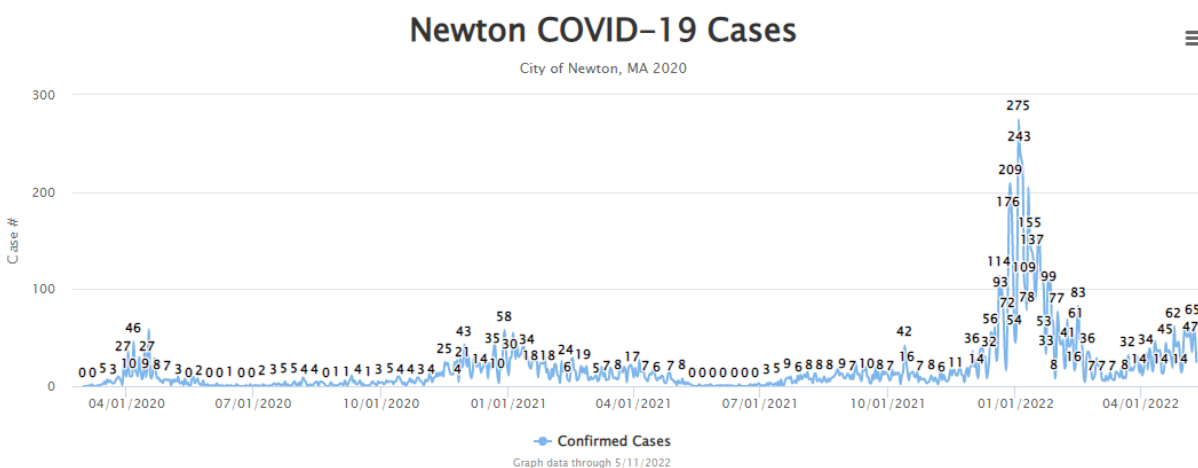


Friday, May 13, 2022

## Mayor's Update



We continue to see positive cases increase with 381 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Newton over the past seven days from May 4 to 11. We had 266 new confirmed cases last week, and 253 prior to that. (Please remember that more Newtonians than this are finding out they are positive with at-home rapid antigen tests and these people most often are not included in this data.)



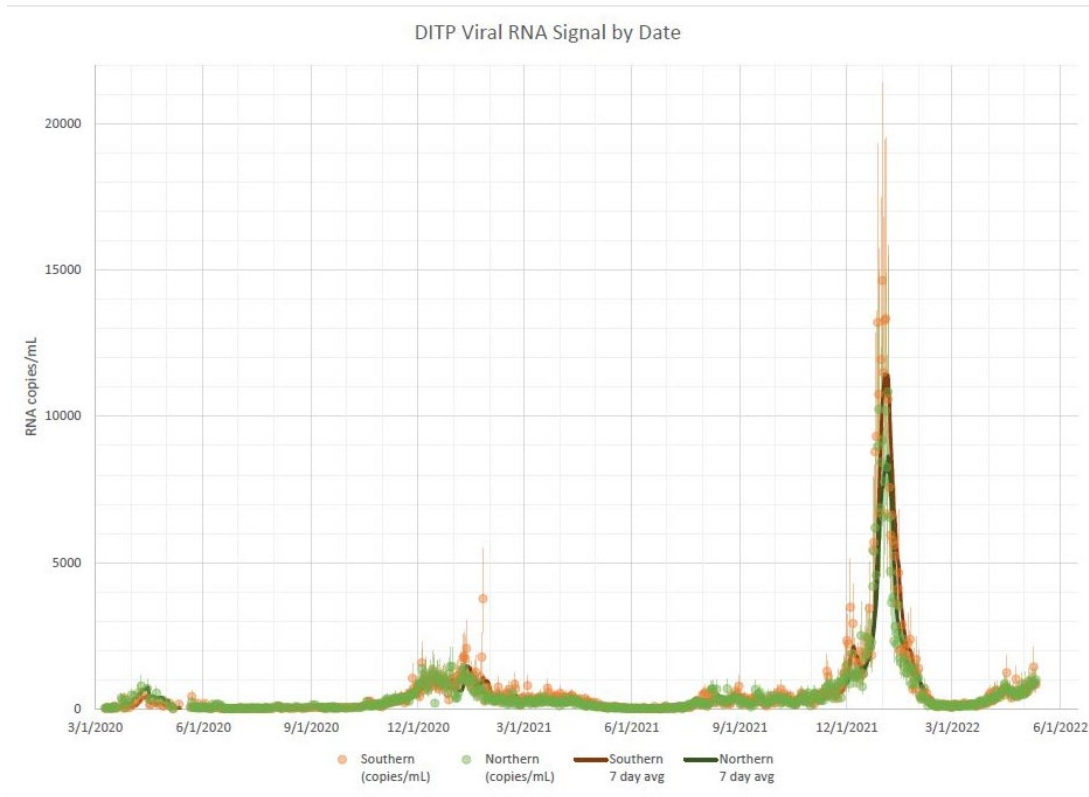
As of Tuesday, May 10, Newton-Wellesley Hospital (NWH) is caring for a total of 24 patients who are hospitalized with COVID-19, none of whom are in the ICU. Of the 24 patients, 54% are listed as being admitted primarily for COVID-19. Last week NWH had between 4 and 9 patients hospitalized with COVID-19 per day and this week, there has been a notable increase to between 9 and 24 patients.

Over the State's two-week tracking period from April 24 to May 7, the incidence rate and positivity rate both continued to go up. The incidence rate in Newton is now 46.3, up from 35.8 last week. The positivity rate is now 6.3%, of the 11,001 tests performed on Newton residents, up from 5.4% (9,311) last week.

This week we also saw another Newton resident die with COVID-19, bringing the total over the past 25 months to 202. We know these family members, friends, and

neighbors are missed and we hope those who knew them and loved them know they are not alone. We remember.

The latest MWRA wastewater tracking data from Tuesday, May 10 is curving up. Click [here](#) to see all the data.



### Wastewater COVID-19 DATA

The CDC last week changed the COVID-19 transmission level in Middlesex County where Newton is located from Medium to High. These levels are updated weekly on Thursday evenings. Middlesex County continues to be High, along with 10 others in Massachusetts. (Read what I wrote about this [here](#), and find out COVID-19 community levels from the CDC [here](#).)

During this time when cases are rising and the community transmission level is high, the Newton Health & Human Services Department strongly encourages people to wear masks in indoor public spaces, stay up to date with vaccines/boosters, get tested if experiencing symptoms, and consider taking additional precautions if at a higher risk for severe illness.

### [Newton Public Schools Data](#)

The Newton Public Schools also had an increase in positive numbers from last week to 331 cases among students and 62 among staff during the seven-day period from May 5 to 11. With the increase in cases, the Newton Public Schools is strongly recommending students and staff wear a mask indoors in public, regardless of vaccination status. Find more information on the Newton Health and Human Services Data [page](#).

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## **Economic Mobility and Self-Sufficiency**

During my annual budget address last month, I announced that the City of Newton will dedicate \$1.75 million in ARPA funds to launch an economic mobility and self-sufficiency program to support Newton's low- to moderate-income residents and families.

Our recently completed Newton Community Needs Assessment indicated lower-resourced Newton households, particularly Black and Hispanic residents, have been disproportionately harmed economically by the pandemic and continue to face significant economic challenges on a daily basis. One of the key recommendations is that the City invest in programs for our lower-income residents for long-term economic stability & mobility and self-sufficiency.

We are poised to take action on this recommendation. We have pulled together an Advisory Committee of residents, issue experts, people with lived experience, and City staff who will work with a partner at the UMass Donahue Institute (UMDI) to design, implement, and monitor an Economic Mobility and Self-Sufficiency Program(s) aimed at supporting the economic mobility of residents with low- to moderate-incomes across Newton.

The UMass Donahue Institute's Senior Research Manager [Christina Citino](#) will work with our Health & Human Services and Housing staff to project manage this effort. Christina has vast experience managing projects of this type. She specializes in health and human services evaluation and research work and has more than 20 years' experience providing state agencies, community-based organizations, and private entities with program development, needs assessment, and program evaluation services.

This effort will be strengthened by the Advisory Committee. I am grateful to this terrific group who will help us throughout the life of this critical project:

- India Arnold – Community Engagement & Youth Services Coordinator, Newton Community Development Foundation (NCDF); former preschool teacher and a Newton resident

- Amanda Berman - Director of Housing & Community Development, City of Newton
- Nikia Bodden – Manager, Housing & Stabilization, The Second Step; over 10 years' experience serving homeless survivors of domestic and sexual violence
- Rebecca Camargo – Director of Resident Services, Newton Housing Authority; LICSW; former Crisis Intervention Clinician with Eliot Community Human Services; and former Program Manager at the Cambridge Shelter
- Barney Heath - Director of Planning & Development Department, City of Newton
- Meghan Kennedy – Director of Social Services, City of Newton and a Newton resident
- Keith Mahoney - Vice President of Communications and Public Affairs, The Boston Foundation and a Newton resident
- Marva Serotkin - Member of the Newton Housing Partnership; former President and CEO of The Boston Home; a consultant specializing in long-term care, affordable housing, and not-for-profit management and a Newton resident
- Linda Walsh – Commissioner, Health & Human Services, City of Newton
- Deborah Youngblood – Executive Director, Mothers' Milk Bank Northeast; former Commissioner of Health & Human Services for the City of Newton; former Vice President of Research and Innovation at EMPATH, Economic Mobilities Pathways; and a Newton resident

Under the direction of Christina Citino, the Economic Mobility & Self-Sufficiency Program Advisory Committee will begin its work later this month. Our goal is to explore which groups of services would be most helpful (e.g., financial coaching, education or job training, support services, employment counseling and services, mental health or substance use support, homeownership preparation, asset-building support). In the fall, we will release a Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify partners in this critical work.

I look forward to sharing more information on this important program as it progresses over the coming months. Information on this initiative as well as the

previous work done as part of the Community Needs Assessment can be found [here](#).

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## Community Breakfast Keynote Speaker



We're excited to welcome Chef Douglass Williams to this year's Mayor's Community Breakfast as our keynote speaker.

Chef Williams, a James Beard Foundation 2022 nominee for the "Outstanding Chef, America" award, is the chef-owner of MIDA Newton on Washington Street in Newtonville, and two other Boston restaurants. He is committed to making a difference not just in the kitchen but also in the community.

Join us for the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Theodore D. Mann Newton Mayor's Community Breakfast on Wednesday, May 25, at the Mount Ida Campus - UMass Amherst. We'll gather at 7:30 a.m. outside, under a tent, in the Shaw Hall Courtyard.

Tickets are available at [bit.ly/newtonbreakfast](https://bit.ly/newtonbreakfast).

We also invite voluntary contributions to benefit programs helping with food insecurity in Newton: [The Newton Food Pantry](#), [Centre Street Food Pantry](#), [The Arabic Baptist Food Pantry](#), or [The Newton Community Freedge](#).

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## English Language Learning in the Newton Public Schools

The Newton Public Schools this year has an enrollment of 11,810 students in kindergarten to grade 12. Of these, approximately 750 students from 61 different countries speaking 40 different languages are enrolled in the Newton Public Schools English Language Learning Program (ELL).

Our ELL students, approximately 70% of whom enter our schools in grades K, 1 and 2, represent 6% of the overall school population. We have no "language majority" in Newton's ELL program as there is in some communities. (Framingham, for example, has a large population from Brazil so Portuguese is the "language majority" in its ELL program.)

Rather, our students represent a tremendous number of cultures and communities. In Newton, the home language for 22% of the students in our ELL program is Spanish, 22% is Mandarin or Cantonese, 10% is Russian, 8% is

Portuguese, 7% is Japanese, 6% is Hebrew, 5% is These students come from a variety of countries: 45% were born in the United States, 25% were born in 60 other countries, 7% were born in China, and 6% each in Brazil, Guatemala, Israel, and Japan.

The Newton Public Schools ELL program is designed to create a setting where students are taught strategies to help them master English as quickly as possible, (most students transition out of the program after two or three years) and develop academic and social skills while making progress in math, science, history and all the other content areas without loss of achievement due to English proficiency. Importantly, the focus of this program is to teach students to become bi-lingual and bi-cultural.

For our ELL staff, the focus is also on the students' families to make sure those at home have access to information in a language they can understand. While the students are learning in the classroom, a whole lot of work being done "behind the scenes."

Newton is the only school district in Massachusetts which has a full-time social worker dedicated to the students in the ELL program. In the words of ELL Director Allison Levit, Social Worker Rachael Kaplan "is a very, very, very busy person" who does amazing things to help our families.

The ELL staff screens more than 1,000 students each year for English proficiency and enrolls between 300 and 400 new students annually in the program. Next year's expected 360 to 370 new students is back up to pre-pandemic levels.

Between 550 to 600 of the 750 families with students in the ELL program need some interpretation and translation services. NPS works with an interpretation company which provides on demand services in 150 languages so any member of the school staff can arrange interpretation services to speak with a parent or guardian in their own language.

### Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education

NPS also has a specialized Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education or SLIFE Program at Newton North High School specifically designed for a small group of ELL students, who for a host of reasons (including a home country at unrest such as Guatemala and Afghanistan), are three or more years below grade level in literacy and math.

"These are students who have stories you read about in newspapers," ELL Teacher Maria Hegarty told the School Committee this week.

Many of the students are older, 16 or 17 when they enter the program, and sometimes arrive in this country to live with relatives here.

This year, educators are partnering with the social workers in the Newton Health and Human Services Department on graduation and post-graduation plans for these students.

“These are unbelievably resilient children,” Allison Levit said. “It’s inspiring ... we’ve had some real successes and had kids that go off to do really amazing things.”

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### **Cousens Fund Seeks New Director**

Are you looking for a meaningful part-time position that helps provide assistance to those in need throughout our community?

The Horace Cousens Fund, a charitable trust fund of the City of Newton, provides financial relief for residents who are facing hardship. They are currently accepting applications for a new part-time director who will be responsible for interviewing applicants, reviewing applications with the three Trustees, ensuring payments are processed, and writing grants.

Please visit [newtonma.gov/cousensfund](https://newtonma.gov/cousensfund) to learn more, submit an application or reach out for assistance.

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*Nurses are heroes. During Nurses Appreciation Week, we recognize them for the work they do every day to literally save lives. On Wednesday, I said thank you in person to our Newton Public School nurses. Today, I say thank you to all the nurses who take care of all of us. They are both the heartbeat and the backbone of health care.*



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### **Class of '65 Pays It Forward**

Twelve years ago, the Newton South High School Class of 1965 decided to “pay it forward.” They came up with a simple, and brilliant, idea to set up an endowed scholarship AND mentoring program for financially challenged, underserved Newton South graduating seniors heading to college.

They award these deserving students college scholarships.

Perhaps more importantly, the team of Class of 1965ers also mentor these young people through all four years of college. Guess what? Over the last 12 years, the college graduation rate of their mentees is 100%.

Two additional college scholarships will be awarded on Thursday, May 26 at 4:00 p.m. in the front lobby of Newton South. With great joy, I will be there to support them.

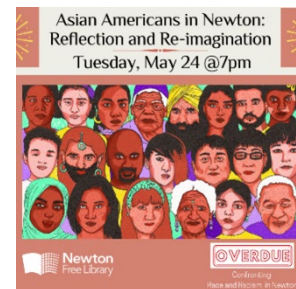
Want to learn more or support their scholarship fund? Reach out to Chair, Steven Lerman, at [slerman@lermansenter.com](mailto:slerman@lermansenter.com) or Carl Finn, [carlfinn@comcast.net](mailto:carlfinn@comcast.net).

Warmly,

Ruthanne

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P.S. Our neighbors from China, India and Korea represent three prominent Asian American groups in Newton. Join us for a panel discussion as we explore and honor these cultures in celebration of **Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month** at [Asian Americans in Newton: Reflection and Reimagination](#) on Tuesday, May 24 at 7 p.m. Panelists will reflect on the impact of current events on the Asian American community, the successes, and challenges of adjusting to life in a new country, and how we can all come together in solidarity. Participants include: Rakashi Chand (Massachusetts Historical Society), Anping Shen (Newton School Committee), Hyeouk “Chris” Hahm (Professor, B.U. School of Social Work), Lisong Liu (Professor and Moderator), and Newton student Shiv Sawhney.



P.P.S. Temple Beth Avodah and Newton’s Human Rights Commission are considering the **complex dimensions of antisemitism**. Join Rabbi Ron Fish from the [ADL](#), David Rhodes from [Facing History and Ourselves](#), and Brady Epstein, a senior at Newton South High School. They will delve into the status of antisemitism in greater Boston and what we can do. Come on Tuesday, May 24 at 7 p.m. at Temple Beth Avodah, 45 Puddingstone Lane, Newton.





P.P.P.S. **Family Fun Fest** returns to City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Avenue) this weekend. Enjoy on both Saturday, May 14, and Sunday, May 15, a carnival complete with kiddie rides and food trucks. In addition, on Saturday, enjoy live music, a public art exhibition, vendors, and the Tanglewood Marionettes production of *The Dragon King* ([tickets on sale now](#)). Find details at Newton's [Cultural Development webpage](#). Special thanks to our event

sponsors, Mass Cultural Council and Bubble - children's dentistry and orthodontics in Newton Centre.

P.P.P.P.S. From 19<sup>th</sup> Century Greek Revival to modern, the homes on **Historic Newton's 2022 House Tour**, each owned by a design professional, reveal the owner's vision through architecture, artwork, fabrics and furnishings. Purchase tickets [here](#) for access to this year's virtual tour this Saturday, May 14 and Sunday, May 15 and a Zoom panel with the designers at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday.



P.P.P.P.S. Newton is celebrating **LGBTQ+ Pride Month**. We're showing our #NewtonPride at our ceremony on Wednesday, June 1 at 6 p.m. at City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Avenue).

P.P.P.P.P.S. Interested in attending a U.S. Service Academy? Tune in to a virtual **U.S. Service Academy Orientation** hosted by the Office of U.S. Rep. Jake Auchincloss on Tuesday, May 24 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Representatives from the five U.S. Service Academies will discuss the Congressional nomination process and programs offered by the U.S. Military Academy (West Point), the Naval Academy (Annapolis), the Air Force Academy (Colorado Spring), the Coast Guard Academy (New London), and the Merchant Marine Academy (Kings Point). The event is open to students currently in grades 9 to 11 who reside in the Massachusetts 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional [district](#), their families, and school officials. Click [here](#) to RSVP.



P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. **Plant a tree!** Are there empty spaces on the berms in your neighborhood? The Newton Tree Conservancy is accepting applications for Fall 2022 neighborhood tree plantings. Find details about the program and sign up for community tree plantings [here](#). Questions? Email [newtontreeconservancy@gmail.com](mailto:newtontreeconservancy@gmail.com)

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. **Need Funding?** The George and Louise J. Hauser Trust/Foundation came into being after the passing of the magnificent Newton resident, Louise Hauser, in 2020. They make donations to non-profits that serve individuals and families in Newton help themselves and to address discrimination and other forms of social injustice. Find out more at [www.hausertrust.org](http://www.hausertrust.org) including guidelines on how to submit a short letter of inquiry for consideration this summer.