

Monday, Jan. 4, 2021

# Mayor's Update

## COVID-19 Updates and Losses

Many people have COVID-19 in our community and the numbers continue to grow.

Over the last week, from Dec. 27 to yesterday, Jan. 3, we had 208 new positive COVID-19 cases among Newton residents, bringing the City's cumulative total of confirmed cases to 2,379.



We ended the year in an awful way. On Dec. 31, we learned of the largest number of new positive cases in one day since the pandemic began, 65 people. (The previous high for one day was in April with 59 new cases.) This latest increase mirrors the high case counts across the state.

Newton remains in the yellow group as classified by the state (Boston turned red joining another neighbor, Waltham). Over the most recent two-week state tracking period, from Dec. 12 – Dec. 26, we had 312 new confirmed COVID-19 cases in Newton. The Newton incidence rate was 24.3, a slight increase from the 23.5 from the previous reporting period. Of all Newton residents who were tested for COVID-19 during this reporting period, 2.08% tested positive (a.k.a. positivity rate). This percentage is higher than the 1.44% reported from Dec. 6 – Dec. 19, and compares to a statewide positivity rate of 6.28%.

The updated state data includes a new interactive data dashboard [here](#).

<b>COVID-19 in Newton</b>	
<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>2,379</b>
<i>*As of 1/3/21</i>	
<b>Total Deaths</b>	<b>170</b>
<i>*As of 12/30/20</i>	

As we see our cases rising, the dreadful reality is that we have learned of 8 additional people who died after being diagnosed with COVID-19. This brings the almost unfathomable total to 170 people lost right here in Newton. With the vaccine already being administered, the loss feels that much more brutal.

We continue to see positive cases primarily as a result of small, informal gatherings among friends or family who live in separate households. We gather together on occasions where people are comfortable and we let our guard down.

It's so important, as we're seeing the number of people infected with the virus grow, that we continue to be vigilant. Wear a mask inside and outside. Try not to put yourself in a position where you are within 6 feet of anyone outside your household, especially for longer than 15 minutes, whenever possible. If you're feeling unwell, stay home and away from others. You can find more information and guidelines for isolation and quarantine [here](#).

## Vaccines

Even with all this disturbing news, hope is here.

Vaccinations are now being given to residents of long-term care facilities in Newton, and I'm excited to report that next week our Health and Human Services staff working with paramedics and medics from our ambulance company, Fallon, will begin vaccinating Newton's first responders – members of the Newton Fire and Police Departments, EMTs and Police dispatchers. HHS is working with Fire Chief Gino Lucchetti and Interim Police Chief Howard Mintz on the logistics to begin administering the vaccine as soon as possible.

We are following the state vaccine roll-out guidelines. It's a frustrating time as we wait for the important details about exactly where and when and how we can get vaccinated. As soon as we know more information specific to Newton, I'll be sharing it. (fyi: The statewide [Vaccine Advisory group](#) makes decisions about which groups of people are prioritized for vaccination, based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. These decisions in Massachusetts are not made at the local level.)

We're hearing from many of you who understandably have questions about the vaccine and when you or your loved ones might be able to get it. The best place at this point to find answers is the Massachusetts Department of Public Health COVID-19 [website](#).

Today the Commonwealth updated its vaccine distribution plan to include people 75 years and older in the first step of Phase 2, Group 1, along with people of all ages who have 2 or more co-morbidities (risk factors). You can find information about when you will be eligible for a vaccine [here](#). If you have questions about where your group falls in the vaccination plan (or want to advocate for a different priority), the best way to get answers and make your case is to email your inquiries to: [COVID-19-Vaccine-Plan-MA@mass.gov](mailto:COVID-19-Vaccine-Plan-MA@mass.gov). Answers to questions are updated regularly [here](#).

We know these are simultaneously challenging and hopeful times; our toughest days unfortunately are most likely not yet behind us. Perhaps the best thing to do is focus on steps we can each take to try and keep ourselves, our family and our community as safe as possible – masks, distancing, hand hygiene, and staying home when not feeling well.

## NPS Data Dashboard

Thirty-two new cases of COVID-19 were reported among people in the Newton Public Schools community since Dec. 24 (during the vacation period), bringing the cumulative total through Dec. 30 to 133. For the case chart by learning model type which will be updated in the next few days, check Newton's COVID-19 website [here](#).

## **Overnight Winter Parking Ban Will Continue to Be Lifted**

With many college students and family members still home for the winter because of COVID-19, I have worked with Newton Police Interim Chief Howard Mintz and the Department of Public Works (and consulted with City Council President Susan Albright) to lift the Overnight Parking Ban for the duration of this winter season. (The ban prohibiting overnight on-street winter parking would otherwise have gone back into effect on Jan. 15 through March 31.)

Please know that if we have snow, we may need to have an Emergency Parking Ban for the duration of the storm and the clean-up as we did successfully a few weeks ago. If a temporary, emergency ban is needed again this winter, we'll get the word out.

Warmly,

Ruthanne



P.S. [Curbside Christmas tree pick-up](#) begins today, Jan. 4, and runs through Friday, Jan. 15. Trees will be picked up on your regular waste collection day. Put the tree out to the curb for recycling by 7:00 a.m. and please make sure all decorations and lights are removed. Sorry, trees cannot be in a plastic bag.



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