Wu moves on vaccine front: Passports for indoor venues beginning Jan. 15

City workers get same timeline for their shots

Monday that marks a major shift from current practice in the city, Wu, who also tightened the vaccine policy for city employees, was joined for her announcement by municipal officials from Salem, Somerville, and Brookline. Her office said those communities, along with Arlington and Cambridge, are also working to advance their own vaccine requirements.

This region requires Boston to take major steps and for us all to work together as a community amongst communities,” Brookline Select Board member Raul Fernandez said.

Wu’s announcement comes five days after the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) (Continued on page 9)

OLD NICK DROPS BY ADAMS VILLAGE

Mayor Wu and her entourage— including Santa and Mrs. Claus— visited Adams Village on the evening of Sun, Dec. 5 as part of the annual Enchanted trolley tour to light a Christmas tree in the small park across from the Eire Pub and Old Dorchester Post. A large crowd gathered to welcome the trolley and its occupants. (Continued on page 16)

Reclaiming empty lots fueling a revival west of Washington

Long-time Dorchester resident Milton Bramble stood on a vacant lot at the corner of Harvard and Standish Streets last week and recalled playing on the grassy patch years ago as a kid. It is just one of many empty, city-owned lots— many of them vacant for several decades— that still dot the landscape of the Talbot Harvard Triangle. Now, Bramble is part of a team selected by the city to build housing on the lot and others like it in the west of Washington Street neighborhood.

“It’s a very, very interesting neighborhood and I’ve lived in it all of my life,” Bramble said. “That is why I’m excited about what is going on with this development.”

The city’s Department of Neighborhood Development last week (Continued on page 16)

8 Blue Hill Ave. city lots assigned to developers

There has been a lot of missing teeth in the development of buildings along Blue Hill Avenue for nearly two generations, but there is hope that those gaps will be filled in as the first 8 of 30 city-owned vacant lots along the Ave. were designated for development this week— with five of them allotted to a young, local developer who has spent most of her life driving past the empty lots. (Continued on page 16)
A fire at a single-family home at 36 Hill Top St. drew a strong response from Boston firefighters last Saturday afternoon. The smokey blaze next to Dorchester Park was quickly knocked down, but a dog perished, which prompted a 3:30 p.m. No one else was injured. The cause remains under investigation.

Bill Photo fury

**BGCD closed until Jan. 4; Covid spike prompts call for extra health care**

The Boys and Girls Clubs of Dorchester closed down its after-school programming for the year on Tuesday due to “an increased number” of Covid-19 cases, according to a letter sent to parents and guardians of club members.

In the Dec. 21 letter, BGCD president Bob Scannell said that the club’s buildings— including the McLaughlin Center on Dorchester Avenue and the Marr Clubhouse on Deer Street, would “reopen safely” on Jan. 4 after contact tracing and a deep cleaning. Scannell wrote that he was “frustrated,” and added that “this closure may have been avoided.”

“As parents/caregivers, it is your responsibility to keep your child home if they are not feeling well and, most importantly,” he wrote, “to share any information, such as a positive case of Covid or other illness that may be pertinent to the wellbeing of our members and staff. If you are not certain of how or what to share, please call. We have hundreds of children in meaningful ways each and every day. Our members come from schools all across the city. Without the cooperation of our families, we cannot do this effectively or safely.

A plan to distribute toys away from the Christmas season during a Thursday event at the club was cancelled, Scannell said, but a drive-by event will go ahead.

**Electricity customers in Boston who choose the city’s Community Choice program as their power source will see lower rates, according to Mayor Wu.**

“Signing up for this program will help speed the process of Boston becoming a 100 percent renewable energy city and provide a more affordable option this winter,” said Wu, who was at the offices of VistAID in Fields Corner last week to promote the program.

Separately, Wu’s office, in concert with social worker General Healey, warned about contracts with third-party suppliers, which have higher rates than the CCE program.

With the new year, with the support of donors like East West Mortgage, we distribute upwards of 6,000 toys to more than 750 families. For more information, call 617-348-6559 or email give@bostonad.org. – ED FORRY

**Wu is pitching lower electricity costs through supplier program**

Electricity customers in Boston who choose the city’s Community Choice program as their power source will see lower rates, according to Mayor Wu. The program, launched last month, was put in place last month and run through December 2022. The program offers an average of 3 percent lower rates than those of Eversource, the local utility provider, for “at least six months,” according to Wu’s administration.

“Signing up for this program will help speed the process of Boston becoming a 100 percent renewable energy city and provide a more affordable option this winter,” said Wu, who was at the offices of VistAID in Fields Corner last week to promote the program.

Separately, Wu’s office, in concert with social worker General Healey, warned about contracts with third-party suppliers, which have higher rates than the CCE program.

With the Omicron variant of Covid-19 sparking fears of a new surge of the virus, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is stepping up its efforts to help more families stay in their homes.

The agency’s Eviction Diversion Initiative (EDI) provides mediation and case management services, legal aid, and rental assistance funds to eligible families struggling to avoid eviction.

Eligible tenants can apply for assistance through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), which distributes federal funds to help low-income people pay overdue rent and utility bills.

To apply, interested parties can visit mass.gov/eviction-diversion-initiative-get-help.

For extra guidance, DHCD operates a toll-free service, which is available online Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 1-800-474-1822.

The pandemic has had disproportionate impacts on most vulnerable communities and neighborhoods across the state, and DHCD wants to remind households in need that help is available,” said Jennifer Maddox, the state’s Unemployment Assistance commissioner.

“With this winter’s rising utility costs, we want residents to be wary of scams from third-party electricity suppliers and to check their bills to see if they are paying more than they would with the city of Boston or with Eversource.”

Wu also sought to ensure that residents who have fallen behind to seek help now.

KATIE PEDERSEN

**UPCOMING CIVIC MEETINGS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS**

Free, at home rapid antigen test kits for all city residents are now available for pick-up at select Boston Public Library branches and Boston Centers for Youth & Families community centers. The free test kits are currently available at BPL community centers at Paris Street in East Boston, 64 Framingham Ave. on Oak St., 123 Milford Ave. in Mattapan, and the Tobin in Mission Hill and Shilborne in Roxbury, as well as Boston Public Library Branches in Brighton, Copley Square, Codman Square, East Boston, Grove Hall, Mattapan, Roslindale, Roxbury, and South Boston with plans in place for additional distribution sites to follow, including all 80 BPL BCFV sites. Boston residents seeking a test kit will also be able to obtain kits for their immediate family, subject to supply.

The City of Boston will be providing more than 260,000 kits for distribution throughout Boston. Each kit contains two tests and are over half a million free rapid tests available for residents. Information about clinic locations available at https://www.boston.gov/departments/public-health/health-covid-19-covid-19-rapid-home-test-kits.html

**The BPDA will host a series of virtual public meetings beginning on Jan. 10, at 6 p.m. to review specific topics of the Dorchester Bay City project. The Jan. 10 meeting will focus on health, infrastructure, sustainability and resiliency. Please register in advance by going to the link: bit.ly/3bXJyzJ.**

Additional, topic-specific public meetings include Jan. 20 (housing and economic development), Jan. 26 (infrastructure, sustainability and placemaking) and Feb. 17 (urban design and open space). For more documents related to this project at bostonplans.org.

Boston Police will host two hockey skills clinics this month on Sat., Jan. 8 and Sat., Jan. 15 at Murphy rink in South Boston. Each clinic starts at 8 a.m. Space is limited to 120 per clinic. For more info.

**SEND UPDATES TO NEWSEDITOR@DOTNEWS.COM**

SEE NEW EVENTS DAILY AT DOTNEWS.COM
MBTA outreach on shortage of drivers features bonus tie-in

BY CHRIS LINSKI
STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

New MBTA employees could receive hiring bonuses under a collective bargaining agreement that officials ratified last Thursday, one of several steps the transit agency’s leaders are taking to attract workers amid a staffing shortage set to impact bus service.

The contract with Boston Carmen’s Union Local 589, the largest union representing MBTA workers, allows officials for the first time to offer bonuses of a still-unspecified amount to help entice new operators.

MBTA General Manager Steve Poftak said the bonuses, which the T’s board of directors approved as part of the bargaining pact, will serve as “an important tool in our toolkit going forward as we seek to address shortages in our workforce.”

Officials will also pay a higher training wage to MBTA recruits receiving their commercial driver’s licenses, promote dozens of drivers from part-time to full-time, and pivot away from an application lottery system to screen everyone interested in a position at the T.

In previous years, the MBTA has used a lottery to pare down a pool of job seekers for greater than the number of available positions. A spokesperson said one human resources employee recalled that a 2009 lottery list drew more than 33,000 candidates for jobs and remained in use until at least 2016.

But as is the case at transit agencies and transportation companies around the country, the pandemic has created major staffing challenges at the T. Officials estimate the agency is about 80 to 100 bus drivers short of being able to run its fall schedule without dropping trips.

“As a board and as an organization, we all need to be aware of the demand problem that’s larger than just the MBTA. It will require all of us to be open to identifying what works and make us as attractive as an employer can be,” Transportation Secretary Jamey Toder said. “The demand for that lottery system no longer exists.”

A winter service schedule that takes effect Sunday will pare back frequency on bus routes by about 3 percent in response to the workforce shortage. Subway schedules will not be affected.

Officials are hopeful that scheduling fewer trips will help address reliability issues exacerbated by the lack of drivers. As an example, Poftak said, a route could run with consistent 12-minute headways between buses, rather than 10-minute headways that sometimes become 20 minutes when the agency drops a trip because of its staffing levels.

He stressed that the imminent changes are “not a budgetary exercise. We are fully budgeted for a full level of service. We would dearly like to be providing that service and spending that money. Unfortunately, right now, we are having staffing challenges as is – frankly, every major transportation entity in the country is dealing with this.”

The agency more than doubled the size of its recruiting team, Poftak said, and promoted 75 part-time bus operators to full-time to help retain them.

Applicants must test negative for marijuana, which, Poftak said, reverts the tricky position the T occupies as an agency overseen by the Federal Transit Authority in a state where the substance is legal for recreational use.

He was unsure when asked how many applicants typically get ruled out by drug tests, but cautioned that “even losing a handful of people is an issue for us.”

The agency’s vaccine mandate is also impacting staffing, albeit at a low rate so far, as 25 of the 5,945 active MBTA employees remain out of compliance with the requirement that they get vaccinated against the virus or seek a religious or medical exemption, according to updated figures Poftak presented Thursday. Four of those workers have been suspended for five days, the second step in a progressive discipline process that could lead to termination.

“We are working with them in an attempt to make sure that they get vaccinated,” Poftak said. “We do want everyone to remain part of the workforce here at the MBTA, but vaccination is an important public health step, so this process will continue to play out.”

A dozen other workers had received notice they were out of compliance and have since begun or completed their vaccination process, Poftak said.

A total of 456 employees, representing nearly 7.7 percent of the workforce, have requested an exemption. About 90 percent of the MBTA’s staff is partly or fully vaccinated.

The two-year contract with Boston Carmen’s Union is retroactive to July 1, 2021 and will provide covered workers annual raises of 2.5 percent, MBTA Director of Labor Relations Ahmad Barnes said a majority of union members will see an increase of $4,148 to their base salary by the contract’s end.

All bargaining unit members will also receive one-time bonuses of $2,000 in pandemic pay. Carmen’s Union workers on the payroll on March 1, 2022 will receive an additional $2,500 in one-time pay related to the outsourcing of shuttle bus diversions.

The union, which represents more than 6,000 MBTA employees, said members ratified the agreement “overwhelmingly” on Sunday ahead of the board meeting.

“Our first priority remains to provide riders with the vital public transit services they need each day to get to work, go to schools, for medical appointments, and for other crucial daily activities. We think this deal helps support that priority in many ways,” said Carmen’s Union President Jim Evers, who added: “The working conditions improvement reflected in this agreement represent essential steps toward addressing the current recruitment and retention issues at the MBTA for the benefit of the rising public and for the public good.”

If the T opts to award hiring bonuses to brand-new employees, it must also offer the same to any bus operator hired with in the past six months offset by any pandemic pay they received.
By Katie Lannan

State House News Service

If elected governor, state Sen. Sonia Chang-Díaz would include money in her first annual budget proposal to eliminate bus fares at the MBTA and regional transit agencies as a major step toward a fare-free transit system.

Incentivizing public transit by removing fares for riders is one component of the climate and energy plan the Jamaica Plain Democrat released this week, along with transitioning the state to 100 percent renewable electricity by 2030, and building a “green workforce” pipeline that prioritizes communities of color and environmental justice communities.

Under her plans, the senator would also use “the full powers of the executive branch to block future fossil fuel infrastructure projects in Massachusetts” and “immediately” appoint a new state Department of Public Utilities commissioner “who are committed to a progressive energy agenda and who have demonstrated experience relevant to implementing the kind of bold transformative changes that our energy system needs,” Chang-Díaz said.

Chang-Díaz said her plan’s transportation elements offer “the fastest and perhaps the most widespread difference that people will feel most directly.” She said funding them would involve federal dollars and revenues from a proposed surtax on incomes over $1 million, and that some advocacy group LivableStreets Alliance tallied the cost of running fare-free local buses statewide at $60 million.

There is consensus among Democrats running for governor on making the MBTA free at least some days. Harvard professor Danielle Allen’s jobs agenda calls for “fare-free MBTA access for low-income workers,” while former state Sen. Ben Downing has said he would use $8 million in American Rescue Plan Act money to fund MBTA and RTA buses fare-free his first year in the corner office, with all MBTA fares, including the commuter rail and ferry services, free by the end of his first term.

Downing, who co-chaired the Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy Committee while in the Legislature and worked for the solar company Nexamp after leaving Beacon Hill, put out a climate plan in April that calls for 100 percent clean electricity by 2050 and for the state to be fully powered by clean energy by 2050 after that.

While eliminating fares for riders, Chang-Díaz also wants to electrify and expand public transit, a goal that involves increasing RTA and MBTA operating budgets. Her plan does not put a dollar figure on the budget increases. She said they those goals would take multiple years to accomplish, “but we do have to walk and chew gum here. This is what it looks like to move with urgency.”

She envisions full MBTA bus fleet electrification by 2030 and electrification of the RTA system and commuter rail by 2040. Her plan also calls for an east-west rail link and the transformation of the commuter rail into “a frequent, electrified regional rail, providing all-day 15-minute to 30-minute train service.”

Chang-Díaz said her proposals would require a variety of funding sources, starting with the constitutional amendment on next year’s ballot that would impose a 4 percent surtax on incomes over $1 million. She also pointed to federal infrastructure money that is “already in the pipe to Massachusetts,” and said she hopes Congress can direct more money here by passing President Biden’s spending package known as the Build Back Better Act.

In her plan, Chang-Díaz said, she would “lead the charge to identify additional sources of funding” such as repealing tax breaks for corporations that shift their income to offshore accounts or to transition to a completely fare-free MBTA.”

“We also need to put a price on carbon and use that money to advance the transition to completely clean energy,” she said in an interview.

Carbon-pricing bills have been filed for years on Beacon Hill but have not gathered the necessary momentum to become law. Gov. Baker last month was forced to scrap Massachusetts’s participation in the multi-state cap-and-trade program known as the Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI) as political support in other states eroded.

Republican gubernatorial candidate Geoff Diehl has been a vocal critic of TCI, which would have pumped up the price of gasoline.

The collapse of TCI was the second major blow to the Baker administration’s climate agenda after Maine voters rejected a transmission project intended to bring hydropower from Quebec to southern New England. Both come after lawmakers passed, and Baker signed, legislation earlier this year committing the state to reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Chang-Díaz said the dynamics around TCI do not push her from the idea that the state needs to adopt some sort of carbon-pricing mechanism.

“We just cannot have all of our whole climate change plan rest on things that are dependent on actors outside of our state,” she said.

To move the state to clean electricity by 2030, Chang-Díaz said that she would work with the energy grid operator and other New England states and would invest in developing clean energy sources through the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center. She described the transition as a “survival imperative,” given the effects of climate change, and added that it would also bring economic benefits as the state builds up a green economy involving offshore wind and solar power.
Kung Fu Girl Riesling $9.99
Kendall Jackson Sauvignon Blanc $12.99
Apothic Red $14.99
Crusher Pinot Noir $14.99
Seven Moons Red $14.99
Budini Malbec $14.99
19 Crimes Cabernet
Chateau Haute Cabanier Medoc
Casillero del Diablo Chardonnay $25.
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Bacardi Silver 1.75ltr $19.99
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Bailey’s Irish Cream 1.75ltr $49.99
Duckhorn Napa Cabernet $69.99
Cabernet Sauvignon $99.99
Brown Deer 1.75ltr $129.99
Stag’s Leap Fay Cabernet $129.99
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15pk $25.99
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12pk Can $14.99
12pk Btl $19.99
12pk Btl $29.99
12pk Can $25.99
508 Geneva Avenue, Dorchester, MA
(617) 283-1097
540 Gallivan Boulevard, Dorchester, MA
(across from McDonalds)
(617) 288-2886
615 Hancock Street, Quincy, MA
(Wollaston)
(617) 773-1332
All Liquors Stores Will Be Closed on Christmas Day
Sale Effective 12/16/21 to 12/31/21
Company preys on POC communities, legislator contends

BY SETH DANIEL
ReporTer Correspondent

About two or three times a week, just after dusk, state Rep. Russell Holmes grabs a pair of wire cutters and some gloves and meets up with former Boston Police Capt. Haseeb Hosein and his truck to take on a special mission: the removal of all signs posted by a company they say is preying on Black, Brown, and low-income communities and the elderly.

Driving across American Legion Highway, up Harvard Street, down Blue Hill Avenue and on just about every thoroughfare on the west side of Dorchester and Mattapan, one by one the duo removes the ‘Cash for Diabetic Supplies’ signs in a display of contempt for those who put them up.

On any such trip they can remove close to 100 signs in just a few hours, as they are that plentiful. Despite that, said Hosein, most of the signs are replaced – sometimes by hand-written posters – as fast as they are taken down.

“They are absolutely preying on our communities and on Black people in particular,” said Holmes. “It really bothers me. I’m not sure who is doing it and what customers they have, but I’m sure it’s harmful to people. It’s not positive. They put these signs in communities where people are struggling and maybe need money. Folks also need their diabetic supplies, and we don’t want them selling supplies and not having them.”

The legislator said it is illegal to take someone’s prescriptions, even if there is payment for them. He said he is suspicious that whoever is running the companies are actually “phishing” for insulin, too.

It seems that western Dorchester and Mattapan are the main targets of the “Diabetic Supplies” signs. Holmes said that is by design to prey upon Black communities in particular.

“When I drive up and down Gallivan Boulevard to the Expressway, you see the real difference,” he said. “You drive through Black Dorchester and they’re everywhere, but when you get to the whiter areas of Dorchester by Morrissey Boulevard, there’s not a single one.

They aren’t everywhere. They know where to target and I don’t think it’s right.”

Holmes has brought the matter to the attention of Attorney General Maura Healey in meetings with her office. He said he has also brought it up in initial conversations with Mayor Wu. He said he is telling every elected official and state government agency he can in hopes to draw attention to something that potentially is putting his constituents at risk.

Healey told the Reporter that Holmes has mentioned the matter in meetings, and they have been looking into it, but have no definite answers about it just yet.

The Reporter called the “855” number that is posted on all the signs and reached a man named ‘Kirk’ who said he lives locally and is only employed by the company to answer phone calls and collect supplies, which he sends by package to the company, the name of which he wouldn’t divulge.

He said there are a lot of diabetics in the areas where his crews hang signs who get too many diabetic supplies from the pharmacy. He said most diabetics don’t need all that many ‘test strips’ or ‘lancets’ which draw blood to test blood sugar levels. So, he said, the company he works for runs a service that allows people to donate them or get cash for the excess.

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“From what I understand, they do accept donations, but offer to pay for supplies,” he said. “People have a hard time and people might need cash…People throw away a lot of these things…We try to give them more than they need…It’s just an exchange program and we source the excess supplies…It’s a job that helps me to take care of my four kids and family.”

Following that call to ‘Kirk,’ the Reporter received a newspaper advertisement by text message offering to pay cash for selling diabetic supplies.

Citing the illegality of posting signs on public property, Holmes said he invites the rest of the community to join him and Hosein in taking down the signs from poles and posts in the neighborhood.

“My advocacy here is to say that if you agree with me, join in the fight and take these signs down whenever you see them,” he said. “We shouldn’t have to put up with this predatory problem. The message here is they need to come down all over Massachusetts – don’t prey on Black people.”
The Reporter

Wu taps Dot’s Millor for key City Hall role

Dorchester native Brianna Millor will join Mayor Wu’s team next month as a community advocate, advisor and passionate about social justice issues. She will be in charge of overseeing the board of ABCD.

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Kristina Pruitt, a student leader from the youth-based organizations, was one of three facilitators and primary presenters for the “Power of Youth” event. After months of planning and preparation by Pruitt and others, young people came together to discuss the importance of engaging with their community and the city government in new and creative ways. Pruitt lives in Dorchester and enjoys spending time with her family.

Codman clinic gives Dot residents a boost

Elfreda Buffong had tried to get a booster shot for Covid-19 at a pharmacy chain only to be told it wasn’t currently available. But on Tuesday morning, she was one of the first Dot residents to receive a third dose of the Pfizer vaccine at the Codman Square Health Center.

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Kristina Pruitt, a student leader from the youth-based organizations, was one of three facilitators and primary presenters for the “Power of Youth” event. After months of planning and preparation by Pruitt and others, young people came together to discuss the importance of engaging with their community and the city government in new and creative ways. Pruitt lives in Dorchester and enjoys spending time with her family.

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A prayer for a devoted journalist

If you are a person of faith—or just one of good-will—may we respectfully ask that you offer up some kind of offering, of thoughts, perhaps, at the moment you pause here at the Reporter. Barbara McDonough, 86, who worked for the Reporter from her earliest days in 1988 until her retirement in 2011, passed in 2021 in her 90s.

Barbara, as longtime readers of the Reporter know, tracked down meetings, and the documentary, and the community for much of her career in newspapering. She kept a hard-copy desktop calendar with the birth dates of everyone important in her world, which she returned, around the parishes and hills of her adopted home.

Barbara was— or “Bubbles,” as she was known to many friends—who filed the weekly “Bubbles Birthdays and Special Occasions” column; she also compiled death notices and tracked civic meetings for the “The Neighborhood Notables” section. She and her husband Vincent “Vinnie” McDonough, were fixtures at civic events in Dorchester for a half-century, well before the Reporter’s first edition.

As we wrote the week that she retired: “What most people do not know is that Barbara has been instrumental in helping to run the Reporter in many ways over the last three decades. Barbara has been the cheerful face that greeted visitors to our old office on Neponset Avenue, and, for the last 15 years now on Columbus Point. ‘The View from Pope’s Hill’ was, unlike any column you were likely to find in an American newspaper, a recounting of the daily life of a woman, a mom, a wife, who shared the moments of her life and the mundane with equal zest and inquisitiveness. It would be folly to try and find a replacement for Barb. Truth be told, we never tried. In May 2020, we prevailed upon her to revise the ‘View’ column for Barb. Truth be told, we never tried. In May 2020, we prevailed upon her to revise the ‘View’ column for Barb. With completion of the project in the fall, one might consider issuing a Request for Proposal (MCC), now under the leadership of Michael J. Bobbitt, might consider issuing a Request for Proposal (MCC), now under the leadership of Michael J. Bobbitt, might consider issuing a Request for Proposal (MCC), now under the leadership of Michael J. Bobbitt, might consider issuing a Request for Proposal (MCC), now under the leadership of Michael J. Bobbitt, might consider issuing a Request for Proposal (MCC), now under the leadership of Michael J. Bobbitt, might consider issuing a Request for Proposal (MCC)."
Wu moves on vaccine front: Passports for indoor venues beginning Jan. 15

(Continued from page 1) announced the city’s first confirmed cases of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 in three young adults over the age of 18 who were not vaccinated and experienced mild illness without needing to be hospitalized.

“This step will help increase our vaccination numbers, which we know is the best and safest way to keep our community safe and thriving,” Wu said. “Although Boston’s vaccination rates have been high, we continue to see serious racial and by age, allowing Omicron and other new variants to spread in our communities. Vaccines are the most powerful tool in fighting this pandemic, once again, and they’re the most powerful tool to allow us to recover as a city and to truly be together.”

BPHC Executive Director Dr. Basilis Ojikutu said the city’s policies have increased almost 90 percent compared to two weeks ago, with the city now averaging 369 new cases daily. “We are two hospital resources are stretched, and that an estimated two-thirds of those hospitalized with Covid in the city clung on,” Ojikutu, who issued the order establishing the proof-of-vaccination requirement, told the crowd during her remarks to be heard over protesters who arrived at City Hall while she was speaking. The group chanted, used whistles, honked horns, and pointed at the Star-Spangled Banner as officials described new city policy and their reasoning behind implementing it.

“Indoor vaccine mandates and mandates in general increase vaccine rates,” Ojikutu just said. “After New York City implemented its indoor vaccination mandate, known as the Key to New York City program, citywide vaccinations increased by nine percent in just one month, and the number of doses administered has risen steadily since the implementation.”

“Welcome to the people’s building,” Wu told the crowd of shouting protesters, “people’s building.” “I just want to emphasize, there is nothing more American than coming together to ensure that we are taking care of each other, that each and every one of our community members is safe, is healthy, and has access to the future and opportunities they deserve.”

A group called Boston First Responders United, which opposes vaccine mandates, criticized Wu’s policy ahead of her announcement, issuing what it described as “a call to action to our brothers and sisters in all law enforcement unions.”

“We especially remind our fellow members in law enforcement that civil rights and workers’ rights cannot be suspended, abridged, or revoked in America,” the group said in a statement, which also said any ongoing contract negotiations should be recessed until the policy is rescinded.

Wu said Boston officials are “in conversations with all of our city unions to proceed along all the processes that are required.” She said more than 90 percent of the city’s workforce is fully vaccinated and that she is “confident that that number will continue to grow as we host on-site clinics in partnership with each of our departments.”

Sen. Will Brownsberger, a Belmont Democrat whose district includes parts of Boston, was on hand for Wu’s press conference, as was City Councilor Lydia Edwards, a candidate for an open state Senate seat. On Twitter, House Speaker and Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives Aaron Michlewitz, a North End Democrat, called the vaccine-proof requirement “a bold and necessary step for many of us to feel safe when going out and dining out in Boston.”

Republican gubernatorial candidate Geoff Diehl, meanwhile, called the policies “clear violations of the civil rights of anyone who lives in, works in, or travels to the city” and said they “will make it even more difficult for Boston’s economy to recover from the pandemic.”

Diehl’s campaign also distributed a photo of a sign inside Boston City Hall, saying it was “taken this morning during the Boston First Responders’ Rally.”

The Boston Public Health Commission ordered, which it says will remain in effect until the executive director rescinds it, calls for “all reasonable efforts” to be made to secure voluntary compliance, including outreach, education and written warnings. It also allows for fines of $300 per violation “and orders of the BPHC to enforce the order.”

Christopher Carlozzi, state director for the National Federation of Independent Business, called it unfortunate that “private businesses are being placed in the unenviable position of having to enforce another government health directive.”

“City officials should take every step imaginable to ensure consumers know this is a city policy, and are aware business owners and their workers are simply being forced to abide by these rules,” he said.

Boston’s planned outreach and support efforts for businesses include a series of webinars and what Wu’s office described as “a long campaign to educate residents and businesses about the new policy, utilizing city outreach workers and inspectional services.”

Temple Gill of the Huntington Theatre Company, an organization that requires vaccines for its staff and artists and has been checking its image from residents for proof of vaccination or a negative test, said the new city policy “means that arts organizations don’t have to shoulder the responsibility of these decisions alone.”

According to the mayor’s office, 68 percent of Boston residents were fully vaccinated as of Dec. 14, and 79 percent had received at least one dose. On Tuesday, Gov. Baker activated up to 500 National Guard personnel to help staff health care facilities. Up to 300 members will be training this week to support 55 acute care hospitals and 12 ambulances.

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bhcc.edu/winter
Latest Bay City plan gets mixed reviews at kick-off meeting

BY SETH DANIEL
REPORTER CORRESPONDENT
Accordia Partners kicked off another chapter in the already four-year process to plan and permit Columbia Point’s Dorchester Bay City (DBC) with an online meeting last Wednesday. Despite recently unveiled changes to earlier proposals, the conversation, which involved more than 25 attendees, showed that some neighbors are still not satisfied with the development program or the ambitious meeting schedule that is set to begin in January.

The development team’s new plans, which were unveiled last week in the Reporter, followed the filing of amended plans with the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) that included the proposed acquisition of the Boston Teacher’s Union (BTU) property along with several updates in response to neighborhood input from earlier review meetings this year.

During nearly three hours of discussion, Accordia and the BPDA staged the first public meeting to feature neighborhood input, and while there was appreciation from residents, there were no standing ovations for the amended plans.

“We’re excited to be back before you again,” said Accordia’s Kirk Sykes. “This is a kick-off, really, and a continuation of the dialog that’s been ongoing for several years. But also, it’s a follow-up to meetings that took place last fall... This is a ‘wow’ site. It’s literally America’s most transit-accessible beach, bay, HarborWalk, and park combination site.”

In a one-hour presentation, Sykes highlighted some of the changes including the increase to 16 percent affordable housing (up from the required 13 percent), making better connections to Day Boulevard and Harbor Point, adding a splashy entrance point at the corner of Morrissey and Mt. Vernon, and re-designing the project as a series of “Green Gloves” leading “from the T to the sea.”

The nuts and bolts of the changes have now made the initiative a 15-year, five-phase development plan with 4.3 million square feet of office, research, and lab space (75 percent of the development), 1,970 residential units to include 296 affordable units at 60 percent AMI, and 165,000 square feet of ground retail space.

Some 40 percent of the developed site will now be open space, including large portions at the waterfront to connect Mt. Vernon Street and Morrissey and Day boulevards. Compared to previous plans, the addition of the BTU property has added 10,000 square feet of retail, 230 housing units, and 400,000 square feet of office/club space.

For all that, several remote attendees said the refined plans with modern buildings reminded them of the Seaport, which in many Boston neighborhood circles has come to stand for bad design and social exclusion.

“We don’t want to build another Seaport here,” said Dan Webber. “I don’t want asphalt and concrete and a parking lot, and I believe that has to go. I am for the density here, but if you’re saying that this isn’t going to create a lot of individual car and vehicular traffic demand, you’d be crazy. The Seaport created more demand than they thought, and the Silver Line wasn’t enough... This is an opportunity to do something different.”

For her part, Caroline Chou said she sees the plans as another exclusionary neighborhood not built for the existing people of Dorchester. “I don’t understand how this is different from the Seaport,” she said. “I don’t understand how it demonstrates that it will create equity and not just another segregated, wealthy neighborhood that also cuts off our communities from public space that is currently used by a very diverse group of people.”

Sykes had said from the outset that DBC is striving to be the most inclusive community (Continued next page)
around, and he identified that his team is working with Harbor Point and do not have any "fences" on their development to keep people out.

“Our goal is to have DBC be the most inclusive project done in America, not just Boston,” he said at the outset, promoting the job training programs and job opportunities that work with the project’s majority-office/ lab space.

Dorchester resident Eileen Boyle challenged the notion when she asked about the affordability of a housing piece and learned that some of it will be rentals on-site and some will be rentals off-site and that ownership opportunities would come from a $10 million donation to Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance (MAHA) for downward assistance to properties not part of DBC.

“Just a problem,” she said. “I think 296 units is an insult when you have close to 2,000 units. I just want to tell UMass that Accordia’s Dick Galvin said DBC’s traffic plan is working with a city/ state task force and they are accounting for that 10,000-unit number Walsh referred to, which was apparently news to a lot of the attendees.

The project is not without its strong supporters, though, as many of the unions and their local leaders spoke in succession about the fact that they would like to see this project built to improve the community and put local people to work.

Reaheem Shepard, of the Carpenter’s Union, said he lives in Hyde Park and grew up in the St. Mark’s area of Dorchester, and that it was projects like this that got him into the Carpenter’s Union – his ticket to homeownership and the middle class.

“We do have more than 100 members that live in Dorchester and our office is less than one-quarter mile from this site,” he said. “Our office trains young men and women who would one day be a part of this project... Boston is changing and without the Carpenter’s Union, I wouldn’t be a homeowner. These jobs are the gateway to the middle class for our residents.”

The upcoming online meeting schedule begins in January as follows:

• Jan. 10, 6 p.m.: Transportation, Infrastructure Sustainability and Resiliency.
• Jan. 20, 6 p.m.: Housing and Economic Development.
• Jan. 31, 6 p.m.: Inclusive Public Realm Improvements and Place-making.

• Feb. 17, 6 p.m.: Urban Design and Open Space.

Some of the community benefit commitments offered at the Dec. 15 meeting include:

• 15 percent affordable housing on-site and off-site at 60 percent AMI.
• $8.5 million for off-site resiliency solutions on Columbia Point, and $5 million for flood protection along the neighboring Harbor Point Apartments community.
• $26.7 million to design, permit, fund, and/or construct transportation infrastructure, with $17.7 million of that paid during Phase 1 to advance design and permitting.
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Stk# BH79557B, 4 dr., 4 cyl., auto, p/s/b, a/c, 75,186 mi.
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2013 Honda CR-V .........................................................$18,998
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Stk# BH23618, 4 dr., 4 cyl., auto, p/s/b, a/c, 55,479 mi.
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Stk# BH79557B, 4 dr., 4 cyl., auto, p/s/b, a/c, 75,186 mi.
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Stk# BH79437A, 4 dr., 4 cyl., auto, p/s/b, a/c, 21,015 mi.
Boys & Girls Clubs honor ‘father figure’
Bruce Seals with memorial ceremony

(Continued from page 1)

“Far more important than basketball for Bruce was his mentoring and being a role model to the kids at the club,” Scannell said. “When I think of Bruce, I think of him simultaneously crouching down to comfort a crying toddler and mentoring a teen who may have been making wrong decisions that day. He really cared. He always said, ‘I’m never leaving here.’”

Wu presented Seals family members with a posthumous citation from the City of Boston that cited his “lifetime of mentorship and dedication to fostering youth to be the next generation committed to service.”

Added Wu: “In his passing, Boston lost a great champion of children, but continues to gain the legacy of his work in the next generation he fostered.”

Later, she said, “It’s incredible to see so many people come together tonight to celebrate Bruce’s life and legacy. He was a fixture for 30 years at the Boys & Girls Club, and has changed thousands of lives, has opened doors, and continues to live on in so many of our community members of Boston. He not only taught athletic fundamentals—he also served as a father figure to so many.”

John Karalis, a former player on the Emerson basketball team that Seals coached for 17 years, offered his own tribute.

“I wanted to speak from the heart, because that’s where Bruce is for me,” Karalis said. “He taught me so many things off the court. Bruce connected with people. He became part of their lives. What we have here is someone who has achieved a level of immortality because he lives on through all the people he’s touched. The kids that he has worked with and mentored are going to turn around and do the same for others. That is a true legacy.”

Karalis said that he and his former teammates have contributed to a scholarship fund that has been set up in Seals’s name to benefit members of the Dorchester club “because we knew how much this meant to Bruce. The only way we could properly honor his legacy is to continue the work that he did here.”

Max Barbosa, a BGCD alumnus who now works at the club, remembered Seals as a “friend, a mentor, a father figure, and somebody I had a lot of love for.”

Seals’s children, Debrita Seals and Bruce Seals, were on hand and spoke about his love for the neighborhood that became his adopted home.

“My dad worked here for 30 years,” Demitra said. “That’s a very long time. There aren’t that many organizations that have this many employees that stay this long. It is truly a blessing and I would like to say that he enjoyed every moment here. He loved coming to work. It’s a blessing to be able to see this organization—many, many thousands of people—reciprocating this love back. It speaks volumes.”

Bruce Seals, who died last December, was a fixture at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Dorchester for three decades.

Bill Forry photo

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December 23, 2021
THE REPORTER
Page 13
The topic: How to build Asian American influence in Massachusetts civic affairs?

By Matt Murphy
State House News Service

The election last month of Mayor Michelle Wu showed what is possible for Asian Americans as they become a more active and influential bloc in Massachusetts, but, elected officials and advocates for the community said last week, more must be done to improve representation at all levels of government and fight racism and attitudes of "perpetual foreignness."

Wu, the daughter of Taiwanese immigrants, is the first woman and a "perpetual foreigner." She has been "politicized" against Asian Americans, said a national poll director who identifies as Asian American.

Asian Americans now account for more than 30 percent of the state population, said Danielle Kim, president of the Massachusetts Asian American Student Association, said a national poll director who identifies as Asian American.

"Asian Americans have been informally appointed as the personal representatives of the state’s Asian-American community," she said.

Anne Calef, of Boston, indicated that the Asian American population in Greater Boston over the last 30 years has grown by 277,409, making it the fastest growing racial group in the city and the region and trailing only Latinos in terms of total new residents.

Growth has been particularly strong in the suburbs of Boston, Calef said, where Asian Americans now account for more than 30 percent of the population. Asians, like Lexington and Quincy, in Braintree, the town has seen 151 percent increase in AAPI population over the last decade.

Calef, however, noted the civic power of Asian Americans is far from equal. There are eight House members and one senator who identify as Asian American.

Paul Watanabe, a UMass Boston political science professor and director of the Institute for Asian American Studies, said a national poll conducted last spring found that 42 percent of Asian Americans cannot name a single prominent Asian American.

"politicized" against Asian Americans has "perpetual foreignness," said a national poll director who identifies as Asian American.

"Asian American communities," she said. "I’m always listen."
By Dr. Edward Schettino

As 2021 draws to a close, I hope your year with your pet is filled with the never-ending joys of having pets in your life. As we all know, pet ownership can be equally as challenging as it is rewarding, and if there is one thing that I can convey to pet owners in this monthly column, it’s that you are not alone! Whether you’ve had pets throughout your life, or if this is your first time with a furry family member, there will inevitably come a time when you may need support. That’s why organizations like the Animal Rescue League of Boston (ARL) offer many resources, including this column, to help both pets and their owners thrive.

To start your new year off on the right paw, here are the top 5 tips we’ve shared with you in 2021:

**Prioritize Your Pet’s Dental Hygiene.** This area of pet care has become more emphasized in recent years. Just like in humans, neglecting our pet’s teeth can lead to periodontal disease and can result in diabetes, high blood pressure, among others.

**Poison Prevention is Paramount.** There are many things in and around the home that may be poisonous to pets. Certain foods, sweet treats, and flowers can be harmful to animals, so it is critical to not only keep our pets away from these items, but also to know what to do if they are ingested. If you suspect your pet has ingested something poisonous, contact the ASPCA Poison Control Hotline which can be reached at (888) 426-4435.

**Curb Pet Anxiety.** Our pets have gotten used to us being home more often, but as we head back into the office, many owners have noticed an increase in nervous or destructive behavior from their cats and dogs. If you have observed similar changes in your pet, contact ARL’s FREE Pet Behavior Helpline by calling (617) 226-5666 or email behaviorhelpline@arl-boston.org.

**Never Leave Your Pet Alone in a Hot Car.** ARL’s annual Too Hot for Spot® summer safety campaign reminds pet owners of the dangers of leaving an animal in a hot vehicle, even with the windows cracked. A car’s interior temperature can rise to deadly levels in a matter of minutes. Not only is it dangerous, it’s also illegal in Massachusetts.

**Prepare for the Unexpected.** It’s important to have a plan in the event of fire, natural disaster, or other life-altering situations. Be sure to include your pets safety in the planning process, and keep an emergency kit at hand, complete with a recent photograph, microchip information, vaccinations, toys/treats, leashes/harness, and a one-week’s supply of food and water.

Until then, I wish you and all of your furry, and feathered family members Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year!

Dr. Edward Schettino

in the president and CEO

of the Animal Rescue League of Boston. He has a doctorate in Veterinarian Medicine from the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University.
Reclaiming empty lots is fueling a west revival of Washington

One of the lots along Blue Hill Avenue and Fabyan Street that DVM will be developing as part of the Blue Hill Avenue Action Plan.

(Continued from page 1)

to a mix of retail, housing, and mixed-use residential and commercial spaces for sale in presentations to the public last fall. The lots were part of the "Blue Hill Avenue Action Plan," which is similar to three other groupings of vacant lots running from Blue Hill Avenue in Grove Hall to Grove Hall still in the process stage. These moves are the first part of a major initiative within the Blue Hill neighborhood to fill in missing pieces of housing and commercial areas that have been left unfilled by the development of the lots have been vacant for 40 years or more, with the city government putting them in the hands of local developers in order to use existing and new businesses in tandem with city transportation projects to create the retail and entertainment destination that was once a staple of Blue Hill Avenue prior to the introduction of commuter cars.

City Councillor Andrea Campbell was one of the key drivers of the dispersal of vacant lots as part of the action plan. She worked with the community to make sure that what was built matched needs and that it was built by developers of color or from the community. "I was proud to launch the vacant lot initiative in partnership with community and am thrilled to see continued action done by the city to activate vacant lots along Blue Hill Avenue, including the designations of a black, woman-led development team and Habitat for Humanity who will create both affordable homeownership and commercial space opportunities for our community," she said in a statement.

Former Mattapan Neighborhood Council (GMNC) has been carefully watching the process, and Chair Fatima Ali-Salaam said they were happy with these initial results. She said they worked very hard with DND to revise the original RFP on the vacant lots to make sure the city development would have a positive impact. "At the end of the day, we want to make sure that what's built on Blue Hill Avenue is an opportunity for younger developers who are from the community," she added.

Blue Hill Avenue is an opportunity for younger developers who are from the community. "I'm excited to do this in my neighborhood," she continued. "We've been given this opportunity and I want to make sure I give an opportunity in this development to other folks of color. I hope it sets a precedent of how local folks can make a difference in their own community with development." The daughter of immigrant parents from Cuba and the Dominican Republic, Villon-Maga said she attended Boston Latin Academy through her senior year, and that at point went into property management. "I've had a lot of consulting with firms like Thee Development and Oddo in Dorchester, she said being involved with project management and putting teams together with developers helped her to decide to jump at this opportunity, and to see it develops with of all the area, such as Juice Up Café at 1290 Blue Hill Avenue and Black Market in Nubian Square, she hopes that the development can trigger creation of wealth for new homeowners and for existing businesses.

The current DVM plan will incorporate eight of the ten lots, with the remaining two percent to 100 percent of the AMI and 20 units affordable housing units, the same price structure at three buildings — all eyes are on another in the 1000 block of Blue Hill Avenue. The previous commercial space for sale to business for sale in the area, with the price set between $140,000 and $150,000. Villon-Maga said she is excited to meet with the community to refine her plans and find out what people in the area really want from her development. "It's exciting to be the first, but it's also a lot of pressure in making sure I stay true to my community and they're not at the end of the process," she said. "The city and the developer are excited to do that, but we need this deep level of affordability to make sure we're able to create that wealth." She said that Boston didn't return a phone call re-

Mattapan’s Daricela Villon-Maga, owner of DVM Consulting, was recently designated to develop three city-owned lots on Blue Hill Avenue as part of the Blue Hill Avenue Action Plan. Seth Daniel photo

At the end of the day, what our residents care about is what the neighborhood needs to survive as long as the people who live in the neighborhood feel safe, said she. "It's about coming back and staying here because we care about the neighborhood and want to come back and stay here as long as the people who live in this neighborhood," she said. "I was looking for ways to stay true to the community and make this an affordable commercial space for local businesses as well.

Said DND Project Manager Julio Filiar at the PRP meeting last week, "Habitat Bos-
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For more information about the COVID-19 vaccine, please visit HHSI.US/CovidVaccine

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Jobs added in November while unemployment nudged higher

Massachusetts employers added 18,800 jobs in November as the statewide unemployment rate ticked up to 5.4 percent, labor officials announced last Friday. The jobs gains lagged October's revised haul of 26,400.

From May 2020 through November, Bay State businesses added 519,500 jobs, replenishing about 79 percent of the jobs that were wiped away in March and April 2020 at the start of the Covid-19 emergency. Leisure and hospitality employment increased by 5,400 jobs, the largest gain among the industries tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Job increases also occurred in professional and business services (3,400), education and health services (2,200), government (2,000), construction (1,900), other services (1,100), manufacturing (700), and financial activities (300). Two sectors reported losses: information (-200) and trade, transportation, and utilities (-100).

Joblessness has inched up since dropping to a yearly low of 4.9 percent in July, and the November rate of 5.4 percent was 1.2 percentage points above the national rate, labor officials said.

As employers across sectors describe struggles attracting workers, the statewide labor force participation rate stood at 66.3 percent in November, above the national participation rate of 61.8 percent. In January 2020, before Covid hit, Massachusetts reported a labor force participation rate of 66.6 percent. That figure fluctuated during the ensuing public health and economic crises, dropping as low as 60.4 percent in April 2020 and reaching as high as 66.5 percent in January.

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