinate.

We invite both wily veteran event organizers and anyone with a spark of an idea in its embryonic stages to join us at our first meeting of 2019 on Wednesday, February 13, at 7:00 p.m. at the Brigham House in Newton Highlands (20 Hartford Street).

Can’t join us for the meeting but want to get on our email list? Have questions or would like to learn more? Contact Dana Hanson, our city’s Director of Community Engagement and Inclusion at (617) 796-1104 or dhanson@newtonma.gov.

Return Your City Census

Have you responded to the City census?

The Office of Newton’s City Clerk in January mailed the annual City census to every residential household in Newton as required by state law. Residents are asked to return the form within 10 days (postage is necessary if returning by mail).

Responding to the annual census keeps your voting status active. If you’re not a registered voter, responding will ensure that the City Clerk’s Office is able to provide you with proof of residency.

If there are no changes to your information, respond online by clicking [here](#). Questions? Click [here](#).

Lock Your Cars

Police report an uptick in car break-ins over the past couple of weeks – 15 have been reported in areas throughout Newton. Notably, none of the 15 cars were locked.

Newton Police Chief MacDonald urges everyone to lock their car doors, and put all valuables out of sight or, better yet, in the trunk or inside your home.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. A special thank you to all our School Crossing Guards who were at their posts in

this frigid weather making sure our kids stayed safe. There are still positions available for hearty souls looking for a great part-time job in the City. Check the City website.

P.P.S. It's freezing outside, but the only way to know if the [Auburndale Cove](#) is safe for skating is to call the City's Skating Hotline, which is updated daily. (617) 796-1536. I have an inside track to know that **Cove skating will be open tomorrow, Saturday, Feb 2 from 10 am to 9 pm and Sunday, Feb 3 from 10 a.m to 5 p.m..** Of course, if conditions change, our Parks and Recreation Department staff on site will make up-to-the-moment decisions and adjustments accordingly. Pack your own skates and gear and park in the parking lot at the end of West Pine Street--see you on the ice! (It is not safe to skate at Crystal Lake or Bullough's Pond.)

P.P.P. S. I had a terrific time moderating the Bigelow Middle School's annual Geography Bee along with Principal Todd Harrison on Tuesday morning. The school band played "We are the Champions" as the finalists walked-in. [Take a look](#). Let's hope we're playing that song Sunday night! Go Pats!

