

Thursday, Oct. 14, 2021

Mayor's Update



Dr. Ashish Jha spent a fascinating hour with me at NewTV on Tuesday evening answering questions from Newton residents about COVID-19. As a worldwide expert in public health policy, Dean of the Brown University School of Public Health, a member of our school Medical Advisory Committee, and parent of students in the Newton Public Schools, he provided a lot of up to date information and insights.

Some highlights are: People who are fully vaccinated are dramatically less likely to spread the virus even if they are infected; Delta is so contagious that every American will likely come in contact with it; vaccines for 5 to 11 year olds will likely be available during the first week of November.

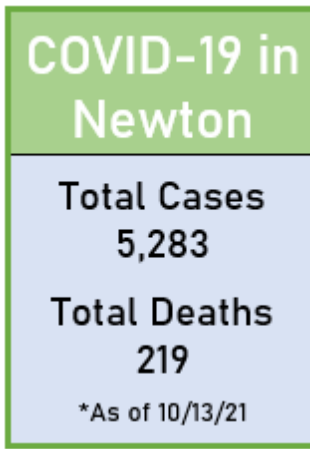
Dr. Jha's advice about Halloween? Maybe don't host a party with 30 kids inside, but go ahead and have a blast trick or treating outdoors.

Watch our full discussion:



Current Cases

We continue to be in a COVID-19 plateau. Newton had 82 confirmed new cases of COVID-19 over the past eight days from Sept. 5 to 13, an increase of 3 over the previous six days, and an increase of four over the seven days prior to



that. Our cumulative total since the pandemic began is now 5,283.

The average daily incident rate in Newton (the number of cases per 100,000 population) is 13.1, over the two-week State tracking period from Sept. 26 through Oct. 9, up 1.6 from the 11.5 reported last week.

Our positivity rate is also holding steady. This week the percentage of positive tests among the 28,885 conducted on Newton residents is 0.7%. Our positivity rate was 0.6% last week (29,320 tests) and 0.7% two weeks ago (28,482 tests).

Thankfully, we didn't lose anyone to COVID-19 in Newton this week.

There were 168 confirmed cases in Newton over this two-week tracking period, an increase of 20 cases 148 reported last week. Of these 148 people who tested positive, 16% were students at one of Newton's institutions of higher education compared to 27% last week.

The ages of the 168 people who tested positive in Newton between Sept. 26 and Oct. 9 are:

- 20% were under 12 years old
- 11% were between 12 and 19 years old
- 27% were between 20 and 39 years old
- 23% were between 40 and 59 years old
- 17% were between 60 and 79 years old
- 2% were 80 years or older

Newton-Wellesley Hospital (NWH) reported on Tuesday, Oct. 12, that five patients were hospitalized with COVID-19, one of whom is in the intensive care unit. Last week, there were eight patients with COVID-19 at NWH, one of whom was in the ICU.

Newton Public School COVID-19 Data

There have been a total of 80 cases of COVID-19 in the Newton Public Schools reported to the Health and Human Services Department since Sept. 2. This includes the 17 students who tested positive this past week. (As a reminder, when looking at NPS data, sometimes cases are added to previous weeks based on tests as they are reported/confirmed.)

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

Vaccination Data

Massachusetts Department of Public Health data shows that more than 95%+ of Newton residents who are ages 12 to 15 *and* 30 and older are *fully* vaccinated,

those ages 16 to 19 are 58% fully vaccinated, and those 20 to 29 are 67% fully vaccinated. To see more detailed vaccination information, click [here](#).

Below is a chart showing vaccination data for students in the Newton Public Schools where 85.1% of eligible students are now vaccinated. 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 is updated monthly and posted [here](#).

Vaccination Rates for Newton Public Schools Students by Grade		
Grade	Percentage of Students with at least one dose as of 9/10/21	Percentage of Students with at least one dose as of 10/10/212
6 (many students are younger than 12)	5.0%	10.5%
7	72.0%	83.5%
8	77.4%	86.6%
9	79.3%	86.9%
10	76.2%	83.7%
11	81.5%	85.6%
12	84.8%	86.6%
All Eligible NPS Students 12 years and up	78.5%	85.1%

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.

ARPA: Schools are Our Future

We listened carefully to the community, our School Committee members and our City Councilors about how best to invest the American Rescue Plan Act, a.k.a. ARPA, funds. A common goal was investing in our schools, as they quite literally hold our future, and our children were so heavily impacted by the pandemic.

This spring, I announced that we would use a portion of the ARPA funds to move forward, in partnership with the Massachusetts School Building Authority, MSBA, on the feasibility phase for the Countryside Elementary School Project. The timing was necessary as Countryside had just been accepted into the MSBA Core Grant Program which can help pay up to roughly 40% of eligible project costs.

We are now positioned to use ARPA funds to help move additional important school projects forward:

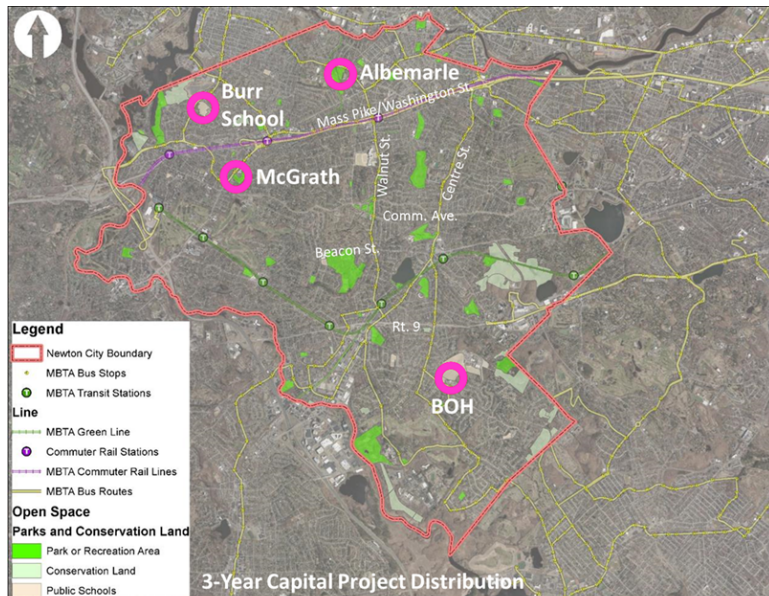
Lincoln-Eliot (\$350,000) – This funding allows us to continue the schematic design phase for a wonderful facility, new playgrounds, fields, and so much more at 150 Jackson Road. We held a community meeting tonight and our next one will be at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 9. Preregister to attend and speak [here](#).

Franklin (\$100,000) – This funding allows us to begin the feasibility phase for a renovation/addition or new building as well as new playgrounds and fields for the Franklin School and neighborhood. Our first community meeting will be at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 2. Preregister to attend and speak [here](#).

Horace Mann (\$100,000) – Following up on our recent announcement of \$250,000 for a new playground, these funds will allow us to further the design efforts that began before Covid for much needed space while complimenting one of our proud historical facilities. Our first community meeting will be at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 25. Preregister to attend and speak [here](#).

Ward and Underwood – Newton Public Schools began to engage with the Ward and Underwood Parent Task Force just before the Covid-19 pandemic began. This group is tackling the facility challenges that exist at both schools, and how best to address them. I am reserving ARPA funds to make sure that Newton Public Schools and the Parent Task Force have the resources they will need to move this important initiative along once the feasibility phase gets started.

*Learn about our **Athletic Fields improvement projects** and share your ideas. The Parks, Recreation and Culture staff will focus its first meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 20 at 6:00 p.m. on the McGrath fields (at Warren House, 1600 Washington Street) and then the Albemarle sports complex (at 250 Albemarle Road) around 7:00 p.m. Register for the zoom webinar [here](#). The second meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 27 at 6:00 p.m. will focus on improvements at the Burr Elementary fields (at 171 Pine Street) and then the Brown - Oak Hill Middle School fields (130 Wheeler Road). Register for this zoom webinar [here](#).*



Two-Way Traffic to Return to Homer Street & the Library

Good news – the whole length of Homer Street is going back to two-way traffic within two to three weeks (as soon as the City’s pavement marking contractor is available to remark the road).

DPW made the temporary switch to one-way in the stretch in front of the Newton Free Library last April. This added additional parking spaces while work was done at the Newton Free Library parking lot to install the new solar carport panels.

The solar panels are now up and operational. (They are providing the equivalent of 49% of the Library's electricity.)

While there is some additional work still ahead (National Grid will be working on this stretch of Homer Street before year end and the Library's parking lot will be disrupted in the spring for storm drainage work underneath it plus repaving), all of this can be done without the additional spaces on Homer Street. We determined we can do some of the parking lot work section by section, and make additional parking spaces available that are close to the library.

I know the change to one-way was frustrating for many of us who use Homer, Comm Ave and Walnut Street in this area (including me). While it was helpful for the past six months, we're all glad to have it permanently re-opened in both directions.

In general, have you been noticing more congestion on our roads? One factor that has recently altered our driving patterns is the later start times in both our high schools this fall. Traffic at a number of traffic lights and roadways have been significantly impacted during peak travel periods, especially in the morning, before and after drop-off. We're looking at the data to see what steps we can take to make traffic flow better while improving conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians to help people make the switch away from driving.



Green Your Halloween

What will you do with your pumpkin after Halloween? You could put it in with your yard waste, but how much more fun would it be to “green your Halloween” and smash it?

Stop by and try out our new and improved pumpkin catapult, a pumpkin target, or the Pumpkin Smashing ground.

Newton's Pumpkin Smash is on Saturday, Nov. 6 outside City Hall from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., rain or shine.

[Pre-registration](#) is encouraged but onsite registration will be available. [RSVP and share this event.](#)

This family friendly event takes our orange pumpkins and turns them “green.” All our smashed pumpkins will be composted by Black Earth Composting, thus reducing waste and greenhouse gas emissions and creating a valuable amendment for our soils.

Remember to:

- Remove any candles or decorations from your pumpkin (paint is okay)
- Bring extra candy to be donated to our troops
- Donate old, unwanted costumes and maybe find next year's at our Costume Swap

It's going to be a smashing good time!



Voting Information for Tuesday, Nov. 2

Here is some information from the Newton City Clerk's Office about voting in the Citywide Municipal Election on Tuesday, Nov. 2 to elect a Mayor and the entire City Council and School Committee. Newton Neighborhood Area Councils in Newton Highlands, Newtonville, Newton Upper Falls and Waban will also be elected.



Vote-By-Mail

If you would like to vote by mail, you can find a Vote by Mail Application at 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.

Please note that if you signed up for a mail-in ballot for the preliminary election on Sept. 14, you will automatically be sent a mail-in ballot for the Nov. 2 election. The election ballots are currently at the vendor being printed. The Clerk's Office is expecting to have the printed ballots back by the end of this week and will begin sending ballots out as soon as they arrive.

This leaves a tight window for ballots to be mailed out and then mailed back to the City Clerk's Office to arrive by Nov. 2. Acting City Clerk Christopher Sullivan suggests voters mail back their completed ballots as soon as possible or drop them off in one of the two secure ballot boxes at City Hall if possible.

The Election staff in the Clerk's Office appreciates voters' patience and understanding as they work to process the ballots.

You can track your ballot at sec.state.ma.us/track.

Vote-By-Mail Deadlines

The application deadline to get a mail-in ballot for the Nov. 2 election is Wednesday, Oct. 27. Applications must reach the Newton City Clerk's office on that day by 5:00 p.m.

Completed ballots must be received by Tuesday, Nov. 2 (Election Day) in the City Clerk's Office by the close of polls, 8:00 p.m., to be counted.

In-Person Early Voting

Early, in-person voting is planned to begin at City Hall on Monday, Oct. 25 through Friday, Oct. 29 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and on Saturday, Oct. 30 from 8:30 a.m. to noon.

Voting In-Person on Election Day

Polls will be open citywide from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. for the Citywide Municipal Election on Tuesday, Nov. 2.

Temple Beth Avodah which had been closed for polling during the Preliminary Election in September will resume as a polling location for the Nov. 2 Municipal Election.

In addition, voters who had cast ballots at the former Horace Mann School at 687 Watertown Street in previous years will now vote at the Scandinavian Living Center at 206 Waltham Street on Nov. 2 and for all future elections.

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



Seven Proposals for the Armory

The City of Newton received seven proposals for transforming the West Newton Armory into affordable housing after purchasing the building at 1135 Washington Street from the Commonwealth for \$1 a few weeks ago.

The Commonwealth offered the historic building to Newton for that small amount with the caveat that it could be used only for 100% permanently affordable housing, a use that helps advance Newton's affordable housing goals.

We are now seeking a partner with creative ideas for serving and supporting the future occupants while simultaneously being sensitive to the neighbors and neighborhood; a partner that can produce a project that is architecturally appealing and consistent with our environmental and sustainability goals; and a partner with a strong track record of affordable housing projects.

Each of these seven proposals offers concepts for transforming the Armory into welcoming and sustainable homes for individuals, families, or seniors. Read the

proposals [here](#).

An evaluation committee comprised of residents, a City Council representative, and City staff will interview all seven development teams. Find more information about the Armory and a list of the evaluation committee members [here](#).

Help the evaluation committee by suggesting questions they should ask. Please submit questions by emailing us at newtonarmoryinfo@newtonma.gov by the end of the day on Monday, Oct. 25.

After the evaluation committee does this first round of interviews in early November, each of the firms will be providing an executive summary slide presentation of their proposal which will be then be posted [here](#). We will invite public comment on the proposals for another month and that feedback will be shared with the evaluation committee prior to their final recommendations to the Purchasing Director, who will compile their evaluations and provides a summary to me, prior to my making a final decision.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in closely examining these proposals.

Happy Birthday John

Today, we celebrated 76 year-old Newton resident John Seferiadis' first birthday.

One year ago today, Newton Police Officers Captain William Dowling, Officer Zoe Lazarakis and Officer Rocco Marini responded to a medical emergency at a tennis court at 71 Manchester Road. When they arrived, they found Newton resident Robert Williams performing Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation under the calm, focused instruction over the phone of Newton Police Dispatcher Samantha Siegal.



(Photo from left: With Fire Fighter Matt Venditti, Officer Rocco Marini, John Seferiadis, Robert Williams, Police Dispatcher Samantha Siegal, Jen Seferiadis Fitzpatrick, Pat Seferiadis, David Seferiadis (rear), Officer Zoi Lazarakis, and Fire Fighter Jason Riffe.)

Captain Dowling stepped in for Mr. Williams and began performing CPR chest compressions as Newton Fire Fighters Matt Venditti and Jason Riffe, under the command of Lt. Ron Fremault, joined the effort and started bag mask ventilation on the unconscious Mr. Seferiadis.

While cardiac compressions continued, Newton Police and Fire personnel administered shocks using an automated external defibrillator. After two tries, Mr. Seferiadis regained a pulse and began breathing. He was taken to St. Elizabeth's Hospital for further care.

Physicians at St. Elizabeth said the survival rate for a cardiac arrest outside of a hospital is less than 12% -- so the efforts of so many literally helped save his life.

This afternoon, I was honored and deeply moved to join the Seferiadis family to thank and recognize the heroes in the Newton Police Department, Newton Police Dispatch, Newton Fire Department and John's tennis partner, Robert Williams, at the "birthday party" at Captain Ryan Park.

This calm, well-trained, professional and collaborative team saved the life of John Seferiadis.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Looking for a job? Looking to hire? Check out the **Newton Hires virtual job fair**. The City of Newton, in partnership with MassHires and the Charles River Regional Chamber, is offering up to \$1,000 to currently unemployed or underemployed individuals who secure employment of up to 20 hours a week at a business with a physical footprint in Newton. The virtual job fair is on Tuesday, Nov. 2 with a registration deadline on Monday, Oct. 25. Job seekers can register by emailing Christine Moreira cmoreira@masshiremsw.com or Karla Torres ktorres@masshiremsw.com.

P.P.S. Curious about induction cooking? Thanks to an innovative program funded by Green Newton and available at the Newton Free Library, you can **give an induction cooktop a test drive** – check one out just like you'd borrow a book. The package includes the cooktop, an induction pot & lid, and instructions. Why consider induction cooking? It's faster; it offers more precise temperature control than cooking on gas or conventional electric stoves; it's more energy efficient; it's a breeze for cleaning up; it's healthier all around for the environment; it's a great way to help transition your home away from natural gas. Click [here](#) and get cookin'!

P.P.P.S. Are those old paint cans in your basement haunting you? Make an appointment to bring them to **Newton's first ever paint collection day** on Sunday, Oct. 31 at the Newton Resource Recovery Center. Call City Hall at 617-796-1000 to make an appointment. All paint will be accepted – latex, oil-based, stain, varnish, and aerosol spray paint – no need to sort it. This is different than a [household hazardous waste collection event](#), so other types of household chemicals will *not* be accepted. FYI: Usable latex paint will be recycled into new paint by Recolor which is then sold at retailers such as Home Depot. Can't make this date? We anticipate holding another paint collection day in the spring. (Fine print: Limit 30 gallons per car, 5-gallon paint buckets accepted, residential paint only, and if your paint has dried out, put it in your household trash.)

P.P.P.P.S. **Looking for fun activities for the fall?** Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture is offering a broad range of programs for all ages. There's *Batty about Bats* for kids of all ages at Nahanton Park Nature Center on Sunday, Oct. 31, a new session of *Drop-In Badminton* for teens and adults, *Athletes Unlimited Fall Programs* for children and adults with disabilities, and *Orienteering for Youth* in grades 2 – 9, plus much more. Learn more and register [here](#).

P.P.P.P.S. Have you heard of **Newton's Energy Coaches**? Whether you are just starting to think about a home energy project, or are looking for more detailed technical advice about energy-saving measures, our City's Energy Coach and volunteer Energy Coach experts are available to help. Check out our [Energy Coach website](#) to schedule a meeting or browse the Q&As. Ask a new question and we'll direct you toward the information, resources, incentives, and industry professionals available as you make energy improvements. You can also talk with an Energy Coach in person at the Harvest Fair this Sunday, Oct. 17 at the Newton Centre Green and Langley Road parking lot. Say hello at the Energy Coach booth which is part of the Green Expo from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



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