

Mayor's Update

Almost No Additional Current Cases and No New Losses

There are 768 Newton residents who have tested positive for COVID-19, according to preliminary data through June 23, 2020. This is an increase of 3 people during the last week as we reported 765 confirmed cases through Tuesday, June 17.



Of 768 people who have tested positive, 42 percent are people living in a Newton long-term care or assisted living facility (a percentage that is remaining quite consistent). Approximately 79 percent of Newton positive cases (excluding people in long-term/assisted living facilities) have met the criteria to discontinue isolation. Again, this percentage is holding steady as last week (through June 17), it was 78 percent.

The symptom onset graph is also updated with data through June 23.

Newton Cases by Symptom Onset Date



I am so happy to be able to report for the second week in a row that the number of Newton residents who tested positive for COVID-19 and died remains at 118.

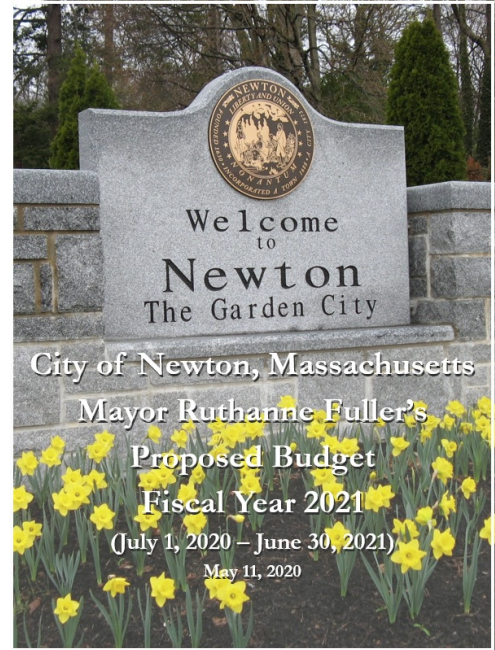
COVID-19 cases in our area are stabilizing because of the work we're all doing – wearing face coverings, distancing, practicing hand hygiene and staying home if not feeling well. Our collective actions are saving lives, especially as we begin re-

opening and re-emerging.

Budget Is Passed

The \$439.5 operating budget for the City of Newton I proposed in May passed 20-4 last night by the City Council.

I made two revisions in the final budget during the Council's deliberations. First, I added \$100,000 for Sunday hours at the Newton Free Library once the re-opening plan is fully in place. Second, I moved \$200,000 from the Police Department budget that had been allocated for cruiser replacements to the Mayor's Office; this funding will allow the soon-to-be-formed Newton Police Reform Task Force to have the option of hiring a facilitator or a consultant as it undertakes a holistic assessment of the department and makes recommendations on the policies, procedures, practices and overall strategic direction for Newton's policing effort. (With the help of City Council President Susan Albright, we are currently reviewing more than 100 applicants, and I expect to have an announcement about the Task Force members next week.).



What are some of the “big picture” items in the budget? The economic slump will mean \$9.55 million less in revenues than we would have projected a short time ago. While we slowed spending except for the most necessary items, the School budget is increasing by \$6.8 million. The Police budget is down very slightly. Core municipal services are protected and assistance for vulnerable residents and COVID-19 related health and safety measures are funded. We are forgoing \$2.5 million of spending on our roads. We paused almost all capital improvement projects. We have kept the City's Rainy Day Stabilization Reserve Fund intact to help us absorb potential additional reductions in revenues or state aid and costs from catastrophic weather events. We have no layoffs of permanent, full-time employees.

You can read a detailed budget summary [here](#), or the full budget [here](#).

I know there are people, especially our young people, demanding defunding the police. Last night, the City Council debated a resolution that would have cut funds to pay the salaries of a number of Police Officers – essentially defunding open officers' positions. I opposed this measure and the City Council defeated it by a 13-10 (one abstention) vote.

I have called for re-imagining the Police Department and we will see in the coming months what the study by the Newton Police Reform Task Force brings. We must decide first what we want to do and then budget accordingly.

Together we will be leaders. Rather than making indiscriminate cuts in police personnel with no logic and no data, we will apply thoughtful judgment. We will think deeply, understand our shortcomings, embrace what is working in our Police Department – and there are good officers doing good work – and together decide on even better ways to provide critical services.

In the meantime, we must ensure that our 911 calls are answered, the 50,000+ requests that come in per year for help are met, officers are available to respond to an accident scene or to show up when a resident is concerned about their safety, that an older resident dealing with a cybercrime can be assisted Together we will make sure we are staffed this fiscal year to take care of the safety of the people of this City.

You can read my full letter to the City Council outlining my position on this issue [here](#).

Newton Power Choice and Electricity Prices

Newton's municipal aggregation program, Newton Power Choice, is the City's electricity program for our residents and businesses. A form of group purchasing, Newton Power Choice lets Newton significantly increase our investment in clean energy.

Most of us have the "standard" Newton Power Choice rate. The "standard" rate provides for customers to match 62% of their electricity with local renewable sources such as solar and wind. By contrast, Eversource Basic Service provides for only 16% renewable electricity. All of us also have other options as well, including opting up to 100% renewable power.

The 22-month Newton Power Choice program started in April 2019. The program's prices are stable throughout the 22 months. In contrast, Eversource's Basic Service prices change every six months for residential and small business customers, and

Eversource's prices are higher in the first six months of the year and lower in the last six months.



Over the 22-month course of the Newton Power Choice contract, the typical Newton Power Choice customer at 62% renewable power will have spent approximately \$0.60 per month *less* relative to Eversource Basic Service. The same customer who opted up to 100% renewable powers will have spent approximately \$2.27 per month *more* as compared to Basic Service.

These figures include the Eversource Basic Service rate that the State has just approved for July to December 2020.

Eversource just announced these rates for the last half of the year and they are down significantly. The significant reduction in the Eversource Basic Service price comes as a result of the current glut of natural gas. The very mild winter and gas pipeline improvements have helped create this glut.

I want all Newton electricity customers to know that the "typical" Newton Power Choice customer will be paying \$11 more per month during July to December this year than an Eversource Basic Service customer. We expect the Eversource Basic Service rate to increase again in January, meaning that a Newton Power Choice customer will once again likely be paying less than if she had remained on Eversource Basic Service.

At any time, customers can leave Newton Power Choice without a cancellation fee. At any time, someone who had opted out can join the program. We also can opt up to 100% or opt down to the State's minimum requirement of 16% renewable power at any time.

The new Eversource rates start on July 1:

- Eversource January – June 2020 Basic Service price for residential (16% green): 12.42 cents/kwh
- Just-approved Eversource July – December 2020 Basic Service price for residential (16% green): 9.88 cents/kwh
- Newton Power Choice prices for 22 months: Standard rate for 60% renewable = 11.34 cents/kwh and 100% green option = 11.75 cents/kwh

What can a “typical” Newton resident using 710 kwh/month expect to pay for the electricity portion of the bill for the next 6 months at the standard rate?

- Eversource Basic Service (16% renewable) = \$70/month
- Newton Power Choice Standard (62% renewable) = \$81/month
- Newton Power Choice 100% green option = \$83/month

The City introduced Newton Power Choice to support the development of clean renewables like solar and wind. If your budget permits, consider choosing the 100% renewables option for the remainder of the 22-month program.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Facing food insecurity? Newton's Grab & Go meal program is continuing this summer. Pick up meals weekdays from 10:00 a.m. to noon at Newton North High School, Newton South High School or 150 Jackson Road. (We will be closed on Friday, July 3, but extra food will be included in the Thursday packages.) Info on more resources can be found [here](#).



P.P.S. Calling all kids, tweens and teens: the 2020 Summer Reading Program *Imagine Your Story: Fantasy, Myths and Fairytales* has begun. Visit the Newton Free Library's [Summer Reading Page](#)

online to discover fantastic reading suggestions and to sign up for the program. You'll create an online reading log to keep track of all the great books you read this summer. You'll also be able to participate in a variety of fun challenges. All “reading” counts - read a book, magazine, or e-book; listen to an audiobook; read aloud to a sibling; or read aloud with your family. Want help getting started? Try these videos: [3 Easy Steps](#) and [How to Use Beanstack!](#)

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 July, you may qualify for 100% off the cost of an approved home insulation project regardless of income level (normally 75% of the cost of eligible insulation is covered). During the phone assessment, a professional energy specialist will develop an energy report with 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.

