

Friday, April 1, 2022

## Mayor's Update



### **Newton Public Schools Budget**

Newton is emerging from a challenging two years that has been defined in many ways by COVID-19. Our community is proud of the way students and their families, caregivers and guardians persevered through everything the pandemic threw at us – learning disruptions, isolation from friends and neighbors, and the fear of the unknown.

We are fortunate to have talented educators who stepped up to support our children. Our educators figured out how to teach and learn remotely, make the best of distance and hybrid settings, and – now – return to full in-person instruction.

While a challenging time, our ability to adapt and evolve has reminded all of us we can do hard things and do things differently. Newton is resilient in so many ways.

As I mentioned in the State of the City address, we are poised to make the largest investment in Newton's school system in the history of the City. This record setting allocation of \$262 million comes when revenue collections are still weak, costs are rising, and the needs of our students have increased.

Children are our greatest priority, and that is reflected in this budget. The total budget for the Newton Public Schools next year will increase by 3.5% and go up by close to \$9 million dollars to \$262 million. Total spending on our school system accounts for 63% of the total City spending. The budget for NPS will be growing faster than the budget for the rest of city government departments.

That is on top of multiple infusions of federal, state and city dollars to support our students over the past two years. That funding amounted to more than \$32 million dollars of additional support which was appropriate and necessary.

It is important to note that these significant investments come while school enrollment is down by 1,000 pupils. Newton will continue to invest heavily in our students, educators and school assets but must remain clear eyed about this reality.

Our Superintendent who manages our schools is legally bound to balance NPS' budget every year and this year is no different. To balance the FY2023 budget, he

has made the hard decision to eliminate 39 of the 2,100 full-time equivalent positions. This is a painful – painful for the people who serve in these roles, painful for our community that wishes resources were not a constraint, painful after two difficult COVID years and painful as we realize that enrollment trends may lead to more hard choices.

There have been calls to use additional one-time funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to address the structural deficit. We have directed more than \$14 million from ARPA to NPS. However, we have focused those one-time funds heavily on one-time costs such as facility improvements and COVID related expenses.

We all know that using one-time funding sources to address this structural deficit in operations is not responsible. In fact, a foundational fiscal rule makes clear that spending one-time dollars on an on-going deficit in operations is unwise. Deferring these challenging decisions only makes addressing funding gaps more painful, damaging and disruptive in future years for NPS. Newton must stick to core budgeting principles lest we burden future NPS students with the consequences of an undisciplined approach.

Our community has proven that we can find solutions to address difficult challenges and has demonstrated our ability to do so over the last two years. I am confident that the Superintendent and the School Committee will chart a path that supports all the students in the Newton Public Schools with this year's \$262 million investment.

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## April is Fair Housing Month

The Fair Housing Act, enacted on April 11, 1968, enshrined into federal law the goal of eliminating racial segregation and ending housing discrimination in the United States.

Passed into law just days after the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King, the *Fair Housing Act*, the third and final significant piece of the landmark Civil Rights Act, makes it illegal to discriminate against a person in the purchase, sale, rental, or financing of housing based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, or familial status. President Joe Biden, on the day he was sworn into office, signed an executive order further extending protections by prohibiting discrimination in housing because of gender identity or sexual orientation.

The poster features a vertical stack of four windows. The top window shows a woman in a blue dress holding a bouquet of flowers. The second window shows a man in a green shirt holding a sign that says 'BLACK LIVES MATTER'. The third window shows a man in a blue shirt holding a sign that says 'HOUSING VOUCHER'. The bottom window shows a woman in a pink shirt holding a sign that says 'HOUSING VOUCHER'. To the right of the windows is a large blue box with the text 'FAIR HOUSING MONTH workshop'. Below this is an orange box with the text 'Fair Housing Past to Present - Insights from the Field'. Below that is a blue box with the text 'April 26 @ 3-5pm'. Below that is a dark blue box with the text 'Register at tinyurl.com/FHM2022'. At the bottom is a light blue box with the text 'Hosted by WestMetro HOME Consortium'.

The *Fair Housing Act* also commits recipients of federal funding, including the City of Newton, to affirmatively further fair housing in their communities.

As we kick off the month of April, we not only welcome spring and the season of renewal - we also declare April as Fair Housing Month in the City of Newton. Having sustained another challenging year fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and witnessing sharp discrepancies between the impacts of the pandemic on white communities and those of color, we are reminded now more than ever how important our commitment is to provide equal housing opportunity for all residents and prospective residents of the City of Newton.

This commitment to end housing discrimination, reduce barriers to fair and equal housing, and take meaningful actions across our city to affirmatively further fair housing continues beyond the month of April through the good work of Newton's Fair Housing Committee.

In addition, the City of Newton serves as the coordinator of the 13-community housing coalition known as the WestMetro HOME Consortium. As part of these efforts, Newton continues to implement the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, or AI for short, which is a critical assessment of the barriers that exist to fair housing in each of the consortium communities. It provides an action plan for overcoming these barriers over the next five years. (Read the report [here](#).)

Join me this month for a Fair Housing Workshop sponsored by the thirteen-community WestMetro HOME Consortium. Whether you are a renter, homebuyer, lender, landlord, or real estate agent, each of us needs to understand fair housing and our relationship to upholding the law and protecting ourselves against fair housing violations.

On Tuesday, April 26 from 3:00 to 5 p.m., attorneys from the Suffolk School of Law Housing Discrimination Testing Program will examine the history of the real estate industry and government's roles in racial discrimination, current trends in housing discrimination, and ways to mitigate implicit biases to ensure that everyone has fair and equal access to housing. Register at: [tinyurl.com/FHM2022](https://tinyurl.com/FHM2022)

In addition, visit [newtonma.gov/FHMonth](https://newtonma.gov/FHMonth) for fair housing resources, readings, workshops, stories, and general information.

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## **MBTA Youth Pass**

Newton is joining the MBTA's [Youth Pass](#) program, which provides affordable transit access for young people with low-incomes. The Youth Pass allows broader

access to jobs and education opportunities through better access to the MBTA system for young adults.

The Youth Pass provides discounted fares to eligible young people with half-off one-way fares and monthly passes for just \$30. These \$30 monthly LinkPasses work for the bus, subway, and Fairmount Line Zone 1A stations. Youth Pass cards can also be used to purchase half-price one-way fares for Commuter Rail, Express Bus, and ferry.

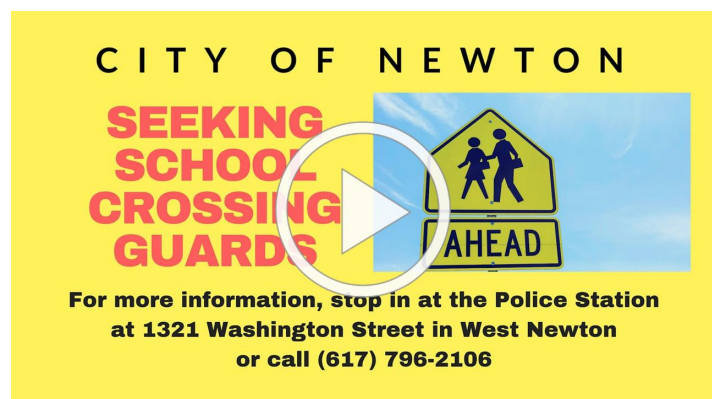
Young people residing in Newton who are interested in applying to the reduced fare Youth Pass program should complete the Youth Pass online application available at [mbta.com/youthpass/apply](http://mbta.com/youthpass/apply). Approved applicants will receive their cards in the mail.

To qualify for the Youth Pass, a young person must live in a participating city or town and either:

- Be between 18 and 25 years old and enrolled in at least one of the following [Youth Pass partner programs](#) (college and university students may be eligible for [Semester Passes](#)):
  - Alternative education program (e.g., high school equivalency degree programs);
  - Job training or professional development program (e.g., Year Up, Roca);
  - State or federal benefit program (e.g., MassHealth, SNAP, fuel assistance);
- Be between 12 and 17 years old and not enrolled in middle or high school (students enrolled in middle or high school may receive a [Student CharlieCard](#) through their school).

Find more information at [newtonma.gov/MBTA](http://newtonma.gov/MBTA) or at [mbta.com/youthpass-eligibility](http://mbta.com/youthpass-eligibility).

*Are you looking for a part-time job in Newton? Consider becoming a **crossing guard** and making a real difference in the daily lives of our kids. Watch the video for more information and click [here](#) to apply.*



CITY OF NEWTON

**SEEKING SCHOOL CROSSING GUARDS**

**AHEAD**

For more information, stop in at the Police Station at 1321 Washington Street in West Newton or call (617) 796-2106

The advertisement features a yellow background. At the top, the text 'CITY OF NEWTON' is written in black, spaced-out capital letters. Below this, the words 'SEEKING SCHOOL CROSSING GUARDS' are written in large, bold, red capital letters. To the right of this text is a graphic of a yellow diamond-shaped crossing sign with a black border, showing two black silhouettes of children walking. Below the sign is a white rectangular sign with the word 'AHEAD' in black. A large white play button icon is overlaid on the center of the sign graphic. At the bottom of the advertisement, the text 'For more information, stop in at the Police Station at 1321 Washington Street in West Newton or call (617) 796-2106' is written in black.

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## COVID-19 Update

We had 135 confirmed new cases of COVID-19 in Newton over the past seven days from March 24 to 30, up from the 104 cases we had during the previous seven days. Our cumulative total of cases in Newton is now 12,804.

Our positivity rate ticked up to 2.5% of the 8,721 tests performed on Newton residents over the State's two-week tracking period from March 13 to 26. The positivity rate last week was 1.9% of 8,382 tests. The daily incidence rate in Newton is now 15.7 per 100,000 population, also an uptick from last week's 11.1. Students at institutions of higher learning in Newton that conduct COVID testing make up 12% of Newton's cases, down from 18% last week.

The Newton Public Schools had 56 cases among students and 15 among staff during the past week from March 24 to 30.

Thankfully, none of our family, friends or neighbors in Newton died this week with COVID-19.

Based on Nowcast, a model that estimates proportions of circulating variants, BA2, a subvariant of Omicron, is now responsible for almost three quarters of the cases in Massachusetts. While we're seeing a bump in cases, the CDC continues to categorize Middlesex County where Newton is located as being in the "low" Community COVID-19 level category. Newton's Health and Human Services staff is continuing to closely monitor data and fortunately, they report that we are not currently seeing an increase in hospitalizations or severe illness, especially among those who are fully vaccinated and boosted.

Age 50 or older or [12+ with certain immunocompromising conditions](#)? You're now eligible for a second booster. Find more information at [CDC.com/Vaccines](https://www.cdc.com/vaccines).

The bottom line from Newton Health and Human Services Commissioner Linda Walsh is, "We're in a time of cautious optimism." She notes that we'll be living with COVID-19 for months and months to come. We've shifted to all of us taking personal responsibility and staying home if we're not feeling well. Rapid antigen tests available at pharmacies and online are also great tools to find out if symptoms you're experiencing are a result of being infected with COVID-19.

Find the latest recommendations and information on COVID-19 at a new website unveiled this week, [COVID.gov](https://www.covid.gov).

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## Spotlight on Gas Leaks

Did you know that NationalGrid has many hundreds of unrepaired gas leaks within the City of Newton?

For the past 5 years, [Mothers Out Front Newton](#) has been raising awareness about the danger, the waste and the pollution from methane gas leaks.



Is there a leak near you? Find a map of interactive gas leaks [here](#). As of December 2021, Newton had 649 unrepaired gas leaks (yellow) and 231 repaired leaks (red). FYI: Gas leaks are measured in the streets, not in buildings, and are identified by the nearest address.

Most of Newton's gas leaks are categorized as Grade 3 which means they are considered non-hazardous and are expected to remain non-hazardous. They are required to be repaired or eliminated within 8 years.

There are also some Grade 3 SEI leaks and Grade 2 Leaks. Grade 3 SEI leaks are greater than 2,000-square feet and have significant environmental impact. (SEIs are 7% of all leaks yet are responsible for approximately 50% of all methane emissions.) SEIs must be repaired within one to three years. Grade 2 leaks which are also considered non-hazardous, but could become hazardous in the near future. They must be repaired within a year. The City of Newton has no authority to repair leaks. That responsibility falls solely on National Grid.

Mothers Out Front, with the support of the City of Newton, continues to call for accountability and transparency from National Grid, the gas company that serves Newton.

**STAND WITH UKRAINE**  
VIGIL for PEACE and  
HUMANITARIAN RELIEF COLLECTION FOR UKRAINE  
APRIL 3RD, 12:30 PM  
**NEWTON CITY HALL**

Please bring a donation from the list below

Hosted by Mayor Ruthanne Fuller  
Speakers include: Reverend Father Roman Tarnavsky, St. Andrew Ukrainian Orthodox Church; Father Yaroslav Nalysnyk, Ukrainian Catholic Church; Rabbi Keith Stern, Temple Beth Avodah; Yana Brodskiy, Humanitarian Aide Coordinator, Andrew Kupovich, NSHS Student; Solomon Schechter Upper School Choirs; and Eugenia Gerstein, Music Educator and Choral Director, Temple Emmanuel, and Solomon Schechter Day School

<b>Trauma care</b>	<b>Medications:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Saline 100 and 200ml</li><li>• Sterile &amp; non-sterile gauzes-all sizes</li><li>• Elastic fixation bandages</li><li>• Alcohol gauze pads</li><li>• Multi-trauma dressings</li><li>• Anti bleeding medications</li><li>• IV kits and NS solution</li><li>• Tourniquets</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ibuprofen and other NSAIDs</li><li>• Tylenol</li><li>• Antibiotics (Azithromycin, Augmentin, Levofloxacin, others)</li><li>• Inhalers for asthma</li><li>• Medications for diabetes (all types of insulin and oral-glycemic medications)</li><li>• Antidepressants</li></ul>

Please visit the websites below for more donation ideas, Amazon Wish Lists, and Financial Donations  
More information at: <https://bit.ly/newtonstandswithukraine> or <https://bit.ly/newtoncityhall>

Stand with Ukraine and join a **Vigil for Peace and Humanitarian Relief**.

We'll gather at City Hall at 12:30 p.m. this Sunday, April 3. We'll be collecting needed relief items that the organization Ukraine Forward will ship through Poland to Ukraine. Consider bringing pain medications such as ibuprofen (Advil) and acetaminophen (Tylenol), hydrogen peroxide, and non-lithium ion AA and AAA batteries.

Find a complete list of needed items and more information at [ukraineforward.org](http://ukraineforward.org).

Warmly,

Ruthanne

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P.S. To our Newton neighbors who will begin their month-long observance of Ramadan, **Ramadan Mubarak**.



P.P.S. For the past two years our **Newton Arts Calendar** has been populated with virtual programming. Today it's thrilling to see many in person events returning. Check out [Newtonartscalendar.org](http://Newtonartscalendar.org) for an up to date listing of engaging performances and community programs. If you are a Newton performer or organizer, simply submit your event on the website and Newton's Cultural Development staff will review your submission. Hope to see you out and about at one of the fabulous upcoming programs.



P.P.P.S. Interested in learning more about how to help children have a productive and healthy relationship with social media and technology? Parents, caregivers and families, please join national recognized digital safety expert, [Katie LeClerc Greer](#), on Thursday, April 14 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. for “**Supporting a Healthy Relationship with Technology**” via a Zoom webinar. Click [here](#) to register.

P.P.P.P.S. Run (or walk) with the Newton South Lions and help support athletics programs and events. The **Newton South High School Booster Club** is holding a **5K road race** open to all ages on Sunday, May 15 at 9:00 a.m.. There will be food and prizes in many categories including the most creative lion-themed costume. The race will begin and end at Newton South. Registration is now open. Click [here](#) to run as an individual or create a team.

*(Photo: Newton South Athletic Director Pat Gonzalez, high school athletes and Principal Tamii Stras.)*

