

Friday, Nov. 12, 2021

Mayor's Update



We had 55 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Newton over the seven days between Nov. 3 and Nov. 10, 13 more than over the previous seven days and 14 fewer than two weeks ago. Our cumulative cases in Newton since the pandemic began is now 5,572.

Again, this week I am thankful to report that no one in Newton died with COVID-19.

The average daily incident rate in Newton over the State's two-week tracking period from Oct. 24 to Nov. 6 is 6.9 (per 100,000 population), another noticeable decrease from last week's 9.7 and the previous week's 15.3.

Our positivity rate in Newton is also continuing to trend downward with 0.4% of the 23,381 tests performed positive this week compared to 0.6% last week (25,246) and 0.8% (27,225) during the week prior to that.

The ages of the 89 people who tested positive over the two week period between Oct. 24 and Nov. 6 are:

- 20% were under 12 years old
- 7% were between 12 and 19 years old
- 33% were between 20 and 39 years old
- 25% were between 40 and 59 years old
- 15% were between 60 and 79 years old
- 1% were 80 years or older

Nine percent (9%) of these 89 cases were students at one of Newton's institutes of higher education.

Newton Public School COVID-19 Data

There has been a total of 138 cases of COVID-19 in the Newton Public Schools reported to the Health and Human Services Department since school began on Sept. 2. This includes four (4) students who tested positive between Nov. 4 and 10 and one (1) staff member. (As a reminder, when looking at NPS data, sometimes cases are added to previous weeks based on tests as they are reported/confirmed.)

Find more information on the Health and Human Services webpage [here](#), and at the NPS Testing Data Dashboard [here](#).

Vaccine Clinics for 5 to 11-year olds

First Dose Vaccine Clinics For 5 to 11-year olds – More Appointments Added

Saturday, Nov. 13, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
and
Sunday, Nov. 14, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

At Newton North High School, 457 Walnut Street, Newton
and at
Oak Hill Middle School, 130 Wheeler Road, Newton

Second dose clinics will be held on Dec. 4 and 5

After School Vaccine Clinics for 5 to 11-year-olds

Wednesday, Nov. 17, 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.
Cabot Elementary School, 229 Cabot Street, Newton
Second dose clinic on Wednesday, Dec. 8

and

Thursday, Nov. 18, 3:30 to 6:00 p.m.
Bigelow Middle School, 42 Vernon St., Newton
Second dose clinic on Thursday, Dec. 9

These after school clinics are being organized by Newton Health and Human Services Department in partnership with the Newton Public Schools. Huge thanks go once again to the Holtzman Medical Group for running the clinics.

Find more information and make an appointment at one of these clinics at holtzmanmedical.org/school.

More information is available at the HHS website [here](#). Vaccine appointments are also available at vaxfinder.mass.gov.

ARPA: Community Needs Assessment

The City of Newton will be investing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to address the immediate and long-term needs of lower-income residents who have been impacted by the pandemic. We are doing a community needs assessment to receive insights and guidance directly from those most impacted on the most effective ways to provide support.

Community Government Research (CGR) is helping us to gather this input. CGR has facilitated a series of focus groups, some with lower resourced residents and others with professionals who serve them. In addition to hearing from people in focus groups, we look forward to hearing from many more via a survey. The Community Needs survey is available in Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, and Russian languages and is being widely distributed throughout the city, with an emphasis on reaching low-income residents.

English: research.net/r/NewtonNeedsSurvey

Translations (Spanish, Russian, Simplified Chinese, & Brazilian Portuguese):
research.net/r/NewtonNeedsSurveyTranslated

The survey takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. All responses will remain confidential.

The Community Needs Assessment will be completed during the fall/winter of 2021, with a final report and recommendations that will enable us to plan responsive programs in early 2022.

Throughout the pandemic the City of Newton has recognized the specific vulnerability of lower income residents. COVID-19 resulted in more financial instability for many residents with fewer resources who now find themselves in precarious financial circumstances. The City has implemented numerous supports throughout the pandemic to serve our low-income residents, including significant investments in food security and emergency housing assistance programs, assisting with housing search, and working with residents to procure all the financial supports for which they are eligible.

This community needs assessment and the resulting guidance and recommendations will enable the City to build the next iteration of responsive programming and initiatives to improve the well-being of low resourced residents and build a more stable future.



The Future of our Village Centers

Newton's Planning staff heard from nearly 2,000 Newtonians about the future of our village centers between May and October. Through neighborhood tours, diverse focus groups, and collaborations with the Newton Housing Authority, the Youth Commission, and so many more - the Planning team listened.

Here are some of the priorities they

heard from our residents:

- Incorporate public spaces with outdoor seating for events, for dining, or to “just hang out” with friends and neighbors to talk and people watch.
- Help small businesses open, stay and thrive in village centers, including making the permitting process easier and clearer.
- Add more diverse housing options and encourage buildings that have a mix of uses such as retail/restaurants, office and/or residential (although to what extent had a spectrum of opinions).

- Prioritize safe and accessible routes to and through village centers, especially for walking and biking.
- Incorporate climate resiliency in buildings, streetscapes and green spaces.

Learn more at an online info session about these results this Monday, Nov. 15 at 6:00 p.m. with a presentation followed by Q+A until 7:30 p.m. [Register here](#) - and in the meantime, check out all the input we received at the [Zoning Redesign Village Center website](#) or [the presentation](#) given to the City Council Zoning and Planning Committee.

The Newton Police Department is again reminding all of us to lock our doors – including our car doors. Since Wednesday, Nov. 10, 16 motor vehicles were broken into in the Newton Corner and Chestnut Hill area. Each one of the cars broken into were left unlocked. Please, keep your doors locked, remove all valuables and never keep a spare key inside the vehicle. Find a map of car break-ins in Newton over the past 28 days [here](#).



Addition and Renovation at Lincoln-Eliot

Thanks go to everyone from the community who has continued to participate in the Lincoln-Eliot Elementary School project process.

Many joined Tuesday night's meeting as months of work analyzing the opportunities and challenges associated with the renovation and addition to the existing facility at 150 Jackson Road as compared to demolishing the facility and building a new school came to a conclusion.

The thorough and thoughtful analysis was a product of careful listening and collaboration with the community, parents, neighbors, and educators.

On Tuesday night, the Lincoln-Eliot School Building Committee voted unanimously to focus on addition and renovation options.

There are several reasons why this approach was approved. The addition and renovation options can meet and exceed the school program and they provide a finished school building comparable to the Angier, Zervas, and Cabot School projects. This option also preserves a historic facility, avoids delays in the project schedule, and is superior from an embodied carbon and environmental perspective. As a bonus, this option leverages the financial value of the existing facility to yield a project that is approximately \$14 million less expensive than what the new construction options would cost.

The Committee vote did not select a preferred addition/renovation option. We will continue working together to find the best possible option for the building and the site in the coming months.

Listen to a recording of the meeting on zoom [here](#); the passcode is: T&%JH8+7

Happy to celebrate the official opening this week of Dr. Anna M. Berik's new office at 792 Beacon St. in Newton Centre, Bubble Children's Dentistry and Orthodontics. The office is made for kids and looks more like an aquarium than a medical office. There is a humpback whale suspended from the ceiling, fish swimming overhead and coral reef and moon jellyfish tanks. The pediatric dentists are also specialty-trained in treating children with special needs and medically compromised patients. (Photo: With Dr. Anna M. Berik at the ribbon cutting for Bubble Children's Dentistry and Orthodontics in Newton Centre.)



Cannabis/Marijuana Update

In November 2018, Newton voters went to the polls to decide on brick and mortar retail marijuana stores in the City. The outcome resulted in a maximum of eight (8) stores in total.

Where are we today?

- Union Twist, 1158 Beacon Street in Newton Centre/Four Corners, has been unanimously approved by the City Council for its Special Permit. Union Twist plans to demolish the current building on the site consisting of a dry cleaner and restaurant and build a new 2,300-square foot, one story retail building with 22 on-site parking spaces. For at least the first six months of operation, there will be an appointment only requirement for customers at the store. As their Special Permit has been approved, they can move forward with their state Cannabis Control Commission (CCC) licensing approval process.
- Garden Remedies, Newton's first adult-use retail marijuana store, opened at 697 Washington Street in Newtonville more than two years ago in May 2019. Since opening, Garden Remedies has sold to customers by appointment only. The request from Garden Remedies to amend its current Special Permit to remove the appointment only condition for their retail shop was approved by the City Council Land Use Committee. (The vote was 5-0, with three

abstentions.) The full City Council will vote on lifting the appointment only condition at their meeting this Monday, Nov. 15.

- Redi, Newton's second adult-use retail marijuana establishment (formerly known as Cypress Tree) opened in July 2021 at 24 Eliot Street at the intersection with Boylston Street/Route 9 in Upper Falls. (It was (formerly known as Cypress Tree.) The Special Permit approved by the City Council requires that Redi's retail customers must have an appointment to shop or pick-up products for at least the first six months of operation.
- Ascend, 1089 Washington Street/58 Cross Street just outside West Newton Square, has a signed provisional HCA and an approved Special Permit. Construction is nearing completion and they are awaiting licensing approval by the CCC to open.
- MedMen, 232 Boylston Street/ Rte. 9 in Chestnut Hill (at the former Shreve, Crump & Low location), has a signed provisional Host Community Agreement (HCA) and an approved Special Permit. They are both awaiting licensing approval by the CCC to open as well as a building permit from the City of Newton to begin work on the building.
- Green Lady, 740 Beacon Street in Newton Centre, a woman and minority owned business, has a signed provisional HCA and the City Council Land Use Committee is currently hearing its Special Permit application. If their Special Permit is approved, they can then move forward with their CCC licensing approval process
- Verilife, 131 Rumford Avenue in Auburndale, has a signed provisional HCA and the City Council Land Use Committee is currently hearing its Special Permit application. If their Special Permit is approved, they can then move forward with their CCC licensing approval process.
- Nuestra, 1185 Chestnut Street in Newton Upper Falls, has a signed provisional HCA. Nuestra is a Cannabis Control Commission certified Economic Empowerment Applicant. They have not yet started the City Council Special Permit approval process which they need to do before moving forward in the state licensing approval process.

Cannabis/Marijuana Delivery Operators

The State's Cannabis Control Commission (CCC) authorized a new type of marijuana business to open in Massachusetts, a "delivery operator." This allows a marijuana business to buy and store products wholesale from growers and manufacturers and deliver orders by secure vehicles directly to customers (21 years or older) at their place of residence. No retail business can be conducted at their facility. The "delivery operator license" was set aside intentionally by the CCC for the first three years of the program to only those entities certified as "economic empowerment or social equity" firms.

Per state regulations, delivery operators are not considered retailers. Therefore, they are not subject to the cap on the number of retail 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 request to locate a delivery operator business is first thoroughly vetted by the Host Community Advisory Group before being sent to the Mayor. If the Mayor approves the Host Community Agreement, the delivery operator is still subject to all the applicable building and parking requirements which need approval by the City of Newton's Inspectional Services Department, as well as the operational requirements of the City's cannabis zoning ordinance. The delivery operator also must be approved for a license by the Cannabis Control Commission.

In each of the delivery operator agreements, 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.

- Rolling Re-Leaf, 69 Adams Street in Nonantum, is a prospective cannabis delivery operator. They are a social equity applicant and they have scheduled an in-person community outreach meeting to discuss their proposal on Wednesday, Nov. 17 at 6:30 p.m. at the American Legion Post 440, 295 California Street. An initial remote zoom meeting was held this past Wednesday evening.
- Blue Sky Organics, 16 Maguire Court in Nonantum. I am approving the recommendation from the Newton Host Community Advisory Group to move forward with a Host Community Agreement (HCA) for the cannabis delivery operator, Blue Sky Organics. Blue Sky Organics is a social equity applicant and will be constructing a new building with 15 on property parking spaces. The company anticipates hiring 15 employees, utilizing 5 hybrid or electric vehicles for its delivery fleet, and operating between 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. daily.
- Emerald Turtle, 120 Wells Avenue, was approved by me in September 2021. Emerald Turtle's co-founders are certified social equity applicants. Once opened, 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. Emerald Turtle does not intend to have any signage and vehicles will be unmarked.

Plowing: Supply Chain Disruptions and Driver Shortages

Over the past two years, the pandemic has presented all of us with many challenges. That's true for our Department of Public Works as well.



DPW is experiencing long delays in the delivery of equipment, vehicles, pavers, granite curbing, parts and components for our trash receptacles, and most electronic equipment.

As winter approaches, one of the most impactful repercussions of the pandemic is the shortage of and difficulty in recruiting contractors for most of the services we provide.

As we sign our winter season snow plowing contracts, we are seeing a significant decrease in the number of contractors bidding on plowing services and those that have bid have not provided the same number of drivers and equipment as in previous years.

We are hearing from surrounding communities that they, too, are facing this problem.

We have worked diligently to improve our snow removal operations and response time. Unfortunately, we anticipate the combination of the supply chain issues and especially the driver shortage to impact the time it takes us to clear streets, sidewalks, and parking lots.

We are actively working to recruit contractors and drivers.

If you are interested in providing snow plowing services, please contact Jack Lovett, Department of Public Works Executive Administrator at 617-796-1008 or via e-mail at jlovett@newtonma.gov.

Charlie, a third grader at Zervas, and I had a blast catapulting my pumpkin on Saturday. More than 8.5 tons – or 17,000 pounds – of pumpkins were smashed at City Hall and hauled away by Black Earth Compost to be turned into compost which then helps grow next year's crop of Halloween pumpkins. Thank you Erica Braman, our Waste Diversion Coordinator, the DPW team, the Ligerbots, and all the volunteers who made this such a smashing success.



Shop Newton Every Day and Especially Saturday, Nov. 27

Coming out of the pandemic, locally-owned, small, independent businesses — shops, services and restaurants — are struggling. Saturday Nov. 27 is Small Business Saturday and our chance to support our favorite places.

The Village Bank has stepped up to make shopping local even easier by providing free parking at every meter in the City that day.

Spending our holiday dollars here in Newton strengthens our village centers, creates new jobs here in Newton, generates economic growth within our community, inspires others to form new independent ventures, reduces our carbon footprint, and enhances our community generally. Unlike a dollar spent at large chain stores or businesses outside Newton (or online!), more than half of each dollar spent at a local business stays in our City.

Join me by shopping local and dining local.

Warmly,

Ruthanne



P.S. Shred your documents and/or dispose of unused or expired prescription medication safely tomorrow, Saturday, Nov. 13, at the **drive-through Community Document Shredding & Drug Take-Back Day** at the Newton Resource Recovery Center, 115 Rumford Ave., Auburndale. The shredding service is for residential materials only (and, yes, staples are fine). There's a limit of four document boxes or 8 paper bags per household. Apologies to our neighbors; this is open only to Newton residents.

P.P.S. Do you love Elvis, Frank Sinatra, Doris Day, classic hits of the 1940s and '50s and Broadway? Come over to the Newton Senior Center, 345 Walnut Street, Newtonville for a **live concert and sing-along** with theater performers Dan Moore and Joel Light. The Memory Café performance is Wednesday, Nov. 17 from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Just show up and enjoy the show.

P.P.P.S. **Curbside leaf and yard waste collection continues until Friday, Dec. 10.** Waste Management is facing a labor shortage for its yard waste collection truck drivers this year, so bear with us as we do our absolute best to collect on time and to get the word out if we have any collection delays. Right now, most routes are being collected on time. Occasionally we're not able to complete a route in a single day. If you notice your yard waste not picked up, leave them there and they will be collected the next day or as soon as possible.



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