

## Mayor's Update



Newton will add solar panels at 17 additional school and municipal locations starting this summer, generating an additional 21 percent of our municipal energy use.

In the last four weeks the City Council approved these locations including solar canopies at the Newton Free Library parking lot and at Brown Middle School.

This is a huge step in Newton's commitment to reducing our carbon footprint. The City previously constructed solar arrays on 12 City owned sites, including at the Newton South High School parking lot.

These solar projects help reduce our carbon footprint, generate revenues and create savings for the City. The first two phases of solar projects generated over \$650,000 in savings for the City of Newton in FY2018 alone. According to the US EPA, the effect of those projects is the equivalent of either removing 865 gas-powered cars from the road or the carbon sequestration effect of a 4,758-acre forest. The 17 newly approved locations will generate \$5 million in electricity savings over 20 years.



(Climate activists and City staff celebrate the City Council vote last night to approve solar panels at the Newton Free Library parking lot and at Brown Middle School.)

We're also moving along on Newton Power Choice, the historic contract I signed in November. The contract provides, from renewable sources such as wind and solar, the equivalent of 60 percent of the electricity used by Newton's electricity customers.

The program goes into effect this month and most customers (25,513) are opting to go with the City's "standard" of 60 percent local renewable energy.

In addition, nearly 4 percent of residents (1,107) thus far have "opted-up" to 100 percent, meaning 100 percent of their energy will be from local renewable sources such as wind and solar power.

Need more information on Newton Power Choice? Click [here](#).

(With City Councilor Andreae Downes, Seana Gaherin and City

Councilor Brenda Noel at the annual St. Patrick's Day breakfast at Dunn Gaherin's in Newton Upper Falls.)

## Potholes, 1,200 and Counting

As is typical in New England, the wet weather and roller-coaster temperature swings again wreaked havoc on our roads this winter.

So far this year we've responded to 1,200 requests for pothole repairs – many having to be filled more than once. Keep reporting potholes to 311 and we'll keep filling them as fast as possible. This past weekend we had crews out working extra shifts to try to catch up.



We're also paying special attention to the Boston Marathon route. We've been diligently patching the carriage road where so many runners have been training.

I know many of our streets are in tough shape. We've spent \$9.5 million on street repairs and maintenance this year, and I'm budgeting another \$9.5 million for next year. At this investment level we will all see real progress in another year or two.

## Winter \$

This winter saw 47 inches of snow fall on Newton during 24 snow (15) and ice (9) events at a clean-up cost to the City of \$4,790,325.

We budgeted \$4.25 million for snow this year, so the remainder is coming from unrestricted funds otherwise known as free cash. I'm adding \$250,000 into next year's proposed snow removal budget to bring the amount to \$4.5 million (fingers crossed we won't need to spend it all next winter). Thankfully, the end is in sight as the 10-day forecast is for mostly dry weather with temperatures inching into the 50s.

## Final Draft Zoning Ordinance Deadline Extended

Please know that I have asked the Planning Department to extend the timeline for their delivery of a final draft zoning ordinance to the City Council to the calendar year 2020.

My decision was made for two reasons. First, we recently concluded the 1<sup>st</sup> draft Zoning Redesign ward-by-ward meetings and listened carefully; we know we have considerable work to do on the second draft to ensure we have the right rules in place to direct the future development of our community. Second, we have a sizeable work load in our Planning Department for the rest of this calendar year. This includes important and time-sensitive planning work reviewing the Northland Special Permit application, a Vision Plan and anticipated special permit application for Riverside, updating our inclusionary zoning provisions, developing and presenting a Climate Action Plan, and completing work on the Vision Plan and associated zoning for Washington Street. I am confident the Planning Department can ably complete these initiatives in 2019 if we extend zoning redesign into 2020.

Read my letter to the City Council [here](#).

(The 12th Annual Newton Spelling Bee. First graders



were on stage Monday.)

## **MBTA and the Buses**

The MBTA is working to amend their original Better Bus Project proposals in Newton, according to Senior Director of Service Planning Melissa Dullea who told us of the changes at a meeting here at City Hall last week.

These amended proposals come after feedback from me, the City's transportation planners, residents and businesses who spoke out against the original proposals. The original proposals would have reduced bus service on certain routes and eliminated some bus stops entirely.

Dullea said the MBTA is currently looking to amend its original proposal for bus route #60 by maintaining the bus stop at the Chestnut Hill Mall and potentially adding a new bus stop across Route 9 at Chestnut Hill Square. She also said the original proposal, which cut outbound express bus service from Boston to Newton Corner on Routes 501-504, is being reconsidered.

The MBTA is continuing to refine the proposed bus route changes. We'll be staying on top of the changes and continue to doggedly fight against service reductions that adversely impact Newton.

See my Feb. 20 letter to MBTA General Manager Steve Poftak [here](#).

## **Newton Housing Partnership Launching**

Join the newly reinstated Newton Housing Partnership (NHP) at its first meeting on Tuesday, March 26 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 204 at City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Ave.).

I recently appointed nine members to the previously dormant NHP. This group will act as an advisory body to the Mayor, City Council, Boards, Commissions and Committees to foster and support housing for an economically diverse Newton.

The members were selected from 24 applicants. They are:

- Rev. Marc Caggiano (past member), the minister at First Church in Chestnut Hill who has a background as a real estate lawyer and helped develop several affordable housing projects.
- Eliza Datta who leads her own real estate development and advisory company with a focus on mixed income housing. She previously worked for The Community Builders and oversaw a pipeline of more than 256 affordable and mixed income housing development projects in Massachusetts and Connecticut, with 1,400 units in City of Boston.
- Chuck Eisenberg (past member) is a real estate development and finance consultant with particular experience and expertise in affordable housing.
- John Hennessey has 30 years of experience working in commercial real estate.

- Lizbeth Heyer (acting Chair) has more than 30 years of experience in affordable housing and is currently Chief of Real Estate and Innovation for 2Life Communities.
- Josephine McNeil (past member) is the Executive Director Emeritus of Citizens for Affordable Housing.
- Kathleen Marchi is the former Executive Director of The Newton Partnership, a board member of the Newton Food Pantry, and currently the Director of Alumni Relations at MIT Sloan.
- Marva Serotkin is a consultant/advocate for housing for people with disabilities in the Boston area and recently completed the construction of Harmon Apartments, the only mixed income supportive housing for people with disabilities in Boston.
- Stephen Tise is an architect.

Newton faces serious housing issues with many people unable to find options that work for them or their families. Yet we're at an exciting moment when interest in creating and preserving affordable housing – whether through inclusionary zoning, accessory apartments, small cluster zoning or multifamily buildings – continues to grow.

I'm looking forward to the NHP once again becoming an important voice in the conversation around housing preservation, development, planning, policy and program implementation as we make critical decisions.

(High School students from Newton North and Newton South gathered on the steps of City Hall on Friday as part of the global Climate Strike to bring attention to the need to address Climate Change.)



### **Overnight MBTA Work at Newton Highlands Starts Monday**

Loud and unfortunately necessary overnight construction work is scheduled to begin at the Newton Highlands MBTA station on the following dates:

- Monday, March 25 – Friday, March 29
- Monday, April 1 – Friday, April 5

Daytime ramp construction which began on Feb. 25 is also continuing weekdays from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. through Friday, April 5.

This overnight work is anticipated to begin at 1:00 a.m. and end before 5:00 a.m. and is required to create an accessible ramp and platform at Newton Highlands Station.

This work will not affect Green Line D branch service at the Newton Highlands station.

The ramp is being installed at the corner of Walnut Street and Station Avenue. Signage is in place at the station directing riders toward the Station Avenue ramp.

The MBTA is installing a ramp at the corner of Walnut Street and Station Avenue to improve accessibility before the \$74 million Green Line track and signal replacement project beginning this spring. The MBTA is making sure everyone has access to the station during the coming track and signal upgrades.

A more extensive project to permanently reconstruct the existing ramps from both Walnut Street and Station Avenue and to add a new pedestrian ramp from Hyde Street to the “inbound platform” side of the track is now at the end of the design phase. That project involves accessible boarding platforms, a new communication system, better lighting, security cameras, bicycle shelters, and new benches.

Work on the more extensive improvements will begin after the Green Line signal and track replacement is completed over the next 18 to 24 months.

Check [mbta.com](http://mbta.com) for more information.

Want to report a noise complaint? Call the 24-hour MBTA noise hotline at 508-676-3550.

Questions? Email the project team at [DBranchInfo@MBTA.com](mailto:DBranchInfo@MBTA.com).



(With Chief Bruce Proia and the Newton Fire Department's new ladder truck.)

### **Brian Yates, a True Public Servant**

We received the sad news on Saturday of yet another loss in our City.

Former City Councilor Brian Yates dedicated his life to public service. He was a passionate voice for the less fortunate in our community. For more than 30 years as a member of the Board of Aldermen and then City Council, he was a champion for the most vulnerable. He was committed to historic preservation. Brian Yates was erudite, learned, and he loved Newton, especially his home village of Newton Upper Falls. He will be missed.

The wake is today from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Doherty's Funeral Home in Needham (1305 Highland Ave.), and a funeral mass will be held at 10:30 a.m. tomorrow (Wednesday, March 20) at Mary Immaculate of Lourdes (270 Elliot St.).

### **Lights, Camera, Action at Cold Springs Park**

Filming at Cold Spring Park is tentatively scheduled for Friday, April 8, Saturday, April 9 and Tuesday, April 16 for scenes in the upcoming Paramount TV production of *Defending Jacob*, based on the best-selling novel by William Landay, a Newton resident.

The murder mystery he wrote is set in Newton, and tells the story of a district attorney

whose son is charged with murder.

Producers of *Defending Jacob* will film scenes at Cold Spring Park, Newton Highlands and at the UMass Amherst Mount Ida Campus, where courtroom scenes will take place. Filming at Mount Ida will be entirely contained within the campus and is tentatively scheduled for April 15, 17 and 18. Filming in Newton Highlands is scheduled for the end of May.

The Cold Spring Park scenes will be the first to be filmed and will take place in the vicinity of the dog park entrance on Plymouth Road. Plymouth Road will be closed during filming, and the dog park will be closed when the search scene is filmed on the 16th.

Paramount is in the final stages of securing approval from the Conservation Commission for use of Cold Spring Park, and is committed to leaving the park just as they found it. I am also finishing negotiations for a payment from Paramount to improve the trails there.

Firm filming dates and more details will be posted on the homepage of newtonma.gov as soon as they are finalized.

Chris Evans (a.k.a. Captain America) is starring in the series, but I'm told he won't be in the scenes filmed here in April.

Want to be an extra? Apply through [Boston Casting](#).

### **Pre-Marathon Activities in Newton**

Going on your last long training run up the Newton Hills this Saturday, March 23? Consider dropping a donation in the boot to benefit the Newton Firefighters' Children's Fund as you pass Fire Station #2 at 1750 Commonwealth Ave.

Newton firefighters will be out from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. collecting donations to help the families of fallen fire fighters in Massachusetts. Checks payable to NFD Children's Fund are accepted, and 100 percent of the donations go to families. More information is [here](#). Thank you NFD!

Would you like to enjoy the Marathon spirit in Newton without training for the full 26.2 miles? Join me for Newton Pride's 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Heartbreak Hill Road Race on April 14, the Sunday before the big race.

Click [here](#) for race start times, registration and more details, or call 617-796-1540.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. The second workshop for Newton's Climate Action Plan is this Thursday, March 21, from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Barry Price Center (2527 Christina St.). Come share your ideas!

P.P.S. The Spring 2019 Newton Community Education brochure is out with more than 65 pages of courses for kids and adults. Take a look and sign-up [here](#).

P.P.P.S. Join me at the Newton Free Library tomorrow night, Wednesday, March 20,

for my Mayoral Meet-up in the gallery outside of Druker Auditorium from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. Then stay for Spice 101, part of the month-long Newton Reads events series in conjunction with the book, "Eight Flavors: The Untold Story of American Cuisine."

