

Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021

Mayor's Update



Newton had 66 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 over the past seven days from Sept. 16 – 22, a decrease from the 99 new cases we saw over the previous seven days, and lower than the 81 cases we had the week prior to that.

Our cumulative total since the pandemic began hit an important milestone; our positive cases in Newton has now topped 5,000 and stands this week at 5,044. (We have a population of 88,923 which means 5.7% of us have had COVID-19.)

The average daily incidence rate in Newton (the number of new cases per 100,000 people) is 13.6% for the current two-week State tracking period of Sept. 5 – 18, up from 12.7 during the previous two weeks.

The percentage of positive cases in Newton among the 26,729 cases performed over this two-week State tracking period is 0.7%, down slightly from the past two week's positivity rate of 0.9%. (There are also a lot more tests being performed – 4,056 more Newtonians were tested for COVID-19 during this tracking period than during the previous two weeks.)

We had 174 new cases in Newton during the two-week State tracking period from Sept. 5 – 18, an increase of 11 from the previous tracking period. We continue to see cases among students at Newton's institutions of higher education. Of these 174 people in Newton who tested positive for COVID-19, 35% were among these college and university students.

The ages of the 174 people who tested positive in Newton between Sept. 5 – Sept. 18 are:

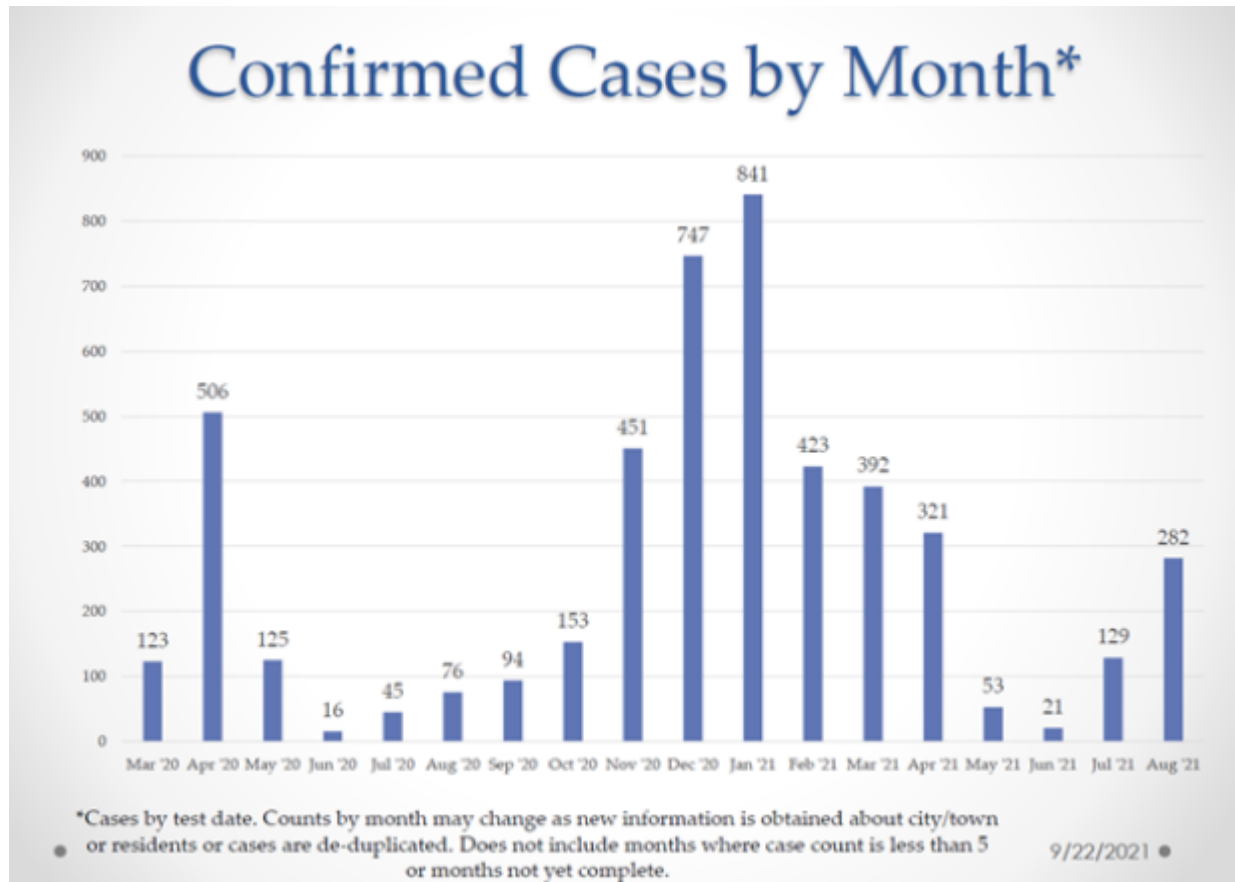
- 10% were under 12 years old
- 31% were between 12 and 19 years old
- 25% were between 20 and 39 years old
- 21% were between 40 and 59 years old
- 10% were between 60 and 79 years old
- 3% were 80 years or older

Newton-Wellesley Hospital (NWH) reported on Tuesday, Sept. 21 that nine patients were hospitalized with COVID-19, one of whom is in the intensive care unit. A week earlier, NWH reported six patients hospitalized with COVID-19, two of whom were in the ICU.

COVID-19 in Newton	
Total Cases	5,044
Total Deaths	216
*As of 9/22/21	

This week was tough. We lost another Newtonian with COVID-19. Our total number of loved ones, friends and neighbors in Newton who died from this awful virus is now 216. The ripples of grief continue.

Another painful reminder that this pandemic is not yet behind us are the 25 COVID-19 deaths reported statewide on Tuesday, the highest single-day total since early April, and the 1,283 cases reported statewide that day were the highest reported in five months.



Vaccine Clinics

Slots are still available for the free vaccine clinic hosted by the City of Newton for people 12 and older on Saturday, Oct. 2 at both Newton North and Newton South High Schools from 8:00 a.m. to noon. Sign up for the Clinic at Newton North at tinyurl.com/NEWTONNORTHVAX and for Newton South at tinyurl.com/NEWTONSOUTHVAX. Walk ins are welcome.

Find more information about Newton vaccine sites, as well as information translated into Chinese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish, [here](#).

Newton Public School COVID-19 Data

There have been a total of 19 cases in the Newton Public Schools reported to the Health and Human Services Department from Sept. 2 through yesterday, Sept. 22. The 19 include 15 students and 4 staff members.

Find a data dashboard tracking COVID-19 cases in the Newton Public Schools each week [here](#).

Vaccination Data

Massachusetts Department of Public Health data shows that more than 95%+ of Newton residents who are ages 30 and older are *fully* vaccinated. To see more detailed vaccination information, click [here](#).

Below is an additional way of looking at vaccination data specifically for the school age students who attend the Newton Public Schools. The data in the charts below *includes* students who do not live in Newton and attend NPS and *excludes* students who live in Newton and attend private schools or are homeschooled. This data will be updated monthly and posted [here](#).

Vaccination Rates for Newton Public Schools Students		
Grade	Percentage of Students with at least one dose as of 8/12/21	Percentage of Students with at least one dose as of 9/10/21
6 (many students are younger than 12)	2.9%	5.0%
7	64.8%	72.0%
8	74.4%	77.4%
9	75.4%	79.3%
10	72.8%	76.2%
11	78.2%	81.5%
12	82.4%	84.8%
All Eligible NPS Students 12 years and up	75.5%	78.5%

Note: This chart includes all NPS students, including those that do not live in Newton. This chart does not include students attending non-NPS schools, e.g. private schools.



Will it be Isaac? Newt? Figgy? Blue?
The Newton Police received more than 700 emails so far with names for the department's new puppy. You still have time to add your suggestion. Email puppy@newtonma.gov by noon tomorrow, Sept. 24. Stay tuned!

Roads are Improving

There's still a ways to go, but halfway through our ten year, \$95 million citywide Transportation Network Improvement Program, we're seeing real progress.

How do we know?

Using cutting edge technology, a pavement inspection of all our City streets was just completed to provide an updated Pavement Condition Index (PCI) for each segment of road. The pavement inspection is done using video specialized technologies (acoustic, radar, and optical) which record all roadway defects. Once these defects are collected and analyzed, each roadway segment is assigned a Pavement Condition Index (PCI) rating which range from 1 (lowest/road in extremely poor condition) to 100 (highest/a new road).

When we did the first inspection, Newton's PCI was 62. Today our PCI has risen to 71. That means we're more than halfway to our goal of 80. (Once we reach a PCI of 80, we will be in "maintenance" mode rather than catching up after too many decades of underinvestment.)



Driving through Newton, you'll see (and feel) that we've made a lot of progress on our main roads - Watertown Street, Washington Street, Cherry Street, Centre Street, and Walnut Street, to name a few. Chestnut Street from Beacon Street to Route 9 and Dedham Street were recently completed using greener, recycled asphalt. Repaving of Chestnut Street from Commonwealth Ave. to Beacon, Concord St, East Side Parkway

and some connecting streets are just starting this month.

How does DPW decide which roads to work on? The schedule prioritization is based on roadway condition, preventative maintenance needs, complete street benefits, coordination with underground utility project schedules, and a cost-benefit value analysis.

When we do our more significant road work, DPW addresses not just road conditions but also intersection safety, accessibility, pedestrian and bicycle improvements, traffic calming and new pavement markings. (We also rehabilitate our City-owned parking lots.)

Find a list of your street's PCI rating [here](#). You can see an interactive map of road projects from 2017 through 2021 [here](#).

I know this decade long plan is tediously slow for those living on a street in poor condition. Please know you can use our 311 system to report potholes and our DPW crews will fill them as soon as possible.

Opus Newton

2LifeCommunities' plans for innovative "aging in community" housing for older adults on the campus of the Leventhal Sidman JCC on Nahanton Street passed unanimously at the City Council this week.

"Opus Newton" is a great new concept. Older adults who don't qualify for subsidized housing yet cannot afford most market rate units may find this housing within their financial reach. In part this will be possible by community members sharing their time and talents which will foster community life and result in lower operating costs. Interestingly, Opus will also offer home care (in small increments) and apartments for life.

Opus Newton includes 174 one- and two-bedroom apartments next to and literally connected to the Coleman House on the JCC campus at Winchester and Nahanton Streets (near the Newton Community Farm and across from the Wells Office Park).

Kudos to 2LifeCommunities President & CEO Amy Schectman for bringing this innovative senior housing alternative to Newton, and to the City Council's Land Use Committee (chaired by City Council Vice President Rick Lipof) for leading the review and approval process.

Find out more about Opus Newton [here](#).

2Life Communities this month also started comprehensive preservation and modernization work at their Coleman House; this is deed-restricted, permanent affordable housing with supportive services to 146 very low- and extremely low-income older households. The City of Newton supported this work with our Community Preservation fund as well as with federal Community Development Block Grant and HOME funding.

A new business in Newton Highlands, a new restaurant in West Newton, a new employee hired through [NewtonHires](#) in Waban, and Project: Pop-Up continues to thrive - a lot to be excited about in our village centers. Kudos to Newton's Economic Development Director Devra Bailin, our liaison to small businesses; reach her at dbailin@newtonma.gov.

(Photo Clockwise from top Left: With Devra Bailin and Tina Burgos of Covet + Lou

on Lincoln Street in Newton Highlands; General Manager Josely Noguera, Devra Bailin and Owner Igor Burukhin of Blue Salt, a Mediterranean restaurant on Washington Street in West Newton Square; Sachiko Ishihara, Executive Director of the Suzuki School of Newton in Waban with Katrina Hester who was hired through NewtonHires; and Project Pop-Up on Lincoln Street in Newton Highlands from left, Robin Cellucci of Puck and Abby, Karen Pevenstein of Louis Sel.)



A Pandemic Silver Lining – Recycling Markets are Thriving

Recycling has always been good for the planet, but over the past few years it hasn't been good for our wallets.

Thankfully, recycling markets not only rebounded since the start of the pandemic, they're booming.

The value of recycled cardboard and plastics, in particular, have significantly increased after taking a dive when China, which had cornered the market on recycling, abruptly stopped accepting materials in 2018.

When China closed its door, American companies and others around the world opened plants to fill the gap. Simultaneously, when the pandemic led people to rely more on e-commerce, the demand for cardboard went up so the boxes could be recycled into more boxes.

How does this impact Newton?

The cost to process our recycling at the material recovery facility fluctuates based on the value of the recovered materials.

When China stopped accepting materials, the global market collapsed, pushing our costs up. The fee to sort our recycling reached a high of \$88/ton last July, 2020. The cost dropped to \$15/ton this June, 2021. In July and August of this year, we even received rebates for our recycling for the first time since March 2017, totaling more than \$24,000. We anticipate a rebate in September as well.

In the words of Newton's Director of Sustainable Materials Management, Waneta Trabert, "This is excellent news."

While the best thing for the planet is to reduce and reuse, the next best option is recycling.

Currently, 40% of raw materials used in manufacturing come from recycled materials, making the recycling system a key link in the manufacturing supply chain. (For example, about two-thirds of steel manufactured in America comes from recycled resources, and a factor in our pandemic toilet paper shortage was the abrupt scarcity of recycled office paper from which much of our toilet paper is made, according to Adam Minter writing in [Bloomberg](#).)

To find out more about Newton's recycling program, visit newtonma.gov/recycling. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection also has a lot of useful information [here](#).

We Still Need to Recycle Right

We're doing much better at "recycling right." After a robust education campaign in 2018, Newton went from being fined for having too many contaminated items in our bins to being more than 90% clean.

Why is this important?

Our contract with Waste Management includes fines if our recycling has more than 10% contamination — which means putting things that shouldn't be into our green carts.

What are the main offenders? Please do NOT put plastic bags, black plastic food trays, food and liquids, Styrofoam, plastic utensils, paper coffee cups or paper plates, medicine bottles, wood, or paper towels/tissues/napkins into the green cart.

Also, clothing, linens and textiles do not go in the green cart but can be picked up curbside. [Schedule](#) your next curbside textile collection.

We launched another education campaign this past spring. More than 3,000 large permanent decals have been applied to green carts by volunteers this summer as a reminder of what materials are acceptable in the recycling. We'll continue putting stickers on the rest of the city's bins into this fall and next summer.

Questions? Email the Sustainable Materials Management Division at recycling@newtonma.gov.



This Sunday morning, Sept. 26, Newton's Fire Department is joining colleagues from Waltham,



Weston, the MBTA/Keolis and Fallon Ambulance for a training drill from 9:00 a.m. to noon along the commuter rail line on the Newton/Weston border. The fire fighters will drill on fire suppression, victim removal and rescue, and onsite triage with as many as 125 volunteers playing roles during a simulated train derailment.

(Photo: Newton Fire Fighters join with colleagues from Weston and Waltham for a training session in preparation for Sunday's drill.)

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Learn more about intimate partner violence, something that happens far too often around the world and right here in Newton. A virtual program will focus on different kinds of abuse, how to safely assist someone in a controlling relationship, and where to find support services in Newton.

Join me, REACH Beyond Domestic Violence, The Second Step, Newton-Wellesley Hospital and the Jewish Family & Children's Services Journey to Safety Program next Thursday Sept. 30, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Click [here](#) to register. Learn more at newtonma.gov/socialservices.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. What values should guide updates to **Newton's village center zoning**? How do you experience Newton's village centers and what do you hope for their future? The City of Newton has been asking community members' these questions all summer. Want to have your ideas heard? We'll be taking feedback until Sunday, Oct. 3. It only takes a few minutes to 'vote' in [this online interactive forum](#). If you have more time, complete [a Vision Kit](#) (a self-guided tour of a village center of your choice) with your neighbors, with family or by yourself. Read more about how you can contribute your thoughts [here](#). (Photo: This group of Newtonians, Newton



Housing Authority renters and Neighbors Helping Neighbors recently completed Vision Kits in Mandarin and English.)

P.P.S. Historic Newton's fall family festival, **Hayfest**, returns to the Jackson Homestead in person this year. Step back into the 19th century and try pressing your own apple cider or candle dipping that were once part of daily life. Everyone is welcome on Sunday, Oct. 3 from noon to 4:00 p.m. The event will be held entirely outdoors at the Jackson Homestead, 527 Washington Street. For more information, visit newtonma.gov/hayfest or call 617-796-1450.

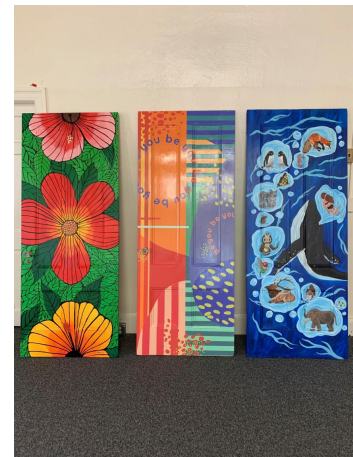
P.P.P.S. Join the fun as two of Newton's 13 villages celebrate. **Newtonville Village Day** is this Sunday, Sept. 26 from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. on Walnut Street in Newtonville Center. It's family-friendly with plenty of live music, local artists, and craft vendors. Find out more [here](#). **Newton Upper Falls Village Day** is the following Sunday, Oct. 3 from 11 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. by 1225 Chestnut Street next to the Upper Falls Greenway. Enjoy live music, magic, food and fun. More info [here](#).



P.P.P.P.S. Walk, roll, bike or bus: Why not give one of them a try on **International Walk to School Day**, Wednesday, Oct. 6? Visit NewtonSafeRoutes for more info.

P.P.P.P.P.S. Do you know a champion for human rights? Nominate them for the Newton Human Rights Commission's annual **Human Rights Awards**. Visit the [HRC's website](#) to learn more and submit your nominations to hrc@newtonma.gov by Friday, Oct. 22.

P.P.P.P.P.P.S. Have you loved the doors you've seen sprinkled around Newton's parks and open spaces over the summer? Take one home! The **Newton Out Doors Online Auction** is open through Friday, Oct 1 at 7:00 p.m. Proceeds will support Newton Community Pride's 2022 Spring public art installation. Find out more or place your bid [here](#).



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