

Mayor's Update



Clearly, this pandemic isn't yet over.

We had 209 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Newton over the past 14 days from Nov. 17 to Dec. 1 or approximately 105 per week. This is a jump from the numbers we had been seeing in previous weeks – 77 between Nov.11 to 17, 55 between Nov. 4 and 10, and 42 between Oct. 28 and Nov. 3.

We also lost another neighbor in Newton over the past two weeks, bringing the total number of people in our City who died with COVID-19 to 220. What should be a season of joy is still tempered by the shadow of illness, concern and uncertainty.

Statewide, Massachusetts yesterday saw the highest number of hospitalizations with COVID (957 people) since mid-February. The 4,838 new COVID-19 cases announced by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health yesterday marked the highest single-day total since the 4,935 new cases announced on Jan. 22. In addition, the statewide seven-day proportion of tests that came back positive (a.k.a., the positivity rate) is 5.14%, a level not seen since January.

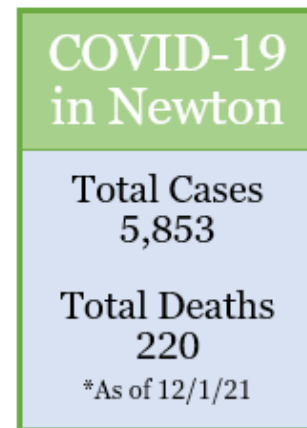
The positivity rate in Newton is also up, with 1.1% of the 18,315 tests coming back positive compared to 0.6% of the 22,050 tests two weeks ago.

The average daily incidence rate in Newton has increased to 14.6 cases per 100,000 population, a jump from the rate of 8.6 two weeks ago. Statewide, the incidence rate is 34.3.

Newton-Wellesley Hospital, as of Tuesday, Nov. 30, reports they are caring for a total of 13 patients hospitalized with COVID-19, five (5) of whom are in the Intensive Care Unit. The number of critically ill patients per day with COVID-19 continues to rise, and it's been over eight months since the number of COVID-19 patients in the ICU per day has been this high.

This data comes as the Omicron variant has emerged with cases already confirmed in the United States.

Health experts continue to advise us that vaccines are our best line of defense, something most of us in Newton already know based on the numbers of us getting our vaccines and boosters.



- 95%+ of Newton residents 30 and older are fully vaccinated;
- 68% of 20 to 29 year-olds are fully vaccinated;
- 58% of 16 to 19 year-olds are fully vaccinated;
- 95% of 12 to 15 year-olds are fully vaccinated;
- 64% of 5 to 11 year-olds have gotten at least one dose over the past month. (according to data from the MA Department of Public Health; see the State vaccine data at mass.gov/vaccination-data)

As Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director and Newton resident Dr. Rochelle Walensky said this week, “The best way to protect yourself from COVID-19, including the Omicron variant, is to get fully vaccinated and boosted, combined with other prevention strategies such as wearing a mask, staying home when sick, and avoiding crowds. Taking these measures to reduce the spread of infection is also the best way to slow the emergence of new variants.”

The CDC has additional information about [COVID-19 variants](#) as well as [updated travel guidance](#), including [travel restrictions](#).

Vaccines and boosters are available from more than 1,000 locations across Massachusetts, including at least nine in Newton. Find more information and locations in Newton at newtonma.gov/vaccines. Vaccine and booster appointments across the state can be found at vaxfinder.mass.gov.

Second dose pediatric vaccine clinics organized by our Health and Human Services Department in partnership with the Newton Public Schools are this weekend on Saturday and Sunday. Thanks go to Holtzman Medical Group for running these clinics. Find more information about the clinics [here](#).

Newton Public School COVID-19 Data

Nineteen (19) cases of COVID-19 among NPS students and four (4) among staff members were reported to the Newton Health and Human Services Department between Nov. 18 and 24, and 15 students and three (3) among staff were reported between Nov. 25 and Dec. 1. This brings the cumulative total since school began on Sept. 2 to 196. (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](#).

The following is a statement from Middlesex County District Attorney Marian Ryan regarding the status of the investigation of the tragic death of Michael Conlon eleven months ago.

Update from Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan

"On January 5, 2021, Michael Conlon was fatally shot by Newton Police inside a building on Lincoln Street. Since that time the Middlesex District Attorney's Office has been overseeing the investigation into Mr. Conlon's death. As part of that

investigation and consistent with this Office's practice in all fatal officer-involved shootings, we have requested that an inquest be conducted in this matter.

An inquest is a confidential investigative hearing for the purpose of gathering information to determine whether a crime has occurred. Given the heightened public interest in these cases, we believe that a review of the facts and circumstances of the case by a neutral party is appropriate in the interest of transparency and accountability. During the inquest proceeding, prosecutors will present evidence and call witnesses to testify. At the conclusion, a judge will make a finding and this Office will then use that finding in deciding whether to seek a Grand Jury indictment or to close the case. Although the proceeding is closed to the public, Mr. Conlon's family will be allowed to attend and hear all of the evidence.

As the District Attorney, it is my statutory obligation to investigate officer-involved shootings. I believe in doing so in a way that ensures both transparency and accountability. It is my responsibility to ensure that each of these cases receives a complete and unbiased review.

The inquest is scheduled to begin this month in Newton District Court. At its conclusion, our Office will make our findings public, and this will include the name of the officers involved. These findings will be available to the public on our website middlesexda.com.

You can read more about the inquest process here - malegislature.gov."



Newtonville Commuter Rail Station Stair Repairs

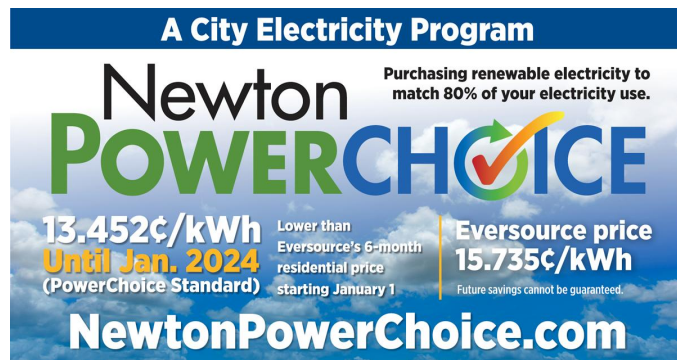
The stairs on the Walnut Street side of the Newtonville MBTA commuter rail station closed for repairs yesterday morning. The work is part of the ongoing stair replacement program at the station. The work will continue through next week with the staircase reopening during the week of Dec. 13, according to the MBTA.

The newly installed stairs on the east side of the platform off of Harvard Street are open. Budget some extra time to walk over to Harvard Street.

Newton Power Choice: The Cost of Electricity

The State just approved the new Eversource Basic Service residential electricity price (for January through June 2022) at 15.7 cents per kilowatt hour, which makes participating in our Newton Power Choice less expensive for that period of time than remaining on Eversource Basic Service, even when opting for 100% renewable power.

Newton Power Choice (NPC) is the City's electricity supply program for our residents and businesses. The program is a form of group electricity purchasing known as electricity aggregation. It provides an opportunity for Newton to significantly increase the community's investment in clean energy. Our current contract includes 80% local renewable sources such as wind and solar as the Standard/Default rate for our Newton Power Choice electricity supply.



A City Electricity Program

Newton POWERCHOICE

Purchasing renewable electricity to match 80% of your electricity use.

13.452¢/kWh Lower than Eversource's 6-month residential price starting January 1
Until Jan. 2024 (PowerChoice Standard)

Eversource price 15.735¢/kWh
Future savings cannot be guaranteed.

NewtonPowerChoice.com

Here are the Newton Power Choice residential rates (through January 2024) compared to Eversource's 15.7 cents/kwh:

- Standard/Default rate with 80% "green" renewable power = 13.5 cents/kwh
- 100% "green" renewable power = 14.4 cents/kwh
- Basic rate with State-minimum of 20% "green" renewable power for 2022 = 10.6 cents/kwh

That means that on Newton Power Choice for January through June 2022, if you use 550 kwh of electricity per month (i.e., the median non-low-income Newton use), you'll save relative to Eversource Basic Service:

- \$12.10/month at the NPC Standard/Default level
- \$7.15/month at the NPC 100% Green level
- \$28.05/month at the NPC Basic level

Looking at this from a citywide perspective, Newton residents on the Newton Power Choice Standard/Default rate will save slightly more than \$2 million over the next six months.

The Eversource Basic Service rate for residential customers changes every six months. Sometimes, the Eversource rate is lower than the Newton Power Choice rate. During last summer, the Eversource Basic Service rate was lower than the Newton Power Choice rate at the Standard/Default and Green levels (but not lower than the NPC Basic level). During that period, the Standard/Default NPC customer at the median level of consumption paid \$14.83/month more than the Basic Service customer using the same amount of electricity (but did get a much higher amount of green renewable electricity).

Learn more about Newton Power Choice and consider opting up to 100% green electricity [here](#).

Winter Parking Ban: What's Your Opinion?

The citywide Overnight Parking Ban went into effect last night on Wednesday, Dec. 1 and will run through Thursday, March 31, 2022.

Last week I asked for your feedback on this winter ban, and many responded.

Roughly 75% of those we heard from strongly favor lifting or modifying the restriction to reduce the strain on those who don't have access to a driveway. Those in favor of the ban often cited safety concerns for pedestrians and drivers on narrow, slippery snowy streets with cars parked on both sides.

Keep your opinions coming. Respond to this email and add on the City Council at citycouncil@newtonma.gov.

Holiday Lights Spectacular

Holiday lights, giant puppets, Frosty the Snowman, happy children - and a good cause.

Join me on Monday night, Dec. 6th at City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Avenue) from 5:30 to 6:30 for the Mayor's Holiday Lights Spectacular Drive-Thru. Consider bringing either an unwrapped gift for a child (newborn to age 10) to help the Newton Police Department "stuff a cruiser" for the Village Bank's Gift Drive, or a grocery gift card to support the Newton food pantries and neighbors in need. '

Drive (or bike!) on by, and get home in plenty of time to have dinner and cheer on the Patriots.



Working Together

Congratulations to the newly elected City Council and School Committee leaders.

Last night, City Council President Susan Albright and City Council Vice President Rick Lipof were re-elected by their peers for a second term.

Last week, Tamika Olszewski was elected by her peers to become the School Committee Chair, and Kathy Shields was elected Vice Chair.

I look forward to doing good work for our students and our residents together with our City Councilors, School Committee members and their leaders.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. We have a busy Sunday (Dec. 5) in Newton this weekend with a craft fair, a groundbreaking and tree lightings in Waban and Nonantum:

- The **Celebrate Newton Holiday Craft Fair** is back for its 18th year with up to 50 local artisans showcasing their handmade jewelry, textiles, ceramics, woodwork, fine art and more at Newton South High School, 140 Brandeis Road, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 5. Admission is \$5 (kids 12 and under are free). Masks are required for everyone attending *and* proof of vaccination is required for everyone over the age of 12. Find more information at CelebrateNewton.com.
- **Hebrew College is partnering with Temple Reyim** to create a new shared campus for Jewish life at 1860 Washington Street in Auburndale. A Community Groundbreaking and Hanukkah Celebration will be livestreamed from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 5. Join in person at 4:15 p.m. for the Jewish Arts Collaborative mobile Hanukkah installation “Brighter Revealed.”
- Join the Waban Improvement Society for **Waban Lights**, a tree lighting and sing along at the Waban Library Center, 1608 Beacon Street, starting at 4:45 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 5.
- Join the Nonantum Children’s Christmas Party Association for caroling and hot chocolate at the annual **Park Lighting at Coletti-Magni Park**, 386-392 Watertown Street. Festivities start at 6:15 p.m. Santa and friends will then arrive for a countdown to the lights going on at 7:00 p.m.

P.P.S. Kudos to the **Franklin Elementary School’s Social Action Committee** who collected and donated more than 120 bags of groceries for the Centre Street Food Pantry. Special thanks to parent organizers Deborah Elliot, Jessica Allen, Lisa Perri and Ranjani Paradise.



P.P.P.S. Do you have **questions for U.S. Rep. Jake Auchincloss**? Join him for a virtual discussion hosted by the League of Women Voters of Newton, along with Brookline, Needham, Sharon-Stoughton, and Wellesley Leagues of Women Voters on Monday, Dec. 6, 7:30 – 8:30 p.m. Q&A will follow the discussion. Advance registration is required. Register [here](#).

P.P.P.P.S. Ever wondered how Newtonians celebrated the holidays in previous centuries? **Historic Newton’s program Historic Holidays** in Newton explores 18th

– 20th century holiday traditions. Join by zoom on Tuesday, Dec. 7 at 5:00 p.m. Click [here](#) to register and learn more.



P.P.P.P.S. Congratulations to the **State Champion Newton North High School Dance Team**, which took top honors in the Hip Hop Division.



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

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