

Mayor's Update

Current Cases and Losses

There are 760 Newton residents who have tested positive for COVID-19, according to preliminary data through Tuesday, June 2. This is an increase of one person since Monday. Approximately 42 percent of these positive cases (~320) are among people living in a Newton long-term care or assisted living facility.



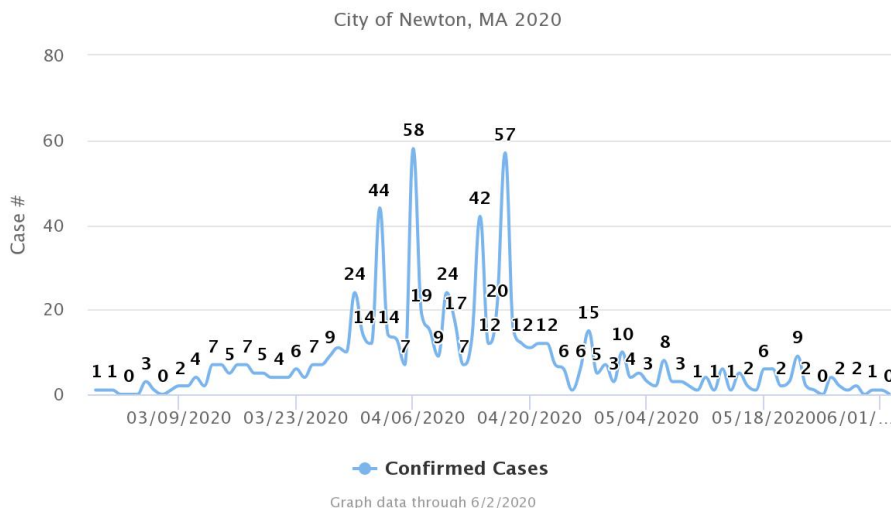
I am sad to report that altogether 116 Newton residents have died who had tested positive for COVID-19, an increase of nine Newtonians since last week (May 27). (Keep in mind that we report deaths weekly as we learn about them in Newton's Health and Human Services Department, but they may have died earlier, prior to this past week.) My heart aches for the loved ones of those who have passed.

COVID-19 in Newton	
Total Cases	760
Total Deaths	116
*As of 6/2	

Approximately 75 percent of Newton's positive cases (excluding those living in a long-term care or assisted living facility for which we are not provided with the information) have now met the criteria to discontinue isolation and are considered "recovered." This percentage has remained relatively consistent over quite a few weeks. As such, this is good news as many people who were diagnosed with COVID-19 recover.

Newton's Health and Human Services Department has provided an expanded data report this week which is available [here](#). The various health indicator data remains consistent from previous reports. The symptom onset graph continues to show few new cases in the last month or so and a bell curve since the peak in mid-April.

Newton Cases by Symptom Onset Date



On the Newton COVID-19 data page on our website, we have added a slide with statewide race and ethnicity data from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. It is also available on their [website](#) and updated daily. This data on race and ethnicity is not currently available by city/town. We know health disparities which result in worse health outcomes for people of color existed prior to the pandemic and are amplified now.

Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on everyone is critically important and we also try to be sensitive to residents who are particularly vulnerable for a range of reasons. Newton strives to meet the needs of those who most need help through joint efforts of our public health and social service personnel. Through our dialogues with people who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, we also identify residents who have other unmet needs such as food security, housing security, medical resources, and much more and refer them to assistance from our social workers. In this way, we promote comprehensive community health in Newton. For more information on available resources, please go to COVID-19 Community Resource [page](#) or call 617-796-1420.

Black Lives Matter

This past Sunday at a rally at City Hall, I heard Black Newtonians speak of their pain and outrage because of yet another killing of a Black man by police. Their pain is real. Their exhaustion is understandable. Their outrage is justifiable.

Chief MacDonald and I share this outrage and condemn the actions of the Minneapolis police officers that led to the death of George Floyd. (Read Chief MacDonald's statement [here](#).)

As our City's Chief of Police, David MacDonald remains deeply committed to the mission of our Police Department— a mission that respects each and every individual, treats all people with dignity, and calls for partnering closely with our community in our operational philosophy of Community Policing/Community Engagement.

Yesterday, I read with despair a Boston Globe article about Tim Duncan, a Newton resident. Then I watched Mr. Duncan's powerful video and heard his serious concerns (click [here](#)). Mr. Duncan spoke of being a Black man who was abruptly stopped and questioned by Newton Police Officers, one of whom had his gun drawn, while walking to the grocery store with his wife a few weeks ago. (The Newton Police's rationale for questioning Mr. Duncan is elaborated in a timeline, click [here](#).)

I understand why he spoke out. He should have. His voice is another important part of the powerful chorus protesting racism and injustice in our country.

Yesterday, I was proud to see the hundreds of emails that streamed into the Mayor's Office demanding change, most from our young people. They poured out their despair about the ongoing racism across our country and the heavy toll it is taking on health, employment, educational achievement, housing and daily life for people of color. I hear your voices and your ideas. And, thankfully, you will help us do better.

As Mayor of Newton, I know there is systemic racism in our society. None of us are immune. I am not immune. Newton is not immune, and the Newton Police Department is not immune.

We must seize this opportunity to make sure we, in Newton, are living up to our core values of respect, diversity and acceptance.

Our community and the Newton Police Department will seize this moment and take action. NPD will review our Use of Force policy, updating it to ban chokeholds and to require police officers to intervene when witnessing excessive force. We will reevaluate our training for officers, which currently includes de-escalation, racial bias, and fair and impartial policing. We will re-examine our police policies and our procedures for ensuring compliance.

Importantly, we will engage our community in this work. We will listen even more attentively to our residents, our students, their parents and caregivers, and the people who work in Newton. We will continue to strengthen the relationships we have already built—our Police leadership meets regularly with a group of parents who are leading vital conversations on how to combat racial bias.

I will report back to you on what we have found and what we will change. Newton together will bend the arc of justice. Check out Families Organizing for Racial Justice, a grassroots Newton community committed to inclusion and diversity in our schools and community [here](#) for one way to be actively involved in this work. Zoom into meetings of Newton's [Human Rights Commission](#) which advocates for diversity and combats discrimination.

I commit myself and our city to the same promise Mr. Duncan made in his video – *We have to do better. And I promise you today that I will do better.*

Continued Grab & Go Meals Through the Summer & Help With P-EBT Card Use

Even as this unusual school year ends, the [Grab & Go](#) meal program from 10:00 a.m. – noon weekdays at Newton North HS, Newton South HS, and 150 Jackson Road continues through the summer months.

If you need some help putting food on the table, please visit [here](#) for a list of resources for food in Newton.

We also received important information today from the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education that applies to some of our families who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. Families whose students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches but had not previously been receiving SNAP benefits started to receive P-EBT cards (the pandemic electronic benefits transfer card) in the mail on Friday, May 29, but many are having trouble activating their card.

To activate your P-EBT Card, follow the steps below. Keep your card; more funds may be added later.

1. Call the phone number on the back of the card:
 - Massachusetts' P-EBT Hotline (800) 997-2555
2. Create a PIN:
 - Enter your P-EBT card number. You will then be prompted to enter the last 4 digits of your social security number. Be careful! Do not enter the last 4 digits of your social security number. Instead, enter the last 4 digits of your child's case number that was provided on the letter you got in the mail. Next, enter your child's date of birth (using the 2 digit month + 2 digit day + 4 digit year. Example: 04/06/2005)

- If you do not have the letter that has your child's case number on it which is needed to activate the P-EBT card, complete this form to request a new one: www.projectbread.org/letter

Athletic Fields Start Opening June 15

Good news for our leagues that use our fields. Newton's Department of Parks, Recreation & Culture will begin issuing permits for the use of athletic fields for youth sports.

Expect to see youngsters on the fields starting on Monday, June 15. We're following the guidelines that Governor Baker just issued and the leagues must follow all the safety restrictions. For example, the City's sport leagues will be able to hold try-outs, clinics, and no-contact drills and practice sessions so kids can be outside having fun. Programs must separate participants into groups of no more than 10 (including coaches and staff). Scrimmages and games are not permitted at this time in the Phase II reopening as participants are required to maintain 6-foot distancing. Since the participants must maintain 6 feet of distancing, the guidelines allow the participants to remove face coverings. Coaches, volunteers, chaperones and spectators do need to wear face coverings.

When the fields are not in use by permitted sport groups, please feel free to enjoy these open-space areas while maintaining social distancing. For more information about the state's Phase II requirements on the use of athletic fields, click [here](#).

Newton Al Fresco Starts as Soon as Monday

The "Newton Al Fresco" program to assist restaurants with the start-up of outdoor dining received a kick-start yesterday from the City's Board of License Commissioners. The board voted to allow restaurants to use sidewalk space in front of their establishment and any outdoor space it owns or leases. The restaurants can go "Al Fresco" and serve food and non-alcoholic beverages as early as next Monday if allowed by the Governor's phased reopening plan. Interested restaurants can simply complete a waiver form and provide a sketch of the areas they intend to place tables and chairs.

The Governor issued a new Executive Order on Monday allowing cities and towns to bypass the longer state process for outdoor alcohol licenses. In response, the Board of License Commissioners will also now allow current alcohol license holders to submit an application to serve alcohol outdoors in these sidewalk and other outdoor spaces it owns or leases. The application, which will be available by the end of the day today on the City website [here](#), will require a simple sketch of the layout of the outdoor seating, proof of insurance and proof of ownership of the service area. The service area has to be enclosed by a barrier and maintain sidewalk accessible. The application will be reviewed and approved administratively by the Commission without the need for a hearing.

The City will begin in the next several days placing picnic benches in village center parks and a few city parking lots near multiple restaurants for take-out eating.



In another boost for our City restaurants, Newton's Commissioner of Public Works today issued a temporary general permit allowing sandwich boards to be placed on sidewalks to help restaurants communicate that they are open, what their hours of operation are and availability of services during the COVID-19 state of emergency.

Our restaurants are so important to our community and they really need our support right now.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

(With Human Rights Commission Chair Hattie Kerwin Derrick and her children raising the Pride flag.)

P.S. In these difficult economic times no one wants to throw money away ... you may be one of the four million people to receive their economic stimulus payment through a debit card in the mail. Unfortunately, the envelope and letter kind of look like other promotional materials for a debit card. But, it's not. Don't throw it out accidentally. For more information and to see images of what the mailing looks like, visit <https://www.eipcard.com/>

P.P.S. On Tuesday as representatives of our Human Rights Commission and I met for a virtual Pride Flag Raising Ceremony, we were joined virtually by Amit Paley, originally raised here in Newton and CEO of [The Trevor Project](#). Amit's message for a "meaningful and changeful Pride" was exceptional. He is the third speaker in this 12 minute video of the ceremony [here](#).

P.P.P.S.

