

Mayor's Update



It's been a tough week for the hundreds of residents of The Towers in Chestnut Hill at 250 Hammond Pond Parkway. Like all of them, I'm grateful we had only three minor injuries during the evacuation from the fire that started early Monday afternoon in a unit on the eighth floor of the South Tower.

The response from our Newton Fire Department was terrific, and they did an admirable job keeping the fire contained. Nonetheless, there has been considerable disruption for the residents of both towers.

The most serious aspect of my job is the safety of our residents. I saw first-hand this week the professionalism, the excellent results of training and investment in

equipment, and the courage of our first responders – Newton Fire, Newton Police and Cataldo Ambulance – and the caring and skilled support from so many others in the City's Health and Human Services, Senior Services, Information Technology and Inspectional Services Departments. I'm both proud and reassured. We will do an after-action review as we are always looking for ways to improve.

If you are a resident of The Towers needing further assistance from the American Red Cross, call 1-800-564-1234 or the Newton Health and Human Services staff at 617-796-1420. For more information, call The Towers at 617-969-0300.

(Photo credit: Jenna Fisher, Newton Patch)

Garden Remedies Retail Marijuana Sales Delayed

Garden Remedies adult-use retail marijuana sales will not begin on Saturday, April 27, as anticipated; the Cannabis Control Commission had to postpone its final inspection.

A new inspection date has not yet been scheduled.

45th Annual Mayor's Community Breakfast

We come together once a year to renew our commitment to this good City. Residents, public officials, community groups, business people and clergy of all faiths come together or renew their commitment to

Newton, and to each other.

At this year's 45th Annual Theodore D. Mann Newton Mayor's Community Breakfast, we will break bread at the Boston Marriot Newton (2345 Commonwealth Avenue), on Friday, May 31. Breakfast begins at 7:00 a.m. and the program starts at 7:30 a.m.

I'm happy to announce our co-keynote speakers this year are student members of the Newton Youth Commission:

- Julia Geller, a senior at Newton South High School
- Nathan Persampieri, a senior at Newton North High School.

Julia and Nathan will share their special perspectives on diversity and inclusion in our community, their experiences as students in the Newton Public Schools, and their thoughts on Newton's future.

The proceeds from the Community Breakfast are used to support the vital work of the Foundation for Racial, Ethnic and Religious Harmony. This community foundation was established in 1988 through the initiative of Mayor Theodore D. Mann.

Over the past thirty years, the Harmony Foundation has provided grants to Newton community-focused organizations working to promote tolerance, respect and understanding among the diverse ethnic, religious, racial and language populations encompassed within the City of Newton. This diversity is a continuing source of community strength.

You can place your orders for tickets, tables and/or a program book advertisement [here](#). Anyone requesting a pre-packaged Kosher meal will need to send an email to harmonyfoundationnewton@gmail.com no later than May 24th.

Newton in Motion, "NewMo," Gets Ready to Launch

Newton's new senior ride share program, Newton in Motion, or NewMo, will start this summer.

I signed a contract with the ride share company Via that will bring to Newton an innovative, affordable, on-demand transportation system for seniors.

I'm so excited about this new ride-share program, the first of its kind in Massachusetts. People 60 years old and older can book a spur of the moment ride online, through an app on their phone or with a phone call, or, just as easily, book a ride for an appointment days in advance.

The name Newton in Motion, or NewMo, was selected after nearly 200 residents



responded to the request for suggestions in one of these updates. After much rather fun deliberation, I settled on a slight variation of resident Stanley Fisher's suggestion of Newton Motion. I want to invite Stanley to be the first passenger when NewMo begins this summer.

Via will have four vehicles in Newton (one wheelchair accessible) that will be painted with a distinct NewMo logo for easy identification.

Newton in Motion will replace the current taxi voucher system. Seniors will be able to access the same specific destinations in Newton and outside the City as are currently available. Rider fees will range from .50 cents to \$3.00 or \$5.00 per ride depending on individual situations.

A sophisticated software program will create routes that may involve picking up multiple passengers along the way, making it more environmentally friendly while providing a social experience for passengers and improving overall service time.

How do I set up a Newton in Motion account? Several information sessions across the City are being planned to explain how the system works, meet the Via staff, upload the app onto your smartphone, set up your account and more. You will also be able to call Via's customer call center to set up an account.

How will I be charged? When riders establish an account with Via, they will provide a credit or debit card number. The cost of each ride will then be billed automatically to that account.

What if I don't have a credit card or I don't want to use it? You will be able to set up your account with a prepaid card available through the Senior Center.



Goodbye to “Foam” Take-Out Containers and Plastic Stirrers

Starting January 1, 2020, polystyrene containers (a.k.a. styrofoam) and plastic drink stirrers are prohibited in Newton.

That means restaurants won't be able to pack your take-out in those white foam containers or serve coffee in foam cups, and the red or green plastic stirrers at some of our favorite coffee shops will be replaced by wooden ones. You won't be able to buy them in Newton stores either.

The ban was approved by a unanimous vote of the City Council.

Thank you to Health and Human Services Commissioner Deborah Youngblood for all her work with City Councilors Victoria Danberg and Alison Leary, and others to get this measure passed.

Wondering About Measles?

Measles hasn't hit Newton, but the numbers across the country are rising. The latest Centers for Disease Control figures show 626 individual cases of measles in the

United States between January 1 and April 19 of this year in 22 states (including Massachusetts) – an increase of 71 cases from the previous week.

The good news is that the measles vaccine is very effective – one dose is about 93% effective and a second dose brings you to about 97% immunity. Fully vaccinated people who are unlucky enough to get the virus are much more likely to have a milder case of the illness.

The measles vaccine isn't just for children. If you were born between 1957 and 1965 and/or don't have written proof of vaccination, you should speak with your healthcare provider about getting immunized.

Get more information about measles [here](#).

Lime Bikes are Back

Lime bikes are back on the street for Season Two. Lime has upgraded Newton's fleet to be 100 percent battery powered, pedal-assist "e-bikes." You still have to pedal, but with a small boost of power, the e-bikes help flatten hills and shrink distances.



When Lime first introduced e-bikes last September, riders rented the e-bikes twice as often as the manual bikes, prompting Lime to phase out the standard bikes.

While scooters are gaining traction across the country, and a pilot is underway in Brookline, Newton is not considering them.

Remember to wear a helmet, ride safely and follow the rules of the road. When parking, don't block sidewalks, driveways, or crosswalks. If you see a bike parked in the wrong place call Customer Service at City Hall at 617-796-1000, or help us out if you can and reposition the bike yourself.

Interested in Urban Design? History? Conservation?

We have opportunities for residents who want to get involved and serve as volunteers on a City board, committee or commission. A full listing of our Boards and Commissions can be found [here](#).

We're currently looking for people to serve on three commissions in particular: The [Urban Design Commission](#) is looking for residents from Ward 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8 to serve on the Commission which conducts design review of development proposals, as well as sign reviews. Candidates should have a background in urban design, city planning, landscape architecture, architecture or a related field. Interested residents are encouraged to attend an Urban Design Commission meeting. The next meetings are scheduled for Monday, May 13 and Wednesday, June 12. The commission meets year-round, usually on the second Wednesday of the month. Questions? Contact Shubee Sikka of the Newton Planning Department at ssikka@newtonma.gov.

The [Newton Historical Commission](#) has an opening for residents who want to serve as stewards of the City's Demolition Delay and Local Landmark ordinances. Preference will be given to applicants with historic preservation and/or architectural experience, and people with a demonstrated interest in working with property owners to ensure positive outcomes. The commission meets year-round on the fourth Thursday of the month in City Hall. Questions? Contact Katy Homes at khomes@newtonma.org.

The [Newton Conservation Commission](#) will soon have two openings. The Commission is responsible for protecting the City's wetlands and managing the City's Conservation land. Preference will be given to applicants familiar with wetlands, conservation, or open space issues. Useful skills include: law, engineering, botany, wildlife ecology, and regulation. Interested residents are to attend a Conservation Commission meeting to get a sense of the role of a Commissioner; the next meetings are scheduled for Thursday, May 9, and Thursday, May 30. The Commission meets year-round, every three weeks on Thursdays, at 7:00 p.m. at Newton City Hall. Questions? Contact Jennifer Steele at jsteele@newtonma.gov.

Any general questions about Boards and Commissions should be directed to Amalia Timbers at atimbers@newtonma.gov.

Thank you "Team Newton"

The forty runners who made up Team Newton in this year's Boston Marathon have already raised more than \$250,000 for local charities.

The City of Newton each year historically receives 40 charity bibs from the Boston Athletic Association. Ten bibs each went to the Newton Fire and Police Departments to raise money for the Firefighters Children's Fund and Police Memorial Association, and my office distributed 20 to runners raising money for Newton-based charities and charities benefiting Newton residents.



I want to thank all the runners. Their commitment to Team Newton will directly improve the lives of those neighbors most vulnerable among us. The shelves at our food pantries will be fuller, children will have more access to safe, welcoming after school and summer programs, our schools will continue to innovate, our Vets will be honored and celebrated, folks with intellectual and developmental disabilities will have housing, and the families of our firefighters and police officers will be supported in times of need.

A list of runners and charities is [here](#).

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Join me on Saturday, May 4, 6:30-11:30 p.m. at the 11th Annual GELF Benefit Dinner. The Jennifer Price Global Education Leadership Fund (GELF) provides

financial aid so low-income Newton high school students can participate in life-changing, international educational travel opportunities through NPS. [Buy tickets or donate here.](#)

P.P.S Unfortunately rain forced the cancellation of today's Newton Highlands Playground event to celebrate Community Development Week. The event is now scheduled for **Thursday, May 16, 2019 from 4:00-7:00 p.m.** Hope to see you there.

P.P.S Newton Theatre Company will be performing "[It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play](#)" by Joe Landry with the Harmony Foundation as a fundraiser to benefit FORJ on Friday, May 3rd at 7:00 p.m. They are still looking for some audience participants, so be in touch with the Newton Theatre Company if you are interested. This should be a fun performance!

