

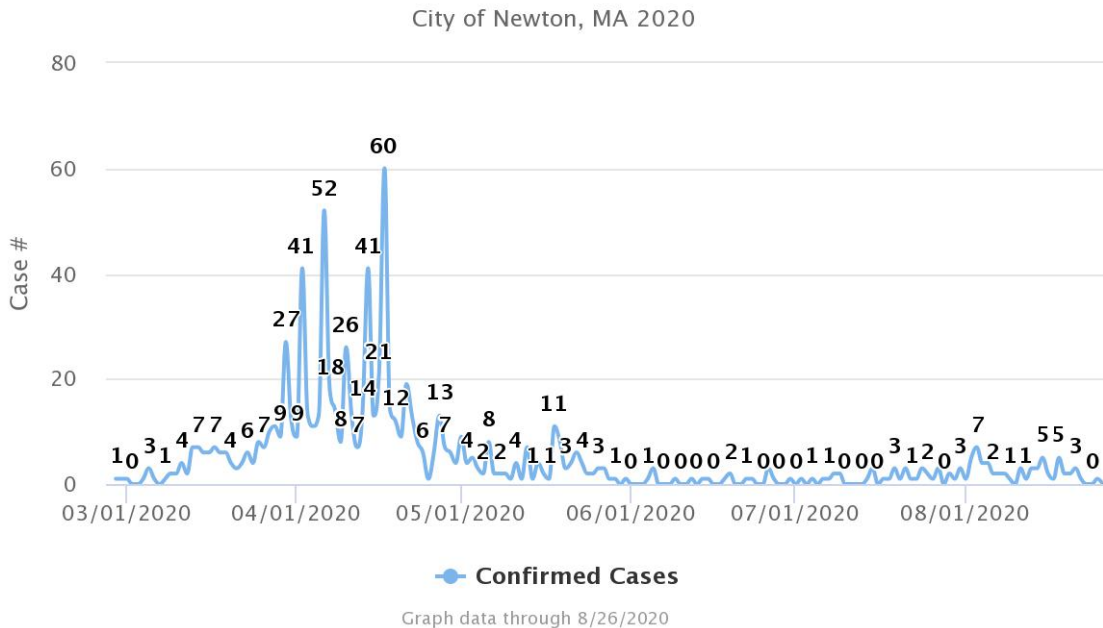
Mayor's Update

COVID-19 Update and Losses

There are 883 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among Newton residents, according to preliminary data through August 26, 2020. This is an increase of 19 since last Tuesday. The updated Newton Cases by Symptom Onset Chart is below.



Newton Cases by Symptom Onset Date



COVID-19 in Newton

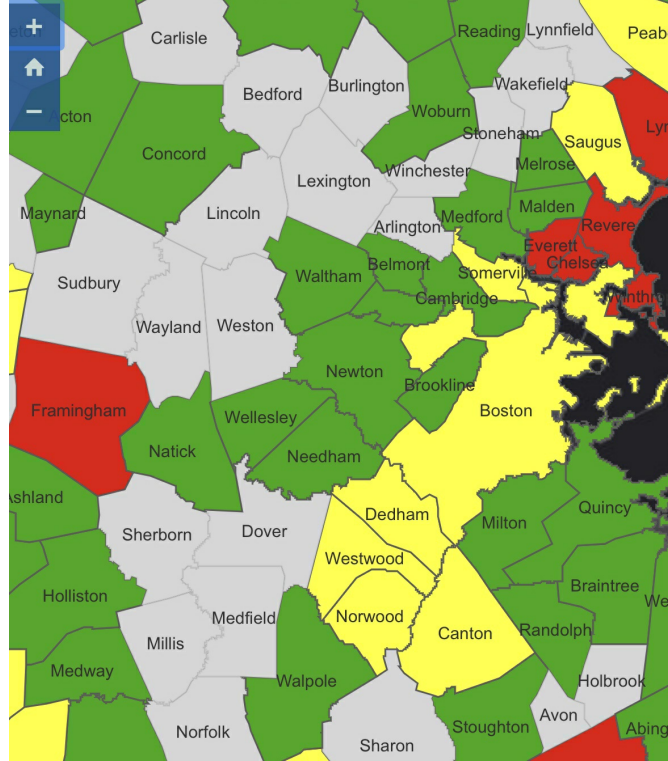
Total Cases
883

Total Deaths
131

*As of 8/26

During this past week, three deaths were reported among Newton residents who tested positive for COVID-19, bringing this painful total to 131 people since I began reporting deaths twenty-one weeks ago. Our heartfelt sympathies to everyone who has lost someone dear to them and may their memory be a blessing.

Newton continues to be a “lower-risk” “green” community based on our low rate of daily new cases, per the most recent data provided yesterday by the state covering the period from Aug. 9 through Aug. 22. (See the Community Level Data Map below.) The number of new cases occurring in Newton over the latest two-week period is also trending in the correct direction as it is lower compared to the previous two-week period.



(Click on the map to find the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Weekly COVID-19 Public Health Report, including the entire statewide map.)

During these same two weeks, the data shows 6,562 Newton residents got tests for COVID-19. Of those tested, 44 people tested positive; this translates into a “positivity rate” of 0.67 percent in Newton. This is good news. Newton’s positivity rate is less than half the statewide rate of 1.8 percent and is lower than Newton’s positivity rate last week.

Most of these numbers are reassuring – low level of positive cases and low positivity rates. At the same time, however, for the month of August so far, 60 new cases have been confirmed. During the month of June, we only had 18 confirmed cases and in July, 39 confirmed cases. (The number of cases in March, April and May, were much higher; Newton had 158, 498 and 109 respectively.) We must stay physically distanced, wear face coverings, and wash and sanitize hands. When inside or outside, someone at high risk may be nearby, so even when passing by someone briefly at closer than 6’, please wear a face covering.

Additional statewide data is updated daily and can be found [here](#).

Schools Reopening Plans Updated

The Newton School Committee (of which I am a member), last night unanimously approved a modified reopening plan.

The plan calls for all high needs students in all grades attending school in-person four or five days a week, if they choose. Part-time in-person learning for elementary students starts in September and for middle school students in November, for those who chose that option. All high school students start the year online and have the option of in-person extracurriculars, clubs, orientations, and counseling (etc.) starting in September. High school distance learning is in place at least until the Newton Public Schools make a recommendation by Nov. 15 for a plan for in-person learning.

The Newton Public Schools found they couldn’t offer in-person learning at the high

school level because of survey information from parents, guardians and teachers received last week, after the School Committee first voted to move forward with a hybrid model for the high school. The survey showed that NPS had more students who wanted to return in-person at the high school than available staff.

Twenty-one (21) percent of the high school teachers have health related issues. It got even more difficult as teachers have to be licensed for certain subject areas so NPS couldn't simply rotate those who were available for in-person teaching to cover other classes. NPS also wanted to make sure that all students had access to all aspects of the curriculum (ranging from AP courses to the specialized ones) – part of the NPS mission for excellence and equity. Finally, NPS wanted to ensure that all students were taught by NPS teachers, the people who are the heart and soul of our schools.

This is frustrating and disappointing news for many high school parents, especially coming this late in the summer. Middle school parents are also finding the wait until November (due to the need to hire additional aides and specialists to make the in-person teaching possible) tough.

This is a difficult time, and COVID-19 has changed so much for so many in such profound ways.

I know, though, that our teachers and staff will do their best to deliver the very best education and support possible, whether online or in-person, as the new school year begins.

Newton Police Task Force Update

The Newton Police Reform Task Force has been meeting weekly since July 8th and sent along an update. (Read the entire update [here](#).)

The 12 members have met with a variety of people from the Newton Police Department, ranging from the head of the Detective Bureau to the Captain leading the Special Operations Bureau (which includes recruitment, hiring, and promotions). Find links to these sessions and more on the Task Force's "Information on Meetings and Public Input" [page](#). Of particular concern to the Task Force is the limited diversity of members of the department (e.g., only one African American officer). The Task Force will be exploring potential barriers, including Civil Service residency requirements and recruitment and retention practices.

Last week the Task Force held its first open session (attended by over 120 attendees) and found common themes and concerns which point to a community desire for police to help enforce quality of life matters. You can watch the full recording of the Zoom meeting [here](#). The Task Force also held a facilitated reimagining activity with a small group of community stakeholders in late July. These community engagements have revealed commonly held values of mutual support, community trust, respect, unity, inclusion, compassion, and empathy.

The Task Force also focused on the qualifications for a consultant(s) to work with them on recommendations and drafting the final report by February, 2021. The Task Force zeroed in on hiring a consultant that has substantial experience working with law enforcement, expertise in systematic racism issues, and a demonstrated ability with organizational change.

Find a lot of materials about NPD and policing [here](#) and sign up for updates [here](#).

Additional Grants to Help the Homeless and Those at Risk of Homelessness

We're so pleased that the City of Newton received a second round of supplemental CARES Act funds allowing us to make an additional \$905,007 in grants to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the impacts of COVID-19 among individuals and families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. These critical funds will be awarded through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to nonprofit organizations who can apply starting tomorrow, Aug. 28. We will prioritize proposals that provide direct services for those currently in emergency shelters, for operating costs or building renovations for shelters, for new temporary shelters, as well as rental assistance and housing relocation and stabilization services for homeless individuals and families. Organizations can respond to the RFP by completing an application found on www.newtonma.gov/ESG. The application deadline is September 16, 2020.

School Nurses Ratify Contract

The School Nurses yesterday voted to ratify the new Collective Bargaining Agreement through June 30, 2023. Thanks to the leaders, including Sue Riley and Ruth Hoshino, our students will be supported and well cared for in this difficult period.

We are so deeply appreciative of our Newton School Nurses.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Piccadilly Square on Union Street in Newton Centre is hosting a physically distanced and masked shopping stroll during tax free weekend this Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 29-30. Shoppers who make a purchase will be entered in a raffle to win a basket with gift certificates and products from Dr. Renee Moran Medical Aesthetics, Yosemite Eyewear, Icon Hair Salon, Forevermark Flowers, Folklorica Newton, The Silver Woman and more. Shop local! Shop Union Street!

