

Mayor's Update

Current Cases

There are 773 Newton residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 through Tuesday, June 30, according to preliminary reports. With 768 cases one week ago (through Tuesday, June 23), we are seeing few new COVID-19 cases being reported among Newton residents, similar to what is being seen statewide. I am also again grateful to report for the third straight week that no new fatalities among Newton residents have been reported. We continue to remember the 118 COVID-19 positive Newton residents who died since we began tracking the virus.



We're getting more evidence that masks slow the spread of COVID-19. Two days ago, for example, the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention updated its informational [website](#) about the use of face coverings. COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice (e.g., while shouting or singing). The CDC also notes that a significant portion of individuals with COVID-19 lack symptoms, yet they can transmit the virus. Thus, all of us can help protect people around us and reduce the spread of the virus by wearing face coverings in public settings when around people outside of our household, especially when physical distancing is difficult.

Schools This Fall

One of the most challenging aspects of COVID-19 is planning for the new school year. The Newton Public Schools staff will be working with faculty throughout the summer to plan for a healthy and safe opening in September. Just last week, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) issued its initial guidance for the fall. The DESE guidance is predicated on public health data, which will be monitored throughout the summer. The next step is for NPS to begin applying those guidelines and requirements here in Newton. (The DESE *Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance* is [here](#).)

Here are the basics from DESE:

- Masks: Everyone Grade 2 and above and all staff
- Hands: Frequent cleaning and sanitizing
- Physical Distancing: Aim for 6' (CDC guidelines) and no less than 3' (WHO guidelines)
- Feeling Unwell: Students and staff stay home if not feeling well
- All School Districts: Plan for in person instruction, but develop 3 learning models: (1) all in-person with physical distancing, (2) a hybrid of some students in person and some remote, and (3) all remote learning (in case of another surge in positive cases)
- Space Considerations: Each district is asked to estimate how many desks can be in each classroom. If the number of students for the size of a particular

classroom doesn't work, districts may need to set up another classroom (e.g., in a library or a gym) OR may need a hybrid model of some students in school and others remote on any given week and/or day.

- DESE Guidance: More guidance coming in July

Read Superintendent David Fleishman's recent letter to the school community [here](#).

The twin goals of having students learning in-person and keeping students and educators safe while also having backup plans for remote learning (in part or in full) is challenging, to say the least. Parents, students and teachers have a lot of questions right now and the staff at NPS will be communicating frequently, both to share information and request feedback, as plans unfold.

Small Business Recovery Grants

We've awarded economic recovery grants to 27 small Newton businesses. The City received federal CARES Act funding in early May and we targeted \$300,000 to help Newton's small brick and mortar establishments facing financial challenges because of COVID-19.

We invited businesses to submit applications for either microbusiness grants of \$10,000 (5 or fewer employees) or small business grants of \$15,000 (6 to 20 employees). We received a total of 107 applications (71 microbusiness and 36 small business). A review committee consisting of two Economic Development Commission members and Newton Planning staff reviewed submitted applications with a specific set of criteria, including:

- The depth of the hardship on the business from the pandemic
- The length of time the business has been in Newton
- The overall business profile outlook before COVID-19
- The location of the business in a village center
- The level of detail and confidence provided in their recovery plan
- If the business is owned by, likely to employ, or serves low and moderate income people
- The extent to which a business would serve Newton residents on a frequent basis
- The extent to which businesses were able to receive other federal business assistance

Notably, the majority of applications received came from business in either the personal service (hair and nail salons) or restaurant categories, industries which have suffered disproportionately because of the abrupt and complete closures.

A total of twenty (20) microbusinesses and seven (7) small businesses received grants with the \$300,000 available (a list can be found [here](#)). The businesses receiving the grants are spread across the City and are consistent with the overall pool of applications; they are intentionally weighted toward those brick and mortar personal service and food establishments that Newton residents have missed and we look forward to their successful return.

Newton Unemployment at 9.6%

The latest unemployment figures from the State show the significant effect COVID-19 has had on people in Newton. We saw an increase in unemployment from 2.2% to 9.6% this May over last May, and an increase of 1% compared to a month ago.

Right now, this translates into 4,021 people unemployed among a workforce of 42,016 in Newton, according to state figures. While a consequential jump, Newton is experiencing much lower unemployment than the State as a whole which is at 16.3% currently.

Location	May 2020	April 2020	May 2019
MA	16.30%	16.00%	2.90%
Newton	9.60%	8.60%	2.20%

See statewide data [here](#).

Improving Mobility and Look & Feel of Newtonville



Have you noticed changes on Walnut Street in the Newtonville village center lately? Work began in March to improve mobility and the “look and feel.” You will find new, wider sidewalks with accessible curb ramps, bike lanes, new traffic signals, new line striping and crosswalks, and a newly milled and paved Walnut Street from Newtonville Avenue to Elm Road and Austin Street. New paving and new sidewalks are being installed on Austin Street as well.



New street trees will be planted in November and streetlights, benches and chairs are on order. (Many of those are delayed as COVID-19 shut down factories.) But, in general, the work is way ahead of schedule as the limited amount of traffic helped us go faster.

Find periodic updates about the Newtonville Enhancement Project [here](#).

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. With July 4th landing on a Saturday this year, there are no delays to trash and recycling collection this week or next. Please set your bins out for collection on your

regular day.

P.P.S. Join me in taking the “Go Purple for Alzheimer’s Challenge” and showing our support for these vulnerable residents, saying thank you to their caregivers, and raising awareness about Alzheimer’s Disease and dementia. Thanks go to Newton resident Walter Frankel for challenging me. Watch our video below:

