

Mayor's Update

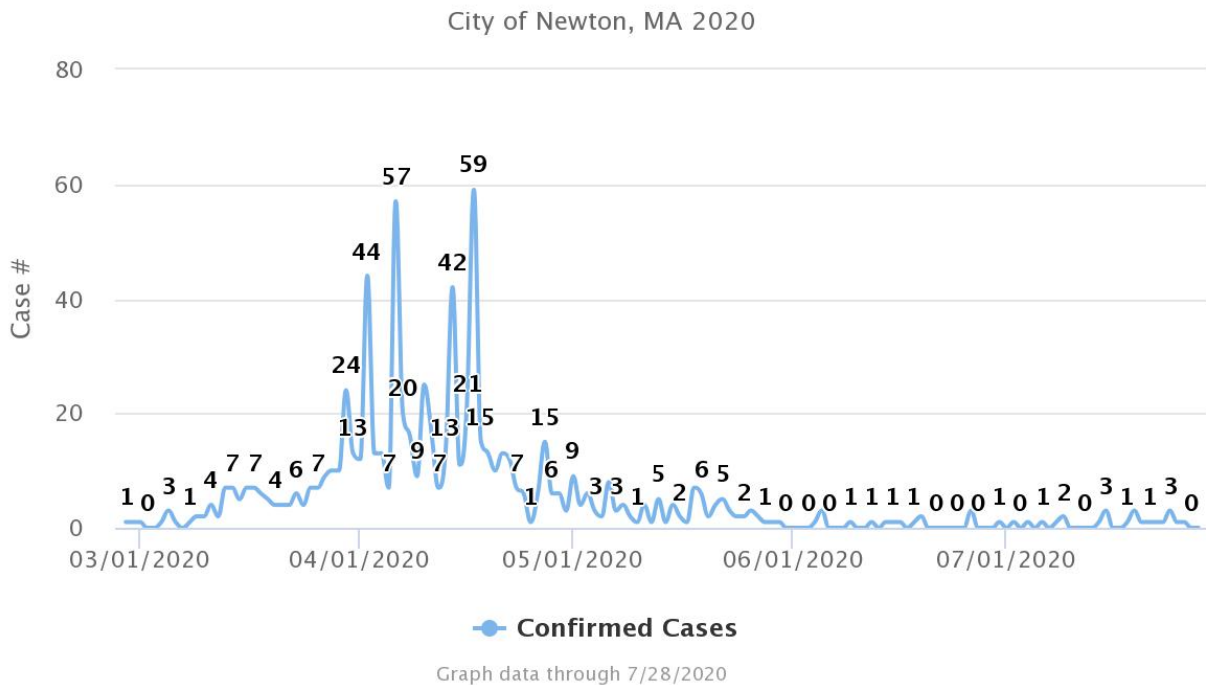
COVID-19 Update and Losses

There are 801 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among Newton residents, according to preliminary data through July 28, 2020. At first blush, this is 12 new cases from a week ago. Looking more closely at the data from the symptom onset [graph](#), only 7 additional Newton residents had a symptom onset date (or test date) between last Tuesday, July 22 and yesterday, Tuesday, July 28.



Additional daily case counts (based on symptom onset date or test date) have remained fairly stable over the last few weeks.

Newton Cases by Symptom Onset Date



COVID-19 in Newton

Total Cases
801

Total Deaths
125

*As of 7/28

Approximately 82% of Newton confirmed cases (excluding the 40 percent who are in long-term care/assisted living facilities) have met the criteria to discontinue isolation. This is up from approximately 78% in late June and is stable from last week when we also reported 82 percent.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health reports “positivity rates” for each city and town. The figures are updated [here](#) each Wednesday and reflect the number of people who test positive for COVID-19 among those who have been tested over the past 14 days.

The positivity rate in Newton today is 0.98%. (Newton’s rate was lower two weeks

ago on July 15 at 0.70%.) Newton's rate is lower than the current statewide positivity rate of 1.74%. (For comparison, Massachusetts' positivity rate was 1.91% on July 14.) At our peak, Massachusetts had a positive test rate of 22.6% on April 15. Nationwide the positivity rate today is 10%, according to the Centers for Disease and Prevention [here](#).

With sadness, we have been notified of 3 additional Newton residents who previously tested positive for COVID-19 and died. This brings our total losses to 125. This virus continues to take a heavy toll.

We can't let our guard down. We are continuing to see flattened numbers here in Newton and in our Commonwealth because of the care we've all taken, including our adherence to wearing masks, staying 6 feet apart, washing our hands and staying home if we're not feeling well. We honor those who have died by continuing to be vigilant.

The Massachusetts [COVID-19 Travel Order](#) goes into effect this Saturday, August 1. The Commonwealth has slowed the spread of COVID-19 and has been gradually re-opening the economy, and now all visitors have a mandate to help us keep transmission levels low.

All visitors entering Massachusetts as of August 1 who do not meet an exemption are required to complete the Massachusetts [Travel Form](#) prior to arrival and quarantine for 14 days or produce a negative COVID-19 test result that has been administered up to 72 hours prior to arrival in Massachusetts. This includes returning residents and students.

Who is exempt? Individuals traveling from a [lower-risk state](#), people who are passing through Massachusetts on their way to another state, persons commuting for work or school, patients seeking or receiving medical treatment, military personnel traveling to Massachusetts at the order or directive of a Federal or State military authority, and workers providing critical infrastructure services are exempt.

Looking for a COVID-19 test? Massachusetts has an interactive [map](#) where you can search for a testing site based on criteria such as distance from your location, accepts MassHealth, and referral not required.

Schools & Tents

Thirty-eight (38) open-air tents of varying sizes will be installed at our 22 schools in the coming weeks to provide more than 40,000 square feet of additional, flexible, covered outdoor space for our teachers and students as we continue planning for the coming school year.



The tents will be set up in early September and will be come down when weather dictates.

Specific plans for how schools will open in the fall are evolving and we will continue to provide information as it comes into focus. The latest NPS information about plans for opening school can be found [here](#).

Last week the Newton Public Schools held community ZOOM meetings to provide information about planning and preparations. (They were well “attended” by nearly 3,000 families.) Follow the links below to listen to a recording or see the slide presentations:

[Google Slides Presentation - High School Level](#)
[Link to high school video presentation](#)

[Google Slides Presentation - Middle School Level](#)
[Link to middle school video presentation](#)

[Google Slides Presentation - Elementary School Level](#)
[Link to elementary school video presentation](#)

Bluebikes Coming

Bluebikes, the bike share company currently operating in Boston, Brookline, Somerville, Everett and Cambridge, will bring six stations and 43 bikes to Newton by this fall as well as expand into four other communities—Watertown, Arlington, Chelsea and Revere.



A MassDOT Workforce Transportation grant made the expansion possible. Newton’s portion of the \$340,000 grant is \$80,000 and we will provide \$20,000 in City funding as a match.

The locations of the six Newton Bluebike stations are still being determined. We’re focusing on the northeast section of Newton so bicyclists can use bike stations in Watertown and Cambridge for pick up or drop off. Once the six new stations are added in each of the four new communities, the combined Bluebikes network will include nearly 400 stations and 4,000 bikes across 10 communities in the Greater Boston area.

As a reminder, Bluebikes is replacing Lime Bikes, the dockless bike share which pulled out of Newton and 15 other cities and towns after it moved its business model primarily to scooters. In contrast to Lime Bikes, Bluebikes uses a “dock” system in which bikes are picked up and returned, or “docked,” at stations. The expansion into Newton will start with this docking system but Bluebikes is considering a dockless system in the future.

Kudos to Director of Transportation Planning Nicole Freedman who has worked hard on this project. I’m glad to have a bike share in Newton that also allows bicyclists to pick up a bike here and drop it off nearby in Brookline, Watertown, Boston and Cambridge.

Swap Shop Reopening

The [Swap Shop](#) at Newton’s Rumford Avenue Resource Recovery Center ([115 Rumford Ave.](#), Auburndale) will be reopening in August. We are instituting a number of operational changes to keep us all safe and healthy so we can clear out our clutter

as we avoid adding to the waste stream.

(Photo: With Swap Shop volunteers at the grand opening in 2018.)

To ensure physical distancing, residents will need to make an appointment at the Swap Shop by calling Customer Service at (617) 796-1000 Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.



We will have a combination of drop-off only days and shopping only days. Items dropped off on a drop-off day will be quarantined for seven days, then put out for shopping the following week. That cycle will continue through October. The first and third Fridays of each month will be drop off only; the second, fourth, and fifth Fridays will be for shopping only.

Friday, August 7 will be the first drop off day. The following Friday, August 14, will be the first shopping day.

The accepted items list has also been modified. Sorry, we won't be accepting clothing, accessories, linens, or other textiles. Only items smaller than a carry-on suitcase will be accepted; if you need help unloading from your car, it's too big, and will not be accepted.

Other safety protocols from the Newton Health and Human Services Department include:

- Masks required for residents and volunteers.
- Shoppers limited to four at any one time.
- Items spaced to maintain physical distancing on shopping days.
- All items set up outside.

As the Swap Shop is run by volunteers, and it's now entirely outside, it will be also only be open as weather permits.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Summer is a great time to install heat pumps. Despite being called "heat" pumps, they provide air conditioning as well as heating. They are efficient and quiet. They can replace natural gas and heating oil, thereby reducing the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. The Heat Smart Newton program is a collaboration of the City of Newton; Green Newton; Newton Mothers Out Front; and 350 Mass, Newton Node; its funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center. The program has now selected its two vetted suppliers, New England Ductless and Muirfield Mechanical. Get more information at the Heat Smart Newton website [here](#).



P.P.S. News that MVP quarterback Cam Newton is suiting up with the New England Patriots this season got us thinking. Is there a better place for a man with the name Newton to live than right here in Newton? We had a little fun delivering a “welcome” package of Newton namesake Fig Newtons to the Patriots for their new Newton. We have no idea if NFL COVID-19 protocols will allow Newton to actually receive the Newton gift box. We’ll keep you posted if we hear from the QB.

(Photo: Citizen Assistance Officer Linda Plazonja with Fig Newtons and a note for Pats QB Cam Newton.)

