

Thursday, Sept. 2, 2021

## Mayor's Update

In Newton, we had 88 confirmed cases of COVID-19 over the past seven days from Aug. 25 – Sept. 1, which is an increase. Over the previous three weeks, our positive case numbers have been 60 last week, 48 on Aug. 20 and 57 reported on Aug. 12. These compare with 253 reported on Jan. 15, the day Newton Health and Human Services nurses administered the first vaccines to our first responders. Including the additional 88 cases from this week, our cumulative total is now 4,798.



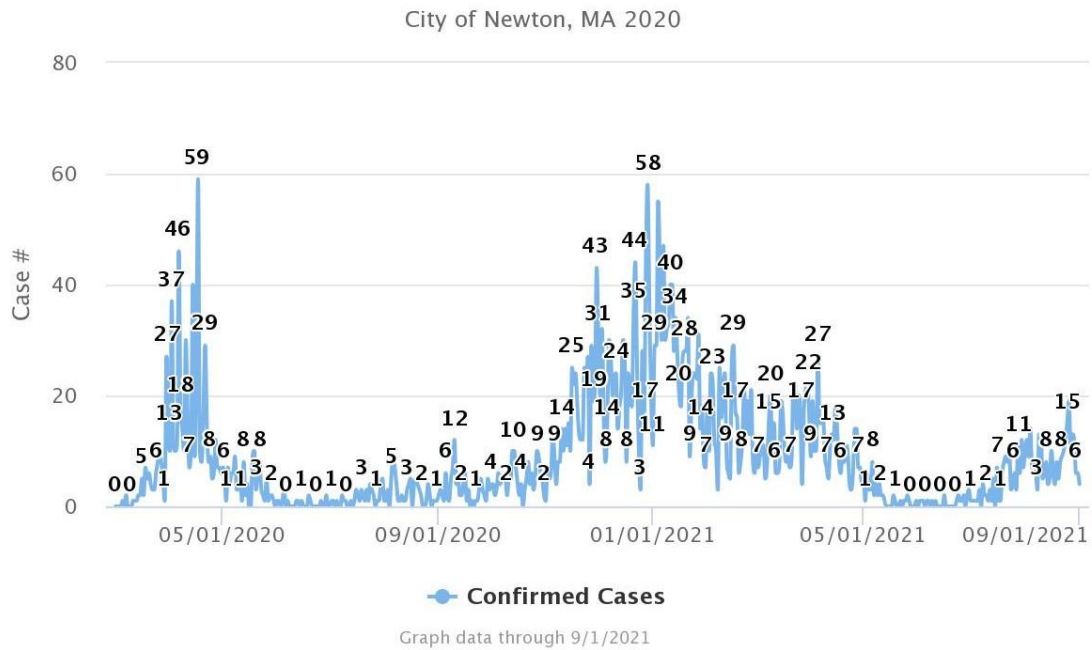
During the two-week period between Aug. 15 -28, there were 134 cases in Newton. Positive cases from Newton's institutions of higher education make up 14% of these 134 cases. Our public health staff anticipated some positive cases from these colleges and universities since every student returning to campus is being tested. The institutions are requiring all students, faculty and staff on campus to be vaccinated.

The age breakdown for the 134 cases is:

- 14% were under 12 years old
- 16% were between 12 and 19 years old
- 31% were between 20 and 39 years old
- 22% were between 40 and 59 years old
- 17% were 60 years or older

The average daily incidence rate in Newton (the average number of new cases per 100,000 people) is 10.4 for the period from Aug. 15 –28. This is up from the 7.6 last week and 9.0 during the two weeks prior to that.

Newton COVID-19 Daily Cases



Newton’s positivity rate (the percentage of positive cases among those tested over the past two weeks) dipped slightly this week, with 0.9% of the 18,841 tests performed coming back positive. This compares to 1% for the past two weeks.

The most important figure I can report is that again this week we had no one in Newton die with COVID-19. Our total is still disheartening: 215 Newtonians lost to this pandemic.

### Mask Mandate

The City’s mask mandate for all indoor public spaces in Newton started today.

The mandate covers all indoor places where the public has access such as grocery stores and retailers, restaurants and bars, performance and event spaces and salons as well as social clubs and places of worship. In food service establishments, customers may remove face coverings while seated and actively eating or drinking. We made this decision now for a number of reasons.

All but one of the fourteen counties in Massachusetts right now are experiencing high or substantial risk of COVID-19 transmission. The CDC recommends that everyone wear masks indoors in public places when their county is experiencing high or substantial risk of coronavirus transmission.

Yesterday 1,796 new cases were reported statewide, the highest number since January.

Our children under 12 years old are not eligible for the vaccination; they are heading back to school in-doors next Thursday. Wearing masks when we’re indoors in public places helps protect them.

Masking helps protect the vulnerable, our youngsters and our older residents. Masking is relatively easy. Masking helps stop the spread so that we can continue to

frequent the businesses we love, our kids can be in school in-person, our vulnerable residents can avoid a breakthrough case, and we can all live our lives.

We're already looking ahead to when we might be able to lift the mandate. Some of the things we'll be considering are the transmission of COVID in Middlesex county and whether it remains substantial or high, the level of transmission in Newton, and the availability of vaccines for our youngsters.

### Vaccine Mandate

Last night the School Committee (of which I am a member) voted unanimously on a policy to require vaccination of all Newton Public School educators and school department employees. There are some exemptions for medical and religious reasons, and those who are exempt will be tested weekly.

Our team at City Hall is also working on having our municipal employees be fully vaccinated to protect the health of those who work for the City of Newton, as well as the public for whom we serve. This requires discussion with our unions, so it will take some time to finalize details. Please know we are working on it.

Vaccines are our most important tool in stopping this pandemic.

All Massachusetts counties, with the exception of Franklin in Western Massachusetts, are experiencing a high risk of transmission of COVID-19, including Newton which is in Middlesex County. In addition, all New England states are seeing increases in case counts. The Delta variant is significantly more contagious than earlier COVID-19 variants and our children under 12 years old within the community and at the homes of our employees are not eligible for the vaccination yet, but they are heading back to schools, in-doors in the coming days. All of us want to help stop the spread so a new variant doesn't emerge that is even more contagious and/or less susceptible to our current vaccines.

We know the vaccine is proving to be effective in preventing serious cases of COVID-19, even as the highly contagious Delta variant moves through our region. Our goal is for our entire community to work together to stop the spread to youngsters who are not eligible to receive a vaccine and others who are immunocompromised or face health challenges.

We also learned today that the Boston Athletic Association will require all runners in the 125<sup>th</sup> Boston Marathon on Monday, Oct. 11 to be fully vaccinated or get tested prior to picking up their bib number.

### Vaccine Clinics

The City of Newton is hosting free COVID-19 vaccine clinics in September and October for people 12 and older at two sites, Newton North and Newton South High Schools.

**Newton North High School**  
Saturday, Sept. 11, 8:00 a.m. to noon  
and  
Saturday, Oct. 2, 8:00 a.m. to noon

Location: Cafeteria  
Newton North Sign Up Link: [tinyurl.com/NEWTONNORTHVAX](https://tinyurl.com/NEWTONNORTHVAX)

**Newton South High School**  
Saturday, Sept. 11, 8:00 a.m. to noon  
and  
Saturday, Oct. 2, 8:00 a.m. to noon  
Location: Gymnasium

Newton South Sign Up Link: [tinyurl.com/NEWTONSOUTHVAX](https://tinyurl.com/NEWTONSOUTHVAX)

Vaccines are also readily available at pharmacies (Keyes Drug in Auburndale, Union Pharmacy in Newton Centre, CVS and Walgreens), and other locations in Newton and across the state. Find a location at [vaxfinder.mass.gov](https://vaxfinder.mass.gov).

### Testing

Do you have a fever or chills? Cough? Sore throat, runny nose, or just feeling achy and rundown? It's most likely a cold or allergies, but it could be COVID-19. Because we know Delta is highly contagious and can be carried and spread even by those of us who are fully vaccinated, it's important to get tested if you have any of the [symptoms of COVID-19](#). Let's do our part and self-isolate if we're not feeling well until we get a negative test result. Find a testing location [here](#). (Please know CIC Health at Riverside decided to stay open for testing.)

*Our amazing Newtonian, Nancy Schön (yes, the sculptor of the Make Way for Ducklings sculptures in the Boston Garden), donated another wonderful sculpture to Newton of a sunflower with 13 petals representing each of the City's villages. It now adorns the Newton Free Library on the front of the building just to the left of the book drop.*



### **Preliminary Election: Early In-Person Voting Starts Tuesday**

The City of Newton Preliminary Election is on Tuesday, Sept. 14 to select two candidates for Mayor who will appear on the ballot in the Nov. 2 Municipal Election.

The City Council voted last week at a special meeting to approve early, in-person voting at City Hall starting next Tuesday, Sept. 7 for this preliminary election.

Polls will be open at City Hall from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. starting on Tuesday through Friday, Sept. 10 at 1000 Commonwealth Avenue.



### Vote By Mail

If you would like to vote by mail, you can find a Vote by Mail Application at [MailMyBallotMA.com](http://MailMyBallotMA.com). Print the application, fill it out and then either mail it to the City Clerk's Office, 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459, or hand deliver it to one of the two secure ballot drop boxes at the top and bottom of the stairs at the main entrance to City Hall.

The application for the mail-in ballot must reach the Newton City Clerk's office by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 8.

Completed ballots must be received by Tuesday, Sept. 14 (Election Day) in the City Clerk's Office by the close of polls at 8:00 p.m. to be counted.

### Voting In-Person on Election Day

Polls will open citywide from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. for the Preliminary Election on Tuesday, Sept. 14 and again on Tuesday, Nov. 2 for the general Municipal Election.

Due to the Yom Kippur Jewish holiday, voters in Ward 8, Precinct 2 who regularly vote at Temple Beth Avodah, 45 Puddingstone Lane, will vote at the Oak Hill Middle School, 130 Wheeler Road, for the Preliminary Election on September 14. This is a temporary change for the Preliminary Election only. Temple Beth Avodah will resume as a polling location for the Nov. 2 Municipal Election.

In addition, the City Council approved a new polling location for Ward 3, Precinct 1 in Newtonville. Voters who had cast ballots at the former Horace Mann School at 687 Watertown Street will now vote at the Scandinavian Living Center at 206 Waltham Street for all future elections.

You can find your ward and precinct [here](#), and your polling location [here](#).

### **Investing ARPA Funding**

I have approved two additional areas for investments of our American Rescue Plan Act funds:

#### COVID-19 Building Adaptations (\$1.3 million)

Since the early days of the pandemic, we've paid close attention to the data and listened carefully to the health experts when making decisions about how to make our public buildings safer for our students, teachers and school community, the public and our employees.



One area we significantly leaned in on is ventilation. Following up on our \$4.5 million investment in ventilation system upgrades in our schools sustain high quality indoor environments for our staff and visitors.

*Police Headquarters:* The work at the 1321 Washington Street Police headquarters in West Newton Square will focus on replacements of critical equipment and systems to sustain fresh air introduction and air exchange. These funds will allow us to replace the rooftop air handling units, chillers, controls, and also make improvements to the insulation and efficiency of the various equipment. These systems will all be fully electric with no use of fossil fuels onsite. This work will be coordinated with the installation of new emergency communication equipment and computer upgrades.

*City Hall War Memorial Auditorium:* The ventilation system at the auditorium in City Hall will receive upgrades to allow us to once again use this incredible asset for community events, public meetings, cultural programs, and staff meetings. Additionally, we will be improve the basement spaces at City Hall, including operable windows to allow for increased fresh air flow and better ventilation.

*Newton Center for Active Living (NewCAL) (\$500,000):* Our older residents were significantly impacted by the pandemic and these ARPA investments will help support them as we rebound and recover. We're scheduled to break ground on a new senior center in the summer of 2023 with a planned opening in the summer of 2025. To maintain this project schedule, we are investing ARPA funds to move from the feasibility phase into the beginning of schematic design. This will include a schematic structural design, architectural site and building design, building renderings, floor plans and a cost estimate. Our next community meeting is Thursday, Sept. 23 where we will continue to work with our older adults and the neighborhood to refine the design and site plan.

*The MA Department of Public Health announced today two new human cases of West Nile Virus. Avoid mosquito bites; apply insect repellent when outdoors; be aware of peak mosquito hours; wear clothing that can help reduce mosquito bites; mosquito-proof your home by draining standing water and installing or repairing screens. Click [here](#) for more info.*



## **Cannabis/Marijuana Update**

Newton's Host Community Agreement (HCA) Advisory Group has reviewed the city's first application from a cannabis delivery operator, a new type of license allowed by the Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission. The State has restricted this new type of license to social equity and economic empowerment applicants for three years.

What is a cannabis/marijuana delivery operator?

A delivery operator purchases cannabis and cannabis products wholesale, stores them, and delivers them directly to customers. All products must be purchased from the wholesaler fully packaged, although the delivery operator may put their own label on the products; they may not otherwise repackage. Deliveries may be made in any community in Massachusetts that has not banned retail cannabis.

An important thing to know about this type of license is that there may be no sale of cannabis or cannabis products onsite where the delivery operator is located. Delivery operators are also not permitted to grow or manufacture any cannabis products onsite.

In addition, per state regulations, delivery operators are not considered retailers. Therefore, they are not subject to the cap on the number of licenses; Newton has a cap of 8 cannabis retailers. Cannabis delivery operators are also not subject to the buffer requirements that apply to brick-and-mortar cannabis retailers in Newton.

Newton's City Council earlier this year voted to adopt zoning updates to allow for delivery operators, consistent with the regulations issued by the Cannabis Control Commission. The zoning in Newton limits the location of delivery operators to manufacturing and limited manufacturing zoning districts. In light of the highly regulated nature of this use and the limited onsite impacts, the City Council also voted to allow the use by-right, rather than requiring an applicant to be approved for a Special Permit by the Council before opening.

A delivery operator is vetted by the Host Community Advisory Group before being recommended for an HCA to the Mayor. If the Mayor approves the Host Community Agreement, the delivery operator is still subject to all the building requirements which must be approved by the City of Newton's Inspectional Services Department, as well as the operational requirements of the City's cannabis zoning ordinance. Finally, the delivery operator must be approved for a license by the Cannabis Control Commission.

Who is on Newton's Host Community Advisory Group?

As a reminder, I established Newton's Host Community Advisory Group in 2018 when Newton's voters approved having eight retailers in Newton. It includes representatives from the Planning, Law, Transportation, Health and Human Services and the Mayor's office.

Emerald Turtle Cannabis Delivery Operator

The Advisory Group recommended to me moving forward with an HCA for the cannabis delivery operator, Emerald Turtle, to be located at 120 Wells Avenue. Emerald Turtle's co-founders are certified Social Equity applicants. (The Social Equity program established by the State requires training and technical assistance to applicants who have been disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs, marijuana prohibition, arrests and incarceration and meet certain income and residency requirements.)

I agree with the recommendations of the Advisory Group and I am approving the HCA.

Emerald Turtle's diverse management team has experience in finance, accounting, equity, and logistics. The proposed site, formerly occupied by an office use in the Wells Avenue office park, is an appropriate location within a limited manufacturing district.

Emerald Turtle will open with five to eight delivery vehicles and scale up as necessary. Orders will be batched so that each vehicle returns only once or twice a day and vehicle trips will be staggered. They have agreed to making best efforts to avoid coming and going from the site during peak traffic hours. Their plans include minor modifications to the building to create a secure area for loading and unloading of delivery vehicles. Emerald Turtle does not intend to have any signage and vehicles will be unmarked and will follow all state security regulations.

The closest existing cannabis store to the Emerald Turtle location in the Wells Office Park is Redi at 24 Elliot Street and the closet active application for one is Nuestra at 1185 Chestnut Street.

Newton will receive 100% of the 3% local sales tax, regardless of the customer's location, as well as an additional 3% of sales through a community impact fee for at least five years.

### Curaleaf

I have also agreed with the Advisory Group's recommendation to amend the HCA for Curaleaf Processing, which seeks to establish a cannabis research facility at a former laboratory space located at 241 Riverview Avenue in Auburndale, near Rumford Avenue.

Curaleaf is requesting an amendment to allow them to seek a manufacturing license as the Cannabis Control Commission has not yet opened the license application for research facilities and there is no clear time frame for doing so. (I had previously approved an HCA for Curaleaf exclusively for research.) The manufacturing license allows for specified research activities. Curaleaf has agreed to limit their activities to only those that would be permitted under the research license. Thus, Curaleaf will only be doing research and testing, following all State and local provisions. There will be no sale of marijuana or marijuana related products on site.

Curaleaf requires a special permit from the City Council to open and establish this use.

*I had the honor of marking today as Sheila Mondshein Day in the City of Newton Sheila, who died in 2018, has left an indelible mark on our community as a tireless*





*advocate for fair housing, human rights, justice and progress. Her husband Lee was surrounded by many on Zoom as well as City Council Vice President Rick Lipof, Marcia Johnson, Ted Hess-Mahan, Kathy Laufer, Jini Fairley and Josephine McNeil.*

### **Remnants of Hurricane Ida: Not Too Bad for Newton**

We were ready and well prepared for the 4.23 inches of rain that fell, and thankfully, Mother Nature didn't play too many tricks on us last night.

We had a few issues. Newton Police and DPW closed Albemarle Road from 2:00 to 6:00 a.m. because of street flooding; the Forestry Department cleared a tree that fell on Dudley Road (the only full tree lost during the storm); firefighters responded to six calls for flooded basements.

Thanks to all the City staff who worked through the night.

### **What an Important Several Days Lie Ahead**

- Monday is Labor Day. More than marking the traditional end of summer, this year especially it celebrates our frontline workers who kept our essential services open, our teachers who invented new ways to teach, and our police officers, firefighters, EMTs, public health staff and healthcare workers who took care of all of us. This Labor Day is for all of you.
- Monday also begins Rosh Hashanah, marking the start of a new year for some of us. *Shana tova* and a good, sweet and healthy new year.
- Next Thursday morning September 9, Newton Public School students return to their classrooms across our City. With anticipation, excitement and some nervousness. We're all so happy to have them back in their buildings after such a tough year and a half. As the new school year begins, please be extra careful on the roads as children will be walking and biking again, buses will be out, and traffic picks up.
- Next Saturday, September 11, marks the twentieth anniversary of 9/11. Join us as we gather with the Newton 9/11 Memorial Committee to remember those we lost, honor the bravery of first responders, and commemorate this solemn

anniversary at 6:00 p.m., Sept. 11 at the Newton 9/11 Memorial in front to the Newton Centre Fire Department Headquarters, 1164 Centre St.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

**P.S.: Are you ready for some football?** High School Football is safely back in Newton. Join us tomorrow night, Friday, Sept. 3 at 6:00 p.m. to cheer on your Newton team when the Newton South Lions will meet the Newton North Tigers. The friendly scrimmage is under the lights at Newton South High School, 140 Brandeis Road.

**P.P.S: The Newton Cultural Council is accepting grant applications** to fund programs in art, literature, music, drama, science and the humanities created by Newton residents, those who work here, or organizations that serve our City. Grant applications and information can be found [here](#). Join an information session on Thursday, Sept. 9 at 6:00 p.m. [here](#) to learn about the new application system. Questions? You can reach NCC at [nccinfo@newtonculturalcouncil.com](mailto:nccinfo@newtonculturalcouncil.com) or at 617-796-1540

**P.P.P.S.** Come join with your family, friends, and neighbors to give the City of Newton a clean sweep. **The Great Newton Cleanup** is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 18 from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Get outside, breath fresh air and buff-up our City. Pre-registration is required [here](#). This event is sponsored by Keep Massachusetts beautiful and Keep Newton Beautiful.

**P.P.P.P.S.** Want to help Team **Newton Senior Center** end **Alzheimer's Disease**? The team is participating in the Walk to End Alzheimer's on Sunday, Sept. 19 at 10:00 a.m. Walkers will meet-up at the "starting line" at the Newton Senior Center Parking lot. To join the walk or donate to Team Newton Senior Center, register [here](#) or reach out to Case Manager Emily Kuhl (Team Captain) 617-796-1672 or [ekuhl@newtonma.org](mailto:ekuhl@newtonma.org).

**P.P.P.P.P.S** Great **City building projects** are all about listening carefully and collaborating. Click [here](#) to find a calendar of upcoming meetings and to sign up for email updates.



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

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