

Mayor's Update

I am now taking action to permanently save Webster Woods.

I have engaged in multiple conversations with Boston College over the past year and a half about reaching an agreement allowing Newton to purchase these woods. They see this land as critical to their future but we know it is critical to ours. After devoting significant time to these conversations, the time has come to move forward.

The property owned by Boston College at 300 Hammond Pond along the parkway is over 25 acres in total; I am focused on saving all of the woods, all 17+ acres outlined in blue below. Boston College purchased the property from Congregation Mishkan Tefila in 2016. It includes the former temple, parking lots and woods.



Preserving the largest contiguous forest for Newton in perpetuity is essential. We must protect this diverse eco-system and the habitat it provides for birds, mammals, amphibians and insects. We must ensure our residents have access to the woods, rocky ledges and the vernal pool on these 17+ acres and can connect to the 88+ acres of forest to either side cared for by the City of Newton and

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

I have been ably assisted in this action by the members of the Webster Woods Advisory Panel, led by Beth Wilkinson of the Newton Conservators, and with a lot of help from City Councilor Lisle Baker, Webster Woods neighbor and environmentalist Ken Kimmell who is Co-Chair of the Friends of Webster Woods, and Community Preservation Committee Vice Chair Dan Brody. Thanks also go to Solicitor Ouida Young and Chief Environmental Planner Jennifer Steel.

“Mayor Ruthanne Fuller’s decision to acquire Webster Woods will save a natural treasure. I am most grateful for the sustained work of the Executive Committee and the full Webster Woods Advisory Panel in laying the groundwork for the preservation of the woods,” Beth Wilkinson said.

While I remain open to achieving a mutually acceptable agreement with B.C., I have decided to initiate a process of acquiring the property’s 17+ acres of pristine woods through the City’s power of eminent domain. In the coming weeks and months, I will work with the Community Preservation Committee, the Conservation Commission, and the City Council to provide the necessary authority and funding to acquire the woods.

I have looked carefully at the cost to acquire Webster Woods and will be approaching the Community Preservation Committee for the funding as part of their open space

funding reserve. Community Preservation Act funds come from our taxes and can be used only for land preservation, outdoor recreation facilities, historic preservation or affordable housing.

I want to thank all of you who have taken the time to share with me your deep concern that these woods be preserved for future generations. I ask for your continued support in the coming months as we look to secure the necessary funding.

We expect to formally move forward with a request to the Community Preservation Committee in the coming weeks. We will provide a lot more information and have plenty of opportunities for questions and comments. Details on the cost will also be forthcoming.

Information on Webster Woods can be found [here](#).

Revised Plan for Riverside

A revised plan for a residential, commercial and retail development at Riverside Station off Grove Street in Newton Lower Falls/Auburndale is now before the City Council. The new plan reduces the height of several buildings, most notably the hotel which went from a proposed 18 stories to 6. It cuts 40 hotel rooms (154 rooms are now proposed), trims residential units by 151 to a total of 524, and reduces office space by 39,412 square feet.

The revisions came after meetings over the past several months between Mark Development, City Councilors and neighbors.

The smaller scale responds to neighbors' concerns about density and height and also means a reduction in community benefits. The number of affordable housing units was reduced commensurate with the number of total units; the proposal now sets aside a total of 92 affordable units, a reduction of 26. In addition, initial plans included \$6 million to improve the walking paths and to create a recreation area along the Charles River; this plan reduces it to \$2 million.

Want to be involved? Come to the next City Council Committee meeting on Monday, Sept. 23 at 7:00 p.m. at City Council Chambers (1000 Commonwealth Ave.).

More information on Riverside is [here](#).

Joining the Watertown Transportation Management Association

Newton has just become part of the Watertown Transportation Management Association (TMA), a public/private non-profit that works across City/Town lines to address transportation issues. Members include property owners, businesses and employers as well as the City of Newton and the Town of Watertown.

By joining the Watertown TMA, we can help residents and employees access vanpools and carpools, guaranteed rides home for commuters who leave their cars at home, and pre-tax public transit benefits.

Providing "emergency" rides for employees who ride a bike to work but need to quickly pick-up a sick child at school is another option being explored.

We are looking forward to working with the Watertown TMA and community partners to find ways to ease traffic, especially during the morning and evening rush hours. We'll

provide more information on the program as new details emerge.

(Cutting the ribbon on the Suzuki School of Newton's newhome in Waban on Sunday with Rep. Kay Khan, Executive Director Sachiko Isihara, Suzuki Board President Anitha Gopalan and many supporters.)



NewCAL Community Meetings

Interested in hearing more about NewCAL, the new facility being designed to meet the needs of Newton's

seniors while providing opportunities for residents of all ages when space is available? Join us:

- Tomorrow, Thursday, September 19, 7:00 p.m. in the Newton Education Center, Room 111 in the basement (100 Walnut Street)
- Monday, September 23, 7:00 p.m. in the F.A. Day Middle School Auditorium (21 Minot Place)

Can't make these meetings? We'll be live streaming both on Facebook at [City of Newton, Mayor's Office](#).

Help Us Identify Newton's Housing Needs

Over the next five years, the City of Newton and the WestMetro HOME Consortium will receive approximately \$17.5 million in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships Program Funds, and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD). These funds will support low-income individuals and families and persons with disabilities.

The FY21 – FY25 Consolidated Plan will guide the use of these funds across the City and the 13-community WestMetro HOME Consortium. The Consortium includes Newton, Bedford, Belmont, Brookline, Concord, Framingham, Lexington, Natick, Needham, Sudbury, Waltham, Watertown and Wayland; Newton is the lead entity of the Consortium.

Want to be a part of this important planning process and help us identify Newton's most pressing housing, accessibility and human services needs?

Join us at a community needs assessment session:

- Monday, September 23, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at Weeks House (7 Hereward Road, Newton Centre)
- Thursday, September 26, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Family ACCESS of Newton, Pomroy Auditorium (492 Waltham Street, West Newton)
- Tuesday, October 1, 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Newton Free Library, Druker

Please RSVP to conplan@newtonma.gov or (617) 796-1120.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Stop by Newtonville Village Day this Sunday between noon and 5:00 p.m. between Washington and Cabot Streets. I'll be cutting the cake at 2:00 p.m.! Newton North High School has convenient parking.

P.P.S. Newton students will join in the Global Climate Strike this Friday morning. A group is expected to gather on the front steps of City Hall at approximately 8:30 a.m. I join environmental pioneer Bill McKibben in saying, "We should be grateful to some of the youngest activists on the planet, people who refuse to become inured to business as usual, who won't give up." I'd love to join the students, but I'll be starting the day on a panel in Boston, "Planning for Climate Change via Local Government Solutions."

P.P.P.S. Looking for a rewarding volunteer opportunity? Volunteer tutors are needed to provide free tutoring services to adult English Language Learners at the Newton Free Library. An introductory workshop for ELL Tutors is being held on Thursday, September 26, 7:00 p.m. in the Trustees' Room (2nd Floor), Newton Free Library, 330 Homer Street. Questions? Contact Susan Bécam, Program Coordinator, at 617-796-1360 or NewtonELL@minlib.net.

P.P.P.P.S Want to take a look inside the newly renovated Cabot Elementary School? Join us on Saturday, Sept. 21 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for a Community Open House (229 Cabot Street in Newtonville) and say hello to Humpty Dumpty. Kids are welcome!

