

Friday, Jan. 10, 2025

Mayor's Newton Update

A “Tobacco Free Generation”

Newton City Councilors, with the support of Newton’s Commissioner of Health and Human Services Shin-Yi Lao and myself, took an important step toward joining our neighbors Brookline and Needham and 10 other Massachusetts communities to prohibit sales in Newton of tobacco or e-cigarette products to anyone born after March 1, 2004.

The proposed ordinance before the City Council will *not* impact anyone aged 21 and over who are currently able to buy these products legally in Newton.

Rather, the new ordinance would create a “nicotine free generation” by preventing anyone not yet of the legal age of 21 from purchasing cigarettes or tobacco products in Newton. On Wednesday night, the City Council’s Programs and Services Committee recommended that the measure be passed with a 5-2 vote.

Across the nation and Massachusetts, we are experiencing challenges with health care costs and strains on the health care system. Smoking-related illnesses, including respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and cancers, contribute significantly to the challenges.

Commissioner Lao and I believe this proposed ordinance is an important tool in reducing the harm caused by tobacco products such as cigarettes and vapes. Cigarettes and vapes are uniquely dangerous and addictive. Nicotine is considered to be more addictive than alcohol and cannabis. There is no safe amount of nicotine. Nicotine is harmful at all ages. Nicotine is the leading cause of preventable disease, disability, and death in the United States.

Who smokes and when do they start smoking? According to WBUR, in 2022, 10.4% of adults in Massachusetts reported current cigarette smoking. In Newton, the Newton Public Schools Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance data from 2022 showed that 3% of high school students were currently cigarette smokers and 8% of high school students vaped. We also know that 95% of tobacco users begin before they turn 21 and 99% begin before the age of 26.

Brookline was the first community in Massachusetts to pass a “Tobacco Free Generation” law. In 2020, Brookline Town Meeting banned sales of tobacco products and e-cigarettes to anyone born on or after Jan. 1, 2000 with the bylaw going into effect in 2021.

Last year the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court unanimously upheld the Brookline bylaw.

After the Supreme Judicial Court decision, Stoneham, Wakefield, Winchester, Reading, Malden, Melrose, Concord, Chelsea, Belchertown, Needham, and Manchester-by-the-Sea joined Brookline and passed similar bylaws.

Currently 35 retailers in Newton are permitted to sell tobacco products, some of whom have reached out to the City Council concerned that a loss of potential cigarette sales could adversely impact their businesses.

The full City Council will vote on this measure at its meeting on Tuesday, January 21. Want to weigh in? Email the City Council at citycouncil@newtonma.gov.

“The Cove” is Open for Skating

(Photo: With PRC Program Manager Stephanie Lapham and Auburndale resident Dana Hanson skating the last time The Cove was officially open, circa 2020.)

Make the best of this cold snap, grab your skates, and head over to “The Cove” at 99 W Pine St. in Auburndale for skating on the Charles River.

The freezing temps and current ice conditions allow our Parks, Recreation & Culture team to safely open the Cove for ice skating. The field house building is open and heated (weekdays 3:00 to 9:00 p.m. and weekends 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.) for warming up and lacing skates.

Skating hours are dawn to 9:00 p.m. The ice rink has lighting for evening skating and hockey is allowed on the left side. Please stay safe by staying in the designated skating area and be careful of little ones on the ice so everyone can have fun.

The restrooms are not open this weekend (plan accordingly), but we are working to get water turned back on to make them usable for next week; stay tuned.

Check the status of the outdoor ice rink by calling Newton’s Ice Rink Hotline at 617-796-1536.

Voting By Mail & March Special Election

Newton voters will elect a new member of the School Committee to fill a vacancy on Tuesday, March 18. Later this year, we will elect a Mayor, City Councilors and School Committee Members in November (with possible preliminaries in September). The City Council will set the exact date(s) later this year.

Registered voters planning on voting by mail need to reapply each year to get their ballots for any elections, whether local, state or federal.

Applications to vote by mail can be completed online [here](#).



March 18 School Committee Special Election

In Newton, the School Committee consists of one school committee member elected citywide with each member residing in each of the City's eight Wards, plus the Mayor. While each seat represents a specific Ward, registered voters citywide can cast ballots for all candidates.

Nomination papers for candidates interested in running for the open School Committee seat from Ward 7 are now available from the City Clerk's Office. While voters from all eight wards can vote in this election, the candidate must live in Ward 7.

Signed nomination papers are due back to the Clerk's Office on Tuesday, Jan. 28. Candidates need signatures from 150 registered Newton voters certified by the City Clerk's Office to appear on the election ballot.

As of this morning, Jan. 10, one candidate, Alicia Piedalue, had pulled nomination papers to run for the open seat.

Early, in-person voting for this election will be held at Newton City Hall on both Friday, March 7 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and on Saturday, March 8 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Polls will be open across the city from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on election day, Tuesday, March 18.

Wondering what the cost is to run this special election citywide? It's a lot. It totals \$184,000 for the poll workers, police officers, voting machine supplies, printing of ballots, postage and a few other odds and ends.

Albemarle Renovations Beginning

Construction fencing is going up, equipment is being delivered, and the City's contractor, RAD Sports, is beginning work on the new fields, pickleball and basketball courts, trails and pathways, lighting, and irrigation system at our City's busiest recreation area, Albemarle Park. This work follows on the heels of the two new Gath pools and splash park which opened last summer.

Albemarle Park, located at 250 Albemarle Road off Watertown Street in Newtonville, is heavily used by youth and adult sport leagues, Day Middle School and Newton North High School students, and camps. It is also the site of large recreation and community events, including our July 4th Independence Day festivities.

The extensive renovations at the north end of the Park include:

- A new High School Regulation Sized Multiuse Synthetic Turf Field
- A Renovated Burke Baseball Field
- A Renovated Softball Field
- Six new Pickleball Courts
- A renovated Basketball Court
- Multiuse trails and accessible pathways
- Sports and pedestrian lighting
- Irrigation

The schedule is phased with the new turf field (and underground stormwater infrastructure and supporting sports lighting) available for athletes this fall.

After this summer's 2025 July 4th festivities at Albemarle Field, RAD Sports will begin work on pathways to the nearby Newton Early Childhood Program school building, pedestrian lighting and site furnishings.

The work along Cheesecake Brook will finish up sometime during the summer of 2026.

(Photo below: The outline in red shows the approximate outline of the construction fence going up at Albemarle Park this month.)

Importantly, the school bus drop off and pick up on Albemarle and the path to the Day Middle School will not be impacted.

We will be working closely with Newton Public Schools, Newton's youth sports leagues, and the Friends of Albemarle to go over the project schedule and safety measures.

(Below: The final design of completed Albemarle Park.)



Aging in Newton

Over the past year, the City of Newton's Department of Older Adult Services and partners from the UMass Boston's Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging Gerontology Institute conducted a comprehensive needs assessment of the current and future needs of older adults living in Newton.

Results of the "Aging in Newton: A Community Needs Assessment" study (funded by the Senior Citizens Fund of Newton) are assisting us in planning for programs and services, especially as the new Cooper Center for Active Living is currently under construction and on schedule to open this fall. (Click [here](#) to read the Assessment.)

Building a new center open 7 days a week all day and into the evening for both older residents and the entire community was an important goal of ours as Newton's older adult population continues to grow. As the Assessment showed, one quarter of all Newtonians are age 60 and older. (To be more specific, 4% of Newtonians are age 80 and older and 21% are age 60 to 79. Projections show that by 2030, 8% of Newtonians will be age 80 and older and 22% will be age 60 to 79.)

What Did We Learn About Newton's Older Adults?

Older Newtonians love this community, citing our city's location, safety, infrastructure, outdoor spaces, access to restaurants & shopping, and connections to neighbors, friends, family and community. One respondent wrote, for example, "Each village is small enough that you feel you are a part of a small town."

While the study showed a great love for Newton, the affection comes with concerns.

Top among the worries for people as they age, the Assessment found, is cost of living, affordability, taxes, home maintenance responsibilities and costs, a lack of options for downsizing within Newton, maintaining mobility, and access to transportation. One respondent wrote of their concerns for the future as, "Becoming isolated with aging. Lacking smaller homes to downsize to."

The Assessment also found that older Newtonians want more access to transportation to medical appointments, more in-home appointments, and more information and referrals for social services.

We also learned:

- 64% of Newtonians ages 70-79 and 71% of those 80 and over responded that it is very important to remain living in Newton as they get older.
- 13% of Newton households headed by someone aged 65+ report an annual income under \$25,000, and 45% of older Newtonians report a gross income under \$100,000 a year.
- 22% of Newton residents aged 65+ report at least one disability.
- 18% of older Newtonians speak another language other than English at home.

Cooper Center for Active Living

Indoor fitness opportunities were at the top of the older adults' wish list – something we anticipated in designing the Cooper Center which will have a full-size gymnasium, an elevated walking track, and a large fitness studio.

Results also found that older Newtonians want informal spaces to socialize, weekend activities, volunteer opportunities, performances and presentations, outdoor exercise programs, and more.

The new Cooper Center will happily meet almost all these requests. The building includes a dining hall, a performance area and a lounge as well as an outdoor deck. There will be a game room (with billiards), an art room as well as a ceramics studio, a library, and spaces for social services.

(Click [here](#) for a recent tour by Commissioner of Public Buildings Josh Morse of construction progress at the Cooper Center at 345 Walnut Street in Newtonville.)

I'm happy to say that Mignonne Murray, the Director of Older Adult Services, and her team are already addressing some of the needs identified by the Assessment. Last summer, the City launched a new transportation system for older adults who need transportation 365 days a year, 24 hours a day within Newton, to Boston hospitals as well as beyond Newton's borders to neighboring communities. (Click [here](#) for more information on GoGo Newton.)

Our Older Adults volunteer coordinator has also prioritized developing roles and placing older adults in positions where they can use their skills and talents. There will be even more opportunities available once the Cooper Center opens this fall.

How Was Data Collected?

UMass researchers analyzed results from a Community Survey mailed to a sampling of older residents. Thank you to the 2,869 people age 60 and older (57% of those who received it).

The researchers also conducted five focus groups with older adults, with residents of Newton Housing Authority properties and with community stakeholders. They also interviewed seven people including first responders, elected officials, planning professionals and members of the Newton Department of Older Adult Services.

Camps, Summer Programs and Camp Counselors

Newton Parks, Recreation & Culture Department's summer camp and summer program registration opens on Wednesday, Jan. 29 for Newton residents. (Registration for non-Newton residents opens on March 1.)

We offer camps and summer programs for pre-schoolers through high schoolers. The camps and programs range from specialized (tennis, orienteering, archery, chess, golf, filmmaking, wilderness survival, environmental science) to "multiactivity" camps. We also have half-day, full day and one day options.

Click [here](#) for a week by week listing of camps being offered.

Click [here](#) for information on camps offered, camp refund policies and helpful hints for online registrations.

Camps will open for registration at staggered times on the night of Wednesday, Jan. 29 to make the process easier. Some camps fill quickly. Please be sure to log in at the correct time to register for the camp you are interested in:

- 5:30 p.m. Camp Echo Bridge, Albemarle Acres
- 6:00 p.m. Camp Extreme, Kids Korner, T-ville Trails

- 6:30 p.m. All Star Chess Camp, Golf, Outdoor Adventure, Specialty Camps at Emerson and Nahanton Park, Viking Sports, Wilderness Education for Middle School
- 7:00 p.m. Summer Vacation Camps, Environmental Science Program, FC Academy Filmmaking

Scholarships are available for qualified Newton residents. Be sure to register for a camp and pay the deposit first, then submit your scholarship application and supporting documents before Thursday, May 1 to be considered for a scholarship. Click [here](#) for a 2025 Camp Scholarship Application.

Questions? Please contact the manager listed [here](#) for the camp about which you are inquiring.

You can also check out the camps and programs offered by Newton Community Education (NCE) by clicking [here](#).

Interested in working at a Newton Summer Camp?

Positions are available for people ages 15 and older. We're looking for Counselors, Counselors in Training (CITs), and Directors (which are also available for adults). It's a lot of fun. Click [here](#) for the 2025 Camp Staff Application.

Celebrating Martin Luther King Day

Join us to celebrate, reflect and be inspired by the life and the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at Newton's 57th Annual Community Celebration of Dr. King on MLK Day, Monday, Jan. 20.

This year's celebration begins at 9:00 a.m. at the First Unitarian Universalist Society in Newton (FUUSN), 1326 Washington Street in West Newton Square.

Hosted by the Harmony Foundation, the morning will feature music, student voices, children's programming with Story Starters, and a community reception.

In honor of Martin Luther King, consider bringing a donation of food for our community food drive organized by the Rotary Club or donate ahead of time, Monday, Jan. 13 through Friday, Jan. 18.

Click [here](#) for more information about the celebration and what we're requesting for food donations.

Click [here](#) to register to attend.

Warmly,

Ruthanne



P.S. **Fig City News**, one of our two online community news organizations, is hosting its first-ever **Open House** tomorrow, Saturday, Jan. 11 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. in Newton Centre. Interested in meeting some of the Fig City writers and mingling with other readers? RSVP [here](#) and Fig City will provide the location.

P.P.S. What are the costs, considerations, and risks involved in

Newton for Everyone



building 100% affordable housing? Join **Newton for Everyone** this Monday, Jan. 13 to hear from Newton resident Jason Korb who has been building 100% affordable housing for almost 20 years. The program begins at 7:00 p.m. at Congregation Dorshel Tzedek/Second Church, 60 Highland Street in West Newton, and will also be live streamed on zoom. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.



P.P.P.S. Join **Historic Newton** this Thursday, Jan. 16 for a free lecture, **18th Century Media Literacy and Bias**. Local educator Michele Gabrielson will analyze perspective, language and bias in 18th Century newspapers, with a critical eye on how

news was consumed in Colonial America. The lecture, part of the Newton History series, begins at 7:00 p.m. at the Newton Free Library Drucker Auditorium, 330 Homer St. Click [here](#) for more information.

P.P.P.P.S. The 4th Annual **WinterFEST**, Newton Community Pride's weekend of activities and community celebrations, begins on Friday, Jan. 24 and continues through Sunday, Jan. 26. Festivities kick off with ice sculptures, live music, hot chocolate and more in Newton Centre on Friday late afternoon, continues on Saturday with a guided winter walk through Cold Spring Park, a storytime (*The Lost Mitten* with the author!) at Newtonville Books, and a free Soup Social with live music at the Hyde Bandstand on Saturday evening in Newton Highlands, and culminates on Sunday with a free screening of *Happy Feet* (very family friendly featuring Mumble a sweet little penguin) at West Newton Cinema and winter crafts and a family dance party at New Art Center. Click [here](#) to see the full schedule with all the details.



P.P.P.P.P.S. The Newton City Clerk's office is sending **census forms** to every household in Newton this month, as they do each January. Responding to the Annual Census is important. It allows the Clerk's Office to provide proof of residency, and, importantly, also keeps registered voters' status active. Click [here](#) for information about the City of Newton Census.



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