

Friday, March 24, 2023

## Mayor's Newton Update



### Time to Replace Water Meters & Transmitters

The lifespan of the water meters in our homes and businesses is about 10 years, and in Newton, it's time for the meters as well as the transmitters to be replaced. (Transmitters are sometimes called reading devices or transponders; they transmit the information from the water meter to our Department of Public Works Utilities Division so we can send water customers a bill.)

The City is using an installation contractor, Baystate Winsupply, to do almost all the replacements. (Our Newton Utility crews will do some of them.)

Baystate Winsupply will need 18 - 24 months to replace the 29,000 meters. They will be starting this spring and will replace approximately 500 meters and transmitters weekly.

All Baystate Winsupply employees will have a photo ID badge and clearly marked vehicles.

Every Newton water customer will receive a letter on City letterhead with information on how to schedule an appointment for installation *when replacement crews are going to be in their neighborhood*. There is no charge for the standard installation. Installation of the new meters is mandatory for all water customers.

Appointments with Baystate Winsupply will be scheduled through their website or toll-free telephone number. But, wait until you receive an installation letter to make an appointment. The letter will include a work order number unique to each customer. (Please do not contact the City to schedule an appointment; we'll just send you over to Baystate Winsupply.)

Standard installation will take approximately 30 minutes to complete and water service will have to be temporarily shut off to perform the work.

### What Does the Work Involve?

An installation technician will need to access the existing water meter (typically in the basement) and the existing transmitter (typically located on the outside of the home or business). They will replace the meter and transmitter and run wiring to connect them. After completing the replacement, the technician will test the new meter and transmitter and use a tablet/electronic device to collect photographs

and data, such as meter serial numbers, old meter reading, water service size and material, etc.

All existing meters and transmitters will be removed from your property as part of the installation process and then recycled.

#### Is There Any Preparation Necessary Before an Appointment?

Please make sure the area around the water meter is accessible to the installer with a clear 5-foot radius.

Someone over the age of 18 will need to be at the property during the appointment to allow the technician inside to access the meter.

Dogs and other animals should be secured throughout the installation process.

#### Why Do We Need These New Water Meters?

Meters and transmitters are expected to last about a decade; the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection recommends they be replaced every 10 years. Newton's meters were installed in 2012 and 2013.

In addition, transmitters at many homes and businesses are failing, resulting in estimated bills and the need for customers to manually read their own meters. While some transmitter units are not automatically sending readers as they should, thankfully the water meters themselves are working properly and accurately measuring water usage.

#### How Will the New Water Meters and Transmitters Improve Service?

The new water meters and transmitters will remedy any need for property us to read own meters and ensures that the City receives timely reads for the actual water used at homes and businesses.

The new system also includes a customer portal that will allow each of us to monitor our water usage in real time. It will also allow property owners and the City to identify leaks in our plumbing systems easily and quickly, helping to conserve water and keep water bills lower.

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### **School Budget Presentation Wednesday**

Interim Newton Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Kathleen Smith will present the draft budget for the coming Fiscal Year 2024 next Wednesday, March 29 beginning at 8:30 a.m. The presentation will be broadcast live on [NewTV.org](https://www.newtv.org) and available for viewing on demand later, also on [NewTV.org](https://www.newtv.org). The draft budget will be available on the NPS website on the [School Committee Budget Information page](#) after the presentation.

This is an especially important budget for the Newton Public Schools in the aftermath of the operating override failing to pass last week. While I already announced an increase in the allocation for the NPS budget by more than \$9 million for the next school year, Dr. Smith will be announcing staff reductions and layoffs as costs are rising even more.

Teachers and staff are the backbone of our schools and people are by far the largest part of the costs of public schools. In fact, personnel costs account for 89% of the NPS budget.

We've been receiving questions recently about how Newton Public School teacher salaries compare with those in our neighboring and peer communities. The School Committee received an update from the NPS Human Resources team at the January 9 meeting which included salary and retention data. Click [here](#) to see the charts presented (pages 10 to 15).

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### Licenses for Animals

When we think of animal licenses, most of us immediately know about dogs. (In 2022, Newton licensed 4,806 dogs. This is a significant increase from the 2,524 licensed in 2019 pre-pandemic.)

However, our Department of Health and Human Services also licenses all kinds of other animals and live fowl.

In 2022, we had 3 potbellied pigs, 4 goats, 6 rabbits, 35 pigeons, and 467 chickens with licenses. (Only hens are currently licensed. Roosters' "cock-a-doodle-doos" are so loud they are allowed only if it can be shown they will be always kept at least 1,000 feet from the property line.)

The City's "Rules and Regulations for the Keeping of Animals and Live Fowl" covers horses, ponies, alpacas, cows, sheep, donkeys, llamas, mules and a host of fowl, including ducks, turkeys and geese.

Our rules and regulations require that animals licensed by HHS are not permitted to roam unrestricted outside their shelters, coops or stalls. In addition, nuisance prevention measures are required in all types of animal housing "to reduce the presence of rodents, flies, other insects, and the creation of odors and other nuisances." Among other things, shelters must have floors that are "easily cleanable," coops "shall be ventilated to prevent buildup of odors and moisture," and stables cannot be less than 200 feet from any church, meeting house, school, hospital, nursing or rest home. Click [here](#) to see the complete Rules and Regulations.

What about snakes and lizards? These animals fall under State regulations, specifically [321 CMR 9.01](#). Many, including most boas, pythons and geckos, can be kept as pets without a permit. Others, including endangered species, venomous snakes, and Gila Monsters, however, may not be kept as pets. Click

[here](#) to see the complete list of animals that can and cannot be kept as pets as well as information about wildlife as pets.

For those of us who love our cats, goldfish and most of the fish in our home aquariums, please know that no license or permits are required.

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## Spring Clean Up

### Yard Waste Collection

Our DPW team will begin collecting yard waste on Monday, March 27.

Yard waste is usually collected on the same day as trash and recycling. It needs to be curbside by 7:00 a.m. on your scheduled day (or after 4:00 p.m. on the day before). To keep our worker's safe, please make sure no individual bag or barrel weighs more than 50 pounds.

Unlike trash and recycling, yard waste pickup is weather dependent, though this mostly relates to snow coming early in the fall.

Sometimes yard waste routes and pick-up times change; if you put yard waste out and it is not collected that day, leave it at the curb and it will be collected on the following day or on a subsequent day, as soon as possible.

Try using our *Recycle Right Newton App* to find out about collection schedule changes. Download the free app in the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).

Drop-off of yard waste is now available year-round at the Resource Recovery Center after we had a successful pilot program last fall.

Did you know that state law bans the disposal of yard waste in trash? Find more information [here](#).

Curious about what happens to the yard waste? Newton's DPW crews collect it and haul it to one of three commercial composting facilities in Massachusetts. Last year, we collected 28,900 cubic yards of yard waste – approximately 1,500 tons.

### Leaf Blowers

Spring clean-up and yard work means residents and landscapers will be starting to use leaf blowers.

If you use a landscaping company, make sure the company is registered with the City. All commercial landscapers who use leaf blowers in Newton need to register with the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) before working on properties in the City. You can view the list of landscapers who have registered [here](#).

Homeowners should also know that they can be held responsible and fined if their landscaper is unregistered and/or violates the noise ordinance at their property.

We have retained a seasonal inspector for a second year who will proactively enforce the landscaper registration program. Fines are \$300 after a first-time warning is issued.

**Leaf Blower Regulations:** Gas or electric leaf blowers that meet the decibel requirement of 65 decibels or below are allowed Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Saturdays 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. through Memorial Day, Monday, May 29. All gas-powered leaf blowers are prohibited from Memorial Day to Labor Day when just one electric or battery powered leaf blower per lot is allowed.

In order to assist ISD with enforcement, you can report possible violations of the ordinance online [here](#). (You will need to login or signup to the NewGov system.) Names of people reporting possible violations are kept anonymous.

Additional info on leaf blowers can be found [here](#).

### Ways to Dispose, Recycle and Reuse

We can help if spring cleaning is on your to-do list.

- Bring unwanted household chemicals to a household hazardous waste event starting on Saturday, April 1 and running twice monthly through December. Click [here](#) for the full schedule, guidelines and a list of acceptable materials.
- Secure document shredding is available on Saturday, April 8, 8:00 a.m. to noon. Click [here](#) for more information.
- Drug take-back collection is also on Saturday, April 8, 8:00 a.m. to noon. Click [here](#) for more information.
- Latex paint recycling collection is on Earth Day, Saturday, April 22, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Usable latex paint will be recycled into new paint. Click [here](#) for more information.

All of the above events are held at Newton's Resource Recovery Center, 115 Rumford Avenue, Auburndale. PLEASE note that *space is limited at all the above events, so appointments are required*. Call Customer Service at 617-796-1000 to make an appointment for any of these events. (Scheduling appointments also allows us to avoid lines from forming.)

The [Swap Shop](#) at the Resource Recovery Center will open on Thursday, April 27 on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays through October 28. This volunteer-run program allows residents to drop-off small usable household items, such as dishware and sporting goods, and encourages other folks to put these items to

use. It's like a yard sale without exchanging money and much less work. Appointments are *not* required.

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### Should Newton Ban the Sale of Single-Use Plastic Water Bottles?

Newton's City Council is exploring an ordinance that would ban the sale of single-use water bottles that are one liter or less.

A proposal by a group of City Councilors would prohibit sale of these water bottles at grocery stores, restaurants, convenience stores, and other retailers to "reduce the overall environmental impact of the City of Newton, its residents and its businesses," according to the draft ordinance being proposed.

What do you think? Please take a few minutes to answer a survey aimed to understand your perspective on the possible ban of selling single-use water bottles in Newton and to learn more about how it may impact you.

While this survey won't be statistically accurate, the feedback will help Councilors make the decision. Take the survey at [newtonma.gov/waterbottlesurvey](https://newtonma.gov/waterbottlesurvey) through April 15.

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### Margaret Stedman Chaloff

Margaret Stedman Chaloff of Newton was a legendary piano teacher. Her "light arm" technique shaped some of the greatest classical and Jazz pianists of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, including two well-known students, Keith Jarrett and Herbie Hancock.

On Thursday, March 30, two of Madame Chaloff's students, Stephany Tiernan of the Berklee College of Music and Ran Blake of the New England Conservatory, will share stories and discuss her remarkable musical legacy during Women's History Month. Join the virtual discussion sponsored by our Library and History Museum from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Preregister [here](#).



Warmly,

Ruthanne

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P.S. The citywide winter **Overnight Parking Ban ends next Friday, March 31.**

P.P.S. Enjoy this weekend's performances of Newton North High School's production of the musical ***Anything Goes*** on Friday and Saturday, March 24 and

25 at 7:00 p.m., and on Sunday, March 26 at 2:00 p.m. Get tickets [here](#). To all the actors— break a leg!

P.P.P.S. We've reached the 10% mark of residential customers in the [Newton Power Choice](#) program opting up to the 100% Green option (primarily solar and wind resources, all in New England). Supporting local renewable resources means fewer greenhouse gas emissions and gets us another step toward **our goal in Newton of carbon neutrality by 2050**. Click on the video below made by a new resident of Newton for some small (and not so small) steps we can all take that collectively will make a huge difference (and save money). Want more info on how take action for our future? Click [here](#).

P.P.P.P.S. Noticing the litter around our City? A group of Newtonians is doing a citywide cleanup on Saturday, April 8. Interested in helping **Keep Newton Beautiful**? Sign up to volunteer [here](#).

P.P.P.P.P.S. Want to make sure your child's car seat is secure and positioned properly? The Newton Police Department is holding a **car seat inspection** next Wednesday, March 29 from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Certified Child Passenger Safety technicians will be in the rear parking lot of police headquarters, 1321 Washington Street, West Newton Square, to make sure your seat is in correctly. Call 617-796-2112 to schedule an appointment.

P.P.P.P.P.S. We wish our neighbors beginning their observance of Ramadan a peaceful holy month. **Ramadan Mubarak**.



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