

Friday, July 23, 2021

## Mayor's Update



The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Newton are continuing to tick up, with 27 new cases over the past seven days from June 14 – 21 compared with 12 during the previous seven days, and 7 new cases reported during the seven days prior to that. This brings our cumulative total number of cases to 4,436 since the start of the pandemic.

The average daily incidence rate over the past two-week state tracking period from July 4 – 17 is 2.5 per 100,000 cases, up from 1.6 reported last week.

The percent of tests performed on Newton residents that came back positive is now 0.6% of the 5,675 tests performed over the two-week state testing period. (The rate was 0.4% of the 5,663 tests performed from June 27 – July 10).

This week's State vaccination information shows that more than 93% of Newton residents who are ages 30 and older are fully vaccinated and 95%+ of Newton residents who are ages 30 and older are partially or fully vaccinated. To see more detailed vaccination information, click [here](#).

The vaccination rates for younger age groups in Newton that are partially or fully vaccinated are:

71% who are 20 – 29 years old  
62% who are 16 – 19 years old  
95% who are 12 – 15 years old

State data also shows that approximately 6,000 Newton residents eligible to be vaccinated have not yet done so.

Our Health and Human Services Department is keeping a close eye on the data. Newton, like the rest of Massachusetts, is experiencing an uptick in infections. We are thankfully not seeing a rise in the number of COVID-19 related hospitalizations at Newton-Wellesley Hospital.

Most importantly, for the sixteenth week in a row no one in Newton died with COVID-19.

All of us have been watching the news and seeing COVID-19 cases increasing, fully vaccinated people turning positive, and an outbreak among people who visited Provincetown in the last few weeks.

What does the City of Newton Health and Human Services staff want all of us to know?

Vaccinations are the most effective tool against COVID-19 and against the spread of the virus, including the development and spread of new variants. Help protect yourself, your family, and your community from COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccine is free for everyone. You don't need an ID or insurance to get the vaccine.

Vaccination against COVID-19 is highly effective against infection from all the known variants and even more effective at preventing severe disease.

While all three vaccines used in the U.S. are highly effective, vaccine breakthrough cases among the vaccinated are expected because none of the vaccines are 100% effective. (A breakthrough case is the terminology for someone who tests positive more than two weeks after receiving a final dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.)

What does this mean on a practical level? Anyone with symptoms (even mild ones) should get tested for COVID-19 regardless of their vaccination status. (Symptoms include fever/chills, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headache, new loss of taste/smell, sore throat, congestion/runny nose, nausea/vomiting, and diarrhea.) Visit [mass.gov/info-details/find-a-covid-19-test](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/find-a-covid-19-test) to find a test near you.

To date, the CDC has not found any unexpected patterns that would indicate that breakthrough cases are more likely to be caused by specific variants, to occur in certain populations, or to be due to vaccine characteristics (e.g., time since vaccination or vaccine type).

Vaccine breakthrough infections occur in only a small fraction of all vaccinated individuals and account for a small percentage of all the current COVID-19 cases.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health is not regularly reporting the number of vaccine breakthrough cases in Massachusetts. But, in a recent [statement](#), they reported 4,450 breakthrough cases among 4,195,844 or 0.1% of vaccinated individuals as of July 10, 2021.

Vaccines and appointments are widely available in Newton, and some accept walk-ins.

- [Chestnut Hill Wegmans \(200 Boylston Street\)](#)
- [CVS \(1199-1201 Centre Street\)](#)
- [CVS \(839 Washington Street\)](#)
- [CVS \(999 Watertown Street\)](#)
- [CVS \(978 Boylston Street\)](#)
- [CVS \(1195 Boylston Street\)](#)
- [Keyes Drug \(2090 Commonwealth Avenue\)](#)

- [Union Pharmacy \(103 Union Street\)](#)
- [V-Care Pharmacy of Chestnut Hill \(1244 Boylston Street\)](#)
- [Walgreens \(1101 Beacon Street\)](#)
- [Walgreens \(Langley Road\)](#)
- [Walgreens \(Washington Street\)](#)

For a list of vaccination sites across the state, please visit [vaxfinder.mass.gov](https://vaxfinder.mass.gov) or call 2-1-1 for assistance in scheduling an appointment.

The state provides [in-home vaccinations](#) for anyone 12 and older who is unable to get to a vaccine location. Call 833-983-0485 Mon-Fri, 9 am-5 pm to register. Representatives are available in both English and Spanish and they also have access to interpreters for over 100 languages. Once you are registered, you will generally be called within five business days to schedule your appointment. In-home vaccinations will be performed by medical professionals and tailored to meet the individual needs of the person.

People ages 12-17 can only get the Pfizer vaccine. People ages 18 and older can get Moderna, Pfizer, or Johnson & Johnson (J&J). You are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after your second dose of Moderna or Pfizer or after your single dose of J&J.



*Suzanne Hodes, Newton resident and artist, gifted two of her works, “River Light” and “River Reflections,” to the City of Newton. The paintings which depict scenes of the Charles River are currently on display on the second floor of City Hall just outside the City Council Chambers. Suzanne’s artwork is in the collections of many museums (including the Fogg and the DeCordova) and many public and private collections – and now, thanks to Suzanne’s generosity – we can include Newton City Hall in this list.*

## **Affordable Housing Trust and Local Preference Policy**

I’m deeply interested in two initiatives that are before the City Council’s Zoning and Planning Committee (ZAP) on Monday night, July 26.

The first discussion will focus on creating a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust to facilitate and increase affordable housing in Newton.

Newton's Planning Department has been looking closely at how this model is used in other communities (110 cities and towns in Massachusetts have one), how they were successfully implemented, and best practices to recommend for Newton should we move forward with an Affordable Housing Trust .

An Affordable Housing Trust creates a simpler, more streamlined decision making and funding process to allow affordable housing to move forward more expeditiously.

Learn more about the concept [here](#) in the Planning Department's memo to the City Council Zoning and Planning (ZAP) Committee.

*(Photo: A tour of the West Newton Armory Thursday morning for those interested in submitting a proposal for transforming the building on Washington Street just outside West Newton Square into 100% affordable housing. )*



The second discussion at the City Council's Zoning and Planning Committee will focus on Newton's Local Preference Policy for people applying to live in affordable housing. Newton's current policy sets aside 70% of the available affordable units for "local" income eligible people, including current residents, Newton municipal and school employees, employees of businesses in Newton, and households with children attending Newton Public Schools (e.g., Boston METCO families).

The local preference policy has helped households stay in Newton or move here if they work here or their children attend school here. An analysis of the results of Newton's Local Preference Policy on three recent affordable housing lotteries raises questions about its impact on opportunities for people of color to move to Newton. That report and the accompanying Planning Department memo can be found [here](#).

Interested in watching the City Council ZAP meeting on Monday night? Find the link to zoom [here](#).

*Students attending the Newton English Language Learners summer enrichment program came to City Hall recently to learn about City government. City Councilor Andrea Kelley*





*and I met in my office with the students and their teachers Amy Worth and Amy McMahon.*

## **We Stand With Our Asian Neighbors**

A few days ago, we had two bias incidents in the City of Newton, both directed at our Asian neighbors. One involved a jogger who took a "Stop Asian Hate" sign from a lawn and threw it into the street.



The other involved an Out Doors public art installation that depicts the artist Amanda Beard Garcia's Asian grandmother that was defaced by paint being scraped off.

I am disheartened by not just these incidents but also the five house break-ins of Asian families in Newton earlier in June and July as well as the increase in the verbal harassment and physical violence against Asians across the country in the last year and a half.

Thankfully we have had no further reports of house break-ins this week as the Newton Police Department

continues their investigation.

*(Above: a photo of the door as it was painted. Below: a photo of the door with the paint scraped off. There are 25 doors around Newton as part of the Out Door public art installation. While some appear weathered, this is the only one that has been vandalized.)*

During the dark days of the pandemic, we saw escalating and hateful anti-Asian ideas. Fear of a disease



metastasized into a virulent form of hate for people identifying as Asians and Pacific Islanders.

Here in Newton, our Asian friends and neighbors responded to acts of hate with deeds of love. They provided thousands of pieces of protective equipment to our hospitals, nursing homes and first responders, delivered meals to our firefighters, and supported our food pantries. Asian painters created beautiful artwork for us all to enjoy.

The fear and vulnerability felt by many in our community, especially by those who identify as Asian, in their own homes, in their own City, is not only about physical safety.

These racist acts attack people's dignity and their sense of belonging.

When one Newtonian loses their sense of belonging, the fabric of our entire community is torn.

Next week, the art installation that was vandalized will be moved to a location outside City Hall where the side depicting the Asian grandmother that was left intact will be displayed on the grass beside the front stairs where we can all enjoy it.

I stand with our Asian neighbors. All of Newton stands with our Asian neighbors. Today and in the days to come, Newtonians will continue reaching out to and watching out for our neighbors.

I ask all of us to keep our hands reaching out, our eyes open and our voices ready to speak up. In both of these incidents, we had caring community members who reported the incidents quickly so that the Newton Police Department could immediately follow up and begin their investigations. If you see something, you can report it to NPD at 617-796-2123 or anonymously through the TIPS line at 617-796-2121.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Want a chance to “**dunk**” the **Chief**? Join Chief John Carmichael and members of the Newton Police Department for food, music and fun at National Night Out next Tuesday. Meet the women and men who patrol our neighborhoods, share a meal, play some games, and maybe even drop one of them into the dunk tank. National Night Out is a nationwide event that takes place every year on the first Tuesday in August. It brings all of us together to get to know our neighbors and our police officers. Stop by on Tuesday, Aug. 3 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Captain John Ryan Park next to Newton Police Headquarters at 1321 Washington Street in West





Newton Square. (Photo: Chief John Carmichael with youngsters at July 4th festivities.)

P.P.S. You may no longer be able to buy cookies at Rosie's Bakery in Chestnut Hill, but Galina Laffer is still baking her **delicious confections** and selling them at several local establishments. Thank you to Café Nero and Star Market in Newtonville, Barry's Village Deli in Waban and Bagel Table and Showcase SuperLux at The Street in Chestnut Hill for carrying Rosie's Bakery cookies made right here in Newton. Shop Local!



P.P.P.S. Congratulations to Auchel World's President and CEO Haidi Huang, Vice President and Newton resident Jian Fu and Director Hong Xue on Tuesday for the **grand opening** of their branch office in Auburndale. Thank also go to Newton resident Joe Li.



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