



## Programs & Services Committee Report

### City of Newton In City Council

**Wednesday, October 7, 2020**

**Present:** Councilors Krintzman (Chair), Noel, Humphrey, Ryan, Albright, Wright, Baker, Greenberg, and Noel

**City Staff:** Jill Mercurio, Library Director; Michelle Buglio, Assistant Library Director; Nathan Giacalone, Committee Clerk

**#375-20**      **Request for a discussion on library re-opening plans**  
COUNCILORS NOEL, ALBRIGHT, BOWMAN, DANBERG, DOWNS, KELLEY, AND LAREDO requesting a discussion with the administration about the plans to re-open the library, plans to inform the public about the options the public has for using the library, and to update the Council on the Library's needs.

**Action:**      **Programs and Services No Action Necessary 8-0**

**Notes:**      The Committee was joined on this item by Jill Mercurio, Michelle Buglio, and Barbara Meltz, Library Trustee President.

Ms. Mercurio presented the library's reopening plan, which begins the next phase on Tuesday, October 13. Currently, the library is already practicing low contact holds and checkouts and due to a promising performance, curbside pickup is expected to increase. The reopening plan has been designed to meet the Governor's restrictions. Sixty people will be allowed in at a time, computers will be accessible by appointment, and other walk-in stations will be open as well. Long periods of time will not be permitted per visit to comply with occupancy limits. A cloud-based tracking sensor will be used for the parking lot, allowing patrons to check how many others are at the library before arriving. This technology will be used for other monitoring throughout the building. Ms. Mercurio said that while other smaller communities have already reopened their libraries, Newton is the first of its size to do so. The library website also contains this information for easy public access. Additionally, the necessary plexiglass installation is almost complete, and the plastic shielding installed in the Children's Room has been decorated like a fish tank.

The Committee thanked the library, complimenting it on being a valuable community resource.

*Committee Discussion:*

**Q:** How are materials being cleaned?

**A:** Materials are held in quarantine for 72 hours after being returned, compared to the state guidelines of 24 hours for the virus to die on paper surfaces. The longer quarantine time is done out of caution and to adapt as research on the virus continues to update.

**Q:** Will patrons be allowed to browse on their own?

**A:** Yes, and procedures have been designed around access, equity, and safety. Some collections such as world languages and children's are better suited for in-person browsing rather than online cataloging. Seating has been removed to make more indoor space and encourage shorter visits.

**Q:** Will masking be required? What other safety protocols will be in place, such as with material handled inside the building?

**A:** Masks are required and so far, there has been 100 percent mask compliance as holds have been checked out. Regular cleaning protocols have increased and occur throughout the day with plenty of hand sanitizer available. We are talking with the Building Commissioner to get more hand sanitizer stations installed around the library as well. Signage on stairs and elevators dictates that either two people or a family group are permitted. Other doors are propped open when possible to minimize touch surfaces. The stairs are big enough to allow two-way traffic. Accessibility concerns prevented setting a single direction on a staircase.

**Q:** Will people be encouraged to return items they browse, but do not check out, onto a separate cart first?

**A:** Typically, people do not reshelv their own items under normal conditions, so this trend is expected to continue. Most items on the floor are intended for checkout, but changes will be made for certain collections such as newspapers. For these items which are not checked out of the library, the 24-hour state guideline will be sufficient.

**Q:** Are there any changes in staffing?

**A:** Currently, about 23 part time staff members have returned to work and the plan is to bring back 14 more. The challenge is making the working hours compatible with social distancing guidelines. Hopefully Sunday hours will return.

**Q:** Are art installations returning soon?

**A:** The closing disrupted the display schedule, and now that the library is reopening, art displays will resume and other areas in the building are being explored for display.

**Q:** Does the library need anything else from the Council?

**A:** Costs increase as reopening progresses, but we understand the tight budget and appreciate the Council's help. There are no specific requests currently, but we will say so if any arise.

Ms. Meltz said she was impressed by the efforts of Ms. Mercurio and the rest of the library staff in reopening the building and conveyed the appreciation of others.

Councilor Albright moved No Action Necessary which carried 8-0.

**#49-20 Request for update on leaf blower ordinance compliance**

COUNCILORS BAKER, LEARY, RYAN, AND HUMPHREY requesting update from the Executive Department on compliance with Newton's leaf blower ordinance and discussion of possible revisions to the ordinance's enforcement provisions to improve compliance.

**Action:** Programs and Services Held 8-0

**Notes:** The Chair introduced the item and said that since the Chair's Note in the agenda specified that the goal of discussion of this item tonight was for an update, the appropriate motion would be to Hold the item.

Councilor Baker described the revisions he and Assistant City Solicitor Marie Lawlor have been working on. He said that the basic idea of the proposed revisions is to add a registration process component, a plan that Chief Mintz said he felt was a good idea. Councilor Baker said that he hoped the Committee would agree to docket a companion item with the Finance Committee about setting the fee. He said it was important to start this process soon as this companion item would be needed to set the necessary fee for leaf blowers.

*Committee Discussion:*

**C:** Through other work on restaurants and their licensing, Cambridge has a licensing group that addresses this, so their model on leaf blower ordinances, licenses, and fees could be used as an example.

**C:** Wasn't the Committee still working on the enforcement question of this item? The question of enforcement responsibility on this item is very important.

**C:** The police should no longer enforce the leaf blower ordinance. There should be more discussion of this.

**C:** These additional discussions about enforcement are why the best action is to hold the item and take more time for this.

**C:** The licensed landscapers who follow the rules are also upset with those who are breaking the them. Those breaking the rules are taking unfair advantage of those who follow them.

**C:** Illegal leaf disposal is a separate issue than leaf blower enforcement. If the police will not be available to enforce this ordinance, then somebody else will need to be able to respond quicker to these calls than ISD can.

**Q:** Who will help get the fee established?

**A:** ISD will likely be involved with this process. A docket item would call for establishment of the fee and Committee discussion would determine the appropriate amount.

The Committee agreed to docket the companion item to set the fee for leaf blower registration.

Councilor Ryan moved Hold which carried 8-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:54 pm.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Josh Krintzman, Chair**