

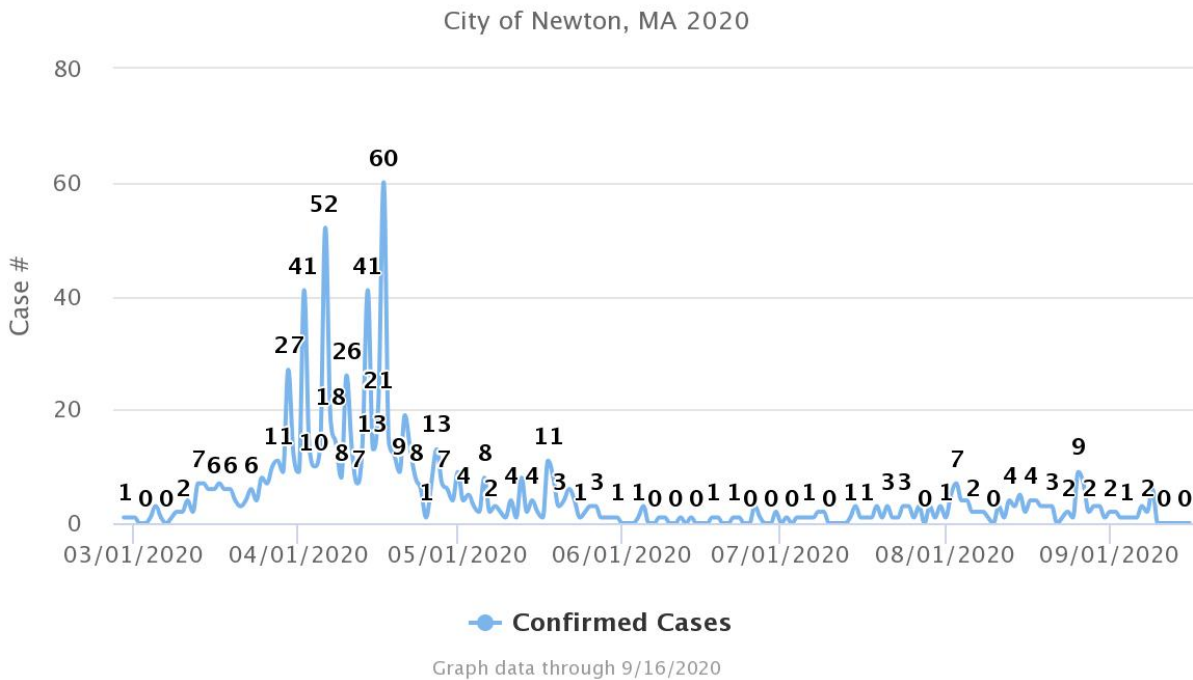
Mayor's Update

COVID-19 Updates and Losses

This past week, we have had an additional 37 new positive cases which brings our cumulative total to 953 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among Newton residents, according to preliminary data through September 16, 2020. The updated symptom onset graph is below.



Newton Cases by Symptom Onset Date



COVID-19 in Newton

Total Cases
953

Total Deaths
133

*As of 9/16

I am relieved that I can report the number of Newton residents who died with COVID-19 did not increase this week. We continue to offer sincere condolences to the family and friends of the 133 Newtonians who have died with COVID-19.

Newton’s positivity rate, or the percentage of people who test positive among those tested, has increased to 0.46 percent for the period from 8/30 to 9/12 from 0.16 percent (from 8/23 to 9/5). Newton’s positivity rate remains lower than the state average of 0.97 percent.

Newton’s COVID-19 risk level increased yesterday from low to moderate. Newton is now depicted on the state risk-level [map](#) in “yellow”. The state is reporting 53 confirmed Newton cases during the

most recent two-week reporting period from Aug. 30 to Sept. 12. The risk level is based on the average daily COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents during the two-week reporting period. Newton's rate is now 4.1 cases per 100,000, up from 1.9 last week when we were "green." Communities are designated as moderate risk ("yellow") when they have at least 4 cases per 100,000 people.

How have the Boston College cases affected Newton's numbers?

Of the 53 Newton cases during the two-week reporting period (8/30 to 9/12), 24 of them or 45% are Boston College students who live in Newton. (This group of 24 is a subset of Boston College cases reported on the [Boston College COVID-19 dashboard](#) because not all Boston College students live in Newton.)

While Boston College has not yet completed testing and received all test results for this week, there have been 12 new cases reported so far as compared to 73 during the entire previous week of 9/7 to 9/13.

Please know that on Monday, Sept. 14, the switch was made to require Boston College to use the state's Community Tracing Collaborative (CTC) for case investigations and contact tracing rather than for BC to do this itself. The Health Departments from Newton, Boston and Brookline coordinate with the CTC and will continue to work collaboratively with the BC Health Services staff. Newton's Health and Human Services staff oversees all cases of people who reside at Newton addresses, including BC students living in dorms on-campus or in off-campus apartments and homes.

Newton's move from a low to a moderate COVID-19 risk level cannot be solely attributed to the Boston College outbreak. Newton's Health and Human Services staff have noticed, in particular, that residents who traveled with or socialized with people not in their household group account for some of Newton's recent new community cases.

Will Newton's new moderate risk level impact our school reopening plans?

Newton's moderate risk level does not require adjustments to our current NPS educational plans. Both the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education concur that a hybrid learning model is appropriate when a community has a moderate risk level for COVID-19. NPS reopening plans were designed with careful adherence to public health principles to mitigate the risk of transmitting the virus (fewer people in classrooms, everyone 6 feet apart, mask wearing, hand hygiene, cleaning protocols, etc.). However, if Newton's average daily COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents increases above 8 cases per 100,000 residents (a.k.a., a "red" level), an all remote model is expected (unless there are extenuating circumstances).

Another note of caution is that some communities experienced a rise in cases after large high school student gatherings took place. This subsequently led to a change from in-person education to all remote learning.

We implore people of all ages to avoid behaviors which could jeopardize Newton's ability to bring students into in-person classrooms as well as to protect our entire community from experiencing a second wave of significant viral transmission.

It is critically important that everyone in Newton remain vigilant and follow the public health guidelines. Remember, people can spread COVID-19 up to 48 hours before

they have symptoms and some positive people will never have symptoms. That's why physical distancing and mask wearing is so important – no matter what.

- Remain 6 feet away from people outside your own household
- Wear a face covering
- Practice hand hygiene
- Stay home if you are ill
- Do not host or attend gatherings with people from other households where [gathering guidelines](#) are not being strictly followed

Since May 6, face coverings are mandatory in Massachusetts in public places where physical distancing is not possible. This includes both indoor and outdoor spaces. Follow the law, protect yourself and protect others.

Flu Vaccines

Getting a flu vaccine is more important than ever during 2020-2021 to protect yourself and the people around you from flu, and to help reduce the strain on healthcare systems responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone six months of age and older should get a flu vaccine every season. There are many places to get a flu vaccine, and it is usually covered at no cost with most health insurance. Contact your healthcare provider, local pharmacy or urgent care facility for clinics – don't pass up any opportunity to get a flu shot.

The City of Newton also will be vaccinating residents age 6 months and up at a few primarily drive-thru flu shot clinics beginning in October. We will provide walk-up options for those who don't drive and will continue as always to provide flu shots to residents if they don't have health insurance. Dates, times and registration information will be posted at newtonma.gov/flu by early October and I'll also let you know.

How and When to Vote in the Nov. 3 Election

Newton voters cast 23,799 mail-in ballots in the Sept. 1 state primary, and we're expecting thousands more to opt for this option for the Nov. 3 general election when we will choose the next President, Senator, Congressional Representative, and other elected officials.

City Clerk David Olson expects to receive election ballots from the state on Oct. 5 and will begin mailing them as soon as they arrive.

Registered voters who did not request a mail-in ballot for Nov. 3 election in August should have received a post card application from the Secretary of the Commonwealth in the last few days. (If you requested ballots for both the Sept. 1 and Nov. 3 election before the Sept. 1 primary, you're all set.)

If you can't remember if you requested a ballot be mailed to you for November, you can check the on-line *Track My Ballot* site [here](#). If your status is "pending" for Nov. 3, 2020, you have already applied. If you haven't applied and you didn't receive an application in the mail, don't worry, you can fill out a vote by mail application online [here](#).

Get your *application* back to the Newton City Clerk's Office as early as possible. This will leave more time to receive your ballot and return it in time to be counted. Secretary of State Bill Galvin's Office recommends mailing your application no later

than Tuesday, Oct. 20 (two weeks before the election) to ensure it's processed in time. (While the deadline to get the application to us is Wednesday, Oct. 28, we highly recommend getting it to us well before that.)

Completed and signed applications as well as your completed ballot can be mailed to the City of Newton Clerk's Office (1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459). You can also return them yourself by placing them in either of the two secure drop boxes in front of City Hall. You can also scan and e-mail your application (not your ballot) to elections@newtonma.gov. Applications for mail-in ballots must have a handwritten signature. (Applications with typed signatures will not be accepted.)

If you choose to mail your ballot, it must be postmarked by Tuesday, Nov. 3^d and must be received here at City Hall by Friday, Nov. 6th in order to be counted. If you choose to hand deliver your ballot, it must be deposited in our secure drop boxes by 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 3.

Would you rather vote in-person? You have a few choices.

In-person early voting for the Nov. 3 general election begins on Saturday, Oct. 17 and is available through Friday, Oct. 30. Vote early in-person at the Newton Free Library, 330 Homer Street. Polls at the Newton Free Library will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and on Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Polls will also be open across Newton from 7:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. on election day. Find your polling location [here](#).

Clerk's Office Open By-Appointment

Starting yesterday, Sept. 16, the Newton City Clerk's Office will be open by appointment only for in-person service to allow time to handle the tremendous amount of work related to the November election.

Please call 617-796-1200 to make an appointment and we look forward to helping you.

Many services can be done online. These include Vital Records requests, Business Certificates, Birth Certificates, copies of Death and Marriage Certificates, Dog Licenses, Public Records Requests, Mail-in Ballot Applications, and Voter Registration. Do these via the City Clerk's [webpage](#).

Update on Needham Street Improvements

Work on the \$31.1 million project to improve Needham Street for motorists, cyclists, public transit users and pedestrians is set to begin by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) in the next few weeks but they're starting in Needham. In the meantime, the City of Newton will continue to upgrade our water pipes that are directly under

Needham Street.

Learn more about the project and how work on the 1.7 mile stretch of Needham Street will unfold. Join a virtual meeting hosted by MassDOT on Wednesday, Sept. 30 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Register for the Zoom meeting [here](#). (You can call in or zoom in.) Get more information about the project [here](#).

You can expect new turn lanes, state of the art traffic signals, 5-foot wide raised bike lanes, better bus stops, continuous sidewalks and improved crosswalks.

Work will also include improvements to the existing bridge on Needham Street over the Charles River. The bridge, constructed in 1875, is on the National Register of Historic Places and is structurally sound. Work will maintain the current bridge substructure while rebuilding the top of the bridge to allow three lanes of traffic, a new shared-use path and ornamental railings.

How long will all of this take? The schedule and timeline will be outlined during the virtual meeting on the 30th.



(Photo: It's a new school year – albeit different than any others we've experienced – and still a time of excitement. The "Franklin Falcon" (a.k.a. Franklin Social Worker Sheila Morris) welcomed elementary students on the hybrid schedule back this morning to meet their teachers and classmates.)

A New Year

As the new school year begins, be especially careful as children will be walking and biking again and buses will be on our roads. This week elementary students on the hybrid schedule had orientation at their schools. The full hybrid in-person schedule begins for Kindergarten, 1st graders and 2nd graders on Monday. The following Monday 3rd, 4th and 5th graders will join them.

For some, tomorrow begins Rosh Hashanah, which also marks the start of a new year. *Shana tova* and a good, sweet and healthy new year.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. "Team Newton Senior Center" is participating in a portion of the Walk to End Alzheimer's Disease on Sunday, Sept. 27. Meet, wearing a face covering, at the Newton Senior Center parking lot (345 Walnut St.) at 10:30 a.m. and walk in a physically distanced manner to City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Ave.) and back. Round trip is just under 2 miles. "Join" the team or donate [here](#). Questions? Reach out to team captain Case Manager Emily Kuhl at 617-796-1672 or ekuhl@newtonma.org.

