

Mayor's Update

COVID-19 Updates and Losses

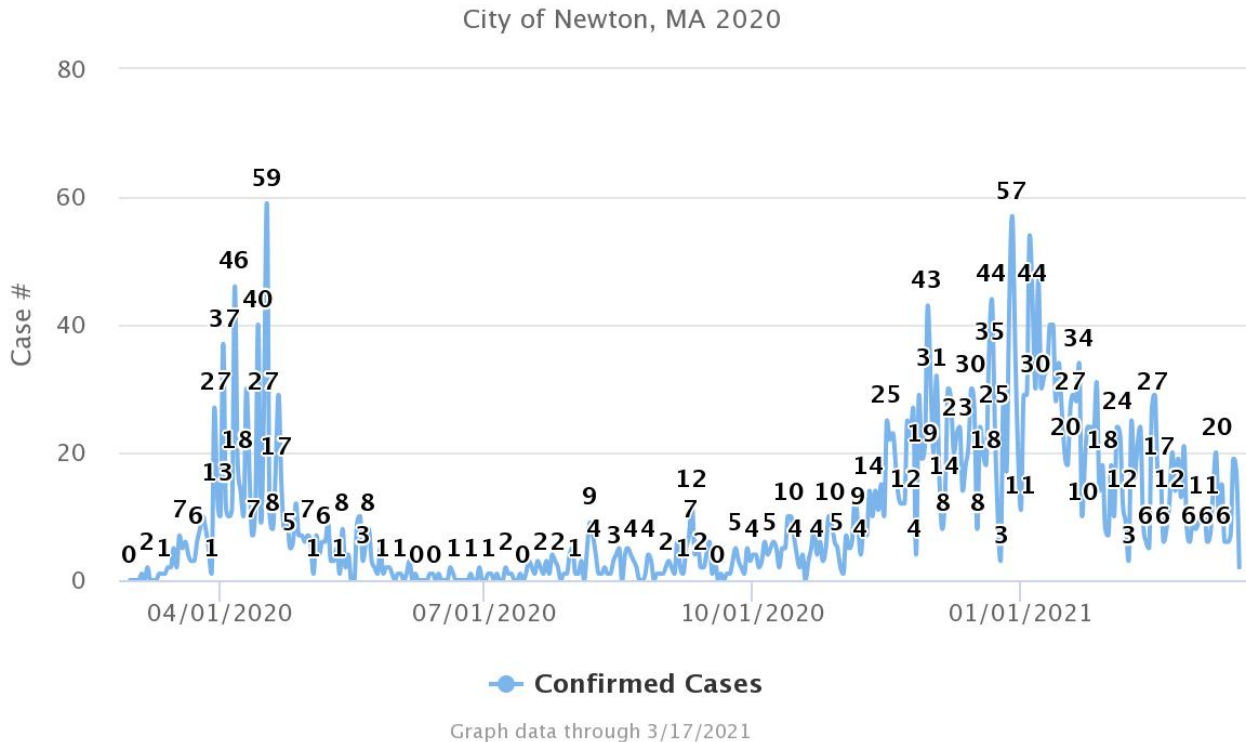
Newton Cases

We had 85 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 over the past week from March 11 – 17, an increase of 10 from the 75 new cases reported last week. Our new case numbers continue to be better than during the surge after the holidays when we saw 253 new cases in Newton during the week of Jan. 6 – 13, but still not near the low we saw last July when we had just 7 new cases from July 22 – 28. This week's new cases bring our cumulative total number of Newtonians who have tested positive to 3,776.



Over the two-week tracking period used by the State from Feb. 28 – March 13, Newton had 141 cases compared to 169 cases during the previous two weeks, and 214 during the previous reporting period.

Newton COVID-19 Cases



Our incidence rate in Newton continues to move in an encouraging direction. At 11 cases per 100,000 this week, it is down from 13 last week and 16.7 during the reporting period prior to that.

Newton's positivity rate also continues to trend in the right

COVID-19 in Newton

Total Cases
3,776

Total Deaths
208

*As of 3/17/21

direction. This week 0.46% of the 33,776 tests administered to Newton residents over the past two-week reporting period came back positive. This is a bit of an improvement from the 0.54% last week. The statewide positivity rate is now 1.83% (with 1.9 million tests performed during this reporting period.)

The Boston College community this week accounted for 34% of the cases in Newton over the past two-week reporting period, an increase from the 19% reported last week. Boston College posts it's COVID-19 case data [here](#).

This positive data comes as the State transitions to the next phase of reopening on Monday, March 22. Next Monday a range of businesses will reopen with capacity limits, including indoor and outdoor stadiums, ballparks and arenas. (The Bruins and Celtics will play in front of about 2,350 masked fans – or 12% of capacity at TD Garden.) The State's current Travel Order will be replaced by a Travel Advisory; it "advises" rather than "requires" people entering Massachusetts, including returning residents, to quarantine for 10 days upon their arrival. People fully vaccinated and those who travel out of state for less than 24 hours do not have any travel requirements under the new Advisory.

Find more information on the Travel Advisory and reopening plans [here](#).

Please note, we're shifting to weekly updates (rather than daily) on our Newton COVID-19 [data page](#). Each week by Friday the COVID-19 related data, including cases, deaths, the graph of cases by test date, and the school dashboard, will be updated. This new schedule will also allow us to pull state provided Newton-specific data (which is updated Thursday evenings), including the vaccination percentages, incidence rate and positivity rate, and add them to the data page.

Losses

I am relieved and grateful that for the first time since the last week in September I can report we know of no one from our City who died with COVID-19 this week. We have a reservoir of grief, though, from the loss of 208 of our neighbors who have died with COVID-19 since last March.

Newton Public School Data

We have nine people in the Newton Public Schools who tested positive for COVID-19 during the seven day period of March 11 – 17, bringing the cumulative total to 308 people. This includes four students learning in person, two staff members working in person, and three students in the DLA/remote learning program. The dashboard with week by week school data is available [here](#).

Vaccines

Gov. Baker said yesterday that he expects vaccine supply from the Federal Government to increase sufficiently that by July 4, everyone in Massachusetts 16 and older will have had an opportunity to be vaccinated. What a relief to know we only have three and a half months to go.

Gov. Baker yesterday specified the dates in March and April when everyone over

the age of 16 will be eligible to make an appointment for a vaccine.

- March 22: Residents 60 and older and people who work in various job categories
- April 5: Residents 55 and older and people with one certain medical condition
- April 19: Everyone aged 16 and older

Everyone can also preregister to be notified when an appointment is available at one of the seven mass vaccination sites at vaccinesignup.mass.gov.

Find vaccination sites and check availability throughout the state at vaxfinder.mass.gov.

I'm also so pleased to announce four Newton vaccination clinics scheduled for educators through our ongoing partnership with Newton resident Dr. Justin Holtzman and the team at the Holtzman Medical Group.

The Health and Human Services and Senior Services Departments have worked closely with Dr. Holtzman since February providing vaccinations for eligible residents who lack the ability to access the mass vaccination sites. This program is ongoing. Please call 617-796-1666 if you lack computer access and don't have a family member or friend who can help you. Leave a message and someone will call you back.

The Holtzman Medical Group collaborated with us again to provide four educator-only clinics at the American Legion Nonantum Post 440 for all K-12 teachers, childcare workers, and K-12 staff in Massachusetts, starting this Saturday, March 20. Get more information at holtzmanmedicalgroup.org.

It's great to have another convenient vaccination location as the Newton Public Schools shift our elementary schools to full in-person learning on April 5 for those who want it and our middle schools on April 28. Next week, Superintendent Fleishman will provide an update on our high schools.

Weekly Vaccination Report

The State is now providing detailed vaccination information for each city and town in Massachusetts by age, sex, race and ethnicity, and zip code. Find the information [here](#).

This week the charts show 20% of Newton's population is now fully vaccinated and another 13% is partially vaccinated. (Note: The data calculated by our HHS staff last week is slightly different from this week's State calculations.)

The chart also shows the age of those who have been vaccinated. For example Newtonians who are partially or fully vaccinated include 94% of those who are 75+, 85% of those 65-74 years old, 39% who are 50-64 years old, 32% who are 30-49 years old, 16% that are 20-29 years old, and 1% who are 0-19 years old.

In each age group, Newton is ahead of the state total, where 78% of those 75+ are partially or fully vaccinated, 63% of those who are 65-74, 29% of those who are 50-64, 22% of those who are 30-49, 14% of those who are 20-29, and 1% of those who are 19 and under.

Seven House Breaks

Seven homes were burglarized in the Newton Highlands/Waban area on Monday or Tuesday, March 15 and 16. In three of the incidents, residents were in their homes when the break-in occurred. Thankfully, no one was hurt.

The thieves struck homes on Mary Ellen Road, Winslow Road, Beethoven Avenue, Harrison Street, Carver Road and Helene Road and gained entry through windows and backdoors.

Newton detectives are investigating the break-ins and they believe these break-ins are all connected. Interim Chief Howard Mintz immediately increased patrols in these neighborhoods. Police advise all of us to lock all windows and doors and to make sure there are no free-standing ladders outside that could be used to access second floors.

Anyone with information is urged to call the Newton Detective Bureau at 617-796-2104 or to use the Police "Tip-Line" at 617-796-2121. If you see something, please say something.

American Rescue Plan & Newton

The City of Newton is expected to receive an estimated \$65.2 million from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) that President Joe Biden signed last week.

The U.S. Department of Treasury is writing the specific guidelines and defining the terms in the Plan to explain the allowable uses. Right now, the information is a bit opaque. The Plan says the allowable uses include:

- Responding to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel and hospitality
- Providing premium pay to eligible workers performing essential work to maintain continuity of operations of essential critical infrastructure sectors and additional sectors as determined by the chief executive officer as critical to protect the health and well-being of the residents of the local government (capped at \$13 per hour);
- Replacing revenue reductions due to the pandemic, to the extent that these revenues are used to provide services (the base year to determine revenue losses is fiscal year 2019)
- Making necessary investments in water, sewer or broadband infrastructure.

The American Rescue Plan specifically says that the funding may*not* be used to make payments to pension funds.

The funds will come to the City in two tranches, the first 60 days after the enactment and the second 12 months after the first.

The use of the funds is limited to costs incurred by Dec. 31, 2024.

The City of Newton is receiving two types of funding in the American Rescue Plan. The first is \$48.1 million of direct municipal aid. (This funding goes directly to municipalities over 50,000 in population that are sometimes referred to as “Metropolitan Cities” or as “Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement Communities.” Newton is one of 37 such municipalities in Massachusetts.) The second type of funding is \$17.1 million that goes directly to municipalities in counties where the county government has been abolished (as it has here in Middlesex County, one of seven abolished counties in the state). Thus, the total funding for the City of Newton from the ARP is \$65.2 million.

In addition to the funds going directly to the City of Newton, the Newton Public Schools will also be receiving funding from the American Rescue Plan. The amount of the funding and the allowable uses also needs to be clarified in the days ahead. We do know that 20% of the NPS ARP funds must be used to address learning loss. In addition, authorized uses include sanitation and PPE, school facility repairs, technology for online learning, student mental health services, and continuity of services.

We will read the guidance coming from the U.S. Treasury Department very carefully before making our decisions about the use of the funds.

My goals for these funds are to help us recover, rebound and rebuild as well as to invest strategically to make a lasting difference for Newton’s future.

I am pleased to have these funds to support people, businesses and nonprofits in Newton hurt by COVID-19, and to rebuild our municipal services curtailed by revenue losses during this public health emergency.

This stimulus package benefited greatly from the support of our delegation in Washington. I’m grateful to both our Senators, Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey, and to Newton’s Representative Jake Auchincloss. Thanks also go to House Ways and Means Chair U.S. Rep. Richard Neal of Springfield who made sure the provision allowing county funds would be allocated to municipalities was included.



Looking for an Affordable Homeownership Opportunity?

Three affordable condominiums are available for purchase at The Eliot, a new 14-unit building close to the heart of West Newton Square at 429 Cherry Street. All three condos have approximately 1,040 square-feet of living space, two bedrooms, two

bathrooms and a parking space.

Two of the affordable units are priced at \$301,000 and are available for those at or below 80% of our area median income (AMI). The other one is priced at \$461,000 and is available to those at 120% AMI. Condo fees for these units are between \$132 and \$203 / month. Down payment and/or closing cost assistance may be available to eligible applicants.

Total household income (which means the total before-tax income of the applicant and all other members of the household over the age of 18) cannot exceed the

following limits to be eligible:

Household Size	1-Person	2-Person	3-Person	4-Person
80% Income Limit	\$67,400	\$77,000	\$86,650	\$96,250
120% Income Limit	\$99,960	\$114,240	\$128,520	\$142,800

More information and the application can be downloaded [here](#). Contact Stefanie at [Metro West CD](#) with questions by phone at 617-923-3505 X 9, or by email at stefanie@metrowestcd.org.

Hate Has No Home in Newton

To our Asian friends, neighbors and colleagues in Newton, please know I stand with you, as do residents in all 13 of our villages.

This has been a year of escalating and hateful anti-Asian words and actions. The events in Atlanta add to the horror.

Our community is built on the unifying core values of respect, acceptance and diversity.

I continue to say - Hate has no home anywhere in Newton.

Warmly,

Ruthanne



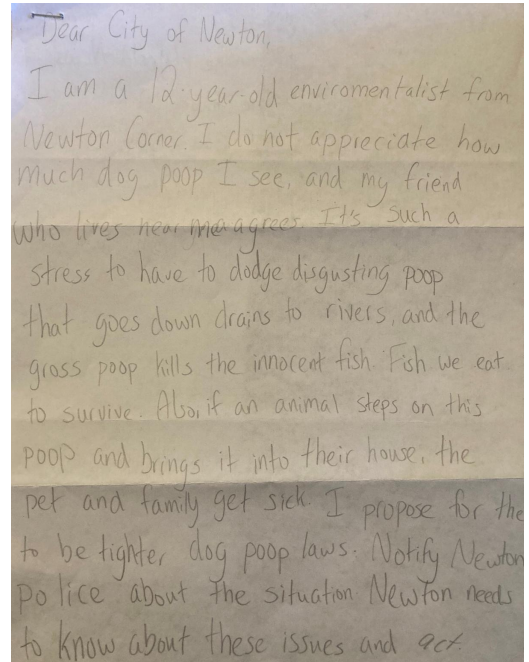
P.S. The Newton “Freedge” is open. Anyone can stop by any time for free, supplemental food. The refrigerator is in the front parking lot by Central Drapery and Dry Cleaning at 420 Watertown Street in Nonantum. Kudos to the Newton Food Pantry which led this volunteer initiative. While volunteer teams will monitor, clean, and stock the freedge with a variety of perishable and nonperishable, we can all help our neighbors. Take what you need and leave what you can.

P.P.S. Yard waste collection begins on Monday, March 29 and continues through Friday, Dec. 10. (This schedule could change because of the weather. I’ll keep you posted.) Put grass clippings, leaves, tree and shrub pruning, wood chips, small plants in a paper yard waste bag or your own barrel along with trash and recycling carts on your regular collection day. Be careful as yard waste in plastic bags won’t be collected.

P.P.P.S. Registration is now open for Newton Community Education’s Spring classes for kids and adults, and for the Summer programs for kids. Check out both online and in-person programs in the arts, technology, sports, recreation and more. Visit newtoncommunityed.org for more information or to register. Also, want to see

your artwork on a Newton Community Education brochure cover? Enter the NCE Cover Contest. Contest details are available [here](#).

P.P.P.P.S. I received a thoughtful letter from Meghan Cecilia O'Leary, a 12-year-old, self-described environmentalist concerned about pet waste – specifically “dog poop.” In short, she’s seeing too much around Newton not being picked-up. Yes, it’s the law in Newton to pick up after your dog; it’s also the right thing to do.

A photograph of a handwritten letter on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and discusses environmental concerns about dog waste in Newton. The letter is addressed to the City of Newton and mentions the author's age and location. It describes the problem of dog poop being seen and the stress it causes, particularly regarding its impact on the environment and public health. The author proposes tighter laws and asks for notification of the situation.

Dear City of Newton,
I am a 12-year-old environmentalist from Newton Corner. I do not appreciate how much dog poop I see, and my friend who lives near me agrees. It's such a stress to have to dodge disgusting poop that goes down drains to rivers, and the gross poop kills the innocent fish. Fish we eat to survive. Also, if an animal steps on this poop and brings it into their house, the pet and family get sick. I propose for the to be tighter dog poop laws. Notify Newton Police about the situation Newton needs to know about these issues and get

