

Thursday, June 3, 2021

Mayor's Update



Strict Gun Store Zoning Passed and Signed

Today I signed a zoning amendment passed by the City Council last night that strictly controls and limits gun stores in Newton.

The updated zoning importantly mandates that any potential firearm business seeking to locate in Newton apply for a Special Permit from the City Council which would then necessitate a two-thirds majority vote of the Council (16 out of 24 Councilors) to receive approval. The zoning amendment also incorporates buffer distances from residences and sensitive uses (e.g., day care centers and schools) resulting in only three primary, small potential locations.

The zoning amendment passed with a 23-1 vote.

As Councilor Josh Krintzman said last night, before last night's vote and prior to this restrictive zoning, a gun store could have opened in Newton on any one of 777 parcels of land without approval of the City Council.

The zoning amendment officially will become "effective" in 20 days. But, it will apply retroactively to any uses that had not commenced or received a building permit by April 23, 2021, the date of first publication of the notice of the public hearing.

The proprietors of the proposed gun store on Washington Street near Cabot's applied for a building permit last Friday, May 28. Therefore, with the zoning amendment now passed, a gun store at this location is no longer an allowed use.

Kudos to the City's Law and Planning Departments for writing, noticing and docketing this effective amendment quickly, and to City Council President Susan Albright and Council leadership, including Councilor Deb Crossley (Chair of the Zoning and Planning Committee), for their partnership and hard work in getting it passed.

Newton now joins just a handful of communities in Massachusetts that have restrictive zoning that requires a special permit and limits firearms businesses to only specific areas buffered from sensitive uses.

A public hearing for residents and others to voice their opinions on a complete ban will be held on Monday, June 21. The Zoom link will be posted [here](#).

Please know that 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 zoning amendment passed last night, the Law Department's answers to City Councilors' questions, two letters from the nationally recognized Giffords (Gabby) Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence supporting the proposed zoning amendments, and other more restrictive amendments being considered by clicking [here](#).

COVID-19 Case Update

The news is so good about COVID-19 that it doesn't need to be the very first thing to read in this update. Hooray.

We saw just 4 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Newton this week, one less than the 5 last week, less than half as many as the 10 we saw two weeks ago and less than a quarter of the 22 we saw three weeks ago. These additional four cases bring our cumulative total number of cases among Newton residents to 4,371.

COVID-19 in Newton
Total Cases 4,371
Total Deaths 214
<small>*As of 6/2/21</small>

Newton had 8 new cases during the two-week tracking period used by the State from May 16–29, compared to 14 over the previous two weeks, and 40 during the two-week tracking prior to that. The average daily incidence rate fell to 0.6 per 100,000 from 1.1 last week, and the percent of tests performed on Newton residents that came back positive is now 0.8% of the 11,590 tests performed.

In another indication we've really rounded the corner, for the first time since students arrived at Boston College last fall, there were no new cases among the Boston College community.

For the eighth week in a row, I am happy to report that no one in Newton died with COVID-19.

Newton Public School COVID-19 Data

This week's State vaccination information shows that 70,908 Newtonians, or 77% of our population, have had at least one dose. The state data also shows that more than 65% of Newton's population is now fully vaccinated with 12% partially vaccinated. (Last week we were at 63% and 14% 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:

- 67% who are 20 – 29 years old (66% last week)
- 58% who are 16 – 19 years old (57% last week)
- 69% who are 12 – 15 years old (64% 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](#).

Not vaccinated yet? Appointments are available and increasingly many clinics take walk-ins. Find locations at newtonma.gov/vaccines.

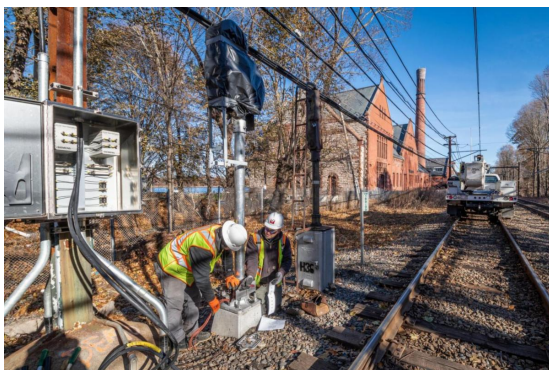
Two remarkable Chiefs are retiring for the second time. Retired Police Chief Howard Mintz came back to head NPD as interim chief during this challenging year and retired Fire Chief Bruce Proia saw us through the pandemic as our Director of Emergency Operations. Both love this City, the professions of policing and firefighting; both grew up in Newton and are wise, generous and hard working.



Newton's Aaa Bond Rating

We just received Moody's Annual Report and Newton's Triple A bond rating, the highest possible rating, is intact.

Moody's noted, "Newton has an outstanding credit position, and its Aaa rating is much stronger than the median rating of Aa3 for cities nationwide. The key credit factors include a very strong wealth and income profile, an extensive tax base and a healthy financial position. It also reflects an affordable debt burden and a moderate pension liability."



Green Line to Halt to Speed Up Repairs

The MBTA will halt all train service on the Green Line D Branch through Brookline and Newton during two separate nine-day stretches in June to expedite track and signal replacement work.

Trains will be replaced by buses from Riverside to Kenmore between Saturday,

June 12 and Sunday, June 20.

Regular train service will return for a few days, then go offline again from Thursday, June 24 through Friday, July 2.

No Greenline D Branch Trains; Buses Only

Saturday, June 12 – Sunday, June 20

Thursday, June 24 – Friday, July 2

During these two periods, crews will install catenary poles, weld previously installed new rails, and replace signals as part of the ongoing \$101 million project which started in June 2018 and is now 83% complete. Once finished, service is expected to be faster and more reliable.

MBTA officials note that keeping the tracks closed for longer stretches allows the work to be completed more quickly than if it was done only at night and over weekends.

As we know, this work can be loud – especially when crews need to cut the rails and then tamp it to the correct elevation. The MBTA has a noise complaint hotline at 508-676-3550.

Find more information about the project at mbta.com/GreenLineD. Sign up for weekly updates about the project [here](#).

Newton TAB Cutting Distribution

We have sad, but not surprising, news for those of us who follow the local newspaper industry.

The Newton TAB is changing its distribution strategy. Starting at the end of July, the TAB will no longer be delivered to nearly every household in the City. Instead, it will be delivered to just 40 to 50% of households. While the print version of the TAB is free, it will still be available online by subscription for a fee.

Sales Director Ron Bright told us this afternoon that they have not yet determined which villages or neighborhoods in Newton will get the TAB once the cuts are made. A decision is expected in the next two to three weeks.

Two thumbs up for the sausage pizza at MIDA, the fabulous new restaurant at the corner of Walnut and Washington Streets at TRIO in Newtonville. Food and Wine Magazine named Douglass Williams one of the best new chefs in America last year.



(Pictured with me cutting the ribbon is Chef Williams, and from left, City

Council President Susan Albright, Damien Chaviano and Robert Korff of

Mark Development which built Trio. Chef Williams, his wife Debra and 3-year-old twin sons are also pictured.)



Emergency Housing Assistance Still Available; Applications due June 30

Launched in May 2020, Newton's COVID-19 Emergency Housing Relief Program has supported over 250 households who have been financially impacted by the pandemic – helping to keep them housed in Newton during a very trying year.

Applications will be accepted through Wednesday, June 30. Funding is still available, so submit your application in the next few weeks.

The program, made possible by Newton Community Preservation Act (CPA) and federal Community Development Block Grant Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) funds, provides temporary assistance for housing costs. The funding assistance covers 70% of an eligible household's monthly rent or mortgage for up to three months. The assistance has a monthly cap of \$2,500 per household. Mortgage assistance is also available to owners of affordable deed-restricted units.

Newton residents who have experienced a reduced income as a direct result of COVID-19 and earn 80% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI) at the time their application is submitted are encouraged to apply.

Metro West Collaborative Development is administering this program on behalf of the City of Newton. To apply, contact Metro West at robyn@metrowestcd.org (preferred method) or 617-923-3505 x5. More details about this program can be found here: newtonma.gov/housingrelief.

Farmers' Market Returns at Cold Spring Park & NNHS

Newton Farmers' Market Managers Nancy Scammon and Ricky Paglia welcome vendors and shoppers back to Cold Spring Park (1094 Beacon Street between Walnut and Chestnut) on Tuesdays this season, starting on June 29, 1:30 to 6:00 p.m.

The Saturday market will be at Newton North High School's Lowell Avenue parking lot (352 Lowell Avenue, Newtonville). (Construction and Newton AI Fresco dining at the Elm Street location in West Newton Square made that site problematic this market season.) The Saturday market will begin June 26, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.



I'm so pleased to be Mayor of a city that jubilantly supports the dignity and self-worth of our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer community and proudly flies the Pride flag.

To the Class of 2021

To all our Newton North and Newton South Seniors, congratulations and enjoy graduation next week. During the pandemic, you navigated your way through a different way of learning online. You found new ways to be friends and teammates, scholars and change agents. You used your voices to let me and my generation know what works, and what doesn't. You spoke out to support others, to question the status quo, and to push us all to do better. Keep speaking up with voices developed and honed in the halls of the Newton Public Schools. I challenge you to find a way to fight for a better future and simultaneously create allies in this work rather than ferocious enemies; lasting progress requires it. Again, congratulations.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Are you free on Friday mornings from 10:00 a.m. to noon this summer? We're looking for **volunteers** to help distribute pre-packed meals to those in need at Newton's **Grab & Go program** at Newton North High School. Interested? Email health@newtonma.gov or call 617-796-1420.

P.P.S. **Lifeguards Needed:** Newton Parks, Recreation & Culture is recruiting Lifeguards for this Summer season at Gath Pool and Crystal Lake. Find more info [here](#). Questions? Contact Sean Nickerson, Newton's Aquatics Director, at snickerson@newtonma.gov.

P.P.P.S. Have some unwanted clean clothes, towels, bedding, shoes and accessories such as purses? Clear out your home and reduce what goes into the trash. Green Newton, the Rotary Club of Newton and [HELPSY](#), the largest **clothing collection recycling** company on the East Coast, are partnering to host monthly

clothing/textile drives June through September. (Find a complete list of accepted items [here](#).) The first HELPSY clothing drive will be this Saturday morning, June 5, from 8:00 a.m. to noon, in the back parking lot of The Shops at Chestnut Hill near the Hammond Pond Parkway entrance. Mark your calendars for the other clothing and textile drives at the same time and location on Saturday July 10, Saturday, Aug. 7, and Saturday Sept. 11.

P.P.P.S. Congrats to the **Boston College Women's Lacrosse** team. The Eagles beat Syracuse in the NCAA finals on Sunday to win their first national lacrosse title. *(Photo by Greg Fiume of NCAA Photos)*



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