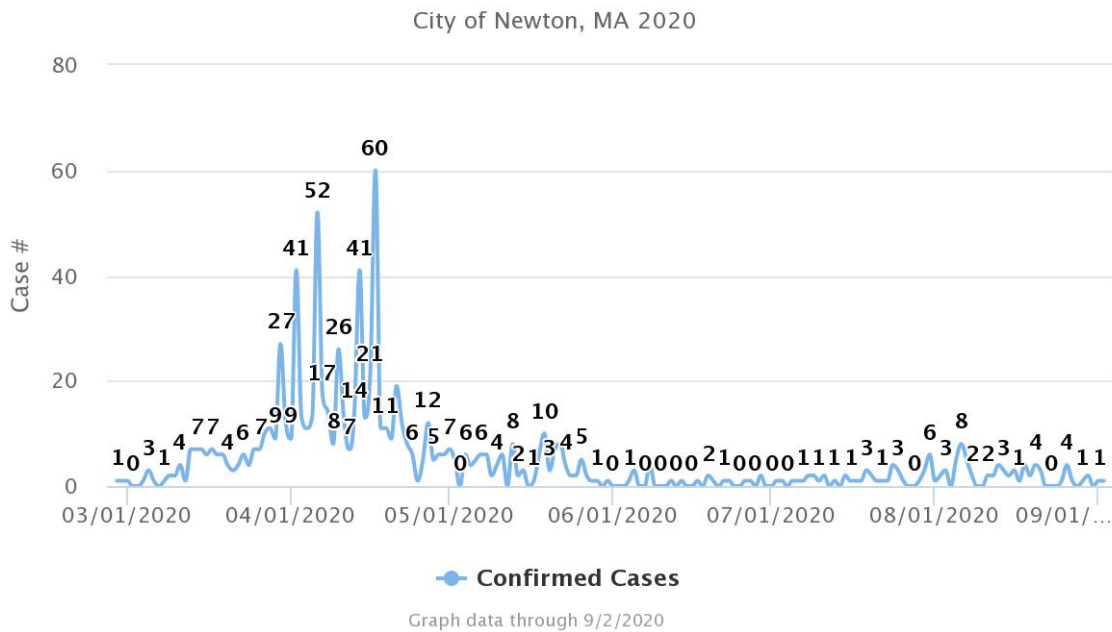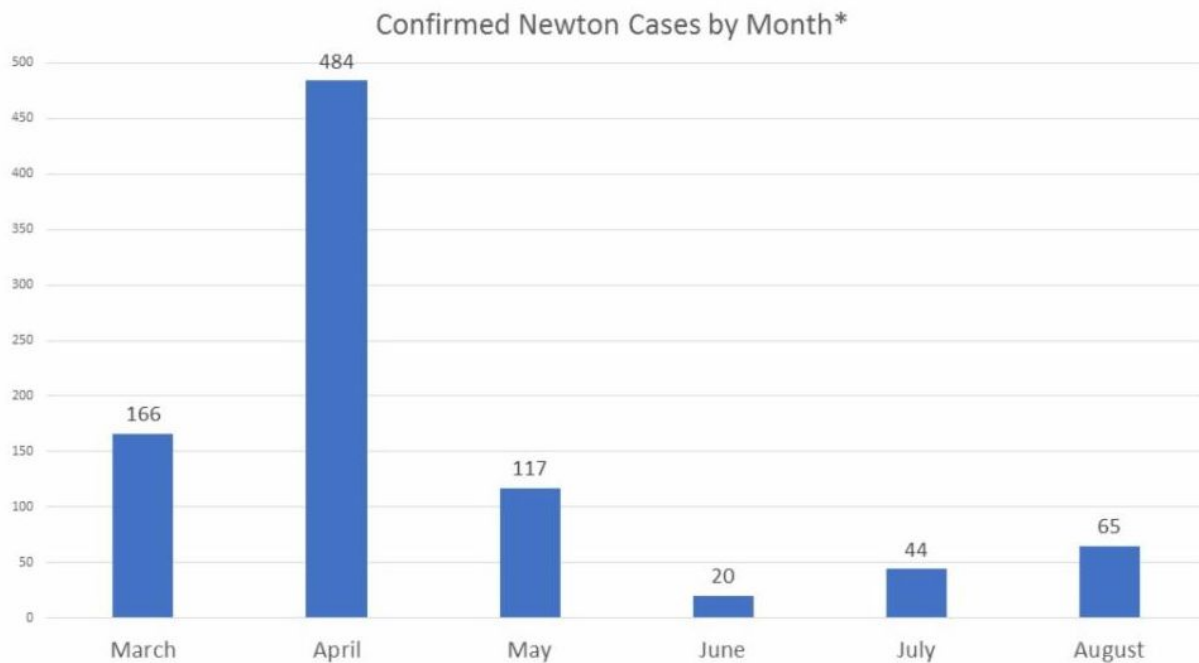# Mayor's Update

COVID-19 Update and Losses

There are a cumulative total of 899 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among Newton residents, according to preliminary data through September 2, 2020. In the past week, we have had an additional 16 positive cases. (See the updated cumulative case chart by symptom onset date below.)

Newton Cases by Symptom Onset Date

City of Newton, MA 2020

Graph data through 9/2/2020

Now that August has ended, we can see the month by month case count since the pandemic began in March. While Newton had more cases during the month of August than in the previous two months, overall Newton has significantly fewer new cases now than in the first three months of the pandemic.

Confirmed Newton Cases by Month*

Month	Cases
March	166
April	484
May	117
June	20
July	44
August	65

*Data is preliminary and may vary slightly from previously reported monthly data as cases are reassigned to other communities, newly reported or de-duplicated.

Again this week, I need to report the loss of another Newton resident who died after testing positive for COVID-19, bringing this upsetting total to 132 people. This information on our deaths never gets easier to report. Our condolences go to the loved ones of those who have died and to those impacted by COVID-19.

COVID-19 in Newton

Total Cases
899

Total Deaths
132

*As of 9/2

Newton continues to be assigned a "lower-risk" status on the color-coded Community Level Data Map the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) updated Wednesday night. Newton remains green for the last two weeks from August 16 through August 29 (the last update). The number of new cases occurring over that two-week period is also lower compared to the previous two-week period.

During this same time frame (August 16 through August 29), MDPH data shows 13,929 Newton residents got tested for COVID-19. Of those who were tested, 39 people tested positive, making Newton's "positivity rate" 0.28 percent. This is a low percentage. It is below the current statewide positivity rate of 1.07 percent. It is also lower than Newton's 0.67 percent positivity rate reported for the previous two-week period.

A significant amount of testing occurred during the past two weeks (13,929 tests) -- more than double the previous two-week period. The increase in vacation travel testing and the reopening of Newton's higher education institutions (who were doing a lot of tests) could be contributing factors to the significant increase in the number of tests performed during the last two weeks.

The community level data map and other statewide COVID-19 data is updated on the state website weekly on Wednesdays at the end of the day. Some additional statewide data is updated daily.

Please be careful. We still had 16 new positive cases reported and one death this past week. While some aspects of this virus remain unknown, there's much we do

know. These 4 "pillars" of prevention reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19:

1. Wear a face covering.

2. Separate from people outside your household by at least 6 feet.

3. Maintain excellent hand hygiene – wash frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer.

4. Stay home if you're feeling unwell and follow up with your healthcare provider – here's where to find the up-to-date list of [symptoms](#).

Election: Done Counting

Almost all the votes from the Sept. 1 State Primary in Newton were counted on Tuesday, with another 751 counted yesterday (Thursday, Sept. 3).

A total of 30,800 Newton votes were tallied on Tuesday. Of these, 4,307 voted in-person on election day, 2,694 voted in-person early, and 23,799 voted by mail. Of these, Democrats cast 28,812 ballots, Republicans cast 1,935, Green Rainbow cast 14 and Libertarians cast 39 ballots.

Election officials worked late into the night on Primary Day, Tuesday, Sept. 1. They counted all but 751 of the 3,184 ballots that arrived by post and by hand delivery in the ballot boxes at City Hall on Primary Day itself. Staff sorted 2,433 of these ballots and then delivered them to the appropriate Ward/Precinct polling location where they were machine counted on election night. The 751 ballots that were hand delivered and put in the City Hall ballot boxes between 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. were set aside by the City Clerk who planned on counting them on Wednesday morning and adding them to the unofficial total later that day.

Sec. of State Bill Galvin halted that count Wednesday morning. He cited the need for public notice to conduct the count in public. Galvin asked a judge to allow a continuation of the counting, which was granted, and the remaining primary ballots were counted in public in the cafeteria at City Hall Thursday afternoon.

The close race in the Democratic Primary for the Representative in Congress from the 4th Congressional District between the top two finishers, Jake Auchincloss and Jesse Mermell, put a spotlight on this tally. Of the 751 uncounted mail-in ballots, 719 were cast in the Democratic Primary with the others cast in the Republican, Green-Rainbow or Libertarian primaries.

In addition to the uncounted mail-in ballots, tallies from 195 ballots cast by Newton voters living overseas and 350 hand counted ballots (that were rejected by the voting machine because of some type of error, e.g., someone voting for two people in a race when only one was allowed) are also being added today to the unofficial total that was posted on Tuesday night. Both the overseas and the hand counted ballots were counted on election night (Sept.1) by election wardens at each polling location. But, they were counted *after* the other types of ballots were totaled by the election machines and therefore were not included in the unofficial total that was posted on Tuesday night. The overseas and hand counted votes are also being added today to the unofficial total from Tuesday night, according to City Clerk David Olson.
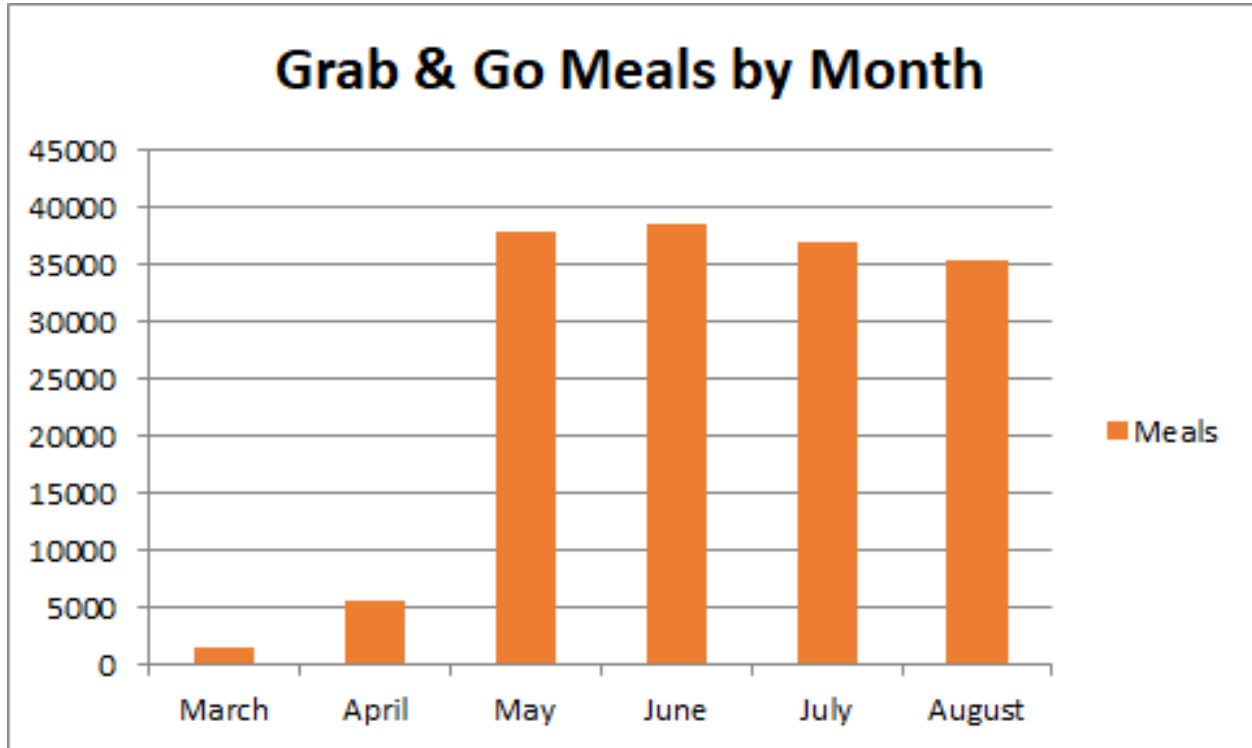
Thursday's count in Newton resulted in Auchincloss receiving an additional 161 mail-in votes, 34 votes from overseas ballots, and 72 hand counted votes, for a total of

267 additional votes. Mermell received another 222 mail-in votes, 62 votes from overseas ballots, and 64 hand counted votes, for a total of 348 additional votes in Newton. (In other words, Mermell pulled ahead in Newton by another 81 votes.)

The results will be certified by the Newton Election Commission at a meeting this evening that begins at 5 p.m.

Grab & Go Meals Continue

The Grab & Go meal program, which has already provided 155,288 meals for students and adults since starting at the end of March, is continuing.

Grab & Go Meals by Month

A bar chart titled "Grab & Go Meals by Month" showing monthly meal counts. The y-axis ranges from 0 to 45000 in increments of 5000. Bars: March ~1500, April ~5500, May ~38000, June ~38500, July ~37000, August ~35500. Legend: Meals (orange).

Newton Public School students and Newton residents can stop by either of two pick-up locations weekdays from 10:00 a.m. to noon for a bag with three breakfasts and three lunches. One person can pick up bags for each member of the household.

Please note a few important changes to the Grab & Go locations:

- Newton South High School - Starting Sept. 14, we are changing the location slightly. Enter the parking lot next to the front entrance loop and follow the signs.

- Newton North High School – The Grab & Go location at the theater entrance remains unchanged.

- 150 Jackson Road – We're discontinuing the 150 Jackson Road location at the end of next week. Friday, Sept. 11 is the LAST DAY OF PICK-UP here as we are reopening the Newton Early Childhood Program.

The City of Newton is paying for the adult meals and we will apply for reimbursement of the costs through the Federal Emergency Management Agency food assistance funds. Student meals are paid through federal funding which has been extended through the end of the year.

Bring Your Own Bag or Pay 10 Cents

Paper bags at grocery stores and other retailers in Newton again cost 10 cents.

As of Tuesday, Sept. 1, Newton's plastic bag and polystyrene (styrofoam) ordinances are again being enforced. We suspended enforcement in the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic and residents were prohibited from using their own reusable bags to "prevent, minimize and mitigate" the risk. Since July 10, residents have been able to use their own bags, but the 10 cent fee was delayed to allow retailers to use up their supply of plastic bags and reorder paper ones.

The ban on plastic bags promotes the use of reusable bags and reduces the use of plastic bags, thus reducing solid waste, helping the environment, and protecting marine life, waterways and green spaces. Read more about the ordinances here.

The first of 38 tents are being erected at Newton Public Schools this week (150 Jackson Road is pictured). In all, 40,000-square feet of additional, covered outdoor space will be available for teachers and students when school starts in mid-September.

9/11 Commemoration

The angst that surrounds us from today's deadly pandemic somehow amplifies the horror of Tuesday, September 11, 2001 for me. COVID-19 will not let more than fifty people be together in person for this year's 9/11 Commemoration Ceremony, so join us for a virtual Commemoration Ceremony. It will be streamed live with only a small number of us in person honoring the Newtonians killed in the attack 19 years ago as well as the more than 400 firefighters and law enforcement officers lost.

Watch the commemoration on Friday, Sept. 11, at 6 p.m. broadcast live by NewTV online here.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. A photography contest in Newton has captured moments in everyday life during COVID-19. This collaboration between Historic Newton, Newton Community Pride, Newton Cultural Development, the Newton Art Association and Newton Camera Club showcases 21 photos which will be exhibited eventually at the City Hall Gallery on the 2nd floor. Until then, take a look at the spectacular "virtual exhibit"here.

P.P.S. A good looking and much needed new bus shelter is in front of Newton North High School on

Walnut Street. Big thanks go to Green Newton and its President, Marcia Cooper, for funding it, and Lucia Dolan and Peter Smith also helped, working together with David Koses, City of Newton's Transportation Coordinator (and Newton resident) on the installation and City of Newton's DPW Streets Division staff who transported and assembled the shelter and poured its foundation.