

Monday, Sept. 19, 2022

## Mayor's Update



### Green Line Closures

The MBTA is switching from the Orange Line over to the Green Line D Branch for major repairs in the next six weeks and will be closing the entire line in three waves. More specifically, the Green Line D Branch from its terminus at the Riverside Station in Newton through Kenmore Square will be completely closed for three separate nine day periods through the end of October. The first period starts this Saturday, Sept. 24 through Sunday, Oct. 2. (Prep work started today but should not interfere with scheduled service.)

Free, accessible shuttle buses will be used during the three closures. In addition to the closure from Sept. 24 through Oct. 2, there will be closures from Saturday, Oct. 8 through Sunday, Oct. 16 and Saturday, Oct. 22 through Sunday, Oct. 30.

The shuttle buses will stop at stations between Riverside and Kenmore. (However, the shuttle buses will not stop at the Beaconsfield Station in Brookline due to the narrow roads in the area. Riders can use the Reservoir Station, or Dean Road on the C Branch to access this station.) Shuttle buses will be available at all seven of the Newton stations.

During the three closures, the parking lots at the Waban and Eliot Stations will be closed to the public as the MBTA is using them for track materials and vehicle storage.

According to MBTA officials, the full closures allow the T to accelerate replacement of D Line tracks that have not already been addressed to make the line safer and more reliable. The work will replace more than 6,000 feet of track, upgrade station crossings at the Woodland, Waban and Eliot Stations in Newton, among others. Safety equipment for the [Green Line Train Protection System](#) (GLTPS) which is used to avoid collisions, add red-light signal protection and incorporate speed enforcement will also be installed.

This is the final surge of work scheduled for the D Branch this year, according to the MBTA. See more information about the project at [MBTA.gov/GreenLine](https://www.mbta.gov/greenline).

The Green Line is a vital source of transportation for Newtonians and people working in Newton and I will do everything I can to lean on the MBTA so we have reliable, on-time shuttle service while this important surge of work is done.

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## How Can the Newton Corner Circle Be Improved?

All of us who travel through the Newton Corner Circle area know that improvements are very much needed. This is the opportunity to offer your ideas for improving safety and operations, and enhancing the experience for all of us regardless of our mode of travel through Newton Corner, including for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and drivers.

MassDOT is leaning in to bring traffic safety and signal improvements to the Newton Corner Rotary for the Mass Pike ramps and the roadways up above at Exit 127 (formerly Exit 17). This is where four major streets (Centre, Park, Washington and Galen) intersect with two Mass Pike ramps with the Four Points Sheraton Hotel sitting in the middle of it all.

Please come to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Virtual Public Outreach/Workshop on Wednesday, Sept. 28, at 6:30 p.m. to provide your thoughts and comments as MassDOT begins the conceptual design process.

The project is envisioned to include the circulatory roadway over the Pike, the ramps connecting Washington Street, the two overpass bridges, associated Mass Pike east and west bound ramps, as well as a number of other intersecting roadways. MassDOT has a very specific scope for the project which they describe as “to identify, evaluate and develop concept level short-term improvement alternatives to address safety and operational deficiencies associated with the roadway and ramp network of I-90 Exit 127 (formerly Exit 17), known as Newton Corner.”

Find more information about this project and register for the meeting at [mass.gov/massdot](https://mass.gov/massdot).



*Franklin Elementary School teachers rolled up their sleeves last week to shape the plans for a new school, playgrounds and sports fields. Commissioner of Public Buildings Josh Morse and Deputy Commissioner Alex Valcarce met with Franklin teachers to get their ideas and priorities as the design phase continues. Among priorities they*

identified thus far are flexible classrooms, a cafeteria/multi-purpose space, plentiful breakout and pullover spaces for small group instruction, good storage, cubbies, nooks and quiet spaces. Find more information about the Franklin School project at [newtonma.gov/Franklin](http://newtonma.gov/Franklin).

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## **Updating Newton's Tree Preservation Ordinance**

Protecting our healthy trees as well as planting new ones is a shared goal of ours. Trees are beautiful. They help the quality of the air we breathe. They provide shade and lower the heat index, and, in turn energy consumption. They support our health. They sequester carbon. They help manage water run-off and flooding. The majority of Newton's tree canopy is made up of trees on private property, and, when combined with the City's trees, Newton's urban forest enhances our quality of life and the City's environment.

Enacted over twenty years ago with updates in 2014, the City of Newton's Tree Preservation Ordinance was one of the first such regulations in the Commonwealth. Our Ordinance continues to be one of the most comprehensive tree protection ordinances in Massachusetts, one that other municipalities emulate.

As stewards of our urban forest, it is important that we protect this canopy and ensure responsible stewardship as we invest in planting more trees and caring for those we have.

City Forester Marc Welch is recommending an update to our tree preservation ordinance. These updates will increase the number of trees protected and increase the number of new trees planted.

The changes proposed build on the existing ordinance and improve it in key areas:

- Increasing replacement requirements for larger diameter (or larger "caliper") trees to address their greater environmental importance
- Adding protections for smaller diameter (or smaller "caliper") trees
- Limiting significantly the removal of trees without replacement
- Adding effective procedures for protecting trees
- Increasing the payment required for trees cut without replacement
- Providing the Tree Warden with additional professional input on trees on private property
- Protecting trees on lots adjacent to construction

Current Ordinance:

The ordinance currently requires replacement of all trees 8-inches in diameter or larger when removed for new construction of a home, an addition, a deck or a pool. (A resident can either replace the tree on their property or make a payment to the City for the replacement on public property.) Currently the ordinance requires an inch for inch caliper replacement as well as a \$150 permit. (Please know that both the current and the proposed ordinance allow trees that are unhealthy or dangerous to be removed.)

#### Proposed Updates to the Ordinance:

The proposed new updates will lower the replacement threshold of trees to 6-inches in diameter and increase the permit fee from \$150 to \$200. They also increase the number of new trees to be planted in accordance with the size of the trees removed.

Greater emphasis is also placed on the types of replacement trees allowed to be planted. Replacement trees will need to be of the same or similar type as what is being removed (when appropriate) and the new trees will be selected for their positive impact on the environment.

The proposed ordinance better protects trees during construction by requiring a certified arborists be engaged at the start of a project to monitor the trees throughout the process. The certified arborist will develop plans that will require the protection of trees on neighboring properties as well as on the project site.

In the updated ordinance, homeowners will still be able to remove a tree of an average size on their property to add a swing set, to add a bit of sun to their garden, or for reasons other than construction. In those types of instances, tree replacement will not be required. However, very large trees would need to be replaced or the owner would have to pay a fee in lieu of replacement which the City would use to fund replacement trees across the City. Under the updated ordinance homeowners will file for approval to remove trees through a straightforward online portal (free of charge) so we can keep an accurate record of activity.

Some City Councilors are proposing more extensive changes to the ordinance than what our City Forester is recommending, including significantly higher fees for residents (which may be prohibitive except for the wealthiest) and a tree cutting moratorium while they discuss this proposal. The City Forester and I believe that the City Councilors can vote in a timely manner so any moratorium is unnecessary. But, if their deliberations require an extended length of time, our current ordinance can continue to offer substantial protections while a moratorium would throw a wrench into the plans of people across the City.

I'm so pleased that the City's Forestry team and City Councilors are thinking about our tree canopy and looking for ways to improve our ordinance. We look forward to working with the Council on an updated ordinance that reflects our shared commitment to our tree canopy, protects trees and the environment, and at the same time allows homeowners an appropriate amount of flexibility in making improvements.



Interested in learning more? Consider zooming into the next City Council meeting on the Tree Preservation Ordinance on Wednesday, Sept. 21 at [newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/90630/637988475613170000](https://newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/90630/637988475613170000)

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## **New Gath Pool: A Huge “Splash” Tonight**

The City Council will vote tonight, Monday, Sept. 19, on funding for the construction design plans for a new Gath Pool. Plans include a new splash pad, and renovations to the existing pool building after unanimous votes of support from the Council’s Programs & Services and Finance Committees.

*(Photo: Renderings of design possibilities for the new pool.)*

The Community Preservation Committee and the Parks & Recreation Commission have already approved Community Preservation Act funds for the \$486,500 final design. (CPA funds can be used for the acquisition, creation, preservation, restoration, and support of open space, recreation, historic preservation and housing.)

Our current Gath Pool has valiantly served our community for more than 50 years and it’s time for a modern, universally accessible, environmentally friendly, and super fun pool facility for guests of all ages and abilities.

This fall we look forward to working with the Newton resident design professionals that serve on the Design Review Committee to help refine the design details of this incredible project. The full design will include all the important details (e.g., the spray park features) as well as construction bid documentation.

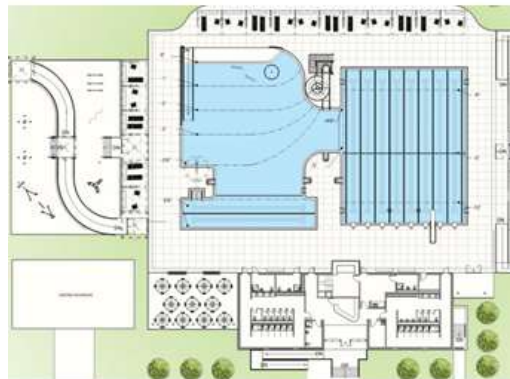
We are targeting next fall to start construction with swimmers and “splashers” having fun the summer of 2024.

The City Council meets tonight– Monday, Sept. 19 – at 7:45 p.m. in Council Chambers on the second floor of City Hall and via zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88432234927>.

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## **Protect Yourself From Check Fraud**

Check fraud is no small matter, and certainly not a thing of the past. In Newton, reported incidents of fraud and check fraud increased from 13 in 2021 to 102 cases so far in 2022 and the year isn’t yet over.



Several Newton residents alerted us to their property tax or water/sewer bills being intercepted in the mail and cashed by fraudsters.

Newton Police are on the case. Just last week Officer Raymond Chieu and Lt. David Tempesta received letters of commendation from Chief John Carmichael for their work investigating and arresting a suspect in the midst of stealing mail from a mailbox at the Auburndale Post Office. (Read the letter of commendation [here.](#))

The City of Newton offers secure, online payment on our website at [newtonma.gov](http://newtonma.gov). for City bills. (Sign up to make your payments online [here](#)). The payment drop box in the front circle at City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Avenue) is video monitored 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Payments can be made in person at the Treasury Department on the first floor of City Hall during business hours, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Here are steps to guard against check and mail fraud:

- Keep check stock and any blank checks in a safe place.
- Never sign checks in advance while leaving the amount and payee blank.
- Convert check payments to digital or electronic payment channels.
- Use mail boxes inside United States Postal Service Offices or deposit in boxes close to pick-up times.
- Check your accounts to make sure checks written are cashed for the intended amounts.

If you become a victim of mail theft or fraud, report the incident to Newton Police at 617-796-2100. Be mindful, however, that these crimes are exceptionally difficult to solve.



*Newton's own Joe Prestejohn shared his frappe secrets with Good Morning America's Will Reeve for his "Sweetest Spots in America Tour." The segment ran on the morning show a couple weeks ago, but I just had to share. Click the photo and enjoy.*

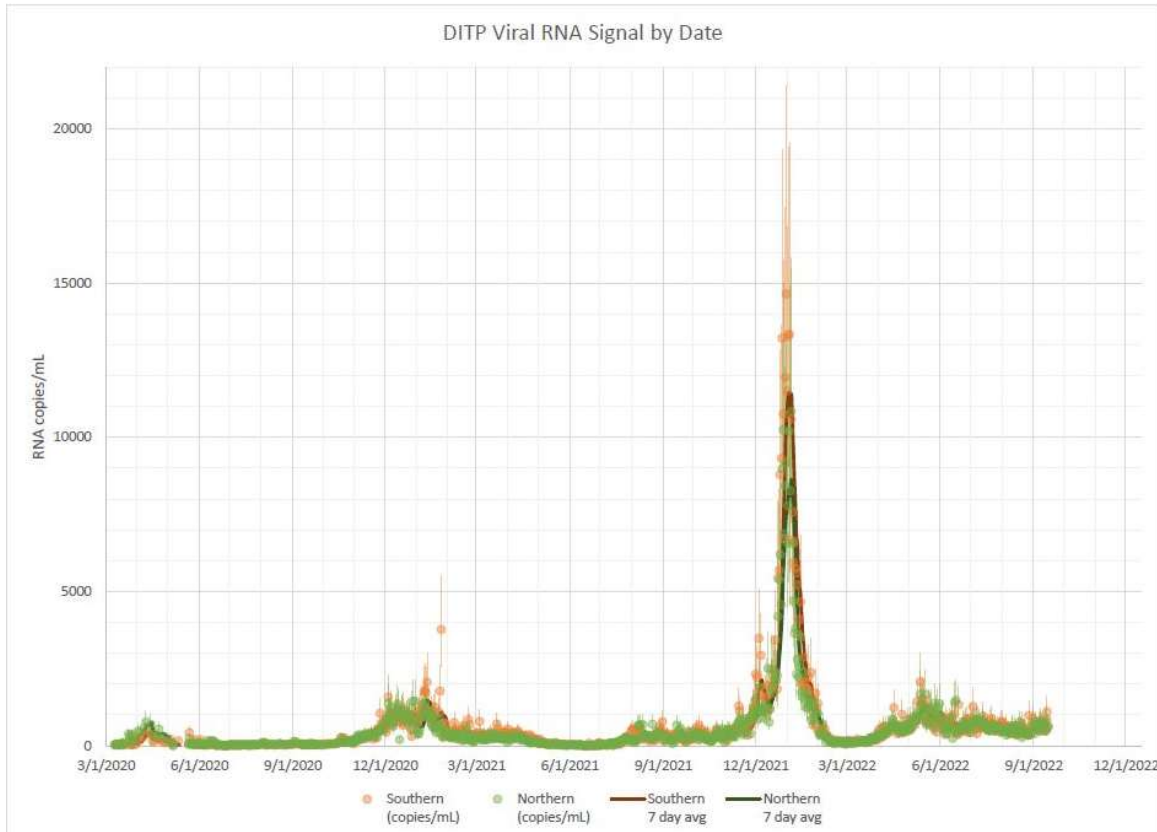
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## COVID-19 Case Data

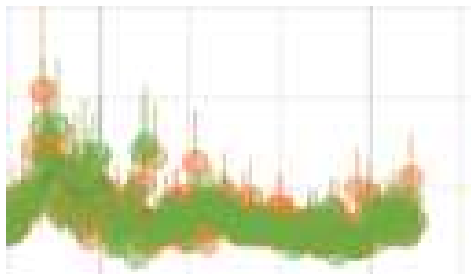
We had 144 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Newton over the past 13 days since Sept. 8 when we last reported this data, bringing our cumulative total number of cases to 16,843.

The latest MWRA wastewater data through Thursday, Sept. 1, which has been a reliable predictor of COVID-19 trends, shows cases ticking up. See more MWRA data [here](#).

### MWRA Wastewater Data From March 1, 2020 through Sept. 15, 2022



### MWRA Data From June 1 through Sept. 15



We lost another Newtonian who died with COVID-19 since we last reported. We have now lost 207 family members, friends and neighbors, a heavy toll from this virus.

The latest incidence rate in Newton over the State's two week tracking period from is 11.3 cases per 100,000 population, and our positivity rate is currently

5.1% (3,066 tests).

### Updated Boosters

Everyone age 12 and older is eligible for an updated booster dose at least two (2) months after their last COVID-19 vaccine (either since their last booster dose, or since completing their primary series). For those who have had a recent infection, the advice is also to wait two months to have the booster.

These updated boosters contain a formula that both boosts immunity against the original coronavirus strain and also protects against the newer Omicron variants that account for most of the current cases.

When is the right time to get boosted? Dr. Ashish Jha is recommending that we do so in the next six weeks before Halloween. Dr. Jha said, "Why Halloween? Because three weeks after Halloween is Thanksgiving, and there's a lot of travel, and you're seeing family, and you're seeing friends – and a few weeks later, it's the holidays."

Boosters are available at many locations in Newton and across the state, including where you received previous vaccines. Check [vaxfinder.ma.gov](https://vaxfinder.ma.gov) for locations and to make an appointment. Massachusetts also offers in-home vaccinations. Find more information [here](#).

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### **Good Kids Who Are Kind and Inclusive**

A post on Facebook came to my attention after a "meet and greet" to start the school year at one of our elementary schools, and with permission from the writer, let me lift up the shout out to the kindness of our children:

*To the parents of the kids playing basketball at Countryside this afternoon – your kids are amazing. About seven 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders let my kindergartener join their game. He has no concept of teams and doesn't understand the rules, but he is obsessed with basketball and shooting hoops. Your kids let him join their game, and even after it became clear he didn't understand the teams, they let him keep playing and gave him several opportunities to shoot baskets.*

*Our son was so nervous about his new school, and those 10 minutes changed his entire attitude and impression. He'll be talking about this for weeks.*

*Thank you for raising good kids who are kind and inclusive.*

Warmly,

Ruthanne

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P.S. The New Arts Center is piloting two [expressive arts therapy groups](#) co-facilitated by a licensed art therapist and an art educator for students in grades 6, 7 and 8. Running from Oct. 7 through Dec. 16, these groups are referral-based for students who are already seeing a therapist or guidance counselor. More info can be found at [newartcenter.org](http://newartcenter.org).

P.P.S. Lots happening in the world of Newton tennis:



- Interested in Lessons? Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture Department has **tennis lessons for all ages** beginning this week. Click [here](#) for information on lessons for adults, and [here](#) for information on lessons for kids.
- Play doubles? Consider playing in Friends of Newton Tennis' (FoNT) **Garden City Doubles Tournament** on Saturday, Oct. 1 and help raise money to improve Newton's 67 courts. All skill levels are welcome. Register [here](#). Questions? Contact Tournament Director Tom Friedman at [thomasharoldf@gmail.com](mailto:thomasharoldf@gmail.com).
- Know someone interested in tennis? **FoNT's Newton Family Tennis Festival** is Sunday, Oct. 2 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., at the Newton North courts. Bring the kids to join the fun and join introductory clinics. Find more information [here](#).

P.P.P.S. **Interested in e-bikes?** Join Green Newton at the Newton Farmers' Market at Cold Spring Park on Tuesday, Sept. 20, 1:30 to 6:00 p.m. to see how e-bikes can help make riding longer distances a breeze. Landry's Bicycles will also be there with their bike check-up booth.



P.P.P.P.S. The **Newton Cultural Council** is hosting their annual grantee **awards celebration** on Thursday Sept. 29 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the War Memorial Auditorium on the second floor at City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Avenue). Meet the 2022 grant recipient artists, enjoy live entertainment and connect with many members of the Newton arts community. All are welcome. The event is free but [registration is required](#). Interested in applying for a grant?

Applications for 2023 are being accepted until Monday, October 17. Apply [here](#). Additional information can be found [here](#).

P.P.P.P.S. Join **UMass Amherst Professor of Jazz and African American Music Studies Professor Felipe Salles** to learn about the creative process behind **“The New Immigrant Experience,”** a musical work that highlights the plight of undocumented immigrants known as Dreamers. This is part of the UMassAmherst/Mount Ida Campus Faculty Speaker Series on Wednesday, Sept. 28, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. and will be held at the Campus Center Auditorium, 100 Carlson Avenue, Newton. Find more information and register [here](#). *(Photo: Professor Salles)*



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