

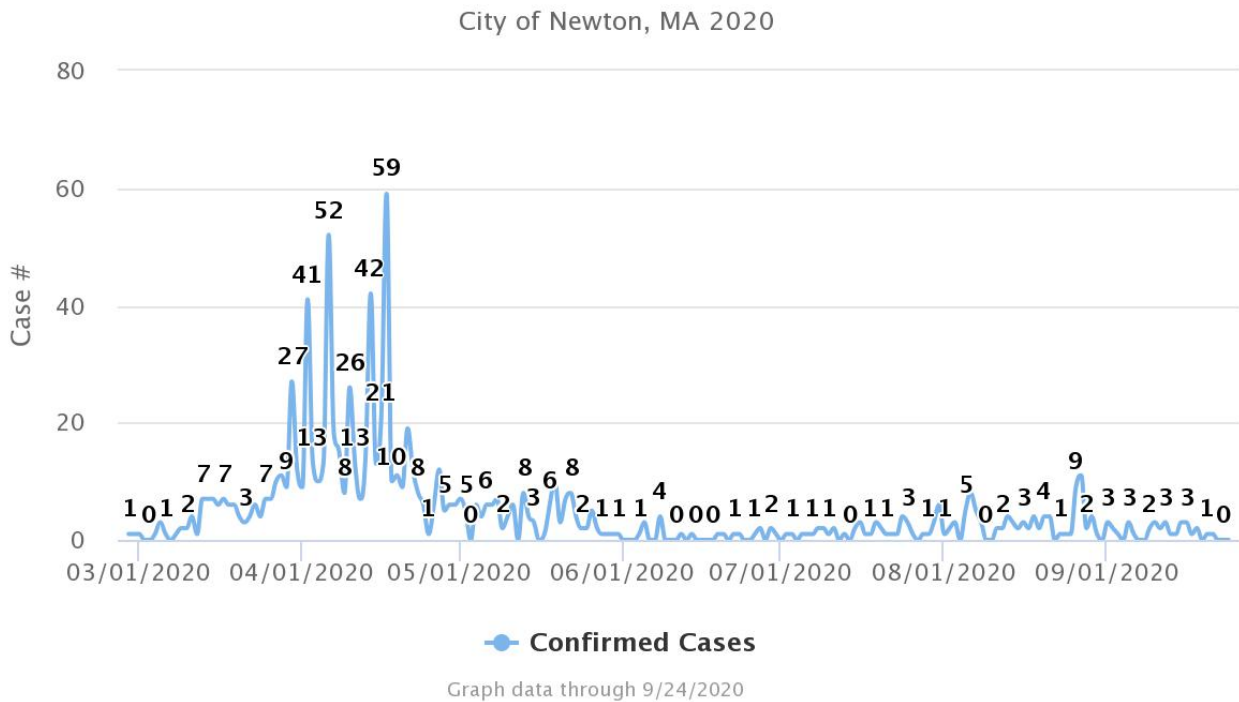
Mayor's Update

COVID-19 Updates and Losses

This past week, we have had an additional 10 new positive cases which brings our cumulative total to 963 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among Newton residents, according to preliminary data through Wednesday, September 23, 2020. The updated symptom onset graph is below.



Newton Cases by Symptom Onset Date



COVID-19 in Newton

Total Cases
963

Total Deaths
136

*As of 9/23

Newton’s COVID-19 risk level continues to be “moderate” and depicted in yellow on the [state risk-level map](#). The state is reporting 52 confirmed Newton cases during the most recent two-week reporting period from Sept. 6 to 19. The risk level is based on the average daily COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents. Newton’s rate is 4.05 cases per 100,000. Communities are designated as moderate risk when they have at least 4 cases per 100,000 people but less than 8.

Newton’s positivity rate, or the percentage of people who test positive among those tested, remains stable at 0.44 percent (the percentage reported last week was 0.46 from 8/23 to 9/5). Newton’s positivity rate remains lower than the state average of 0.85 percent.

I report today with a heavy heart three additional Newton residents who died after testing positive for COVID-19., This brings our total in Newton to 136 mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, family members, friends and neighbors who died with COVID-19. My thoughts are with the families and friends who are grieving.

Each time I report the news of those we lost, I'm struck again by the tragic toll this virus continues to take, and it reinforces the need for us all to remain committed in our efforts to protect each other.

Let's heed the words of a resident who emailed me yesterday: "I just have to let you know that it is so disheartening to try to go for a walk or a run in Newton now and find so few people outside wearing masks. The weather is beautiful and it appears that many people are out before hunkering down for a long winter ... I understand that the risk of transmission outdoors on a quick contact is very low but for such potentially serious consequences, increasing Covid numbers and serious local outbreaks, I feel it is well worth the trouble to protect myself and possibly others. Please...emphasize how important it is to wear a mask - even outdoors."

Newton Public Schools Data: As we begin to reopen our schools for in-person teaching and learning, our Health and Human Services team has added a Newton Public Schools (NPS) Data Dashboard on our Newton COVID-19 Data [webpage](#). This first one includes all reported confirmed COVID-19 cases from Sept. 16 to 22 among NPS students and staff. Please notice a few things about this data:

- The total number of confirmed cases includes students and staff whether or not they were in school during their infectious period.
- The total number of confirmed cases includes students and staff in all educational model categories (Distance Learning Academy (DLA), Remote and Hybrid In-person).
- Some students and staff reported in this table may not be Newton residents; they are a part of the Newton Public Schools community, so they are included in this chart.

There were 3 students and staff who tested positive for COVID-19 from Sept. 16 to 22. As with all cases, contact tracing to notify everyone who has had a close contact with the person who tested positive and monitoring is ongoing.

Boston College: Of the 52 Newton COVID-19 cases during this two-week reporting period (9/6 to 9/19), 19 of them are Boston College students who live in Newton. This group of 19 is a subset of Boston College cases reported on the Boston College COVID-19 [dashboard](#) as not all Boston College students live in Newton. Most of these 19 students were already reported last week because they occurred in the first half of the two-week reporting period.

There are fewer cases being reported at Boston College during its most recent period from 9/14 to 9/20. Seventeen (17) new cases (not all in Newton) were reported as compared to 73 during the previous week (9/7 to 9/13).

Safety Net COVID-19 Testing for Vulnerable Residents

Newton-Wellesley Hospital (NWH), in partnership with the City of Newton, is now

accepting City of Newton referrals for safety net COVID-19 testing for vulnerable residents. This service is specifically for those who do not have their own health care provider and/or are uninsured or underinsured (which makes obtaining a test particularly challenging). Additionally, only people who have COVID-19-like symptoms and/or are identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive are eligible for testing. To access this service, community members need a referral from Newton's Health and Human Services staff.

This new partnership to provide access to testing for those who may otherwise struggle helps protect everyone in our community and ensures that those tested have complete and timely information about their COVID-19 status.

Think you may need a test and are eligible for this service? Call Newton's Health and Human Services (HHS) staff at 617-796-1420. (Please don't call Newton Wellesley Hospital; HHS is the essential first step as a referral is necessary.)

Emergency Housing Assistance Extended for Additional Three Months

Last week, Newton's Community Preservation Commission voted to extend the amount of time that an eligible household can receive assistance from Newton's COVID-19 Emergency Housing Relief Program from three months to six months. We asked for this extension as we know so many Newton households continue to struggle financially due to the pandemic.

The \$2.5 million Newton COVID-19 Emergency Housing Relief Program provides temporary assistance for housing costs. The funding comes from Newton's Community Preservation Act and federal Community Development Block Coronavirus Grants. The funding assistance can cover 70% of an eligible household's monthly rent or mortgage for up to three months, with a possible three-month extension for qualifying households. The assistance has a monthly cap of \$2,500 per household. Mortgage assistance is available only to owners of affordable deed-restricted units.

Newton residents who have experienced a reduced income as a direct result of COVID-19 and earn 80% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI) at the time their application is submitted are encouraged to apply. New applications will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Households that are already receiving assistance from the program will be asked to submit the necessary documentation to ensure continued compliance with the program prior to being granted a three-month extension of financial assistance.

Metro West Collaborative Development is administering this program on behalf of the City of Newton. To apply, contact Metro West at robyn@metrowestcd.org (preferred method) or 617-923-3505 x5. More information can be found here: www.newtonma.gov/housingrelief.

A Review of Investments of Federal Funds for Housing and Community Needs

The City of Newton receives federal funding annually to address housing and community needs, including human services, affordable and fair housing, homelessness prevention and assistance, improvements to low-to-moderate income neighborhoods, and the removal of architectural barriers to mobility and accessibility.

We've been able to do a lot of good work with these funds this past year:

Affordable Housing:

- Completion of 17 affordable units altogether- 7 at Myrtle Village on Curve Street, 8 units at 236 Auburn Street, and 2 units at 83-85 West Street.
- Rehabilitation of an 8-bedroom affordable group home for intellectually disabled individuals.

Homelessness Prevention and Support Services:

- Assistance to 755 persons needing homeless prevention, rapid-rehousing, and shelter services in the Newton, Brookline, Waltham and Watertown region.

Human Services:

- Assistance to 2,759 low-to-moderate income Newton residents, children, youth and older individuals and persons with disabilities through human services programs.

Neighborhood Improvements:

- Completion of planning for the Newtonville Transportation Improvement Project. This plan includes the installation of bus shelters at two bus stops (Westbound at Washington Street & Craft Street and Southbound at Watertown Street & Walnut Street).

Architectural Access:

- Construction of a wheelchair-accessible, single-use, unisex toilet room on the first floor of Newton City Hall.
- Installation of four sets of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons at intersections in Newton.

More specifically, the City of Newton and our consortium received \$4.3 million from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) programs. In addition, the City received funds through the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) program on behalf of the WestMetro HOME Consortium. Newton is the lead entity of this consortium, which consists of 13 communities (Bedford, Belmont, Brookline, Concord, Framingham, Lexington, Natick, Needham, Sudbury, Waltham, Watertown, and Wayland).

Each year Newton's Planning and Development Board is required to hold a public hearing to consider the draft Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) which provides an analysis of the City's and the WestMetro HOME Consortium's accomplishments. This year's public hearing is Monday, Oct. 5 at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom. We welcome written public comments as well through Monday, Oct. 19. To review the draft FY2020 CAPER, click [here](#)

Bike Sharing

Bluebikes are coming to Newton next week. Five stations are in the process of being installed right

now.

- Newton Corner North (Bacon @ Washington)
- Newton Corner South (Centre @ Washington)
- Washington @ Crafts
- Nonantum Library (Watertown Street Driveway)
- Newton Centre South (Union @ Herrick)

We hope to add three more locations:

- Newton Centre North (Langley Parking Lot) – This location requires Traffic Council approval for removal of two parking spaces. If approved at the October 8 Traffic Council meeting, installation will proceed.
- West Newton Square – The City applied for a MassDOT Shared Streets & Spaces Grant to fund this station. If we succeed, we will pick a specific location.
- Walnut Street & Lowell Avenue area (or another location along Washington Street in Newtonville) – This is also part of our MassDOT Shared Streets & Spaces grant request.



The bike share company, Bluebikes, currently operates in Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Somerville and Everett and is in the process of expanding into Watertown, Arlington, Chelsea, Revere and Newton.

If we can secure even more additional funding, we would like to expand the Nonantum-Newton Corner-Newton Centre-West Newton Bluebikes network to include a station(s) in the Newtonville village center.

A *Park & Pedal* electric bike station was installed at Albemarle Field a few months ago. We also applied as part of the MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces grant for funding to purchase and install two more Park & Pedal automated electric bike rental stations, each with 15 bicycles. Park & Pedal is typically paired with marked parking spaces to provide automated full day, round trip rentals of electric-assist bicycles. The Park & Pedal bikes are typically used by suburban commuters who drive to and park at a station and then bike the rest of the way. The two proposed stations are at Lyons Field on Commonwealth Avenue in Auburndale and at City Hall in Newton Centre.

We'll let you know if we succeed in getting the MassDOT grant.

*Looking for a Spooky, Scary
and Safe way to spread
Halloween cheer this year?
Sign up for Newton's
Halloween Window*



Decorating event. A family favorite for 20 years, the event will run differently this year. Children in grades 3 to 8 will make their artwork at home on posters and then hang them in a merchants' window. The City of Newton Cultural Development staff and Newton Community Pride encourage registering early. A big thanks to all our

participating businesses whose storefronts will become our exhibit halls. We can enjoy the masterpieces, shop local and keep these businesses in business. Get more info and register at newtoncommunitypride.org.

Renumbering and I-95 & Mass Pike Exits

The familiar exit numbers along the Mass Pike and I-95 (as well as most other federal highways) are changing next month. Mandated by the Federal Highway Administration, the new numbers will reflect the mileage along the route, rather than be sequential, as they are now.



For example, the familiar Exit 17 off the Mass Pike in Newton Corner will become Exit 127 and the next one further west in West Newton Square changes from Exit 16 to Exit 125 (as it is two miles from Newton Corner).

Click [here](#) to find an interactive map that shows the new numbers of all the exits

being changed statewide and for more information about the changes.

(This is going to be a struggle for me. I still call I-95 by its old name of 128.)

City Seal Working Group

Last month, I put out a call for people interested in serving on an ad hoc City Seal Working Group to look closely at Newton's official seal (which also appears on our City flag). We were delighted to have received over 40 responses from talented and thoughtful Newtonians. While challenging to narrow the list, the result is a diverse group of 13 residents who live across the city and bring different perspectives, skills, professional backgrounds and life experiences to this work. They range from a high school student to older residents. Their backgrounds include design, history of Newton, art, education, religion, equity for Indigenous communities and more.

I'm grateful to our volunteers and City staff— Eryn-Ashlei Bailey, Judy Battat, Judy Dore, Diana Rodriguez Doyle, Amy Golahny, Jim Murphy, Ryan Naragon, Kerry Prasad, Steve Sangapore, Rabbi Charlie Schwartz, Steven Sulewski, Issac Tang, and Alyssa D'Arienzo Toro. Lisa Dady, the Executive Director of Historic Newton, will chair the Working Group. City Clerk David Olson and Director of Community Engagement and Inclusion Dana Hanson will also support the effort.

The Working Group will begin meeting bi-monthly next week. We know the process will include community feedback and expect it to be iterative. The Working Group will report back to me with recommendations about whether to change the seal, and, if so, what that design might look like. I look forward to a lot of input from our residents and sharing their report with the community and the City Council (which will vote on any recommended changes).

We have created a website for project updates [here](#). We have also set up a place on it to [sign-up to receive periodic emails](#) about the project, including announcements on opportunities to provide input. We also have an email address to use to share your ideas and thoughts about the project at cityseal@newtonma.gov. I am grateful to the Working Group volunteers and the community at large as we contemplate the important question of how we portray the identity, spirit and values of Newton in our city seal.

You Count so Be Counted

We still have a few more days to fill in our US Census before the Wednesday, September 30 deadline. You may fill yours out online at www.my2020census.gov. It's quick (about 10 minutes) and easy. It's safe and secure. It matters. The information helps decide how billions of federal dollars are allocated to local communities, including Newton, for the next 10 years.

Newton Reflects

Join fellow Newtonians in a celebration of the life of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Tune in on your computer or smartphone tomorrow, Friday, Sept. 25, at 4:00 p.m. While a few of us will be

together in-person but physically distanced at City Hall, join virtually and safely thanks to NewTV who will livestream it on the video sharing platform vimeo at <https://vimeo.com/460953474>.

Warmly,

Ruthanne



P.S. With the changing of seasons and the cold weather upon us, our firefighters at the Newton Fire Department want all of us to take two steps. First, make sure your Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors are working properly. Second, check that all vents, including your vehicle exhaust, are clear from any snow or obstruction to minimize the likelihood of Carbon Monoxide buildup in your home or vehicle. Questions? Call Newton Fire Prevention at 617-796-2230.



P.P.S. Historic Newton's annual House Tour this year is a "Special Edition" online tour celebrating the work of house designer Maud Brodrick. With talent, fearlessness, and marketing genius, this Newtonian built hundreds of homes in Newton and Wellesley during the 1920s and 1930s, a period when few

women worked in the field. Historic Newton uncovers this amazing, little known story through a virtual tour inside four homes she designed. For more information or to buy a ticket for the video tour, an accompanying booklet and a Zoom panel discussion on Sunday, Oct. 18 at 3 p.m., click [here](#).

P.P.P.S. Learn more about plans to build NewCAL, a new community center focused on older residents, at the site of the current Newton Senior Center 345 Walnut Street. We're holding a Zoom Community Meeting on Thursday, Oct. 1 at 6:30 p.m. The project team will give an update and you can share your thoughts. Get more information about NewCAL [here](#). Join the meeting by computer or smartphone on Zoom on the Web: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89455057906?pwd=eTF2UnBYREhYMVVHVmNBQ1ZsYVpJZz09>; or by Phone: 1-646-558-8656 Meeting ID: 894 5505 7906 — Passcode: 311700

P.P.P.P.S. The next "shopping" day at the Swap Shop at the Newton Resource Recovery Center at 115 Rumford Avenue is tomorrow, Friday, Sept. 25. The volunteers who run the Swap Shop have many health and safety protocols in place as they provide a way to keep usable items out of the trash. All items are quarantined for 7 days and set outside for browsing. Residents need to make an appointment before coming to ensure physical distancing by calling Customer Service at 617-796-1000. Visit Newton DPW's [website](#) for more information on the Swap Shop.

P.P.P.P.S. The Newton Free Library is

offering "Borrowing Bundles." Enjoy a handpicked selection of recommendations and/or items based on your reading or viewing preferences. Choose from five different Borrowing Bundle Services:



- Kids' Book Bags, a personalized bag of elementary level books and a surprise for younger readers
- Picture Book Bundles, for families to borrow and share together.
- Tween/Teen Books, a personalized box of books, swag and more
- Personalized Book Recommendations, by email for adults
- Five Films To-Go!, a personalized bag of films for movie lovers of all ages

Click [here](#) to request your bundle.

Kudos to the Newton Public Schools music teachers, under the direction of Day chorus teacher Michael Smith, who set a joyful tone for the start of school. Enjoy!

