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JPNC hears from Walsh at its Zoom meeting

BY LAUREN BENNETT

Mayor Marty Walsh was a special guest at the April 28 virtual Zoom meeting of the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council (JPNC), where he provided updates and answered questions from the Jamaica Plain community.

Walsh said as the City continues to fight COVID-19 and prepare for a phased reopening,

he is “grateful for the people who work at City Hall.” He also said that the City is making strides in increasing testing across the city, but “we’re on our own search to buy tests in the City of Boston,” he said. The City is not relying on the federal government to get testing kits.

He also said that “we’re about 18 months away” from a vaccine, and about four or five months from some type of medicine to

treat the virus. “We’re in this for the long run,” he said.

JPNC member Gert Thorn brought to the attention of the Mayor that in public areas like Jamaica Pond and the Arnold Arboretum, “the problem is people who walk seem to wear the masks and some runners don’t.”

The next day, Walsh addressed runners specifically in his press

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Despite empty roads, state’s traffic fatality rate doubled in April, MassDOT says

BY LAUREN BENNETT

With COVID-19 causing less traffic on roads across the Commonwealth, speeding and traffic fatalities have increased over the past month, MassDOT said on Monday in an online press conference.

Both Gov. Charlie Baker and Boston Mayor Martin Walsh have addressed residents and warned them about the dangers of speeding through empty streets.

Massachusetts typically has one of the lowest traffic fatality rates in the United States and is known for having some of

the safest roads in the country, MassDOT State Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver said at a virtual media availabil-

ity on May 4.

“This past month,” he said,

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A pesar de calles vacías, muertes automovilísticas suben

BY LAUREN BENNETT

Aunque la pandemia ha causado menos tráfico en las carreteras, el exceso de velocidad y las muertes automovilísticas han aumentado en el último mes, según MassDOT.

En un año normal, Massachu-

setts tiene una de las tasas de mortalidad de tráfico más bajas en los Estados Unidos. Se debe al hecho de que el estado históricamente ha tenido graves problemas de congestión de tráfico, los cuales prohíben a los conductores

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JP organizations included in latest round of Resiliency Fund grants

BY JOHN LYNDIS

Two Jamaica Plain organizations were the latest to receive grant money from the Boston Resiliency Fund to expand COVID-19 testing and continue to feed those most in need during the pandemic.

Mayor Martin Walsh announced Wednesday that both the Southern Jamaica Plain

Community Health Center First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain were included in the latest round of grant money. The two Jamaica Plain organizations joined 12 other organizations from across the city that will share \$1 million in grant assistance.

Walsh said the focus of this round of funding here in Jamaica Plain and elsewhere is to continue supporting the expansion

of testing at community health centers, building on his announcement of rapid expansion of citywide testing capacity. This round of funding also focuses on increasing food access for residents and supporting Boston’s small business community, ensuring parents and families have

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Kathleen Gaskin, JP resident and business owner, wearing a fashion-must mask.

Kathleen Gaskin turns upholstery shop into mask-making site

SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

On Lamartine Street in Jamaica Plain, Kathleen Gaskin works into the night in her home-based upholstery shop, Decorator’s Workroom. While the popular shop across from the Stony Brook Orange Line stop is closed because of the COVID-19 business shut-down, she is making masks for the Boston Area Mask Initiative.

Gaskin was furloughed in April from her position teaching upholstery at the Eliot School of Fine & Applied Arts in JP when the school had to close because of COVID-19.

“When I heard from the school about this mask initiative, I knew right away I wanted to help,” she said. “It’s a great project! It’s keeping me going – I can work in

Continued on page 4

Walsh provides testing, BPS updates

BY LAUREN BENNETT

Mayor Walsh said on May 4 that while Boston “may be on the verge of a downward slope,” it’s “not time to ease up” on social distancing and other protective measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

He said that as the Commonwealth and the City plan for a phased reopening, “we all have to stay the course right now so we can save lives. If we don’t, we risk dealing with a second and even worse wave of the virus.”

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Traffic fatalities

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saw a “pretty disturbing trend in the way people have been driving.” He said that preliminary numbers indicate that fatalities on Massachusetts roadways have doubled for the month of April. He said that while the raw number fatalities are similar, there are only half as many drivers on the road as there normally would be.

“Congestion is not an issue for most people driving during their regular trips,” he said. “As a result, we’re seeing that the driving conditions across the board have changed. There are not a lot of people out there, but there are people out there and they’ve changed the way they’re traveling.”

Gulliver said that there were

28 deaths on highways and local roads in April. Of those deaths, 18 were vehicle operators, four were passengers, two were motorcyclists, three were pedestrians, and one was a bicyclist. He added that about a third of the fatalities were on interstate highways and about two thirds of them were on local roads, and the problem areas are not concentrated in one particular area of the state.

“Be cautious and mindful that there are people,” Gulliver said to motorists, adding that speed and distraction are a main cause of these fatalities because roads are much more empty than usual. “We want you to be safe.”

He said that especially with kids learning at home rather than at school, they are much more likely to be out in yards playing, walking, and riding bikes, and people need to be aware that they are around.

“Slow down, pay attention to your surroundings...You don’t have the road completely to yourself,” he said.

He said as a general rule, states that have more congestion tend to have fewer fatalities, and there are “not as many high speed crashes on our roadways due to that congestion,” but more people are speeding on local roads because cars are not backed up, and “that tends to be a dangerous situation.”

Gulliver said that MassDOT continues to work with both state and local police to identify hot spots and where more targeted enforcements are needed.

“Reduced traffic volume is no excuse for excessive speed,” Jeff Larason, Director of Highway Safety for the Executive Office of Safety and Security, said in a statement. “We’re reminding everyone to drive responsibly, wear a seat belt, and watch the road

for cyclists and pedestrians.”

In April, two of the 28 deaths were in Boston, one in the South End at Mass Avenue and Harrison Avenue on April 22, where a bicyclist was killed, and one at 415 D Street in South Boston on April 8 where a vehicle operator was killed.

Mayor Marty Walsh reminded residents on Monday that the City speed limit is 25mph, and stressed that there are “lots of kids around.” He also said that if speed traps are necessary in the City, they will be used.

“The trend that we’re seeing here in Massachusetts does not appear to be unique as far as fatalities go,” Gulliver said. “States not as congested as Massachusetts are not seeing the uptick.”

The COVID-19 crisis hit the Commonwealth very abruptly, which did not give drivers much time to adapt to fewer cars on the road, Gulliver said. He said that

during the recession a little over 10 years ago, changes happened much more gradually and people were able to slowly get used to them.

Gulliver said that “nearly overnight,” Massachusetts saw a 50 percent decrease in volume on the state’s roads.

“This is a serious topic,” he said, and stressed that people should not “take advantage of the current level of traffic.”

He said that “the last thing we want” is for everyone to have followed all social distancing and other health safety guidelines and then have deaths on the highway.

“Highway safety, road safety is something we take really seriously at MassDOT,” Gulliver said. “We want to do everything we can to dial this back and get us back to being number one in the nation for roadway safety.”

Muertes

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conducir a velocidades excesivas.

La crisis de COVID-19 causó una disminución del 50 por cien-

to en el volumen de carros en las carreteras casi de la noche a la mañana. Por el contrario, durante la recesión hace poco más de 10 años, los cambios ocurrieron mucho más gradualmente y las personas pudieron acostum-

brarse lentamente.

“No hay mucha gente en las calles”, dijo el administrador de MassDOT Jonathan Gulliver, “pero los que quedan han cambiado la forma en que viajan”.

Las cifras preliminares indican que las muertes en las carreteras de Massachusetts se han duplicado durante el mes de abril, una noticia impactante considerando que sólo hay una fracción de los conductores en la carretera de lo que normalmente habría.

Las veintiocho muertes del mes pasado incluyeron 18 con-

ductores, cuatro pasajeros, dos motociclistas, tres peatones y un ciclista. Un tercio de las víctimas se produjeron en carreteras interestatales y aproximadamente dos tercios de ellos en carreteras locales. Dos de las muertes ocurrieron en Boston.

“La reducción del volumen de tráfico no es excusa para manejar con un exceso de velocidad”, dijo Jeff Larason de la Oficina Ejecutiva de Seguridad y Protección. “Les recordamos a todos que conduzcan de manera responsable, usen el cinturón de seguridad y vigilen el camino en busca de

ciclistas y peatones”.

Además, con las escuelas cerradas, es más probable que los niños salgan a los patios a jugar, caminar y andar en bicicleta, y las personas deben ser conscientes de que están cerca.

Los estados que históricamente no están lidiando con altos niveles de congestión de tráfico no están experimentando un aumento en las muertes automovilísticas. MassDOT continúa trabajando con la policía estatal y local para identificar lugares problemáticos.



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Resiliency fund

Continued from page 1

basic, essential needs to care for their children, and to continue supporting neighborhood-based organizations.

“During the ongoing public health emergency, Bostonians have shown their true colors and have demonstrated that we can lean on each other during difficult times,” said Walsh. “The City of Boston is proud to quickly deploy these critical resources made available by the generosity of Boston’s residents and businesses, to support organizations in our community that are on the frontlines of providing needed assistance to our residents.”

According to Walsh the Boston Resiliency Fund has now dedicated \$1.1 million to expand COVID-19 testing and conduct culturally appropriate outreach and education at 15 community health centers here in Jamaica Plain and across the City of Boston.

The Southern Jamaica Plain Community Health Center will use the money to expand testing at the neighborhood-based com-

munity health center.

Grant money will also go to the historic First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain to continue to serve and deliver hot meals from their commissary kitchen three days per week to seniors, homeless individuals, and low-income Bostonians.

“Due to the Covid-19 virus the First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain has been worshiping via ZOOM,” said the church in a statement. “Meals are being delivered Monday, Wednesday and Saturday and groceries (are being delivered) also on Saturday. We are currently working to increase our capacity to serve more of our neighbors.”

So far the Boston Resiliency Fund has distributed \$16 million to 179 organizations since the Fund was first launched in March.

The Boston Resiliency Fund exists within the Boston Charitable Trust, an existing nonprofit designated trust fund managed by the City of Boston’s Treasury Department.

For more information on how to make a donation, please visit: boston.gov/resiliency-fund. For general inquiries, please email brf@boston.gov.

BPDA welcomes Brian Miller as newest member of Board

STAFF REPORT

The Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA) last week announced Brian Miller as the newest member of the BPDA Board. A resident of South Boston, Miller is a financial advisor at Morgan Stanley, and founder of The Miller Group at Morgan Stanley which advises local organizations on their retirement plans.

Miller was appointed to the BPDA Board by Governor Charlie Baker.

“I am pleased to welcome Brian Miller to the BPDA Board. Already an active member of the Boston community, Brian brings a strong understanding of the City’s landscape as well as decades of financial knowledge

and experience to this position,” said Mayor Martin J. Walsh. “He will help us build on our work to plan for a future that is inclusive for all Bostonians.”


“Brian Miller has contributed years of dedicated service to his community and the City of Boston,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “He is well-qualified to serve as a member of the BPDA Board, and I am pleased to offer his appointment.”

For ten years, Miller served on the Labourer Center Advisory Board and co-chaired the organization’s Capital Campaign. He was a founding trustee and finance chair of the Boston Collegiate Charter School, and former president of the South Boston Residents Group. He also served as finance chair for Congress-

man Stephen F. Lynch. Miller currently serves on the South Boston Catholic Academy School Board.

“I want to thank Mayor Walsh, BPDA Director Brian Golden, and Governor Baker for this opportunity,” said Miller. “I am excited to join my fellow Board Members to help create new jobs, affordable housing opportunities, open space and more for Boston residents.”

As the official agency body, the BPDA Board votes on all final determinations and agreements at the agency. The BPDA Board will only act on final project approvals following an extensive community vetting and stakeholder review process led by BPDA staff.



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I understand there are a bunch of unknowns with this pandemic but know this; East Boston Savings Bank has endured many devastating events in the past and has come through each of these stronger and more committed to our customers than ever.

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Gaskin

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my shop and play my music and know that my efforts are helping others.”

Gaskin came to the United States from Trinidad in 1969 at age 24 and is a longtime U.S. citizen who always gives back to her community. She serves on the board of JP-based “Families Creating Together” and has received awards for community service from Action for Boston Community Development, Vinfen, where her autistic son receives care, Spontaneous Celebrations and other community organizations.

Starting the Boston Area Mask Initiative

In mid-March, Stephanie Cave saw on the news that face masks were desperately needed by those working in hospitals, nursing homes, homeless shelters, food pantries and other sites that needed to keep workers and those receiving services safe.

Cave’s ties to JP go back a few years to when she sold quilts and home décor from the Green Street storefront, now occupied by Papercuts bookstore. She also taught sewing classes in collaboration with the Eliot School of Fine & Applied Arts.

Cave immediately started to mobilize her sewing networks to meet the need for masks. She is now running the Boston Area Mask Initiative, a clearinghouse for requests and drop-offs, out of her Dorchester home. Her expanding network of about 250

sewers is producing more than 3,000 masks a week and has filled requests for approximately 17,000 masks in the Boston area. The requests are currently hitting a total of 45,000.

Her designs can provide for filter-ready masks which allow filters to be inserted or they can be used over the N95s needed in emergency rooms and ICUs for greater security.

Eliot School playing a role Eliot School Executive Director Abigail Norman praises Cave’s inspiring initiative. “With our country unable to provide enough proper protective gear to people, the Boston Area Mask Initiative is making a huge difference to public health. Stephanie has pulled together an amazing volunteer network based on shared skills and resources and shared urgency.”

While on furlough, other Eliot School sewing teachers, including Carol Price, Deborah West and Mihoko Wakabayashi, along with numerous sewing and upholstery students, are producing masks to distribute through the Mask Initiative, Worcester Mutual Aid, and directly in neighborhoods where the coronavirus is causing disproportionate harm.

The Boston Area Mask Initiative welcomes volunteer sewers, fabric and elastic donations, and volunteers to pick up and deliver materials and masks. They also welcome mask requests. Forms for both are available on their website <http://www.bostonareamaskinitiative.com/> and their Facebook group page. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/bostonareamaskinitiative/>

JPNC

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conference, telling them that while he acknowledges wearing a mask can be uncomfortable, it is necessary to protect yourself and others from the virus, especially if heavy breathing is involved.

JPNC member Max Glikman Brough up some concerns about the difficulties caused by pausing non-essential construction, especially affordable housing construction, and how some financing for these projects is “difficult to pause.”

Walsh said he recognizes the hardships this places on this type of construction, but he said that it is “probably one of the first industries to go back,” and is working with the industry on a phased plan to do so safely.

JPNC member Michael Reiskind, who praised the city’s Good Neighbors program—a partnership between the City and Nestlerly to pair volunteers with older people in need—asked the Mayor how a phased reopening might work, especially for restaurants and other small businesses.

“I think for restaurants,” Walsh said, there will be several safety protocols in place once the time comes for them to reopen. He said the City was also considering some type of promotion program advertising that it is safe for people to resume eating at restaurants to ease some of the wariness that might be prevalent for a while. People will also have to be aware of and abide by

the safety protocols once they become available.

Additionally, Walsh said that the City will probably “ease some of the requirements for outdoor dining,” and that “restaurants need to be a part of the conversation” about reopening, so they can be prepared and ready to serve the public in a more normal capacity than they have been during the stay at home order.

Fiscally, Walsh said that “I think the state is going to have a bad year,” as it is losing a lot of revenue. “That rolls down the hill and comes down to the City of Boston’s budget,” he said.

“I think we’ll be okay with the capital budget,” he said. “As of right now, I don’t see a big difference on the CPA funding or the capital side.” Where he does see impacts is on the social service side. He said that he doesn’t currently see the need to furlough anyone in social services, but a hiring freeze might be necessary. “It’s a very fluid situation,” he said.

Reiskind also asked about mental health resources for first responders, as many of them have been severely impacted mentally by this virus. Walsh said that the City is rolling out support for front line workers, food service employees, teachers, and other essential workers in the form of resource numbers, emails, guides, and videos to get them the resources they need.

Also on the Zoom call were City Councilor Matt O’Malley and Natalie Kaufman, Staff Director for State Rep. Liz Malia.

O’Malley briefly thanked the Jamaica Plain community for all it has done to help call seniors in JP and West Roxbury. He said that he had 40 volunteers “right off the bat,” and since then, 150 volunteers have made two rounds of calls to older residents in those two neighborhoods.

Kaufman said that Rep. Malia’s office is “here to help,” whether it be providing help with filing unemployment or listening to concerns that the Rep. can advocate for at the State House. “We can reach out on people’s behalf,” she said, if they have run out of money and have tried applying through available avenues.

JPNC member David Baron also thanked Rep. Malia and Rep. Elugardo, and several members thanked neighborhood liaison Lindsey Santana for her updates to the community regarding the virus.



JP resident and business owner Kathleen Gaskin outside her Lamartine Street shop.



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'We can not shelter in Place'

Commissioner Gross says police will not run from the fight

BY SETH DANIEL

The Boston Police Department (BPD) has a tremendous legacy and history of working through just about every situation – from terrorist bombings in the 1960s – but there are no officers still on the rolls that have worked through a pandemic.

For the BPD, Commissioner William Gross said they are entering uncharted territory as a police force – responding to regular criminal activity and COVID-19 situations as well, while also trying to protect the officers and staff in the department so as to be able to keep operating full-force.

Bottom line, they will not run from the fight, he said.

"We haven't gone through anything like this since 1918 in terms of working in an environment where there's a pandemic," he said in an interview on Tuesday. "We have had no delays of terms in service during this pandemic. The officers have been performing exceptionally... It's not joke though. I think the morale is great and work ethic is great, but certainly there is a concern out there about how this virus can affect you. When you're getting updated and getting information on this, there are so many opinions it can be confusing. But we can't run from it. We have to work through it."

Gross' message to the public is that the officers are filling gaps wherever possible in helping deliver food and in supporting the schools, while also fighting crime, taking guns off the streets and protecting older adults from a rising amount of scams and targeted crime.

The work has not stopped, he said, even as officers are getting sick, and even having Jamaica Plain Officer Jose Fontanez pass away from COVID-19 two weeks ago.

"We can't shelter in place," he said. "Not only do we have to respond to calls for service that report criminal activity, but also we have to respond to calls for mental health issues and we cannot forget our unhoused population and those people with substance abuse disorders. The first responders fighting through this cannot shelter in place."

ment in several ways.

On Tuesday, Gross said they had 81 sworn officers and civilians in the department who have tested positive for the disease, and at the moment there are 46 still out fighting COVID. However, several others have recovered and returned to work.

"We have people that are so committed - they go through COVID and heal and get back to work because they know it will take everyone to defeat this disease," he said. "That's inspiring."

One of those inspirations was Officer Omar Borges, who works the citywide drug unit, who recovered from a very serious case of COVID-19 last week. In a very emotional moment, he was reunited with his family and fellow officers outside Beth Israel Hospital. It was a victory, said Gross.

"He almost died, he really almost died," said Gross. "For him to fight through that, to be there with his friends, family and the medical staff, it was a victory for everyone. It shows everyone to never give up...It sends a great message to do everything we can to remain healthy and even if you're in the hospital battling

this disease, you can come out of it."

At the same time, they remember Officer Fontanez who did not win his battle with COVID-19, and that's a reminder for officers to be safe and to do things to help them in the field.

Gross said at the outset of the response, Mayor Martin Walsh met with the Police Command Staff, Boston EMS and Boston Fire to review all of the guidelines and protocols and systems recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). That resulted in two videos put out to those in the field on how to approach many situations, and the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) they would need.

Gross said officers now report to calls in masks, and are advised to wear them when off-duty as well when they cannot socially distance themselves. Having a mask on, though, can present a problem when trying to communicate with others in critical situations.

"It's very much kind of standard for us," he said. "Every call we go to now, we have out masks on and make sure everybody is clearly communicating. It's tough to talk though the masks and people cannot always hear you."

There are a lot of precau-



Officers and family members of Officer Omar Borges – who is assigned to the citywide drug unit – gathered recently to celebrate his touch-and-go recovery from COVID-19. Commissioner William Gross said it was a victory for everyone during an uncharted time for police officers.

tions also taken on calls. Police officers are one group that is discreetly given the addresses of those who have tested positive for COVID-19 so they can be aware of that if they are called to such an address. The information doesn't go out over the police radio, and no names are attached to the warning.

Meanwhile, they've also brought out an old practice known as 'Call Screening.' If someone calls 9-1-1 and only needs a police report for the matter – not a response – calltakers can do the report over the phone. It's something that used to be done years ago, and was brought back to limit unnecessary interactions in person. That has been one change in response, and has been working successfully so far.

Gross said another thing the public can do is to wear a mask when officers show up at a home,

and also be as forthcoming and honest as possible with the 9-1-1 operators. Give good information, and if one is sick with COVID-19, let responding officers know so they can be prepared to safely offer services.

The Commissioner concluded by expressing his thanks to all of the officers and civilians in the department – as well as first responders in the Fire Department and Boston EMS. He also had a heartfelt thank you to the health care workers – who the Boston Police and other first responders thanked with a rolling rally two weeks ago.

"We know what it is to bust your butt working and get no thanks for it," he said. "This was a sincere thank you to them. Like us, they cannot shelter in place... It was a public display to say thank you."

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Walsh updates

Continued from page 1

He said on Wednesday afternoon that the average new cases in the city have “leveled off a bit overall,” and the City is “moving in the right direction,” but the curve is bending slowly.

“We are only beginning towards where we need to be,” he added.

He said that “there’s still too many people not wearing masks,” and urged people to provide more distance between each other when outdoors. “Be cautious and mindful,” he said.

Walsh said that the City continues to rely on the Boston Hope field hospital at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, and as of Wednesday there were 166 patients being served there, 81 on the shelter side and 85 on the hospital side.

Coming out of a weekend of nice weather, Walsh thanked “everyone who did their part this weekend; keeping up with social distancing and covering their faces.”

He also thanked his neighborhood liaisons, who distributed more than 70,000 booklets to convenience stores, banks and

food distribution sites across the city over the weekend. The booklets include information on how to stay safe, make face coverings, and practice social distancing.

After Governor Baker announced last week an order for everyone over the age of two to wear face coverings in public when six feet of distance between people cannot be maintained, Walsh emphasized the importance of wearing a face covering while walking on the street, while riding the MBTA, while in the grocery store or pharmacy, and “anytime you are outside your home when you cannot ensure enough distance between yourself and others.”

He also stressed once again the importance of disposing of gloves and masks properly, as leaving them on the ground is not sanitary or “fair” to those who have to pick them up.

Wednesday marked National Nurses Day, and the start to National Nurses Week. Mayor Walsh said that “no one is working harder than our nurses right now,” and “no one is more indispensable” to Boston’s communities. “We have some of the best nurses in the world,” he said. “Thank you for your great service.”

TESTING UPDATE

As of May 6, Boston had

10,433 confirmed cases of COVID-19, and 473 people had died.

Walsh said on May 4 that 28,000 people have been tested in Boston, which is four percent of the City’s population. Last week, the City was able to increase testing by 44 percent, and Walsh said that the positive rate is at 32 percent and “trending down.” He said that numbers of positive tests were lower in Mattapan, Hyde Park, and West Roxbury, but they were higher in the Fenway after testing late last week. The percentage of positive tests was lower last week in East Boston as well, but the neighborhood still has the highest number of positive tests in all of Boston, Walsh said.

By the end of this week there will be 19 total testing sites across the City, Walsh said, including more sites in Jamaica Plain and Charlestown. He told residents that if they think they need a test, they should contact their local health center ahead of time as “you cannot show up and just get a test.”

On Wednesday, Walsh announced the expansion of mobile testing in the City, and a goal to test 150 residents a day, six days a week.

Additionally, “As part of the

ongoing work to make testing available for groups at risk of faster spread and more severe illness from COVID-19, the City will work to complete universal testing for individuals experiencing homelessness and then begin universal testing for other high-impact populations and sites, including first responders,” the City said in a statement.

More than 1800 homeless individuals have also been tested so far, and two have passed away.

“The antibody testing initiative is also wrapping up,” Walsh said on Monday, which will give the City “a bit of a snapshot of where we stand with people.” He said a summary of these results of the testing of 1000 asymptomatic residents will be made publicly available. The City announced on Wednesday that they also hope to expand antibody testing to “targeted populations such as first responders” once this initial study is wrapped up.

DISTRIBUTION OF GRANTS TO OVER 500 SMALL BUSINESSES

Mayor Walsh announced on May 5 that the City’s Small Business Relief Fund will be “distributing \$2 million in grants to 561 small businesses most directly impacted by closures, policies,

or general loss of revenues due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” according to a release from the City.

The businesses are located in every neighborhood of the city, and the most affected industries include hospitality, personal care, arts and recreation, retail, and healthcare and social assistance, according to the City, and more than 75 percent of businesses who were awarded funding have fewer than five employees, many of which had trouble accessing federal assistance.

“The Small Business Relief Fund grants are critical to help struggling small businesses across the city address challenges brought on by COVID-19,” said Mayor Walsh. “These businesses are the backbone of our economy, and the lifeblood of our communities. I’m proud we are able to assist them during this time, and am grateful to our partners who have stepped up in a big way to support Boston’s neighborhood business community.”

Additionally, the Boston Resiliency Fund has raised \$29.4 million dollar so far, and over \$16 million has been distributed. Walsh said that more than half of the \$16 million has gone to food and basic needs for residents who need it most.

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BPS will go ahead with choosing new Exam School test

BY SETH DANIEL

Supt. Brenda Cassellius said Boston Public Schools (BPS) will go forward with choosing a new exam school test provider for

next fall, with several companies considering bids and a bid due date of May 15.

During a call with the media, Cassellius affirmed there is an open Request for Proposals

(RFP) still out there that has a deadline of May 15, and that there have been several interested parties.

“There is an open RFP and we expect that to close on the date

that is set,” she said. “We’ve had a number of interested parties who have pulled down the RFP for that.”

Previously, the ISEE test, which is from the ERB Company, had been administered for entrance into the City’s three exam schools – Boston Latin School, O’Bryant School of Math and Science and Boston Latin Academy. That had been given for many years at the sixth grade level – for entrance into 7th grade – and at the 8th grade level – for entrance into 9th grade. After some issues arose following Cassellius coming into the new job last year, the test was re-evaluated and she put it out to bid earlier this year to get a new test, and also to reconsider the way exam school entrance is evaluated.

Many companies have shown interest in the new test, though it isn’t certain which companies will bid on providing the new test. It also isn’t certain how much weight the new test will carry in a potentially revamped entrance process to exam schools – which Cassellius has explored already with an appointed Task Force. The companies that have taken out copies of the RFP include:

- Achieve3000, Inc.
- Achievement Network, LTD.
- Act, Incorporated
- American Institutes for Research
- American Reading Company
- Amplify Education Inc
- Assessment Technology, Inc.
- Carnegie Learning, Inc.
- Cognia, Inc
- College Board
- Curriculum Associates, LLC
- Data Recognition Corporation
- Ernst & Young LLP
- Heinemann Educational Books
- Heinemann-Raintree/Capstone Global Lib.

- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Co
- Illuminate Education
- edmentum Inc
- NWEA
- Osiris Family Institute LLC
- SchoolCity Inc.

The former ISEE test company, ERB Company, did not take out an RFP for the test by Tuesday, and had previously said it didn’t plan to bid on the work in Boston Public Schools.

The exam school test has become a major stress agent for parents in Boston hoping to get their children into the best middle schools and high schools in the City. Routinely, all three exam schools are in the top 15 high schools statewide and are also nationally acclaimed. In this year’s annual U.S. News & World Report ranking of high schools, Boston Latin School and O’Bryant School of Math & Science were in the top 10 of all schools in the state, with Boston Latin Academy in the top 15. Getting in has always meant doing well on the test, and tons of companies, private tutors and after-school programs invest a great deal of time preparing for the test.

Since the RFP went out, many of those programs have been on hold and watching closely what will happen. That should have more clarity after May 15. Cassellius has said they plan on choosing a testing company by June.

One thing she told reporters last week is that the test will not be performed remotely or online in the fall – as that could be complicated.

“A high stakes test like that is probably not a test that could be performed in a remote environment,” she said.

Elugardo endorses Dr. Goldstein in his bid for Congress

This week, State Rep. Nika Elugardo (D-Boston) endorsed Dr. Robbie Goldstein’s campaign for Congress. Dr. Goldstein looks to unseat long-term congressman Stephen Lynch in the Massachusetts 8th Congressional district, citing a need for more public health officials in Congress as healthcare is consistently the number one issue for voters.

Elugardo’s district comprises communities in Jamaica Plain, Mission Hill, Brookline and Roslindale, and overlaps with the 8th Congressional District. She has served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives since 2018. Elugardo’s endorsement comes at a time when Boston is effectively shut down in the

wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and highlights the need to send more public health experts to Washington.

“It is my honor to endorse Dr. Robbie Goldstein in his campaign for the Massachusetts 8th Congressional District. Robbie’s experience bringing structural change to large institutions and expertise as an Infectious Disease physician is ever more critical as we try to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, and other urgent healthcare issues,” said Elugardo. “It’s clear we need to have more medical professionals at the table when making decisions about public health and wellbeing.”

Elugardo’s endorsement of

Dr. Goldstein’s campaign signifies a growing movement to elect new leaders that have more focus on opportunity, equity, and smart healthcare policy for all Americans.

“As a legislator whose district overlaps with the MA-8, I can attest that Robbie is the progressive leader we need in Congress. He understands what issues are most critical to voters, including housing and transportation, protecting our coastal towns from the impact of a rapidly changing climate, and ending the opioid epidemic. Robbie will not just support these issues, but will champion them as a sharp and innovative leader.”

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Arboretum’s Lilac Sunday 2020 is cancelled

In keeping with CDC and Harvard COVID-19 guidelines for large gatherings, The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University is canceling Lilac Sunday 2020. All formal activities such as tours, family crafts and science, and performances scheduled for Sunday, May 10 are canceled. Picnics will not be allowed on this or any day.

The lilacs will bloom as usual

over the course of several weeks (typically late April through mid-to-late May). We invite you to visit during these weeks of peak lilac bloom, but request that you practice social distancing from one another and respect our plants. If the landscape appears to be too crowded for safe visitation, please return another time.

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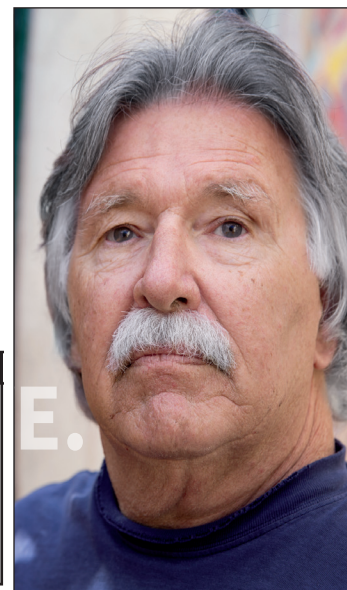
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Ocean Beach native and local surf legend Steve Bettis was diagnosed with MS in 2006. Although surfing is still central to his life, he hasn't been able to get out on the water in 10 years. For a man whose daily routine always included a few waves, more than a decade out of the surf is just too long. This is why the National MS Society teamed up with his buddy Robert "Wingnut" Weaver and used virtual reality to get Steve back on his wave. See their experience and find out how you can share yours at WeAreStrongerThanMS.org.

Together We Are Stronger.



Olmsted birthday party postponed, but project plans move forward

BY LAUREN BENNETT

While a large gathering at English High School to celebrate Frederick Law Olmsted's 198th birthday on April 26 was cancelled due to concerns over COVID-19, the venerable landscape architect continues to be remembered in other ways.

Olmsted 2022 Massachusetts, - a continuing project for conservation, public health and social justice that was formed in 2010 to lead up to its namesake's

200th birthday in 2022 - honored the Olmsted Legacy last Sunday by honoring Betsy Shure Gross. Credited as a leading force in the creation of the National Association for Olmsted Parks, Gross went onto serve as one of its first co-chairs before Gerry Wright tapped her to help him launch Olmsted 2022. Gross served as co-chair for its first five years and continues on as an advisor for Olmsted 2022 Massachusetts, Wright wrote.

Olmsted 2022 Massachusetts,

which has named Sarah Freeman, a public health research professional and a highly dedicated volunteer for parks, open spaces and a healthy environment, as co-chair, is currently participating in and supporting various projects, including the Franklin Park Master Plan and Shattuck Campus Planning, the Arborway Parkways Improvement Project, and the Back Bay Fens, while continuing to work together with the nonprofit Charlesgate Alliance, with sup-

port from the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, to develop plans and raise funds.

Moreover, Olmsted 2022 Massachusetts will share park experiences virtually and via social media, including a collection of images from every day of the year, as well as he Olmsted Birthday awards, which will be presented throughout the year at different programs across the Commonwealth in anticipation of a statewide conference to be held in 2021, Wright said, with

the hope of expanding it to an international conference the following year.

"What we're now doing is spreading his birthday out," Wright said of Olmsted's yearly celebration. "It may be spread all the way out until next year."

The Shattuck Campus Planning effort is one that is important to many in Jamaica Plain, and many members of the community are divided on the issue

Continued on page 11

JP cancer survivor "full of gratitude" as she gives back to Dana-Farber

BY LAUREN BENNETT

When Jamaica Plain resident Katherine Walsh was a graduate student at Harvard Medical School working at a research lab at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, she didn't imagine she'd be diagnosed with cancer herself.

Ten years ago at the age of 23, Walsh was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL), and went through two years of radiation and chemotherapy at the very place she had just been conducting cancer research. She had to put her PhD on hold.

"It was pretty surreal," she said, "but it did give me a new sense of purpose when I came back to graduate school and a real drive to do the work." She said that even though she was

wrapped up in the "stress of exams," her own diagnosis was a "constant reminder of why we're all doing this in the first place."

Now, Walsh works at the Broad Institute in Cambridge on oncology drug discovery.

Walsh has also participated in the Boston Marathon Jimmy Fund Walk for the past six years, and this year's walk, slated for October 4, will mark the 10th anniversary of her cancer diagnosis. The annual walk raises money for adult and pediatric care and cancer research at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

Walsh is the Team Captain of the Young Adult Program, which she chose to support because its mission was one that helped her as a cancer patient.

"It was extremely isolating to be a patient," Walsh said. "Emo-

tionally, it was really hard." She said that she quickly learned through her own experience that some situations are "unique to young adult patients," as many are just beginning their careers and figuring out who they are.

"All of a sudden I was back in my parents' house and being taken care of and sleeping in my childhood bedroom," she said, and had to watch her peers go through milestones of being a young adult. Due to her weak immune system, she had to remain inside the house or be in the hospital for long stretches at a time.

She said the Young Adult Program at Dana-Farber was "really important to me for my process and healing" to meet other people her age who were going through a similar experience.

The program also allowed her to participate in events like an annual conference where she met people that have become "lifelong friends," she said. "It was a silver lining of the experience."

The program also provides patients with resources on things like finances and nutrition to help them ease back into a normal life.

She said that because of her great experience with the Young Adult Program, "I really feel like it's essential and extremely important to help others connect and get through this experience. It's important for me to give back to that community."

For her seventh Jimmy Fund Walk this fall, she said she is proud to lead a team of patients, caregivers, friends, and support-

ers who will all walk together to raise money for the Young Adult Program, which will receive all of the funds raised by Walsh's team.

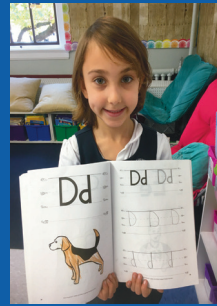
"It is gratifying to us to know we're supporting others in similar situations," she said.

This year is also special because she will be joined by her young son who will cross the finish line with her. "It's going to be really emotional," she said. "It's really just complete gratitude when I look at my son and when I think about where we've come from it's just pretty amazing. I honestly cannot say enough about the care team I had and the support system they formed around my family and myself. I feel like they're all a part of my story and my family's story."



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BPS, Mayor share new policies for the remainder of the school year

BY JOHN LYNDS

Boston Public School (BPS) Superintendent Brenda Cassellius and Mayor Martin Walsh last week shared new policies with families and schools for remote learning that went into effect Monday.

This updated learning plan gives more guidance for students and teachers around attendance, assignments, grading, and scheduling. It also provides predictability for families with routine class schedules and contact between students and teachers.

“Since Governor Baker announced that all Massachusetts schools will remain closed through this academic year, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley recently released guidance to schools, underscoring that student learning will continue, while keeping health and safety as our top priority,” said Cassellius. “We understand that this is a challenging time for all of us

as we balance work, home life, caring for loved ones, and the education of our children while also working to remain safe during this health crisis.”

As part of the new policies, no student will be held back in their grade. All students will advance to the next grade and have opportunities for summer learning and additional support in the fall. If parents believe their child would benefit from repeating their grade, they can request a meeting with their teacher to discuss further.

“Every school will share a class schedule with families and students,” said Cassellius. “Teachers will record daily attendance each week. Attendance includes completing learning activities or interaction with teachers/staff. Teachers in grades K0-5 will record daily attendance. Teachers in grades 6-12 will record daily attendance by course.”

Cassellius said students will receive grades and feedback on their assigned projects and tasks.

Elementary students (grades K0-5) will receive a Term 3 grade

of Meets Expectations,

Approaching Expectations, or Not Yet Meeting Expectations. Secondary students (grades 6-12) will receive a Term 3 letter grade if it is above their average grade from Terms 1 and 2.

Otherwise, secondary students will earn a grade of Pass or Incomplete and that grade will not be factored into their final grade.

“Each school schedule will include class times, and a school staff member will contact each student at least every three days,” said Cassellius.

Students with disabilities will receive services that can reasonably be provided in a remote learning environment by their assigned team of educators in relation to the goals identified in the student’s IEP and ELS students will receive ESL instruction based on their English Development Level.

As for graduation for seniors Cassellius said graduation is a celebration of students, their families, and their school communities and BPS is working on

several opportunities to celebrate this year’s graduations citywide and with each school.

We look forward to sharing more information soon.

“We will continue to assess and shift how we meet our students’ needs during this unprecedented closure based on feedback,” said Cassellius. My team and I have convened weekly Equity Roundtables to hear from educators, parents, social service providers, and community partners to gather real-time feedback and identify challenges so we can direct resources to support students and families who need them.”

Both Cassellius and Mayor Walsh thanked Boston’s teachers and staff for their continued cooperation during this difficult time, acknowledging that this week is Teachers Appreciation Week.

The Mayor stated that throughout the final weeks of the

school year, BPS will continue distributing free meals for students and other resources; connecting with students on a routine basis; and collaborating with school communities, nonprofit partners, and parent groups, to ensure that students are getting the support they need.

“We are so grateful to our teachers, food workers, technology staff, and other front-line workers who are working tirelessly to get our children what they need to learn and stay healthy,” said Cassellius. “We care deeply for our students and families and look forward to continuing to build meaningful connections with all of you as we close out our school year over the next several weeks. If you have any questions about this information please contact your school principal.”

Olmstead

Continued from page 10

of whether to keep homeless and recovery services on the land once the Shattuck Hospital moves to the South End. Many believe the services are necessary, but they should be placed in an alternative location so the land can be returned to Franklin Park.

“My position is clearly unless other places are found we must then create an open campus that has open space that uses what Olmsted uses when he created residential communities,” Wright told the Gazette. “We’re still working on attempting to find places they could put these facilities outside of what used to be Franklin Park,” he added, but “I have been off the opinion that that is probably unrealistic.”

Wright said that as he continues to move forward with the Olmsted 2022 project, “I am working with people who believe that we need to reevaluate and see how we develop these individual parks in their own right.” He said that Olmsted designed each Emerald Necklace Park separately “with a unique center point,” but the parks are all connected by pathways and waterways.

As for the Back Bay Fens, “this is an area that we have some real vision for,” he said. There’s a terrific opportunity for creating something there that will bring more money to sustain the parks.”

He said one of the biggest issues supporters of these parks have is “to have people appreciate what Mr. Olmsted thought was the centering part of any park.”

Olmsted 2022 will also soon

announce the beginning of its Olmsted Nature Centers, which will provide information connecting history, art, and science at sites across the state, Wright said.

“The long term goal is to keep things going in Olmsted’s principles and practices; his life and works,” Wright said of Olmsted 2020. “That’s my centering point.”

Dan Murphy contributed to this article.

**HAPPY MOTHER’S DAY!
FELIZ DIA DE LAS MADRES!**



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EDITORIAL

THIS SUNDAY IS MOTHER'S DAY

During this time of unprecedented upheaval because of the novel coronavirus pandemic, the rituals that most of us traditionally follow either have been eliminated or drastically changed because of the need to practice physical distancing.

So too, the manner in which we observe Mother's Day, which is this Sunday, May 10, will be different from all others before it. The traditional family get-togethers that we usually observe will be cancelled or modified to a great extent because of the situation in which we find ourselves.

However, it often is said that necessity is the mother of invention (no pun intended) and in that spirit we're sure that all of our readers will find a way to honor their mothers in some fashion, whether it be something as simple as a phone call or by a family gathering via Zoom.

Oftentimes, the smallest of gestures can mean the most.

We hope too, that Mother's Day this year will serve as a way for all of us to think about what is most important in our lives -- our family, friends, and loved ones -- as we struggle to make sense of these turbulent times amidst a pandemic.

We know we join with all of our readers in wishing all of our moms a happy Mother's Day.

THIS IS NO TIME FOR HOOVERISM

Herbert Hoover had been President for about seven months when the stock market crashed in October, 1929. Although there have been many causes attributed to the onset of the Great Depression, the crash generally is viewed as the trigger point for what still rates as the greatest economic downturn in our nation's history.

However, even as the economy continued to sink in the aftermath of the crash, Hoover adopted a hands-off policy toward the economy. Although Herbert Hoover was a good man with lots of government experience prior to becoming president, he refused to take action of any kind, held back by a combination of a lack of imagination and his rigid, free-market view of the U.S. economy.

Hoover failed to recognize the severity of the situation or leverage the power of the federal government to address it. He was widely viewed as callous and insensitive toward the suffering of millions of desperate Americans.

By the time Hoover left office in early 1933, unemployment in the U.S. had reached 25% and millions of Americans literally were starving. The iconic photos from that era of Americans lined up for handouts from the soup kitchens that were operated by private charities still are seared into our collective memory even today.

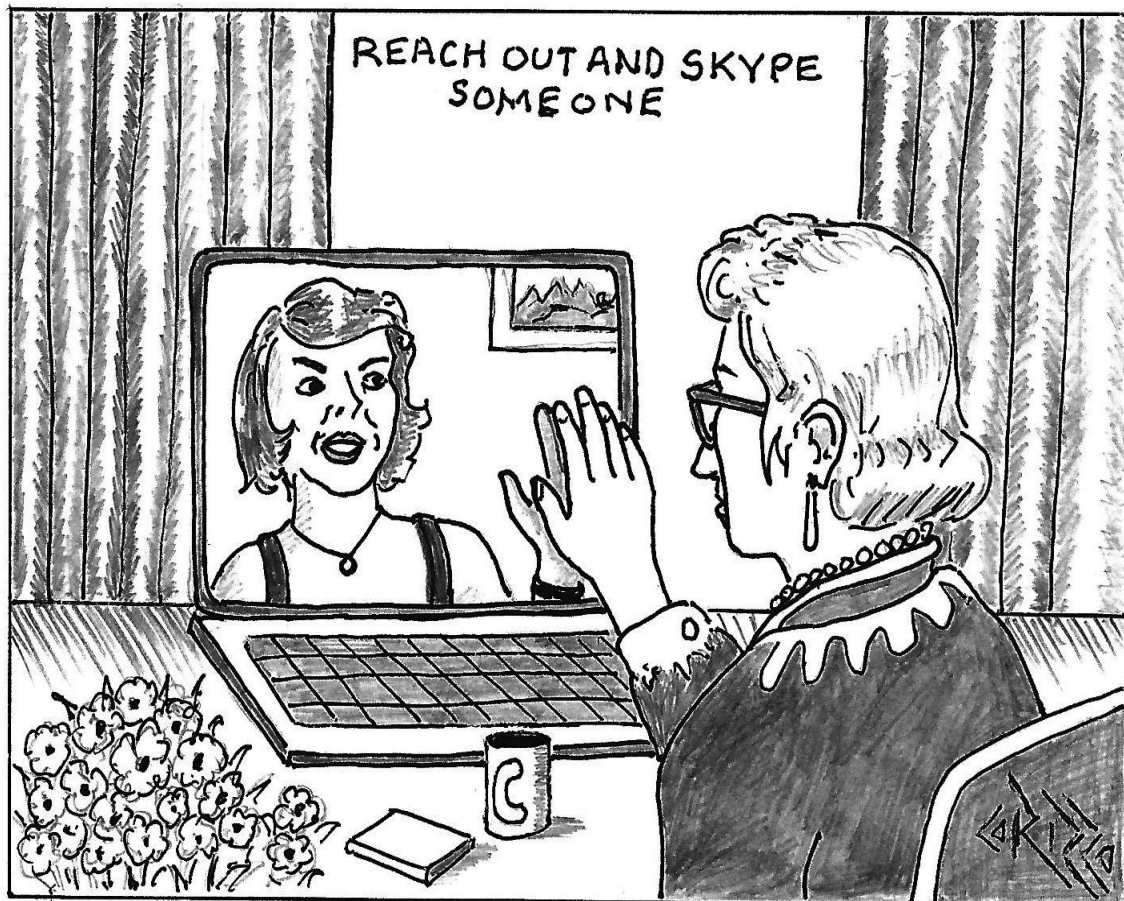
What brought to mind the inaction of Herbert Hoover during the Great Depression were comments made this past Sunday by Lawrence Kudlow, the former TV personality who now is one of the chief economic advisers to President Trump.

Basically, Kudlow said the Trump administration is taking a wait-and-see approach before committing to more federal support for Americans as the United States continues to weather the coronavirus crisis and the accompanying economic damage.

"Well, I don't want to get too far ahead of the story, Jake," Kudlow said to CNN's Jake Tapper. "There may well be additional legislation. There's a kind of pause period right now."

But "getting ahead" of this crisis precisely is what policymakers need to do. While it certainly is true that the federal government has spent trillions of dollars in various ways to assist Americans, it also is true that the degree of economic assistance -- as well as a coordinated plan -- that will be necessary simply to keep Americans fed during the ongoing crisis will require additional trillions of dollars as the economy plunges into free-fall without a parachute in the months ahead.

The lesson of the Great Depression is that a national government cannot be a passive bystander during a time of economic collapse. Speedy, forceful, and creative action is required today to prevent an already-calamitous situation from becoming worse tomorrow.



HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY... MAY 10.

LETTERS

WE WERE DISMAYED

Dear Editor

We were dismayed to hear that the Forest Hills Cemetery had shut its gates to visitors who wished to seek refuge from their "sheltering in" and to spend time, often with their children, in a healthy, green and endlessly interesting place. We wondered what e. e. cummings would think, memorialized, as he is, by the marvelous vined arch near the pond that graces Forest Hills' grounds. Lover of children's sensibilities, and a man who never gave up his childlike perspective, perhaps there's a clue in his poem called "maggie and milly and molly and may." --

maggie and milly and molly
and may
went down to the beach (to play
one day)

and maggie discovered a shell
that sang
so sweetly she couldn't remem-
ber her
troubles, and

milly befriended a stranded
star
whose rays five languid fingers
were;

and molly was chased by a
horrible thing
which raced sideways while
blowing
bubbles; and

may came home with a smooth
round stone
as small as a world and as
large as alone.

For whatever we lose (like a
you or a me)
it's always ourselves we find in
the sea.

BOB CRABTREE

and responsibility to maintain a quiet, respectful atmosphere where the bereaved can visit the graves of family and friends in peace. Granted they have the right to protect their trees from children whose parents do not restrain them. Granted, a cemetery is not a playground, a dog park or a raceway. Granted that children and adults should learn respect for the dead.

The cemetery management and trustees, however, are caretakers not just of a resting place for the dead but a sanctuary for the living. They are responsible, therefore, for sharing this place of peace and beauty with the people of Boston.

On the many occasions when I've walked through the cemetery, I've seen no signs instructing visitors specifically on what was and was not acceptable behavior. I saw no signs warning visitors that violation of these guidelines might result in closing the cemetery. This was and is regrettable because this was an

LOCKOUT DURING LOCKDOWN

Dear Editor

The management and trustees of the Forest Hills Cemetery have responded to lockdown with a lockout.

Granted they have the right

Continued on page 14

PLEASE WRITE...

The Gazette welcomes letters to the editor. Word limit: 500. Deadline: Friday at 5 p.m. one week before publication. Letters may be emailed to letters@JamaicaPlainGazette.com. Please include address and telephone number for verification purposes. Anonymous letters will not be published. More information: 617-524-2626

OP-ED

Emergency care has not been put on hold if you need medical assistance, seek help

BY MAYOR MARTIN J. WALSH

During this public health emergency, many of us are feeling stressed and anxious. Days are uncertain and our routines have shifted. Many people are working remotely, or have lost their jobs. Students are learning online. Many of our favorite events have been canceled. For some time now, I have urged you to follow many precautions like staying home, covering your face when outside, and not visiting friends and family. But, one thing has not changed and should not change: if you are experiencing an emergency, please call 9-1-1 for help. Boston EMS and our emergency rooms are ready to help you.

In anticipation of Boston's surge in COVID-19 cases, we

have been doing our part to not overwhelm our emergency departments. We are asking individuals to call their primary care provider or 3-1-1 if you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or have any health-related questions. You can also visit buoyhealth.com/mass for an online screening of COVID-19 symptoms. But, life-threatening emergencies like difficulty breathing or pain or pressure in the chest should be addressed immediately by calling 9-1-1.

Boston EMS will provide you the necessary pre-hospital care and transport you to the nearest emergency department if needed. Hospitals have seen dramatic decreases in health emergencies, like heart attacks, strokes and appendicitis. Even though coronavirus is a new challenge, that does not mean other health chal-

lenges are less present. Please do not delay getting life-saving care because of fear of getting coronavirus. Go to the emergency room if you think you are in need of emergency care. Our hospitals in Boston have been taking many steps to ensure safety and cleanliness, and they have space for you.

Every day we are planning and responding to reduce the further spread of coronavirus. One piece of this has been increasing hospital capacity. We know it is important to be ready to treat as many people as possible, and not just for COVID-19. We must also help front line workers, like our medical professionals, first responders, grocery store employees, public servants and sanitation workers, stay healthy by practicing our guidelines: staying home as much as pos-

sible, covering your face when outside your home, keeping at least 6 feet of distance from other people, washing your hands frequently, and disinfecting frequently-touched surfaces.

I know it's a hard adjustment, and it seems like this has been going on for much longer than it has. But this virus will not stop spreading if everyone follows our guidelines. I want to thank everyone who has been avoiding gatherings and wearing a face covering when they go outside. I know it's not always comfortable or easy to do, especially as we move into warmer weather. Your actions will directly help save lives. To those of you ignoring these guidelines, I urge you to reflect on the consequences of your actions. Is ignoring these guidelines worth risking the lives of your friends, family and

neighbors? We can overcome this, but we have to work together.

The City of Boston will continue to take the proper steps to respond to this crisis in a comprehensive way. This is a difficult time for everyone around the world. It's okay to feel stressed. We will get through this together by following the public health guidelines, working together and supporting each other, one day at a time.

For more information on Boston's COVID-19 response, please visit boston.gov/coronavirus or text BOSCOVID to 888-777 to receive text alerts on a regular basis, available in 11 languages. For non-emergency questions, please call 3-1-1.

Martin J. Walsh is the Mayor of Boston.

OP-ED

Boston pets and COVID-19

BY MARTHA SMITH-BLACKMORE, DVM,

The National Veterinary Services Laboratory of the USDA announced on April 22, 2020 that two pet cats from different households in the United States were confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection. These are the first pets in the U.S. with positive tests for the virus that causes COVID-19 in people. Subsequently, a family dog from Chapel Hill, North Carolina tested positive. It appears that cats and dogs can become infected, but currently we have no information that suggests the virus can go from pets to people.

If you are sick with symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, dry cough,

difficulty breathing, tiredness, nasal congestion or runny nose, sore throat, diarrhea, aches and pains) you should limit contact with pets and other animals, just as you would restrict your contact with other people. When possible, have another family or household member care for the animals while you are sick. If you have a service animal or you must care for pets, wear a face mask or covering; don't share food, kiss, or hug animals; and wash your hands before and after any contact with your pet, service animal, or other animals. If you are sick, you should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or

pets in your home.

Good general safety practice includes not allowing pets to interact with people or other animals outside the household; keeping cats indoors to prevent them from interacting with other animals or people; walking dogs on a leash, maintaining at least 6 feet from other people and animals; avoiding public places where large numbers of people and dogs gather.

Keeping pets indoors or under close supervised conditions not only protects them against COVID-19 infection, it prevents them from suffering other harms commonly encountered outside.

Now is a great time to practice teaching your pets skills and

tricks with positive reinforcement, and to spend extra time at home grooming your pets. Walking your dog is important for both animal and human health and well-being. Love your animals, keep them close to you (unless you are sick!), away from other people and together all of us, whether we have two legs or four, will get through this together!

For more information about COVID-19 and pets, visit the CDC and the AVMA.

For additional information on resources and COVID-19, visit boston.gov/coronavirus.

Martha Smith-Blackmore, DVM, Boston Animal Care and Control.

OP-ED

Covid-19 and Mother's Day

BY DR. GLENN MOLLETTE

I wish mom were still here so I could take her out to Sunday dinner. The problem with Sunday dinner this Mother's Day is that most of the restaurants either won't be open yet or operating under new guidelines. Restaurants make their biggest payday of the year typically on Mother's Day. Even in states that

are wide open for dining there is the problem of social distancing. Can you imagine this week going to a restaurant that only is allowed 25% occupancy or maybe 50% occupancy at best? Many states will still be closed tight this Sunday adding further pain to the economic dilemma of business owners across America. For some restaurants being closed this Sunday will be the nail in

the coffin of their business.

This year to celebrate mom's day you still can patronize your favorite restaurant by ordering from them and bringing the food back home. This will still take some pressure off mom. Also, insist on cleaning up the mess when it's over. Mom shouldn't have to do this on Mother's Day,

Continued on page 14

The opinions expressed on these pages are not necessarily those of this newspaper.

Jamaica Plain GAZETTE

Circulation 16,400

Published 26 times a year in Jamaica Plain by Independent Newspaper Group

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Mechanical Solutions in Jamaica Plain owner John Douglass inside his work truck. Douglass's company recently received a small business grant from Citizens Bank.

JP business receives small business grant

By JOHN LYNDIS

A longtime Jamaica Plain Business was recently awarded a small business grant from Citizens bank.

Mechanical Solutions in Jamaica Plain that served Boston residents and businesses for more than 30 years was one of 32 small businesses in Massachusetts that each received a \$15,000 grant as part of the bank's Small Business Recovery grant program.

Founded John Douglass the Jamaica Plain company specializing in heating and plumbing systems for residential and commercial clients.

"These grants will go directly to Massachusetts small businesses, providing them with much needed cash flow and support to help them stabilize amidst the devastating impacts of the coronavirus pandemic," said Jack Murphy, President, Business Banking, Citizens Bank. "Small businesses are the heartbeat of

the American economy, and we are committed to providing them with a vital jolt as they battle the economic implications of the pandemic."

Douglass and his company have built a reputation for high-quality work and attention to detail. In addition to plumbing, mechanical systems and troubleshooting, the company does residential renovations, repairs and additions.

"It's all about the people and building relationships with customers that sustain my business and build community," said Douglass.

For three decades Douglass has installed, serviced and repaired hundreds of heating systems, gas appliances and more. In addition to plumbing and mechanical work, Douglass supervises a team that provides residential renovations, additions and repairs and is a licensed plumber, sheet metal worker and builder.

and trustees do not realize this, it may be time for city officials to remind them.

For, when the worst of this pandemic is over, have we any reason to expect that the gates of the cemetery will open again to the public? Can those of us who own lots at Forest Hills feel certain that our friends and family will be free to visit our graves when we are gone? And how will the management and trustees of the cemetery live with a reputation for shutting its doors to the hard-pressed people of Boston when they most needed this place of peace and beauty?

CARL SCOVEL

JP arrest leads to illegal gun, drug charges

By JOHN LYNDIS

As part of an ongoing investigation, Drug Control Unit detectives from District B-3 station in Mattapan conducted a motor vehicle stop in Jamaica Plain Tuesday that resulted in the arrest of two males and the recovery of two loaded firearms and drugs.

Officers arrested Luis Perez, 27-years-old, of Roxbury and his front passenger, Anthony Perez, 24-years-old, of Roxbury. Both were arraigned in West Roxbury District Court on two counts of Unlawful Possession of a Firearm, two counts of Unlawful Possession of Ammunition, Possession of a High Capacity Feeding Device, and Possession with Intent to Distribute Class B Drugs.

According to police, the detectives had received information that one of the suspects allegedly had been in possession of a firearm. The detectives initiated a traffic stop of a motor vehicle which had caught their attention while conducting a simultaneous drug investigation in the area of Hills Street and River Street in Hyde Park.

The detectives stopped Perez's vehicle in the area of 74 Brookley Road in Jamaica Plain and spoke with him and his passenger. Detectives said the two

were being vague in their responses when asked about where they had been prior to the stop.

The two Perezs were removed from the vehicle and officers subsequently located a plastic bag containing a substance believed to be crack cocaine. Additionally,

officers located a shopping bag containing a black face mask, an Interarms .38 Special firearm loaded with five rounds of live ammunition, and a Ruger .9mm firearm loaded with thirteen rounds of live ammunition.

Emergency room arrest in JP

By JOHN LYNDIS

As if healthcare workers on the frontlines battling the COVID-19 pandemic in Jamaica Plain didn't have enough to worry about, last week they had to deal with an out of control emergency room patient.

Last Tuesday, officers assigned to Jamaica Plain's District E-13 station arrested Kamari Hope, 36, of Boston, on numerous charges after responding to a call for a disturbance inside the Emergency Room of the Brigham and Women's Faulkner Hospital located at 1153 Centre Street in Jamaica Plain.

When police arrived they were met with Special State Police Officers assigned to the hospital who stated that the suspect had entered the ER and quickly became loud and aggressive towards the staff.

The suspect continued to be confrontational and was asked to leave the property. The suspect

then began to spit on members of the nursing staff as well as security personnel while screaming and claiming that he had a highly contagious illness.

Due to the suspect's increasingly dangerous and belligerent behavior, the security team members then attempted to physically escort the suspect off of the property at which time the suspect began to strike the officers with his clenched fists before being placed in handcuffs. BPD Officers then took custody of the suspect and transported him back to the district station for booking.

The suspect will face arraignment at a later date in West Roxbury District Court on charges of Threats (Deadly Weapons, Explosives, Chemical or Biological Agents), Assault and Battery on a Police Officer, Assault and Battery on Ambulance Personnel, Disorderly Conduct and Trespassing.

Op-Ed

Continued from page 13

Overall this is the toughest Mother's Day we've had in America during my lifetime. So many millions are struggling financially. Buying a nice meal from a restaurant to take home to feed everyone is a stretch for many. With 70,000 or more deaths now due to Covid-19 this Mother's Day will be the hardest day ever for a lot of families. There will be an empty chair at the table. Millions of Americans have moms in nursing homes. Their moms are in danger of being exposed to Covid-19. People will probably not be able to visit mother because she is in the

nursing home. This is painful. There are just so many distressing scenarios being played out around the world. From health care workers who are at risk, to unemployment and a new era of poverty hitting out country, to people just going crazy over social distancing.

The way to celebrate Mother's Day this year is don't forget. Don't distance yourself from this celebration. Honor mom while you have her. Honor some other mothers too who have been special to you.

When I was a child, I had \$5 my dad gave me for being "brave" to have my tonsils removed. The only thing I wanted to do as a child was to take mom and dad to the local G.C. Murphy's grill.

We sat at the bar and we all had hotdogs and cokes that cost me about \$3. My mom didn't want me to spend my \$5 but she smiled when I bought lunch that day as a 7-year-old kid. I would love to have mom back this Sunday and do anything that might make her smile. This Sunday, it could be the simplest thing but give it a try. Mom is worth the effort.

Glenn Mollette is the publisher of Newburgh Press, Liberty Torch and various other publishing imprints; a national columnist - American Issues and Common Sense opinions, analysis, stories and features appear each week in over 500 newspapers, websites and blogs across the United States.

Letters

Continued from page 12

occasion to educate the public, as the Arboretum has done, not shut them out.

As far as I know the management and trustees did little or nothing until they slammed shut the iron gates at the entrance, forcing more graciously-minded institutions in Jamaica Plain to deal with even more visitors.

The Forest Hills Cemetery is not a world to itself. Like the Arboretum, Franklin Park and Jamaica Pond, it is part of a community. And if the management

RE-INVENTING EDUCATION: BPS Remote Learning Plan starts this week, many elements will remain in the future

BY SETH DANIEL

With more than 40,000 ChromeBooks now delivered and in the hands of students all over Boston, Supt. Brenda Cassellius told the media Boston Public Schools (BPS) are ready to roll out Phase 2 of remote learning that will play out until the end of the school term in June.

That plan will also be bolstered by robust summer learning opportunities provided by BPS and many community partners throughout the city.

“We know the last month has been really, really hard on our families our teachers and our staff,” she said. “We want to bring back some predictability in the next plan. Phase 2 of remotely learning is what we hope it will be until the end of the year.”

One thing they are hoping the new Phase 2 home learning program will bring is a standard across the city in every school with more uniform expectations. One complaint over the last month has been that some schools came up with a very robust, fun and challenging curriculum very fast with daily assignments. Meanwhile, other schools struggled to simply contact families and provide simple instructions.

“This will bring more predictability because we created structured learning,” she said. “We also have master schedules so there are no duplicate times

scheduled...Some were reporting they had two classes at the same exact time. This schedule should clear that up.”

The general flow for the on-line day will be from 9 to noon in the mornings, with a one-hour lunch break, and then back to work from 1-4 p.m. However, different schools have structured their time with some variation – particularly by grade level. The idea, she said, mostly with that timeframe is to provide a little more structure than has been provided so far.

The Boston Teacher’s Union (BTU) has an agreement with BPS in a memorandum to their contract to provide at least three hours of synchronous (Google Classroom/non-live) learning per day, and one hour of a-synchronous (live classes, face-to-face) learning per day.

Teachers across the district are being asked to differentiate their students by using information they already have gleaned from September through March – prior to COVID-19 closures. That will result in three tiers of instruction. Tier 1 will be general instruction, with live classes and Google Classroom postings and recorded videos. Some students will need no more than that. However, Tier 2 will involve students who need interventions in subject matter, supports or are struggling with material. They can be helped in one-on-one meetings or in small group



BPS Supt. Brenda Cassellius on a call with the media last Friday explaining how the district’s Remote Learning Plan will roll out this week, a Phase 2 of learning from home. It is expected to provide more predictability, more challenge to students and also – she said – it is here to stay.

meetings with the teacher or a specialist. Meanwhile, Tier 3 will be students who have not signed into online school or the teacher cannot contact.

Attendance will be different, and will be done in K-5 by classroom teachers, and done in grades 6-12 by subject matter. Attendance will be counted if a student attends a face-to-face class and checks in appropriately, or if they successfully turned in homework and assignments – even if they didn’t participate in the live classes.

For the senior class – the Class of 2020 – Cassellius said they have something very special in the works, but are not able to release the full plan yet.

“We’ve been spending a lot of time talking with our students, our teachers and out headmas-

ters about this,” she said. “They would like to have in-person graduations because it’s a major part of the year and a huge milestone. Right now, it’s not fully ready. We have said we’re committed to doing something very special district-wide for the Class of 2020.”

She said it will be something that is in conjunction with outside partners in the city. It will include a commencement with entertainment, signing and other special touches. It will be announced soon, she said.

Moreover, she said what they have learned overall is that education – maybe more than the other parts of life – will be radically changed. The trial by fire transition to technology will change how parent-teacher conferences are held, how classroom space is allocated, and how parent engagement is handled.

“I think right now we are

reinventing education,” she said. “We are learning so much from this process. It presents such an incredible opportunity to learn and innovate. We’re going to be 1-to-1 with technology. The way we now engage with our community and parents is going to probably expand...What is here is to stay.”

Meanwhile, BPS officials said they would be offering a robust learning experience during the summer, doubling their normal offerings with community partners like the Private Industry Council and others. That will help students who want to continue on to catch up or to not fall backward – which is going to be inevitable.

“We are prepared to offer a lot of summer learning experiences,” said Lindsa McIntyre of the BPS leadership team. “We plan on doubling what we normally do.”

State Treasurer Goldberg launches the Empowerment Grant for Small Businesses

STAFF REPORT

The State Treasurer’s Office of Economic Empowerment is funding the *Empowerment Grant for Small Businesses* to support the needs of Massachusetts small businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The grant application period opened May 4 and will close on May 29.

The Office of Economic Empowerment is seeking to award small businesses in Gateway Cities across the state. The goal of the program is to stabilize and support the well-being of small

businesses by providing access to capital and building financial empowerment through one or more trainings. Grants of up to \$2,500 are available and will empower small business owners to support business continuity and foster ingenuity amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

“These financial empowerment grants will provide our local business owners and their employees with some needed resources to survive this unprecedented crisis,” said Treasurer Deborah Goldberg. “I am honored to support our state’s small business-

es who contribute so much to our economy and our communities.”

Applicants are eligible if they are considered a small business, have been in operation for at least one year, and are registered in Massachusetts. Preference will be given to those that operate in a Gateway City. Minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned, and/or immigrant-owned small businesses are encouraged to apply. To submit applications, please visit: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/the-empowerment-grant-for-small-businesses>.

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Unemployment data shows new claims are overwhelmingly from white residents

STAFF REPORT

For the fourth week in a row, new unemployment claims were lower than the previous week, and new data from the state shows that more than 80 percent of new claims since March 15 came from residents describing themselves as white.

Of the 722,552 new claims since March 15, some 82 percent – or 459,511 claims – were from white residents, with the next highest racial group being

Hispanic residents at 15 percent (91,779 claims). That did not include the new Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) claims, which is a new type of unemployment for self-employed, gig workers and other workers that don't typically qualify for unemployment.

Of the other groups represented, Black/African Americans made up 10 percent of the new claims (54,584 claims) and Asian residents made up 8 percent (44,018).

The state Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) did not give any reasons as to the large numbers of white residents claiming unemployment since March 15. The sectors of the economy with the most new claims included Retail Trade, Food & Accommodations, and Healthcare & Social Assistance.

From April 19 to April 25, Massachusetts had 70,552 individuals file an initial claim for standard Unemployment Insurance (UI), the fourth consecutive week of fewer initial claims filed over the previous week. Since March 15,

Initial Claims Filed

Industry	Week Ending 4/18	Week Ending 4/25	Change	% Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	281	208	-73	-26.0%
Mining	13	12	-1	-7.7%
Utilities	82	50	-32	-39.0%
Construction	4,754	3,155	-1,599	-33.6%
Manufacturing	5,065	3,798	-1,267	-25.0%
Wholesale Trade	3,709	2,452	-1,257	-33.9%
Retail Trade	12,669	10,085	-2,584	-20.4%
Transportation & Warehouse	3,292	3,289	-3	-0.1%
Information	1,336	1,200	-136	-10.2%
Finance & Insurance	536	592	56	10.4%
Real Estate	1,040	977	-63	-6.1%
Professional and Technical Services	4,359	3,775	-584	-13.4%
Management of Companies	486	421	-65	-13.4%
Administrative & Waste Services	4,956	4,788	-168	-3.4%
Education	1,653	2,140	487	29.5%
Health & Social Assistance	9,249	9,271	22	0.2%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	1,777	1,889	112	6.3%
Food & Accommodation	9,564	7,515	-2,049	-21.4%
Other Services	5,383	4,833	-550	-10.2%
Public Administration	1,244	1,604	360	28.9%
Information Not Available	8,705	8,498	-207	-2.4%

The shown data and graphs relate to standard Unemployment Insurance (UI) only

a total of 722,009 initial claims were filed. As the number of initial claims continues to decrease, the number of claimants filing for their weekly benefit each week continues to grow. For the week of April 19 to April 25, there were a total of 527,538 claimants, an increase of 13.8% over the previous week, who filed for their weekly unemployment benefits. Food and Accommodation with 93,168, Retail Trade at 69,333 and Health and Social Assistance with 66,202 showed the largest number of claimants who filed for their weekly unemployment benefits.

The Cares Act created a new temporary federal program called

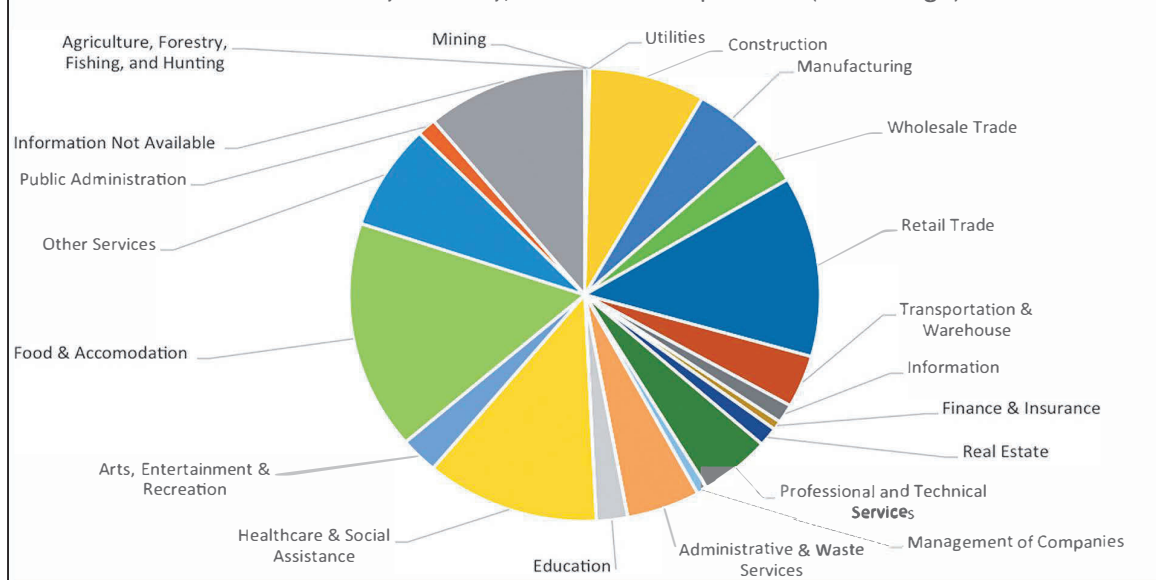
Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), which provides unemployment benefits to individuals who are self-employed, gig workers and those not covered by regular unemployment compensation. In the week of April 19 to April 25, there were a total of 171,598 PUA claims.

From March 15 to April 25, combining UI and PUA, Massachusetts had a total of 893,607 claims filed for unemployment insurance.

Currently, the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) is paying standard Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits to around 450,000 claimants and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance to around 150,000 claimants. Since March 15, nearly 700,000 Massachusetts total claims have been paid amounting to more than \$2.3 Billion in disbursements to beneficiaries of both programs.

Over the last month, the customer service staff at DUA has grown from around 50 employees to more than 1,200. The remote customer service operation is now making more than 25,000 individual contacts per day and DUA continues to host daily unemployment town halls, held in both English and Spanish, which have been attended by more than 200,000 constituents. Massachusetts was one of the first states to successfully launch the PUA program. Due to DUA's previous efforts to migrate their systems to the cloud, the first unemployment agency in the country to do so, the unemployment online platforms for both regular UI and PUA has maintained functionality throughout the surge in demand.

Initial Claims by Industry, March 15th - April 25th (virus-surge)



Gazette Pet of the Week

by Sarah Carroll



FRANCES

Frances is a gentle soul looking to take flight into his new home! This cute little cockatiel was found as a stray and came to us from our friends at Boston Animal Control. This beautiful cockatiel loves to sing (as most do!) and is still learning that people aren't so scary. He is very nervous when people get too close to his cage (and consequently is not hand tame at all) so he would do best in a quiet home with a patient, experienced adopter who would be willing to take it slow with him. Sitting nearby, talking quietly, and trying to give him bits of fruit or treat would be a good way to win his trust! Call the adoption center to make an appointment to meet this shy guy!

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For more information about Frances and other animals in need of adoption, please contact:



"Gazette Pet of the Week" is a biweekly submission sponsored by Sarah Carroll, Sales Associate of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage 1375 Beacon St., Brookline, MA 02446 • 617-731-2447 (617) 522-5055 www.mspca.org



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Due to COVID-19, Suffolk County Register of Probate Felix Arroyo hosts online fundraiser for re-election

BY JOHN LYNDIS

For years, Suffolk County Register of Probate Felix Arroyo normally hosts a birthday fundraiser in April but the COVID-19 pandemic has cancelled those plans.

However, his son, District 5 Boston City Councilor Rocardo Arroyo has launched an online fundraising effort for his dad.

Arroyo was born on April 30, 1948 and established himself as a mainstay in Boston politics.

“Not only is my dad an amazing father to me and my siblings, he also spent his entire career serving others and fighting for justice,” said Councilor Arroyo. “In April, we normally host a birthday fundraiser to support my father’s campaign and work but, due to COVID-19, that was not possible this year. I ask that you please join me in making a donation to his re-election campaign and in honor of his birthday today. Donations are especially needed now because he will be on the ballot seeking re-election in just a few months.”

Arroyo was raised in a public

housing project in Puerto Rico by his late father, Felicitto Arroyo, a World War II veteran and police detective, and his late mother, Elisa Arroyo, a garment seamstress and an ILGWU member.

Arroyo completed his undergraduate studies and received a Masters in Secondary Education at the University of Puerto Rico. He was the first member of his family to earn a college degree; he continued with his graduate studies at Harvard University, MIT, and the University of Puerto Rico.

Arroyo’s political career in Boston spans nearly four decades. He ran for the Boston School Committee in 1981 and 1983, becoming the first Latino to run citywide, and the first Latino to pass a primary. In 1984, Arroyo founded the Latino Democratic Committee, the first statewide Latino political organization in Massachusetts, and served as the Latin American Affairs Director for United States Senator John Kerry. Arroyo served in the cabinet of Mayor of Boston Raymond Flynn from 1985 until 1992. In 1992, Arroyo resigned his salaried position as

the Director of Personnel for the City of Boston, in order to take an unpaid position as a member of the Boston School Committee. He would later serve as Vice President and President of the Boston School Committee, where he served from 1992 until 1999.

Prior to being elected Suffolk County Register of Probate Arroyo was elected as one of four at-large City Councilors in 2003, Arroyo was re-elected in November 2003 and November 2005.

In 2014 Arroyo announced he was running for Register of Probate for Suffolk County. He won the Democratic nomination with over 53% of the vote on September 9, 2014, and won an uncontested general election in November 2014.

He became the first Latino to win a county-wide political race in Massachusetts.

“Whether it was by being the first Latino on the Boston School Committee and the Boston City Council, the first Latino elected County Wide in Massachusetts, the Director of the Department of Transitional Assistance or the Executive Director of various community based organizations,

he has opened doors that were sealed shut. He has made a lasting impact for all of us,” said his son, Councilor Arroyo. “As the Suffolk County Register of Probate, representing all of Boston, Chelsea, Revere and Winthrop, he continues his life’s work of fighting for justice and equity for all. That is why, not only as his son, but as his constituent, I am proud to stand with him as he runs for re-election this year. I ask that you join me.”

Supporters can make a donation to <https://secure.actblue.com/donate/felix-arroyo-2>.

“While the maximum dona-



Register of Probate Felix Arroyo.

tion per person is \$1,000, there is no donation too small or unappreciated,” said Councilor Arroyo. “Please give as much as you can so that his campaign will have the resources needed to win so my father can continue fighting for justice and equity as our Suffolk County Register of Probate.”

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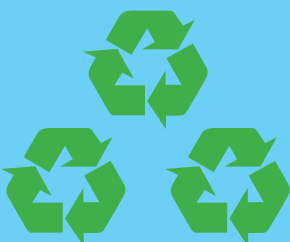
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CPC earmarks three JP projects to receive nearly \$2 million in grants

BY DAN MURPHY

Three Jamaica Plain projects have been recommended to receive grants totaling nearly \$2 million from the fiscal '20 Community Preservation Funds.

The city's Community Preservation Committee (CPC) has earmarked a \$1.5 million Affordable Housing grant to help Community Builders, Inc., a Boston nonprofit real estate developer, and the Pine Street Inn build

225 units of affordable housing at 3368 Washington St., with 150 units designated as housing for individuals assisted by the homeless shelter.

"Community Builders hopes to start this project this winter for occupancy by the winter of 2022," Sheila Dillon, Chief of Housing and Director of Neighborhood Development, said Tuesday during a virtual meeting sponsored by the City Council Committee on Community Pres-

ervation Act.

The CPC has also recommended awarding a \$200,000 Historic Preservation Grant to The Haffenreffer Brewery Complex "to restore the roof and windows for a 'Prosperity Center' providing small business services, job training, ESL classes, and other programs" as well as another grant, also for \$200,000, "to the Footlight Club, the country's oldest community theatre, remediate structural problems and stabilize Eliot Hall, a Greek

Revival wood-frame structure built in 1831," according to a press release from the city.

In all, the CPC's recommended Community Preservation Funds for fiscal '20 amount to \$24,309,000 for 40 projects, including nine Affordable Housing applications totaling \$15,750,000; 16 Historic Preservation applications totaling \$3,440,000; and 15 Recreational Space and Open Space applications totaling \$5,119,000.

Mayor Martin Walsh still

must sign off on the recommended allocation of funding.

Boston voters approved the Community Preservation Act by voting "yes" on Ballot Question 5 in November of 2016, and the city subsequently created the Community Preservation Fund, which is funded in part by a 1-percent property tax-based surcharge on residential and business property tax bills and took effect in July of 2017.

Baker signs order requiring face coverings in public; is now in effect

BY LAUREN BENNETT

Governor Charlie Baker on May 1 signed an order requiring face masks or coverings for everyone when six feet of distance cannot be maintained, both indoors and out. The order went into effect on May 6, and children under the age of two and those unable to wear a mask due to a medical condition are exempt.

Face coverings must be worn inside pharmacies, grocery stores, and other retail stores, and "also when providing or using the services of any taxi, car, livery, ride-sharing, or similar service or any means of mass public transit, or while within an enclosed or semi-enclosed transit stop or waiting area," the order states.

The order also states that people are "strongly discouraged" from wearing medical-grade masks, as those are in limited supply and should be saved for first responders and healthcare workers.

"This is going to be basically a way of life, okay, there's no ifs, no ands, no buts, no doubts," Baker said at a recent press conference, "and I certainly think for the most part if you can't distance inside or outside, you're going to be expected to wear a face covering or a mask."

Businesses are allowed to deny entry of any person who refuses to wear a mask and does not have a valid medical reason not to, the order says.

"The Department of Public Health, local boards of health and authorized agents...are authorized to enforce this Order and if necessary may do so with the assistance of State or municipal police," according to the order, and while there is no

standard fee implemented across the board, Baker is enabling municipalities to charge up to \$300 per violation of the order or guidance from the Department of Public Health.

"One of the major issues associated with this particular virus," Baker said, is that a "very significant portion of the people who contract this virus will never show symptoms at all. I can't stress that one enough."

He said this is why masks are especially important, as their "main purpose is to protect [others] from you as much as it is to protect you from [others]."

REOPENING ADVISORY BOARD

Last week, the Baker-Polito administration announced the creation of a 17 person reopening advisory board that has been working over the past week and over the weekend on a phased plan to reopen the state

Reopening is "certainly something that I think is at the forefront of everyone's mind," Baker said at a press conference on April 20. "The advisory board has hit the ground running," he added, and has met with business organizations and leaders from municipalities across the Commonwealth. He said the goal for the board is to "hear from employers from across the Commonwealth," and to "gather as much data as they possibly can to make sure that we can offer up specific guidance."

So far, the board has met virtually with stakeholders from "23 different industry associations and community coalitions," Baker said, which represent more than 100,000 businesses and over 1.4 million employees in retail, life sciences, restaura-

rants, tourism, construction, recreation, and more.

He said that the "best way to handle the reopening" is to "do it in a way consistent with data and recommendations" that come from other countries and different levels of government.

"This work is obviously going to be critical to make sure a smart, phased reopening will take place in Massachusetts," Baker said on April 30.

He said in the coming weeks, more "concrete" plans will be available about what each phase will look like, and "where certain activities and industries fit into which phase." Baker also said information for businesses, such as guidance for social distancing and cleaning, will also be made available.

Baker said he was "very grateful to the many people across industries that have had to close their doors and adjust their work styles" during this crisis. "I think everybody's anxious to find a way to safely move forward."

Lt. Governor Karyn Polito reminded residents on May 4 that when May 18 comes, it "doesn't mean the economy across the Commonwealth will just open," she said. Governor Baker has reiterated several times throughout the past couple weeks that they must rely on testing and hospital data to make the safest decision for what can open when.

Baker said that while the goal for the process is to start reopening some businesses "in a limited fashion" on May 18, the phasing process cannot begin "until we see sustained downward trends" in positive test rates, hospitalization rates, and fatality rates.

"When the public health date indicates that COVID-19 is on that sustained downward trend

that's been discussed by so many previously, we'll be able to resume more and more activities going forward," Baker said.

CONTACT TRACING UPDATE

On April 30, Baker said that about 1000 people are working on the contact tracing collaborative, and so far, the average number of contacts for infected people is two.

He said that this "means that the work that all of you and we have done here in Massachusetts to stay at home, separate, and socially distance has made a big difference."

He said the conversations that contact tracing callers have had with people has heavily leaned towards providing people with guidance and support and answering their questions and concerns around the virus and isolation practices.

Baker said that calls from an 833 or 857 area code or a Caller ID of MA COVID TEAM should be answered, as they are important for providing vital information to stop the spread of the virus.

TESTING, HOSPITALIZATION RATE UPDATE

As of May 6, there were 72,025 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Massachusetts, and 4,420 people had died.

Baker said on May 4 that May 3 was the "single highest" number of tests conducted in a single day in the Commonwealth, and it's "good to see the total test numbers continue to increase."

He said that as of May 3, 3,617 patients were hospitalized due to COVID-19, which is five percent of the total cases in the

state.

"COVID hospitalizations have actually been decreasing in the past several days, with very few spikes in new admissions," he said.

He added the number of patients in the ICU has dropped as well.

On May 6, Baker said that "over the past week or so, the percentage of positive cases has consistently been lower" than the past month. "We are encouraged by this data, but it's important to remember that test results alone" do not show the complete impact of the virus on communities.

He said that while there are "obviously still thousands of people" who are sick, "the numbers have started to trend in the right direction" and different parts of the state are in different stages.

He added that the state has had "tremendous success" with the Telehealth program, and people should continue using it to communicate with health care providers, but if people are experiencing a medical emergency, they should call 911 or go to the emergency room, as hospitals have plenty of room and are prepared to care for non-COVID related conditions.

Baker said that he will "continue to ramp up testing for months to come," and will continue to invest in the contact tracing program. He also said that it's "important to remember that as long as there is no vaccine," the state will have to continue discussions about how to operate the state in the most safe way.

"The threat of future transmission and illness will be with us for a very long time and we can't forget that," Baker said.

City Council holds hearing on coronavirus relief grant

BY LAUREN BENNETT

The City Council Committee on Ways and Means held a hearing on Monday regarding a grant from the Coronavirus Relief Fund.

The Council discussed a “message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of \$120,853,359 in the form of a grant awarded by the United States Department of the Treasury to be administered by the City of Boston from the Coronavirus Relief Fund established by section 5001 of the CARES Act,” according to City Councilor and Chair of the Ways and Means Committee Kenzie Bok.

The City’s budget director, Justin Sterritt, was on hand to give an overview of the Federal CARES Act and explain how Boston plans on using this grant awarded by the federal government.

Sterritt said that the CARES

Act was passed and signed on March 27, and consists of a stimulus package in the amount of \$2 million to “address the public health and economic impacts of COVID-19.”

He said that Boston’s allotment is up to \$121 million, and is restricted in what it can be used for. “It must be a necessary expenditure incurred due to the public health emergency,” he said, and for expenditures incurred during the period beginning March 1, 2020 and ending December 30, 2020.

“We will need very detailed accounting” on how the money will be spent he said. “This funding cannot be used as a revenue replacement,” he added, as the money can only be used for “public health and public safety expenditures directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Sterritt said he anticipates the funding being used for “unanticipated and necessary City costs related to COVID-19,” including personal protective

gear for City staff, cleaning and disinfection of public areas and city facilities, technology to allow public employees to work remotely, Chromebooks and software for distance learning, and public health and medical expenditures, such as the Boston Hope facility at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center.

He said the money can also be used for “ongoing public health measures” related to the pandemic, such as testing and contact tracing, disease containment, quarantine and isolation, communication and community engagement, and more. It can also be used for payroll expenses for City employees in public safety, public health, health care, and human services.

Other expenses that this money qualifies for include food delivery to senior citizens and other vulnerable residents, care for the homeless population, and support for youth and education, Sterritt said. These allotted funds must last until December

2020 to address these ongoing concerns.

Sterritt was asked how this money relates to money distributed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

“We know that FEMA is not going to be here forever,” he responded. He said that the City qualifies money from FEMA as the first bucket of money that the city would use for things like emergency food money, and then this grant money would be a “secondary plot of money.”

He also added that if something the grant money is spent on is “deemed ineligible for use by the he federal government,” the City will have to reimburse the federal government.

“The goal is to maximize the federal relief money,” Sterritt said.

The City Council then asked questions and raised concerns about this money and how it can be best spent. The councilors thanked the administration for their partnership on this issue,

as well as stated the fact the discussion around this grant money and other funds will be ongoing as the coronavirus situation continues to unfold in the City.

“I think that we’re all cognizant of the fact that this is just a really moving, evolving target,” Councilor Bok said. “I certainly want to stress how important I think it is for us to move in every way we can to maximize our federal funds that we have access to.”

She added that the Council’s budget process looks very different this year, and “is going to have to be a more continual thing this year than we’re used to it being in the sense that we can expect rolling stimuli and impacts both positive and negative at the federal and state level that are not going to track our fiscal year deadline,” she said. “We’re all looking forward to that continuing to be a very active conversation.”

Good government groups warn of power consolidation by state legislature

BY JONATHAN COHN, BOSTON WARD 4 DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE

While the world is focused on COVID-19, the Massachusetts House of Representatives proposed new operating rules that advocates say are an attempt to grab power while people are preoccupied.

“People are dying, kids aren’t going to school, and most of us are worried about whether we’ll be able to continue putting food on the table and a roof over our heads,” said Jonathan Cohn, Issues Chair of Progressive Massachusetts. “Instead of tackling these problems, House leadership is using this crisis to further consolidate their own power.”

The proposed rules, released after close of business on Monday, April 27, would allow representatives to vote by phone but would substantially weaken public oversight and the ability of rank-and-file members to participate in debate. The biggest cause for concern is a rule which

would increase the number of state representatives required to record a vote via roll call from 16 state representatives to 40.

“This change to the roll call provisions does nothing but silence dissent and threaten our democracy,” noted Matt Miller, co-founder of Act On Mass. “It would make it impossible for a progressive state representative to have a real floor debate on a critical issue without their amendment being defeated in a voice vote with no accountability. The idea that this is a necessary response to the Covid-19 emergency is laughable, because we’ve seen only a handful of examples of progressives seeking and demanding roll calls over the past 16 months since session began. This is about preventing voters from knowing how their representatives voted.”

The proposed rules establish a complicated system of telephone participation for members to engage remotely, but many questions remain about how the

system would work. Advocates are concerned about how some provisions would work, like requiring state representatives seeking to make a motion to first contact their division chairs in order to be recognized, schedule their speeches in advance, and unclear provisions for what happens with technical glitches cause a representatives to lose connection. And the rules don’t end automatically when the State of Emergency ends.

“Clearly, we need to give our legislature some flexibility during this pandemic to provide much-needed assistance for impacted communities, and they need to figure out a path forward that works for them. But the House’s need for speedy consensus can’t come at the cost of basic transparency. The ability to know how our legislators are voting is critical for a healthy, functioning democracy,” said Jacob Stern, Deputy Director of the Sierra Club Massachusetts Chapter.

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Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey

CASH ASSISTANCE

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES Act), provides one-time cash payments of \$1,200 for individuals, \$2,400 for couples, and \$500 per child for anyone who files taxes with a social security number. Other benefits, including SNAP (food stamps), TAFDC (welfare for families with children), and WIC may be available through the Departments of Transitional Assistance and Public Health.

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

You may apply for unemployment benefits if you lose your job and are authorized to work in the United States. File a claim with the Division of Unemployment Assistance.

EARNED SICK TIME

Under Massachusetts law, workers are eligible for benefits from their employers, including earned sick time, regardless of their immigration status. Additional sick leave and paid family leave may be available through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

Uninsured residents may qualify for coverage through the Health Connector’s extended open enrollment period.

ASSISTANCE FROM NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

MassUndocuFund, mutual aid organizations, and worker organizations are providing small cash grants for undocumented people and others who might not be eligible for other assistance. Jobs with Justice has more information.



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AGO RESOURCES

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JPNC Zoning Committee approves two projects at latest meeting

BY LAUREN BENNETT

The Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council (JPNC) Zoning Committee met virtually on April 29, where two projects were discussed, one at 373 S Huntington Avenue and one at 54 Danforth Street.

The project at 373 S Huntington Ave. was a proposal to change the occupancy from an office to an office and one residential unit, “to correct error in 2017.”

Architect Alfonso Sira said that the first level will be used as a medical office, and the second level and the upper level will be used as a residential unit. “There’s really nothing being

done to the building,” he said.

Building owner Jose Ruano said he has owned the property for 17 years, and wants his college-aged daughters to live in the residential portion, while his medical office remains on the first floor. He said the upper unit has been empty for 17 years, and the “error” outlined in the scope of work is that it is listed as commercial on the first and second floor.

Ruano said that there was once a kitchen on the upper level that was converted into a lab, but is in need of a stove to become a working kitchen. He said there are two bathrooms and two means of egress, so the space

meets requirements for a livable unit.

“This looks very much like it used to be a two family house,” architect and Zoning Committee member Kendra Halliwell said. “I support it going back to residential up above and office use down below.”

The Committee voted to approve this application, and it will be brought up at for a full vote at the Neighborhood Council hearing at the end of May, where the public is again invited to ask questions and make comments on the proposal.

At 54 Danforth St., owner Luiza Santos proposed to create an off-street parking space and new curb cut so she can park next to her house.

Santos bought the house at 54 Danforth St. last October, and said that the previous tenants had started work on paving what they wanted to be a driveway. She said her proposal was rejected by the Inspectional Services department because the regulation requires 18 feet, which she does not have because her land ends five feet too soon.

She said that living right around the corner from Stonybrook Station on a street that does not have resident-only parking has made it difficult to find a place to park as commuters come and park their cars on Danforth St.

She said that the liquor store owner next door “doesn’t mind,” and she said that no neighbors came to the abutters meeting on March 16, which was held before the stay at home advisory went into effect.

There was some discussion about whether there was simple disinterest in this project from the neighbors, or if people were afraid of the virus so they didn’t attend the abutters meeting, that led into further discussion about signage and flyering and how abutters should be notified for JPNC Zoning Committee meetings.

A neighbor on Boylston St. who had known the previous owners said he opposes this proposal because the street is “very narrow, very difficult to navigate.” He said he was unable to make the abutters meeting

because he works nights.

“The space I’m proposing isn’t actually the same one the previous owners had set up,” Santos said. She said that right now, her fence has an opening that’s at an angle, and the proposal is to have a nine foot wide curb cut that would only take up one car space. It’s closer to her house and away from the bend in the street that causes a blind spot. The car would be parked right up against her house.

She said that both of her neighbors have one car garages, so she believes she should have a place to park her car as well.

Jerry O’Connor, who is on the Zoning Committee, said that “it looks to me like a one for one on street verses off street parking space,” and called it a “fine idea.”

Zoning Committee member Marie Turley said that “even though it’s a swap of one spot for one spot, it’s still a loss of a spot on the street,” which she said “can still cause concerns for the neighbors.”

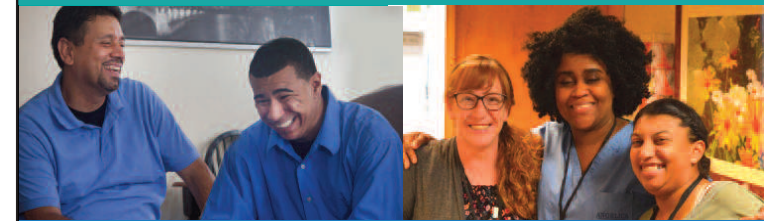
The Zoning Committee voted to approve this proposal with one opposition and one abstention.



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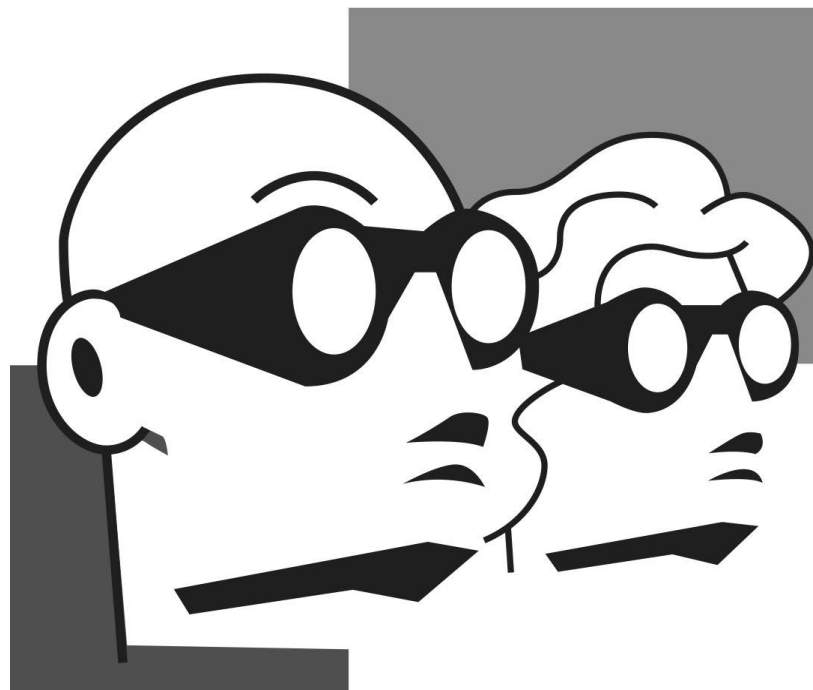


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