

Thursday, Aug. 5, 2021

## Mayor's Update

We're continuing to see an increase in confirmed COVID-19 cases in Newton this week with 61 new cases over the past seven days from July 29 – Aug. 4. This compares to 47 during the previous seven days, and 27 reported during the seven days prior to that. These new cases bring our cumulative total number of cases in Newton to 4,545.



The average daily incidence rate in Newton over the past two-week state tracking period from July 18 – 31 has also increased to 7.1, up from the 4.8 cases per 100,000 people reported last week and the 2.5 reported during the week prior to that.

COVID-19 in Newton
Total Cases 4,545
Total Deaths 215
<small>*As of 8/4/21</small>

The percent of tests performed on Newton residents that came back positive is now 1.24% of the 8,079 tests performed over the two-week state reporting period. (The rate was 0.9% of the 6,960 tests performed from July 11–24.)

With a heavy heart, I need to report the death of one person in Newton who died this week with COVID-19. This death brings the number of lives lost with COVID-19 in our community to 215. My thoughts are with the family and friends of our Newton neighbor who died and with all of us who have lost someone they knew or loved to this virus.

With more of us testing positive, there's a simple and proven technique to stop the spread. Each of us can put our face masks back on when inside public spaces to keep this uptick from becoming a surge. It's an act of kindness we can all do for ourselves and for each other to help keep our community healthy in the face of the highly contagious delta variant.

Thankfully we're in a far different situation at this moment than we were a year ago because we now have safe and effective vaccines.

We can and should still take easy steps to stop the spread.

The following are updated COVID-19 recommendations for Newton from our Health and Human Services Commissioner Deborah Youngblood:

### ***Updated COVID-19 Recommendations for Newton***

*COVID-19 continues to be a concern in our community and one we take very seriously.*

*At this time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has designated 12 of the 14 Counties in Massachusetts as experiencing high or substantial COVID-19 transmission. Middlesex County, which includes Newton, is currently experiencing substantial COVID-19 transmission, defined by the CDC as 50 cases per 100,000 people in a seven-day period.*

*Massachusetts overall and Newton specifically is favorably positioned to weather this uptick in cases because of the significant protection that vaccines provide and our high vaccination rate. Currently 75% of Newton's population is fully vaccinated, a total that includes children under the age of 12 years who are not yet eligible for the vaccine. While Newton's high vaccination rate is laudable, we must continue to be vigilant against further spread. As long as significant levels of virus are circulating, there are health risks to the community and the opportunity for the virus to continue to mutate. The next variant could be even more difficult to contain.*

*Below are specific recommendations the City of Newton Health and Human Services team is making for our residents and employees as we continue to work together to contain this persistent pandemic.*

***Recommendation #1: We strongly encourage everyone in our community who is eligible to be vaccinated to get the vaccine.*** Vaccines are the best defense against COVID-19 and known variants. Vaccines are successful in keeping the majority of those vaccinated from contracting the illness. The small percentage who do contract the virus and are vaccinated are protected from serious illness, hospitalizations, and death in the majority of cases. If you have not already done so, please get vaccinated. If you need assistance getting a vaccine, please go to [vaxfinder.mass.gov](https://vaxfinder.mass.gov) to locate one. If you have questions and concerns regarding the vaccine, please contact your medical provider or call Newton's Health and Human Services Department (HHS) at 617-796-1420.

***Recommendation #2: We strongly encourage everyone, regardless of vaccination status, to wear face coverings when inside public spaces.*** Face coverings are now known to be protective of both the wearer and others around the wearer. It is important that we do not allow transmission rates to continue to rise, and so we urge everyone to adhere to mask wearing indoors in public spaces as we know this is an effective mitigation strategy. The more people who wear them, the more effective they are at controlling the spread.

***Recommendation #3: If you feel unwell, you should stay at home.*** While this is always good practice, it is critically important during this pandemic to limit the spread of the virus. We urge all our employers to be as supportive as possible of their employees and to urge their staff to stay home when sick.

***Recommendation #4: We strongly encourage anyone experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 to isolate from others as soon as possible and get tested for COVID-19, regardless of your vaccination status.*** Testing is an important tool for tracing close contacts and tracking the prevalence of the virus in our community. You can find nearby testing locations at [mass.gov/covid-19-testing](https://mass.gov/covid-19-testing). Common symptoms of COVID-19 include: Fever, chills or shaking chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, headache, body aches, new loss of sense of taste or smell. The following site provides more information about testing including

what to do if your test is positive: [mass.gov/info-details/about-covid-19-testing#should-i-be-tested?](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/about-covid-19-testing#should-i-be-tested?).

## Newton Hires

As Newton-based employers begin to recover and rebound from the pandemic, many are facing a challenge finding employees to fill a variety of job openings. The numbers are daunting—over the 90 days between April 15 and July 15, 3,400 jobs were posted for positions with employers located in the City of Newton.

Simultaneously, people who faced layoffs and shorter hours during the pandemic are looking to re-enter the workforce or get more hours of work.

How can the City of Newton help?

The City of Newton created a partnership with MassHire Metro South/West, and the Newton-Needham Regional Chamber to start *Newton Hires* an exciting program that will provide a cash bonus incentive to attract employees to Newton-based employers. (MassHire is the state sponsored agency focused on employment training and placement.)

Currently unemployed or underemployed individuals who register for employment assistance with MassHire and secure employment with a Newton based employer will be eligible for up to a \$1,000 cash bonus.



*(Photo: With, from left Greg Reibman, President, Newton-Needham Regional Chamber, Stephen Kramer, CEO, Bright Horizons, Greg Bunn and Zoie Jaklitsch of MassHire Metro South/West. Bright Horizons, headquartered in Newton, has dozens of job openings and is delighted by the start of this program.)*

We are investing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to attract talented people to work here in Newton while supporting our short-staffed businesses and non-profits that are bouncing back after such a difficult year and a half.

### *Newton Hires* Program

The *Newton Hires* program will offer cash incentives of up to \$1,000 to currently unemployed and underemployed individuals who register with MassHire, secure employment of up to 20 hours per week or more with a qualifying Newton employer, and remain employed with the business/non-profit for at least four weeks for an

initial \$500 cash award and an additional \$500 cash award for individuals who stay as employees with the same employers through the week of December 20, 2021.

The *Newton Hires* program will be administered by the state's MassHire Metro South/West office. It begins this Monday, August 9. The program is limited to the first 200 individuals who get hired in Newton, remain employed, and become eligible for the cash awards. The *Newton Hires* program will be funded with approximately \$220,000 from the City of Newton's share of the federal American Rescue Plan Act funding.

### Newton Hires Employee Eligibility

To be eligible for the *Newton Hires* program, applicants must:

- Be currently unemployed or underemployed and at least 18 years of age
- Register with MassHire Metro South/West [here](#)
- Secure employment of 20 hours a week or more with a Newton based business with a physical "brick and mortar" location in Newton
- Provide appropriate documentation to MassHire showing that they both have remained with the Newton employer for a period of four weeks (to receive the initial \$500 cash incentive) and potentially receive an additional \$500 cash incentive upon remaining with the employer through the week of December 20, 2021.
- The employee does not need to be a Newton resident

### Newton Based Employer Requirements:

In order for employees to become eligible for the *Newton Hires* hiring incentive bonus, the employer must:

- Be a Newton based employer with a physical brick and mortar location in the City of Newton
- Register their business and available job openings with MassHire Metro South/West [here](#)

Questions? Reach out to Newton Director of Economic Development Devra Bailin. Email her at [dbailin@newtonma.gov](mailto:dbailin@newtonma.gov), call her at 617-831-0103 or leave her a message at 617-796-1122.

*A night of community fun  
supporting and getting to know  
the women and men of the  
Newton Police Department at  
National Night Out on Tuesday  
night. Thanks to Officer Justin*



*Lau and Director of Cultural Development Paula Gannon for teaming up to plan a wonderful event. (Photo: With, clockwise from top left: Mathias Ntege and his daughter, District Attorney Marian Ryan, Judy Dore, Newton Police Officer Zoi Laskarakis and Marisabel Lazarakis.)*



*Click on the photo below to watch a video of D.A. Ryan and my attempt to dunk the Chief - it may not have been pretty, but it was successful (and all in good fun)!*



**Two Affordable Homeownership Opportunities:  
74A Webster Park and 250 California Street, Unit #250**

The City of Newton is accepting applications for two affordable homeownership units at 74B Webster Park (priced at \$345,000) and 250 California Street, Unit #250 (priced at \$399,000).

74A Webster Park in West Newton is a three-bedroom, two-bathroom condominium with 1,000 square feet; this home is part of a two-unit townhouse. 250 California St., Unit #250 in Nonantum is a four-bedroom, two full bathroom condominium with

2,042 square feet with a fenced yard and deck. Take a look at the homes at Open Houses at both properties on Sunday, Aug. 15 from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm.



*(Photo on the left, 74A Webster Park, on the right, 250 California St., Unit #250)*

These units are available through an application and lottery process. Households with annual incomes at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) are eligible to apply. See the maximum household income limits below:

Maximum Household Income Limits (80% AMI):

- 1- Person Household: \$70,750
- 2- Person Household: \$80,850
- 3 - Person Household: \$90,950
- 4 - Person Household: \$101,050
- 5 - Person Household: \$109,150

Applications for these properties can be found [here](#) and must be received by Wednesday, September 1, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. Questions? Contact Malcolm Lucas: [mlucas@newtonma.gov](mailto:mlucas@newtonma.gov) or (617) 796-1149.

## **Eviction Moratorium**

Are you, or someone you know, having difficulty paying rent or facing eviction?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced a new 60-day federal moratorium on evictions through Oct. 3 in counties where COVID-19 cases are elevated, which includes Middlesex County and Newton. Click on [newtonma.gov/HousingHelp](https://newtonma.gov/HousingHelp) for housing assistance and eviction diversion resources in Newton and Massachusetts.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) recently created a new tool for renters and landlords to easily search for local rental assistance. Click [here](#) to access this tool.

## **Making Newton More Accessible**

We continue to invest in ways to make Newton more welcoming and accessible to people of all ages and with disabilities. Thanks to the hard work and leadership of Jini Fairley, the City of Newton Americans With Disabilities Act Coordinator, our Commissioners on Disability, and staff from our Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, we have a new, state-of-the-art water-accessible wheelchair. This Mobi-Chair allows swimmers to move across the beach and get safely and easily into the water at Crystal Lake. The funding for the Mobi-Chair came from fines for illegal parking in handicapped spots which the Commission on Disability approved.

*(Photo: Aviva Volpi with Lakshmi Kadambi, a co-chair of Newton's Commission on Disability, Waterfront Director Carol Stapleton, and Nigel Shaefer, Head Guard at Crystal Lake.)*

Thanks, too, to State Representative Ruth Balser who secured \$100,000 in the recently passed state budget requested by the City for two additional projects at Crystal Lake. The Parks, Recreation & Culture Department will invest \$75,000 for accessibility improvements within and around the park and beach area. The remaining \$25,000 will go towards the Livingston Cove improvement project which will include a platform with a modified accessible railing to allow for small children and folks who use a wheelchair to enjoy fishing.



Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Beginning on Monday, Aug. 16, we will see crews from the Newton Fire Department and Department of Public Works around Newton making sure our 2,577 fire hydrants are in working order and ready for emergencies. **Inspecting, testing and flushing the fire hydrants** will continue through October, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. You may see discoloration in your water due to iron deposits in the water main becoming dislodged during the flushing of the hydrants in your neighborhood. This discoloration *DOES NOT* cause a health risk, although it can discolor your laundry. You can flush your system by running cold water through the lowest fixture in your home until the discolored water becomes clear. Find the schedule for when the work will be performed in your neighborhood [here](#). (Please know, the schedule may change due to weather and emergencies.) Questions? Call the Utilities Division at 617-796-1640 Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. or the Police Control Center at 617-796-2100 during non-business hours.





P.P.S. **Celebrate India** in Newton at two special events. On Friday, August 13, we'll gather at 2:00 p.m. to raise the Indian flag at City Hall (rain or shine). Then, on Sunday, Aug. 15, pack a picnic lunch and enjoy an afternoon of Indian dance, music, art and culture at a family-friendly event at the Bandstand at the Hyde Community Center, 90 Lincoln Street in Newton Highlands from noon to 3 p.m. (The rain date for this event is Sunday, Aug. 22 from noon to 3:00 p.m.)

P.P.P.S. Regretfully, we're fast approaching the end of summer when our Lifeguard staff at **Crystal Lake and Gath Pool** return to school. The final day of the season at Crystal Lake will be Sunday, Aug. 22 when the beach will be close for the season at dusk. Gath Pool will close for the season at the end of the day on the following Friday, Aug. 27.

P.P.P.P.S. Are you a woman interested in learning self defense techniques? Join Newton Police Captain Billy Spalding for a two-part **self-defense class for women** on Tuesday, Aug. 24 and Thursday, Aug. 26. The classes will run from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the American Legion Nonantum Post 440, 295 California Street. The classes are free. RSVP to Ginny Gardner at [Virginiagardner@aol.com](mailto:Virginiagardner@aol.com) to attend.

P.P.P.P.P.S. Do you have any **children's books to donate**? Service Stars campers in Newton are collecting books to set up a children's library in Ghana. Campers will be collecting books from Aug. 9 through Aug. 19 in boxes outside the Lower Falls Community Center, 545 Grove Street. The first 1,000 pre-school through middle school level books will be mailed to the African Library Project, and all additional books collected will be donated to Books and Bread of Waltham. Kudos to the campers and Newton Community Pride for making this project possible.



Mayor Ruthanne Fuller | 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459

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