

Friday, Aug. 27, 2021

## Mayor's Update

### A New Bridge

Remember the dramatic photo last week of the SUV caught in the flash flooding that badly damaged the pedestrian/bike bridge over Cheesecake Brook at Albemarle Road near the Gath Pool?



That bridge is heavily used, especially to access the Albemarle Park and Halloran Sports Complex and for students walking and biking to and from the F.A. Day Middle School.

With a lot of hard work and fast action by many staff here in City Hall, we quickly found a way to replace the condemned bridge with a temporary one. Work begins next week and will be complete by mid-October (and hopefully sooner).

We're also moving forward with a new, accessible permanent bridge. We'll be working with neighbors and looking for input from the School community, those who use the fields and Gath Pool, and others. For example, we need input on the final bridge location and the precise bridge design.

By the way, we're also making additional improvements in the same area to help get students who normally used the bridge safely to and from middle school. Day Middle School Principal Jackie Mann will be outlining these measures soon to parents and there will be public notices and signboards about temporary traffic and pickup/dropoff changes as well. The City is also working with the state to design some exciting improvements to the complex intersection at North/Albemarle/Craft Streets.

We'll continue to look for a lot of community input and discussion as we move forward on all of these initiatives.

A big thank you goes to our partners on the City Council, in the School Department and from Safe Routes to Schools, as well as so many people across City Departments who put this solution together so quickly and worked through the options for safe walking and biking routes to and from F.A. Day while the temporary bridge is under construction.

For questions and comments about the projects, please email [Dpwprojects@newtonma.gov](mailto:Dpwprojects@newtonma.gov).

### Leaf Blower Season

Starting on Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 6, commercial landscapers who use leaf blowers in Newton will need to register with the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) before working on properties in the City.

The changes require landscapers to register with ISD, provide contact information and attest that they understand Newton's bylaw which prohibits the use of all leaf blowers above 65 decibels without exception. 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 should also know 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.

The changes to the leaf blower ordinance go hand in hand with my FY2022 budget that added funding in our Inspectional Services Department (ISD) to pay for a seasonal inspector who will proactively enforce this new landscaper registration program in cooperation with the Police Department. This should make enforcement of this ordinance more effective.

Labor Day also begins the leaf blower season when gas or electric devices that meet the decibel requirement are allowed Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Saturdays 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Find additional information [here](#).

### **Verizon's Cable License**

How do you feel about Verizon's cable service here in Newton? Do you have some programming preferences? Do you cherish NewTV, our Public, Educational, and Government (PEG) access channel and wonderful community resource, and care deeply about financial support for our public access channels? Speak up and be heard.

This Tuesday, Aug. 31 at 2:00 p.m., we will be holding a public hearing on Zoom on Verizon's cable license with the City.

As background, we have three cable service providers in Newton: Comcast, RCN and Verizon.

Under State law, cities and towns act as local "franchising" authorities. The City grants permission to cable operators to construct, operate and maintain their

systems and to make use of public ways. The Mayor of Newton is the “Issuing Authority” for cable license agreements.

Verizon’s franchise agreement expires on June 30, 2022. As the Issuing Authority, we will be reviewing information relevant to the franchise renewal criteria (established by under law). This includes Verizon’s past cable performance here in Newton and our community cable-related needs and interests.

We encourage residents to share comments with us at [CableRenewals@newtonma.gov](mailto:CableRenewals@newtonma.gov) on your experience with Verizon’s service, programming preferences, the importance of public access channels, and other interests and needs related to cable service.

Some additional areas covered by our cable franchise agreements include: cable service coverage across the City, requirements related to subscriber notices, credits for service interruptions lasting 24 consecutive hours or more, payments of “franchise fees” of up to 5% of gross revenue from cable service for cable-related purposes including PEG access programming and operations, and capital payments to support PEG access facilities and equipment.

Please know that the City does *not* have the authority to negotiate the types of commercial programming provided by the cable operator, or the rates charged for cable television service in Newton. The franchise renewal is also solely related to Verizon’s cable service, not its internet or other services.

For a deeper dive into this process, click [here](#) for a memo prepared by the City’s Law Department.

Join the public hearing on Zoom on Tuesday, August 31 at 2:00 p.m. with the below link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85012335238?pwd=a1V5K2VCdm9CQUlyL0FObTBmbGhWQT09>  
Meeting ID: 850 1233 5238 and Passcode: 964592

*A wonderful walk with friends through the Martin Conservation Area in Upper Falls. Julie Leavitt solicited works by poets of all ages and along with neighbors posted them along the hilly trail. Also, check out the amazing painted rocks done by elementary students. The conservation area is located right across the street from 26 Circuit Avenue. (Photo: With City Councilor Deb Crossley and sisters Julie and Lisa Leavitt.)*



## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

We just posted a Request for Proposals for groups who have experience helping cities expand diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) initiatives and develop and implement comprehensive, meaningful DE&I actions. As Mayor, I have a deep sense of urgency and purpose in creating, implementing, and maintaining a more equitable and inclusive City of Newton.

Mayors have come and gone and spoken to the goal of long-term systemic change to actualize diversity, equity, and inclusion within Newton's city government and across our community. I want to ensure the creation of a plan and take the actions to *institutionalize* equity and social justice, reinforce inclusion, affirm diverse identities and experiences, support victims of hate and bias, foster respect among all of us and celebrate difference.

Within our government body, I want to increase the diversity of our workforce and boards and commissions to help the city deliver services in an equitable, caring, fair and inclusive manner. I want to build support for diversity, equity and inclusion by working closely with people in all our City departments, so these goals are integrated into our decision making, policies, practices, procedures and services. I want to increase our staff's cultural responsiveness through training and discussions to build excellence in communication and customer service for everyone in Newton, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, disability, other protected and important classes of people, and geography.

We will undertake this work by partnering with residents, organizations, and groups - ranging from the Human Rights Commission and the Newton Housing Partnership to the Newton Coalition of Black Residents to Families Organizing for Racial Justice to name just four of the many thoughtful, caring groups in Newton committed to this work. Together we must understand the issues, determine the strategies, and take action to make lasting change.

As part of this process, we will be including a DEI Strategic Advisory Committee made up of residents and those who work or visit our City.

While we work on longer term systemic change, we are already well underway on this work. When I started as Mayor, I created for the first time a position in the City of a Director of Community Engagement and Inclusion. Hattie Kerwin Derrick has led many efforts and the work is spreading across our departments.

A few examples follow:

### Police

We began this crucial work around diversity, equity and inclusion with the Newton Police Department focused on delivering fair, just, respectful, safe and effective community policing. I convened the Newton Police Reform Task Force to undertake a holistic assessment of the Newton Police Department and make recommendations on NPD's strategic direction for the coming years.

Chief Carmichael and I are implementing its recommendations – including increased training (more on that below), strategizing ways to recruit more diverse candidates within Civil Service while also evaluating whether leaving Civil Service can assist in accomplishing this goal, and by bolstering community policing and more.

### Economic Development

We are moving forward with reconsidering our procurement process with the lens of equity. We are looking at what barriers in the bidding process can we remove to support underrepresented groups. In addition, we created Project Pop-up to support micro and small businesses and our unrepresented and women owned entrepreneurs.

### Housing

Plans to transform the West Newton Armory on Washington Street just east of West Newton Square into 100% permanently affordable housing are taking the next important step forward. We're actively seeking a partner who can transform the property into a wonderful home that helps advance our goals of opening the doors wider to people of all means.

### Training

#### *Police Department*

Following the recommendations of the Newton Police Reform Taskforce, Chief Carmichael is implementing increased training. This includes joining Active Bystander for Law Enforcement (ABLE). ABLE prepares officers to successfully intervene and create a culture of peer intervention. NPD is also bringing the FBI-Law Enforcement Executive Development Association (LEEDA) program for NPD's supervisory staff. One of the core aspects of the FBI LEEDA program is to instill the values of diversity, inclusion, and equity into all the operations of the Department.

The Chief is also in active communication with two additional trainers: (1) Attorney John Scheft of Law Enforcement Dimensions, a premier police trainer who concentrates on continuing education in Police Legitimacy, Procedural Justice and Fair & Impartial Policing. (2) Gerard Cox, PhD, of Cox Associates who provides a comprehensive organizational development program to improve customer service, trust development, and create lasting partnerships through collaboration with the community.

### *Fire Department*

Assistant Fire Chief Gregory Gentile, NFD Training Captain Phillip McCully, and Mary O'Neill, HR Business Partner, have been working together to roll out "respect in the workplace" training to all members of the Newton Fire Department. This important training will be conducted by Jean Heartl, CEO of *Safety and Respect at Work* and will include eight training sessions in the coming weeks for all ranks of the Newton Fire Department. Ms. Heartl, a highly sought-after investigator and trainer, has regularly provided training along with Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan. Through real-life customized videos, participant role plays and case studies, Ms. Heartl will guide our Fire Department staff in learning to recognize microaggressions and implicit bias; and how to have effective communications that generate trust.

### *Our Leadership Team*

Through the coordination of the Human Resources Department and our Director of Community Engagement and Inclusion, Hattie Kerwin Derek, we have completed two sets of training on Unconscious Bias and Inclusive Leadership with key members of our management and supervisory staff. We partnered with Diversity@Workplace to make this happen. Diversity@Workplace Consulting Group is led by Su Joun (she/her/hers), a Diversity and Inclusion scholar and practitioner with comprehensive senior business leader and entrepreneur experience in diverse industries.

Through these sessions, our departmental leadership and supervisory staff learned how to recognize unconscious bias and the impact it can have in the workplace and in the community we serve. It generated deep discussion on how our leaders can create an inclusive environment and be a champion of DEI initiatives within their respective departments.

We are also working closely with the Diversity@Workpalce staff to bring this training to our boards, commissions, and City Councilors in the coming months.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. The "**Request for Proposals**" for a qualified housing developer to transform the **Armory** on Washington Street just



outside West Newton Square into 100% permanently affordable housing is open. We're looking for a partner with creative ideas that can produce a project that is architecturally appealing and sensitive to the neighbors and neighborhood, consistent with our environmental and sustainability goals, while helping to further our fair housing initiatives. The deadline for submissions is Sept.

30, 2021. More information is [here](#) and [here](#).

P.P.S. Calling all arts and culture and community and service groups in Newton! Applications open this Wednesday, Sept. 1 for **Newton Community Pride's Micro Grant Program** supporting groups such as the Newton Theatre Company, Cappella Clausura, the Juneteenth Celebration Committee, the Pan Asian Cultural Festival Committee and many others. Interested? More info at [NewtonCommunityPride.org](http://NewtonCommunityPride.org).



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