

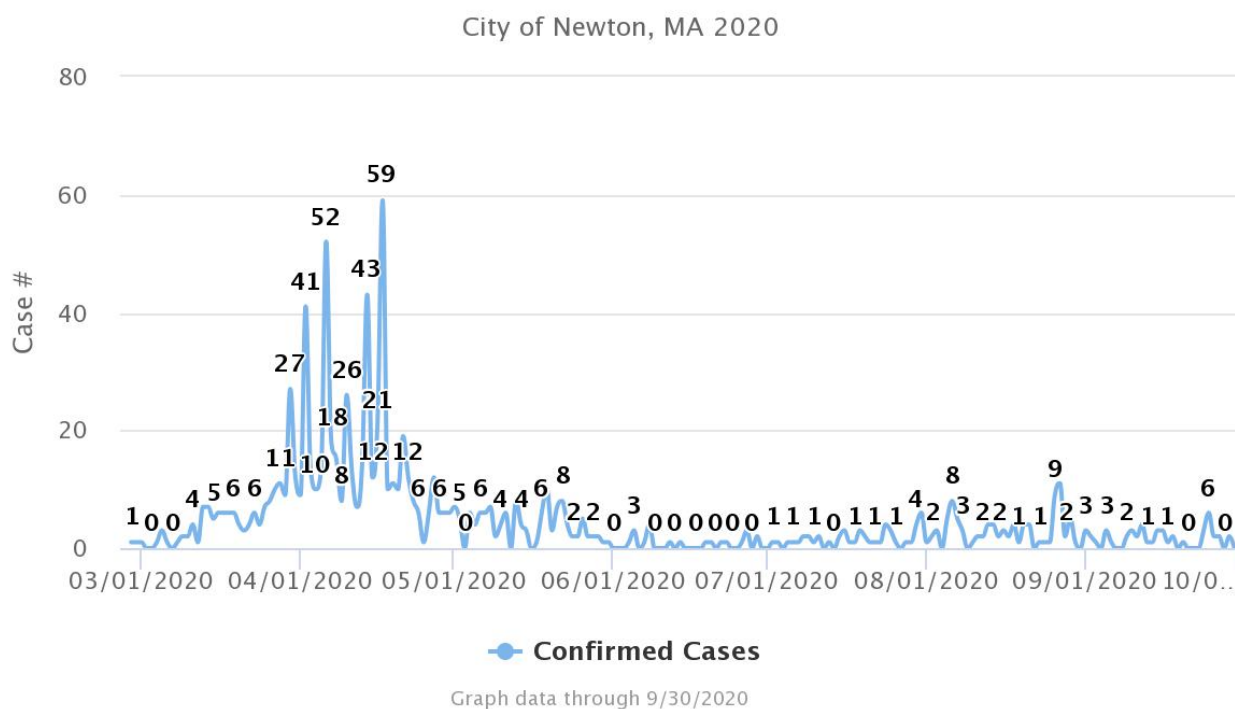
Mayor's Update

COVID-19 Cases

Over the past week, we have had an additional 21 new positive cases which brings our cumulative total to 984 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among Newton residents, according to preliminary data through September 30, 2020. The updated symptom onset graph is below.



Newton Cases by Symptom Onset Date



COVID-19 in Newton

Total Cases
984

Total Deaths
136

*As of 9/30

Newton’s COVID-19 risk level has been downgraded to “lower risk” and has returned to green on the state risk-level [map](#). The state is reporting 33 confirmed Newton cases during the most recent two-week reporting period from Sept. 13 to Sept. 26. The risk level is based on the average daily COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents. Newton’s rate decreased to 2.57 cases per 100,000 (from 4.05 cases per 100,000 during the previous reporting period from 9/6 – 9/19). Communities are designated as lower risk when they have fewer than 4.0 cases per 100,000 people. (Our next door neighbor, Boston, however, just turned red. Three additional neighbors– Needham, Waltham and Weston are

yellow.)

Newton’s positivity rate, or the percentage of people who test positive among those

tested, decreased to 0.21 percent. (The percentage reported last week was 0.44 from 9/6 to 9/19.) Newton's positivity rate remains lower than the state average of 0.87 percent.

Gratefully, we have no additional deaths to report of Newton residents who died over the past week with COVID-19, leaving our total number at 136 people as reported last week. The impact of COVID-19 in our community remains significant. Here are some [mental health resources](#) you may find helpful as we all continue to try to adjust to the challenges this pandemic brings to our lives every day.

Newton Public Schools Data: An updated NPS Data Dashboard is posted on Newton's [COVID-19 Data website](#). I am grateful to also be able to report no new confirmed COVID-19 cases among NPS students and staff from Sept. 23 to 29, the most recent reporting period. Please see the dashboard for further explanations about this data. The cumulative total of students and staff who have tested positive for COVID-19 since Sept. 16 remains at 3. As with all positive cases, contact tracing and monitoring is ongoing.

Flu Vaccine Clinics

Newton's Health and Human Services Department has initially scheduled two drive-through/walk-up, appointment-based, weekend flu clinics open to Newton residents and Newton Public Schools students and their families.

Registration is not yet open for these clinics. Online appointment registration will open early next week at www.newtonma.gov/flu.

Adults and children older than 6 months may be vaccinated at these clinics. Some high-dose flu vaccine will be available for adults who are at least 65 years old. These clinics are free and health insurance information is requested, but not required. If you do not have a vehicle, you may walk-up to receive a vaccine.

Saturday, October 10, 9 a.m. to 12:00 noon, Newton North High School
(457 Walnut Street)

Sunday, October 18, 9 a.m. to 12:00 noon, Newton South High School
(140 Brandeis Road)

Additional dates may be added depending upon demand.

Appointments are required and may fill quickly. Alternatively, consider getting a flu shot at another time and place; they are available in many locations, including primary healthcare provider offices, local pharmacies and urgent care clinics. A list of some additional options for flu shots can be found at newtonma.gov/flu.

Needham Street/Highland Street Improvements

Work on the \$31.1 million Needham/Highland Street improvement project is finally going to begin (hooray!). The work is starting on Highland Avenue in Needham during the first week of November, according to Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) officials. Simultaneously, our City of Newton Utilities/DPW crews will continue to upgrade our water pipes that are directly under Needham Street.

Starting next summer, we will see MassDOT work starting in Newton on Needham Street. It will begin at the intersection with Oak Street. (A public meeting will be held before this work begins.) Work on the Winchester end of Needham Street in Newton is scheduled to start in the Winter of 2021/2022. The whole project wraps up in 2023.

The project stretches the entire 1.7 mile length of Needham Street. Plans include better turn lanes, continuous sidewalks, new crosswalks, state of the art traffic signals, better bus stops, raised bus lanes and renovations to the existing bridge over the Charles River.

The “top” of the bridge across the Charles River will be rebuilt beginning next summer to allow three travel lanes, a new shared bike and pedestrian path and ornamental rails. (There will be no impact to the Charles River as the foundation is in good shape.)

While this long-anticipated project will bring much needed improvements, we know a road project of this size will be inconvenient at best and more likely disruptive.

MassDOT’s schedule has the work taking place primarily on weekdays from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with the important caveat that there will be no lane closures during peak traffic hours (6:00 to 9:00 a.m. & 3:00 to 7:00 p.m.). Driveways, pedestrian and bicycle access will be maintained at all times, so customers and employees will always continue to have access to all the stores, restaurants and businesses along this critical street. Detail officers will try to keep traffic moving to minimize backups.

Some road milling and paving will also be done at night to minimize traffic impacts. MassDOT committed to two weeks of advance notice before any planned work on Sunday through Thursday nights from 9:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.

Questions or concerns? Want regular updates? Email the MassDOT Project Team [here](#). Sign up for project updates [here](#), and read the meeting slide presentation from a public meeting last night [here](#).

More Bike Sharing Stations

Good news— MassDOT just awarded Newton a \$153,000 Shared Streets grant to fund two additional Park & Pedal electric bike rental stations and two additional Bluebikes stations.

The two additional Park & Pedal stations will be installed in the next few weeks at City Hall in Newton Centre and possibly at Lyons Field on Commonwealth Avenue in Auburndale, joining the one already at Albemarle Field at the Crafts Street end.

(Photo: We installed three of the Bluebikes stations yesterday- in the driveway of the former Nonantum Branch Library (on Watertown Street at Bridge Street), on Washington Street at Centre Street in Newton Corner and on Washington Street at Crafts Street in front



of Whole Foods (the one in the photo).

The two additional Bluebikes stations will be installed in West Newton Square and in just to the east of the square in front of the Armory on Washington Street.

School Grounds for Students During School Hours/Activities

It's great to have some of our youngsters back in school buildings. While our elementary schools have the most students on-site currently, our middle and high schools also have some students attending daily as well. Students are going outside for recess and some athletes in some sports are also having practices and games.

As part of our COVID-19 protocols, our schools are paying a lot of attention to students' interactions being within cohorts, physical distancing and the use of face coverings.

To support these health efforts, school playgrounds and school grounds during school hours are for students attending the affiliated public school during their in-person learning time. Fields and tracks at both high schools after school are for our students' use during team practices, games and meets.

Please do not enter these areas during these hours and instead wait to use them after our students are gone.

During the COVID-19 shut down, we know that childcare providers and families (and even personal trainers and exercise companies) have used these playgrounds and school grounds a lot. Organized groups and businesses using parks, fields and courts continue to require a permit from Newton's Parks Department. Parks Dept. staff are happy to assist in obtaining a permit. (Contact the Parks Department at parks@newtonma.gov.)

Halloween

Like most everything else, Halloween will also be different this year as we change our ways to keep our families and our neighbors safer from COVID-19. Here are some considerations to help everyone plan for Halloween this year:

- Indoor gatherings pose a higher risk than outdoor gatherings.
- Large gatherings should be avoided and all gatherings must comply with the [Governor's Gathering Orders](#).
- Practice frequent hand washing, mask wearing, and physical distancing before, during and after any gatherings
- If you have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 or have COVID-19 yourself, you should not attend any gatherings or participate in trick-or-treating (both giving and receiving treats).
- Block parties and other events that involve Newton Police or Newton DPW support are still not permitted as we still need to avoid large gatherings.

Here are a few ideas from the [CDC's list](#) of lower, moderate and higher risk Halloween activities:

- Lower risk: Pumpkin carving/decorating at a safe distance, with a very small group; a scavenger hunt-style trick-or-treat search with your household members in or around your home, rather than going house to house; a virtual Halloween costume contest.
- Moderate risk: One-way trick-or-treating, with individually wrapped bags lined up for families to grab on a driveway or at the edge of a yard; having a small group, outdoor, open-air costume parade where people are distanced more than 6 feet apart; visiting pumpkin patches or orchards where people use hand sanitizer before touching pumpkins or picking apples, wearing masks is enforced, and people are able to maintain physical distancing.
- Higher risk (avoid these activities this year): Participating in traditional trick-or-treating where treats are handed to children who go door-to-door; having trunk-or-treat where treats are handed out from trunks of cars lined up in large parking lots; attending crowded parties, especially those held indoors; using alcohol or drugs which can cloud judgment and increase risky behaviors.

Damaging Storm

Wednesday morning's heavy rain and high winds led to the loss of perhaps 15 whole street trees and at least four locations where fallen trees completely blocked a road. Our tree, fire and police staff responded to nearly 200 calls from across the City for downed trees, limbs and wires.

City Forester Marc Welch, our in-house City tree crews and our contractors used 5 bucket trucks, 4 log trucks, 1 chip truck and 3 pickups yesterday and today to clean up downed trees owned by the City and trees from private properties that fell into the City's public right of way.



When a tree or large limb falls blocking a road, a limb is hanging precariously or power lines are downed, Newton Police and Fire secure the scene. Hazardous electrical issues are reported quickly to Eversource; they have to respond to cut power to an electrical line before our tree clearing work can safely begin.

Huge thanks to everyone for their quick and effective response.

Update on Newton Police

This week we selected a firm to help us in our search for a new, permanent Chief of the Newton Police Department. After receiving proposals through a bid process, we interviewed the four firms who submitted. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) had hands-down the most impressive team, an effective recruiting/evaluation strategy, and the most nuanced understanding of the role of a Chief in the coming years. The IACP, based in Virginia, is a non-profit organization committed to having thoughtful, progressive leaders of Police Departments. Its 125 full-time employees focus on research, training, best practices, executive searches, management and technical services, and addressing the pressing policing issues of our times.

The IACP will assist me in writing a candidate profile for what Newton is looking for in our next Chief. I welcome your input on the qualities I should prioritize. Email me at rfuller@newtonma.gov. I will share our job posting with the community. The search firm will also help me recruit candidates internally and externally and evaluate them.

A 9-person selection committee will also help me select the new Chief. This committee will include residents, a City Councilor, a union member, a businessperson, an attorney, a member of the judiciary, and a member of the Massachusetts Police Chief's Association. (Interestingly, the categories of people who must be members of the selection committee are defined in a state statute.) I will appoint some of the members (subject to approval of the City Council) and others will be selected by City Council President Susan Albright (also subject to approval of the City Council). The union representative will be selected by the Newton Police Association.

As the Mayor, I will select the final candidate for the position and forward my recommendation to the City Council for approval. I hope to have a new Chief in place by the beginning of 2021.

(Photo: Ronald MacNeil Jr. and Amanda Henrickson this afternoon being sworn into their new positions as Lieutenants. Lt. Henrickson is just the second woman to rise to the rank of lieutenant in the NPD and the first in more than 30 years.)



In the meantime, I am grateful to Interim Chief Howard Mintz for his steadfast leadership during this difficult time. Even at this time of transition, the Newton Police Department continues to move forward. I want to ensure that each bureau and each shift has the leadership in place for our officers to do the job effectively, safely and respectfully. This afternoon I

swore in two Captains, two Lieutenants and three Sergeants. (Click [here](#) to read their biographies.) As a community that currently uses the Civil Service process for both our Police and Fire Departments, the promotions were made according to the civil service rules.

To paraphrase what I said during today's ceremony, wearing the uniform of the Newton Police Department is an honor and a privilege; it requires integrity, leadership, as well as a deep understanding and respect for the law. Wearing the NPD uniform means doing your utmost to fulfill our Department's mission of guaranteeing respect and dignity for each individual.

I am also grateful to the members of the Newton Police Reform Task Force. The Task Force continues to work on a holistic assessment of the Newton Police Department in order to make recommendations to me on the policies, procedures, practices and overall strategic direction of the Department. I am checking in with them regularly so their work can inform my selection of our next chief. The Task Force plans to complete their report by February 1, 2021 and their recommendations will no doubt serve as a helpful resource not only to me, but also to the next leader of the Newton Police Department.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Pick a day and join Walk & Roll to School Week next Monday through Friday, Oct. 5-9. If you're attending school remotely, walk or roll around your home or neighborhood. Go to [Newton Safe Routes to School](#) for more information and to download an activities booklet.



Walk & Roll to School Week: October 5-9

P.P.S. Newton's shops, restaurants and service providers are facing significant drops in sales and daunting challenges ahead. The good news is that we can help. If you're thinking of take-out, delivery or dining out, stay local. The same goes for shopping, getting a haircut, ... you get the idea. *(Photos in West Newton Square: Andrew Li of Flora's Wine Bar on Washington Street and Mike Gilmore of Fit4Newton on Elm Street.)*



P.P.P.S. Tune into the next School Committee meeting on Monday when Superintendent David Fleishman will share updates about getting high school students back into the buildings for teaching and learning. You can join the Monday night, Oct. 5, 6:30 p.m. meeting by Zoom at <https://zoom.us/j/390017072>. The call-in number is 1-646-558-8656 and the meeting ID is 390 017 072.

