

Friday, May 21, 2021

Mayor's Update

COVID-19 Update

We had 10 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Newton over the past week, a continuation of the good news we've seen since vaccines became widely available. On Jan. 15, the date 300 of Newton's first responders received their first doses of vaccine, we reported 253 new cases over the previous week. Each month since then we've seen fewer people in Newton being infected with new cases falling to 112 on Feb. 18, 85 on March 15, 66 on April 16, and now only 10.

This week's 10 new cases are down from the 22 we saw last week and brings our cumulative total in Newton to 4,362.



COVID-19 in Newton
Total Cases 4,362
Total Deaths 214
<small>*As of 5/19/21</small>

Over the two-week tracking period used by the State from May 5 – 15, Newton had 40 new cases compared to 86 over the previous period.

The average daily incidence rate fell to 3.1 per 100,000, down from 6.7 last week, and our positivity rate (the percentage of tests that come back positive) is now 0.24% (with 24,326 tests performed).

Cases among the Boston College community accounted for 20% of Newton's confirmed cases during this two-week tracking period. Updated BC data can be found [here](#).

Losses

The best news of all is that for the sixth week we have lost no one in Newton with COVID-19.

Newton Public School COVID-19 Data

Over the past seven days, from May 13 – 19, the Newton Public Schools had no new cases of COVID-19.

The dashboard with week by week school data from the pooled testing program is available [here](#) and the overall school data is [here](#).

Vaccination Update

This week's State vaccination information shows that 68,664 Newtonians, or 75% of our population, have had at least one dose.

The state data also shows that approximately 60% of Newton's population is now fully vaccinated with 15% partially vaccinated. (Last week we were at 56% and 16% respectively.)

Newtonians who are partially or fully vaccinated include:

95%+ of those who are 75 years old or more,
95%+ of those 65 – 74 years old,
95%+ who are 50 – 64 years old,
95%+ who are 30 – 49 years old,
65% who are 20 – 29 years old, and
56% who are 16 – 19 years old,
46% who are 12 – 15 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](#).

Still not vaccinated? Newton Health and Human Services is holding a free walk-in COVID-19 vaccine clinic with the one-dose Johnson and Johnson vaccine.

When: Wednesday, May 26

Time: 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Where: Newton City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Ave) check in at Room 107A
No appointment necessary, anyone 18 and older is welcome

An additional vaccination clinic is also open at Newton North High School this weekend for all students 12 and over as well as anyone else who is currently eligible to receive their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

When: Saturday, May 22 or Sunday, May 23

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Where: Newton North High School (457 Walnut St., Newtonville)

Register: <https://www.holtzmanmedical.org/school>

Questions? Call 617-796-1420. Homebound vaccine visits are also still available. If you or your loved one is homebound and would like a home visit to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, call 617-796-1420 and someone will call you back to screen for eligibility and schedule an appointment.

You can also check the State [vaxfinder](#) site or our Newton Health and Human Services page [here](#) to find a vaccine appointment.

Re-Opening

Stay tuned as plans take shape to reopen fully the Newton Free Library and for in-person programs to be re-introduced inside and outside at the Senior Center.

Read the State's reopening update [here](#).

After a long, cold winter of physical distancing and online classes, what better way to celebrate a glorious day than with a pop-up, in-person Zumba class at Newton's Senior Center. Zumba instructor Ketty Rosenfeld, who has been an exercise lifeline for hundreds of Newton's older residents during the pandemic, put out a call. Before she knew it, the parking lot was full, the music was blasting and the class was back in the swing of things together.



Gun Shop Update

At close to midnight last Monday night, May 17, the City Council deadlocked at 12 – 12 on whether to continue to debate an amendment to the City's zoning ordinance to require a special permit and limit the location of gun businesses to three locations in the City that meet buffer requirements from sensitive uses.

Half of the Council was in favor of voting on the zoning change that night. The other half wanted more time to consider the changes and to explore options to further restrict the potential locations of a gun store in Newton.

The tie vote meant that the City Council could move forward with the vote on the zoning ordinance that night.

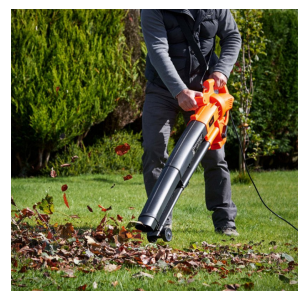
But a councilor called for the vote to be "Chartered," effectively delaying the discussion and vote until the next full Council meeting which is scheduled for Wednesday, June 7.

On a separate but closely related track, the City Council's Zoning and Planning Committee will take up a discussion of a separate item to adopt an ordinance banning gun businesses entirely next Wednesday, May 26 at 6:30 p.m. Get the Zoom log in information [here](#).

Read FAQs and updated information [here](#).

Leaf Blowers

We have a new registration requirement for commercial landscapers who use leaf blowers in Newton. Starting on Labor Day, these companies will need to register with the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) before working on properties in the City.



The leaf blower noise ordinance was passed into law by the City Council four years ago and among other things prohibits the use of all leaf blowers at or above 65 decibels. (There are no exceptions.)

Additional information about leaf blower regulations can be found [here](#).

These new changes, passed by the City Council this week, require landscapers to register with ISD, provide contact information, and attest that they understand Newton's bylaw. The landscapers will also be required to post registration information on their company vehicles. The registration fee is \$50, and companies can be fined for violations. Multiple fines could result in a suspension of operating privileges in Newton.

Homeowners please know that the changes include a provision that they can be held responsible and fined if an unregistered landscaper violates the noise ordinance at their property. The City will post a list of registered landscapers this fall so homeowners will know who is in compliance with the ordinance. (We will remind everyone in late August.)

Please remember that gas-powered leaf blowers are prohibited from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

More information on the leaf blower ordinance is [here](#).



Join Us Wednesday Morning

Join with neighbors for an infusion of hope and joy at our Community Breakfast on Wednesday, May 26th at 8:30 a.m. We'll be together virtually on a webinar with some songs, some reflections and lots of gratitude for the people who helped us during the pandemic.

Although there is no fee to attend, we ask you please consider supporting our neighbors with donations to: [The Newton Food Pantry](#), [Centre Street Food Pantry](#), [The Arabic Baptist Food Pantry](#), or [The Newton Community Freedge](#).

Please register here: bit.ly/NewtonBreakfast21.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. We're exploring options to repair or replace the **Christina Street Bridge** over the Charles River in Newton Upper Falls and we want to hear from you. Should the dilapidated bridge be rehabbed, built new in the same location or built in a new location? The design options will be presented at a meeting on Wednesday, May 26,

from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Join the zoom discussion [here](#). Find out more about the project [here](#).



P.P.S. Join a discussion about the intersection of **racism and housing instability** in the time of COVID with Dr. Jen Brody and Sonja Spears, Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer for [Boston Health Care for the Homeless](#), on Tuesday, May 25 at 7:00 p.m. to Register [here](#) for *COVID-19 and Structural Racism*, a part of the ongoing Overdue: Confronting Race and Racism in Newton series.

P.P.P.S. Check your mailbox for a [letter](#) announcing the **City's partnership with Eversource and National Grid with tips to help us all save energy in our homes**. Check out our [Take Action page](#) to get started.

P.P.P.P.S. Oh, the treasures we find at City Hall. In the process of getting settled, new City of Newton Treasurer/Collector Ron Mendes stumbled across a legacy of late 19th century clerical practice: four bottles of **Commonwealth of Massachusetts Standard Record Ink**. This blue ink, registered for use in November 1899, was the official ink for records and other public documents in Massachusetts. The Federal Government would not adopt standard ink until 1914. A feather quill pen and antique pen stand were found nearby.



P.P.P.P.P.S. **Struggling with your utility bills?** The Cousens Fund has federal Community Development Block Grant funds (CDBG) to assist eligible households with emergency utility grants. Households must live in Newton and be of low-to-moderate income. The Cousens Fund also assists Newton low-to-moderate income households who may not qualify for the COVID funding. Find more information and an application for assistance [here](#). Questions? Call Cousens Fund Director Kathy Laufer at 617-796-1324.

P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Newton's own Marjorie Druker received a surprise call from the **Today Show** Monday morning to thank her for her dedication to helping feed people in our community. Click the photo below to watch.



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