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Friday, March 31, 2023

## Mayor's Newton Update



### Newton Public Schools Budget

In preparing the City of Newton's FY2024 budget, I am keenly focused on our children and the Newton Public Schools. I believe passionately in the mission of NPS and I will support our students and educators within our financial constraints.

The FY2024 Newton Public Schools budget is \$271.8 million. This is an increase of \$9.7 million, or 3.73%, over last year, with an additional \$1.4 million from the City for a bridge grant to address out-of-district tuitions. Altogether, this is more than an \$11 million increase.

The total is a significant increase in funding.

However, when Interim Superintendent Kathy Smith presented the proposed Newton Public Schools budget for the coming year a few days ago, she explained that it cannot keep up with rising costs that include out of district tuition increases (14%), health insurance (5%), van transportation (20%) and gas and electric utilities (25%) *and* rising student needs.

After increasing funding for other district priorities (such as curriculum coordination, academic support staff, the 1:1 technology program and the STRIDE special education elementary program), and weaning the district off of one time funding, NPS was left with a \$4.9 million gap that they are grappling with.

I anticipated the budget challenge and last October asked for an override to be presented to our residents to help address it. The gap NPS is wrestling with is slightly more than the \$4.5 million included in the operating override, which was not approved by the voters of Newton on March 14, 2023.

Superintendent Smith's budget proposal makes systemwide cuts to close the funding gap. This includes the loss of 56.4 full time equivalent positions, program cuts, increased class sizes, and an increase of fees.

This is part of the message she shared with the Newton Public School community:

*I know how difficult this budget is to receive. It comes to you after months of consultation, feedback, and review by principals, department heads, and central staff. No proposal to reduce services and staff was taken lightly. However, with a \$5 million budget shortfall, we were forced to look at reductions across the district.*

*This initial budget presentation is the start of the formal budget process. Over the next month, we will work with the School Committee, the Mayor, the City Council, and our State Legislators to review and analyze the funding available for next year's budget. We will continue to do everything possible to protect our ability to serve our students and to provide them with the opportunities they need and deserve.*

*Newton Public School educators and staff are incredibly hard-working, resilient, and persistent. Despite the challenges of the past few years, they remain committed to teaching and supporting each and every one of our students. The heightened need of students, coupled with their own traumatic experience with the pandemic, make their jobs very, very difficult. Yet, I see them every day in our classrooms giving of themselves completely to help our students. Despite the financial challenges ahead, I remain committed to doing everything possible to support our educators and this generation of Newton Public School students.*

Watch her presentation on NewTV [here](#). Find Superintendent Smith's budget slide presentation [here](#).

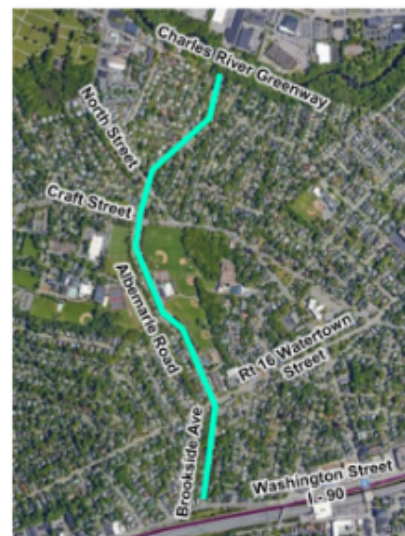
The School Committee will be reviewing the Superintendent's proposed budget in detail over the coming weeks. The first budget review will be of Elementary and Secondary Instructional Areas on Monday, April 3 at 6:30. Click [here](#) to see the complete schedule of budget review sessions. School Committee meetings are broadcast on NewTV and can be watched live or on demand at [NewTV.org](#).

If you would like to address the School Committee on the budget, a public hearing is scheduled for April 12 at 6:30 p.m. To sign up to participate in the public hearing, or to share your feedback with the School Committee at any time, please email the School Committee at [schoolcommittee@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:schoolcommittee@newton.k12.ma.us).

### **Albemarle Road Traffic Calming Project**

Join us for an online public meeting to learn about next steps for the Albemarle Road Traffic Calming project, offer comments, and ask questions. This project has been discussed in public meetings since 2020, and we are looking forward to constructing the safety improvements this summer. More info can be found at the [project web page](#).

Monday, April 3, 2023, 6:00 p.m. zoom  
Meeting Link: [tinyurl.com/albemarle-calming](https://tinyurl.com/albemarle-calming)  
Phone: 646-558-8656, meeting id: 862 8523  
9203



The project's goals are to:

- Improve safety for everyone by reducing conflicts and slowing speeds of vehicles in a heavily used area including younger people traveling by foot,

- bicycle, and school bus
- Improve walking and biking connectivity between Washington Street and the Charles River

Can't make the meeting? Please email Josh Ostroff at [jostroff@newtonma.gov](mailto:jostroff@newtonma.gov) with your comments, feedback, or questions by Monday, April 10.

### **Affordable Housing Opportunities**

SEB Housing is accepting lottery applications for affordable apartment rental opportunities at the “Allee on the Charles” at 15 Riverdale Avenue in Newton.



There are 52 affordable units, including studios and one, two, and three bedroom apartments available for individuals and families at 50%, 65% and 80% of the area median income. Click [here](#) for more detail on the units, rates, and income limits.

The application deadline is 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 23. The units will be made available to applicants through a lottery held on June 5.

Find the application [here](#).

### **Vulnerable Road Users Law**

Tomorrow, April 1, a new law goes into effect in Massachusetts designed to increase road safety. What do you need to know?

Among other provisions, the law requires all drivers to stay at least four feet away from “vulnerable road users” when passing them. “Vulnerable users,” according to the law, include: *(photo credit to Aram Boghosian for the Boston Globe)*



- People walking and biking
- Roadside workers
- People using wheelchairs
- People using scooters, skateboards, roller skates, and other micromobility devices
- Horse-drawn carriages
- People driving farm equipment

If you are a bicyclist, you will now also be legally required to use a rear red light when biking at night, in addition to a white headlight and rear reflector.

For more details on what is included in the law, MassBike has a handy guide [here](#).

## Spring Holidays

Whether beginning a celebration of Passover, observing Holy Week or celebrating Easter next week, 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. April is Donate Life Month. Checking "yes" can save a life. Nearly 5,000 people in Massachusetts are waiting for life-saving organ transplants. Register as an **organ donor** and learn more about organ and tissue donation at: [DonateLife.net](http://DonateLife.net)

P.P.S. **Bone Marrow Donation:** A bone marrow transplant may be the best or only hope for someone who has been diagnosed with blood cancers, like leukemia and lymphoma. Join the registry today by [clicking here](#).

P.P.P.S. **Donate Blood:** The US is experiencing an ongoing national blood crisis with the supply at its shortest in over a decade. It takes just 15 minutes to donate and can save up to three lives. Newton's Health & Human Services is partnering with Mass General Blood Donor Center for a Mobile Blood Drive on Friday April 14<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at City Hall. To schedule an appointment [click here](#). Find a list of donation centers around Newton [here](#). For more information, see [frequently asked questions](#), [eligibility criteria](#), and [tips for a successful donation](#).



Mayor Ruthanne Fuller | 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459

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