

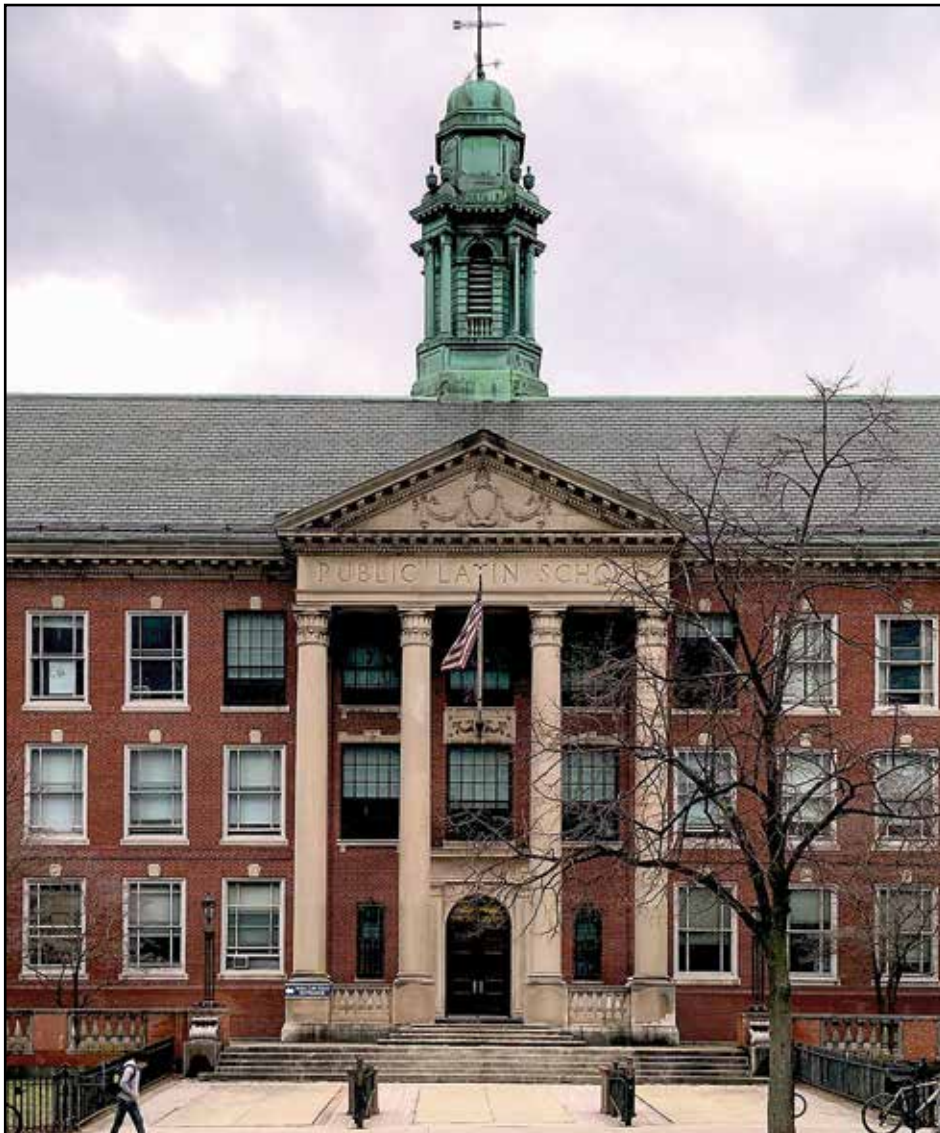
Dorchester Reporter

“The News and Values Around the Neighborhood”

Volume 39 Issue 17

Thursday, April 28, 2022

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Above, a view of Boston Latin School as seen from Avenue Louis Pasteur.
Chris Lovett photo

Gateway or Barrier? Unpacking the Exam School Mystique

BY CHRIS LOVETT
SPECIAL TO THE REPORTER

Anyone who applies to a Boston exam school must know something about inequality.

A member of Boston Latin's Class of 1981, Ron Bell assumed he had been among the Black students admitted with the help of racial set-asides ordered by a federal court. It took another forty years, after the set-asides had been overturned, before Bell learned from his former headmaster that he had gotten one of the highest scores on the qualifying exam.

For that, Bell thanks Mr. Lee, his teacher in the more advanced sixth grade at the Thomas Edison School in Brighton. “This guy gave us more work,” said Bell. “I mean it. It was like he had us for Latin—because, when I went to Latin, I was like, ‘This is like Mr. Lee.’”



BLS Head of School Rachel Skeritt is pictured with current Boston Latin School senior Miriam Sirage and Alan Kuang, Class of 2020. The students served as emcees at the school's 2020 Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration.

Photo courtesy Rachel Skeritt

Bell grew up a few blocks from Boston Latin, in Roxbury's Mission Hill neighborhood. His father worked two jobs and his mother was a bus monitor who later worked at Northeastern University, in a job that helped pay the cost of

(Continued on page 16)

Wu's \$3.6b budget targets projects in Dot, Mattapan; schools in line for funding

BY JENNIFER SMITH
SPECIAL TO THE REPORTER

Mayor Michelle Wu's \$3.6 billion capital budget includes 400 projects to be started or completed over the next five years, with 34 identified for Dorchester and 12 specifically for Mattapan.

Local highlights include some \$4 million recommended for the Boston Centers for Youth and Families to design a new Dorchester community center based on a recent programming study and a series of public meetings. A proposed facilities assessment study for BCYF centers is a separate \$500,000 budget item.

Schools are scheduled for infusions of funding:

A new K-6 school in Dorchester is on the menu, with \$150,000 proposed to design a “building program” for an elementary school.

(Continued on page 14)

A \$106m plan for housing initiatives

On Tuesday this week, Mayor Wu came to the Mass Affordable Housing Alliance (MAHA) headquarters on Dorchester Avenue to highlight a key plank of her spending plan: \$106 million to support homeownership and affordable housing.

Wu plans to commit \$60 million in federal funds through her Office of Housing, support down payment assistance programs, and expand the ONE+Boston Mortgage program.

Symone Crawford, executive director of MAHA, said the mayor is “giving hope to hundreds of homebuyers who fear they might have to leave the city because home prices and interest rates are rising.”

(Continued on page 14)

As EVs take over the roads, issues over charging sites are stirring equity concerns

BY SETH DANIEL
NEWS EDITOR

The world of Electric Vehicles (EVs) is a mysterious environment to many, but an increasingly certain future for all of us. City officials and a growing number of Boston residents are already living the life of noise-reduced rides and battery-charging stations.

When Dorchester's Pamela McGee began looking for a new vehicle this year, she “just figured” an EV “would be something new and the way of the future. I was concerned that if I didn't go electric, there would be no trade-in value for a gas vehicle in the next few years.”

McGee had no idea how charging or “filling up” would work, but after



Dorchester's Pamela McGee plugs in her new Mustang EV car at the new Electrify America charging station in the parking lot of the Bank of America on Gallivan Boulevard. It takes about 30 minutes and \$12 to charge her EV at the site. *Seth Daniel photo*

a month of driving her new EV, she said that charging has been inexpensive and convenient. Her biggest obstacle was finding one to buy. While she was looking for a tra-

ditional SUV model, none were available, but she came across a Ford Mustang SUV Mach-E GT in a showroom and jumped at the opportunity.

(Continued on page 24)

She was a star on courts that now carry her name

BY SETH DANIEL
NEWS EDITOR

On Monday morning, the Boston Parks and Recreation Department unanimously voted to name the hoop courts at Walker Playground on Norfolk Street the “Me-

dina Dixon Basketball Courts” as a memorial to Ms. Dixon, who grew up on nearby Willowwood Street and starred in the game in high school, college, and the Olympics.

“She's probably one of the most decorated ath-

letes in Massachusetts that we haven't really talked about, especially on the women's side,” said Al McClain, an in-law of Ms. Dixon, who passed away at age 59 last fall.

A former NBA draftee

who has an impressive neighborhood basketball story in his own right, McClain said “she's done it all. She was an Olympian on the first Dream Team, won an NCAA championship,

(Continued on page 6)



Medina Dixon: Champion at every stage

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Police, Courts & Fire

Four hospitalized, 17 left homeless in Mattapan fire

Two adults and two children had to be taken to a local hospital after they were injured in a fire at 115 Deering Rd. in Mattapan on Sunday morning. Firefighters responded shortly after 10 a.m. to a fire that consumed the house's rear porches and attic. A total of 17 people were made homeless by the fire, the department says, adding that the cause is under investigation.



Boston Fire Dept. photo

A Mattapan man was arraigned last week on charges of cocaine trafficking and disturbing a correctional institution after he was reportedly caught with more than 18 grams of the white powder - some found "on his person" during a strip search - the Suffolk County District Attorney's office reported.

Woldson Noel, who, at 22, already has 40 arrests on his record, was in the Suffolk County Jail awaiting trial on gun-possession charge last June when jail officers monitoring phone calls heard him tell somebody he "still had 'stuff' on him that was missed during searches" and that he was making "four times the money" while behind bars.

As a result of the information, jail officials conducted a search of Noel's cell and found a white powdery substance inside a piece of paper. Officials also found a large white package inside Noel's

property bag, which was under his bunk.

He was then transferred him to the medical unit for a strip search during which time he threatened guards and created a disturbance, according to the DA's office. Officials found additional substances on Noel's person during the strip search.

He was arraigned in Boston Municipal Court via Zoom from the Berkshire County Jail, where he was transferred following his arrest for Suffolk jail dealing, the DA's office said.

An 18-year-old Boston man was arrested on Saturday night on illegal gun charges by police officers who were called to shut down a house party, complete with DJ, at 35 Dunlap St. in Dorchester. Phillip Blain was taken into custody after police say officers observed "a prominent bulge under the floor mat" in a car in which Blain was a passenger.

The gun under Blain was a semi-automatic, 9-mm handgun with a magazine, and loaded with a total of 12 bullets, police say. A second gun was also recovered from the car. Police say it was in the possession of a Weymouth teen too young to have his name released.

Blain was charged with unlawful possession of a firearm, possession of a large-capacity feeding device, carrying a loaded firearm, possession of a firearm with a defaced serial number and possession of a large-capacity firearm on a public way, police say. The 17-year-old was charged with unlawful possession of a firearm, unlawful possession of ammunition, carrying a loaded firearm and possession of a firearm with a defaced serial number, police say.

Former Boston police-union head concedes guilt in six child rapes

Patrick Rose, a former president of the Boston Police Patrolmen's Association (BPPA), pleaded guilty on Monday to raping six children over a period of 27 years.

Suffolk Superior Court Judge Mary Ames sentenced the 67-year-old Rose to 10 to 13 years in prison, followed by 10 years of probation for the 21 counts of child rape and sexual assault, the Suffolk County District Attorney's office reported.

One of his victims, a relative, was just 7 when he first raped her. She was the daughter of one of his first victims, who was among five others who came forward in 2020 after Rose was initially charged with raping the 7-year-old girl.

"I saw you for what you really are - a coward, a



Patrick Rose

predator of the weak and the defenseless," one of his victims said in court, the DA's office reported.

"Your reputation? Absolutely gone," another said. "All you will ever be remembered as is another creep who has nothing going for him. Your job as a cop protecting people? Well, that's really quite ironic, isn't it?"

BPD records show the department first learned of the allegations in 1995, when Rose was a pa-

trolman, and that while the BPD internal-affairs unit "sustained" the allegations and Rose had his gun taken away, the department never tried to fire him.

In fact, in 1997, the BPPA threatened to file a grievance over his assignment to desk duty, in response to which the department reassigned Rose to active patrol duty. Over the course of his career as a patrolman in Dorchester's District C-11, he helped investigate several child-abuse cases.

Rose was elected union president in 2014, ousting Thomas Nee, who himself faced criminal charges, although for overtime abuse at the troubled BPD warehouse in Hyde Park.

- REPORTER STAFF

City Covid rate dips slightly

Statistics announced by the Boston Public Health Commission on Monday showed a slight dip in Covid-19 rates in Boston of late, but the number of new cases per day remains far higher than in mid-March.

Additionally, hospitalization rates due to the coronavirus for Boston residents continue to rise - those numbers typically lag behind new-case rates, because it usually takes time for somebody to get sick enough to require a

hospital bed.

According to the city's Covid-19 dashboard, as of April 23, Boston had a citywide test positivity rate of 6.9 percent, above the "threshold" of 5 percent officials had set for taking more active steps, such as requiring indoor mask use.

However, other statistics the city uses to determine whether to return to masks and other measures remain below city thresholds; for example, as of April 22, Boston was seeing

about 270 new cases of the viral infection daily, which is well below the city's threshold of 339 - but well above what the city considers its ideal number of 68 cases a day.

Although the number of new Covid-19 admissions has increased nearly 69 percent over two weeks, the total number of people hospitalized with Covid-19 remains below the city threshold of 200, according to city figures.

- REPORTER STAFF

New name, new slogan for UMass Boston

The University of Massachusetts Boston launched a new brand and marketing platform on Monday that officials say is a much-needed re-boot. It comes with a new slogan: "For the times."

"Today, we share UMass Boston's story and endow our distinction with a renewed commitment to our legacy of excellence and a new look to better reflect who we are and what we aspire to be," said Chancellor Marcelo Suárez-Orozco. "This is a pivotal moment for UMass Boston."

The new brand highlights the university's connection to Boston and its mission and service as a beacon in urban higher education.



An example of the marketing campaign - including billboards, broadcast, social and print media - is on the back cover of this week's Reporter.

The new campaign casts the Dorchester campus as "an engine for upward mobility for students and economic growth for Boston and the region, fueled by

the excellence of its teaching and research faculty."

"At UMass Boston, we democratize education," added Suárez-Orozco. "It is where our students rise to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow and prepare for lives of consequence. It is where they expand the knowable world and realize flights of imagination. We continue to rise in the ranks of the nation's leading public research universities, affirming our reputation as a leader in producing groundbreaking research and scholarship that moves the world forward."

- REPORTER STAFF

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Memorial Day 32

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Quadricentennial of Dot 3,372

Dorchester Reporter

(USPS 009-687)

Published Weekly Periodical postage paid at Boston, MA.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: 150 Mt. Vernon St., Suite 560, Dorchester, MA 02125

Mail subscription rates \$50 per year, payable in advance. Make checks and money orders payable to The Dorchester Reporter and mail to: 150 Mt. Vernon St., Suite 560, Dorchester, MA 02125

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UPCOMING CIVIC MEETINGS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

Mass Affordable Housing Alliance's annual Taste of Dorchester event returns to in-person on Thurs., April 28, 6-8 p.m. at Freeport Hall, IBEW Local 103, 256 Freeport St., Dorchester. Tickets are \$50 in advance, \$60 at the door. Go to tasteofdorchester.org to buy tickets.

Savin Hill Park Tour Take a walk with Noah McKenna through Savin Hill Park and learn about the trees, flora, and the health of the park on Sunday, May 1 at 3p.m. (rain date: 5/15). Meet at the bottom of the hill by Grampian Way. More info: savinhillvents@gmail.com

A virtual public meeting will be held on Wed., May 4 at 6p.m. to discuss a proposed 24-unit residential building at 1153 Washington St., Dorchester. See page bostonplans.org for more information.

A virtual public meeting will be held

on Thurs., May 5 at 6 p.m. to discuss a proposed 72-unit mixed-use building at 554-562 Columbia Rd., Dorchester. The project includes the renovation of the four-story Fox Hall building and the construction of a six-story addition. See page bostonplans.org for more information or contact Stephen Harvey, 617-918-4418 or Stephen.j.harvey@boston.gov. See ad on page 8 for more info on logging onto the meeting.

A virtual public meeting will be held on Tues., May 10 at 6p.m. to discuss a proposed 25-unit, four-story building at 26 Coffey St., Dorchester. See page bostonplans.org for more information or contact Nick Carter, 617-803-4009 or nick.carter@boston.gov. See ad on page 8 for more info on logging onto the meeting.

On Friday, April 29 at 11:30 a.m.,

a teaching naturalist for the Mass Audubon's Boston Nature Center will come to the Grove Hall Branch Library to do a special Gardening Story Time and garden activity. This program is best for kindergarten-aged children but children ages 3 and older are encouraged to attend. If you have any questions, please **Franklin Park Kite & Bike Festival - Saturday, May 14th** from 12 noon to 4p.m. A spring family tradition since 1969 features kite-making tables and kites for sale, bicycle activities for elementary-age children with Countdown to Kindergarten, helmet give-aways, a bike repair station, food trucks, and community vendors. Bring your family, friends, and neighbors. On the Franklin Park Playstead ballfields - bus #16 from Forest Hills Orange Line station or JFK on the Red Line. For more information and

directions: franklincoalition.org. **Free registration is now open for the Eversource Walk for Boston Children's Hospital, happening on Sunday, June 12 at 9 a.m.** Now in its 20th year, the event offer participants the ability to gather and walk along the Charles River Esplanade in Boston or join virtually from anywhere in the world. Organizers for this year's event are hoping to register 5,000 participants and raise \$1.7 million. To register, go to bostonchildrens.org/walk. Participants who raise over \$150 by April 29 will receive a Walk t-shirt ahead of the walk on June 12.

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Charter school gains use of soccer field along Morton Street

**BY SETH DANIEL
NEWS EDITOR**

There were equal parts cheers and jeers last Thursday night as the Mattapan State Hospital Community Advisory Committee (CAC) voted unanimously to approve the use of an athletic field along Morton Street to serve the Brooke Charter School.

The issue has been high-profile in the emerging neighborhood, as the designated developer Lena New Boston had sought a change of use at the four-acre site. The change removed the urban farm planned back in 2005 and replaced it with an athletic field to serve the community and the Brooke Charter School next door.

The Brooke has had trouble finding existing field space in the city and has either had to not field certain teams or play no home games. Since last fall, the Brooke and some of the homeowners at the abutting Harvard Commons have been in conflict – mostly during CAC meetings.

A vote on the change of use had been expected at several previous meetings, including the March session, but had been postponed each time for further contemplation. Last Thursday, the issue was called to a vote and it passed easily despite the many months of back and forth on the matter.

The vote was done uniformly with CAC member Glenola Mitchell spelling out the specifics prior to the vote, as well



A site plan shows the location of a proposed soccer field for the Brooke High School along Morton Street in Mattapan.
Image courtesy Warner Larson Landscape Architects

as four conditions addressing things like security, signage, and maintenance plans. Those voting in favor included Donna Young, Carmen Kaechler, Joyce Carroll, Stan Gwinn, Donn Dingle, Glenola Mitchell, and Royal Bolling (via proxy vote). There were no votes against the proposal.

The quick vote, though, prompted those in opposition to demand that they be able to speak their mind despite the vote being over.

“You take a vote with no discussion?” asked Kay Mathews. “There is no discussion,” clarified CAC Chair Young. “We’ve been talking about this for a number of months. It’s not something

we’ve decided quickly, I promise you.”

The Brooke Charter School and developer Lena New Boston said they appreciated the vote and felt it was the right decision.

“We are thrilled that the CAC voted to approve the change of use,” said Brooke COO Mark Loring. “We are excited to move forward with the process of bringing this athletic field resource to our students and the Mattapan community. We look forward to continuing to engage with our neighbors to refine plans and make the best possible space we can.”

State Rep. Russell noted that the Brooke and others

went door-to-door to seek input from the abutting community.

“I am thankful the CAC once again made the right decision and it’s appropriate to make demands of the developer to deliver a \$5 million benefit to the community,” he said. “That is the correct decision...They’ve addressed security and parking and will plant more trees. They chose the location with the fewest amounts of trees.”

But not everyone was ready to jog laps or kick goals.

Several abutting homeowners from the Harvard Commons have spoken up about their opposition to the field – mostly on the grounds of environmental preservation.

“I don’t want to be made to feel like an elitist because I don’t want the field here,” said Jessica Spruill, along with her husband, Darien, last week prior to the vote. “They want to put it in our backyard and take away the few trees we have...We’ve had trash and litter problems, and things stolen, just things I didn’t experience or notice when we first moved here. I’m totally against having a soccer field.”

The field now will have to be approved by the state Department of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), and then it will move on to a traditional Article 80 review process at the city level. There are still several steps left in the process before the school

and developer can move on constructing the field, CAC officials said.

Lena New Boston gets 10-acre PDA

Lena New Boston’s Eric Van Dusen reported to the CAC that his group has received a Provisional Development Agreement (PDA) from the state on the final 10 acres of land available at the State Hospital site—a swath behind MassBiologics and near the corner of Harvard and Walk Hill streets.

“We now have a signed PDA from DCAMM,” said Van Dusen. “We have now entered into the 90 days of that agreement to do our due diligence. We will continue and keep working toward our Licensed Development Agreement (LDA). We are thrilled to have cleared the first milestone and look forward to the others and starting construction.”

The tentative project includes 265 units of supportive senior and Foster Family housing, along with some homeownership opportunities. The plans have not been presented publicly yet.

There was controversy earlier this year when some in the community learned that a previous developer who had gone through a very public process had abandoned his intentions for the site – which was never announced publicly. An alternative process that wasn’t made public ended with the choice of Lena New Boston.



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EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

What’s up with 8 candidacies for the light-work Lt. Gov. post?

**BY ANTHONY BROOKS
WBUR REPORTER**

Few voters might be able to answer the question of a what a lieutenant governor does in Massachusetts. The answer, according to the state constitution: Very little. (1) Step in if the governor becomes too sick to serve, dies or leaves office. (2) Sit on the Governor’s Council — an arcane body that meets a few hours a month to consider judicial nominations, pardons and commutations.

And yet, this year, it has become one of the most sought elected offices in the state.

The decision by Gov. Baker and Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito not to seek re-election has created wide-open contests to succeed them. But that’s especially true for Polito.

In fact, more people are running for lieutenant governor than for any other state office in Massachusetts.

The current crop of eight candidates includes six Democrats (state Rep. Tami Gouveia, state Sen. Adam Hinds, Salem Mayor Kim Driscoll, state Sen. Eric Lesser, businessmen Bret Bero and Scott Donohue, and two Republicans (former state Rep. Kate Campanale and former state Rep. Leah Cole Allen.)

But what’s the attraction of a job with so few official duties?

Evelyn Murphy, who was elected lieutenant governor in 1986, said the lack of clear responsibilities gave her the freedom to define the job for herself.

“I was really excited by that,” said Murphy, who became the first woman in Massachusetts history to win a constitutional office.

Lieutenant governors work in partnership with the governor, said Murphy, but they can also shape their own agendas. In her case, that meant



Former Lt. Gov. Paul Cellucci went on to become governor. Jane Swift became acting governor. And John Kerry became a US Senator and Secretary of State.

helping cities and towns make plans for decades to come.

“What I wanted to do was create a way to use the freedom of the office to say to all the communities in the state: ‘Take a look ahead and see what you’re going to need in terms of schools, in terms of healthcare, in terms of housing, so that you’ve got a plan,’ “ said Murphy, who wanted to find ways for the state to help.

Murphy said becoming lieutenant governor also provides a good launching pad to eventually run for governor. In fact, out of 72 Massachusetts lieutenant governors, more than a third went on to serve as the state’s chief executive.

In Murphy’s case, she was an early favorite in 1990 to win the Democratic gubernatorial nomination, though her campaign faded and she eventually dropped out. But other recent lieutenant governors — including Paul Cellucci and Jane Swift — eventually made it to the corner office.

Cellucci stepped into the role after Gov. William Weld resigned in 1997 and was re-elected the following

year. Jane Swift became acting governor in 2001 after Cellucci left to become US ambassador to Canada. Swift decided not to run for a full term as governor, however, after some controversies and flagging poll numbers.

Other notable success stories include John Kerry, who vaulted from lieutenant governor to US Senator, and then became secretary of state. And Calvin Coolidge, another Massachusetts lieutenant governor, went to governor then national as Warren Harding’s VP and, later, his successor.

But because the job is so loosely defined, it often attracts people with little or no political experience. This year, that includes two of the Democrats — Bero and Donohue. And back in 1994, it included Bob Massie, a grassroots organizer, running for office for the first time.

“Lieutenant governor is kind of this place where you can be creative and where unusual people can run and win the primary,” said Massie, who won the Democratic nomination that year. Massie and Mark Roosevelt went on to lose the general election to the

Republican ticket of Weld and Cellucci.

But while running, Massie said he often faced the same two contradictory questions:

“Why do you believe you are qualified for the second highest office in the state? And why do you want this do-nothing job?”

Massie, though, said he viewed the job as full of potential.

In fact, the history of lieutenant governors in Massachusetts suggests that political experience matters a lot. Virtually all the winning candidates had backgrounds in politics or elective office — from Sam Adams, a founding father and one of the earliest lieutenant governors, to Karyn Polito, who holds the office now.

But that history hasn’t stopped political outsiders from taking a shot.

This article was first published by WBUR 90.9FM on April 21. The Reporter and WBUR share content through a media partnership.

Mariano likes Driscoll as Lt. Gov candidate

House Speaker Ron Mariano last month made his pick in this year’s lieutenant governor race public, backing Salem Mayor Kim Driscoll from a busy Democratic primary field that also features a sitting state rep and two senators.

Mariano said last week that Driscoll “will be a valuable partner for our work in the House and the best advocate for the cities and towns of the Commonwealth.” He pointed to her “vision for what this state can achieve in offshore wind development and job creation.”

Mariano had previously thrown his support behind Attorney General Maura Healey for governor.

— KATIE LANNAN
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(Continued from page 1) and played pro ball overseas for a long time.”

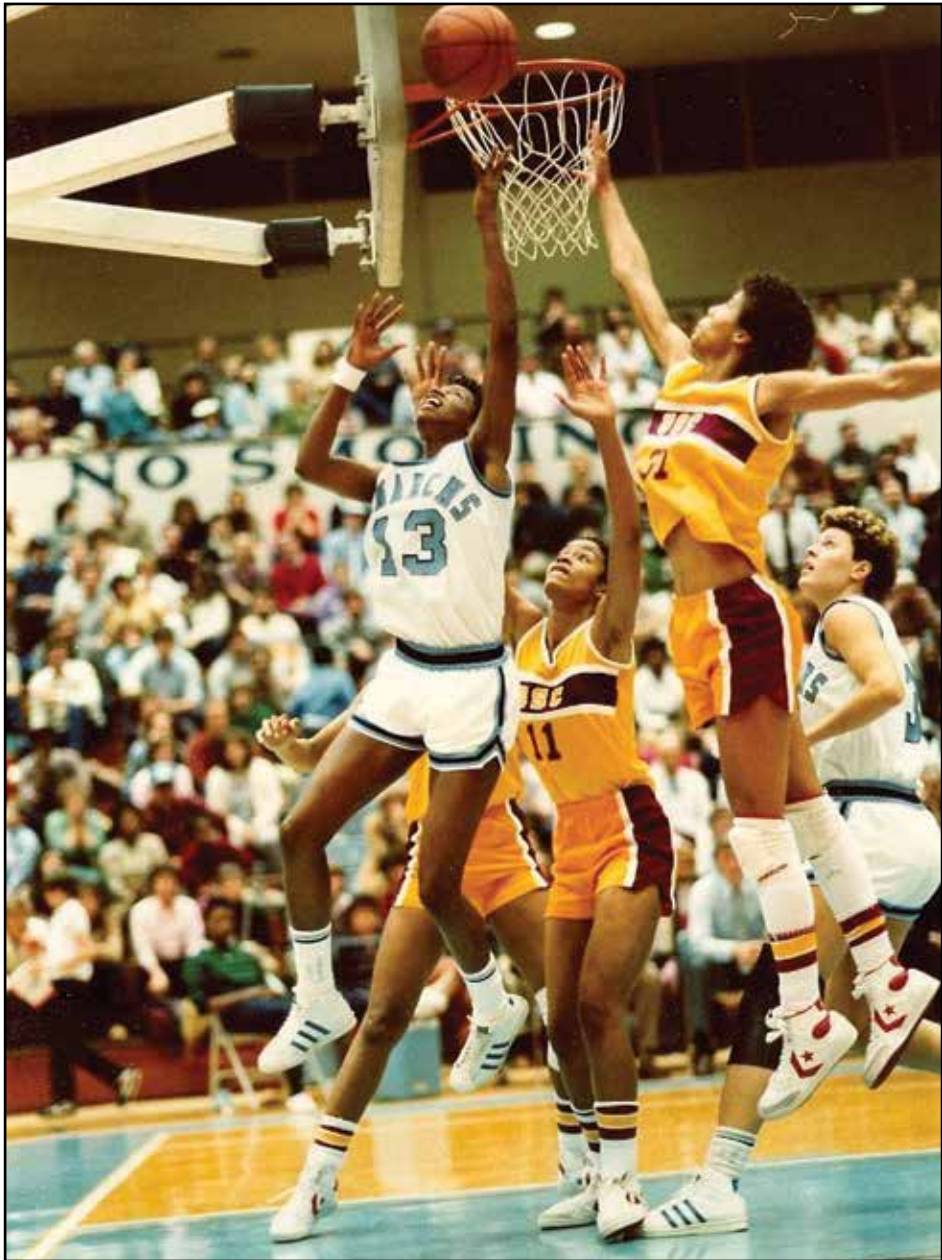
Alfreda Harris, a former Parks Department deputy commissioner, was one of the first to recognize Dixon’s talents. She helped steer her to Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School and then on to the Division 1 college ranks.

“I have helped many, many young men and young women through the sport of basketball go on to major colleges and universities,” said Harris at Monday’s meeting. “Medina Dixon is one of the best.”

Dixon’s brother, Rob Dixon, said her family is happy to have the courts named after Medina, but all felt it should have come long ago.

“All of us are very proud of this achievement, but me personally, I think it should have been done five or 10 years ago,” he said. “We had to do it after she died, which is a shame for Boston...A lot of young ladies are playing high school and collegiate ball now because of what Medina did on those courts. It’s a generational thing now and that’s what she wanted.”

Her anonymity in her own neighborhood and in Boston was something that was painful during her best years, her brother says. He recalled after her team won the NCAA Championship, he went to the airport to pick her up. They expected some sort of celebration or acknowledgement from



Mattapan’s Medina Dixon, who passed away from cancer last fall, is shown here during her playing days at Old Dominion University.

Photos courtesy Old Dominion University

Boston, but nothing ever came – even after the Olympic medal.

“She came back from winning it all and I went to pick her up at the airport and there was just nothing,” he said. “It’s one thing to embrace,

or not to embrace, one of your own. Boston did nothing. That hurt her at the time, it really did.”

At Old Dominion University (ODU) in Norfolk, VA, where the 6-foot-3 Dixon was a star player during the 1980s, she

is still a revered figure. She was inducted into the ODU Sports Hall of Fame in 2017 and the university retired her No. 13 jersey in 2011.

She played three years at ODU after transferring from the University of South Carolina where she had enrolled as the top girls’ high school player coming out of a talented pool of players

in Massachusetts at the time. She led ODU to three NCAA tournament appearances, including a Final Four in 1983 and the national championship in 1985. In the championship season, she was a first team Kodak All-American, the Sun Belt Conference Player of the Year, and a Naismith Player of the Year finalist.

“Medina Dixon has given so much to the community of Norfolk and ODU; it is only fitting that her legacy be remembered in prestigious ways,” current ODU Women’s Basketball Coach DeLisha Milton-Jones told the Reporter. “The dedication Medina displayed while playing for ODU will be able to live on for many years to come through the dedicating of these courts in her honor. My only wish is that every person that steps foot on that court will do so in remembrance of a great player and an even greater woman, that Medina was. She will forever be a great ambassador for ODU Women’s Basketball.”

Beyond college, Dixon was part of the first Women’s Olympic “Dream Team” in 1992, opposite a men’s team comprising superstars like Larry Bird, Patrick Ewing, and Michael Jordan. That women’s team went on to win a bronze medal in the 1992 Games, with Dixon playing a major role in that victory.

McClain remembers her as a scrappy young player growing up in Mattapan, playing with the boys and never afraid to be aggressive. Growing up on Willowwood

Street as one of 12 siblings (her brother Rob Dixon was drafted by the NBA’s Washington Wizards), she played often at the Norfolk Street courts and learned the game there with her brothers and others from the neighborhood.

McClain said those courts were well-known in the 1970s for attracting top talent from all over the area, propelled by competitive pick-up games all the time and by hosting the annual Boston Neighborhood Basketball League (BNBL) playoffs.

“She could play with us, and she wasn’t a weak link at all,” he recalled. “Many of the other players were shocked she was so aggressive as a girl. She always wanted to prove a point that she could play... It would have meant everything to her to have the court named after her if she were still around.”

Nowadays, McClain runs elite girls’ basketball tournaments as part of the Battle New England teams. He has been adding Dixon’s name to those tournaments over the last year to pay homage to her achievements. Last summer, he hosted a tournament in her honor in New York City’s Rucker Park – and Dixon was able to attend in person. Next month, from May 13-15, he plans to host the 1st annual Medina Dixon All-Star Tournament, partly in Cambridge and partly at the Kroc Center in Rochester.

“I always tell the players any time you want to reach full potential, you have to pay homage to the people that came before you that set the bar high,” he said. “I want all the ladies in these tournaments to know who Medina Dixon is.”

Rob Dixon said he and the Dixon family hope to help out in remembering Medina with camps, focus events and other basketball-related events on Norfolk Street. He noted, “We could have done it with her five years ago, but really this is a step in a positive direction and giving young people more access to things like this will be a bonus.”

Parks Commissioner Ryan Woods said the courts have recently been re-done, and the Medina Dixon Courts are part of a larger renovation project of the space, officially the George H. Walker Park. The renovations include a rehab of the playing fields, a new playground, and a new open space picnic area.

The request for naming the courts after Dixon came from Police Supt. Nora Baston, Alfreda Harris, the Dixon family, City Councillor Ruthzee Louijeune, and more than 200 signatories on a neighborhood petition.



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Miss you love you Billy xoxoxo

Cannabis store owners are looking to spark change in Codman Square

By SETH DANIEL
News Editor

The business district in Codman Square has plenty of life and foot traffic, but the space has long needed some upgrades. Now, two neighborhood natives about to open the district's first cannabis dispensary on Washington Street opposite Kenwood Street believe their store can be the catalyst for renewed vitality.

Jeff Similien and Robert Nichols, co-owners of Lowkey Dispensary, have gone through several years of permitting to get to where they are right now – “building it out and in the construction phase,” said Nichols.

“Next week we’re bringing in the flooring, plumbers, and electrical contractors and we expect it to fly quickly. We’ve been targeting an opening date for the end of July if all of our final inspections go well.”

Similien said they started the process in 2017, and while they have other proposals now in Hyde Park and West Roxbury, Codman Square was their first effort and the one that helped them learn an

ever-changing regulatory process.

They have received approvals from the City of Boston and have their provisional license from the state Cannabis Control Commission (CCC). While the two men are planning to retain ownership and not bring in any out-of-state operators, they have hired a seasoned general manager and operations manager to provide cannabis expertise.

“We’re excited,” said Nichols. “It’s been a lot invested into this and it’s been a long road. We are ready to get the return... It’s one of the hardest businesses to go into. It’s very highly regulated.”

Some in the neighborhood were lukewarm to the idea of a dispensary in the Square – particularly since there is another one proposed for a site just two blocks up Washington Street.

The Codman Square Neighborhood Council (CSNC) has in recent history taken a stance against most dispensaries. Its members feel the business district could become saturated with them. The civic has also stated they it would like

to see investments in sit-down restaurants and other local businesses before a proliferation of cannabis stores.

Nichols and Similien have strong ties to the community. Both grew up in Codman Square, and professionally, they have operated a residential and commercial real estate business in the area for a decade.

“We look at our dispensary as a benefit to the community,” said Nichols. “It’s the first of its kind here and will bring in an upgrade to this storefront. We believe that will lead to other investment and business coming here. It’s a forgotten gem in the city. We see our store as a catalyst that will leverage other investments in Codman Square.”

The partners are currently accepting proposals for a mural contest for the dispensary’s exterior adjacent to a parking lot.

“The mural is a small way for this to be for the people here,” said Similien. “It can’t be the Rob and Jeff show and we expect for Lowkey to be a place people enjoy coming to. By doing the



A first effort to engage the community by Lowkey is a mural contest for their building with submissions now being taken.
Seth Daniel photo

mural or the investment drive, it gives people partnership in what we’re doing. In the case of the mural, it’s the kind of outward partnership that everyone will see for years to come.”

Lowkey’s space at 571B Washington St. became available after Dunkin’ Donuts, which was eyeing the storefront, backed out. Similien, who bought the building, approached

Nichols to form a partnership.

Nichols had left a corporate career with Stop & Shop to pursue the construction and real estate business. After
(Continued on page 23)

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Belén Indhira Pereyra back in Boston with Ailey troupe

By SHIRA LAUCHAROEN
WBUR REPORTER

Dancer Belén Indhira Pereyra learned at a young age that dance is a language of its own. Born in the Dominican Republic and raised in Lawrence, Massachusetts, Pereyra got her first taste of the art form when she was seven years old and joined a traditional Peruvian dance group, led by a woman who just wanted to share her culture.

From there, she joined Lawrence Ballet Academy, where she learned the vocabulary behind the steps and began to learn hip-hop and jazz. But once she enrolled at Boston Arts Academy for high school, her passion for dance flourished, and she discovered the style that she most connects to: modern.

“I love the earthiness of it,” said Pereyra. “Ballet is absolutely stunning. I grew up being mesmerized by it and the magic of it. But what I love about modern dance is the bare feet, the grounding of the pelvis, the rawness. There’s a humanness to it. We’re not trying to be perfect. We’re trying to contort ourselves in all the mysterious ways that our bodies are capable of and expressing really deep emotions of all



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s Belén Indhira Pereyra dances in Robert Battle’s “For Four” premiere onstage. Photo courtesy of Paul Kolnik

ranges. In ballet, there’s an element of perfection that is aimed for. And in modern dance, there’s just so many more colors that I can reach and that I can express.”

It was also at Boston Arts Academy that Pereyra began to envision herself as a dancer with a professional life in the arts.

“No one was going to shake me out of this dream,” said Pereyra. “In high school, it became very clear that it was a possibility, that it is a career path. Growing up, not just in the Hispanic community, but just in general, the arts is something that sometimes can be frowned upon, as in it’s not a real

career and it won’t pay the bills. A part of me wasn’t sure how realistic the path was. But when I got influenced by all the incoming teachers, choreographers, and guest speakers, it was very obvious that many people are leading fruitful lives on this path, and why can’t I?”

Pereyra now dances

with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in New York. The company will come to Boston for the first time since 2019, before the start of the pandemic, as part of Celebrity Series’ “The Movement Series” (April 28-May 1), which will center works celebrating Black culture.

Some of the dances that she will perform in include “Love Stories,” a joyful ballet inspired by the African concept of “Sankofa,” which teaches that “we don’t know where we’re going unless we know where we have been.”

She will also dance in “For Four,” capturing the energy of coronavirus times, “Blues Suite” and “BUSK,” a crowd favorite. Pereyra will also be a part of “Holding Space” and the spiritual “Revelations,” created by Ailey in 1960 and known as the choreographer’s major masterpiece.

“The pandemic, for me, was a rebirth. It was an opportunity to recalibrate, recenter, and recreate myself,” said Pereyra. “Coming back to Boston was a huge celebration of that awakening, that rebirth. It’s an opportunity to share all the growth I’ve experienced in the center of my heart and share it in a very powerful, potent

way, as generously as I can. Boston has given me so much, and I have so many people in Boston whom I love, who have shaped my career, who have shaped my life in ways that I can never thank enough.”

While Alvin Ailey himself was a Black artist, and “The Movement Series” represents an honoring of Black culture, Pereyra said that she doesn’t “really think of race, at all. I think of the soul. For me, it’s less about Black excellence, because I believe we’re all excellent, including Black excellence. I think Mr. Ailey was about all people, and I think he was about integrating and merging, blending the lines, completely dismantling these segregated ideas of putting people into categories and sectioning them off.

“I’m about that. To me, that’s my path, as well as Mr. Ailey’s. I’m so grateful and humbled to be in this company, that walks that path, that is led by a man who wanted to go beyond his skin, to others.”

This article was first published by WBUR on April 21. The Reporter and WBUR share content through a media partnership.

Virtual Public Meeting

Virtual Public Meeting

554-562 Columbia Road

Thursday, May 5
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Zoom Link: bit.ly/3OkGxrh
Toll Free: (833) 568 - 8864
Meeting ID: 161 576 8187

Project Description:
Proposal for a mixed-use residential/commercial development with 72 new residential units including the four-story Fox Hall Building to be renovated along with 5,524 sf of commercial space in combination with construction of a six-story addition at the rear along with a 24 space parking garage and associated open space and amenities. The Proponent envisions development without displacement with 100% of the new residential units deed-restricted for a variety of income levels in a true mixed-income program, with existing SRO tenants at the Fox Hall Building upgraded to larger studio apartments in the new building without displacement.

La información de esta reunión es crucial para usted como residente y parte interesada de la ciudad de Boston. Se encuentra disponible el servicio gratuito de interpretación de la información brindada en estas reuniones. Si necesita servicios de traducción, contáctese con: (Stephen.j.harvey@boston.gov) (617-918-4418) La reunión está programada para el 05/05/2022. Por favor, solicite los servicios de interpretación a más tardar 5 días antes de la fecha de la reunión.

Enfòmasyon ki nan reyinyon sa a enpòtan anpil pou ou menm antanke rezidan Vil Boston ak moun ki gen enterè nan vil sa. Sèvis entèpretasyon ki disponib pou kominike enfòmasyon yo nan reyinyon sa yo san okenn frè anplis pou ou. Si ou bezwen sèvis tradiksyon, pri tan kontak: (Stephen.j.harvey@boston.gov) ((617-918-4418) Reyinyon an pwograme pou 05/05/2022. Tanpri mande sèvis entèpretasyon an 5 jou pou pita anvan dat reyinyon an.

mail to: **Stephen Harvey**
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201
phone: 617.918.4418
email: stephen.j.harvey@boston.gov

Close of Comment Period:
5/6/2022

26 Coffey Street

Tuesday, May 10
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Zoom Link: bit.ly/3vAq7T5
Toll Free: (833) 568 - 8864
Meeting ID: 161 205 6788

Project Proponent:
Midot LLC

Project Description:
Construction of a new 4-story building with a common roof deck that will include twenty-five (25) total Dwelling Units, thirteen (13) of which are two-bedroom residential units (four per floor + one at grade/street level), six (6) one-bedroom residential units and six (6) studio units, an Activity Room with a dedicated entrance from the courtyard, a lobby/sitting area, plus a bicycle storage and repair area off the common lobby. Twenty-five (25) vehicle parking spaces accessed via a new curb cut on Coffee Street. The two (2) existing curb cuts will be extinguished.

mail to: **Nick Carter**
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201
phone: 617.803.4009
email: nick.carter@boston.gov

Close of Comment Period:
5/17/2022

Reporter's

People

News about people
in and around our Neighborhoods



Gov. Charlie Baker; Frederica, president and CEO, Whittier Street Health Center; and gala honoree Joseph Nolan, Jr., CEO, Eversource Energy.
Chris Aduama photo

Whittier Street Center salutes Eversource CEO Joseph Nolan

Whittier Street Health Center toasted and roasted Eversource Energy CEO Joseph Nolan, Jr. at its annual gala on April 19 at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel in a return to an all-out in-person event after a two-year hiatus.

Continuing Whittier Street Health Center's long tradition of shining a light on standout business leaders and philanthropists, Nolan was lauded for "being a staunch supporter and one of the most caring and passionate champions" for Boston's most vulnerable residents.

WCVB Channel 5 "CityLine" host and executive producer Karen Holmes Ward emceed the event, which attracted 600 guests, including Gov. Charlie Baker and raised \$1.2 million to provide high quality medical care and social services for Boston residents, regardless of their ability to pay.

"This year's gala was a true celebration," said Frederica M. Williams, president and CEO of Whittier Street Health Center, which primarily serves

Dorchester and Roxbury residents. "Under Joe's leadership, Eversource has a bold vision to be a catalyst for clean energy, a beacon of sustainability and a leader in promoting racial equity and social justice among its employees, suppliers, and the communities served.

"In addition to paying tribute to the remarkable Joe and Eversource, we were honored to have Gov. Baker in attendance – and to have the generous support of our donors."

Theatre marathon to include work by Savin Hill's O'Neill

Catherine O'Neill's latest play will be featured in the upcoming Boston Theater Marathon XXIV, which features 50 ten-minute plays written by New England playwrights and presented by local theatre companies.

The event will take place on the Boston University campus on Sun., May 1.

A Dorchester native who has become a well-known playwright over the last several years, O'Neill has written and produced several Boston-themed plays, including "The Fence," "Murph," and "Sister Anonymous." Her latest work, "The Shave," will be featured in the festival.

Boston Theater Marathon XXIV marks the return to live, in-person performances for the event. Net proceeds will go to the Theatre Community Benevolent Fund



Catherine O'Neill (TCBF), which provides financial relief to Boston-area theatre artists in need.

Tickets can be purchased online at bu.edu/bpt/performance/boston-theater-marathon-xxiv.

BGCD to honor three at '22 Women's gala

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Dorchester (BGCD) will host its 29th Annual New England Women's Leadership Awards (NEWLA) in person on Mon., May 16, at the Seaport Hotel in Boston in celebration of remarkable women who meet challenges with confidence, persistence, and compassion.

The event will be hosted by WBZ-TV (Ch.4) anchor Lisa Hughes.

BGCD said it is pleased to have First Lady Lauren Baker as Chair for the 2022 awards. Her generosity of her time, donations, and endless care have supported people all across the Commonwealth. This year's honorees are:

- Dr. Kizzmekia S. Corbett is an assistant professor of immunology and infectious diseases at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Shutzer Assistant Professor at Harvard's Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Study, and Associate Member of the Phillip T. and Susan M. Ragon Institute. A leading COVID-19 vaccine, mRNA-1273, was co-designed by Dr. Corbett's NIH team from viral sequence and rapidly deployed to industry partner, Moderna, Inc., for Phase 1 clinical trial. It is a now used around the world to prevent COVID-19 disease.
- Jen Faigel is the executive director of CommonWealth Kitchen (CWK), Greater Boston's non-profit food business incubator and development center.

An innovative civic leader, she lives by the motto "It doesn't matter how fast you run or high you jump, but how well you bounce." The CWK team launched CommonTable, a coordinated effort to put its hard-hit food business community to work feeding neighbors in need.

- Silvia Lopez Chavez is a Dominican-American visual artist working at the intersection of art, design, and community. A brilliant colorist, Silvia's murals transform architecture worldwide, provoking collective consciousness and inspiring joint ownership of the art through its place-keeping process.

For more information please visit secure.qgoiv.com/for/newla22.

Nunez drafted to play ball in the Dominican Republic

Dorchester's Kevin Nunez, a senior on the Lasell University basketball team, was selected as the 16th pick by Indios de San Francisco, a professional team in the Dominican Republic, during the 2022 Liga Nacional de Baloncesto draft.

Nunez is a 6-foot-1 guard for the Newton-based Lasers, who compete in the Great Northeast Athletic Conference. Last December, he reached the 1,000-point mark during a game against Wheaton College.

An alumnus of New Mission High School in Hyde Park, Nunez told the *Reporter* recently that he enjoys attending college close to home.

"It's great because I get to have my childhood



Kevin Nunez friends and my mom and my stepdad come to most of my games and support me," he said. "I've been through a lot as a ballplayer—lots of injuries and stuff. For them to always be there supporting me through ups and downs is great.

"As far as being a Dorchester native kid, it's an amazing feeling, because a lot of people didn't really know me or expect me to be this good. I just put in the work."

After averaging 16.1 points and 6.0 rebounds per game during the 2021-22 season, Nunez earned GNAC All-Conference second-team recognition. He shot 47.4 percent from the field (167 for 352) on the season.

During an 86-71 triumph at Rivier on Dec. 4, he finished with career-highs of 34 points and 15 of 25 from the field. The field goals tied him for the fourth most in a single game in program history. He also pulled down a season-high 14 boards.

Nunez recorded three double-doubles during the 2021-22 season, scoring in double figures 19 times, including 22 or more on seven occasions.

—REPORTER STAFF

YESTERYEAR ARCHIVE

DORCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Miss Elida Rumsey Fowle

Illustration and text from a clipping from some unknown, undated publication from the second half of the 19th century.

"Of all the women who devoted themselves to the soldiers in our late war, perhaps none had a more varied experience than Elida B. Rumsey—a girl so young that Miss Dix would not receive her as a nurse. Undaunted by seeming difficulties, she persisted in 'doing the next thing,' and so fulfilled her great desire to do something for the soldiers, for wherever she saw a soldier in need her ready sympathies were enlisted, little caring if the heart beats stirred a coat of blue or gray.

"She was engaged to Mr.



John A. Fowle, of Jamaica Plain, Mass., who was employed in the Navy Dept in

Washington but who devoted all his spare time to philanthropic enterprises, and their work was supplementary from the first. In Nov. '61, she began to visit the hospitals and sing to the soldiers, and the knowledge of how little the boys had to look forward to from day to day, while under such depressing influences, first inspired the thought of supplying them with pictures and books.

"One of the first things established was a Sunday evening prayer meeting in Columbia College Hospital, in an upper room in Auntie Pomroy's ward. That room was crowded night after night, and overflow meetings were held in a grove nearby. The interest steadily increased, and the enthusiasm of the soldiers

could not be repressed, when Miss Rumsey's sweet voice stirred their souls, and rekindled the noble self-sacrificing spirit that had brought them to such a place. The soldiers planned what they wanted her to sing from week to week, and she threw into the songs all her great desire to bring the boys to their better selves and help them to feel they were not forgotten and alone.

"Miss Rumsey was the means of founding a Soldier's Free Library, the first one hundred dollars was given by Mrs. Walter Baker, a greater part of the remainder was earned by Miss Rumsey and Mr. Fowle, giving concerts. On March 1, 1863, Mr. Fowle and Miss Rumsey were married in the Hall of Representatives, about 4,000 being present.

The ceremony was performed according to the rights of the Episcopal Church by the Rev. Mr. Quint, pastor of the church which Mr. Fowle attended in Jamaica Plain, and Chaplain of the 2nd Mass. Reg.

"Mr. and Mrs. Fowle now reside in Dorchester, Mass."

The archive of these historical posts can be viewed on the blog at dorchesterhistorical-society.org.

...

Reminder: A house history from the Dorchester Historical Society would make a great gift to a homeowner in Dorchester or Mattapan. Take a look at some of the completed histories on the Dorchester Historical Society website.



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Whittier Street Health Center would like to thank sponsors and program participants for a successful 2022 Toast to Joseph R. Nolan – President & CEO of Eversource Energy. Thank you for your generous support!

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Muralist wants to bring sense of ‘peace’ to Peabody Square

By SETH DANIEL
NEWS EDITOR

Sometime next month, the brick-clad Peabody/Englewood senior housing building at the crossroads of Peabody Square will be dressed up with a 1,500-square-foot mural created by a 30-year-old artist who grew up in Dorchester and Brighton.

Mattaya Fitts, who moved to Brooklyn in December 2019 and works there for a professional mural company, will return in mid-May to paint a little peacefulness in her former neighborhood.

“It’s definitely going to be one of the larger murals I’ve created,” Fitts said in an interview last week. “Overall, I’d say the encompassing themes are personal transformation, self-care, healing, and the relationship between us and nature...I just really wanted to tap into themes of growth and how we can look at nature and find commonalities between the natural world and ourselves.”

Fitts said the mural, which will be titled “Joy of Growing,” will be about acknowledging one’s personal journey, knowing one is going through that journey and may not be at the end. The central figure will be a large person in the ‘tree pose,’ borrowing a stance from yoga – though she said the theme is not about yoga.

The existing trees in front of the large wall on the Dorchester Avenue side of the building will play into the mural as well, giving it a three-dimensional quality. Finally, a theme of butterflies and caterpillars and their journey of change will be reflected in the mural.

However, she said it won’t be something that will overpower the urban landscape.

“Since it’s about self-care and healing, I wanted it to be really soothing to look at – some blues and purple and tones you would say are pastel,” said Fitts. “I don’t want it to overwhelm that space. The intersection there is really busy and loud, and I hope people will look at it in this context and feel at peace.”

The mural on the BHA property is part of a larger program by the agency to add some extra life to many of their buildings citywide. Last year, a mural was added to the Patricia White development in Brighton and another project is just about to start at Franklin Field on Stratton Street.

The Peabody/Englewood mural will be the largest and most visible within the program to date, according to BHA Administrator Kate Bennett.



Mattaya Fitts, originally from Dorchester, is ready to begin work on a mural on the side of the Peabody/Englewood senior housing building in Peabody Square.
Jared Charney photo

“We are thrilled to have so many local artists bring new color and beauty to our public housing communities,” Bennett said. “These murals will be an awesome reminder that our residents and communities are central to the urban fabric of this city.”

Fitts spent most of her life living in Dorchester and Brighton before moving to Brooklyn. She attended the Haley School on American Legion Highway in Mattapan, and then Boston Latin Academy. During her school years, she said, she was very involved in the Artists for Humanity program, now located in South Boston, and that really shaped her desire to be an artist.

“We are all artists in some capacity as children and we draw and paint and create things,” she said. “Many of us leave that behind as we get older. It started the same way for me, but I never left it behind... Drawing, painting, and communicating a vision have always been part of my life since elementary school.”

Fitts enrolled at the Massachusetts College of Art (Mass Art) in Mission Hill, and originally chose to pursue photography. Eventually, though, she landed in painting and worked at canvas paintings. However, unsure that this was a career path, she stepped away from painting after college. It wasn’t long, though, that she knew she needed to revisit things.

“I had to step away from it after college for a while to know that I needed to do it,” she said.

In 2017, she said she began looking into mural painting.

“The scale of the work and it being outdoors and in the community – making it so accessible to everyone – there’s something about that which really clicked for me,” she said.

Fitts has collaborated on other murals in Boston recently, particularly one done last

year with Artists for Humanity on the side of the Sportsman’s Tennis Club along Blue Hill Avenue. She said she has been inspired by the many artists working in Boston on community murals and noted that there is a home-grown movement afoot here.

“There is so much talent in Boston,” she said. “The people that do murals in Boston are very open to other artists and it’s not snooty or like you can’t talk to them. People here are doing beautiful work. There’s always a commitment

to community in them. You can see that and see that so much time and thought went into the work...The artists in Boston doing murals here have a connection to Boston or are from Boston...They have their hand on the pulse of the community.”

This year, upon hearing about the new Joy Agenda that started under former Acting Mayor Kim Janey, and continued under Mayor Michelle Wu, Fitts applied to see if she could be a part of it. Within the Joy Agenda was a

budget for murals on city buildings. Fitts said she was contacted by the city and accepted into the program.


She was given a choice of two different walls, and eventually chose the Peabody/Englewood site. Her proposal was approved by the Boston Arts Commission earlier this month.

So far, she said, she has met with residents of the building a few times and gathered input from them. She has also been sharing ideas with building administrators. More times than not,

though, she said, people wonder about how she’ll handle the overall size of the piece.

“It’s not completely new to me anymore, but when you’re in front of that big wall, it can still sometimes be a little overwhelming,” she said. “It doesn’t seem as big to me anymore, but my first mural was 8x8 and I was intimidated by it. Now, I see 30 feet, or 50 feet, and I can handle that.”

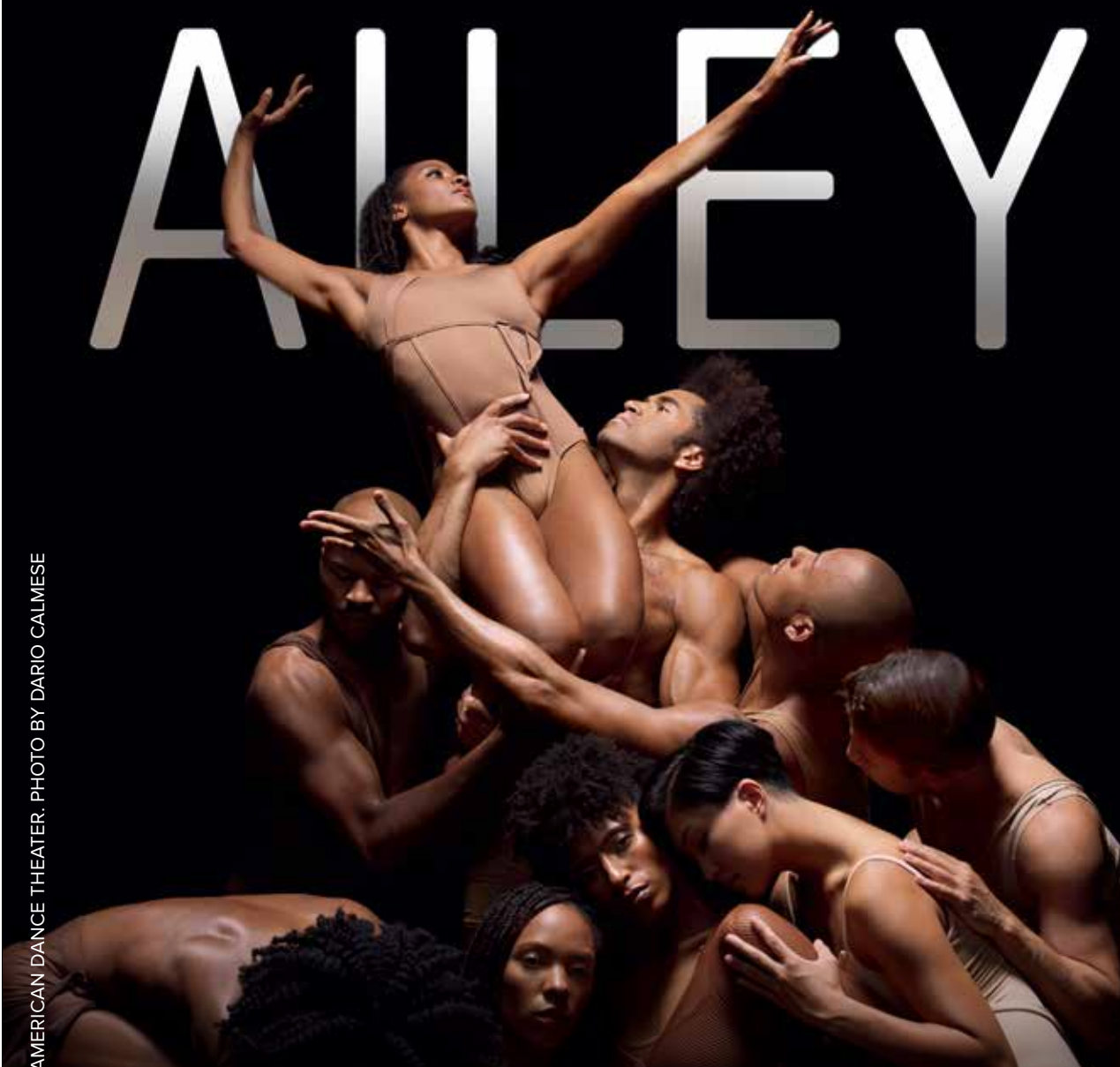
Fitts said she plans to start in mid-May and work every day for about three weeks to complete the artwork.



Celebrity Series of Boston

PRESENTS

AILEY




ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER. PHOTO BY DARIO CALMESE

APR 28-MAY 1

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Editorial

For Essaibi George, a time to pay back

Annissa Essaibi George’s mother Barbara was born in a refugee camp in Germany just after World War II. Her parents, displaced by the fighting between the Hitler’s army and Stalin’s Russians, never made it back to their homeland in Poland.

This month, the former Boston city councillor and mayoral contender journeyed to Poland, accompanied by her sister Sonia and 26 hockey bags filled with supplies for Ukrainians who continue to pour over the border seeking refuge from Vladimir Putin’s murderous assault on their country.



From left, just inside Ukraine: Annissa Essaibi-George, her sister Sonia and Yuri Kosmyna.

On their eight-day visit, the Essaibi sisters made their way to a border crossing near Przemysl to assist arriving Ukrainians, most of them pedestrians carrying whatever they could with their hands.

“My big take-away— and I’m still reflecting on it— is that one person can actually make a difference in this situation,” said Essaibi George. “I was very surprised to not see as visible a presence

as I expected from some of the international humanitarian organizations like the United Nations or the Red Cross.”

She added: “I saw people like us just there doing the work.”

In addition to the hockey bags stuffed with supplies— donated by Dorchester Youth Hockey, BU, Boston Fire, the Bruins, and other leagues in the Boston area— the Essaibi sisters brought along about \$25,000 that they had raised before their trip to buy necessities like diapers, hygiene products, and medicine to send into Ukraine. They even crossed the border into Ukraine to give the supplies they had purchased at the Polish equivalent of Costco to a contact who ferried the goods deeper into the stricken nation.

Essaibi George is careful to emphasize that her excursion into Ukraine wasn’t a long one, nor very far over the border. “Other people are taking tremendous risks,” she said. “The Polish people have really stepped up as a country.”

But, she added: “The mood is one of concern and of worry, really. Polish people know what this means for the Ukrainian people, but also for the Polish people and their sovereignty. The implications are that democracy is very much at risk.”

Her instincts to help and willingness to take action aren’t new to the Dorchester-born councillor, who has been working as a substitute teacher, answering an urgent call for reinforcements in the Boston Public Schools.

Essaibi George plans to return to the Poland-Ukraine border again soon, this time with a better understanding of the needs and with better contacts to make a difference. She and Sonia met people who run orphanages and others who are focused on caring for family pets who have been abandoned.

All of it, she says, is inspired by her own family’s long-ago experience. “It’s what pulled me to do it,” she said. “When I think about that experience [my mother] lived through... for me, it was an opportunity to pay back the people who helped my mother in her time as a displaced person.” — **Bill Forry**

United States Attorney Rachael Rollins took the oath of office on April 22 during an investiture ceremony at the John Joseph Moakley Federal Courthouse in Boston. Rollins was flanked by her niece Victoria Nunes, left, and her daughter Peyton, right. The oath was administered by the Honorable O. Rogerie Thompson. Mayor’s Office photo by John Wilcox



About the promise home equity loans offer

By BOB CREDLE AND NATALIA LIMA
SPECIAL TO THE REPORTER

Home ownership represents the “American Dream” for many of us, and we must do all we can to help make that dream a reality by increasing opportunities for underserved communities. As we move out of the pandemic into the recovery stage, financial institutions and not-for-profit organizations offer a variety of resources to help people determine if home ownership is attainable and accessible by securing a loan to fit their budget. Given the cost of housing, it’s important for consumers to gather information and make informed decisions.

Median home prices are at a record high in the Bay State, pushed by increased demand, and limited inventory. In Massachusetts, the median price of a single-family home has risen by 27.4 percent in just the last two years while the housing affordability index dropped by 15.4 percent.

Still, there is a silver lining as home values continue to rise. An improving economy and low interest rates have spurred a resurgence in home equity borrowing in Greater Boston. In the past several years, we have seen significant increases in home equity loans across the region. Local homeowners are in a unique position to use equity in new ways to fund important life goals efficiently and confidently while also prioritizing financial responsibility. By leveraging programs like a Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC) — with borrowing based on the value of their homes minus any mortgages they may have — home buyers are using their property’s value as a source of cash to pay for kitchen renovations, college education, or car purchases, in addition to gaining an edge when making offers on a new home.

Typically, home equity lines of credit carry lower rates than other loans because they are secured by the property. Potential borrowers should take advantage of low fixed interest rates that can also be taken as tax deductions and shop around for lenders that provide an easy digital experience, fast access to funds, and personalized expert advice.

In Massachusetts, financial institutions such

as Citizens are proud to offer financial education resources, allowing residents to manage their money and make sound decisions; in 2021 we offered nearly 90 no-cost financial education sessions for low and moderate community members across the Commonwealth, including education courses on mortgages and the value of home equity products. Our programs focus on commonsense advice on the ways customers interested in financial tools should partner to make smart financing options to tackle short-or long-term expenses. They should also find a lender who will help them determine the path forward to pay down their HELOC and minimize risk, in a manageable and cost-effective way that’s tailored to improve their credit score and open up future financing opportunities.

For the last several years, Citizens and Urban Edge have worked together to ensure safe, affordable, and equitable housing to community members, providing hundreds of potential homebuyers with sound financial advice, helping them realize their dream of homeownership. In Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury alone, Urban Edge has helped more than 3,000 families purchase homes over the last several decades. And tools like the recently launched Goal Builder Home Equity Line of Credit offer customers financial flexibility to maintain savings, while enabling access to the funds needed to meet their responsibilities and ensure their quality of life.

No one can predict the future. However, with the right tools, we *can* plan for it. With the right guidance, HELOCs can provide Greater Boston families with the financial flexibility needed to address a range of possibilities. Whether you reside in Roxbury, Jamaica Plan, or in another Massachusetts city or town, local homeowners will be equipped to take advantage of the best opportunities and minimize the stress that life often throws at us.

Bob Credle is the director of community programs at Urban Edge. Natalia Lima is a vice president and Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) officer for Citizens.

Real estate analysts: Rising prices mean housing affordability is ‘rapidly waning’

Sales of both single-family houses and condominiums in Massachusetts declined in March as housing prices rose even further, continuing a pattern that real estate market analysts at The Warren Group said is pushing homeownership further away for many residents.

There were 3,591 single-family home sales in Massachusetts last month, a 6.9 percent decrease from March 2021. Meanwhile, the median home sale price increased 12 percent on a year-over-year basis to \$515,000, up from \$460,000 in March 2021, The Warren Group said on April 20. The 1,826 condo sales in March were down 19.5 percent compared to 2,268 condo sales in March 2021 and the median sale price climbed 4.1 percent year-over-year to a new March record high of \$460,000.

“Low inventory continues to plague the real estate market in Massachusetts. The number of homes for sale has been declining for a decade or more and that trend has led to a lower sales volume and is pushing prices higher. Couple this with rising mortgage rates — which recently hit 5 percent for the first time since 2011 — and housing affordability is rapidly waning,” Tim Warren, CEO of The Warren Group, said. “First-time homebuyers are flocking to rural communities and blue-collar cities to take advantage of attractive purchase prices.”

Because inventory in the condo market is not quite as depleted as for single-family homes, some would-be homebuyers might think about turning their attention in the coming months to condos, though Warren said it likely won’t be enough to significantly boost the condo market.

“Condos are perfect for a lot of people as city life picks up and with restaurants and cultural events and socialize becoming more popular, more people will consider them as a home. But I think people pretty much know what they want. It will be hard for someone who had been shopping aggressively for a single-family home to suddenly switch and to decide to start looking for a condo,” he said. “So, I don’t think we’re going to see a big increase in condo sales this year.”

So far in 2022 there have been 9,711 single-family home sales in Massachusetts, a 9.7 percent drop from the first three months of 2021. At the same time, the year-to-date median single-family home price has increased 10.9 percent to \$499,000. There have been 4,490 condo sales so far this year, a 17.2 percent decrease from the first three months of 2021 with a median sale price of \$450,000, a 5.9 percent increase over the same period in 2021.

— COLIN A. YOUNG
SHNS

The Reporter

“The News & Values Around the Neighborhood”

A publication of Boston Neighborhood News Inc.

150 Mt. Vernon St., Dorchester, MA 02125

Worldwide at dotnews.com

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Next Issue: Thursday, May 5, 2022

Next week’s Deadline: Monday, May 2 at 12 p.m.

Published weekly on Thursday mornings

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In Late February of 2022, Conor Olsen age 14, son of Phil and Deb Olsen, was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma and is currently undergoing treatment. Shockingly, a few weeks later the Olsen Family was dealt another blow when mom Deb was diagnosed with Breast Cancer. Let’s come together to support the Olsens who are an integral part of The Dorchester Community!!

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Kim Driscoll, five-term mayor of Salem, is running to be Lieutenant Governor. We are supporting her, and would love for you to come meet her and hear about her vision for the Commonwealth. Stop by for some snacks and conversation, and feel free to bring your neighbors!

Hosted by Jim Keefe and Joyce Linehan



Wu’s \$3.6b budget targets projects in Dot, Mattapan

(Continued from page 1)

Improvements make the list, including a still-to-be-scheduled \$200,000 study at the Dever and McCormack Schools on Columbia Point “to determine outdoor improvements.” Interior changes to the McCormack School – converting to a 7-12 grade facility – are under construction with an allocation of \$3 million.

The CASH and Winthrop schools are in line for roof repairs, with \$2.15 million proposed for CASH School work and \$1.7 million asked for replacing the roof at the Winthrop School. And a plumbing overhaul at the Holmes School is earmarked for \$288,000. And about \$10 million is set aside toward new school bathrooms and upgrades to existing fixtures.

Upgrades to the Mattahunt Elementary School, still to be scheduled, would total some \$3.6 million. This budget cycle includes a new \$492,000 project to replace the school’s air handling unit.

In other areas, Norwell Street Square is in line for a \$140,000 project that would develop a “dead-end section of Park Street into a plaza in conjunction with the development of a park in the adjacent lots.”

As for cross-neighborhood and citywide projects, the Blue Hill Avenue Multimodal Corridor carries a proposed \$39 million price tag across five years. The project is described in the budget as “the creation of center-running dedicated bus lanes, redesigned Mattapan Square for improved bus connection to the MBTA station, protected bike lanes, signal changes, and sidewalks.”

A \$250,000 study for improvements to JFK/UMass station is still to be scheduled, according to the budget data. It would assess areas for improvements to the site and “create a transportation action plan” for the area.

Other projects are still in the pipeline, with their funding initially approved in earlier budget cycles.

The budget includes \$250,000 for a “study to assess the capital needs at the Strand Theatre.” While the city resubmitted Requests for Proposals for Uphams Corner buildings earlier this year in line with an arts district revitalization plan, the Strand’s operation has been cordoned off for now. The study is still to be scheduled, according to the city’s data portal of all budget proposals.

Existing studies are underway at three new li-

Schools in line for good funding

brary sites, including the new \$18 million Uphams Corner library and the \$21 million Fields Corner library. Further south, the \$18.3 million Adams Street library renovation is still ongoing. The budget allocates an additional \$3 million to the design and construction of a new branch library in Codman Square, for which a \$100,000 study is already in progress.

A Mattapan item approved last year would set aside \$250,000 to “fabricate and install a bronze sculpture of books for the entrance of the Mattapan Branch Library.”

Along with Byrne Park, projects abound, many of them multi-year renovations.

Mattapan’s \$870,000 Walker Playground play lot upgrade is under construction, as is the \$5.4 million Garvey Playground renovation, the \$7.8 million McConnell Park renovation, and the \$1.2 million Doherty-Gibson Playground rehab.

The budget also proposes \$400,000 for rehabbing the Byrne Playground in Dorchester, “including play lots, courts, and passive areas.”

Other park and open space projects are in design, such as the \$1.5 park improvement to Coppens Square that will include replacing the Mayor Theodore Lyman fountain that was removed in 1951.

The Odom Serenity Garden, near the border of Dorchester and Mattapan, is still slated for \$550,000 and is in design. Also in design – Codman Square Park, which is budgeted for \$1.8 million, and the \$1.6 million improvements to Mother’s Rest at Four Corners park and play areas.

The Parks Department’s \$1.82 million plan to repave existing Dorchester Park walkways is “to be scheduled,” according to the data portal.

The budget continues funding for annual environmental programs like the \$750,000 Mattahunt Woods preservation and \$2 million Urban Wilds citywide project. Another \$350,000 is proposed to develop an Urban Wilds conservation and land management plan.

The City Council holds hearings on parts of the budget between April and June, before taking action on the document in early June, with the mayor’s final approval expected in late June. Unlike prior years when city councillors were limited to up or down votes on both the general and school budgets, this year could see more back and forth between councillors and the mayor. A ballot measure approved by voters last November changed the city’s charter to give the councillors power to adjust or overrule the mayor’s budget, with some limitations.

In the background of the normal budget process looms the substantial remainder of some \$560 million in American Rescue Plan Act Funds. For that pot of money, Mayor Wu has previewed some major investments in affordable housing, launched a free bus pilot program on three key Boston bus routes, and teased tailored programs like a three-decker energy retrofit program expected to be fleshed out in the coming weeks.

A \$106m plan for housing initiatives

(Continued from page 1)

Offerings like ONE+Boston, an income-restricted mortgage program, are tools that “we know work,” Crawford said. About 5,200 people have graduated from MAHA’s first time homebuyer courses in the past two years, she said.

These investments are particularly targeted at historically marginalized homebuyers. According to the city, of the 150 households in the ONE+Boston program last year, about 60 percent were people of color.

The proposed operating budget also bolsters similar programming, planning for \$10.2 million over the next three years toward homebuyer assistance programs.

“Homeownership is crucial to building generational wealth and long-term stability for families,” Wu said in a statement. “We have an opportunity to transform what homeownership looks like in Boston.”

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City coming to grips with overhauls of IDP, linkage programs

By JENNIFER SMITH
SPECIAL TO THE REPORTER

Boston has selected two consulting firms and set up an advisory panel committee of policy experts, affordable housing advocates including Dorchester-based groups, and developers to guide changes to its linkage and Inclusionary Development, Mayor Wu announced last week.

The California-based firm David Paul Rosen & Associates, which oversaw the study leading to Cambridge’s affordable housing standards, will conduct a similar study in Boston. Karl Seidman Consulting Services and Consult-Econ, Inc. will study the city’s linkage program, focusing particularly on lab space.

The city’s Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP) was established through Mayor Thomas Menino’s executive order in 2000. It sets requirements for building a certain number of affordable units in or near developments of a certain size – currently 10 units or greater. With city approval, developers can alternatively pay into an affordable housing fund. Linkage funds are extracted from large scale commercial developments and routed into city housing and job trusts.

Since its inception, Menino and his successors updated the IDP terms within Boston, all of them limited by city powers to applying affordable unit requirements to projects that required variances from the Zoning Board of Appeal. The IDP was last overhauled in



Sheila Dillon, chief of Housing for the city of Boston, spoke at a City Hall event to discuss Mayor Wu’s FY23 budget on April 13. *Jeremiah Robinson/ Mayor’s Office photo*

2015 by Mayor Martin Walsh, an iteration that introduced three city zones with slightly different rates of affordability requirements that limited how far away from a market rate building a developer could build affordable off-site housing.

Home Rule petitions approved by the Legislature in 2021 to add IDP and linkage to Boston’s enabling legislation now gives the city greater leeway in amending and applying these affordable housing tools. With that change, former Mayor Walsh upped the city’s linkage exaction to \$15.39 per square foot and the city redoubled efforts to reevaluate IDP.

According to the Office of Housing, the IDP study “will look at a range of options to update the policy, including increasing the proportion of units that are income-restricted to at least 20 percent, deepening affordability requirements, increasing

contribution fees to the IDP Fund, and other reforms so as to better meet Boston’s housing needs.”

On the linkage front, the study will evaluate the current balance between new commercial development and the city’s affordable housing needs. Recommendations may include increasing the linkage fees, lowering the square footage that triggers linkage fees, and differentiating between different development types, according to the city.

In an interview last month as the city was assessing responses to their Requests for Proposals for the consultant positions, housing chief Sheila Dillon said the city’s focus on lab space in the linkage component reflected increasing demand for life sciences.

The consultant would be asked to evaluate “what can we extract from commercial development,” Dillon said, crucially whether the “the

economic conditions of lab space” would allow the city to “extract an even higher rate.”

The Requests for Proposals received responses from consultants in late February, according to Dillon. After analyzing the respondents, the city selected David Paul Rosen and Karl Seidman.

“We have committed to a process that has community input, technical advisory,” Dillon said. “We have very much committed to making the consultant’s findings available to the public and make them transparent.”

The technical advisory committee, announced on April 20, includes Donna Brown, executive director of the South Boston Neighborhood Development Corporation; Jesse Kanson-Benanav, executive director of Abundant Housing Massachusetts; George Lee of the Coalition for a Truly Affordable Boston/Keep It 100 for Real Affordable Housing & Racial Justice; Abe Menzin, principal and executive vice president of development at Samuels & Associates; Greg Minott, managing principal of the DREAM Collaborative; Markeisha Moore of the Coalition for a Truly Affordable Boston and Dorchester Not For Sale; Leslie Reid, CEO of Madison Park Development Corporation; Erica Schwarz, board member of the Boston Neighborhood Community Land Trust; Tamara Small, CEO of NAIOP Massachusetts; Peter Spellios, principal of Transom Real Estate; and Justin Steil, associate profes-

sor of law and urban planning at MIT.

Both the IDP and linkage studies should be completed over the next several months, according to the city, and consultants will make policy recommendations to the Mayor’s Office of Housing in September.

“We want certainly to hear from people along the way, interested parties – developers, certainly affordable housing advocates. But we also want to move the process along, because every day that we don’t move the process along, we could be foregoing resources.”

Those resources are substantial. Though the city has a few new pipelines for affordable housing money, including Community Preservation Act funds and a sudden influx from the American Rescue Plan Act, linkage funds and IDP requirements offer dedicated long-term pots of money and pledged affordable units.

Linkage funds are managed by the housing office’s Neighborhood Housing Trust, which has collected \$102 million over the last 10 years, according to the city. Since its start in the early 1980s, Boston’s linkage program has funded some 7,149 new income-restricted units and preserved 5,795 existing income-restricted units.

IDP, similarly, has created almost 3,600 on-site and off-site income-restricted units with another 2,500 additional income-restricted units created or preserved through the fund, according to the city.

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Gateway or Barrier?

Unpacking the Exam School Mystique

(Continued from page 1)

college for two daughters. But Mr. Lee was an authority who commanded respect.

“It was almost like listening to a drill sergeant, and also a Black male figure,” said Bell. “It showed me an image, and I responded well to that.”

...

In Boston, responding well and going to one of its three exam schools is to beat the odds. As I prepare to mark the 50th anniversary of my class at Boston Latin—delayed one year by the pandemic—the number of those choice options remains unchanged. Some students who fail to make the cut have other options that allow them to succeed, but the exam school mystique is only heightened by a rationing of opportunity that forces many other capable students to settle for less. And in Boston’s public high schools, at least 21% fail to finish in four years.

At its best, the steep gradient of opportunity has inspired exam school alumni to pursue a public mission, a feature dating back to 1635, when Boston Latin was founded. While extending British dominance over indigenous land, the founders wanted to groom champions of Puritan religious orthodoxy. That meant expanding literacy for study of the English Bible, but also exposure to the secular poetry and republican oratory of ancient Rome and Greece. The school’s earliest notables included theologians, but there were also other kinds of leaders with other agendas, including five signers of the Declaration of Independence and, eventually, two of Boston’s newest office holders, state Rep. Brandy Fluker Oakley and City Councilor At-Large Ruthzee Louijeune.

If anything, the built-in conflict over the mission of a public exam schools has become more intense, driven by demands for competitiveness with inclusion and fierce debate over the meaning of merit. Grades can be inflated, while a qualifying exam can be skewed by race or how much it aligns with earlier curricula. An index of individual talent might also reflect more test preparation and tutoring, or placement in advanced work classes—factors that have loomed larger in recent years.

But, if an admissions process can be a barrier separating winners and losers, the schools themselves can also be thought of as the sum of their students as they interact with each other and the outside world.

...

Even before applying to Girls’ Latin, Suzanne Lee had a lesson about the difference between sorting and ability. Arriving from Guangdong Province in China when she was 11 years old, she lived with her parents in Grove Hall, where her family had moved after being displaced from Boston’s Chinatown. Just before she arrived, Lee had been a sixth-grade student. At the William Lloyd Garrison School, she was back in grade four, sitting at the front of the classroom and struggling to



Boston Latin School students are shown in the school’s Black Box theatre during the annual Moth Story Day in which students and faculty present 10-minute stories in a day-long series of sessions. Boston Latin’s second cohort of Topol fellows initiated the Moth Story Day in 2018 to share their personal stories with the community as a whole. Photo courtesy Rachel Skerritt

improve her English. It was her sixth-grade teacher who noticed her strong math skills and encouraged her to take the entrance exam.

...

The outgoing Head of School at Boston Latin, Rachel Skerritt, took her exam after being placed in an advanced work class based on her third-grade test scores. She had an older cousin who graduated from Boston Latin in 1987, but her mother, who came to the United States from Antigua as a middle-schooler, had had a different experience. She was placed on the non-college track at Jeremiah Burke High School, graduating in 1965, when fellow students included the future recording star and “Disco Queen” who would be known as Donna Summer.

In that same year, I was a sixth grader in Hyde Park and attending a Catholic school, like more than one-quarter of my class at Boston Latin. Exam schools were not on my mind when Sister Gerard Maria suspended our daily routine for long, tiring math drills. The material wasn’t new, but the pace was almost frantic. It was around this time that she took me aside in the hallway and told me to take the test. Out of fifty students in the class, three were accepted, less than half the number at each of the two parish schools in West Roxbury. If nothing else, the math drills signaled there was no single measure of academic merit.

Our pressure to compete was tempered by messages about equality and tolerance. But our world was also configured in the weekly children’s Mass, where students from our school were sorted by gender and grade level, with students from public schools in the pews farther back.

On Fridays, we got out early for “release time,” making way for public school students to get religious instruction. Looking out from our classroom on one of those Fridays, I could see them extend in a squirming column, waiting their turn out on the sidewalk. To most people, they would have looked just like us. When Sister Gerard Maria saw them, she paused for a moment. In a voice that seemed abstracted, and maybe less to us than to herself, she said, “Those



A view of one of the entrances to Boston Latin School in the city’s Longwood section. Chris Lovett photo

public-school kids, they even smell different.”

While I was in grade six at a three-year-old building, Jonathan Kozol was teaching a predominantly Black student body at an overcrowded school in the Mount Bowdoin section of Dorchester. In “Death at an Early Age,” he described how students were harmed by building conditions, outdated materials, and educators who treated them, not as potential leaders, but with “standardized condescension.” Where Kozol saw racial inequality in education, Boston School Committee members saw inequalities in people or in circumstances beyond the control of educators.

That same year, the Boston NAACP filed a federal lawsuit against the Boston School Committee, alleging racial segregation. That was the issue two days later, when Martin Luther King, Jr. led a march from Roxbury to Boston Common. From there, he went up Beacon Hill to address state legislators, calling de facto segregation in the north “a new form of slavery.”

...

Boston’s exam schools can boast of students who go on to become leaders, but their sense of public mission might not emerge until years after graduation. For Suzanne Lee, that process began after she went from Girls’ Latin to Brandeis University.

“I remember in college that I felt like I knew how to study, but that’s about it,” said Lee. “I didn’t have any other skill, like discussing about current

events, or how to think about something. The critical thinking wasn’t there.”

But going to student meetings at Brandeis led to her being recruited as an English teacher in Chinatown for recent immigrants, as Lee described them, “mostly common workers, like my mother’s friends.” She later went on to become the principal at two Boston public schools. The most recent, until 2009, was the Josiah Quincy Elementary School in Chinatown, with large numbers of English Language Learners and special education students.

...

At Boston Latin, Bell played basketball and football, along with three different brass instruments. His leadership moment came a few years after graduation from college, in 1989, with the Stuart case. Stuart’s accusation that a Black man had shot him and his wife in the Mission Hill neighborhood would be revealed as a hoax more than two months later. But the immediate aftermath of the shooting was the widespread and aggressive racial profiling in a blitz of stop-and-search by Boston Police.

At the time, Bell was an administrator with the community center in Mission Hill and the Boston Neighborhood Basketball League. He decided to channel the community outrage over police tactics into political action. He tried registering voters at store fronts but got little response. Then he organized a basketball tournament with voter registration

and other information tailored for Black men and boys. The response to “Dunk the Vote” led to more registration efforts and political campaign work.

Bell said the drive also required him to face his own discomfort and unfamiliarity with the voting process, an effort that drew on his exam school background.

“It helped me be bold enough to ask a question,” he said. “Some people are afraid to ask questions.”

...

Before majoring in English at the University of Pennsylvania, Skerritt had been a seventh grader putting off a reading assignment. By tenth grade, she was in Honors English. More importantly, Skerritt said, she had a teacher “who really pushed me, who was really tough on me in a very loving way and insisted that I rise to a level of excellence and not necessarily ride on my naturally good English talents.”

Skerritt’s favorite book from the class was the novel by Zora Neale Hurston, “Their Eyes Were Watching God.” She later came back to her school, at first as an English teacher, and she still knew the book’s opening by heart, starting with “Ships at a distance have every man’s wish on board.”

I didn’t read the book until early 2005, when I was captivated by the opening sentences. The disastrous hurricane near the end seemed somewhat contrived – that is, until a few months later, when New Orleans was overwhelmed by Hurricane Katrina and the

terribly inadequate response from the federal government.

Among those responding to Katrina from afar was Ron Bell, helping with relocation in the Boston area for 21 displaced families. That led to an offer of help from another Boston Latin graduate, the late Sidney Topol. A Dorchester native, Topol went on to become well known as a communications innovator, philanthropist, and active supporter of the Democratic Party.

Topol and Bell also worked together in 2005 on a march from Roxbury to the State House, retracing the steps in the march led by King forty years earlier. If the march was a reminder of persistent inequality in education, Bell and Topol were one more example of a school tie, connecting people of different backgrounds and generations.

Because of her musical activities at Boston Latin, Skerritt found herself performing with a school choir at an alumni dinner, then sitting at a table next to Raytheon’s chairman and CEO, Thomas L. Phillips, which led to her receiving a scholarship of \$5,000 a year. And that led to more encounters at alumni events, even after Phillips had retired in 1991.

Because of experiences like that, said Skerritt, going to Boston Latin “absolutely changed the trajectory of my life, both in terms of what it exposed me to from an academic perspective, but also the network that you become a part of.”

As Bell put it: “It’s not just what you know, but who you know.”

But Skerritt also emphasized the value of connections among students themselves. “A school of 2,400 kids across all socioeconomic ranges, speaking close to 50 languages, just different religions, different relationships with Boston,” she said. “It’s hard to get that in schools that might have similar academic outcomes.”

•••

When I was a seventh grader, my

classmates and teachers were less diverse, but our headmaster, Wilfred O’Leary, dubbed us the “aristocracy of the intellect.” That reinforced the barrier of elitism, but it could have also meant that excellence wasn’t always determined by genes. If we could feel flattered, we could eventually dare to snicker when a student, hearing the master’s voice on a new P.A. system, dubbed him as “The Wiz.”

Because Boston Latin was surrounded by places of learning and culture, we crossed paths with college students five days a week. A short trolley ride after school would take me to the library in Copley Square, where I could be one of the figures arched under the green lampshades and vaulted ceiling of Bates Hall. Once I left, another trolley ride would let me blend in with people heading back from work. I was an adolescent impersonating a grownup.

•••

Suzanne Lee compared the environment of Girls’ Latin to a “cocoon,” with its fabric of conversation—wishful or promotional—about students getting into prestigious schools.

“You’re surrounded with that kind of talk all the time, not just from teachers, but from other kids, too,” Lee recalled. “And then,” she added, “you always look at that list when they publish who got into what school, and it’s never about who didn’t get in.”

By the time she was the principal at the Quincy Elementary School, Lee was asking teachers to pay more attention to students who were struggling.

That’s also a strategy built on by Skerritt at Boston Latin. Unlike in the past, when educators took pride in a high rate of failures, Skerritt boasts about a high rate of students who remain and graduate. She talks about support for learning and mental health needs, and platforms for students’ cultures, but she admits that workload tolerance remains a struggle.

“I also think that Latin schools—or

exam schools,” she said, “shouldn’t be the only option if families just want a rigorous and safe and positive experience.”

As an educator, Lee said, she felt it was her job to prepare students for whatever qualifying exam was required, despite reservations about its fairness. Though she agrees with the need for some kind of “gateway” for admission, she acknowledged that still leaves students at the mercy of circumstances.

“As you think historically about the role that race plays in public schools,” said Lee, “that if the only way you get [into an exam school] is some teacher recommending you or pushing you, that’s a story, too.”

With her own grooming for exam school in advanced classes, Skerritt acknowledged that “pathways feel like they have to be really precise to end up in the place where many want to go, and it shouldn’t have to be that precise.”

And Ron Bell says educators like Mr. Lee are in short supply. “I think that’s one of the major issues,” he said, “not having a lot of Black male role models.”

•••

After my graduation in 1971, the two Latin Schools became coeducational. That was the first in a series of policy changes that would have altered my odds of admission, maybe placing me on the other side of a gateway. As things were in 1965, I had two older brothers already in college, along with aunts and uncles who were helped through college by the GI Bill. At home, there were a couple of small shelves with books, some better than others, but all within reach. I had my own room with my own desk. Distractions were easily tuned out.

It would take almost twenty more years to realize that another thing I took for granted – riding the trolley – was a luxury that Ray Bolger couldn’t afford while he was growing up more

than one century ago in Dorchester. I managed to interview him because my student years led to being a substitute teacher in Boston, and then to working in Dorchester on a weekly newspaper.

Bolger was acclaimed for dance roles on Broadway and best known as the Scarecrow in the 1939 film version of the “Wizard of Oz”—the same role highlighted in the 1978 film, “The Wiz,” by Michael Jackson’s number, “You Can’t Win.” In the older version, Bolger was the tattered, almost gracefully disjointed figure without credentials, dehumanized yet wanting to pass for human:

*With the thoughts that you’ll be thinkin’
You could be another Lincoln
If you only had a brain.*

We met as two people equalized by connections with Dorchester and, thanks to free music lessons at Boston Latin, I could even boast of having, like Bolger, performed at the Strand Theatre. What I didn’t realize, until he brought it up, was how much he wanted to me to know his grades at the Oliver Wendell Holmes Elementary School were good enough for getting into Boston Latin. Since there was no qualifying exam at the time, he explained, the only admissions barrier was that his parents didn’t have enough money for his carfare.

When I showed up for the interview and Bolger opened the door to his hotel room, I saw the rags and straw had morphed into something else: a traveling entertainer between acts, dressed in a smoking jacket. But he was still playing his cherished character and bold enough to ask the first question: “Did you go to Boston Latin?”

Chris Lovett is the former news director of BNN-TV’s Neighborhood Network News and a longtime community journalist with a particular focus on Dorchester. He is a regular contributor to the Dorchester Reporter.



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With emergency rental aid window now closed, advocates warn of negative impacts with Covid-19 still in active stage

BY CHRIS LISINSKI
STATE HOUSE
NEWS SERVICE

Without the crutch of pandemic-era emergency rental assistance, Antonia De Leon of Lynn worries that she and her family might not have been able to remain in their home.

They had never fallen behind on rent before the pandemic, De Leon said, but once Covid-19 hit, her husband lost his restaurant work and she had to change to a new, lower-paying job.

De Leon and her family turned to the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, or ERAP, which offered up to 18 months' worth of aid available to cover rental arrears and future rent for tenants impacted financially by the pandemic.

"If this program hadn't existed, I could've gone to the streets homeless with my family," De Leon, speaking in Spanish with an English interpreter, told a crowd of advocates and reporters outside the State House on April 12. "There are lots of families who need this assistance, but sometimes their stories aren't heard."

Beginning April 16, Massachusetts residents became ineligible



Massachusetts Law Reform Institute Director of Community Based Advocacy Andrea Park (left) joins other housing advocates outside the State House on April 12 calling for lawmakers to tap into remaining federal aid to keep an emergency rental assistance program afloat beyond its April 15 expiration.

Chris Lisinski/SHNS photo

to apply for housing aid covered by the federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funding, which the Baker administration says is dwindling and likely to run out before June 30.

Families in need can still turn to the state-funded Residential Assistance for Families

in Transition (RAFT) program — which will receive a \$100 million boost under a supplemental budget Gov. Charlie Baker signed April 1 — but housing advocates warn that the alternative will be insufficient to match the scope of need with Covid threats still lingering.

Community Based Advocacy Andrea Parksaid the Lynn family would not be eligible for RAFT even though they still struggle to make ends meet.

"As she will not be eligible for any rental assistance after April 18," Park said. "What is going to happen to Antonia and many like her?"

"A lot of us were sick with Covid as recently as February, and so I think as much as we want this to be in the rearview mirror — and we are making a lot of progress toward that — we need to remember there are still people who are really struggling to get back on their feet," Park added. "This is an emergency program. There's emergency money we still have available."

Since the start of the ERAP program in March 2021, the Baker administration has distributed more than \$600 million to 74,200 households, according to a spokesperson. Officials projected last month that the state had about \$200 million in unspent federal rental aid funds, all of which the administration anticipates exhausting by the end of the fiscal year at the current rate of applications and pay-

ments.

The supplemental budget that boosted RAFT funding by \$100 million also extended through next March 31 pandemic-era eviction protections that require courts to pause any proceedings for failure to pay rent if a tenant has a pending application for aid.

Rally attendees on April 12 renewed their call for lawmakers to tap into state government's roughly \$2.3 billion in remaining federal American Rescue Plan Act funds or a developing tax revenue surplus to keep expanded emergency housing aid flowing.

"All those words we heard about the importance of front-line workers, about people finally recognizing the connection between health and housing, about racial disparities and economic disparities -- we heard lots of nice statements from the governor and from the Legislature," said Lynn United for Change Empowerment Project Director Isaac Simon Hodes.

"This is where the rubber hits the road. Cutting a program like this is just going to exacerbate those exact same divides."

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Moment of Paws

Boarding your pet? First thing: Do your research

By Dr. Edward Schettino

Did you know that there are no statewide regulations that govern boarding kennels and pet daycare facilities in Massachusetts? This means that, throughout the Commonwealth, not all boarding facilities are created equal. While many offer excellent accommodations and a

nurturing environment, other kennels or daycares may not be on par with your expected standard of care. In fact, the Animal Rescue League of Boston (ARL) has sadly seen numerous instances where a dog was injured, in some cases fatally, due to improper protocol or supervision during play groups. If you're planning a

vacation, or simply looking for an opportunity to socialize your dog during the workday, ARL encourages pet owners to do their own research before leaving their dog or cat in the care of a boarding kennel or daycare facility. Not sure where to start? ARL recommends taking these three steps to get set to board your pet:



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- **Find out safety protocols and licensing.** What is the procedure in the event of a natural disaster or medical emergency? Are there vaccination requirements to ensure the health of all boarded animals? Does the facility have a current kennel license?
- **Ask for details about supervision and interaction.** What is the

experience-level of the person supervising your pet, and are they always on the premises? Are dogs allowed to interact with one another, and are they separated by size/temperament?

- **Download the Board Safely™ checklist at arlboard.org/board-safely.** When researching potential boarding kennels or daycare facilities for your pet, ask all of the questions on this list and take notes.

While pet owners now have the tools to help them assess their own comfort level before they board their pets, there are bigger changes on the horizon. ARL, along with many other animal

welfare organizations across the state, is actively seeking legislation that would establish regulations within the operation of boarding kennels and daycare facilities. These regulations would create statewide standards for emergency response training, facility accommodations, pet supervision, and more.

To learn how you can advocate for kennel regulations, visit arlboard.org/board-safely.

Dr. Edward Schettino is the president and CEO of the Animal Rescue League of Boston. He has a doctorate of Veterinary Medicine from the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University.

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RECENT OBITUARIES



BARBOSA, Linda C., 54, of Roxbury. Wife of Gabriel Zabala. Mother of Jovani Barbosa of Roxbury, Natasha Barbosa of Randolph, and Stephanie Barbosa of Randolph. Step-mother of Amanda and Gabriel Zabala. “Mama” of 4. Sister of Manuel Barros of Pawtucket, RI, Michael and his wife Leopoldina Barbosa of Randolph,

Antonio and his wife Celeste Barbosa of Randolph, Emmanuel Barbosa of Roxbury, Caroline Barbosa of Brockton, Joseph Barbosa of Roxbury, Teresa Barbosa of Dorchester, and the late Marcelino Barbosa. Sister-in-law of Stella Barbosa of Rockland. Linda is also survived by many nieces and nephews.

BENN, Minniebel Elizabeth (Allen), 98, of Dorchester, formerly of Connecticut. Minniebel was preceded in death by her husband, Dr. Reginald E. Benn and her eldest son Reginald, Jr. She is survived by her daughter, Beverly Benn, her son, Joseph, four generations of nieces and nephews and a host

Mary Anne (McMahon) Murphy

Mary Anne (McMahon) Murphy, of Dorchester, died Saturday April 23, 2022.



Beloved wife of the late Patrick Joseph “P.J.” Murphy. Mary Anne is survived by her sisters Peggy Quinlivan of Lissycasey, Co. Clare, Ireland and Evelyn Harris of Riverside, CA and several cousins and extended family in Ireland, England and Boston and many friends.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated in Saint Gregory Church, 2215 Dorchester Avenue, Dorchester, Wednesday April 27 at 10:00 AM. Interment Saint Joseph Cemetery, West Roxbury.

nieces and nephews. US Air Force veteran. He was a retired custodian of the Boston Public Schools for over 20 years. Donations in Bill’s memory may be made to the American Heart Association at heart.org.



MAGINNIS, Helen L. (Lyons) of South Boston. Mother of Courtney Kinney and her husband Edward of Dorchester. Grandmother of 2. Sister of Thomas Lyons and his wife Jean of Wakefield, Claire Lyons of South Boston, John Lyons and his wife Robin of South Boston, Paul Lyons and his wife Denise of South Boston and Kenneth Lyons of Dracut. Daughter of the late Thomas and Evelyn (Ryan) Lyons. Also survived by many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews. Donations in memory of Helen may be made to New England Center and Home for Veterans, 17 Court Street, Boston, MA 02108.

MURPHY, Bridget P. “Breda” (Wilson) of Weymouth, formerly of Dorchester. Mother of Brittany Wilhelm and her husband Jared of Holbrook, Bridget Cogliano and her husband John of Canton, and Kristen Dauwer and her husband Michael of South Boston. “Mimi” of 3. Sister of Arthur Wilson, Danny Wilson and his wife Connie, and the late Margaret



Wilson and her surviving husband Jack, and the late Eileen Desmond and her surviving husband Ruairi. Daughter to the late Bridget Lynch (Wilson) and David Wilson. Former spouse of Richard E. Murphy, and former longtime partner of Brian Henderson. Breda is also survived by many nieces, nephews, and friends. Please consider making a donation in memory of Bridget to the Alzheimer’s Association.

O’TOOLE, Dorothy F. of South Boston. Survived by her sister Mary Mullen of Dorchester, many nieces, nephews, great-nieces, great-nephews and many friends. Predeceased by her parents, Lawrence and Margaret (Boland) O’Toole; and sisters Joan Dunphy and Margaret Connelly.



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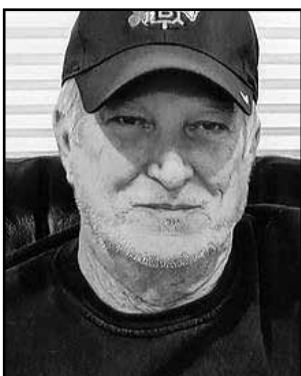


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GUNDERSEN, William F. “Bill,” 66, of

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CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION
Docket No. SU22P0373EA
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DATE OF DEATH: 11/13/2021
To all interested persons:
A Petition for Formal Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by Patricia Stokes of Boston, MA requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition. The Petitioner requests that: Patricia Stokes of Boston, MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve Without Surety on the bond in an unsupervised administration.
IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 06/02/2022.
This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.
UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)
A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.
Witness, HON. BRIAN J. DUNN, First Justice of this Court.
Date: April 21, 2022
Felix D. Arroyo
Register of Probate
Published: April 28, 2022



Brockton, formerly of Dorchester. Husband of Trisha “Pat” L. (Smith) Gundersen. Father of Amanda Workman of Florida, Jason Hurley of Rockland, and William and his wife Samantha Gundersen of Newton. “Grandpa” of 8. Great-grandfather of 3. Brother of Mark and his wife Donna Gundersen of NH, Frank Gundersen of Milton, and the late Edward Gundersen and Katherine Jones. Bill is also survived by several

LEGAL NOTICE

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
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To the Defendant:
The Plaintiff has filed a Complaint for Divorce requesting that the Court grant a divorce for IRRETRIEVABLE BREAKDOWN. The Complaint is on file at the Court. An Automatic Restraining Order has been entered in this matter preventing you from taking any action which would negatively impact the current financial status of either party. SEE Supplemental Probate Court Rule 411.
You are hereby summoned and required to serve upon: Jason Centeio, 1 Maple St., Apt. 11, Malden, MA 02148 your answer, if any, on or before 06/20/2022. If you fail to do so, the court will proceed to the hearing and adjudication of this action. You are also required to file a copy of your answer, if any, in the office of the Register of this Court.
Witness, HON. BRIAN J. DUNN, First Justice of this Court.
Date: March 17, 2022
Felix D. Arroyo
Register of Probate
Published: April 28, 2022

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May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and preserved throughout the world, now and forever. Sacred Heart of Jesus pray for us, St. Jude, Worker of Miracles, pray for us. St. Jude Helper of the Hopeless, pray for us.
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SCARBOROUGH, David G. “Scarby” of Dorchester. Husband of Diana. Father of Jade. Grandfather of 1. Brother of Linda Collins and her husband Kevin of Quincy, and Christopher Scarborough of Quincy. Son of the late Mary Scarborough. David is also survived by many family members and friends. Please consider making a donation in memory of David to the Colon and Rectal Cancer Center at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

THANKSGIVING NOVENA TO ST. JUDE

O Holy St. Jude, Apostle, and Martyr, great in virtue and rich in miracles, near kinsman of Jesus Christ, faithful intercessor of all who invoke your special patronage in time of need, to you I have recourse from the depth of my heart and humbly beg to whom god has given such great power to come to my assistance. Help me in my present and urgent petition. In return, I promise to make your name known, and cause you to be invoked. Say three Our Fathers, three Hail Marys and Glorias. Publication must be promised. St. Jude pray for us and all who invoke your aid, Amen. This Novena has never been known to fail. I have had my request granted. Publication promised.
T.F.M

Notice is hereby given by Always Open Towing at 18 Talbot Avenue, Dorchester, MA 02124 in pursuant to M.G.L. c.225, section 39A, that the following vehicles will be for sale at a private auction on May 13, 2022 at 8 am to satisfy the garage keeper’s lien for towing, storage and notice of sale:

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- 2011 Dodge Grand Caravan – Vin: 2D4RN5DG2BR608241
- 2012 Nissan Sentra – Vin: 3N1AB6AP6CL624196
- 2011 Jeep Grand Cherokee – Vin: 1J4RR5GG1BC556052
- 2012 Ford Fusion – Vin: 3FAHP0HA0CR424056
- 2004 Ford F-250 Super Duty – Vin: 1FTNF21L24ED78595
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Cannabis store owners are looking to spark change in Codman Square

(Continued from page 7) successfully launching that business, and having 50 agents under his flag, Nichols’s approach was a surprise.

“I don’t consume cannabis first and foremost, and it wasn’t on my radar as a business at all,” said Nichols. “I was skeptical, but Jeff was persistent. We wanted to bring more investment to the community we grew up in with our real estate business, and I realized we could do that with cannabis also.”

They decided on the Codman Square location after attending several other early cannabis community meetings in 2017 and 2018. Owning their building cut down on the rental payments that are necessary to hold the space during

the long permitting process.

“We went to a meeting in the Bowdoin area to see what it was like and the man proposing it was getting yelled at so much,” said Similien. “He wasn’t from here and he had no rapport with the community. He didn’t know anyone and didn’t know what the community wanted. We saw that if you’re going to do this, you need rapport with the community and you need people to know you before you walk into a room.”

For them, what better place than Codman Square?

Earlier this week, the new recreational dispensary facility had been framed out and concrete floors – now ADA accessible – were

being polished to a bright shine. The look was a departure from anything that had been there in the past, and as the progress continues, they hope it will become a needed spark to light up the aging Square.

“We both grew up here and we’ve been in business in this neighborhood,” said Nichols. “We take pride in our work, and we’re determined to bring something here this summer that is top-notch.”



Lowkey Dispensary’s Jeff Similien and Robert Nichols both grew up in Codman Square and entered the cannabis industry many years ago while managing a successful real estate business. *Seth Daniel photo*

MBTA joins crowd: No mask requirement; choice is up to riders

Masks will no longer be required on MBTA vehicles and properties, Massachusetts Department of Transportation officials announced last Tuesday, a day after a federal judge in Florida struck down a nationwide masking mandate on public transportation systems.

“The Commonwealth has followed federal guidance in terms of face coverings and to be consistent with that, we are lifting the face covering mandate at the transportation hubs and on most public transportation vehicles,” Transportation Secretary Jamey Tesler said in a statement.

The day before, US District Court Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle voided a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention masking requirement for public transportation, ruling the mandate “exceeds the CDC’s statutory authority and violates procedures required for agency rulemaking.”

As a result of the ruling, the Transportation Security Administration said it would no longer enforce an order requiring masks on public transportation and in transportation hubs. Mass transit systems across the United States can now decide for themselves whether to keep or shed masking requirements.

MBTA General Manager Steve Poftak said while masks are no longer mandatory on trains, buses and ferries, riders can still cover their faces if it makes them feel more comfortable.

“The MBTA remains committed to safety and will continue adhering to all CDC and Massachusetts’ public health guidance,” Poftak said in a statement. “The T is continuing to clean vehicles and stations regularly and upgrade air filtration systems.”

Massachusetts Port Authority officials began removing signs associated with masking requirements at Logan Airport earlier Tuesday morning, a Massport spokesperson told the News Service.

“In line with the TSA’s guidance, mask wearing will now be optional within our airport facilities and on Logan Express buses,” Massport CEO Lisa Wieland said in a statement. Massport also oversees the Worcester Regional Airport and Hanscom Field in Bedford.

Speaking to reporters at the State House Tuesday afternoon about masking on the MBTA, Gov. Charlie Baker pointed to high vaccination rates in Massachusetts and the increased availability of COVID-19 treatments.

He said 80 percent of people in Massachusetts are fully vaccinated, and among those over the age of 65, “it’s more like 95 percent of people are fully vaccinated.”

“We also continue to have other kinds of therapeutics available. None of that existed when this pandemic began,” Baker said. “Those are big changes in terms of how we should be thinking about the way we deal with it going forward.”

– SHNS

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HELP WANTED

Family Nurturing Center of Massachusetts (FNC) seeks Project Coordinator for the implementation of Healthy Bowdoin Geneva Community Collective’s social cohesion initiative. The Project Coordinator will facilitate resource-sharing, bridging social ties among community members, and development of community leadership infrastructure in the Bowdoin Geneva neighborhood of Dorchester. The Project Coordinator will develop, maintain, and lead a coalition of community stakeholders to work together to support families. The Project Coordinator will be responsible for building relationships with community members, local businesses, and relevant government and community leaders to advance health and racial equity.

Key Responsibilities

- Develop productive collaborative relationships with community residents, business owners, government officials, and Collective agencies
- Build upon existing resources and programs to ensure families have the support needed to raise healthy children
- Participate in designing projects and community events in collaboration with community members
- Participate in ensuring the sustainability of the Collective’s activities by identifying and pursuing potential funding sources
- 3-5 years of experience in community organizing, leadership development and/or experience initiating community participation and programming
- Willingness and availability to work evenings, and weekends

Interested candidates should send a cover letter and current resume in PDF format to FNC’s Judelys Del Carmen (judelcarmen@familynurturing.org) by Friday, May 6 in order to be considered.

To read the full job description, visit www.familynurturing.org

JOB POSTING:

Project Coordinator, Healthy Bowdoin Geneva Community Collective

Responsibilities Include:

- Write and create new custom code for analysis of big datasets (>10TB)
- Adapt analytical methods to perform on binary data formats
- Increase speed and efficiency of big data analysis
- Utilize statistical approaches such as regression, PCA and permutation-based analysis to study genetic data
- Collaborate with lab members on machine learning and big data projects
- Perform data analysis on new experiments and make conclusions based on data
- Other tasks as required or assigned; potential for exploratory projects

QUALIFICATIONS Required:

- Bachelor’s degree in data science, computer science, machine learning, big data or a field directly related to the work.
- Must have 1+ years of experience in computer programming field.
- Knowledge of Python required

Send resumes to HR, Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, 455 Main St, Cambridge MA 02142 or resumes@wi.mit.edu

As EVs take over the roads, issues over charging sites are stirring equity concerns

(Continued from page 1)

McGee and many Dorchester residents maybe unknowingly live near Electrify America's first electric "gas station-like" experience in Boston, which is set in an underutilized corner of the Bank of America's Gallivan Boulevard parking lot.

Last Monday, she stopped at the private Electrify America facility, which offers four fast-charging outlets. She said she uses the station frequently as one of several charging options. In about 30 minutes, and for around \$12, she can get an 80 percent charge, she said.

"It's far more convenient than I thought it would be," she said. "I can come here to charge it fast, and other times I can just plug it in at work and head into the hospital for my shift. It's charged when I leave. There are a lot of options and I like this station because it's fast and I live very close by." Normally, she said, she catches up on e-mails or makes phone calls while she waits – occasionally, she runs errands.

But most of the time, she charges at work where there's a \$1 fee to plug in. She said she also uses an adapter at her home overnight, but she isn't as happy with the results.

A typical week of "fuel" can be either \$1 at work, or around \$12 at the fast charger. That, she noted, is in contrast to the price of gasoline down the boulevard at several gas stations where it's over \$4 per gallon. "It's not like I don't have any power in this thing; it's like 480 horsepower," she said with a laugh.

According to the Ford Mustang website, her model goes for just over \$60,000 – if a model can be found. It can go from 0 to 60 mph in 3.2 seconds.

Charging sites vs. equity

When it comes to charging EVs, most people with one have grown used to the city providing free electric chargers and other such infrastructure. That, of course, brings up issues of siting and equity into most conversations about the vehicles. According to Boston's Chief of Streets Jascha Franklin-Hodge, the city is thinking about such things. However, the more complete answer is that the city hopes they may not have to do so in the future.

Franklin-Hodge said the city has "no doubt" that many EVs will be on the streets in the next few years, noting the strong advertising push during this year's Super Bowl. "We are headed into an electric vehicle future very, very rapidly if for no other reason than the auto makers have plowed all of their [research and development] money into electric vehicles," he said. "If the electric vehicles don't come onto the market the way they think, they will honestly have nothing to sell you... The change probably happens slowly, and then it happens all at once. I think we're probably close to that tipping point in the next year or two."

So, while the city is "all in" on EVs, he said, officials have a different view of how things will shake out for residents.

"I think the challenge with EV is everyone is really thinking about this in the same way that we think about fueling up our cars with gas and the paradigm about where gas stations are located," said Franklin-Hodge. "But how we will fuel our EVs will be fundamentally different."

For the most part, he said, those looking down the road believe that those with access to garages, driveways, or work chargers will "fill up" their vehicles overnight or, like Pamela McGee, while at work. That will provide access for most of the charging public, he said. Most home chargers are sold as adapters for regular plug-ins and are of the

slow-charge variety – taking seven or eight hours to fully charge a vehicle.

The trouble, however, comes in places like Dorchester or Mattapan where parking is on the street, and very often not in front of drivers' homes.

"We don't want you running extension cords across the sidewalk for obvious reasons," Franklin-Hodge said. "This is where public charging infrastructure comes in. It's a problem where there is a tremendous amount of technological change happening now that will really change how public charging infrastructure emerges over the next few years."

Private firms, fast chargers

The city and many EV advocates see a future where private businesses and work chargers will provide for most people, and the city will fill in gaps with its chargers.

That future has already arrived at Electrify America's Dorchester facility. As the technology has developed rapidly over the last six months, new EVs have come out with fast-charging capabilities – with 150kW or 350kW charge capabilities known as a "fast charge." Electrify America officials said that for a paid fee at the "pump," their 150kW chargers on Gallivan Boulevard can offer 7.5 miles of charge per minute, or about 150 miles in 20 minutes, meaning a driver could drop off the car for a charge while hitting nearby pharmacy or grabbing a cup of coffee.

Franklin-Hodge said the Dorchester location is a sign that private companies are finally starting to see charging as a good business, much in the same way that owning a gas station in the early 1900s was a good business.

"They have essentially created a gas station for electric cars in part of the parking lot that the bank didn't use very often," he said. "That becomes probably the best option for people who can't charge at home or at work. That's the model we see as coming to dominate the charging options for people who don't have at-home or at-work charging capabilities... My hope is that long term, you will see this become enough of a business that the city won't have to be the driver in getting charging stations in locations."

Officials from Electrify America said the station, one of 800 it now has placed nationwide, was located there to be close to an urban center in a busy neighborhood next to a major highway.

"Electrify America uses a data-driven process to determine where to install charging stations - looking for convenient, easily accessible locations across a variety of businesses," said spokesperson Gabby Jurkiewicz. "We know the Dorchester Bank of America location is in a high-traffic area near a major highway [I-93] and allows EV drivers to charge while completing everyday tasks like banking."

And for city officials? "Right now, we see ourselves as the catalyzer for people to feel comfortable going with EVs," Franklin-Hodge said. "We want people to look at a map and see there is a charging station around the corner from their house and feel like they can buy an electric vehicle. In the future, though, I think [charging services] will be a broad mix of public and private."

The role of public charging

When it comes to city charging stations, though, some, like Meg Campbell of Jones Hill, wonder if the city is thinking enough about equity in locating chargers. She said she worries it might not be on their radar.

"A major consideration when purchasing an EV is your plan for charging the battery," said Campbell. "Easy access and proximity to electric charging



City charging stations aren't often as fast yet as private stations but are free of any fees. This charger is a medium-speed charger located in the municipal parking lot in Fields Corner. Several city-owned chargers are in Dorchester and Mattapan, with others coming within 12 months. City officials see their charging stations as a way to fill in the gaps for EVs, and not to be the main source for the charging public.
Seth Daniel photo

stations means the difference between purchasing an EV or not...If you live downtown, Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, South Boston, Brighton, or in the South End, you have good access to EV charging stations. If you live in West Roxbury, you likely have a driveway where you can install your own EV charger. But if you live in Dorchester, Roxbury, or Mattapan, you're out of luck," she said, noting that it's unlikely your three-decker or older apartment building has access to on-site parking with an EV charging station.

Campbell said she hopes the city will consider implementing charging stations at public school parking lots to serve the school community during the day, and the general community in off-hours.

"Staff could charge cars while at work, and neighborhood residents could charge their electric vehicles after school hours and on weekends," she said. "What if the city not only made this a priority, but also publicized the rapid timeline for installation? This idea is a perfect example of an initiative City Hall – not the School Department – should launch, implement, and maintain as integral to climate mitigation as rapidly moving to a fleet of electric school buses."

Franklin-Hodge said there is a ton of thinking going on about this issue, even if it might not be heralded from the top of City Hall just yet. He said the city implemented an EV Readiness policy in 2020 requiring all new projects going through the Article 80 development process (mostly large projects with parking) to provide charger plugs at 25 percent of all parking spaces, and to equip the remaining 75 percent of spaces to be charger ready.

Because most large projects are in the downtown neighborhoods, the new

policy can seem to skew availability on charging maps – though Franklin-Hodge said they haven't forgotten about Dorchester, Mattapan, and other dense neighborhoods. While he doesn't believe most EV owners will rely on the city chargers, he said they do see them as a way to fill gaps within charging deserts.

"One thing we're looking to address first and foremost...will be locations where we have space. That means municipal parking lots," he said. "The good news is most of those are in neighborhoods. They're also in business districts...I think if you look at the map of city lots, they're not on highways or big shopping centers. That means the city will try to step in and fill the gaps no matter what the neighborhood."

The city has 13 charging locations with 66 plugs (many locations have multiple plugs). In Dorchester, the city has medium speed chargers in municipal lots on Hamlet Street in Uphams Corner, on River Street in Mattapan Square, and on Adams Street in Fields Corner. Later this year, 18 medium-speed charger plugs will be installed on Bowdoin Street and another set in Codman Square. Four fast-charging stations will be installed in the Hamlet Street lot next year.

Franklin-Hodge said he encourages anyone looking to replace a car to go with EVs. He said the city does push alternate transportation, but it doesn't expect that drivers will go away.

"EVs are critical piece of the work we need to do to address climate change in Boston," he said. "We want to reduce the driving that happens...but we know there are people who drive, will drive, and need to drive...We're really all in on this from the city perspective in electrification of our own fleet, and for residents and businesses, too."

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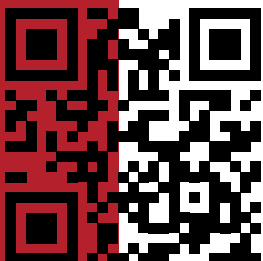


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