

Mayor's Update

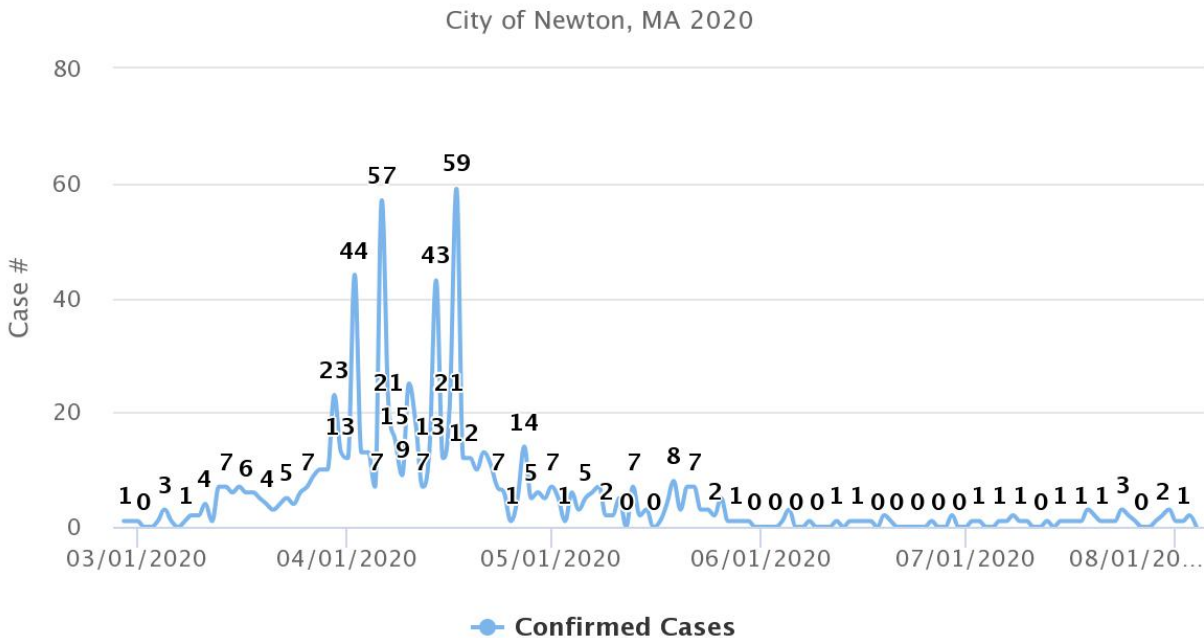
COVID-19 Update and Losses

Since late February, there have been 816 Newton residents confirmed to have COVID-19, according to preliminary data through August 4, 2020. We are paying close attention to the data. Consonant with what is happening in the Commonwealth, we're seeing cases in Newton ticking up. Since our report last week, we have learned of 15 additional people with COVID-19 in the City.



Take a look at the graph below for a visual understanding of how those cases have been spread out over the past five months or so. We're in a much better place than we were in April. But, we saw more new cases during July than we did in June. Massachusetts Phase 3 of reopening began in early July which is likely one factor that may explain this recent increase.

Newton Cases by Symptom Onset Date



The average age of Newton's confirmed cases has been decreasing steadily since May according to the preliminary data. We analyzed all Newton positive cases by their symptom onset date (or test date if that was unavailable). Over the entire period, the average age of all confirmed Newton cases is 62.2 years. For cases during March, the average age was 56.9 years. It increased for new positive cases in April to 67.9

COVID-19 in Newton

Total Cases
816

Total Deaths
125

*As of 8/4

years, then decreased to 51.9 in May, and has been decreasing since then to 48.2 years in June and 43.2 years in July. To me, this is worrisome.

I can thankfully report that this week we have not learned of any additional Newton residents who died with COVID-19.

I had the opportunity to listen to a webcast with Dr. Fauci, the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, earlier today. He noted that this is a novel coronavirus and we are still learning about how the virus spreads. He stressed that because up to 40% of those who are infected and infectious don't have symptoms, all of us must be diligent and take responsibility for: (1) Wearing masks, (2) Staying physically distanced, (3) Avoiding large gatherings, and (4) Keeping hands clean. He said he is cautiously optimistic despite the high number of cases across the country because we can collectively stop the spread by understanding the science of COVID-19 and following these key pieces of advice.

Additional COVID-19 data, including cases by age, sex and more, is updated in the periodic data report available on the City's [COVID-19 data page](#).

Isaias

Nearly 300 tree-related issues poured into Dispatch during yesterday's high winds and rain with up to 20 whole City street trees coming down.

Both Newton Police and Fire were busy as they secured dangerous scenes where trees and branches blocked roads, hung precariously, or downed electrical wires, for example. Hazardous electrical issues are reported immediately to Eversource as they must cut the power to an electrical line before tree clearing work can begin. Our Fire Department and Emergency Operations team help Eversource understand the nature of the locations (e.g., major thoroughways) and, when necessary, lean on the utility to prioritize locations in Newton.

City Forester Marc Welch and our crews were prepared yesterday. We had 5 bucket trucks, 5 log trucks, 2 pick-ups and one chip truck on Newton's roads. These crews (a combination of our own City employees and a contractor) cleared downed trees and branches on streets and sidewalks as well as those that were dangerously damaged and leaning.

Their work included cleaning up both downed trees owned by the City or trees from private properties that fell into the City's public right of way. Our goal is to make the City safe again. Our crews also clean up any City tree that falls onto private property. (When a privately owned tree on private property falls onto private property (including the next door neighbors property), that is the responsibility of the property owner to clean up.)

Join me in thanking a police officer, fire fighter or a tree crew next time you see them.

Voting by Mail

The first state primary election ballots were mailed to Newton voters yesterday afternoon as City Clerk David Olson, our staff and volunteers continue to process the estimated 20,000 mail in ballot applications returned so far.

Please pay close attention to the directions on how to apply to get a ballot and the ballot itself. Remember it is a two step process. First, you must apply to get a ballot. Second, you must fill in the ballot and return it to City Hall.

Applications were already sent to all registered voters and must be completed and returned by Wednesday, Aug. 26 for you to receive a mail in ballot for the Sept. 1 primary.

You must return the ballot itself by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, Tuesday, Sept. 1, for it to be counted.

Your completed and signed application as well as your completed ballot can be mailed to the City of Newton Clerk's Office (1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459) or can be placed in either of the two secure drop boxes in front of City Hall. You can also scan and e-mail your *application* to elections@newtonma.gov (Be careful: your ballot cannot be cast by email). Notably, applications for mail-in ballots must have a signature. (Applications with typed signatures will not be accepted.)



The easiest and best way to make sure your ballot is counted on time is to fill it out as soon as you receive it and mail it in or drop it in the secure boxes in front of City Hall.

If you requested a mail in ballot but then decide to vote in person, do not return your ballot. Once your ballot is returned to the Clerk's Office, you won't be eligible to vote in person.

In-person early voting for the Sept. 1 Primary begins on Saturday, Aug. 22 and continues through Friday, Aug. 28 at Druker Auditorium at the Newton Free Library, [330 Homer Street](#). Polls at Druker Auditorium will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, with extended hours on Tuesday evening until 8:00 p.m., and on Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Polls will also be open on Sept. 1 across Newton.

Want to help? We need poll workers, a paid position. Find more information and an application [here](#) if you are interested in working at the polls on Tuesday, Sept. 1 and/or Tuesday, Nov. 3.

Riverside Update

The only two very large developments on the horizon here in Newton have been in front of the City Council in the last twelve months. Northland, on Needham Street, moved forward in March.

The other is a mixed-use housing, retail and commercial development proposed for the Riverside MBTA parking lot and former Indigo hotel along Grove Street in Lower Falls/Auburndale at the intersection of I-95 and the Mass Pike. It is in the final phase of hearings before the City Council's Land Use Committee.

Plans by Mark Development include 582 housing units, 88 of which would be permanently affordable, 253,827 square feet of office space, 150 hotel rooms, and 38,895 square feet of ground-floor commercial space in 10 buildings within the 14-acre site. One of the buildings will include a 1,971-car parking garage with 1,000 of the spaces dedicated for MBTA parking and this will be the first structure built as part of the project. All the buildings will be environmentally friendly (either passive house certified or LEED Gold/LEED Silver certifiable).

A new exit ramp from I-95 northbound directly into the new development, as well as a new roundabout at the Grove Street southbound I-95 exit/entrance ramp are also part of the plans.

The project also includes the developer paying \$1.3 million for traffic or neighborhood improvements in Lower Falls and Auburndale, \$3 million in improvements to the Riverside Greenway trails and \$1.5 million for capital improvements for the Williams Elementary School, and \$1.4 million toward sewer improvements.

The Land Use Committee will again be discussing Riverside at its August 18th meeting. Most likely, the project will come before the full City Council for a vote in September or October. Want more information? Click [here](#).

Judy Dore Day in Newton, 8/4/2020



Four Commissioners celebrated Judy Dore Day in the City of Newton at the Newton Farmers' Market yesterday. Judy helped found Newton's Farmers' Market over 40 years ago and she has been its heart, soul and effusive leader ever since. Since bringing her first vendor, Wally's Vegetables to the market, Judy has embraced the vendors as her extended family, including Wally, who is still a market participant today.

Photo: From the left, former Parks and Recreation Commissioner Russ Halloran, our current Parks, Recreation and Culture Commissioner Nicole Banks, and former Commissioners Fran Towle and Bob DeRubeis saluted Judy for her energy, passion and joy.

Help the Newton Police Reform Task Force

Following my [announcement](#) on June 15 of the creation of the Newton Police

Reform Task Force, [Chair Sonja Spears and the other 11 members](#) had their first meeting on July 8.

The Task Force knows that input from residents, businesspeople and others across our community is crucial to the work they are doing to understand, analyze and re-imagine policing in Newton.

- Please participate. [Sign up for email updates](#) about the Newton Police Reform Task Force.
- Peruse the [Task Force web page](#) that has resources and background information on the work of the Task Force and our Police Department, including some recorded excerpts from their meetings that will be uploaded online on the [Information on Meetings and Public Input](#) page as the Task Force makes them available.
- Provide comments, ask questions and raise issues through the Task Force's email: NPRTaskForce@newtonma.gov. A member of the Task Force will respond to all inquiries received but please know that while they will make every effort to provide a timely response, it may not always be possible for them to respond immediately.
- Take a survey. The Task Force will release a community online survey. Sign up for the email updates so you know when it is ready.
- Speak up. On Wednesday, August 19th from 5:30 – 7:30 pm, the Task Force would like to hear about community experiences with the Newton Police Department. Your 3-minute or shorter personal experience should respond to the following: Have you or a close family member ever had a significant personal interaction with a member/members of the NPD? What was the experience like? The Zoom link for the meeting and tentative dates for future public input meetings are on the [Information on the Meetings and Public Input](#) page. And again, please sign up for the email updates to stay informed.

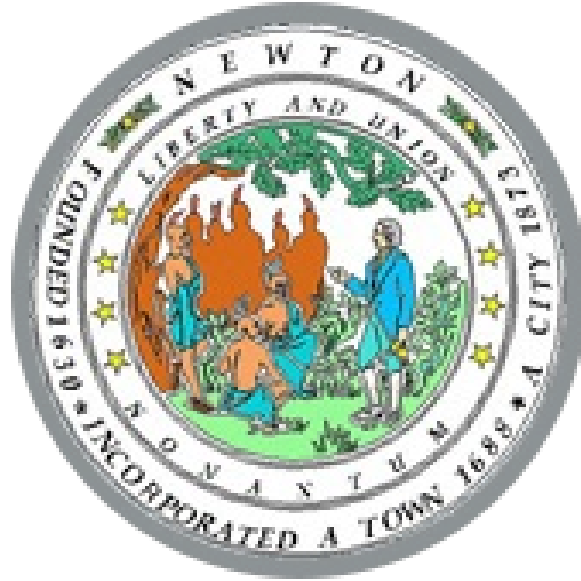
The Task Force is formally providing me with an update on their work every six weeks. I look forward to sharing their first set of insights later this month. (More information on the [goals, responsibilities, and timeline](#) of the Newton Police Reform Task Force are here.)

I am so grateful to this group and for the help of our community as we double down on the good work of the Newton Police Department and find ways to do even better.

Our City Seal

The Newton City Seal was created 155 years ago. A lot has changed since 1865, which raises some key questions:

- In what historical context was the seal designed and adopted, and what can the study of history tell us about what it conveys?
- Is the seal's imagery still relevant in the 21st century?
- Is the City's logo readable and meaningful? Is it good design?
- What does the seal mean to you, if anything?
- Are there other graphics and/or words that would better portray the identity, spirit and values of Newton?



Last fall and winter, I started meeting with our Director of Historic Newton Lisa Dady, City Clerk David Olson and Dana Hanson, our Director of Community Engagement and Inclusion, to look at the history, origin and iconography of the City seal (which also appears on our City flag) and to discuss the seal's role in representing the City. A summary of that history which Lisa Dady pulled together can be found [here](#).

Now I think it's time to take a deeper look at our seal. I'm calling for an Ad Hoc City Seal Working Group to be formed to study our seal (and our flag). The Working Group will work to answer the key questions above and more, and to report back to me with recommendations about whether to change the seal, and if so, what that design might look like.

Since the context of history is essential to understanding the existing symbols (in many ways they are historical artifacts) and history should inform the future, I have asked Lisa and Historic Newton to lead the working group and the public process. If possible, I'm hoping the work can finish up by the end of this year. (Please know that the City Council will vote on any recommended changes.)

If you have questions or comments about the history of the seal, or the working group's process, please be in touch with Lisa Dady at ldady@newtonma.gov. Interested in serving? Send along a few paragraphs about why you're interested and a resume to Lisa by Wednesday, Aug. 19.

Marijuana Research Facility

I am signing a provisional Host Community Agreement (HCA) with Curaleaf Processing to open one of the first marijuana research facilities in Massachusetts. Curaleaf still needs a special permit from the City Council for its proposed location at 241 Riverview Avenue, a former lab space, in the industrial zone off Rumford Avenue in Auburndale. In addition, it will need a license from the Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission before moving forward.

Curaleaf Processing will be a research facility, with no sales of marijuana or marijuana related products.

I am signing the provisional HCA with Curaleaf after our Host Agreement Advisory Group met with the applicant and reviewed their plans for security, public health, and community relations and examined their experience, equity, sustainability and economic impact (including 13 new jobs).

My letter to the City Council on Curaleaf (which also includes an update on the status of marijuana retailers in Newton) and the Executive Summary of the Advisory Group's recommendation is [here](#) and [here](#).

Fight the Bite!

Newton's West Nile virus risk has been upgraded to "moderate," along with nearby communities including Boston, Brookline, Watertown, Cambridge, Somerville and others. Based on criteria established by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, a moderate risk level indicates, "Infection with West Nile virus is likely or has already occurred." (Newton's EEE (Eastern Equine Encephalitis) risk level is "remote," the lowest level.)



Mosquitoes trapped in Newton on July 21 tested positive for West Nile virus. There have been no reports of human or animal West Nile virus (WNV) infection statewide so far this year.

WNV is most commonly spread to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. Most people who are infected with WNV (approximately 80%) will have no symptoms.

A smaller number of people who become infected (~ 20%) will have symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands. They may also develop a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back.

- Schedule outdoor events to avoid the hours between dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active.
- When outdoors, wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt and socks.
- Use a repellent with **DEET** (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), **permethrin**, **picaridin** (KBR 3023), **IR3535** (3-[N-butyl-N-acetyl]-aminopropionic acid) or **oil of lemon eucalyptus** [p-menthane 3, 8-diol (PMD)] according to the instructions on the product label. More information on choosing and using repellents safely is included in the [MDPH Mosquito Repellents fact sheet](#).
- Keep mosquitoes out of the house by repairing any holes in screens and making sure they are tightly attached to doors and windows.
- Remove areas of standing water around the house.

Warmly,

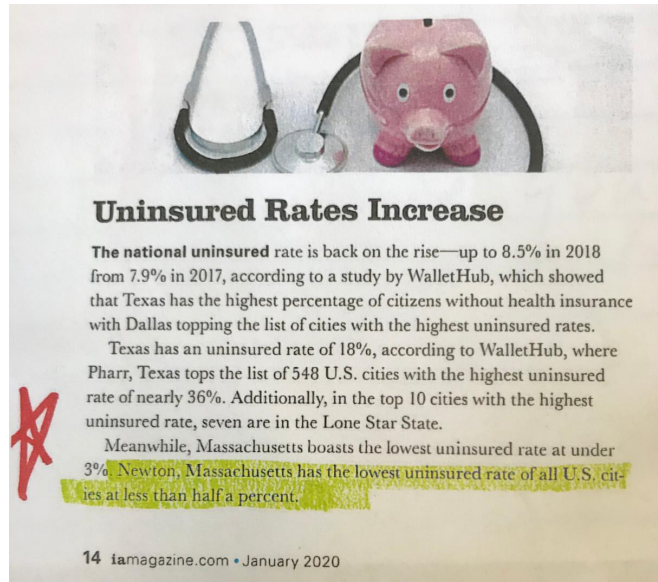
Ruthanne

P.S. Another virtual Zoom session on [bike safety](#) geared toward riders in grades 3-6 is being offered by our friends from Safe Routes to School with help from the Newton Free Library. Go over the "ABCs of biking," proper bike and helmet fit, what to wear and where to ride on Tuesday, Aug. 11 at 4:30 p.m. Pre-register at newtonfreelibrary.net before 4:30 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 10.

P.P.S. Have you noticed more litter around and about? Our beautification crews tasked with keeping our village centers, parks and recreation areas clean have definitely seen an uptick. Please find a Bigbelly or a barrel (we have a lot of them!) to toss our wrappers, take-out containers, bottles, cans and other trash. As the slogan on the Bigbelly's say, Let's Keep Newton Clean and Green.

P.P.P.S. Good news for people who walk along the Charles River Pathway System. Newton received a \$56,700 state MassTrails Grant to begin the process of constructing a new, fully accessible Christina Street Bridge over the Charles River just off Needham Street (near the Price Center). The City will provide \$14,700 in matching funds to survey existing conditions and begin a structural review of the current bridge which is in disrepair and closed, leaving a gap in the trail.

P.P.P.P.S. Newton is once again number one. We lead the nation's Cities as having the lowest number of uninsured residents with less than half of one percent uninsured (Pharr, Texas, which tops the list has nearly 36 percent uninsured). The figures from seven months ago are a bit dated, but still interesting. Thanks go to Newton resident Bill Cleary for finding this in Independent Agent magazine and letting us know.



P.P.P.P.P.S. Green Newton's vetted partner, Homeworks Energy, is providing virtual, no-cost home energy assessments using smartphones. Through the end of September, you may qualify for a completely free, no cost home insulation, regardless of income level. During a phone assessment, an energy specialist will develop recommendations personalized to your home's needs. Fill out the online request form [here](#) or call 781-305-3319, option 2, and mention you were referred by Green Newton.

P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Overdue: Confronting Race & Racism in Newton begins next Wednesday, August 12 at 6:30 p.m. with a virtual conversation with Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, Director of the Boston University Center for Antiracist Research. Zoom space for this event is limited (we increased it to 3,000 but 2,300 spaces are already reserved) and requires registering in advance [here](#).

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Thanks to Mark Kelly of our Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture, the Schultz family and all the participants for such a spirited kids triathlon virtual event supporting youth fitness, inclusion, goal setting and joy this year.



(I know, too many P.S.s! My apologies Ruthanne)

