

Thursday, March 24, 2022

Mayor's Update



Members of Newton's Affordable Housing Trust

Newton's new Affordable Housing Trust will take another important step forward this week, as I am now ready to submit my recommendations for the Trustee candidates to the City Council for their review and approval in the coming weeks.

Thank you to Tami, Ann, Jason and Peter, Newton residents, for your willingness to serve:

Tamirirashe (Tami) Gambiza – Tami is a Certified Public Accountant with extensive experience in auditing and reviewing affordable housing projects for compliance, including federal housing programs. Tami is also a board member of the Commonwealth Land Trust which owns and manages affordable and supportive housing.

Ann Houston – Ann has forty years of experience in affordable housing as a developer, lender and partner to local communities. She is the former president of Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) which encourages the production and preservation of housing that is affordable to low and moderate income families and individuals.

Jason Korb – Jason is an experienced affordable housing developer at Capstone Communities. He has worked closely with the affordable housing trust in Cambridge and his projects have included complicated layering of public and private subsidies.

Peter Sargent – Peter has deep experience in affordable housing financing in a variety of roles, including as a Director of Capital Development at the Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation. In addition, he is a former member and chair of Newton's Community Preservation Committee.

Over the last two and a half months, we received applications from an impressive pool of residents. I am grateful for the amount of interest we received for these four Trustee positions and I want to thank everyone who took the time to submit an application and to interview for such an important volunteer role within our community.

The mission of Newton's Affordable Housing Trust is to preserve existing affordable housing units and create new ones that are affordable to low and moderate income households. These are households which make less than 80% of our Area Median Income (AMI). The Trust has the ability to create a streamlined process to provide funding to new affordable housing projects and to take advantage of development opportunities which might otherwise not be available to the City.

In total, the Trust will be made up of seven Trustees. The seven will include myself as the Mayor; Councilor Alicia Bowman, representing the City Council; Judy Weber, representing the Community Preservation Committee; and four Newton residents with backgrounds in affordable housing development and financing to be appointed by myself and confirmed by the City Council. The Affordable Housing Trust Ordinance calls for these appointees to be geographically, culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse.

We believe that the new Trustees will be appointed in time to begin holding meetings in May. With the pandemic further highlighting the region's housing crisis, the Trust is convening at a critical moment.

The funding for the Trust will come from an initial allotment of approximately \$1.6 million, 35% of the Community Preservation Committee's annual budget, and may include additional funds from the City's Inclusionary Zoning Fund as projects pay into that account.

I am thankful to members of our City Council, the Newton Housing Partnership, the Fair Housing Committee and all the advocates that joined me in bringing the Trust to fruition in Newton.



Congratulations to high school **national champion shot putter Max Klein**. With a huge throw of 65 feet, 3-1/4 inches, the Newton North High School senior won the New Balance Nationals Indoor Championships earlier this month. (Photo by Jim Mahoney)

Cannabis Delivery Operator Agreement

I have given my approval to have our Law Department develop a “Host Community Agreement” (HCA) with Rolling Releaf which applied to the City to operate a wholesale cannabis (a.k.a., marijuana) delivery business at 69 Adams Street in Nonantum.

A “delivery operator” license allows a cannabis business to buy pre-packaged cannabis products from growers and manufacturers, store them in a secure warehouse type facility, and deliver orders by secure vehicles directly to customers (age 21 years and older) at their residence or place of business. The storage facility is not open to the public and no retail business can be conducted; only employees will be allowed into the facility.

Delivery operators need a signed HCA with the City of Newton as well as Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission (CCC) licensing approval to open. They do not need a Special Permit from the Newton City Council.

The City Council approved the “delivery operator” use as a by-right zoning use in manufacturing and limited manufacturing zones. The Rolling Releaf location on Adams Street is a manufacturing zone.

After a favorable recommendation from the City’s Host Community Agreement Advisory Group, I am giving approval for an HCA to Rolling Releaf. To see the full recommendation of the HCA Advisory Group to me, click [here](#).

Rolling Releaf will become Newton’s third delivery operator. I have awarded delivery operator HCA’s to Emerald Turtle at 120 Wells Avenue on the south side of Newton and Blue Sky Organics at 16 Maguire Court in Nonantum – neither of which has yet begun delivery operations as they have not yet received licenses from the CCC.

Emerald Turtle, Blue Sky Organics and Rolling Releaf are all Social Equity applicants, a requirement by the State’s Cannabis Control Commission that delivery operator licenses be limited to Economic Empowerment and Social Equity applicants for three years.

Rolling Releaf plans to operate its wholesale cannabis delivery business from a 1,500 square foot space in a multi-tenant building located in a manufacturing zone at the corner of Adams Street and Silver Lake Avenue. There will be no exterior signage on the building, nor on its delivery vehicles.

Under the terms of the HCA, Rolling Releaf will be limited to three delivery vehicles and up to eight employees working on-site at a given time. As a result, there will be minimal traffic impact. The three vehicles will each make two trips a day from the site for a total of six trips a day.

As with the other two delivery operators, the Newton Police Department reviewed and approved Rolling Releaf's security plan. These plans include storing all cannabis products in a secure and alarm-equipped storage room, storing all products and cash inside tamper-resistant and theft-proof locked vessels secured inside of unmarked company delivery vehicles, requiring drivers and delivery agents to wear body cameras while enroute and making deliveries to customers, and requiring at least one staff person to always remain in the vehicle.

In addition, Rolling Releaf will have a security guard to assist with monitoring the loading and the parking area and making sure employees stay within the designated parking spots and do not park on neighborhood streets.

Rolling Releaf's plans also include installing a retractable fence for loading purposes, striping 10 spots in the parking lot located in the rear of the building for employee parking, and adding lighting and cameras to enhance site security.

Another update on cannabis: Ascend, the third retail marijuana shop at 1089 Washington Street in West Newton Square, opened Dec. 6, 2021. Ascend joins Redi just off Rt. 9 in Upper Falls and Garden Remedies in Newtonville.

[Apply](#) to join the '**Community Engagement Network**' for Zoning Redesign: Village Centers. The network will serve as a space for community members to collaborate with City staff on making engagement materials accessible and engaging for the next phase of updating Newton's [village center zoning](#). [Click here](#) for the application and full details; applications are due by midnight on Sunday, April 10.



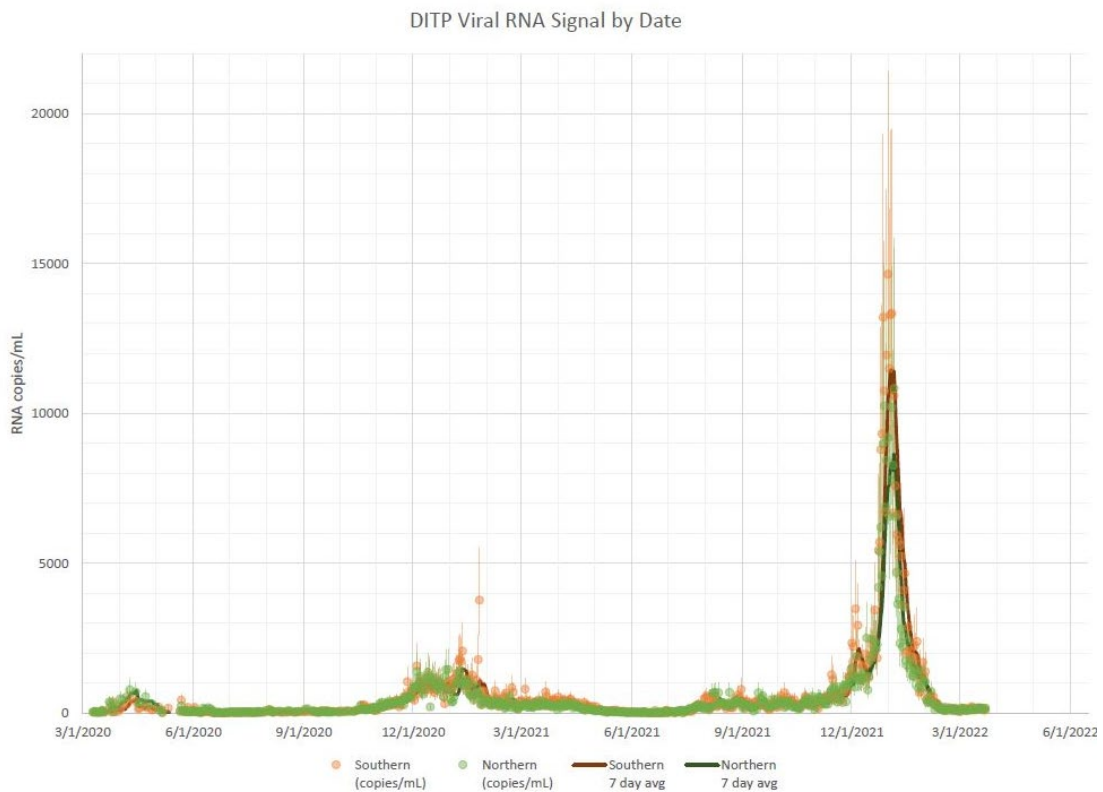
COVID-19 Update

We had 104 confirmed new cases of COVID-19 in Newton over the past seven days from March 17 to 24, up from the 74 cases we had during the previous seven days.

Our positivity rate fell to 1.9% of the 8,382 tests performed on Newton residents over the State's two-week tracking period from March 6 to 19, down very slightly from the 2.0% (of 9,918 tests) last week. The daily incidence rate in Newton is now 11.1 per 100,000 population, also down from last week's 14.2. Students at institutions of higher learning in Newton that conduct COVID-19 testing comprised 18% of the cases this week, down from 36% last week.

Wastewater (i.e., sewage) data collected by the MWRA, an early detection method that has been reliable through the pandemic, is remaining flat. Samples are collected and analyzed three to seven times a week by Biobot Analytics to detect from human fecal waste the RNA from SARS-CoV-2. In the chart below, the data shows a dramatic spike at the end of December 2021 into January 2022 (at a much greater level than the previous two surges), followed by a rapid decline. (The chart shows data from samples collected through Tuesday, March 22.)

MWRA Wastewater COVID-19 Tracking



During the Omicron surge, we kept a close eye on the number of Newton-Wellesley Hospital patients with COVID-19 and reported them each week. Their patients have fallen dramatically so our Health and Human Services staff will remain in contact

with the hospital, and we'll share the data if NWH starts noticing meaningful changes.

We thankfully can report the good news that no one in Newton died with COVID-19 over the past seven days.

The Newton Public Schools had 35 cases among students and 6 among staff during the past week from March 17 and 23. There were 41 cases among students and 11 among staff during the previous week from March 10 to 16.

DPW Yard Waste Pickup Starts Monday, April 11

As everyone starts clearing flower beds and cleaning up any lingering leaves from the fall, yard waste pickup season starts on Monday, April 11. Rather than an outside contractor, Waste Management, the Department of Public Works will be doing our yard waste collection as a city-run operation.

We are making this change to both improve the service and save money. The City's contractor has faced disruptions with service for the past several years and they couldn't guarantee that there would be improvements this year.

We know it will take some time for the new DPW yard waste collection team to be fully trained on operations and routes. While you clear out your flower beds and clean up lingering leaves, please understand that there may be some hiccups during the start-up period for our in-house operation.

Yard waste will continue to be scheduled for pick up on the same day as trash and recycling. (Please know that trash and recycling collection are not being changed in any way.)

Stand with Ukraine

Today marks one month since Russia invaded Ukraine and the cruelty of this war began.

Last night, Ukrainian President Zelensky asked the people of the world "... to stand against the war," he said. "From this day forward, show your standing. Come from your offices, your homes, your schools and

Stand with Ukraine
Rally for Peace
Friday, March 25
4:30 - 6:00pm

Newton Centre
Corner of Beacon and Centre Sts

universities. Come in the name of peace. Come with Ukrainian symbols to support Ukraine, to support freedom, to support life.”

Join us tomorrow afternoon, Friday, March 25, to stand with Ukraine and rally for peace. We will gather at the corner of Beacon and Centre Streets in Newton Centre from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m.

Warmly,

Ruthanne



P.S. April is **National Poetry Month** and Newton is celebrating by inviting us all to submit an original haiku poem. This project, called *Poetry Newton*, is organized by Newton Poets Grey Held and Elizabeth Lund in partnership with the City of Newton’s Cultural Development staff. Selected Haiku will be printed on colorful lawn signs and placed along public walkways throughout Newton for all to enjoy during April. See [details here](#) and submit your Haiku by next Thursday, March 30.



P.P.S. It’s time to start thinking about your serve. **Tennis lessons, camps, clinics for all ages** and more can be booked at [NewtonTMTennis](#). Please click [here](#) to learn about Tim Mayotte and the professional team that will be leading racquet sport activity for Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture.

P.P.P.S. Newton’s New Philharmonia orchestra will begin its performance this Sunday, March 27, with a **tribute to the people of Ukraine**. Newton resident and Kyiv native, opera singer Olga Lisovskaya, will begin the *New Phil Reawakened – Sights & Sounds* performance with the Ukrainian National anthem and a Ukrainian Aria. Following the tribute, the show will celebrate the sights and sounds of Latin America and guests will leave with a treat to



take home from Che! Empanada, opening soon in Newtonville. Tickets to the show starting at 3:00 p.m. at Newton North High School are available at newphil.org.



P.P.P.S. A handmade bowl, a simple meal and a way to give: Join members of the Lasell University **Empty Bowls** Club on Friday, April 1, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at de Witt Hall on the Lasell campus to help raise money for the **Centre Street Food Pantry**. Handmade ceramic bowls made by the students will be on sale, and all proceeds will go directly to help fight food insecurity.

