

Thursday, April 14, 2022

Mayor's Update

Summer Break-Ins Targeting Asians Cracked

Today, ten months after a series of break-ins among homes in Newton where the residents were of Asian descent, we are so pleased that NPD has cracked the cases.

Arrest warrants have been issued for two men in New York City in connection with these break-ins after tremendous work by detectives in the Newton Police Department who looked at every angle and investigated every detail. Both suspects have past histories of breaking and entering and burglary and one was found to be incarcerated in New York.

This case has been cracked in large part because of the exceptional work of Newton detectives, in particular Det. Peter Koerber.

Det. Koerber was on the case from the first break-in last June. Det. Koerber connected these crimes occurring in Newton with similar ones in other locales, leading him to New York and New Jersey. Day by day, he built the case until he obtained several search warrants, gathered a variety of evidence, and ultimately identified the two suspects. Det. Koerber presented his case to Middlesex County District Attorney Marian Ryan and the arrest warrants were issued.

I am proud of the dedication and expertise our Newton Police showed in cracking these crimes. We now know from their investigation that the suspects were indeed targeting members of our Asian community, as we initially suspected.

All of the victims of these house break-ins have been kept up to date about the investigation's progress and the recent arrest warrants. This news cannot erase their hurt, anxiety and loss but I hope the Newton Police Department's relentless and effective work to ultimately identify two suspects will provide some solace and peace of mind.

Marathon Security Prep

Have you seen or heard low-flying helicopters over the Boston Marathon course? They're part of the pre-race security operation and they will continue to fly over Newton through Marathon Day, this Monday, April 18.

They're just one part of a meticulous security operation involved in hosting the marathon.

Over the past several months, law enforcement agencies including the Newton Police Department and regional, state and federal departments have planned and

coordinated security for the 126th race where tens of thousands of spectators will gather along the 26.2-mile course to cheer 30,000 athletes from across the globe.

For obvious reasons, we won't be sharing too many specific details. I can say Newton is supported by a significant law enforcement presence along the route. From the Wellesley border at Washington Street throughout the course where runners turn onto Commonwealth Avenue and run up Heartbreak Hill, Newton Police Officers in uniform and in plain clothes will be working alongside the National Guard and partners from the Metropolitan Law Enforcement Council (METRO-LEC), a consortium of 46 local police and sheriff's departments.

The coordination stretches beyond Newton Police and law enforcement agencies. The Newton Fire, Public Works, Parks, Recreation and Culture and Health and Human Services Departments are also very much involved.

Fire Chief Gino Lucchetti will open the Emergency Operations Center early on race day morning and both Fallon (our ambulance provider) and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) will be there.

Streets leading onto the route will be blocked by heavy equipment and buses provided by the Newton Department of Public Works as well as the Boston Athletic Association.

Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture staff put all the barriers, signs and clear plastic bags out along the course, and then by early on Tuesday morning, they'll have the course all cleaned as though the famous race never occurred. As always, police are asking that if you see something, please say something. Call the Newton Police Department at 617-796-2100 or dial 911.

Road Closures and Parking Restrictions

Road closures and parking restrictions in Newton along the Marathon Route (Washington Street from the Wellesley border to Newton Fire Station 2, then right on Commonwealth Avenue to Brighton) begin at 8:00 a.m. and stay in place until approximately 6:00 p.m. Figure out alternative routes as Newton is bisected and plan for traffic delays as no vehicles will be allowed to cross the route until the race concludes and roads are reopened for traffic.

There is no parking along the Marathon Route or on the Commonwealth Avenue Carriage Lane and sections of the streets that feed into the course.

Team Newton

Support for our Team Newton runners is still welcome at newtonma.gov/TeamNewton. Good luck to everyone.

COVID-19

We had 203 confirmed new cases of COVID-19 in Newton over the past seven days from April 7 to 13, up from the 154 new cases we saw last week and the 135 the

week before. Our cumulative total number of confirmed cases in Newton is now 13,161.

Like our cases, our positivity rate and incidence rate also ticked up again this week. The positivity rate is 3.4% of the 10,438 tests performed on Newton residents during the State's two-week reporting period from March 27 to April 9, up from 2.9% of the 9,816 tests performed over the previous two-week period. The daily incidence rate in Newton is now 25.9 per 100,000 population, up from last week's 20.5.

This data is only directionally correct as it does not capture all the positive cases found with at-home rapid antigen tests. (Even though not all at-home antigen tests taken by our residents are reported into the state system, they are playing an important role in identifying the virus so people can isolate and stop the spread. This is a welcome addition to our other risk mitigation strategies of vaccinations, masking and staying home when sick.)

The wastewater COVID-19 tracking data is also ticking up. Click [here](#) to see the MWRA graph.

Students at institutions of higher learning in Newton that conduct COVID testing make up 8% of Newton's cases, up slightly from 6% last week.

The Newton Public Schools had 93 cases among students and 17 among staff during the past week from April 7 to 13. Last week NPS had 60 cases among students and 21 among staff. Find more information on Newton's Health and Human Services Data page [here](#).

After several weeks of good news, this week we had another Newton neighbor die with COVID-19. Our cumulative total since the pandemic began is now 200 of our parents, family members, friends and neighbors who have died with this virus.

COVID-19 is still with us as I know all too well. I tested positive using a rapid home antigen test on Sunday after experiencing mild, spring allergy-like symptoms. I continued to have very mild symptoms through the week as I worked from home in isolation. I am deeply grateful for the protection the vaccine and the booster(s) provide against serious illness.

As many prepare to gather with families and friends for the holidays, Health and Human Services Commissioner Linda Walsh recommends paying attention to symptoms and taking a minute to take a rapid test before being inside with a large crowd especially if you're experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms. If the weather is nice, consider taking the party outside, and if not, increase ventilation by opening the window.

They ask questions and provide pre-arrival instructions for our police, firefighters and EMTs all while monitoring and operating our extensive computer and radio systems. Ever wonder what a Newton Dispatcher station looks like? The photo on the left shows the three large monitors, two keyboards, three computer mice and two telephones used. That's multi-tasking!

This week during Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, I want to express my gratitude and respect for the people in Newton's Dispatch Center who quietly, humbly, and professionally perform a critical job.

Investing \$3.6M in Housing and Human Services

This week I asked the City Council to authorize the City of Newton to submit an Annual Action Plan to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as required each year.

The Annual Action Plan, which is currently in draft form, describes the anticipated uses of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds by the City and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) funds by the thirteen member WestMetro HOME Consortium of which the City of Newton is a member (and the lead administrator).

The Plan presents the FY23 (FFY22) allocation of CDBG, HOME, and ESG funds for the period of July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023 which may total approximately \$3.6 million. The CDBG funds will support affordable housing (production, preservation, support for homeowners, and rehabilitation), human services (enrichment and care for vulnerable youth, stability and self-sufficiency for vulnerable adults, and promoting economic security and vitality for older adults), and architectural access (accessible pedestrian crossings). The HOME funds will support tenant based rental assistance and rehabilitation & production of affordable units. The ESG grants will support emergency shelter services, homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing.

On Monday, May 2, the Planning and Development Board will hold a public hearing on the FY23 Annual Action Plan. The comment period will begin that same day. The draft Annual Action Plan will be published on the City website next Wednesday, April 20.

Read the Planning Department memo about the Annual Action Plan [here](#).

In the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) draft, Newton South High School alum and Newton resident Veronica Burton was selected seventh by the Dallas Wings. Veronica followed her parents, Steve and Ginni, and grandfather Ron Burton as a Big 10 athlete at Northwestern and excelled in the backcourt as a defensive star. (Her nickname is the "backcourt burglar.") Now she follows in her grandfather's footsteps - he was the very first draft pick of the then Boston Patriots. I suspect a lot of us will now be huge Dallas Wings' fans! (Photo credit: Associated Press)

Next Year's City Budget

I will present the City of Newton's Fiscal Year 2023 Budget to the City Council next Tuesday evening, April 19, at approximately 8:00 p.m.

Our prudent financial management over the last two difficult years, the financial strength of the City with our AAA bond rating, and the resources from significant one-time American Rescue Plan Act funds are allowing me to mobilize our resources to support the vulnerable, to recover, to provide a wide range of quality services, and to make critical investments in Newton's future. As our future is our children and since a budget is a reflection of our values, a key budget priority is investing in our students and the Newton Public Schools.

Watch the budget presentation to the City Council on Zoom at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89711021647> (meeting ID: 897 1102 1647), or watch a live broadcast on NewTV's government channel (Comcast 9, RCN 13, 614(HD), Verizon 33), or view a livestream on NewTV.org.

Hope, Happiness, Spring

Whether beginning a celebration of Passover tomorrow evening, observing Holy Week and Easter this week or next, reflecting during this month of Ramadan, or finding ways to enjoy the renewal of spring, I wish you and your loved ones moments of hope and happiness.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Celebrate Earth Day at a festival outside City Hall on Sunday, April 24 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. (rain or shine). Enjoy an electric vehicles expo, a petting zoo, ice cream and info on home energy improvements. See the full list of activities at GreenNewton.org/EarthDay. Thanks go to Green Newton, the City of Newton's Climate Team, and Newton's EV Task Force for hosting our Earth Day Festival.

P.P.S. Interested in becoming a carpenter, mason, plumber, electrician, pipe fitter or other skilled trades after high school? Explore the possibilities with professionals working in the field and "broaden the definition of success" at a virtual workshop on Wednesday, April 27 at 6:30 p.m. Register for the webinar [here](#).

P.P.P.S. Newton Schools Foundation (NSF) is hosting its eleventh Newton Inspires by celebrating creativity in the classroom and featuring Newton's remarkable teachers. Join in on Tuesday, May 3 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Angier Elementary School (1697 Beacon St., Waban). Find more information at NewtonSchoolsFoundation.org.

P.P.P.P.S. Interested in film cameras and antique images? The Photographic Historical Society of New England is holding a sale and display at Newton North High School on Saturday, April 23 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with a live auction to follow. Enjoy more than 70 tables of cameras and vintage images with dealers both selling and buying. Find more information at phsne.org.

P.P.P.P.S. Join the all men Highland Glee Club for an afternoon of song when they'll perform "All's Fair: Songs of Love & War for Men's Voices." Tickets for the 3:00 p.m. show on Saturday, April 23 at the War Memorial in Newton City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Ave.) are available [here](#) or at the door a week from Saturday.



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