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Barney S. Heath  
Director

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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** July 31, 2020

**TO:** Councilor Crossley, Chair, Zoning and Planning  
Members of the Zoning and Planning Committee

**FROM:** Barney S. Heath, Director of Planning and Development  
Amanda Berman, Director of Housing & Community Development  
Lara Kritzer, Community Preservation Program Manager

**RE:** **City of Newton COVID-19 Emergency Housing Relief Program Update**

**CC:** Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer  
Planning & Development Board  
Community Preservation Committee  
City Council

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This memo provides a brief update on the status of the Emergency Housing Relief Program.

The application deadline for inclusion in the lottery was Wednesday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>. By the close of the application deadline at midnight, Metro West Collaborative Development, who is administering the program on behalf of the City, had received the following:

- 240 applications
- 597 email inquiries and 219 phone inquiries (includes duplication)

All 240 applicants were entered into the lottery, which took place via Zoom at noon on Wednesday, June 10<sup>th</sup>. The lottery generated a wait list, identifying the order in which Metro West will process applications, determine eligibility, and award assistance. Priority will be given to households at or below 65% AMI. While the application deadline for inclusion in the lottery has closed, Metro West is still accepting applications for the program. These applications will be placed at the bottom of the wait list and will be processed if funding is available.

Since the lottery took place, Metro West has been diligently processing applications, reviewing income and program eligibility, collecting outstanding documents from applicants to complete their application files, and reaching out to landlords to execute the program participation agreement. As of June 30<sup>th</sup>, Metro West had processed rental or mortgage assistance checks for **106 households**, totaling **\$131,832 of direct financial assistance**.

Of the 106 households assisted, 5 received mortgage assistance – the mortgage assistance is limited to only those Newton households that reside in deed-restricted affordable housing units. The average amount of financial assistance provided to the 106 households during this time was approximately \$1,200 (which represents 70% of a household’s monthly rent or mortgage payment) and the average total monthly rent or mortgage payment per household was approximately \$1,700.

As the following table shows, of the 106 households that received assistance by June 30<sup>th</sup> (for July rent or mortgage payments), 56% had an annual income at or below 30% of the area median income at the time of application to the program, while only 9% of households had an annual income between 65% and 80% AMI.

<b>Income Eligibility</b>	<b># of Successful Cases Processed (June 1-30, 2020)</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
<b>30% AMI and Under</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>56%</b>
<b>31-50% AMI</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>51-65% AMI</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>66%-80% AMI</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Total Cases Processed</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100%</b>

The following table shows the racial and ethnic breakdown of the 106 households that received assistance by June 30<sup>th</sup>. While 68% of households identified as white, 20 of those 72 households identified as Hispanic / Latino. Approximately 17% identified as Black / African American and 11% identified as Asian.

<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>	<b>Number Served</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Number Served who are Hispanic/Latino</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
White:	72	68%		
Hispanic/Latino			20	19%
Black/African American:	18	17%		
Black/African American & White:	0	0%		
Asian:	11	10%		
Asian & White:	1	1%		
Other Multi-Racial:	4	4%		
<b>TOTAL Households Served</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19%</b>

An additional 63 households were enrolled for August 1<sup>st</sup> disbursements to equal a total amount of direct financial assistance to-date of \$192,811. Approximately 16 households have been determined ineligible and 46 have not responded to any requests for additional information. 31 households are still in the review process. Applications continue to be submitted to Metro West at a rate of approximately one application per day.

The full amount of assistance that will likely be awarded to these first 169 households is \$578,433 (\$192,811 times three months of assistance). This represents approximately 25% of the total program budget of \$2,312,500 for direct financial assistance.

The Planning Department has begun additional outreach on the program and plans to continue with this outreach and marketing into August to solicit more applications. This timing is appropriate given that the additional \$600 a week in federal unemployment benefits is set to expire today, July 31<sup>st</sup>. Originally, the Massachusetts eviction moratorium was set to end on August 18<sup>th</sup>, but the Governor recently announced that this has been extended until October 17<sup>th</sup>. This decision, however, is currently being challenged in Superior Court.