

Mayor's Update

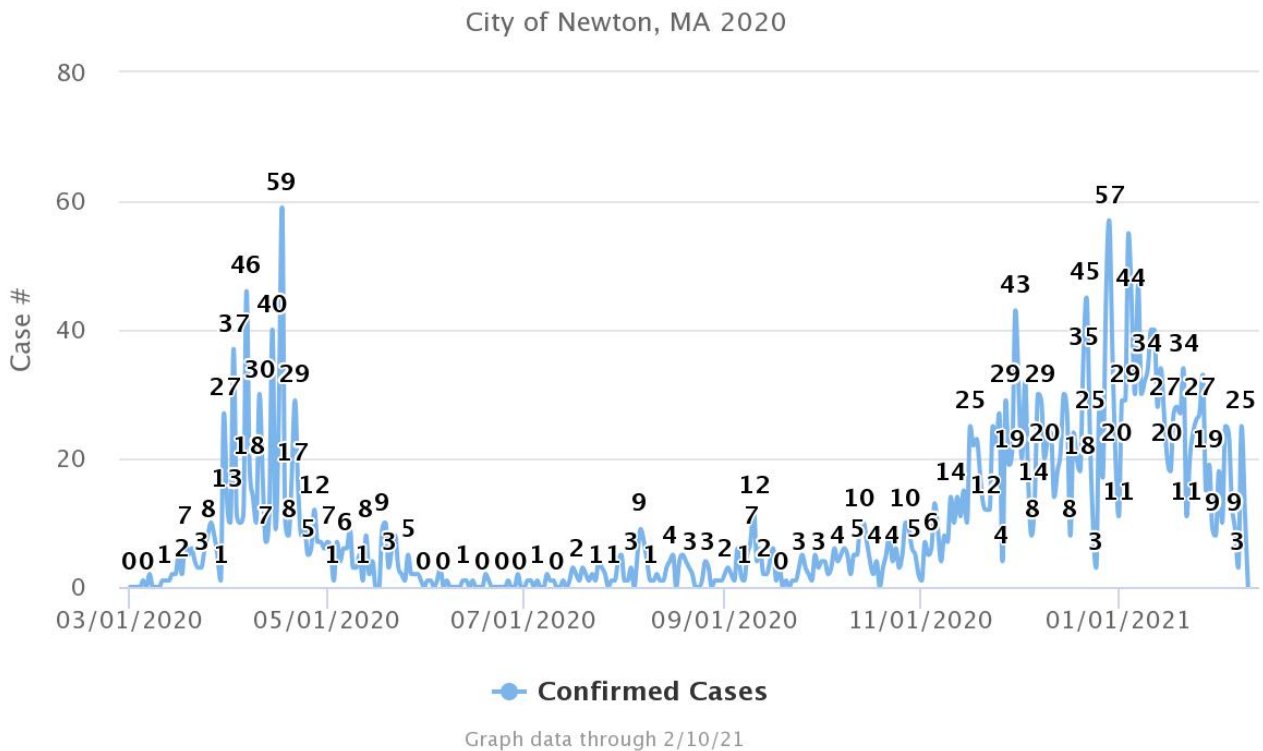
COVID-19 Updates and Losses

We had 104 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 over the past seven days from Feb. 4 – 10. The data indicates that again this week the number of people in Newton testing positive is moving in the right direction after the holiday surge. This week's total compares to 182 new cases during the previous week in Newton.



The 104 new cases brings our cumulative total of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 in Newton to 3,332.

Newton COVID-19 Cases



Over the two-week tracking period from Jan. 24 to Feb. 6 used by the state for its reporting, Newton had 261 positive cases, compared to 387 during the previous two weeks.

Our incidence rate in Newton decreased to 20.3 cases per 100,000, down from 25.1 reported over the previous two weeks and 30.1 during the two weeks prior to that.

Newton's positivity rate is also under 1% for the first time since the end of November. Of the 36,682 tests administered to Newton residents over the past two-

COVID-19 in Newton

Total Cases
3,332

Total Deaths
194

*As of 2/10/21

week reporting period, 0.84% came back positive. It was 1.22% during the previous two-week State reporting period, and 2.33% prior to that. The statewide positivity rate is now 3.40% (with 1,293,888 tests performed in Massachusetts during the current two-week reporting period.)

Find more statewide information on the Massachusetts Department of Public Health data dashboard [here](#).

As we've seen during this pandemic, a surge in cases is followed a couple weeks later by an increase in deaths. This week we have another six Newtonians who have died with COVID-19, bringing our grim total to 194. Each of these 194 people were family members, friends and neighbors. May we find ways to comfort those in mourning.

School Cases

We have 12 people in the Newton Public Schools who tested positive for COVID-19 over the past week from Feb. 4 – 10, bringing the cumulative total to 248. This includes 4 students learning in person, 3 staff members working in person and 2 Distance Learning Academy/remote learning students. The Newton dashboard with week by week data is available [here](#).

School Testing Update

The Newton Public Schools will begin weekly COVID-19 surveillance testing in two weeks. They are starting with high school, post-secondary and Ed Center students, teachers and staff. The weekly testing program will be expanded to the middle, elementary and pre-K levels over the following several weeks.

The COVID-19 tests are voluntary.

The School Committee last night approved the COVID Testing Working Group recommendation to contract with JCM Analytics to provide the weekly pooled testing that screens a group of people in a "pool" with one test. If a pool tests positive, more testing is immediately done in the lab to identify the specific person(s) who is/are infected.

Read more details about the weekly testing program [here](#).

NPS is currently providing weekly testing on a voluntary basis for teachers and staff working in person through CIC-Health. This program will be gradually integrated into the JCM Analytics program.

This weekly testing comes as ventilation upgrades are on the verge of being completed in each of the 18 school buildings and vaccination for teachers and

school staff is expected.

Vaccination Clinic Opening in Newton for Vulnerable Older Residents

Newton resident Dr. Justin Holtzman and the team at the Holtzman Medical Group worked with us on a wonderful opportunity to help our older residents who may be most vulnerable due to lack of access to technology and who have been facing difficulty in booking vaccination appointments.

Staff in the Mayor's Office, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Senior Services has been fielding hundreds of calls and sharing the frustration that people are feeling in trying to get these very important appointments.

We are so appreciative of this amazing opportunity to help our residents right in our own backyard. The Holtzman Medical Group has been administering Covid-19 vaccines on the UMass Amherst - Mt. Ida campus in Newton to people who are in Phase 2, Group 1 who sign up online, first come, first served.

Newton's Department of Senior Services will be able to book appointments there for our most vulnerable older residents.

For this initial group of reserved appointments at the UMass Amherst - Mt. Ida campus, Newton residents must meet all five of these criteria:

- 85 years of age and over
- Newton resident
- No/limited access to technology, difficulty traveling outside of Newton, living alone or with another vulnerable individual
- Not already scheduled for an appointment elsewhere
- Physically able to get to the appointment.

-- The vaccination site at UMass Mt. Ida is accessible. It's ok to bring someone with you to help you. Transportation may be available, potentially at no cost, through NewMo and must be prearranged. We can help if needed.

If you are a Newton resident who meets all the criteria, call the Department of Senior Services vaccinations line at 617-796-1666. You will be asked to leave a message with your information to receive a return phone call about scheduling.

Please know that we do not know ultimately how many vaccines Holtzman Medical Group will be able to offer us or how long this opportunity will last. We will approach this opportunity responsibly, judiciously and nimbly.

We will let you know if we're able to expand this opportunity to residents age 75-84; we will if we can. Also, please do not show up at the campus seeking an appointment. You must call, meet the criteria, and be scheduled.

I'm so grateful to Dr. Holtzman and his team for partnering with us to help our older residents who need particular help so they can receive a vaccine. Kudos to UMass

Amherst as well for making the campus available to protect lives.

You may have heard the recent news that at the mass vaccination sites at Gillette Stadium and Fenway Park, people who bring an eligible older person for their vaccination appointment can also get vaccinated. This does not apply to this small clinic at UMass – Mt. Ida run by the Holtzman Medical Group. If this changes, we will let you know.

If you would like to bring an older eligible person to be vaccinated and get vaccinated yourself, you and the older person should book appointments together at one of the state mass vaccination sites. Book those appointments [here](#).

There are a number of places to get vaccinated in Newton. Get Newton-specific information [here](#).

The folks at our Senior Center are available to help if you are having difficulty navigating the State's vaccination system. Please give them a call at 617-796-1666, and be sure to leave a message with your contact information.

Want to be sure to get updates? Subscribe to the Senior Center e-newsletter and the Mayor's e-newsletter at newtonma.gov/newsletters. You can also call Newton's Health and Human Services hotline for recorded updates at 617-796-1440.

The City now has information on resources for housing assistance and eviction diversion available in Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Russian and Portuguese. Find translated resources [here](#).



Are you having difficulty paying rent or are facing eviction in Newton because of Covid-19?

There is help. Learn more about the resources you can access at the City of Newton's website*: www.newtonma.gov/HousingHelp

If you need help accessing the internet or these resources, you can contact the City of Newton's Social Services at 617-796-1420.



**Information available in Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Arabic, Russian and Portuguese.*

¿Está teniendo dificultades para pagar el alquiler o enfrenta el desalojo en Newton debido a la COVID-19?

您是否在牛頓市因 Covid-19 而難以支付房租或正面臨驅逐？

هل تواجه صعوبة في دفع الإيجار أو تتعرض للإكراه على الإخلاء من السكن في مدينة نيوتن بسبب جائحة فيروس كورونا (Covid-19)؟

У вас возникли трудности с оплатой аренды в Ньютоне, или вам грозит выселение из-за пандемии Covid-19?

Está com dificuldades para arcar com o aluguel ou está em situação de despejo em Newton por conta da COVID-19?



MBTA Cuts Hurt Newton

Learn more about the impact of MBTA budget cuts on Newton's public transportation

at two virtual meetings scheduled by the MBTA Service Planning Team. Zoom in on consecutive Wednesday evenings, Feb. 17 and Feb. 24 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

The MBTA is eliminating bus Routes 52 and 505. Both routes provide very important connections to, from and within Newton. In addition, eight of the express bus routes are being impacted as well as some diminution in service on the commuter rail and The Ride.

The MBTA is eliminating 20 bus routes altogether and two of them are right here in Newton.

The cuts go into effect in March and April of 2021. It's unclear if they are temporary or permanent.

The virtual meetings will include a discussion of why the MBTA thinks the route changes are necessary, the service planning process, specifics about the changes on the impacted routes and other elements of the MBTA's pandemic response.

Find more information about how the cuts impact other bus routes and commuter rail and T service in Newton and across the system and register for the Zoom meetings [here](#).

Newton Officer Saves a Life

Newton Police Officer David Schaefer while off duty was driving along Cherry Street on his way to work Monday morning. It was freezing cold just after 7:00 a.m., so when he noticed a man collapsed on the sidewalk, he pulled over and acted quickly.

Officer Schaefer immediately started CPR as responding Officers Jeremy Fay and Reid Larson arrived to assist along with people from Newton Fire Department Engine 4 and Fallon Ambulance. They used the defibrillator to revive the gentleman at the scene before transporting him to the hospital.

Join me in thanking Officers Schaefer, Fay and Reid and all our first responders who acted quickly to save this man's life. We send our best as well to him and his family as he recovers.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Have you seen one of these in the road as you take a walk or a bike ride? It's a bent, popped up water or natural gas valve cover about 6" in diameter. The valves are embedded all over the roads in Newton. When bent, they can wreak havoc with your vehicle or bicycle tires and with our

snowplows, ruining blades as drivers unknowingly pass over them buried under snow and ice.

Here's how you can help. If you see one, report its location through our 311 system. The more specific the location, the better. We'll send crews out to fix them before they cause more damage.



P.P.S. Join Newton resident Yoni Battat in the next virtual Parlor Performances on Wednesday, Feb. 17, at 7:30 p.m. Battat is a talented multi-instrumentalist, vocalist and composer, specializing in contemporary and traditional Jewish music. Go to the [Newton Cultural Development Facebook](#) page for the live streaming event. Thanks go to [Newton Community Pride](#) for sponsoring this series.



P.P.P.S. Join The Newton Theatre Project on Saturday, Feb. 27 at 8:00 p.m. for their virtual production of William Branch's *A Medal for Willie*, a powerful play examining the intersection of segregation and racism during a time when both were allowed to flourish. After the performance, stay for a "talkback" conversation with members of the cast and directors facilitated by members of Families Organizing for Racial Justice (FORJ). This evening is part of the series, *Overdue: Confronting Race and Racism in Newton*. Register for the event [here](#).

P.P.P.P.S. In my State of the City Address last night, I spoke of an anonymous child who placed a painted rock at Dolan Pond. This morning we opened an email office with a note and this photo:



The rock artist is 9-year-old Breslyn Clinton. Breslyn, is a 3rd grader at Burr Elementary School. Her rock will always bring a smile to my face.

