Mayor's Update

New Ambulance Service

I'm happy to introduce Fallon Ambulance Service, a division of Transformative Healthcare, as our emergency ambulance provider. The new three-year contract starts on Dec. 31, 2020.

As our current contract with Cataldo Ambulance ended its third and final year, we issued a Request for Proposals and began the process of choosing our ambulance service going forward. We went a thorough and thoughtful vetting process with four companies before selecting Fallon/Transformative Healthcare.

Our vetting team included members from Health and Human Services, Fire, Police & Dispatch, two Doctors, the Mayor's Office and City Councilor Jay Ciccone. They considered a range of criteria. For example, they evaluated the number of personnel and vehicles (and backup for them) available to their training, experience, communication abilities, supervisory capabilities, insurance availability, costs, quality assurance programs, and response times.

They were impressed with Fallon/Transformative's ability to provide clinical excellence, as well as their experience and interest in community initiatives. Fallon/Transformative also serves Brookline and Newton-Wellesley Hospital which enhances their ability to provide excellent emergency medical care to people who live, work and visit Newton.

As we look forward to working with Fallon, I want to thank Dennis Cataldo and the Cataldo team for providing strong emergency services. They provided critical emergency care over the last three years including during this especially challenging period of a pandemic.

Eviction Help

Are you struggling to make rent or mortgage payments? Let us point you toward some resources from the state.

With the expiration of the state's eviction and foreclosure moratorium in mid-October, the state developed a COVID-19 Eviction Diversion Initiative. The goal of this $171 million set of resources is to support tenants and landlords during the financial challenges caused by the pandemic. More specifically, it aims to keep tenants safely in their homes and to support the ongoing expenses of landlords. Funds are available for rental and mortgage assistance, legal aid, housing counseling, and post-eviction rapid rehousing.

The Rental Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program, for example, will be expanded to increase funding from $4,000 to $10,000 per household. Funding will also be expanded for the nine regional Housing Consumer Education Centers

(HCECs). The initiative also creates the Community Mediation Pre-Court and Legal Representation Services. It expands HomeBASE (rapid rehousing) and the Strategic Prevention Initiative for residents and families in the process of trying to secure stable housing. Resources are also available through the Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance Program (ERMA).

Call 2-1-1 to speak with trained staff or vist mass.gov/CovidHousingHelp for more information on these programs.

Updates on the City Seal

The City Seal Working Group has made good progress in its meetings so far, including hearing a compelling presentation from scholars on the historical context and visual imagery of the seal. (Click here for meeting recording).

Want to learn more about the seal's history? Historic Newton will be presenting a program entitled *"A Closer Look at Newton's City Seal"* on Thursday, Nov. 12 at 5:00 p.m. Why did city leaders in 1865 choose an image of Christian missionary John Eliot proselytizing to Waban and other native people in the 1640s? What does the image convey? Register here.

Want to provide ideas to the City Seal Working Group? They are interested to hear your thoughts on two key questions: (1) If you were to talk about the City in 3 words, what would they be? (2) What would you like Newton to be known for?

You may provide this input via an onlinecommunity feedback form; join a community meeting on Thursday, Nov. 19 at 7:00 p.m. to give a 3-minute or shorter response to those two questions (click here for the Zoom link); and/or email the group at cityseal@newtonma.gov.

As part of the community input process, the Working Group is also reaching out to invite representatives from local Native American communities to further explore the story depicted on Newton's seal and to hear their contemporary perspectives on the city emblem.

If you wish to receive email updates about the City Seal project and reminders about the upcoming community meeting, please sign up here.

Indigenous Peoples' Day

For most of my life, I thought of Columbus Day as a wonderful celebration of the heritage, traditions and contributions of Italian Americans and the discovery of America. As for Columbus himself, my vague memories of history lessons centered on the ditty, "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue," and little more.

More recently, I've learned a lot more about Christopher Columbus. I've begun to understand how blind I was to the violence and pain brought to the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, and the deep hurt that the continued celebration of Columbus causes to Indigenous People today.
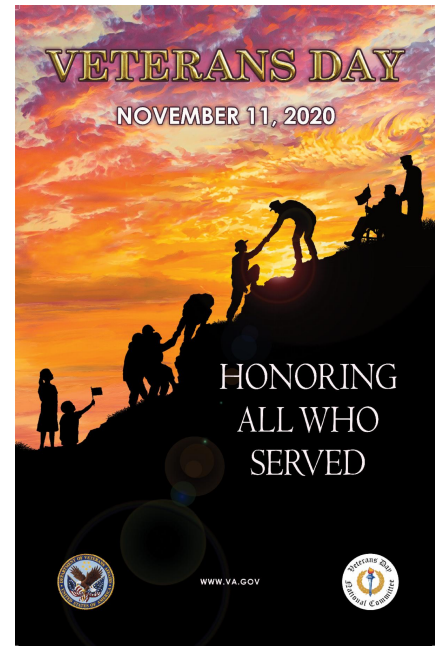
Now that I understand this, I am glad the City Council voted 22 to 2 on Monday night to find a different way and day to honor the heritage of our Italian Americans in Newton as we shift the name of our holiday on the second Monday in October from Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day.

This is another step on our journey to make sure our core values of respect, diversity and acceptance are more fully realized in Newton in our words, symbols and actions. We will not reject our tradition of honoring Italian Americans but instead adapt to our better understanding of history. To paraphrase Barbara Jordan, we'll embrace the discomfort of change to achieve a better future.

Honoring Our Veterans

Next Wednesday at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, we will hold our Veteran's Day Observance virtually to honor the service and sacrifice of our veterans and those who are currently serving.

A small group of us wearing masks will gather physically distanced for a ceremony (including Veteran and Congressperson-Elect Jake Auchincloss). Join us on a livestream by NewTV on Vimeo at https://vimeo.com/466305745 (Wednesday, Nov. 11, 11:00 a.m.)

Our Country, Our Commonwealth and Our City

Tonight, Newton's Inter-Faith Clergy Association gathered their congregations together in the spirit of hope and prayer. While the clergy lead distinct and dedicated groups across the religious and political spectrum, they are united in their call for comfort, peace and common purpose following our elections. At this time of great anxiety when many are sequestered for safety at home, together they called for comity, unity, respect and reconciliation. Here are the comments I just gave at the virtual gathering:

Good Evening. It feels both good and right to be together this evening – even virtually.

This is hard.

Our Country is hurting right now.

The very foundation of our Democracy feels shaky.

The rhetoric is loud and caustic.

The truth is sometimes lost in the commotion.

Here in Newton, we know something about rough campaigns – I definitely understand how campaigns can spark fierce disagreements, fierce passions and

fierce loyalties on both sides.

I also know that here in Newton, we can disagree with our opponents and still respect them, still see their goodness, and still call them a friend.

This afternoon, I reached out to Scott Lennon, my opponent in the Mayor's race three years ago. He is a good man, a man I respect, and a man I consider a friend. I gave him a call and asked if he would join me at this gathering as a show of unity during these difficult times.

While Scott couldn't make it this evening, he gave me permission to share his thoughts:

"I'm totally in support of you mentioning this event's importance to me, and while I don't at all feel our campaign "differences" elevated to those of the national level, I am grateful for our continued friendship and that you and I have connected recently and will continue to work together for the future of our great City."

We are all hurting.

We are all going through this difficult time – and I am so grateful to be the Mayor of such a strong, caring community. We will get through this together because of people like Scott Lennon who put their City over politics … because of our young people who raise their voices against injustice and inequality … because of our climate activists who push to save our air, land and water for our next generation … because of our neighbors who are advocating for more affordable and more diverse housing options in our City, and because of people like all of you on Zoom tonight – coming together in hope and prayer in the midst of all this division and hurt.

We will get through this because of our united, powerful commitment to the core values we all share in Newton: respect, acceptance and diversity.

We will get through this because while we have passionate political campaigns, different priorities and sometimes conflicting points of view – we share a love for our Country, our Commonwealth and our City and a deep commitment to our fellow Newtonians.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Lately our COVID-19 comprehensive update has been in my Thursday email. This week, however, the State is reporting city/town information, including risk levels, on Friday instead of Thursday. I'll be emailing our update tomorrow once we have the information from the State. In the meantime, you can keep track of daily cases on the Newton COVID-19 Data page. It shows another notable increase; we have 1,151 cumulative positive cases and 142 deaths through yesterday, 11/4/2020, an increase of 38 and 2, respectively.

P.P.S. Looking for someone else to cook your Thanksgiving dinner this year? The Newton-Needham Chamber has a directory of area restaurants open for dining-in or offering a special to-go menu for Thanksgiving. (Are you a restaurant owner/manager and would like to be added to this list? Please email the Chamber at info@nnchamber.com)