

*Thursday, Feb. 3, 2022*

## **Mayor's Update**

### **Temperatures Set to Fall, Flash Freeze in the Forecast**

The rain is falling now and expected to continue through the night with a rapid drop in temperature sometime around 8:00 a.m. tomorrow. The quick drop in temperature, as much as 5 degrees in an hour, could create a flash freeze and a potentially slippery and dangerous morning commute.

I say potentially because the forecast is not yet clear on how hard the rain will be falling in the hours just before the temperature drops, a critical factor in how our road conditions will be in the morning.

Crews will be staged at locations around the City early tomorrow morning ready to begin salting and sanding roads as soon as possible to prevent ice from forming. If the rain stops or slows to a light mist before the temperatures drop, crews will be able to get out, salt roads, and stay well ahead of the ice. If the rain is falling hard in the hours before the temperature drops, any salt crews put down will be washed away before doing any good. In this case, crews would be hampered in their ability to control the ice and keep the roads safe.

One factor working in our favor is that the relatively warm temperatures yesterday and today mean that when temperatures drop and the freezing rain begins, it will not immediately freeze on pavement. Crews could have a short window to salt before the pavement freezes and ice forms. (While the pavement is warm, our front porches and stairs aren't – so be careful because they will become slippery as soon as the freezing rain starts falling.)

The freezing rain should transition to sleet and then light snow flurries before ending by 6:00 p.m. with an accumulation of about 1 inch of snow and ice expected.

If there are any closings, opening delays or cancellations we will post them at [newtonma.gov](http://newtonma.gov) by 6:00 a.m. tomorrow morning at the latest.

## **COVID-10**

### Positive Cases

We had 365 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 among Newton residents over the past seven days from Jan. 27 to Feb. 2. While this is still a significant number of cases, it is also a continuation of the downward curve we've seen with 675 new cases last week and 969 the week before. Our cumulative number of confirmed cases reported into the state system since the pandemic began is now 11,465.

Of the 1,294 people who tested positive in Newton during the State's tracking period of Jan. 6 to 29, 37% were students at one of our institutions of higher education. This was the period when students were returning to campus and 100% of them were tested, so it's not surprising that this is a high percentage.

Newton's positivity rate is now 4.7% (i.e., the percentage of the 30,598 tests done on Newton residents that were positive). This percentage is down from 6.7% reported last week and the 11.2% from the week prior.

The daily average incidence rate in Newton which measures the number of cases per 100,000 population also fell. The rate is now 100.8 compared to 134.8 last week and 172.2 the week prior.

### Newton-Wellesley Hospital

Newton-Wellesley Hospital, as of Tuesday, Feb. 1, reports they are caring for a total of 40 patients hospitalized with COVID-19, two (2) of whom are in the ICU. In comparison, last week 48 people were hospitalized and two were in the ICU after a peak of 56 patients on Jan. 14.

Approximately 40% of the patients hospitalized with COVID-19 are admitted primarily for management of COVID-19, and the rest are hospitalized with other

conditions but also have COVID-19.

### Deaths

This week we lost four of our family members, friends and neighbors in Newton. Two hundred and thirty seven (237) Newtonians have now died with COVID-19 since the pandemic began. The grieving continues.

### Vaccines

I find it painful to imagine how many deaths we might have experienced without the vaccines and boosters which are effective in preventing serious illness. CDC Director and Newton resident Dr. Rochelle Walensky yesterday remarked on the staggering effectiveness of boosters. She said, "For those who are boosted, the average weekly deaths was 0.1 per 100,000 people, meaning that unvaccinated individuals were 97 times more likely to die compared to those who were boosted."

Looking for a vaccine or booster appointment? Check [vaxfinder.mass.gov](https://vaxfinder.mass.gov).

### Newton Public Schools COVID-19 Data

During the past seven days from Jan. 27 to Feb. 2, the Newton Public Schools (NPS) had a total of 99 positive student cases and 17 among staff. This is a decrease from the 199 positive student cases and 29 among staff last week, and the 318 among students and 47 among staff during the week prior to that.

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

### **It's Pothole Weather: "Be Our Eyes"**

This week's roller-coaster temperature swings with snow, rain, and ice is the perfect recipe for potholes.

As asphalt ages and loses its flexibility, water seeps into it and under it. When the water freezes, it expands and bends which cracks and weakens the pavement.

Then, when the ice melts, the pavement contracts and leaves gaps and voids under the pavement.

This kind of freezing and thawing happens over and over during New England winters, weakening and cracking the pavement more and more. When the weight of cars and trucks pass over that weakened spot, the road material is displaced or broken up – and a pothole appears.

Newton's DPW crews have repaired more than 310 potholes since January 1<sup>st</sup>, and two or three crews are working as weather permits to repair more. Already, we've used more than 22 tons of asphalt on the repairs this season.

We still have potholes appearing and we're asking for your help.

Please be our eyes out on the roads. When you see a pothole, report it through our 311 system so we can get it fixed. If we know about the pothole, we will fix it.

The fastest way to make a report (which can be done anonymously) is to download the Newton MA 311 app if you have a smart phone. With the app, you can take a photo of the pothole and send in a report right at the spot. (Open the app, press "report a problem," then press "streets," take a photo and follow the prompts.) Don't have a smart phone? Newton's 311 system can also be accessed on a computer through the City's website [here](#), or you can call 311 on your telephone (you can leave a message if calling on weekends or after hours). Please provide a very specific location/address so our crews can find the pothole.

Although potholes are inevitable in this climate, the number of them will decrease as we continue to repair our roads. Across the City, we've already repaved 47 miles of roadway (of our 300 total miles) over the past three years and we'll continue this necessary work.

#### Storm Drains: Be our "Arms"

The fast-melting snow and rain today makes flooding a concern. If you are able, please clear any storm drains by the curbs on your street that may still be covered in snow. Thank you, thank you.

## How Should Newton Invest our Federal ARPA Dollars?

Many people have provided great ideas for our investments. Our City Councilors and School Committee members have weighed in. Residents, community groups, business owners and the heads of non-profits have spoken up. Many people sent along thoughtful emails to [ARPAinput@newtonma.gov](mailto:ARPAinput@newtonma.gov).

Please continue to make recommendations at our next zoom community ARPA input session on Wednesday, Feb. 16 at 7:00 p.m. Join the meeting at [us02web.zoom.us/j/85410319248](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85410319248).

To recap, the City is receiving \$63.2 million dollars in American Recovery Act (ARPA) funding.

Our overarching goals for the funding is to seed initiatives that will help Newtonians and our city not just stabilize and recover, but permanently be more resilient, more livable, more vibrant, more inclusive, and more sustainable. We will invest this money using the lens of equity, ensuring all geographic areas of Newton and people of all ages and ethnicities are supported while we help those hurt by the pandemic. The funds must be fully invested by December 2026. Not surprisingly, there are a lot of rules and regulations on allowed uses. (For example, we cannot use the funds to decrease taxes or to bolster our pension fund.)

To date, I have allocated approximately \$19 million of the \$63.2 million.

These investments support a broad range of people and places:

- Helping those most impacted or disproportionately impacted by the pandemic (e.g., a community needs assessment of our lowest resourced residents, expanding the children's room at the Library, adding affordable housing next to the Williams School, buying rapid antigen tests)
- Assisting the recovery and rebuilding of village centers and commercial corridors and our small businesses and non-profits (e.g., linking employers to employees with NewtonHires, improving our streets, sidewalks and village centers, supporting arts, culture and community groups, helping restaurants)

- Supporting the operations of the Newton Public Schools and the City in the face of increased needs of our students and residents and continuing revenue losses (e.g., upgrading ventilation and buildings, investing in parks, gardens, trees and trails, creating a bicycle/pedestrian master plan, supporting our employees)

See the complete list of investments to date at [newtonma.gov/arpa](https://newtonma.gov/arpa).

You're also invited to email ideas to [ARPAinput@newtonma.gov](mailto:ARPAinput@newtonma.gov).

### **Use Electricity to Curb Greenhouse Gases**

An important next step in our efforts to address climate change is shifting to the use of electricity for heating, cooling and hot water.

Why?

In Newton, more than 60% of our greenhouse gas emissions come from our homes, apartments, and commercial buildings. So, the way we heat and cool these buildings, heat our water, and keep the lights on matters as we work to “Use Less and Green the Rest.”

Thankfully, by using cleaner and greener electricity generated increasingly with renewable sources (solar and wind), we can reduce greenhouse gases emissions caused by fossil fuels, the major cause of climate change.

Working with builders, architects, and other experts among our residents and City Councilors, we brought forward a draft ordinance and accompanying Home Rule petition to allow Newton to move forward with electrification as the towns of Brookline, Arlington, Lexington, Acton and Concord have already done by seeking Home Rule authority from the Legislature.

[Learn More](#)

The City Council’s Public Facilities Committee will discuss the latest draft of the electrification Home Rule Petition at its meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 9.

If passed by the State Legislature, the Home Rule Petition will allow Newton to move forward with an ordinance that would require all residential and small commercial development (less than 20,000 square feet) and major renovations to use electricity for heating, cooling and hot water.

Check the [Electronic Posting Board](#) for zoom information to attend the meeting next week.

### **Celebrating the Rich History of Black Americans**

During Black History Month, we are celebrating the rich heritage and shared experiences of Black Americans—the scientists, en-slaved and soldiers, the educators, entertainers and engineers, the landscapers, lawyers and laborers, the famous and the obscure who worked at home, in factories, fields and boardrooms and wove the complex fabric of our country.

Several Black History Month events are planned within the community:

- [Celebrating Voices of Color: Poetry Reading and Open Mic](#) on Tuesday, Feb. 8 at 7:00 p.m. will feature the voices of black and brown poets. An open mic will follow with a limit of one poem per person, limited slots are available.
- [Half American: The Epic Story of Black Americans Fighting During WWII](#) on Thursday, Feb. 10 at 5:00 p.m.
- [Racism Not Race with Joseph L. Graves and Alan H. Goodman](#) on Wednesday, Feb. 23 at 7:00 p.m. Drawing on evidence from both natural and social science, Graves and Goodman will dismantle the myth of gene-based racial difference.
- [How to Make a Slave and Other Essays](#) on Monday, Feb. 28 at 7:00 p.m. Jerald Walker will read excerpts from and discuss his new book, a finalist for the 2020 National Book Award in nonfiction. Q and A will follow.
- Teaching/Learning about the Civil Rights Movement on Thursday, Feb. 10 at 7:00 p.m. Families Organizing for Racial Justice, FORJ, will hold this virtual panel discussion followed by breakout sessions. Learn more and register [here](#).

The history of Black America is the history of our country. #MoreThanAMonth

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. **WinterFEST**, a weekend of family fun, begins next Saturday, Feb. 12 with a Community Soup Social with music, dancing, giant puppets and Olaf from Frozen serving cocoa and cookies at the Hyde Playground from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. On Sunday, Feb. 13 join a 10:00 a.m. walk through Cold Spring Park (meet at the trail entrance near the sports fields at the 1094 Beacon Street entrance) and conclude Sunday afternoon at Newton Centre with festive lights, live ice sculpture demonstrations and many ice sculptures, music, costumed characters, a pop-up market and family activities from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Thanks go to Newton Community Pride for all the fun. Click [here](#) for all the details.

P.P.S. Need **help filing your taxes**? The Newton Senior Center and A.A.R.P. Volunteer Tax Team can provide assistance. Call the Senior Center at 617-796-1662 to make an appointment.

P.P.P.S Newton Community Education's [summer camps](#) are now live for registration. Choose from favorites like [Camp Invention](#) and [Garden City Sports full-day sports camps](#), or browse new offerings, including [Garden City Stage](#), a 5-week musical theater camp for elementary and middle-schoolers, and [exploration camps](#), full-day combination camps based around weekly themes such as STEAM week, Pirate week, Eco Week, and more. Scholarships are available [here](#).

P.P.P.P.S. **Fat-Shaming and Middle Schoolers**: Join American Library Association 2022 Printz Honor Award Winning Author Lisa Fipps as she takes us behind the scenes of her powerful novel, *Starfish*, about Ellie, a resilient middle schooler who is bullied about her weight. Join the Zoom event on Tuesday, Feb. 13 at 7:00 p.m. as Lisa gives tweens in 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade and their families a look into her writing process. Register [here](#).





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