

Thursday, May 27, 2021

Mayor's Update



COVID-19 Update

This Saturday, May 29, Newton will be following the State guidelines which call for lifting nearly all COVID-19 restrictions.

The State guidelines end the capacity limits on indoor or outdoor gatherings and allow all businesses to operate at 100% capacity. Bars will reopen and COVID-19 restrictions on hours of operation, table capacity and physical distancing requirements at restaurants will be lifted.

Find more information about the State's reopening guidelines [here](#).

The State guidelines also lift the mask mandate with a few exceptions. For fully vaccinated individuals, masks will only be required in certain places, including rideshares, public transportation, congregate care settings and healthcare facilities. Please know that individual businesses, including stores and restaurants, have the option to still require masks.

Non-vaccinated individuals are advised to continue wearing masks and to continue physical distancing in most settings.

Some people who are fully vaccinated may choose to continue wearing a mask for lots of different reasons. Please respect people who make different choices than your own – here in Newton we want kindness, acceptance and civility to be the norm.

The changes in the guidelines are possible because the vaccine has changed the landscape of this pandemic. New cases and hospitalizations continue to fall.

Case Update

Over the past week, we saw only 5 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Newton, half as many as the 10 we saw last week and less than a quarter of the 22 we saw two weeks ago. These additional five cases bring our cumulative total number of cases among Newton residents to 4,367.

Newton had 14 new cases during the two-week tracking period used by the State from May 9 – 22, compared to 40 over the previous two weeks, and 86 during the two-week tracking prior to that.

COVID-19 in Newton	
Total Cases	4,367
Total Deaths	214
*As of 5/26/21	

The average daily incidence rate fell to 1.1 per 100,000 from 3.1 last week, and the percent of tests performed on Newton residents that came back positive is now 0.12% of the 17,969 tests performed.

Cases among the Boston College community accounted for 12% of Newton's confirmed cases during this week tracking period, down from the 20% we saw last week. Updated BC data can be found [here](#).

Again, I am happy to report that for the seventh week in row no one in Newton died with COVID-19.

Newton Public School COVID-19 Data

Over the past seven days, from May 20 – 26, the Newton Public Schools reported no new cases of COVID-19.

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

Newton Vaccination Update

This week's State vaccination information shows that 70,145 Newtonians, or 77% of our population, have had at least one dose.

The state data also shows that more than 63% of Newton's population is now fully vaccinated with 14% partially vaccinated. (Last week we were at 60% and 16% respectively.)

State data shows 95%+ of Newton residents who are ages 30 and older are partially or fully vaccinated.

The vaccination rates for younger age groups are:

66% who are 20 – 29 years old (65% last week)

57% who are 16 – 19 years old (56% last week)

64% who are 12 – 15 years old (46% last week)

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, June 2

Time: 10:00 a.m. - Noon

Where: Newton City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Ave), check in at Room 107A

No appointment necessary, anyone 18 and older is welcome

If you are having difficulties getting to a vaccine appointment, please call the Newton Health and Human Services Department at 617-796-1420 for assistance.

Celebrate **LGBTQ+ Pride Month** at our Pride Flag Raising Ceremony on Tuesday, June 1 at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall. We will be honoring LGBTQ+ healthcare workers from Newton-Wellesley Hospital and the cofounders of Sunbow Zine (an amazing virtual platform that brings together art, writing, climate justice, culture and identity in a space by and for young women and LGBTQ+ artists). RSVP to attend in person (or just show up!) or join the live stream at newtonma.gov/hrc. *(The photo is from our 2019 (pre-pandemic) Pride ceremony.)*



Gun Shop Update

The City Council is again poised to vote on a strict zoning ordinance amendment focused on gun dealerships at a special meeting of the full Council next Wednesday, June 2, at 6:30 p.m. They will vote on a proposed zoning amendment that incorporates buffer distances from residences and sensitive uses (resulting in only three potential locations within the City) and importantly, would mandate any potential firearm business to apply for and receive a Special Permit from the City Council (requiring a 2/3 vote of the full City Council for approval).

The Zoom link will be posted [here](#).

The City Council's Zoning and Planning Committee met last night to discuss the separate but related track of amending the City zoning ordinance to ban completely gun businesses in Newton; they voted to schedule a public hearing. (You can watch last night's Zoning and Planning meeting here at [NewTV/Vimeo](#).)

The date for the public hearing for residents and others to speak up about the proposal to ban all gun businesses in Newton is scheduled for Monday, June 21.

In light of the implications of the 2nd Amendment and the current legal landscape, the opinion of our City's Law Department is that a complete ban would likely be held unconstitutional by a court of law.

Read the FAQs, the Planning Department's proposed zoning amendments, the Law Department's answers to City Councilors' questions, and two letters from the nationally recognized Giffords (Gabby) Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence supporting the proposed zoning amendments by clicking [here](#).

Resource Recovery Center Opens on Tuesday, No Appointments Necessary

Great news! The Newton Resource Recovery Center at 115 Rumford Avenue (near the Waltham line) is re-opening on Tuesday, June 1 for most regular operations with no appointments necessary. Saturday hours will also resume on June 5.

Never visited our Resource Recovery Center? The site is open to all Newton residents to drop off overflow [curbside recyclables](#) and items that can only be [recycled by drop-off](#). (Keep in mind that no wood furniture or overflow trash is accepted at the site.) Find information on how to manage overflow trash and bulky items [here](#).

2021 Summer Hours for most operations are Tuesday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and Saturday, 7:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

The Swap Shop (leave a household item you no longer need or pick up something someone else left) will reopen on Friday, June 11; it is open on Fridays and Saturdays 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. through Saturday, October 30. (It closes in the cold weather months.)

The Book Shed (donate a gently used book or pick one up) will reopen on Tuesday, June 8; it is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and Saturdays 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. We're planning a special one day book drop-off only at the Book Shed to restock the shelves on Saturday, June 5, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The Latex Paint Exchange will remain closed for now. We anticipate reopening this in July; check [here](#) for updates.

The Goodwill Donation Trailer: The pandemic significantly impacted Goodwill's operations and its donation trailer has not yet returned. Goodwill has not yet scheduled a date for it to return.

City Hall Pollinator Garden

Next time you're at City Hall, keep an eye out for hummingbirds, butterflies and bumblebees. Thanks to the good work of the Newton Conservators, the Newton Pollinator Working Group, Newton's Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, City Hall now has a garden to help feed all the native pollinators that call Newton home.



Watch and enjoy as this garden transforms into a blossoming buzz of aster and ironweed, bluestar and goldenrod, and so much more. The Newton Conservators have also developed a Pollinator Toolkit, so you can help feed the bumblebees in your own backyard this summer; check it out at newtonconservators.org/pollinator-toolkit. (Pictured, Beth Wilkinson and Mark Fedhusen at the City Hall Pollinator Garden.)

Memorial Day

Join me on our national day of remembrance to honor and remember those who sacrificed their lives for our freedom. On Monday morning, May 31, Memorial Day, we will gather at 10:00 a.m. at the Newton Cemetery to lay wreaths in the lots where our war veterans are buried.

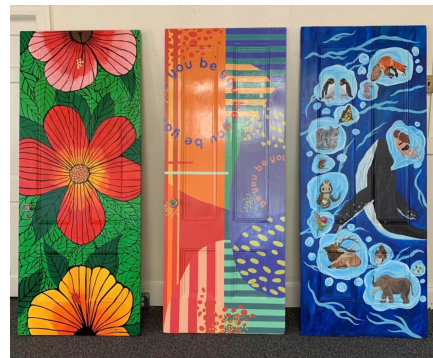
On Sunday, May 30, I will also join members of American Legion Nonantum Post 440, the Sons of the American Legion, and veterans to lay wreaths at the City's War memorials and on the six bridges that bear the names of Newtonians killed in service to their county.

As we enjoy the unofficial beginning of summer, we also take the time to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice and to thank those who wear the uniform.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Newton Out Doors! Check out the upcycled wooden doors decorated by local and regional artists in eight Newton villages. Enjoy this unique public art in our villages and, while you're there, grab a bite and shop local. Thank you to all the artists, Meryl Kessler for chairing the effort, City of Newton's Cultural Development staff, Newton Community Pride, and Village Bank. Find more info [here](#).



P.P.S. We celebrated the 3,000 employees of the City of Newton who served all of us during the pandemic at yesterday's 47th Annual Mayor's Community Breakfast. Watch the video tribute below and click [here](#) to watch the whole program which includes wonderful music, tributes to extraordinary students, and special words of joy, hope and consolation by Rabbi Gardenswartz, Rev. Bailey and Rev. Johnson. Hats off to Stephen Kessinger of NewTV who put the videos together.



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