

January 2021 Newsletter from City Councilor Marc Laredo

Dear Friends,

Happy new year – let us all hope that 2021 is a better year, and we can successfully tackle COVID-19 and return to some sense of normalcy!

First, some good news from the Laredo family. Our son Matt (the one in the middle of the family picture) recently got engaged to his long-time girlfriend from Newton North, Joanna Yelen, the daughter of Charlie Yelen and Barbara Newman. Needless to say, we are thrilled for Matt and Joanna and the opportunity to combine our two families! Now, on to city issues.

Newton Highlands Shooting:

The recent Newton Highlands shooting was a terrible tragedy – and our thoughts must be with the owner of Indulge (who displayed remarkable courage and fortitude), our police officers, and the family of Michael Conlon. District Attorney Marian Ryan is conducting an investigation. We must not rush to judgment about any part of this tragedy without knowing all the facts.

COVID-19:

We must be relentless in our efforts to promote and protect our residents' and businesses' health, well-being, and financial stability during this pandemic. We also must start planning now for a time when the vaccines are widely distributed, and we begin to return to our regular activities. Here are some areas of particular importance:

Strong public health guidance and increased testing in our schools

I have repeatedly urged the administration to form an advisory group of physicians and other public health experts to work with our city's health department. Our knowledge of the best ways to address COVID is changing daily and, with so many world-renowned experts in our community, we need to take advantage of this expertise just as some of our neighboring communities have done.

We continue to lag behind our peer communities and numerous private and parochial schools in the amount of in-person learning that our students receive at all levels. Scientific and medical experts have repeatedly stressed the importance of in-person education with appropriate safeguards in place. Recently, I joined with many of my City Council colleagues in a letter to the Mayor and the School Committee, which urges the

formation of such a committee and the expansion of testing within our schools. You can read by clicking the button below.

[Memo from Councilors on In Person Learning](#)

Finally, we need to start thinking about what school will look like in the next school year. We have been told that staffing and physical constraints limited our ability to have our children remain in school this year. I am working hard to ensure that those issues are completely and successfully addressed before we begin another school year.

City Finances

COVID-19 will have a negative impact on our city finances for the next several years as we will have decreased revenues and increased expenses as we help our residents, local businesses, and government services rebuild. We will need to work together to make sure that we are on a sound financial footing as we continue to build for the future.

Zoning

We must examine how new attitudes towards working from home and shopping on-line will affect how and where people chose to live and work, the desire for additional open space, transportation needs of our residents and businesses, and the vibrancy of our village centers. I will continue my efforts to ensure that we have a thoughtful, deliberate review of our zoning ordinance with these specific issues in mind while also ensuring that we maintain all the things that make Newton such a special place to live.

Elections:

On March 16, we will have a special election to fill two vacant seats on the City Council. ***All Newton voters can vote in this election.***

You can vote in person (including early voting at City Hall) or by mail. In order to vote by mail, you must request a ballot. Click the button below for information on voting in the special election.

[Special Election Information](#)

I am supporting John Oliver for the Ward 1 At-Large seat and Tarik Lucas for the Ward 2 At-Large seat:

John Oliver is running to fill the seat of the late Allan (Jay) Ciccone, Jr. He will be an intelligent and independent member of the City Council who will gather information carefully and thoughtfully before jumping to conclusions. John is co-President of the Newton North PTSO and was President of the Horace Mann PTO, is on the Board of Newton Community Education, has coached youth sports, and helped lead the effort to preserve Albemarle Field and find an alternative site for a new Senior Center. Hit the button below to learn more about John.

[Click here to learn more about John](#)

Tarik Lucas will bring a common sense, calm, practical approach to the City Council and add a diverse voice to the City Council. He is the son of a union postal worker and a union psychiatric nurse, and a graduate of the Brookline Public Schools and Springfield College. Tarik is an active member of the Newton community, serving as a member of the Newtonville Historic Commission and having served as the vice president of the Newtonville Area Council. Hit the button below to learn more about Tarik.

[Click here to learn more about Tarik](#)

As always, I welcome your comments, questions, and criticisms!

Marc