

Mayor's Update

COVID-19 Updates and Losses

One year ago tonight, on April 1, 2020, I reported for the first time that three of our neighbors had died with COVID-19. I distinctly remember that somber day and our uncertainty, unease and grief as the pandemic broke over us.

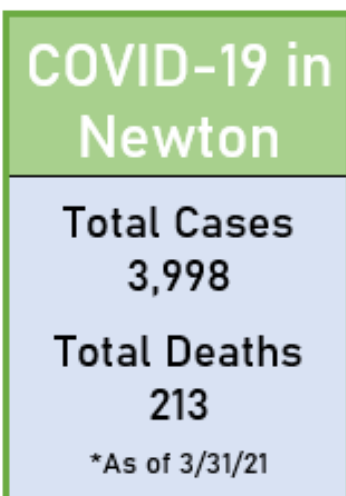


Tonight, fifty-two weeks later, one more Newtonian has died with COVID-19 this past week. We have now lost 213 family members, friends and neighbors from our 13 villages. I know that in addition, so many of us have lost others who didn't happen to live in Newton and our grief extends broadly and deeply.

Join together on Tuesday, April 6, at 7:30 p.m. at the City Hall circle out front as we light at least two hundred thirteen candles and honor, remember and celebrate those we have lost and rededicate ourselves to doing what we can now to stop the spread of COVID.

Newton Candlelight Memorial Service
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Tuesday, April 6
7:30 p.m.

Bring a candle with you as we gather as a community. Wear a mask. Physically distance. Find solace together with music by Adrienne Hartzell Knudsen and a brief program led by members of the Newton Interfaith Clergy and including a resident who lost a family member and Dr. Errol Norwitz, President and CEO of our vital partner, Newton-Wellesley Hospital.



Newton Cases

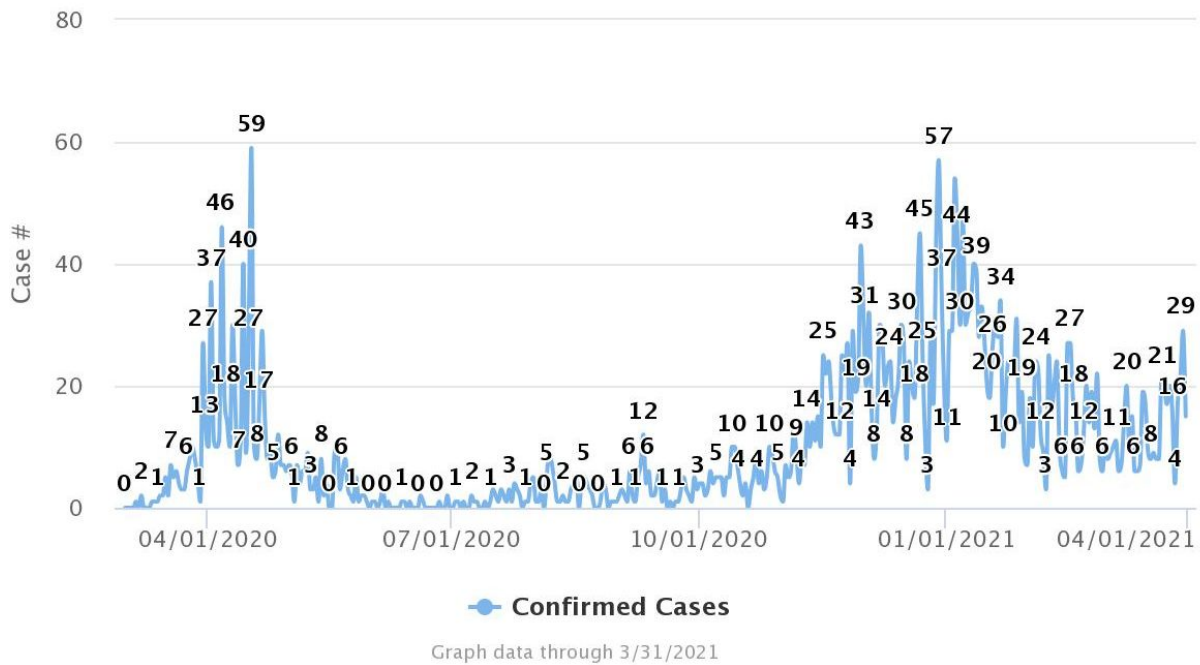
As we're seeing statewide, the number of new cases in Newton are going in the wrong direction after coming down and then staying relatively stable for the past several weeks.

We had 138 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19 over the past week from March 25 – March 31 which is 53 more than the 85 new cases we saw last week, and the 75 new cases we saw over each of the previous two weeks. The new cases bring the cumulative number of people in Newton who have tested positive to 3,998.

Over the two-week tracking period used by the State from March 14 to March 27, Newton had 182 new cases compared to the 156 during the previous two weeks,

and 141 during the reporting period prior to that.

Newton COVID-19 Cases



Our incidence rate also increased to 14.2 cases per 100,000 this week, higher than the 12.2 reported last week, and the 11.0 reported prior to that.

One more indicator that shows now is not the time to let up on our vigilance is the positivity rate in Newton, which inched up to .64% of the 31,094 tests administered to Newton residents over the past two-week reporting period coming back positive. Last week it was .53%, up from .46% the week prior to that. The statewide positivity rate is now 2.36%, up from 2.01% last week (with 1.2 million tests performed during this reporting period).

The Boston College community accounted for 17% of the cases in Newton during this reporting period, which is almost half as many as the 30% they accounted for over the previous two reporting periods. Boston College posts its COVID-19 case data [here](#).

Looking at all this data makes it clear why we heard such an urgent message this week from Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I will echo her words, “We are not powerless.” We know what to do and we can change this trajectory as we race toward getting everyone vaccinated.

Vaccination Update

This week’s State vaccination information shows that 39,126 Newtonians, or 43% of our population, have had at least one dose.

That number includes my husband, Joe, and me. We had our turn on Saturday when we got our first vaccines at Brigham and Women’s



Hospital. (Thank you to the two nurses, Aja and Sean.) We trust the science and we know the vaccine will protect us, those we love and our community.

The state data also shows that 27% of Newton's population is now fully vaccinated with 16% partially vaccinated. (A week ago, we were at 23% and 14% respectively.)

Newtonians who are partially or fully vaccinated include 95%+ of those who are 75+, 95%+ of those 65-74 years old, 58% who are 50-64 years old, 44% who are 30-49 years old, 24% that are 20-29 years old, and 3% who are 0-19 years old. To see the detailed vaccination information for each city and town in Massachusetts by age, sex, race and ethnicity, and zip code, click [here](#).

You can find a vaccination appointment or register to be notified when it's your turn at a mass vaccination site at vaxfinder.mass.gov.

If you or someone you know is eligible for a vaccine in Newton and is homebound, contact Newton Health and Human Services Department at 617-796-1420 or email health@newtonma.gov.

Newton Public Schools COVID-19 Data

The State and the City have kept track of positive cases in our public school community since the school year began, including faculty, staff and students. These numbers include all tests performed, both those done through outside testing sites and those performed through the free school testing program.

As of March 31, 345 people in the NPS community have tested positive since September 14, an additional 37 cases from when we last reported the numbers two weeks ago. This includes 25 students learning in person, seven staff members working in person, and five students in the DLA/remote learning program.

The dashboard with week by week school data is available [here](#).

Serious Holes in Commuter Rail Schedule

The MBTA recently released the Commuter Rail schedule for service along the Worcester Line leaving serious holes in the scheduled stops at the three Newton stations, severely limiting the ability of Newton residents to get into Boston during the day and precluding any Boston morning commuters from arriving in Newton until after noon.

I am calling on the MBTA to either restore or augment the schedule times for trains stopping in Newton or alternatively to re-instate Express Buses from these station areas as a work around while accelerating permanent improvements to platforms in Newton to provide regular commuter rail service to Newton.

Read my full letter to MBTA General Manager Steve Poftak [here](#). Consider sending him an email yourself at spoftak@mbta.com.

Get Ready to Swim and Consider Applying for a Summer Job

Thankfully, our Parks, Recreation & Culture Department (PRC) will be reopening Gath Pool and the Crystal Lake bathhouse and beach this summer for recreational swimming and swim teams.



Working closely with Newton's Health and Human Services and Public Buildings staff, we are developing policy changes for health and safety. We'll post these changes at newtonma.gov/aquatics when passes become available for purchase.

With the pool, beach and camps opening this summer, the Parks, Recreation and Culture staff is hiring lifeguards and camp counselors. Job descriptions for these positions can be found [here](#). (Please note, these seasonal jobs are listed here rather than on the City's main employment page.)



Newton AI Fresco

Picnic tables, bistro tables and umbrellas are being delivered, twinkle lights installed, and artists have their brushes ready to add their flair for the second season of Newton AI Fresco.



Order some take-out and enjoy a meal outdoors in the Newton Centre Triangle Parking Lot, Rodney Barker Square and Arthur English Park in Newton Highlands, the Elm Street Parking Lot and Captain Ryan Park in West Newton, the Austin Street Parking Lot in

Newtonville, in Colletti Magni Park in Nonantum, and at the Depot along the Upper Falls Greenway. There's also expanded on-street dining along Union Street in Newton Centre. Click [here](#) for a map of all the Newton AI Fresco locations.

Special thanks go to Newton Community Pride, and Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture, DPW and Planning Departments.

Small Business Recovery Grants, Round 2

We have awarded another \$302,000 in small business economic recovery grants to 27 Newton brick and mortar businesses in villages across the City.

This second round of funding follows a previous \$300,000 investment in 27 Newton small businesses last summer.

We targeted the investments to:

- Our small brick and mortar establishments in village centers.
- Businesses which demonstrated significant financial hardship as a result of the pandemic.
- Businesses owned and operated or whom employed people of low and moderate incomes.
- Businesses that served Newton residents regularly.

A total of 76 Newton businesses applied for the grants. Of the 27 businesses that will receive grants of either \$10,000 or \$15,000 (\$10,000 to businesses with five or fewer employees and \$15,000 to businesses with six to 20 employees), the majority are either restaurants or personal service establishments, sectors which have suffered disproportionately. The awardees, though, also included retailers, youth focused enterprises, and a dance studio. A full list of the awardees can be found [here](#).

Included on the list are restaurants (Boca Bella, Cherry Tree, Moldova, Jumbo Seafood), retailers (Newtonville Books, Icing on the Cake, Yogurt Beach, Floristika), salons (Coco Nails, Glo Medical, Spa Paula B) and youth programs (ICKids, Nonantum Boxing Club).



Autism Appreciation Day

As the Mayor of Newton, I have the honor of proclaiming tomorrow, April 2, 2021, Autism Acceptance Day in the City of Newton. It's a day to promote acceptance and celebration of our autistic neighbors as family members, friends, classmates, co-workers and community members making extraordinary contributions to our community.

Warmly,
Ruthanne

P.S. Is there something on your mind? I regularly hold **office hours** (virtual during the pandemic) and the next one is Tuesday, April 6 from 8:30 to 10:00 a.m. Find the schedule through July [here](#). During the last session, I heard from residents about everything from vaccines and reopening our schools to water bills and potholes.

P.P.S. Newton Community Farm's **Online Seedling Sale** opens to the public next Wednesday, April 7 at noon with pickups scheduled for mid-May. Find more information at newtoncommunityfarm.org.

P.P.P.S. Help with **donations to our three Newton food pantries** to help put food

on our neighbors' tables at the Spring Food Drive on Sunday, April 11 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Please, only drop off the following as our food pantries are not currently set up for other items: hearty soups, 5 ounce cans of tuna (preferably white), 16 ounce boxes of cereal (or smaller), oatmeal in round cannisters or other hot cereal, and peanut butter or jelly. The drop off is in the rear Memorial Hall circle at City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Avenue. Our three pantries- Arabic Baptist Church Food Pantry, Newton Food Pantry and Centre Street Food Pantry- thank you in advance.

P.P.P.P.S. In recognition of John MacDougall Lewis, upstanding resident of Newton, caring and compassionate husband and father, kind and loyal friend, and exceptionally gracious **recipient of April Fools Day pranks**, I hereby proclaim Thursday, April 1, 2021, April Fools Day, as **John MacDougall Lewis Day** in the City of Newton. Check this out!

