

## Mayor's Update



Are you 60 or older? Newton in Motion, or NewMo, our new senior transportation system is available for you.

NewMo will launch on Monday, June 17. It will provide on-demand, easily identifiable vehicles, and vetted drivers who will walk passengers to their doors, and reliably get people to and from the senior center, villages, medical appointments and to specified destinations, primarily in Newton.

Seniors can book a trip in real time with an app on their smart phone, by email or with a phone call. The system will create a route to pick up multiple passengers along the way; ride sharing is both environmentally friendly and provides a social experience for passengers.

- **Set up an account:** The City of Newton is partnering with a company called Via. To set up an account, you can download the Via app (available for free from the App Store on your phone) or call Via's call center at **617-655-8019**. If you are using the Via app you can set up your account prior to June 17, but phone service won't begin until June 17. You will need a credit card, debit card, or a prepaid credit card (available at the Newton Department of Senior Services). Every time you take a trip, the cost will be deducted from your card on file.
- **Cost:** The cost is \$5, \$4, \$3 or .50 cents per ride depending on financial circumstances. Those individuals who currently pay \$4.00 per ride for Newton's voucher taxi service will now be paying \$5.00, those paying \$3.00 will be paying \$4.00, those paying \$2.00 will be paying \$3.00 and those individuals who are currently exempt from paying will be paying \$0.50 per ride. Via will have a record of people's previous voucher system accounts. (Those who have been exempt because they are receiving a public benefit fuel assistance, Mass Health, SNAP or Veterans' benefits will be asked to provide verification.)
- **Requesting a ride:** You will no longer need to make reservations in advance for rides. Starting June 17, simply use the Via App or call the Via Call Center at **617-655-8019**. If you don't yet have an account, the call center agent will help you set one up. If you already have an account and are calling in to book, you will only need to provide a) the phone number or email of your account b) your address c) your destination. They will confirm your booking details; and if you have a cell phone, you'll receive text updates as your ride approaches. We are expecting rides to arrive within 30 minutes.

NewMo will replace the yellow voucher and taxi system currently in place. Newton's Department of Senior Services has a record of what each person paid for their vouchers. You can go ahead and set up your account with Via, and then send or drop off your vouchers at the Senior Center and the value of your vouchers will be added to your account.

Drop by a NewMo information session to learn more about the senior ride share program:

**Newton Senior Center, 345 Walnut St.**

Tuesday, May 28, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Friday, May 31, 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 4, 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

**Coleman House, 677 Winchester St.**

Thursday, May 30, 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.

**Casselman House, 195 Sumner St.**

Monday, June 3, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

(limited on-street parking available)

**New Use for West Newton Armory**

This morning I sent a request to the City Council to authorize the purchase of the West Newton Armory Building and land at 1135 Washington Street just outside West Newton Square.



The City of Newton is being presented with an opportunity both to obtain a special historic building and

to increase the supply of vital affordable housing for the price of \$1.00.

The Commonwealth is willing to sell the building to the City for \$1.00 only if it is used for affordable housing in perpetuity, a use in which I believe deeply, and which also allows the City to control what happens to this important building.

The need for more affordable housing throughout Newton continues to persist. Some have thoughtfully asked how it came to be that the City of Newton could obtain the Armory for \$1.00, but only for one hundred percent permanently affordable housing. Through our discussion with the Commonwealth's Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) representatives, we learned that there were two scenarios under which the City could take control of the Armory; however, only the scenario of one hundred percent affordable housing presented the option for the City to purchase the property for \$1.00.

The other scenario would allow the City to acquire the Armory for a municipal/direct public use at a price that reflected the type of use. DCAMM has sold properties in other municipalities under this scenario at 25 percent of full and fair market value. Based on the current \$4.3 million assessed value of the Armory (likely less than appraised value), Newton would pay approximately \$1 million to purchase the property.

Another scenario results if the City declines the opportunity to purchase the Armory; DCAMM would then sell the property on the open market to the highest bidder. My vision for the West Newton Armory is that the City purchase it and retain ownership (as required by the state). Then we would lease it to an affordable housing development

partner who will redevelop and manage the property as 100 percent affordable housing.

I am very excited about this opportunity to add much-needed affordable housing, especially in such a unique and well-located building. I look forward to the next few years of collaboration with the honorable City Council and our residents as we work together to bring the West Newton Armory back to life.

Read my letter to the City Council with more information about the Armory [HERE](#) under Other Communications.

### **Some Hope in Region's Opioid Crisis**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health released its most current data on the opioid epidemic showing that confirmed opioid-related overdose deaths of Newton residents declined from 16 in 2016, to 9 in 2017 and 4 in 2018.

The number of opioid-related deaths are level or down in our neighboring communities of Boston, Waltham, Wellesley, Weston, Needham and Brookline.

The numbers show some improvement, and yet four overdose deaths are too many. We are adding social workers and school counselors and we're creating programming through PATH to help people touched by this crisis.

Newton PATH (Prevention, Awareness, Treatment, Hope) this past summer launched a program that trained residents on Narcan administration and provides free Narcan kits in case of an overdose. The training is coupled with discussions with a social worker to help guide people toward long-term recovery. Newton's emergency responders also carry the life-saving antidote.

Limiting access to opioids in prescription pain medications (Vicodin, OxyContin) from people to whom they were not prescribed to is also important. Bring your unused prescription drugs to a medicine disposal kiosk. They are which are located in Newton year-round in the lobby of the Newton Police Department Headquarters (1321 Washington Street in West Newton Square), and in the west lobby at Newton-Wellesley Hospital (2014 Washington Street).

Find more information about NewtonPATH [HERE](#).

### **Convertibles Needed for Memorial Day Parade**

Do you have a convertible? If your car's roof goes down and you'll be in the City on Sunday, May 26, the Newton Memorial Day Parade Committee needs you! The committee is looking for volunteers with convertibles to drive VIPs in the parade. If you can help, email Director of Veterans' Services Seth Bai at [sbai@newtonma.gov](mailto:sbai@newtonma.gov).

Veterans are also invited to march. Gather at 2:15 p.m. at Newton North High School, 457 Walnut St. to take

part in this year's parade. The parade starts at 3:00 p.m. at Newton North, moves down Walnut Street to Watertown Street, ending at the reviewing stand in front of Coletti-Magni Park in Nonantum.

Join us for additional Memorial Day observances. The Wreath Ceremonies at bridges and monuments are on Sunday, May 26 starting at Forte Park, 235 California St., at 9:00 a.m. The Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Newton Cemetery is at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, May 27.

There's also a new event this year at City Hall. On Monday, May 27, at 11:30 a.m. a ceremony will honor veterans and active members of the military. Are you a veteran or on active duty and want to participate? Contact Nick Pasquarosa at 617-908-1560 or sign-up online at [HERE](#).



## A Vision for Riverside

A developer, Mark Development, is coming forward with a project at the Riverside 14-acre site, an important parcel in Newton. It is largely owned by the MTBA and sits at the end of the Green Line "D" Branch, at the intersection of I-95/Rte. 128 and I-90 Mass Pike, and next to the Charles River.

Our goal was to develop a Vision Plan to guide the development and help with decision-making, understanding that the proposal requires a Special Permit and rezoning from the City Council which will review it extensively. The Riverside Vision Plan, a joint effort of Civic Moxie and the Newton Planning Department, is now complete. It is available [HERE](#).

The Vision Plan process began in January, included community input meetings in February and March, and concluded last week with a presentation of the Vision Plan by Civic Moxie on April 30 at the Williams Elementary School.

The 127-page Vision Plan offers guiding principles and key takeaways:

- **Community Connections:** Use the development to connect Lower Falls and Auburndale rather than further divide the two villages. Require a variety of open spaces, from a public plaza

near the station to open lawns to small parks with seating and plantings. Include roof or rooftop gardens. Have vibrant ground-floor retail, art and activity. Include a walking path along the Charles River and a boat launch with rentals.



- **Housing:** Include a variety of age-friendly housing types at a range of prices including apartments, condominiums and townhomes with studio, 1, 2 and 3-bedroom options. Have a mix of rental and ownership options and a substantial number of units priced to be affordable to low to middle income individuals and families.
- **Sustainability:** Exemplify sustainable development standards, improve local climate resiliency and enhance connections to nature. Provide fast chargers for electric vehicles; require buildings to be all-electric and off the natural gas grid; require green infrastructure to reduce stormwater runoff; support the restoration of the Charles River and celebrate local ecology. Support carless residents and those who rely less on cars as their sole means of transportation.
- **Design:** Encourage a mix of office, residential, retail and open space uses to assure the creation of a vibrant community. Design the site with taller buildings and greater density along the highway and rail tracks away from Grove Street. Keep the streetscape along Grove Street in scale with the neighborhood so pedestrian activity can be encouraged with existing trees preserved and new trees and vegetation planted to act as a visual buffer. Allow taller buildings (potentially up to 20 stories) to attract anchor tenants who want sight lines along I-95/Rte. 128., a must in attracting large employers. (Civic Moxie used the examples of The Towers at Chestnut Hill, which are each 16 stories, to illustrate how the look of tall buildings next to lower residential neighborhoods can be mitigated with tree plantings. The next highest building in Newton is the Crowne Plaza Hotel on the Mass Pike in Newton Corner at 12 stories. The Hotel Indigo, currently next to the Riverside site, is 7 stories.)
- **Economics:** Include commercial and retail, including Class A market office space, a hotel, as well as a mix of retail/restaurants geared to Newton's needs. Protect existing businesses in Lower Falls and Auburndale by providing a retail mix that is complimentary to what is there now. Give priority to Newton-based businesses. Provide highly desired commercial space. Consider office, lab, medical office, flex space and other commercial space types that are in high demand across the region. Provide fiscal benefits to the City of Newton by growing the commercial tax base.
- **Transportation:** Require traffic and transportation measures which reduce the impact on Lower Falls and Auburndale, strengthen mass transit alternatives, allow for shared parking among users and prioritize neighborhoods pedestrian and bicycle access and accommodations. Add traffic signals and redesign streets to

complement the new interchange to improve safety and conditions for automobiles, cars and pedestrians along Grove Street. Implement parking management and regulation of the adjacent neighborhood streets and enforcement of parking rules during large event days. Consider shared parking strategies, designated carshare spaces, ride share and shuttle drop-off and pick-up sites and designated areas for bicycles.

Next Steps: The Special Permit and rezoning process by the City Council begins on June 4, which includes a public hearing. If you have comments on the Civic Moxie report, provide them to the City Council at [CityCouncil@newtonma.gov](mailto:CityCouncil@newtonma.gov).

## **New Trees Along Washington Street**

The City of Newton's Forestry Director Marc Welch and his crews planted 30 trees along the edge of the commuter rail tracks in Newtonville and Auburndale to make up for the ones cut down by the MBTA last year.

The MBTA cut down the trees between the tracks and the fence along Washington Street for safety reasons, but in so doing hurt the tree buffer which shielded the Pike.

After meeting with state officials, we secured \$8,500 from the T to purchase the Oak, Maple and Crab Apple trees. Both Rep. Kay Khan and City Councilor Emily Norton worked with us on this.



It doesn't make up for all the trees we lost, but it helps.

About 15 trees were planted between Eddy Road and Lowell Avenue and 5 across from the Jackson Homestead on Washington Street. Another 8 to 12 will be planted in Auburndale across from the Auburndale Community Library.

The tree crews have been busy. So far this fiscal year they've planted 793 new trees (505 were removed), pruned 848 trees, ground 702 stumps, and cleared 838 downed limbs and 23 downed trees.

## **Newton is Eligible for More State Grants**

Newton is among the 10 new cities and towns designated by the state as Housing Choice Communities. This gives the City priority status for a variety of state grants. Governor Baker, who instituted the Housing Choice Initiative two years ago, made the

announcement last week.

A Housing Choice Designation is given to cities and towns that have new housing and have adopted sustainable housing development best practices. A Housing Choice designation is for a period of two years and provides communities with:

- Exclusive access to Housing Choice Capital Grants of up to \$250,000: Housing Choice Communities received \$4 million in funding for capital projects in FY19; and,
- Priority Scoring for selected Commonwealth funding and grants from the Clean Water Trust, MassWorks, MassDOT, Energy and Environmental Affairs Planning, and the Division of Conservation Services.

Newton joins Watertown on this year's list of new designated communities, bringing the number to 79.

(Pictured is Raven Cheyenne Fernandes, recipient of this year's NSHS Alumni Scholarship Mentoring Program funding. She is heading to Morgan State University. Congratulations! With Raven are Scholarship Committee Chair Steve Lerman from NSHS Class of 1965, Principal Joel Stembridge, Raven, her mom and me.)



Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Garden Remedies, 697 Washington Street in Newtonville, is still awaiting the final signature from state officials necessary to open by appointment only for adult-use marijuana sales..

P.P.S. Newton residents can trade their unwanted firearms and ammunition for grocery gift cards on Saturday, June 15 at a Gun Buy Back event at The Second Church, 60 Highland Street, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The event is sponsored by the Newton Police, Middlesex Sheriff's Office, The Second Church and the Newton Interfaith Clergy Association. Questions? Contact Newton Police Community Outreach at 617-796-2103.



P.P.P.S. The MWRA will be holding a public meeting next Wednesday, May 23 at 6:00

p.m. in the War Memorial Hall at City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Ave. to explain three upcoming construction projects in the City of Newton. The first project is installation of a new water line at their pump station on Commonwealth Avenue crossing the avenue and the carriage road near Valentine Street. That project is likely to take place in September. They are also performing test borings for an upcoming water pipeline project along Centre Street (Comm Ave. to Ward Street) and Ward Street (Centre Street to Waverly Ave.). The third project is the lining of a sewer line on Farwell Street (from North Street to end of Albemarle) and a section of California Street (Bridge to Chapel Streets). More information is [HERE](#).

P.P.P.P.S. Go Bruins!

(With my son Chris at Game 2 against the Maple Leafs)

