

Mayor's Update

Current Cases and Losses

There are 767 Newton residents who have tested positive for COVID-19, according to preliminary data through Tuesday, June 9, 2020. Of those, 42 percent are among people living in a Newton long-term care or assisted living facility. This percentage remains relatively consistent and our number of new positive cases continues to be low.

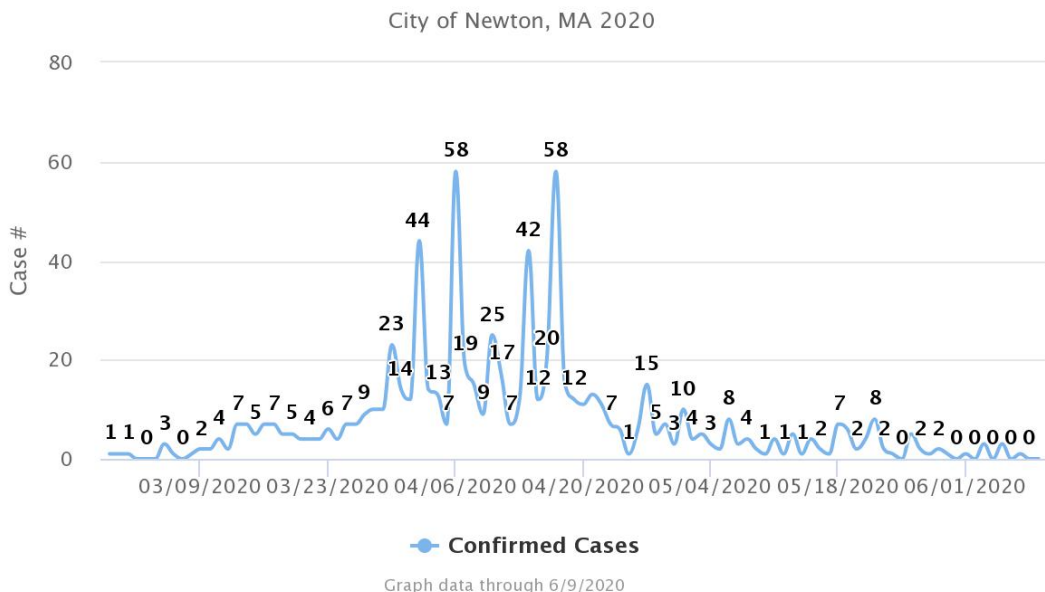


A week ago, we reported 760 confirmed cases through Tuesday, June 2, so we only had an increase of 7 people during this past week.

The symptom onset graph [here](#) is also updated. The graph shows the decrease in newly confirmed COVID-19 cases. Looking at the data, we can see there are less than 10 cases each day with symptom onset or test dates from early May going forward.

COVID-19 in Newton	
Total Cases	767
Total Deaths	118
*As of 6/9	

Newton Cases by Symptom Onset Date



Additionally, approximately 78 percent of Newton’s positive cases (excluding people in long-term/assisted living facilities) have met the criteria to discontinue isolation and are considered “recovered.” The percentage of people in the “recovered” group has grown slightly; last week it was approximately 75 percent.

While the data shows encouraging signs, sadly, for the eleventh week, I need to report the deaths of Newton residents who tested positive for COVID-19. This week

two more Newtonians died. We now have a total of 118 Newton residents who tested positive for COVID-19 and died. We grieve for these 118 people and continue to try to find ways to comfort those who loved them.

Let's use our grief to remind us to wear our face coverings, stay 6 feet apart, wash hands frequently and stay home when feeling unwell.

Distance Learning

At the School Committee on Monday night, educators from our elementary, middle and high schools described some of the challenges, highlights and “lessons learned” during the past ten weeks of Distance Learning.

They loved the increased creativity, different ways of problem solving and new uses of technology as tools for learning as well as the teamwork, dedication, creativity, concern and caring for all our students across departments.

But they noted significant challenges. For example, elementary students, particularly those in K to Grade 2, have trouble accessing online lessons independently. Teachers find gauging academic understanding and social and emotional health of their students remotely challenging. They can't completely recreate the in-person classroom experience where students discuss issues and work out problems together. Social connections for students, many of whom crave in-person interactions, is diminished. Despite a lot of effort, distance learning tended to magnify inequities among students and families. Teaching all types of learners is more difficult. They are still searching for better approaches to student accountability and bolstering intrinsic motivation.

In a letter to NPS families today, Superintendent David Fleishman wrote that planning teams are looking at many scenarios for the next school year. One team will look at school facilities and another at scheduling, curriculum, distance learning, service delivery and social and emotional support for students at all levels.

Fleishman acknowledged that the State is suggesting we prepare for at least some distance learning in September. “We must recognize that portions of the next school year will likely involve three different modes of instruction: in-person learning at schools, distance learning with an improved schedule, and/or a hybrid of the two models to facilitate social distancing,” he wrote.

In the midst of an incredibly difficult time, I am deeply grateful for how our educators, our parents and guardians, and our students managed in extraordinarily difficult circumstances to reinvent learning and teaching. I know this has been hard.

Interested to hear more? You can watch Monday night's entire presentation to the School Committee from NPS administrators, elementary and middle school principals and high school department heads on NewTV [here](#).

A red prescription drop box is now located in front of City Hall to make it easier to safely dispose of unused prescription drugs. There is also a box in the lobby of Newton Police Department Headquarters at 1321 Washington Street in West Newton Square. No sharps!



Oak Hill Addition

Even with the financial challenges caused by COVID-19, we're moving forward on adding three new permanent classrooms at Oak Hill Middle School so we have the space for the students we expect in the fall of September 2021.



(photo: The addition is on the front left.)

On Monday night, the City Council approved the site plan 22-0 so work will start

this fall. The project also includes a reconfiguration of some interior space to provide more flexible use of the gym and cafeteria.

Oak Hill is seeing increased enrollment primarily because of the expansion of the new Zervas Elementary School which feeds into this middle school.

We worked with Principal John Harutunian, staff and parents at Oak Hill on a plan so students will stay safe during construction. The plan includes fencing off the construction site completely and having safety officers on site during construction hours.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Good news. All those bottles that we have saved up can now be redeemed and we can get our bottle deposits back. Bottle redemption machines at grocery stores reopened on June 6. Bottle redemption centers will open on Friday, June 19.

P.P.S. Looking for fresh, healthy, locally-grown produce? Newton Community Farm is selling *Healthy Harvest Bags*. Pre-order and pick up at the Farm on Friday afternoons at 309 Nahanton Street. A list of produce to be included in the bags and the price will be posted each week. Sorry, no substitutions are possible. Find more

information and place an order online [here](#).

P.P.P.S. Calling all mural and street artists! Austin Street Partners is working with Newton Community Pride, the New Art Center and the Newtonville Area Council to find an artist to paint the brick wall facing the new public plaza in Newtonville across the street from the Star Market. The winning artist will receive a cash prize of \$5,000. Find contest details [here](#).

P.P.P.P.S. Camp Echo Bridge and the Newton Public Schools' SPACE Camp have gone virtual this summer. Camp Echo Bridge is offering a half-day morning program to keep campers active and connected. These morning blocks include time in the great outdoors. Learn more about Camp Echo Bridge [here](#). Virtual SPACE, a four-week program, enables campers to explore, learn and connect with peers. Learn more about Virtual SPACE Camp [here](#).

