

Mayor's Update

To help reduce the impact of the regional surge of COVID-19 cases in our city, I will be joining the City of Boston and others in returning the City of Newton back to a modified Phase Two, Step Two of the [Reopening Massachusetts](#) plan beginning on Friday, December 18. (Please note that Boston is rolling back on Wednesday, but I wanted to give our businesses, non-profits, employees and residents sufficient time to implement the changes.)



Closures of specific facilities and activities not allowed in this Phase/Step will be in effect for a period of three weeks (until January 8); we will re-evaluate our status as that date draws near.

The steady regional rise in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations since Thanksgiving presents a significant threat to our residents and those who work here. While this is a difficult decision to make for those impacted businesses and employees, we urgently need to ensure our health care workers in Newton and regional facilities have the capacity to care for everyone in need. I have also made this decision, in part, to help keep our schools open for in-person learning opportunities by working to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

Newton is part of a regional fabric that is porous in terms of the spread of Covid-19. The City of Boston is Newton's largest neighbor and where many residents of our city work, visit various institutions like museums and the aquarium, and patronize businesses and restaurants. There has been a significant increase in COVID-19 related visits to the emergency rooms and hospitalizations in recent weeks and positive tests and the positive test rate has been on the rise. While Newton has better numbers than some other communities, we are part of a region dealing with a surge of this pandemic.

While the return to Phase Two/Step Two impacts quite a few businesses, the most affected institutions in the City of Newton that are required to close starting Friday, December 18 for at least three weeks include:

- Movie theaters
- Fitness centers and health clubs, including gyms using alternative spaces (except for youth 18 and under)
 - One-on-one personal training sessions are allowed with protocols
- Indoor recreational and athletic facilities (except for youth 18 and under)
 - This does not apply to collegiate or professional sports, which are regulated by the State
 - Indoor pools may remain open for all ages under pre-registration format structure limited to one person per swim lane
- Indoor event spaces (meeting rooms, ballrooms, private party rooms, and social clubs)
 - Private social clubs may continue to operate, if they serve food, consistent with restaurant guidance

- Higher education institutions may continue to utilize indoor event spaces as classroom space
- Indoor historical spaces and sites

The following businesses in the City of Newton may remain in operation with the following restrictions in place starting Friday, December 18 for at least three weeks:

- Indoor dining in restaurants may remain in operation with restricted bar seating. Ancillary activities such as pool tables, darts, trivia etc. are prohibited.
 - Bar seating may be permitted only with written approval by Newton's Board of License Commissioners. Licensees must submit a Bar Seating Plan that protects both employees and others seated at the bar for review and approval.
 - Face coverings are mandatory at all times unless the patron is eating or drinking even if maintaining six (6) feet of social distance from the server, bartender, or other parties or patrons.
- Office spaces may remain open at 40 percent capacity.
- Non-athletic instructional classes in arts, education and life sciences for persons 18 years and older are allowed for groups of ten or under.

To view the full Executive Order from Newton Commissioner of Health and Human Services Deborah Youngblood, click [here](#). We will provide more detailed sector-specific guidance on the new restrictions by tomorrow.

As a reminder, the following State orders remain in effect to reduce the transmission of the virus:

- [Face Covering Order](#): face masks or cloth face coverings are required in all public places, whether indoors or outdoors, even where people are able to maintain 6 feet of distance from others.
- [Travel Order](#): all visitors entering Massachusetts, including returning residents are required to:
 - Complete the [Massachusetts Travel Form](#) prior to arrival, unless visiting from a [lower-risk state](#) designated by the Department of Public Health.
 - 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.
- [Stay-at-Home Advisory](#): residents of Massachusetts are advised to stay home between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.

While City Hall will remain open with the operational modifications implemented over the summer, we recommend that you conduct as much business with our departments as you can online and over the phone.

We intend to re-evaluate this order in three weeks on or before January 8 and will announce at that point whether these restrictions are to be lifted, modified or maintained.

It is vitally important that we take appropriate steps to once again flatten the curve, protect our hospitals from getting overwhelmed, and work to decrease the community transmission that is taking place.

A Good-Bye and A Hello: Dana Hanson & Hattie Kerwin Derrick

When I was campaigning for Mayor four years ago, I knocked on doors and spoke

with residents from every village in our city. I heard what our neighbors already loved about Newton and their hopes and aspirations for a better Newton in the future. A theme that emerged was that many in our city wanted to find ways to feel more connected, both to City Hall and to one another. When I was elected and deciding how to structure staffing in the Mayor's Office, I wanted a member of my team dedicated to working on bringing us together in the city and I created the position of Director of Community Engagement and Inclusion.

For the past three years, Dana Hanson has served in that important role. She has supported our city's efforts to build bridges across our divides, work together on special initiatives alongside many of our residents, and yes, to have some fun and good times while doing it.

Over these three years, Dana has touched almost every single thread in the fabric of Newton. She joined me (in-person in pre-COVID days, now on Zoom) at countless community events, village "Mayoral Meetups," and Open Office Hours at City Hall. She also serves as the Mayor's Office designee in many events and initiatives that partner with individuals outside of City Hall; in this capacity, she wove together a strong network with people in non-profits and neighborhood organizations as well as students, advocates and activists, our interfaith clergy members, elected officials, and an active group of fellow-minded 'community folks,' affectionately referring to themselves at "The Village People."

Though this is a bittersweet announcement, I am sharing the exciting news that Dana will be moving to a new position as the District Director for Congressman-Elect Jake Auchincloss in the Massachusetts 4th Congressional District when he takes the oath of office on January 3.

To say that I will be sad to see her go doesn't begin to voice what she has meant to me, her colleagues in the Mayor's office and City Hall, and to the community she has embraced here in the City of Newton. Dana has been my touchstone for what to do and say on the many complicated and contentious issues that we are facing. She has helped all of us find commonality of purpose between our many strong voices. When confronted with challenging projects or daunting tasks (or even upset individuals), she often said, "Let me jiffy something up on that," returning with a thoughtful and compassionate idea. She is endlessly positive, patient, tireless, respectful and empathetic.

Concurrent with the news of Dana's departure, I am so glad to announce our new Director of Community Engagement and Inclusion, Hattie Kerwin Derrick. Hattie Kerwin Derrick is a longtime Newton resident in Oak Hill Park and a higher education administrator by profession. Hattie has served extensively across the city as a board member at Newton Montessori School, Family Access of Newton, and Newton Girls Lacrosse. Hattie is the current Chair of our Newton Human Rights Commission, having served on the HRC since 2012. Hattie is also one of our members of the Newton Police Reform Task Force. She is a deep thinker, wise and steady, and a champion of diversity, equity and inclusion. Above all, Hattie has a good heart and she loves our city.

*(Photo: Incoming Director of
Community Engagement &*



*Inclusion Hattie Kerwin
Derrick, Mayor Fuller, and
Dana Hanson)*

Hattie and Dana have worked very closely together on many projects over the past three years — they are professional colleagues, good friends and they are looking forward to ensuring a smooth transition over the next several weeks. In fact, both Hattie and Dana participated in a Department Heads training earlier this afternoon on recognizing and overcoming unconscious bias, the first in an ongoing series at all levels at City Hall.

We will say farewell to Dana on Friday, December 18 and will welcome Hattie on Monday, January 11. I am grateful to both for promoting the values that are so dear to our city and look forward to continuing to work with them in their new roles.

If you would like to give your well wishes to Dana, drop in for a few minutes on a Zoom this Friday, December 18, from 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. The Zoom log-in information is below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82080841746?pwd=aXAxZHZuRktCaWxMK0YxN01Ra0hiUT09>

Meeting ID: 820 8084 1746
Passcode: 245654

Update on Composting

Diverting food waste from the trash is good for the environment. Composting vegetable peels, chicken bones, clam shells and all kinds of food waste instead of tossing them into the trash means that nutrients will be returned to the soil to grow more food, offsetting the need for fertilizer. Food waste is a huge part of our trash, making up 26% of the weight of the trash stream in Massachusetts.

Want to compost? You have plenty of options.

Option 1: Weekly Curbside Pick Up for \$10/month

In October 2019, Newton partnered with Black Earth Compost to offer a once-a-week curbside service for meat, dairy, fruits and vegetables, coffee grounds, tea bags and



more. The City went out to bid and secured contract pricing on behalf of residents in which the weekly price decreases as the number of subscribers increases.

Households that subscribe to the service pay \$34 for a starter kit, which includes a 13-gallon locking cart and two rolls of compostable liner bags. Weekly service is now priced at \$59.99 for six months, or \$11.99 a month if you prefer to pay monthly.

I'm a huge fan (as is my husband). It's easy. I'm still surprised at how much food waste we generate and I'm glad it's being composted.

Prior to the partnership beginning, roughly 400 Newton households subscribed to the Black Earth Compost curbside collection service on their own. At the beginning of this year in January 2020, more than 1,200 households subscribed. Now, close to one year later, Newton has 2,014 active subscribers. Once we hit 3,000 subscribers, the price for six months of service for Newton residents will drop to \$49.99. You can get more info and/or sign up for Black Earth Composting by clicking [here](#).

Option 2: Do it Yourself Composting

Newton DPW encourages backyard composting by offering two different styles of home compost bins for \$25 each. Click [here](#) for more information.

Option 3: Free Organics Drop Off

For residents who don't have the yard space or interest in composting at home, a new no-cost food waste drop-off pilot program started at the Newton Resource Recovery Center at 115 Rumford Avenue.

Residents can drop off all food waste, including fruit and vegetable peels, meat/bones, seafood shells, and other kitchen scraps along with paper towels and paper napkins. These food scraps are picked up at Rumford Avenue and composted by Black Earth to become a soil amendment. Refer to their [guidelines](#) for accepted materials.

As a reminder, please do not put any metal, glass, plastic, rubber, or cartons/juice boxes in with food scraps. Make sure to remove any stickers from fruits and vegetables before composting.

To drop off your household organics (a.k.a., food waste):

1. Call 617-796-1000 to make an appointment to drop off material at the Resource Recovery Center at Rumford Avenue (115 Rumford Avenue). This is a precaution required by the Health and Human Services Department to prevent overcrowding at the site during the pandemic.
2. Use a paper bag or a certified compostable bag to contain your organics during transport. Certified compostable bags can be found at Whole Foods, Target and many other brick and mortar or online retailers.

Tip for using a certified compostable bag: Consider storing organics inside the compostable bag in your freezer until you're ready to drop them off; this will prevent odor issues.

Tip for using a paper bag: Store it within a plastic shopping bag to create a moisture barrier; this double bag can be kept in the freezer until it is full and you are able to

drop it off. Remove the plastic shopping bag before placing into the organics collection carts.

3. Place the paper bag or certified compostable bag into one of the organics carts at Rumford Avenue located near the back of the residential drop off area.

Seen a Coyote?

Coyotes are active year-round, and feed on whatever is available, including small animals, birds, insects, reptiles, fruits and berries. But, come the fall, coyotes are not only easier to see through bare branches, but when pups reach maturity and strike out on their own. Plus, as the weather turns colder, coyotes also need more energy and travel farther to find food.



In Newton, we're seeing them across the City. According to our Coyote map, residents reported seeing 15 coyotes in September, 33 in October, 29 in November and 4 so far in December. (These statistics don't include the one I saw on Homer Street a couple weeks ago when I left City Hall around 9:30 p.m.) Coyotes are definitely here in Newton as well as in every other community across Massachusetts. (The only exceptions are the towns on the islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.)

Have you seen one in your neighborhood? Add it to the Newton coyote chart [here](#). Report the sightings to help your neighbors be extra vigilant with their pets.

Unfortunately, coyotes can attack pets. The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife suggests several steps to help keep pets safe:

- Don't leave pets alone outside and avoid off-leash walks
- Don't keep pet food outside and keep bird feeder areas clean
- Securely cover trash and recycling bins
- Don't add meat or bones to your compost pile
- Stick to lighted areas and carry a light after dark
- Don't run or turn your back if you encounter a coyote; stand tall, wave your arms, clap your hands and shout to scare it away

Report a threatening, aggressive coyote to the Newton Police Department at 617-796-2100 which does have the ability to capture and kill problem coyotes. Trapping or killing a coyote is very difficult, especially in a suburban community like Newton, and is not recommended except by licensed hunters or trappers.

Find more information about coyotes from MassWildlife [here](#).

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. A reminder that the Newton Police Reform Task Force will be hosting two 'town hall' meetings this Wednesday, Dec 16 and Tuesday, Dec 22. Click [here](#) to RSVP for the link.

