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Jamaica Plain GAZETTE

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DECEMBER 18, 2020

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VACCINES HAVE LANDED
MGH, BMC receive first doses of COVID vaccine

BY SETH DANIEL

received the area's first doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID19 vaccine on Monday morning,

Boston Medical Center (BMC)

taking it into cold storage immediately and, on Wednesday, beginning the first rounds of vaccinations on staff members.

Mass General Brigham followed suit on Tuesday, receiving 9,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine and putting it in storage as well. On Wednesday, prioritized employees began to be vaccinated throughout its network of 12 hospitals.

At BMC, Registered Nurse Cheryl Tull was the first BMC employee to get the vaccine around 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 16. She is also the Associate Chief Nursing Officer at the hospital. The first five vaccinations at BMC were given to Tull, a Family medicine doctor, an Infectious Diseases doctor, a respiratory



PHOTO BY BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER

Registered Nurse Cheryl Tull, an Associate Chief Nursing Officer, was the first employee of Boston Medical Center in the South End to get the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at 9 a.m. Wednesday morning, Dec. 16. The first five vaccinated were Tull, a Family Medicine doctor, an Infectious Diseases doctor, a respiratory therapist, and an environmental services employee.

therapist, and an environmental services employee whose job it is to disinfect patient rooms.

BMC said it expects to vac-

inate 1,000 employees through Saturday, and a total of 2,000 by

Continued on page 3

JP Licks offering liquor-infused flavors this holiday season

BY LAUREN BENNETT

JP Licks, which is heading into its 40th year of business, recently announced the arrival of new alcohol infused flavors,

including Caramel Bourbon Fig, Cherry Amaretto, Bourbon Praline, and Coquito, which is a returning flavor.

All flavors will run "through the holiday season," according to

JP Licks.

Beth Otis, Production Manager for JP Licks, told the Gazette that inspiration for the flavors comes from "talking about the

Continued on page 5

JP crime statistics through November

BY LAURA PLUMMER

On Thursday, Dec. 3, District E13 of the Boston Police Department (BPD) hosted its monthly virtual police and community relations meeting. The meeting is an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions of local law enforcement.

At every meeting, officers provide year-to-date

Continued on page 2

Datos delictivos de JP de diciembre

BY LAURA PLUMMER

El jueves 3 de diciembre, el Distrito E13 del Departamento de Policía de Boston (BPD) presentó su reunión comunitaria mensual. La reunión es una oportunidad para que los miembros del público hagan preguntas a las autoridades locales.

En cada reunión, los oficiales proporcionan es-

Continued on page 2

BOSTON STILL HONORS THE PARIS AGREEMENT



PHOTO COURTESY OF MAYOR'S OFFICE PHOTO BY JOHN WILCOX

Boston City Hall was lit in green for the 5th anniversary of the Paris Agreement on Saturday, Dec. 12 - as exemplified in this unique and funky photo of the green Hall magnified by the City Hall Christmas tree.



# ZBA approves 10 units, commercial space at 3305-3307 Washington St.

BY LAUREN BENNETT

The Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) approved the scope of work proposed for 3305-3307 Washington St., which consists of 10 residential units, one commercial space, and 10 parking spaces.

Architect Tim Johnson explained that this project came before the board in March with a proposal for 15 residential units, one commercial space, and eight parking spaces.

“At that time, the board felt that project was too dense and

gave us the opportunity to defer,” Johnson said. He said that on April 7, the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) “gave the project team a building program” of nine units and one commercial unit.

But Johnson said that “out of respect for the JP civic associations, we asked the BPDA for a 10th affordable unit and they agreed.”

The existing Victorian building “will be largely preserved” and turned into four duplex

units, Johnson said. The remaining six units will be built on the parcel to the left of the Victorian building. He said that because this is a corner lot, the 10 parking spaces will be accessible via Ophir St. The existing curb cut will provide access to eight garage spaces, and two spaces will be off street spaces, he said.

The top units will have dedicated roof decks that will be accessed via bulk heads and roof doors.

ZBA member Joe Ruggiero

said he is “glad to see” the tenth affordable unit, and that “nine would have been a sad thing.” He continued, “I’m glad to see you did that so I just want to commend that.”

Johnson said that this plan does include one bedroom in each duplex unit in the basement of the existing Victorian building, but said he would be “more than happy to pull them to the first floor,” since the ZBA typically does not like to see bedrooms in the basement.

The ZBA reported that they

received 17 letters of support and one letter of opposition for this project, and the Mayor’s Office as well as Councilor Annissa Essaibi-George were also in support.

Jeff Hampton from the BPDA said that the BPDA is also in support of the redesigned project after being opposed to the previous design.

The ZBA voted to approve this project with BPDA design review and the relocation of the basement bedrooms to a higher floor.

## Crime stats

*Continued from page 1*

crime statistics. One chart examines Part One crime data. Part One crimes are more serious in nature, and don’t include lesser crimes such as vandalism, drug dealing or illegal possession of firearms.

According to the summary, Part One crime is down four

percent in the city of Boston compared to this time last year. Jamaica Plain is beating that reduction. So far this year, there have been 762 reported crimes, compared to 857 last year, a decrease of 11 percent. Of the 12 BPD districts, only Downtown, Mattapan and Hyde Park saw a greater year-to-year decrease.

Crimes that saw a decrease so far this year include homicide, rape and attempted, non-domestic aggravated assault, residen-

tial and other burglary, other larceny and auto theft. Crimes that saw an uptick compared to 2019 include robbery and attempted, domestic aggravated assault, commercial burglary, and larceny from a motor vehicle.

Officer William Jones provided a more detailed overview of the Part One crimes from the previous month. One that stood out was the theft of auto parts out of a car parked on a residential street. Among the parts

stolen was a catalytic converter, which can cost up to \$2,000 to replace.

“I would suggest that owners of these vehicles pay extra attention to ensuring they are locked and that if they hear a car alarm, to look outside and check their vehicles,” said Officer Jones. “If they think something is wrong, call 911.”

A second chart compared the statistics of fatal and nonfatal shootings from 2019 to 2020.

Jamaica Plain saw 20 shootings so far this year, up from 18 in 2019. Only Roxbury, Mattapan and Dorchester’s District C11 saw higher numbers. However, Jamaica Plain accounted for 7.4 percent of citywide shootings in 2020, down from 9.7 percent last year.

The police and community relations meeting is held on the first Thursday of the month at 6:30pm.

## Datos delictivos

*Continued from page 1*

tadísticas sobre delitos hasta la fecha. Un cuadro presenta los datos delictivos de la primera parte. Los delitos de la primera parte son de naturaleza más grave y no incluyen delitos menores como el vandalismo, el tráfico de drogas o la posesión ilegal de armas de fuego.

Según el resumen, el crimen ha bajado un cuatro por ciento en Boston en comparación con esta época del año pasado. Jamaica Plain está superando esta reducción. En lo que va de año,

ha habido 762 delitos denunciados, en comparación con 857 el año pasado, una disminución del 11 por ciento. De los 12 distritos de BPD, sólo el Centro de Boston, Mattapan y Hyde Park experimentaron una mayor disminución de año en año.

Los delitos que experimentaron una disminución en lo que va del año incluyen el homicidio, la violación, el asalto agravado no doméstico, el robo residencial y de otro tipo, otro hurto, y el robo de automóviles. Los delitos que experimentaron un repunte incluyen el atraco, el asalto agravado doméstico, el robo comercial, y el hurto de vehículos.

El oficial William Jones brindó una descripción más detallada de los crímenes de la Primera Parte del mes anterior. Uno que se destacó fue el robo de autopartes de un coche. Se robó un convertidor catalítico, cuyo reemplazo puede costar hasta \$2.000.

“Sugiero que los propietarios de estos vehículos presten atención para asegurarse de que estén cerrados y que, si escuchan una alarma de automóvil, miren fuera y revisen sus vehículos”, dijo el oficial Jones. “Si creen que algo anda mal, llame al 911”.

Otro gráfico comparó las estadísticas de tiroteos fatales y no fatales de 2019 a 2020. Jamaica Plain registró 20 tiroteos en lo que va del año, frente a 18 en 2019. Sólo Roxbury, Mattapan y District C11 en Dorchester registraron números más altos. Sin embargo, Jamaica Plain representó el 7,4 por ciento de los tiroteos en toda la ciudad en 2020, frente al 9,7 por ciento del año pasado.

La reunión de relaciones policiales y comunitarias se lleva a cabo el primer jueves del mes a las 6:30 pm.

**Wishing you & your families a safe and healthy Christmas**  
 The office will be closed Thursday Dec. 24 and Friday, Dec. 25 & Thursday, Dec. 31, and Friday, Jan. 1.  
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# Vaccines

*Continued from page 1*

the end of next week. In the next two months, a spokesman said they expect to vaccinate 6,000 patient-facing employees using guidance from the state.

At Mass General, the first vaccination was given to Registered Nurse Belza Betancur on Wednesday morning by Ellen O'Connor.

BMC said it received 1,950 doses Monday morning and planned to equitably disperse them throughout the front-line workers at the hospital, a process that started Wednesday morning.

"Monday morning, Boston Medical Center received 1,950 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine," read a statement. "Beginning Wednesday, we will begin the first wave of vaccinations to front line health care workers, a group including doctors and nurses from our ICU and Emergency Department and patient floors that treat COVID-19 patients, but just as importantly, employees from environmental and support services, and other crucial positions that work in COVID-positive patient areas."

The doses were put into a freezer at the BMC inpatient pharmacy. Mass General Brigham (MGH) confirmed on Tuesday it had received its first shipment of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Mass General Brigham received an initial shipment of nearly 9,000 vaccine doses to be allocated proportionally across the 12 hospitals in its system. They also began vaccinating health care workers at the hospitals on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Community Health Centers like East Boston Neighborhood Health Center has been planning for their role in receiving and vaccinating workers and the public. Community health centers are expected to play a large role in the coming weeks and months as the general population starts to qualify for the vaccine.

"We are taking important steps to prepare for the COVID-19 vaccine to ensure its equitable distribution throughout our communities," said East Boston Neighborhood Health Center CEO and President Manny

Lopes. "We have a specific team that will manage all aspects of the vaccine, from preparing for its arrival through to administering doses to our communities. Our Massachusetts COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Agreement has been approved, so we are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it becomes available. This is an important step in ensuring the safety of our communities, especially our patients that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic."

The Chief Medical Officer for the health center, Jackie Fantes said they are awaiting direction from the state Department of Public Health. She said the health center plans to vaccinate their staff and high-risk patients first.

"The big questions about how and when we will administer the vaccine will depend greatly on the guidelines developed by our partners at the Mass Department of Public Health as well as the amount of supply," she said. "We now serve more than 100,000 patients at our East Boston, South End, Revere and Winthrop facilities. Our priority will be to administer the vaccine first to our staff and patients at high risk of complications from COVID-19, such as the elderly and those with chronic health conditions. It is also important to us to focus on vulnerable populations like those in essential worker roles or those living in multi-generational households who cannot isolate."

In an historic press conference on Monday, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, Dr. Moncef Slaoui and General Gustave Perna – all members of the Operation Warp Speed vaccine team – reported on the first shipments of the Pfizer vaccine. The reported that 2.9 million doses of the vaccine had been shipped and another 2.9 million would be held back for the second booster dose that will be given to those inoculated in 21 to 28 days. The Pfizer vaccine requires an initial shot and a second booster for full immunity, they said.

Those shipments would continue through Tuesday, and Wednesday and the rest of the week likely, Perna said. He said they have used a public/private partnership with the federal government, UPS and FedEx to distrib-

ute the doses, and now are entering into a "steady drumbeat" of constant shipments as the days and weeks go on.

"The point here is the initial push that we have shows we can execute," he said. "Now we're starting our drumbeat of continuous shipments of vaccine."

All vaccine shipments destinations and dosage amounts are determined by each state's governor, they said. For Massachusetts, Gov. Charlie Baker issues an initial priority list last week that is now being followed in the first dosages. There were 636 sites across the United States identified to Operation Warp Speed, with 145 getting shipments on Monday.

There were 425 that would receive shipments on Tuesday, and

66 on Wednesday.

All expected the Moderna vaccine, also a two-shot program, to get emergency use authorization by the weekend, and that would start to be shipped out by next Monday, Dec. 21. There would be approximately 100 million doses of that vaccine available initially as there has been more time to manufacture in the run-up to authorization.

They expected to be able to vaccinate 100 million people by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2021. That will be bolstered if a Johnson & Johnson vaccine – a one shot program – is approved for emergency use in late January or early February. Another vaccine by AstraZeneca is also on the same timetable and could be in use before the end of the

first quarter, Slaoui said. He also said protein-based immunizations – as opposed to the above genetically-based products – are in the pipeline for later in 2021. Meanwhile, Azar said they are confident they will have enough vaccine for anyone that wants it and that no American would have to pay for the vaccine if they want it.

"No American faces an out of pocket expense for this vaccine," Azar said.

The Centers for Disease Control has authorized \$140 million to pay for long-term planning for the vaccine. Meanwhile, Operation Warp Speed is paying for the vaccine cost and all of the supplies, including syringes and other materials.

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# COVID positive test rate in Jamaica Plain increases over 110 percent

## Mayor announces new citywide restrictions in wake of rising hospitalizations

BY JOHN LYNDS

The COVID-19 surge across Boston is continuing and Mayor Martin Walsh said the city is focusing efforts on neighborhoods like Jamaica Plain that have a high volume of community spread ahead of the Christmas holiday as hospitalizations are on the rise.

Last week the BPHC reported that of the 26,438 Jamaica Plain residents tested for COVID 11.1 percent were found to be positive—an increase of 110 percent from the 5.3 percent reported just after Thanksgiving. The citywide positive test increased 45 percent last week and went from 11.9 percent of Boston residents testing positive for the virus to 17.3 percent.

Overall since the pandemic began 5.6 percent of Jamaica Plain residents have tested positive for the disease.

On Wednesday, Mayor Martin Walsh said that the number of COVID patients in city hospitals has continued to rise and, as expected, the latest data has crossed the thresholds for concern on some health data metrics.

The Mayor said daily Emergency Room visits for COVID-19 have gone up for eight days in a row and that's a concern to him and the medical community.

"The number of available adult hospital beds has gone down, and that's a concern," said

the Mayor. "Our hospitals are not in danger, at the moment, of being overwhelmed, but the trend is concerning."

Walsh said data confirms why his administration decided to move Boston back into a temporary, modified Phase 2, Step 2 of the reopening plan on Monday.

"Our focus is to keep the people of Boston safe," said Walsh. "That's what every decision we make is about. We have to reduce opportunities for COVID transmission so fewer people get sick, and so hospitals can continue to treat everyone, whether they have COVID or any other serious condition. That's the path to a strong recovery for our city."

On Monday, Walsh and Gov. Charlie Baker announced new state-wide restrictions for the city and state. In an effort to reduce the further spread of COVID and its impact on Boston's health care system and essential services, Walsh said starting Wednesday Boston will return back to a modified Phase Two, Step Two of the Reopening Massachusetts plan.

"Unfortunately, we are at the point where we need to take stronger action to control COVID-19 in Boston, and urgently, to ensure our health care workers have the capacity to care for everyone in need," said Walsh. "We are hopeful that by reducing opportunities for transmission throughout the region, we will reduce the spread of this deadly virus and maintain our ability to keep critical services open. We continue to urge everyone to take personal responsibility and follow the public health guidelines while visiting any public space or business, and employers

to allow their employees to work from home as much as possible. Together, we will be able to get this virus under control, save lives, and ultimately come back stronger."

Returning to a modified Phase Two, Step Two requires the closure of certain businesses that were allowed to open during the Phase Three reopening plan. Gatherings in private and public settings are required to have no more than 10 people for indoor settings and 25 people for outdoor settings.

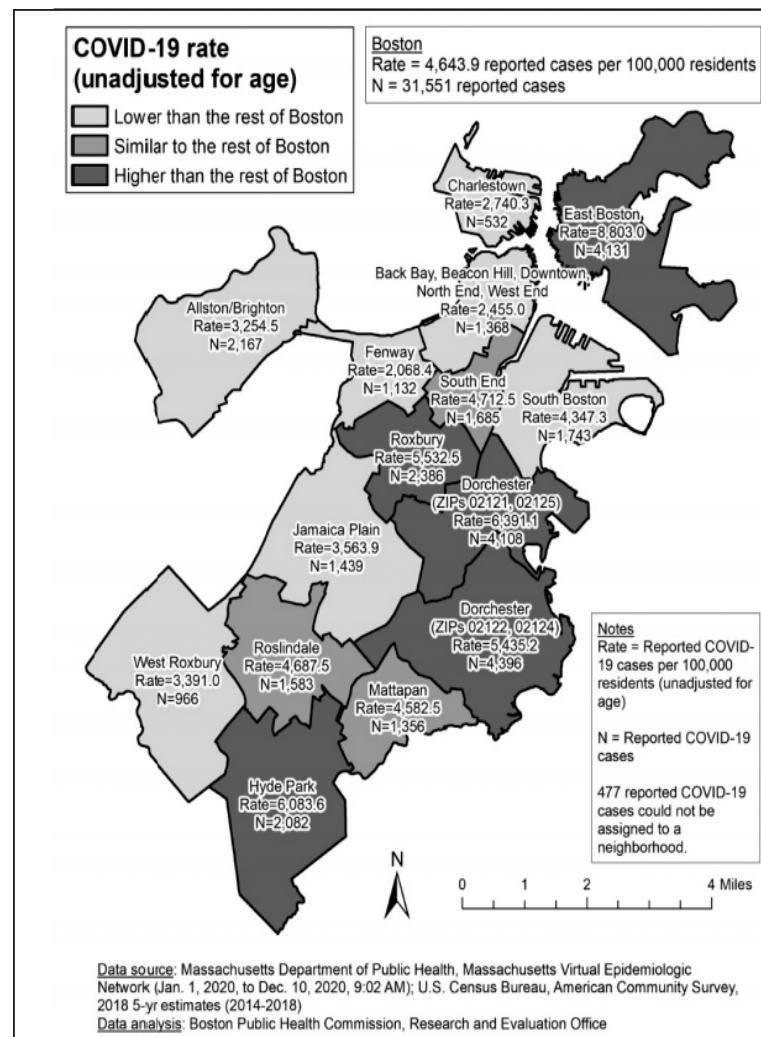
The following industries in the City of Boston are required to close starting Wednesday, December 16 for at least three weeks:

Indoor fitness centers and health clubs, including gyms using alternative spaces. One-on-one personal training sessions are allowed.

- Movie theaters
- Museums
- Aquariums
- Indoor recreational and athletic facilities (except for youth 18 and under)

This does not apply to collegiate or professional sports. Collegiate sports teams in the City of Boston may continue to use indoor recreational facilities and fitness centers.

- Indoor pools may remain open for all ages under pre-registration format structure limited to one person per swim lane.
- Indoor recreational venues with potential for low-contact (batting cages, driving ranges, bowling alleys, rock-climbing)
- Sightseeing and other organized tours (bus tours, duck tours, harbor cruises, whale watching)



On Friday the BPHC released its weekly COVID-19 stats by neighborhood that tracks infection rates and COVID testing results in Boston neighborhoods.

- Indoor historical spaces & sites
- Indoor event spaces (meeting rooms, ballrooms, private party rooms, social clubs)
- Private social clubs may continue to operate, if they serve food, consistent with restaurant guidance.
- Indoor and outdoor gaming arcades associated with gaming devices

The Mayor said bars and restaurants may remain open

with bar seating restrictions and a strictly enforced 90-minute seating limit.

According to the BPHC data, Jamaica Plain's infection rate increased 15.5 percent.

Jamaica Plain went from 308.5 cases per 10,000 residents to 356.3 cases per 10,000 residents.

One hundred ninety-three additional Jamaica Plain residents became infected with COVID-19 in the past two weeks and the number of total cases here went from 1,246 cases two weeks ago to 1,439 cases last week.

The statistics released by the BPHC as part of its weekly COVID-19 report breaks down the number of cases and infection rates in each neighborhood. It also breaks down the number of cases by age, gender and race.

Citywide positive cases of coronavirus increased 12.5 percent last week and went from 30,342 cases to 34,143 in a week. Thirty more Boston residents died from the virus and there are now 960 total deaths in the city from COVID.

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# Boston rolling back to “modified version” of Phase Two, Step Two

BY LAUREN BENNETT

Mayor Marty Walsh on Monday announced that effective December 16, Boston will be rolling back to a “modified” version of Phase Two, Step Two of the state’s reopening plan “for at least three weeks.”

Walsh said that the increase in COVID-19 cases following the Thanksgiving holiday have held steady, and Boston saw 374 new cases as of Monday, and one new death.

He said the community positivity rate is 7.2%, which is up from 5.2% the week before, and every neighborhood in the city saw an increase in positivity. He added that hospital activity in the city also continues to rise.

The hospital data is “moving closer to the threshold for concern,” Walsh said, adding that hospitals are prepared with surge plans. He said that as of

now, no hospital is “in danger” of being overwhelmed, but there is continued spread of the virus throughout the community.

“If these trends don’t stop, it will be a very difficult winter for our hospitals and for a lot of people,” he said, adding that action needs to be taken “now” to reduce the amount of activity in the city where people come into contact with one another.

Walsh said that the rollback to Step Two of Phase Two of the reopening plan “is not about targeting specific sectors that cause the virus,” but rather “trying to reduce overall activity outside the house.” He said that he wants to “minimize the negative impacts on working people and small businesses.”

Industries required to close include gyms (one on one personal training may continue with proper distancing restrictions), movie theaters, museums, aquar-

iums, bowling alleys, sightseeing and organized tours, indoor event spaces, and more. For the full list, visit [boston.gov/reopening](http://boston.gov/reopening). He thanked businesses who must close and said they will have the City’s “full support in the reopening and recovery efforts.”

“Structured youth programs at community centers may continue,” Walsh said.

Office space may stay open with 40 percent capacity, but employers are urged to have their employees to work from home “as much as possible,” according to the City, and Walsh said that “structured youth programs” may continue, as well as indoor dining “with strict adherence to guidelines” including the state’s newly imposed 90 minute timeline, 9:30 closing time, six foot distancing between tables, and six person table limit. Bar seating, however, “will not be allowed, except with

special approval granted by the Boston Licensing Board,” Walsh said.

“If you dine in a restaurant or you visit a store and you want to help small businesses stay open,” Walsh said, “do your part and follow the guidelines.” He also recommended the use of takeout and delivery “whenever possible” to safely support restaurants.

The City hosted a series of webinars for small businesses to learn more about how the changes will affect them, and there are weekly small business conference calls as well.

He said he “doesn’t take lightly” that people’s livelihoods are affected by these changes, “but public health needs are clear at this moment” and all decisions by the City are made based on public health data.

Walsh also addressed the recent vote of no confidence in

Boston Public Schools (BPS) Superintendent Brenda Cassellius by the Boston Teachers Union.

“That action doesn’t help our collective efforts during this critical time,” Walsh said. He said he “deeply” values the work of teachers in the City, and is “sympathetic to their concerns about COVID safety.”

He said that “100 percent of all the safety measures that the Teachers Union requested are implemented in the schools we opened today.”

More high needs students have been able to return to in-person learning, despite BPS being closed for in-person learning for all other students.

Walsh said that he will “continue to support” teachers and staff.

“In hard times, we really need to come together,” Walsh said.

## JP Licks

*Continued from page 1*

times and folks being home and what gives everybody comfort,” she said, as well as “the feelings of home and warmth” that are synonymous with the holidays. “That’s really where the flavors come from,” she said.

Caramel Bourbon Fig pairs bourbon-marinated figs and caramel with sweet ice cream. “We’ve always wanted to do something with figs,” Otis said, but added that they are not known for being packed with flavor, so the team decided to marinate them “to see if we could bring out some more flavor.” She said the taste of figs reminds her of eating fig pudding during the holidays, a memory she has of growing up, so that was her “little input” into the flavor.

The Coquito flavor has been around for a few years, and will return again this holiday season to bring the tastes of coconut, rum, and cinnamon together into an ice cream. Coquito means “little coconut in Spanish,” and the Puerto Rican drink is similar to egnog. Otis said this flavor is popular at the shops during the holidays, and will still be around in time for National Coquito Day on December 21.

“Pralines have always been one of Vincent’s favorites,” Otis said, speaking of JP Licks Founder Vincent Petryk. She said that

their “sweet and crunchy” texture pairs well with bourbon ice cream in the Bourbon Praline flavor.

“Cherries always make us think of Christmastime,” Otis said. Cherry Amaretto’s pink color comes from red cherries marinated in Amaretto and blended with amaretto ice cream.

Otis said the hope for these flavors is “giving everyone some kind of comfort,” as there are different flavors and textures in each.

While ice cream may not be the go-to winter dessert, Otis said that New Englanders always find their way to JP Licks year round, but especially this year as “people are just trying to yet out a little bit, but still be safe,” she said. “Instead of going to the movies, people will bring ice cream home.”

She said that even if it’s chilly outside, New Englanders will “eat ice cream all year round. We just have great families,” she added, calling ice cream “always a comfort food.”

If folks are looking for a hot beverage to warm up this winter, JP Licks also roasts its own coffee beans, and “comes up with new blends all the time,” Otis said. She said the beans are roasted right in Jamaica Plain at the JP Licks headquarters on Centre St.

“Right now, our specialty is the holiday blend,” Otis said, which this year consists of Sumatra coffee blended with coffee

from Peru and Ethiopia.

She said all of JP Licks’ coffee is “fresh” and the shop offers many different roasts and origins of coffee. She said they’re “very good” and are “all different. Some are lighter and some are darker; you can always pick something.”

Otis said that JP Licks also takes customer suggestions and feedback into consideration when creating new flavors or rotating other ones in or out. She said that no samples of flavors are being given right now because of the pandemic, but JP Licks is a kosher company and when it comes to flavor suggestions, “we do our homework and research to see if we can make it into an ice cream.”

But she also said suggestions sometimes lead to the return of an older flavor that people want to see again. She said most recently, the “mainstay” Sweet Cream flavor was removed from shops because it wasn’t selling well, but “a lot of customers asked to bring it back.” As a result, the flavor was brought back as a “special run” in some shops.

“We do really listen to the customer comments,” Otis said, and “try and make it happen.”

The new boozy holiday flavors, along with a plethora of other homemade flavors, can be found in all 17 JP Licks locations.

Petryk said that “liquor and ice cream go together so well- any sweet creamy drink translates very nicely into an ice cream flavor.”

## Happy Holidays!

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## SNA discusses development process; BMS paper update

BY LAUREN BENNETT

The Stonybrook Neighborhood Association (SNA) met virtually on December 14, where they had a discussion about the SNA process and how the group will move forward when it comes to development projects.

SNA Steering Committee member Jonathan McCurdy explained the current SNA process for development projects in the neighborhood, which includes getting in touch with project proponents, hearing the proposal, having it move to subcommittee, then a full vote by the SNA to either oppose or not oppose. The project then goes to the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council (JPNC) Zoning Committee, then the full JPNC, and then to the Zoning Board of Appeal if zoning variances are needed.

"97-99 Williams has come under sort of a spotlight," McCurdy said of a project that sparked a lengthy process discussion at a recent JPNC Zoning Committee meeting. McCurdy said that an abutters meeting was held, after which the City requested a meeting with the SNA Steering Committee, along with the Mayor's

Office of Neighborhood Services, the chair of the JPNC Zoning Committee, and the chair of the SNA subcommittee on this project. The project went before the JPNC Zoning Board on December 2, even though the SNA said the project was still in subcommittee, McCurdy said, and there were still outlying concerns that need to be addressed regarding the requested variances.

"What came out of that," McCurdy said, is "that the city is looking for a process that is more expedited than what we currently have." He said that the city would like to see a vote from neighborhood organizations three months after an official abutter's meeting.

"That's a more condensed timeline than we normally have," he said. He continued, "what we're proposing as a Steering Committee is to look at our subcommittee guidance and to update that."

Steering Committee member Paige Sparks said that some of the Steering Committee's goals include making it "clearer to neighbors what being on a subcommittee means," as well as "clear knowledge" of the public

process when it comes to development projects.

She said the goal is to "continue to maintain and strengthen our reputation as a group" as one that helps create better projects and developments for the Stonybrook neighborhood. Sparks said that next steps involve meeting with some "external groups" and others, and a vote on the new structure is expected in January.

Sparks said that the SNA will aim to meet the City's three month deadline, but are hoping from some flexibility depending on the project if the SNA also shows some flexibility.

### BMS PAPER

The SNA also provided an update on the BMS Paper project. SNA member Jennifer Uhrhane explained that owner Bob Harrington has proposed to expand his restaurant supply business at 3390 Washington St. as well as add a grocery store, a restaurant, and about 160 units of housing.

She said the SNA subcommittee for this project has gone "back and forth" with the developer by providing feedback and asking questions.

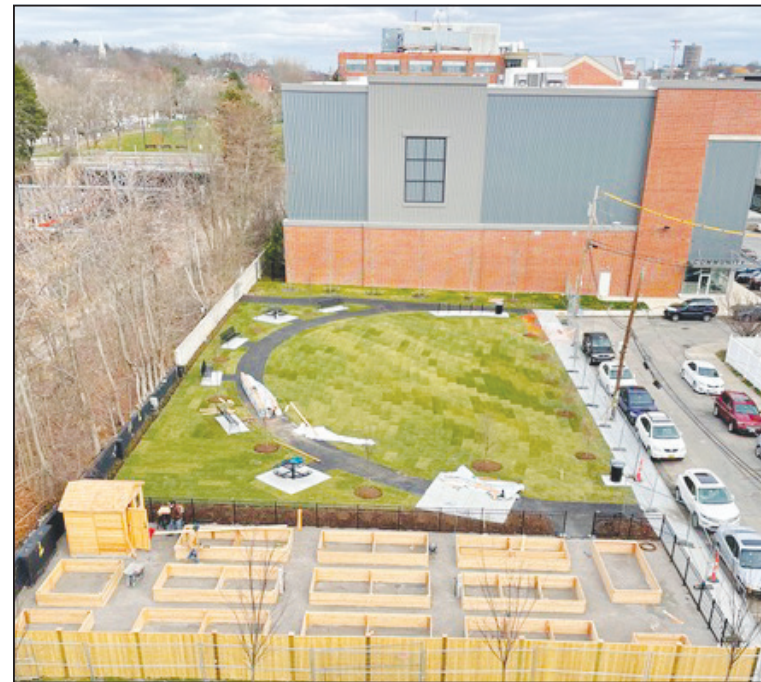


PHOTO COURTESY OF GOPI MANCHINEELLA

The Burnett St. Garden and park is "built and soon ready for the community," SNA member Frederick Vetterlein told the Gazette. The park, which is adjacent to the ExtraSpace storage facility on Washington St., "is the culmination of a 10 year effort by the SNA to build a park, garden and Southwest Corridor Park connector by committing funds from a large development to a community benefit." The park and garden includes a bike path from Burnett St. and raised garden beds for the community garden. Vetterlein said that details surrounding ownership and liability have yet to be figured out, but are forthcoming.

Uhrhane said that the project proponents filed a Project Notification Form with the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) on November 20, "but didn't tell us there was updated information." The comment period is set to end on January 3, but Uhrhane said she hopes it will be extended, as there has yet to be a BPDA public meeting for this project.

She said there are "generally

still some concerns about the bulk of the building" from the subcommittee. She called the design "very awkward," and said it has a "kind of hulking presence," and suggested that "a lot of it could be solved by a different design" as well as putting things like parking underground.

The SNA subcommittee had a meeting on December 17 to discuss the latest plans and the Project Notification form, Uhrhane said.

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# Baker addresses spike in post-Thanksgiving COVID cases

BY LAUREN BENNETT

Governor Charlie Baker on Tuesday spoke about the importance of not gathering with people outside of your household this holiday season, and spoke about the uptick in infections and hospitalizations that followed the Thanksgiving holiday.

Baker said that as of Monday, the state saw 3,572 new cases of COVID-19, and 1,788 people were hospitalized. Of those in the hospital, 354 were in the ICU.

He said that on December 1, the seven day average was about 2,444 new cases per day, but eight days later, about 13 days after Thanksgiving, that number

almost doubled to around 4800 cases per day. He said that was a 96 percent increase in “a little over a week.”

There has also been a “significant increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations over the past three weeks,” Baker said, which are up by 93 percent. Patients in the ICU have increased by 73 percent, and intubated patients have increased by 104 percent, he said. Since Thanksgiving, deaths have increased by 84 percent and 689 people have died statewide due to the virus since Thanksgiving.

He said since many people have “light or no symptoms at all,” it is very easy to spread the

virus to someone who might not be as lucky.

“It’s not a secret that we’re in a second surge here in Massachusetts,” Baker said, and encouraged people to continue wearing masks, distancing, an avoiding people outside of your household while the state waits for the vaccine to be made more widely available.

He said he doesn’t “think we should kid ourselves about the holidays in December,” as “we really can’t have them be the kind of consequential event that Thanksgiving has been here in Massachusetts. We really do need the help of everybody to make sure that we don’t have a

repeat so our hospital system can continue to provide the critical medical care that it does so well for those who need it.”

He said the holidays really have to look different this year, and the Department of Public Health has released guidelines for safely celebrating the holidays, which can be found at [mass.gov/holidays-during-covid-19-in-massachusetts](http://mass.gov/holidays-during-covid-19-in-massachusetts). Baker said the “safest way to celebrate this year is with members of your own household.”

He added, “I can’t emphasize enough that this is not forever.” He said that hopefully next year the holidays can be celebrated as normal, but this “one time, one month,

one year” has to be different.

Baker also announced that on Monday, Massachusetts hospitals received their first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. About 6,000 doses have been distributed to hospitals so far, with more to come soon totaling the 300,000 expected by the end of the year.

The first Massachusetts resident to receive a vaccination was 96-year-old WWII veteran Margaret Klessens as part of the VA Bedford healthcare system. She was also the first VA patient in the country to receive the vaccine.

For more information about the COVID-19 vaccine, visit [mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine-in-massachusetts](http://mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine-in-massachusetts).

## City offering free webinars in multiple languages on Community Choice Electricity program

BY DAN MURPHY

The city’s Environment Department is now offering free webinars to the public in multiple language on the upcoming Community Choice Electricity program, which, officials said, will provide Boston residents with a “stable, affordable, and cleaner electricity option.”

Webinars began Dec. 14 and continue through Dec. 21, including instruction in Haitian Creole and Cantonese from noon to 1 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 18; in Haitian Creole and Cantonese on Sunday, Dec. 20, from 6 to 7 p.m.; and in Mandarin and French on Monday, Dec. 21, from noon to 1 p.m., and they resume again on Jan. 4 based on accommodation requests.

Webinars, which cover how the program works, customer benefits; electric rates and renewable energy offered; key features; and what to expect over the next few months as the program launches, are also being offered in ASL and CART.

City Councilor and mayoral candidate Michelle Wu has been a strong proponent of community choice electricity, and she told reporters at a press conference last Friday that “this is a huge step forward in terms of our city’s carbon footprint as well as easing of the pressures on residents.”

Wu said that she had heard from “so many residents” that “scam companies” offering green

energy had reached out to them, but “having now a seamless, trusted, publicly coordinated purchasing program is a win for the city, and we need to keep ramping up the percentages of renewable energies.”

Moving forward, Wu said the city should “take actions on top of that,” and “should be converting to 100 percent green energy for our municipal footprint.”

A full schedule of webinars and registration links can be found at [bit.ly/38Udh8i](http://bit.ly/38Udh8i), and for more information on disability access or language interpretation, contact [aidan.smith@boston.gov](mailto:aidan.smith@boston.gov). Afterwards, the webinars will also be posted on Greenovate Boston’s YouTube page at [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDj97\\_kFFC-Qr4005hDNjA/videos](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDj97_kFFC-Qr4005hDNjA/videos).

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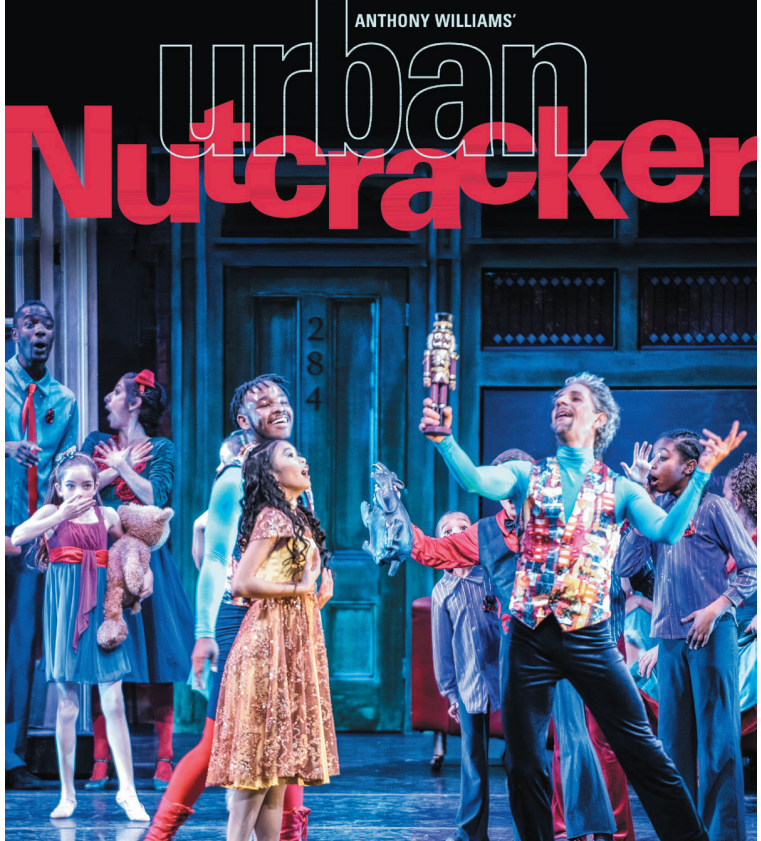
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# Coalition for A Truly Affordable Boston calls for changes to the City's IDP

BY LAUREN BENNETT

The Coalition for a Truly Affordable Boston, a group of residents and community organizations who are calling on Mayor Martin Walsh to strengthen the city's Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP), held a virtual speak-out on December 9 where members explained the current ID policy and what they would like to see changed.

Jaya Ajyer, a Community Organizer at the Fenway Community Development Corporation (CDC) explained that the city's current IDP includes a rule that developers must provide 13 percent affordable housing in new buildings, but "we know that 13 percent is not enough," she said. "This 13 percent is supposed to go toward units in the building to be affordable, or it can go to external affordable development

or job training."

She also said that "we know now that affordable is not really affordable," and many of these units are "out of reach" for Black and Indigenous people of color and households without housing vouchers.

The City of Boston uses Area Median Income (AMI) as a measure for defining affordability, she said, but the AMI for Boston "incorporates incomes from cities beyond Boston, including wealthy neighborhoods and towns like Newton, Wellesley, Weston, and even parts of New Hampshire," she said. She added that a typical income level for Boston is about 50% of the AMI.

Right now, the IDP is for 70 percent AMI, which amounts to one person making about \$55,000 a year or less, or a household or family of four making \$79,000 or less.

"What many residents in Boston actually make is about 30 percent AMI," Ajyer said, which is one person making \$23,000 a year or less or a household or family of four making about \$34,000 a year or less.

"The City has stopped the update for IDP, yet there are pandemics of all sorts hitting us," she said, including systemic racism and others. "These all make the need for affordable housing even greater," she said.

Sam Montano from the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPND) went through the coalition's requested changes, and said that the coalition is demanding that the City increase the IDP from 13 percent to 33 percent by the end of next month. She added that this is a conversation with the City that has been happening for years.

"We would like to make sure that IDP units being developed are actually affordable to folks in Boston," Montano said. She said that there should be a "deepening" of the IDP income levels to an AMI range of 20-70 percent for rentals, and about 50 to 100 percent AMI for home ownership.

She also said that the current nine unit trigger to include affordable units should be lowered so that buildings with fewer than nine units will have IDP units as well.

She said the group has been "pressuring the city," and is urging residents to make phone calls and post on social media to spread the word.

"Affordable housing is a key pillar of strong communities in the city, particularly in a neighborhood like the Fenway where we have such a transient population due to the many colleges

and universities in the area.," said Fenway resident Sarah Jenness. "Affordable housing is also a racial justice issue, particularly in the city of Boston where we know there is a huge racial wealth gap between white families and black families. I hope to see more affordable housing in my neighborhood, because I believe affordable housing allows neighborhoods to become stronger."

Chinatown resident Tian Yin Zhang said via a translator that he and his wife have been in the US "for several years," and have had a lot of trouble finding a stable place to live. They both worked in the restaurant business, but Zhang was forced to retire after an illness, and his wife has recently lost her income due to the pandemic. He said that they have applied for both elderly and public housing, but were turned away because their income was too low. He said he would like to see more help for folks like him.

Karen Chen, Executive Director of the Chinese Progressive Association, said that even before the pandemic, one of the City's top issues was housing, and "during recovery, it's going to continue to be the top issue."

She said a question at hand is finding a way to ensure that affordable housing created in the city "reflects the need of the community."

Chen added, "We need to have a stronger requirement so that working families have a fair game in the City of Boston."

Chen also said that the state needs to work with the city to pass Bill H.4115 that "provides increased affordable housing, job training, and autonomy to Boston," she said. "We really need

our state legislators in the Boston delegation to call on the state to pass this bill." She said this bill "gives the city the ability to work with the residents to find solutions to the housing need that is so critical and that is so urgent."

City Councilor and mayoral candidate Michelle Wu told reporters at a press conference on December 11 that "I support efforts to make sure that our development and private development aligns with our community needs and affordable housing." She also said that when IDP units are included in a larger development, they need to be "dispersed throughout the building as opposed to segregating them."

She added, though, that "there are ways to improve and strengthen that program, however, IDP will never be the solution to our affordable housing crisis," as "we will not get to the scale and the level of affordability that matches what residents actually need." Instead, she said that "generating resources at a target scale for affordable housing" is what needs to be focused on.

"The public sector has an obligation to be proactive and be creative about how we could be aligning our efforts with needs in the community," Wu said.

The Coalition for a Truly Affordable Boston, put out three "action items" for residents to participate in, which includes signing a petition to make the changes to the IDP, posting on social media, and calling Mayor Walsh and Boston Planning and Development Agency Director Brian Golden.

For more information about the coalition and their mission visit [affordableboston.org](http://affordableboston.org).

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# Jamaica Plain Porchfest 2021 will be under the care of Dunamis

STAFF REPORT

Mindy Fried and Marie Ghitman, co-founders of Jamaica Plain Porchfest, are thrilled to announce that this much-treasured event is being handed over - with love and gratitude - to the amazing artists and art-managers from Dunamis, a Boston-based nonprofit organization.

JP Porchfest is a vibrant music and arts festival that takes place on porches (and patios, stoops, driveways, church/community center yard) all over the Jamaica Plain neighborhood.

Our mission is to bridge the divides of race, class, culture and immigrant status through the power of the arts. We welcome performers of all kinds (music, dance, theater, spoken word, storytelling, circus arts, comedy...) and from anywhere.

JP Porchfest has had a long-standing collaboration with Dunamis, originating with the organization's Executive Director serving as Porchfest's Volunteer Coordinator for two years before curating a Dunamis Porch for an additional two years.

"I have always been struck by

Mindy and Marie's intentionality towards celebrating the rich and diverse JP and artistic communities via a refreshingly genuine and authentic servant leadership model. Part of our work at Dunamis is to transform Boston to fully recognize its potential as an arts-hub and this is work that JP Porchfest has been doing to much success with equity at its core. We could not be more excited to carry on this legacy." - J.Cottle, Executive Director

Dunamis, founded in 2017, serves as a nexus for professional development, community-building, consultation, production, advocacy and developing equitable pipelines for access and leadership in creative spaces-particularly for emerging artists and arts managers of color.

We're very excited that Neo Gcabo, the Director of Marketing and Community Development at Dunamis, will be the new JP Porchfest lead producer. Neo is a Boston-based arts-manager as well as an RnB, Jazz, Neo-Soul singer. Originally from Pretoria, South Africa, Neo graduated from Berklee College of Music with a Music Business degree. She has performed at events such as the Boston Book Festival, the Re-

gatta Bar, and Emerson College, and toured internationally with the University of Pretoria Youth Choir.

Reflecting on a reimagined approach to JP Porchfest, building on the fundamental work that the JP Porchfest Co-Founders have created, Neo comments,

In this time of uncertainty, the arts have been forced to pivot as we navigate the challenges of COVID. At Dunamis, our focus is to steer the work of Porchfest to highlight BIPOC-run organizations and communities, elevate the collaboration of community partners, and create long-lasting relationships between artists and community members through a robust, safe and en-

gaging festival. With the fundamental work Marie and Mindy have done, we are excited to launch a reimagined Porchfest to the world.

Mindy expresses how much she and Marie have loved creating this festival, and the importance of passing it on to the artists/arts managers at Dunamis:

We have loved producing JP Porchfest for the past 6 years, but we feel that it is time for a transition. We know that JP Porchfest will thrive under Dunamis's leadership. Dunamis will bring to this project their brilliance, creativity and commitment to artists and arts-managers of color. Porchfesters are in for a treat!

Marie expresses how she and

Mindy welcome what Dunamis will bring to JP Porchfest moving forward:

Dunamis' mission - to ignite agency and transformative growth for emerging artist and arts-managers of color - aligns really well with the JP Porchfest's mission of celebrating the creative talent and diversity of JP and beyond, using the arts as a vehicle to weave together the community across the divides of race, class, culture and immigrant status. We can't wait to attend JP Porchfest, produced by Dunamis!

Dunamis will of course adapt the event to ensure safety, based on the status of the Covid pandemic in summer/fall of 2021.

## Forum on COVID-19 set for Dec. 28

On Monday, December 28 at 7 p.m., there will be a forum titled: Questions about the COVID surge or about COVID vaccines? Join the panel for a virtual conversation with infectious disease specialist Julia Koehler, MD, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School. Most of

this event will be a Question and Answer.

Some questions to be answered are:

- Should I get vaccinated?
- Why does Massachusetts have the third highest death rate from COVID in the country?
- You can register to receive

the event link here: <https://clvu.kindful.com/e/pandemic-2021-keeping-our-families-and-our-neighbors-safe>

• The forum is sponsored by JP Progressives Immigrant Rights Action Group and City Life/Vida Urbana

## Tunnel lighting maintenance scheduled for Central Artery Tunnel (I-93)

STAFF REPORT

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is announcing that there will be reduced lighting in the Central Artery Tunnel (I-93) northbound and southbound beginning Sunday, December 20. The reduction in lighting is in preparation for an extensive lighting replacement to begin later this month. Lights will be turned off in various locations in both the northbound and southbound tunnels, as well as the entrance/exit ramps. The lighting project for this corridor is ongoing through January 2023; lane closures will be necessary throughout the duration of the project. Drivers are advised to keep lights on for safety.

Various right and left lane closures will take place in both directions as well as on entrance/exit ramps.

•I-93 northbound lane closures will take place nightly from 10:00 p.m. until 5:00 a.m., Sunday through Thursday nights.

•I-93 southbound lane closures will take place nightly from 11:00 p.m. until 5:00 a.m., Sunday through Thursday nights.

Appropriate signage, law enforcement details, and advanced message boards will be in place to guide drivers through the work area.

Drivers who are traveling through the area should reduce speed, and use caution. All scheduled work is weather dependent and may be impacted due to an emergency.

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# Jamaica Pond Association discusses MBTA cuts; Bynner St. traffic calming

BY LAUREN BENNETT

The Jamaica Pond Association (JPA) met virtually on December 7, where members discussed various issues affecting the neighborhood.

## JP BAPA UPDATE

JPA Michael Reiskind provided an update on the Jamaica Plain Business and Professional Association (BAPA), which talked about decorating for the holiday season at its last meeting.

This year, the holiday light show using the projector purchased last year will be projected onto the tower of the First Baptist Church on Centre St., and Centre/South Main Streets has received a grant that will allow them to offer “free delivery for all retail stores in the Centre/South district,” Reiskind said.

## MBTA CUTS

The JPA has previously spoken out against the proposed MBTA cuts, and member Franklyn Salimbene said he attended the rally on Veterans Day at

the Health St. stop, where City Councilors Kenzie Bok, Matt O’Malley, and Michelle Wu, along with State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz and Rep. Ayanna Pressley spoke against the cuts. The JPA has been particularly outspoken against the E line ending at Brigham Circle.

Salimbene said that the MBTA’s Fiscal and Management Control Board has been holding a series of community hearings for people to hear about the plan and make comments or ask questions. The vote on the cuts was supposed to take place in early December, but has since been postponed to February.

Salimbene said that he thinks a vaccine will “begin to turn around the loss of ridership as people begin to move around again...”

JPA Chair Rosemary Jones said that as a retired social worker, she wrote a two page letter about “who can get transportation outside of the MBTA system,” and how difficult it is to board a crowded 39 bus for service past Brigham Circle,

particularly for veterans who receive care at the VA medical center by the Health St. station.

## BYNNER ST. TRAFFIC CALMING

The JPA has been working towards several traffic calming measures on Bynner St. to alleviate some of the issues that have been going on in the area. Bruce Fleischer reported that the City has “okayed” resident parking on Bynner St. and several other streets in the area.

There was a recent meeting concerning traffic calming in the area, and Fleischer said that a representative from the Boston Transportation Department proposed the elimination of three parking spaces “going down to the Jamaicaway so people could make a right turn and kind of form another lane,” he said. “It was a solution in search of a problem.”

He said that turning right was not the problem, and said that the “lights are way too short on Bynner St.” He said that Bynner St. and the Jamaicaway are

regulated by different entities, so he hopes that the timing of the lights could be revisited again.

He said this is “clearly not where we want to be...why did they come up with this solution that nobody asked for and doesn’t really help?”

He said that “we’re far from done around this,” and there was a decent amount of participation from neighbors on this issue.

Lindsey Santana from the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Services said that signage indicating resident parking will be put up this month, and she will be flying Bynner St. a week before. After the signage goes up, there will be a 90 day trial. She said she wanted “to make it clear that it is a trial, because people have issues with the left turn signal.” She said she has also talked to the Boston Transportation Department and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (which is responsible for the Jamaicaway) about the timing of the lights.

Another part of the discussion revolved around speed bumps, which some said the City gave


“excuses” like that dire trucks and snow plows have issues getting over them. But members said that they exist on other streets in the neighborhood, and JPA member Kevin Moloney said that that reasoning is “baloney.”

## COUNCILOR O’MALLEY NOT SEEKING RE-ELECTION

Councilor Matt O’Malley announced at the end of the month that he would not be seeking re-election, and the JPA voted to send a letter to O’Malley thanking him for his “various good works over his ten year term,” drafted by Franklyn Salimbene and Kevin Moloney.

Moloney said that O’Malley’s work on pond improvements, the library, and other issues throughout the city have been commendable.

“He’s been helpful in discussions of extending the green line beyond Heath St. to Hyde Square...” Salimbene said, and “I appreciate his leadership on banning plastic bags,” Rosemary Jones added.




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# BPS returns some students to in-person learning at three JP Schools

By JOHN LYNDS

Mayor Martin Walsh and Boston Public School Superintendent Dr. Brenda Cassellius announced that approximately 1,700 students across 28 schools, including the Hennigan, Curley and English High School, returned to in-person learning on Monday.

The students returning to school this week have complex disabilities and language needs and were identified by BPS as having a high priority for in-person learning.

“After the return three weeks ago of students to our special education-focused schools we returned the next group of students on Monday, December 14,” said Cassellius. “We are communicating directly with those families in collaboration with their school leaders to outline next steps. This group includes

approximately 1,700 students across 28 schools. These plans are based on families who selected hybrid learning for their students and on each building’s ability to welcome students and staff back to in-person learning. We will add free-standing air purifiers into the school buildings without HVAC systems to promote airflow.”

However, the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) passed a vote of ‘no confidence’ in Dr. Cassellius’s reopening plan.

“The BTU has advocated to Cassellius for common sense reopening provisions such as prioritizing in-person learning for special education students, particularly those who cannot access remote learning,” said the BTU in a statement after the vote.

Other asks by the BTU included safe ventilation and air quality standards; vents in bathrooms

and working sinks with soap for handwashing; a scheduling process that takes into account pre-existing medical conditions of educators and their families; PPE for educators, nurses and staff working with students who cannot socially distance or wear masks; and access to COVID-19 testing.

The union did not seek additional provision with regard to safety, instruction, or staffing issues covering the Jamaica Plain schools and the 25 other schools in Boston, but merely sought the same provisions that were formally agreed to by the superintendent for the first four schools that were opened last month.

“These key provisions were at last agreed to with the Superintendent in November for the initial four schools that were reopened with our support for some of our highest-need stu-

dents,” the statement continues. “Prior to the vote of no confidence, the union had passed a resolution calling for the same safety, instructional, and staffing provisions that exist at the four currently open schools to be extended to the 28 additional schools where staff and students will be present on Monday.”

On Monday, Mayor Walsh shot back at the BTU’s no confidence vote and credited Cassellius and her team for doing this work and prioritizing the students who most need our support.

The Mayor addressed the vote that the BTU took over the weekend that criticized the district and the superintendent on Monday during a press briefing.

“That action doesn’t help our collective efforts at a critical time,” said Walsh. “I value deeply the work that our teachers are doing and have done, all year, under very difficult cir-

cumstances. I am sympathetic to their concerns about COVID safety. These are all of our concerns and we are responding to those concerns. 100 percent of the safety measures that the teachers union requested are implemented in all the schools we have opened. The result is that, today, many more high needs students and their dedicated teachers and support staff are in school, working together, being safe, and learning. That’s a great accomplishment by all involved. We’re going to continue to support our teachers and school staff in that work. And we’re going to keep our promise to the families of our city to do everything we can to get kids safely back in school, where they belong. I have absolute confidence in the Superintendent and her team’s commitment to these values and this work.”

## LOCAL STUDENTS EARN ACADEMIC HONORS

### JAMAICA PLAIN RESIDENT NAMED TO HONOR ROLL AT BC HIGH

**Boston, MA:** Boston College High School is proud to announce that the following student from Jamaica Plain have been named to the school’s First Quarter Honor Roll.

BC High successfully reopened for in-person learning this past September using a hybrid model, with two cohorts of students coming onto campus on alternating weeks. This model provided all BC High students with completely synchronous learning opportunities throughout the fall, regardless of whether the student was at school or at home. The school also implemented extensive safety protocols to help keep students, faculty, staff, and others safe and healthy during the global pandemic, and plans to continue offering in-person instruction in January.

#### First Quarter High Honors Recipients

For High Honors a Sophomore, Junior, and Senior must have at least a 3.80 quality point average and all grades “C+” or higher. Freshmen need a 3.6 quality point average and all grades “C+” or higher.

- Aidan Carroll

Boston College High School is a Jesuit, Catholic, college-preparatory school for young men in grades 7 to 12. Founded in 1863, the school enrolls approximately 1,500 students from more than 140 communities in eastern Massachusetts. For more information please visit [bchigh.edu](http://bchigh.edu).

### BUCKINGHAM BROWNE & NICHOLS GRADUATE PIERCE HALEY EARNS DEAN’S AWARD AT COLGATE UNIVERSITY

Pierce Haley, a member of the Colgate University Class of 2023, has earned the spring 2020 Dean’s Award for Academic Excellence.

Haley is an International Relations major and a graduate of Buckingham Browne & Nichols, from Jamaica Plain.

Students who receive a term grade point average of 3.3 or higher while completing at least three courses earn the spring 2020 Dean’s Award for Academic Excellence.

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majors and supports 25 Division I athletic teams on a campus of about 3,000 students in central New York.

### THE HONOR SOCIETY OF PHI KAPPA PHI INDUCTS NEW MEMBERS

The following people recently were initiated into The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation’s oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines.

- Rachel Kim of Jamaica Plain at MCPHS University
- Kanti Dahal of Jamaica Plain at MCPHS University
- Sung Ki Kim of Jamaica Plain at MCPHS University
- Ramsha Javed of Jamaica Plain at MCPHS University
- Michelle Chung of Jamaica Plain at MCPHS University

They are among approximately 30,000 students, faculty, professional staff and alumni to be initiated into Phi Kappa Phi each year. Membership is by invitation only and requires nomination and approval by a chapter. Only the top 10 percent of seniors and 7.5 percent of juniors are eligible for membership. Graduate students in the top 10 percent of the number of candidates for graduate degrees

may also qualify, as do faculty, professional staff and alumni who have achieved scholarly distinction.

Phi Kappa Phi was founded in 1897 under the leadership of undergraduate student Marcus L.

Urann who had a desire to create a different kind of honor society: one that recognized excellence in all academic disciplines. Today, the Society has chapters on more than 325 campuses in the United States and the Philippines.



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# Egleston Square resident tapped to lead Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement

By JOHN LYNDS

Mayor Martin Walsh announced this week that Egleston Square resident Alexandra Valdez will be the new head of the Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement.

Valdez's appointment as executive director of the department that the Walsh Administration created is part of a wave of new leadership at several key City of Boston departments, including the Mayor's Offices of Women's Advancement, Intergovernmental Relations, Neighborhood Services, and the Inspectional Services Department.

Valdez, who previously served as the director of engagement for the City's Economic Mobility Lab, will replace Tania Del Rio as executive director of the Office of Women's Advancement following Rio's departure from City Hall to take a job in the nonprofit sector.

As head of the office, Valdez

will oversee daily operations for the Office of Women's Advancement, which creates specific programming and opportunities that support economic equity, safety, and empowerment, and representation.

Some of the office's most recent work includes research on paid parental leave and childcare affordability; a multi-pronged approach to closing the gender pay gaps; reducing the demand for commercial sexual exploitation; and creating specific programming for women entrepreneurs.

Valdez's previous role in the City's Economic Mobility Lab has given her the experience necessary for her latest challenge. During her time at the Mobility Lab Valdez and a team of social entrepreneurs within the Mayor's Office of Policy researched and tested ideas to increase upward economic mobility for low- and moderate-income



*Jamaica Plain resident and former mayoral liaison for the neighborhood, Alexandra Valdez was named the new head of the Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement.*

Bostonians.

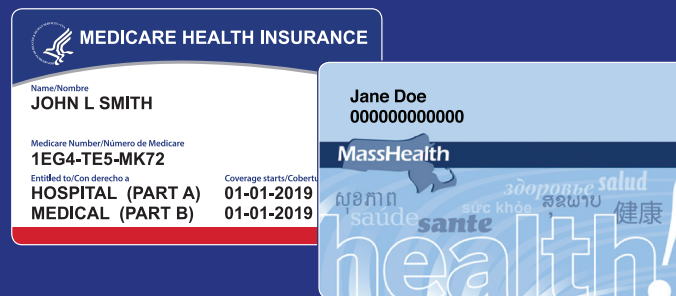
Valdez got her start in City Hall serving as Mayor Walsh's neighborhood liaison for Jamaica Plain and the Latino community in the Office of Neighborhood Services.

Valdez holds a bachelor's degree from Fitchburg State University and is finalizing a master's degree from Suffolk University. She was born in the Dominican Republic and lives in Egleston Square.

The Mayor also appointed Kaitlin Passafaro to director of the office of Intergovernmental Relations (IGR). Current chief of staff for the Civic Engagement Cabinet, Edward M. McGuire III, will assume the role of director of the Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS). Also, Jessica Thomas, the Mayor's current liaison to Roxbury will assume the role of Assistant Commissioner of Constituent Services at ISD.

"Alexandra Valdez is a dedicated public servant that has gone above and beyond to serve the city, especially during difficult times like these," said Mayor Walsh. "The work of all City departments is crucial to our overall mission of serving the residents of Boston in the best way we can. I am incredibly proud and excited to welcome Alexandra, Katilin, Eddie and Jessica into their new roles and look forward to what we can accomplish together."

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# New School Committee chair leans on experience with youth in new role

BY SETH DANIEL

Alexandra Oliver-Davila often tells the youth at Mission Hill’s Sociedad Latina be careful about what they say, because quite often it could come true.

That is the case for Oliver-Davila, who – as a consultant 21 years ago - said she would like to lead the Sociedad Latina organization due to her deep respect for the work they do with young LatinX youth. So it happened – and to her great happiness – that soon enough she was tapped to get that exact position she talked so much about wanting.

“People often asked when I traveled to the various sites I worked at what it is I wanted to do and I said I wanted to be the director of this agency – Sociedad Latina,” she said. “Here I am 21 years later. This is what I said I wanted to do and here I am doing it and feel very blessed. I always said I would never stay anywhere very long in my work life, but I have to say I love it.”

Part of that love she said is that the job has been a time for her to heal. Growing up in New York and Brookline – attending a private school on scholarship that wasn’t very diverse at the time – she said her Latin culture wasn’t celebrated and she experienced racism for the first time in Boston. Coming to Sociedad Latina began to reverse those experiences.

“Coming here as a girl and not speaking English, I was the only one in my classroom,” she said. “One little girl spoke Spanish and she was my translator and she was so annoyed by that. I felt like such a burden. It wasn’t easy. Having that lens for our ELL students, I definitely felt it. I didn’t feel my language and culture were assets. I felt the opposite. Part of working at Sociedad Latina...is like a personal healing. It helped me to heal my soul.”

For the past four years, that journey has also included being a member of the Boston School Committee, shouldering the role of community organizer and public official often in the same sentence. Her role there, however, changed dramatically last month when former Chair Michael Loconto made insensitive remarks to some Asian American parents and ended up resigning. Last month, Oliver-Davila was unanimously elected by her peers to be the new chair, and she said that new role will be a continuation of that healing and learning journey.

“We really want to learn from the incident that happened,” she said. “That’s one thing I really want to make sure we do – that we’re really cognizant. I had a great working relationship with Michael Loconto and stand by all my statements...However, his words were hurtful and I would love to use this as a learning experience. We plan to work with the Director of Equity and students in BPS and treat this like a learning journey.”

She said the healing will begin with retreats this month – one that happened this week – and professional development to better understand what happened and to truly become an anti-racist board. She said she is ready to lead the Committee to that new place.

“We talk a lot about equity and we want to now go beyond equity and learn what that might look like,” she said.

## COMING OF AGE ON THE HILL

Oliver-Davila, 52, is of Nicaraguan and Argentinian heritage, but was born in New York. That said, she lived her first years in Mexico and Argentina before returning to New York. She moved to the Boston area in middle school and settled in South Brookline. She said she was very fortunate to have earned a scholarship to Brimmer & May School, where she excelled academically and then went on to Emmanuel College. It was at that time her connections to Mission Hill started to form.

She said she was introduced to late State Rep. Kevin Fitzgerald. She worked in his office and for the Mission Possible summer camp – really getting a foothold in the Boston network through his help.

“I have deep love for Kevin and he was wonderful,” she said. “I worked in his office and worked with Mission Possible Summer Camp. That’s when I decided I wanted to work with young people.”

Fitzgerald also helped her to get her first “real” job at the Hyde Square Task Force in Jamaica Plain – a youth development organization that is still a treasure to that community just beyond the Back of the Hill. After that, she took on a job at Boston After School & Beyond, where she visited sites all the time throughout the neighborhood – including

Sociedad Latina. It was those visits that propelled her to the role of executive director of that organization, which celebrated 50 years on the Hill last year.

She said working on the School Committee, she has learned important lessons about both sides of the podium – that of advocate and that of public official. It has not been an easy shift, she said, noting that as an advocate you want to do everything, but as an official decision maker, you understand there are finite resources and so many consequences to consider.

“Being on the School Committee side is tough because you want to do everything people ask you to do, but with finite resources, you can’t,” she said, noting that one has to consider a good decision for some could be a bad decision for others.

At the same time, her community organizing with young people provides very real and ground-level information that she said she often uses to inform her positions.

“My job is very informed by the youth I work with,” she said. “I get the real deal, on the ground information from them. That’s helpful. We can forget what it’s like to be a young person.”

## A NEW CHAIR, SOME NEW CHANGES

Oliver-Davila brings a diverse voice to the chair of the School Committee, though it was recently learned she is not the first Latina to chair the Committee (apparently former Chair Elizabeth Reilinger had a Cuban heritage and served in the early 2000s). But Oliver-Davila also brings the perspective of a parent (she has one daughter) and a former English Language Learner (ELL) student who came to the United States without knowing English.

With that will be some changes, first of all with the value put on language and culture – those being assets in a global economy and not deficits to overcome.

“It’s so important when young people really feel their language, culture, race and ethnicity are seen as an asset,” she said. “We’re living in a global world and economy. It’s a no-brainer. You’re bringing something of value to the table.”

She also wants to focus in on issues, and bring the meetings

into check. Some of the meetings over the years, and especially under the COVID Zoom era, have lasted more than seven hours and into the next day. She said one thing she’d like to see is the Committee identify a few goals and work on those things routinely so they can be accountable.

“We cover a lot of things on the School Committee and everything seems urgent and important,” she said. “But it does feel watered down to me because we’re all over the place. We need to focus on one or two things in year one and have a long-term plan. It helps us to be more grounded.”

And naturally, the topic du jour for the Committee is the remote-only learning situation that has been in place since September, with a vast majority of students and teachers trying to conduct school from home via online resources. It has been challenging, she admitted, as the parent of an 11-year-old daughter who is doing remote learning. But she also said she believes the district has done a much-improved job since the emergency learning that took place last spring.

She said getting the technology out to students has been done very well, and having a consistent schedule with teachers on screen is a vast improvement. However, she also said she knows



*New School Committee Chair Alexandra Oliver-Davila has deep roots in Mission Hill, having worked in the office of late State Rep. Kevin Fitzgerald and having been the director of Sociedad Latina the last 21 years. She was voted into the chair role in November.*

many students and parents want to be back in buildings learning in person.

“I truly understand people’s frustration and truly get it as a parent,” she said.

“I think everybody wants to be back,” she continued. “That’s our goal to be back. It’s going to have to be slow and making sure everything is safe. But I understand and am very aware...I understand parent frustrations.”

Oliver-Davila was re-appointed to the Committee this past January, and will serve the next year as the chair.

## Gazette Pet of the Week

by Sarah Carroll



### NICHOLAS

Nicholas is busy kneading (or making biscuits) in preparation for the holidays. This gorgeous, checkerboard boy is looking to spread warmth and cheer as the weather gets colder and the days shorter. At 9-years-old, Nicholas is a big fan of napping, purring, and following you around. He’s also a big fan of snacks and unfortunately has diabetes. He’s so tolerant for his insulin shots, but his adopters will need a close relationship with a vet to help keep his blood sugar regulated. Nicholas will pay you back tenfold with his unending affection and tolerance. He can live with other cats, dogs, and kids. If you’re looking to add a little extra sweetness to your life, inquire about Nicholas today!



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# JP Centre/South Main Streets provides delivery service and more

STAFF REPORT

Thanks to a grant from the Boston Main Streets Foundation and a partnership with City Feed & Supply, JP Centre/South Main Streets will offer JP Holiday Delivery, a free delivery service for our local shops to our local residents. Participating merchants can now offer free delivery to a limited area that includes Jamaica Plain, Mission Hill, Roslindale, and parts of West Roxbury and Brookline. See

a map for the delivery area at this link: <https://bit.ly/3a5xYit>.

This service will run throughout December 24. The last day to place an order is December 23. Residents can do all of their holiday shopping locally and have it delivered together. Current participating locations include:

- Papercuts JP
- Salmagundi
- DVSTY Consignment
- Susanna Jamaica Plain
- On Centre
- Kitchenwitch
- George's Shoes

• Boing! Toy Shop

Residents can also ask their favorite shops to contact JP Centre/South Main Streets to participate.

## JP Holiday Light Show

JP Centre/South Main Streets has launched the JP Holiday Light Show onto the STEEPLE at First Baptist Church at 633 Centre St. The show will run from 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM every evening from December 4, 2020 to January 3, 2021. It features artwork contributed by the Ja-

maica Plain community and a countdown to the New Year.

JP Centre/South Main Streets purchased the projector for last year's Holiday Show, and were able to use it for multiple events, including JP Together/JP Unidos show, projected onto the J.P. Licks building. This year's show is made possible by sponsors Matt O'Malley, the Blue Frog Bakery, and more, and is produced by MASARY Studios. The show is also available to watch online at <https://youtu.be/VUaVETdgLWQ>.

JP Centre/South Main Streets is a volunteer-driven, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that seeks to guide the growth of Jamaica Plain's Centre and South Streets' business district through the active collaboration of residents, business owners, and others committed to a community-led initiative. In partnership with Boston Main Streets, we provide a direct conduit to the City of Boston and can provide technical assistance to help new businesses succeed.

## JPNC Housing and Development Committee discusses affordable senior project on Washington St.

BY LAUREN BENNETT

The Jamaica Plain Housing and Development Committee of the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council (JPNC) met on December 15, where a proposal was heard for a five story building at 3371 Washington St.

The project at 3371 Washington St. is being developed by the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPND) and New Atlantic Development, and consists of a five story building with 38 one bedroom residential units for low income seniors, as well as a new space for El Embajador restaurant, the current tenant of the building. The project has also received funding from the Department of Neighborhood Development (DND).

Samantha Montano of the JPND provided some background on the project, saying that the site is home to El Embajador, which, about three years ago, faced displacement when they received an eviction order. She said that the JPND "helped navigate what was at first a rent hike and then an eviction order," and was able to "push off City Realty" from taking over the building. JPND purchased the property from City Realty, and is now proposing this project.

Ingrid Bengtson, an architect with Utile Architecture & Planning, said that the 38 one bedroom senior units will be "service enriched," and the building will also include one live-in manager unit. All units will be affordable at or below 60 percent of the Area Median Income, she added, and

will include common areas and green spaces for residents, as this project will be compliant with all compact living guidelines.

There will also be bike storage, along with meeting space, offices, and a community space for the residents that has the potential to be opened to the public, Bengtson said. Parking has been removed from a previous version of the project, she added, and the space for the restaurant includes cafe seating with an overhang above.

Bengtson said that one bedroom units have been successful in JPND's other senior buildings, so that's why they chose to implement those here. She said there are also "generous ceiling heights and windows," also to comply with the compact living guidelines.

She said there are also "ambitious sustainability goals," including the goal of achieving passive house certification for the project.

Bengtson said that in complying with the compact living guidelines, the team will not be making bedrooms or living rooms smaller, even though the guidelines allow "for smaller room dimensions than the typical DND guidelines," she said.

"We didn't set out to do compact living," said Bill Madsen Hardy of New Atlantic Development. "We designed it and said, 'hey we're meeting compact living standards in most regards,' so we're sort of following that path. It is our goal to meet all of the standards of compact living."

The committee went through their checklist for BPDA Article 80 projects, which is used to write a comment letter to the BPDA. Chair Carolyn Royce started out with the affordability aspect of the project, which she

said is "great." She added, "I like the idea of senior housing," and other members of the committee were also excited to see an all affordable project, especially with a live-in manager, which Royce also said she liked.

There was some discussion around the transit-oriented design aspect of the checklist, and Royce brought up potential issues with pickup and drop-off as there is "no vehicle access to this site that's regular." The project will, according to the team, meet guidelines for the city's Complete Streets initiative.

On the sustainability front, committee member Aidan Foley said there was potential for concern with building materials and indoor air quality that were not addressed in the presentation.

Brian Goldson of New Atlantic Development said that the team is "not quite there yet with materials," but "can support the indoor Healthy Homes standards [of the Boston Public Health Commission]. Our values should align there."

He said that they plan on having electric heat and the rest of the building will be "fully electric with the potential exception of domestic hot water heating," but added that the building will be prepared to have electric hot water once the technology has

advanced further.

The committee also talked about urban design, and committee member Kevin Rainsford said he thinks "the design is attractive," but wondered how it stacked up against PLAN: JP/Rox guidelines, which he said allow for a maximum height of 55 feet.

Goldson said that the proposed building right now stands over 56 feet high, which he said is a "product of conflicting goals and standards," as the compact living guidelines require higher ceiling heights.

Carolyn Royce said she wants to see more strict adherence to PLAN: JP/Rox guidelines, and a comment was also made that it should be recognized that the Union Ave. Neighborhood Association wants to see "further mitigation" on this project.

Overall, the discussion pointed to the fact that committee members felt that the project's affordability was favorable, but some people were concerned that getting hung up on some of the other details might prevent more affordable housing from being built in the neighborhood.

The committee voted to recommend to the full JPNC that a supportive letter on this project be written, but mention some of the outstanding concerns.



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# BTU members pass vote of no confidence in Superintendent Cassellius

STAFF REPORT

Members of the Boston Teachers Union have overwhelmingly passed a vote of no confidence in Boston Public Schools superintendent Brenda Cassellius through a motion brought from the floor of a membership meeting.

The floor vote was affirmed by a 97.5% margin during an emergency membership meeting this evening. It comes on the heels of the superintendent's refusal to formally extend equal and uniform safety provisions as those

which have been in place at four BPS schools that are currently open, to the 28 additional schools slated to open on Monday morning.

Despite the lack of formalized and equal protections across schools, BTU educators also affirmed that those educators assigned to in-person teaching responsibilities would be reporting to buildings Monday morning.

"We will proudly be there for our high-needs students when they arrive at schools in the morning, but it is very disheartening that the superintendent

has refused to officially ensure equitable and uniform safety provisions and instructional practices at the additional schools slated for reopening on Monday," said Boston Teachers Union President Jessica Tang. "Our educators, as always, are doing their part to ensure our students have what they need for safety and for quality instruction, whether learning in-person or remotely. We are simply asking that the superintendent do her part, as well."

The union did not seek a single additional provision with regard to safety, instruction,

or staffing issues covering 28 schools, but merely sought the same provisions that were formally agreed to by the superintendent for the first four schools that were opened.

BTU educators and parents have long advocated for and supported a return to in-person learning for high-needs students, as well as early education students, and have pressed the superintendent for a comprehensive plan that would ensure safety, equity, and transparency regarding what the conditions and timeline would be for a return

to additional buildings in order to support students in greatest need of in person learning.

Less than one month ago, on November 15, BTU educators and parents reached an agreement with the Boston Public Schools that put important, basic, common sense protections for safety, staffing, and learning in place at four schools that the Boston Teachers Union had supported opening to prioritize the needs of our highest-need students.

*Continued on page 17*

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# Walsh announces 2021 outdoor dining pilot program

STAFF REPORT

Building on Boston's ongoing commitment to supporting restaurants during COVID-19, Mayor Martin J. Walsh last week announced the launch of an outdoor dining pilot program for the 2021 season, making more permanent what was put together for temporarily help restaurants across the city survive through the summer months.

The 2021 Outdoor Dining Pilot Program will continue many of the successful initiatives from this year's program, such as streamlined permitting and outdoor patios on roadways that enable restaurants with narrow sidewalks to offer patio seating to patrons, while offering new

features based on community feedback. Applications for outdoor dining licenses on both public and private property are now open and can be accessed here: <https://bostonopendata.knack.com/outdoor-dining#welcome>.

"I'm pleased to announce an outdoor dining pilot program for the 2021 season. This year we saw the benefits outdoor dining can have on our neighborhoods: vibrant streets, support for local businesses, a safe and enjoyable experience for restaurant goers, and, in many ways, a lifeline for our small businesses during this challenging time," said Mayor Walsh. "We have appreciated the feedback from restaurants and residents, and look forward to their continued input as we de-

velop a outdoor dining plan for next year that balances public health, our restaurants, and our residents."

The 2021 Outdoor Dining Pilot Program season will begin on April 1, 2021, or earlier if weather permits, and will end on December 1, 2021, weather permitting. Restaurants who took part in the 2020 temporary outdoor dining program and who wish to do so in 2021 must re-apply. We will also be accepting applications from restaurants who did not take part in the 2020 temporary outdoor dining program. For the 2020 temporary outdoor dining season, the Licensing Board for the City of Boston approved more than 550 requests for outdoor dining licenses with over 415 on public property. Of the

total approved outdoor spaces, applications from every single neighborhood in the City of Boston were represented.

The City has made a series of changes from the temporary 2020 program, based on feedback received from the public, including:

- Moving the application process to another online platform where businesses can track the status of their applications for more transparency.

- Additional time built into the process, so that restaurants can procure proper materials and plan for operations that will include an outdoor dining space.

- Clear guidance for outdoor dining on public and private property that will be available in both English and Spanish,

with other languages available upon request.

- Consistent enforcement that will focus on ensuring licensees adhere to all requirements issued by the City to ensure outdoor dining is safe and enjoyable.

- 1:1 assistance for restaurant owners who require support and/or translation of the online application

Recognizing that each neighborhood has its own opportunities and challenges for outdoor dining, the City is also working to address the specific needs of restaurants, residents, and visitors across neighborhoods.

There will also be virtual application help sessions available to assist restaurants in preparing and submitting their applications.

## BTU

*Continued from page 16*

However, educators reported at an emergency meeting on Sunday evening that they were "shocked" and "saddened" that, for reasons that remain unclear, Superintendent Cassellius was refusing to formally extend those same protections to the additional 28 schools slated for opening Monday. Furthermore, despite claims to the contrary, she would not even meet with the BTU to explain why she would not extend those same provisions.

At the emergency meeting, educators confirmed a resolution that had been passed at a prior meeting to move the vote of no confidence in the event that the superintendent denied educators at the 28 schools the same and equal rights and provisions as had been formalized for the four schools that opened first. These provisions were created to ensure not just safety for students, educators and the larger community, but also to ensure improved instruction and staffing.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the BTU community has advocated to BPS Superintendent Brenda Cassellius for these important, common sense reopening provisions in Boston Public Schools such as:

- Prioritizing in-person learning for special education students, particularly those who cannot access remote learning
- Safe ventilation and air quality

standards

- Vents in bathrooms and working sinks with soap for hand-washing
- A scheduling process that takes into account pre-existing medical conditions of educators and their families
- PPE for educators, nurses and staff working with students who cannot socially distance or wear masks
- Access to COVID-19 testing

These key provisions were at last agreed to with the Superintendent in November for the initial four schools that were reopened with our support for some of our highest-need students. Prior to the vote of no confidence, the union had passed a resolution calling for the same safety, instructional, and staffing provisions that exist at the four currently open schools to be extended to the 28 additional schools where staff and students will be present on Monday.

Jessica Tang, President of the Boston Teachers Union, issued the following statement regarding the vote of no confidence and what led up to it:

"We all know these safety, staffing, and instructional provisions should have been agreed to earlier so that families would have had more notice and clarity on reopening conditions – and so that we possibly could have returned to in-person learning even sooner. It was clear that COVID-19 rates, tragically, were bound to rise due to the federal government's negligent bungling of the pandemic – and a failure

by Governor Baker to take key steps that would have helped to curb the spread in Massachusetts, particularly in recent weeks.

The provisions reflected in the prior November 15 agreement are practical, student-centered, and essential to keeping our communities and school buildings safe and ensuring the highest quality of instruction for all students. There is no logical reason – and the superintendent has stated no explicit reason whatsoever – why those provisions should not be formally extended to the other 28 schools. There is nothing extraneous in this safety agreement covering the four initial schools to open which should not apply to the additional 28 schools. That is why it has been a shock and profoundly surprising to many of us that Supt. Cassellius has yet to guarantee those same provisions to the other 28 schools slated for reopening on Monday.

We appreciate that Mayor Walsh played such a critical role in reaching the November 15 agreement – and we appreciate that he continues to express his intention to provide similar provisions at the additional schools slated to be opened. That is why we are disappointed, confused, and saddened that the superintendent is not following through and doing her job to memorialize and formalize those commitments. We have felt supported by the Mayor and we wish we could say the same about the superintendent.

Every educator and every

student is worthy of these same protections from the district and many educators have expressed frustration that their school may be treated as less deserving of having these protections memorialized in writing than another. It hurts the trust of educators and of families when the district holds out on extending these provisions equally to schools, particularly when the district holds out on putting those provisions in writing even as COVID-19 rates continue to persist at dangerously high levels across our city. There was a feeling among the membership that the superintendent may somehow be politicizing what should be a very clear procedural matter to ensure equal protections across

schools.

The school district should not be arbitrarily picking and choosing higher standards for some schools over others – it is not just and it is not safe – and the hesitancy to confirm these standards in an agreement with educators sends the wrong signals, even if unintentionally, to the entire community. Why does the superintendent think it is okay to ask certain school communities to settle for lower standards than others? It doesn't add up and it is a matter that could have been easily resolved over recent weeks without members feeling forced to take action from the floor in the form of an overwhelming vote of no confidence in the superintendent."



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# Amid rising COVID numbers JP Stop & Shop launches pickup service

BY JOHN LYNDS

With Jamaica Plain's COVID numbers once again on the rise and the city rolling back to Phase 2 of the state's reopening plan Stop & Shop at 301 Centre Street is doing its part to encourage social distancing.

Jamaica Plain Stop & Shop's Store Manager Jamall Griffin has launched a new 'pickup' service at the Centre Street store.

Griffin said while customers in Jamaica Plain are shopping for holiday gifts online now more than ever due to the pandemic, they can now place an order at stopandshop.com, or on the Stop & Shop mobile app, head to the Jamaica Plain store at a time of their choosing, and have their groceries delivered directly into their car.

"As we get closer to the holidays, it's beyond important that

our customers have a convenient way to shop for groceries," said Griffin. "From the moment our customers send their order, through making sure those hard to find holiday ingredients get into their shopping bags, all the way to the moment we load their groceries into their car, our goal is to make their shopping experience easier."

The 'no-contact' shopping method hopes to cut down on the number of people inside Stop & Shop as Jamaica Plain and Boston experience the most recent spike in COVID cases. Griffin said customers are asked to have their trunk or door open for associates to place groceries directly into their vehicle.

Customers are also encouraged to wear masks and limit the number of people in their vehicle, when possible.

In addition, all Stop & Shop Pickup associates will be wear-



A Stop & Shop associate in Jamaica Plain stocks shelves ahead of the Christmas rush.

ing masks and follow all of the same sanitizing precautions as its in-store associates, including surface sanitization and regular hand washing.

Griffin said now through December 31st 2021, those who are new to pickup can receive the service free for 90 days by entering SSFREEPICKUP at check-

out. The online pickup fee will be waived on the first order and then on all subsequent orders of \$30 or more if placed within 90 days of the first order.

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## 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](mailto:letters@JamaicaPlainGazette.com). Please include address and telephone number for verification purposes. Anonymous letters will not be published. More information: 617-524-2626



# Perkins joins Wholesome Wave as Chief Executive Officer

STAFF REPORT

Jamaica Plain Community Minister/Associate Interim Pastor Benjamin Perkins has joined Wholesome Wave, a national 501(c)3 non-profit that addresses nutrition insecurity by making healthy produce available and affordable for people who need it most. Serving as the organization's Chief Executive Officer, Perkins will grow the strategy and mission, and ultimately lead the organization through the next decade of influence and impact.

"Since our inception thirteen years ago, we have connected over a million and a half families across the country to affordable fruits and vegetables, encouraging healthier eating to prevent, reduce, and reverse diet-related diseases," said Michel Nischan, co-founder, Wholesome Wave. "Because of the pandemic, we are at a pivotal point in our nation's history when more

people than ever are in need of affordable access to healthy food options through financial assistance. I am delighted to welcome Benjamin to the helm of our organization to lead us to our next phase of growth and scale. Ben's passion and dedication to helping communities around this country, as well as his vast experience working in public health over the years, will add great value to our work. I look forward to the learnings Ben will bring to Wholesome Wave."

"At a time when there is an urgent, immediate need in the United States to service those who are struggling to feed themselves and their families, I'm looking forward to rolling up my sleeves and getting to work today, on day one, to help meet this unprecedented demand in communities big and small around the country," said Perkins. "In addition to servicing this immediate need, the urgency of working with Michel, the Board of Directors and the entire team

at Wholesome Wave to ensure that poverty is not a barrier to choosing fruits and vegetables is at the top of my list of priorities. The long-term effects of assisting not only those in need, but also infusing demand into our farming ecosystem and helping take unnecessary strains off of our healthcare system, will ultimately help our country as a whole. What undergirds this all is a foundational belief in equity and the dignity of those we serve, which is at the heart of everything we do."

Prior to joining Wholesome Wave, Perkins served as Vice President, Health Strategies (formerly Vice President, Health Equity/Multicultural Initiatives) with the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association. Previous roles include Associate Director for Community Engagement, The Fenway Institute at Fenway Health and Director, The MALE Center, AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts. He is also a

Community Minister/Associate Interim Pastor with Hope Central Congregational Church in Jamaica Plain, MA. A graduate of University of California, Los Angeles, Perkins also holds a Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology from Antioch University in Los Angeles, and Master of Divinity from Harvard Divinity School.

Wholesome Wave is a national nonprofit that believes that solving hunger is not just about providing more food, but instead it's about providing the right food so those in need can lead a healthy life. The organization's efforts are driven by the mission of democratizing nutrition by empowering underserved consumers to make healthier food choices by increasing affordable access to fruits and vegetables. Wholesome Wave addresses complex problems with innovative and effective solutions, including the development of innovative payment technologies, programs such as "Wholesome



Wholesome Wave's new CEO Benjamin Perkins.

Rx" (doctors writing prescriptions for produce) and "SNAP Doubling" (2 for 1 produce at grocery stores and farmers markets). Founded in 2007 by James Beard Award-winning Chef Michel Nischan and former U.S. Undersecretary of Agriculture Gus Schumacher, the organization is based in Bridgeport, Connecticut. For more information, visit [www.wholesomewave.org](http://www.wholesomewave.org)



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# Eliot School's TeenBridge program creates documentary blending two generations with animation

BY LAUREN BENNETT

A documentary by the name of InterGeneration is in its final stages of editing, and is the culmination of work by teens in the Eliot School of Fine and Applied Arts' TeenBridge program, along with its artist in residence program.

Nine teenagers and seven elders worked together to create the film, weaving together stories using animation, and each generation got to learn about the other to see where their lives overlap. A screening of the documentary was held on December 2, which was the first time that both the teens and the elders were seeing the mostly finished product.

"From the perspective of mostly indigenous, immigrant, and black community leaders, artists, activists, educators and public health workers, *InterGeneration* processes our current moment through storytelling, letter writing and animation," according to the website of filmmaker Carolyn Shadid Lewis, this year's artist in residence who worked with the TeenBridge program. "Armed with their home devices, the teens create magical worlds from the elders' stories with drawing, paper cut-outs, found objects, and their own bodies revealing universal experiences of anxiety, loss, and hope during a global pandemic and a national struggle for racial

justice."

Alison Croney Moses, a Program Director at the Eliot School, said that the TeenBridge program was piloted five years ago to fill the gap in art programming that eighth graders experience when moving up to high school.

"Those folks are now seniors with us and getting ready to apply for college," she said of the program's first participants.

Students are typically recruited at the eighth grade level, but sometimes even in the ninth or tenth grades. "The idea is they stay with us and grow," Croney Moses said. A goal of the program is to empower students "to be successful in their lives through the arts," so they can succeed beyond high school.

The Eliot School's artist in residence program began three years ago "because I wanted an intensive art experience for young people where they get to work with a real live artist; a practicing artist in Boston," Croney Moses said. Working with the artist in residence each year, the students are engaged in a project and have something to show off at the end.

This year's artist in residence is Carolyn Shadid Lewis, an animator and filmmaker who said she had to completely change her original vision for this project because of the pandemic.

She said she knew she "wanted to respond to the moment" with a project, and this year was

"already a little bit significant because it was an election year."

She said she had a broad idea at first, but as she started developing her idea further, she began doing more research and learned about elders facing displacement, so she began to "redirect" her research towards that. Shadid Lewis also said her interest in climate change was something she wanted to weave into the project, in "thinking about the next generation and how we have to think about their futures."

An animation lab was created for students to create animations as a form of storytelling, but then the pandemic hit and it could not be used in the way it was intended, she said.

"In terms of my curriculum, everything had to become more individualized," she said, and a project that was intended on being very collaborative had to be adjusted to deal with the pandemic.

"Everybody had their own animation station," Shadid Lewis said. "The idea of collaboration wasn't possible."

She said because of this, she decided to pair each student with an elder to tell stories about their lives.

"I wanted to make it personal," Shadid Lewis said. "Animation is amazing for that." She said that in her own artistic practice, she combines oral history with "imagery that you're not used to seeing, which she said

"changes the way things are said and seen and creates something a little bit different."

A lot of work for the documentary had to happen over Zoom, but Shadid Lewis also had the students do letter writing to help them practice speaking.

JP resident Carolyn Ingles, one of the elders who participated, said "this was really awesome. It showed me the value, the perspective older folks have in life, and validated it." She said that older people, especially older women, "become invisible." Ingles told stories about her late husband, who was a musician, and about "a time where artistry could flourish easily," she said.

Croney Moses said that the "idea of intergeneration was the hook for me. I feel like so much of all the voices are all elevated in this experience."

Ingles said it was "hard for some of the kids to communicate in any kind of way. We didn't know that our conversations with the kids were being heard." But "when I saw the finished product, I was on the verge of tears. They did listen," she said. "They animated, drew, and spoke about all of the things that all of us said. It was a beautiful, successful contract."

Shadid Lewis said the thing that surprised her most about this process is that "I single-handedly produced a feature length film in a short period of time." She said the timing could not have been better with the

election this year and the "interconnection between all of these people and all of our responsibilities."

Due to licensing issues, the film cannot be released yet, and it still needs some finishing touches. Shadid Lewis said that if it is to ever be distributed publicly, it "needs to have a communal experience," and must be "distributed in a way that can continue the conversation respectfully."

Croney Moses said it was "definitely a learning curve for all of us." She said that "young people did a lot of work during the summer," which is evident in the final product, though there was a much faster time frame for this project than there would be for a typical documentary.

"This film is sort of made for Zoom in a weird way," Shadid Lewis said. "It was the right way to do it in real time," Ingles added.

"The program needs to continue, and it will," Croney Moses said of the TeenBridge program and the artist in residence program. "We want the residency to not be a benefit for just the teens," but the artist as well, she added, saying it's also about "community connections and resources."

Shadid Lewis said that "we really need to focus on teens in our communities. [They're] just a very vulnerable age group...having this kind of support system for teens is so important."

## LEGAL NOTICES

### LEGAL NOTICE

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS THE TRIAL COURT PROBATE AND FAMILY COURT Suffolk Probate And Family Court 24 New Chardon St. Boston, MA 02114 (617)788-8300 NOTICE OF PETITION FOR CHANGE OF NAME Docket No. SU20C0372CA

In the matter of: Hubert Galan, Jr. A Petition to Change Name of Adult has been filed by Hubert Galan, Jr. of Jamaica Plain, MA requesting that the court enter a Decree changing their name to: Hubert Galan-Vargas Any person may appear for purposes of objecting to the petition by filing an appearance at: Suffolk Probate and Family Court before 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 12/31/2020. This is NOT a hearing date, but

a deadline by which you must file a written appearance if you object to this proceeding. WITNESS, Hon. Brian J. Dunn, First Justice of this Court. Date: November 25, 2020 Felix D. Arroyo, Register of Probate

12/18/20 JP

### LEGAL NOTICE

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS THE TRIAL COURT PROBATE AND

FAMILY COURT Suffolk Probate And Family Court 24 New Chardon St. Boston, MA 02114 (617)788-8300 CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION Docket No. SU20P2103EA Estate of: Margaret Chambers Date of Death: 09/12/2020

To all interested persons: A Petition for Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by Laurie McKeown of Jamaica Plain, MA requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition. The Petitioner requests that: Laurie McKeown of Jamaica Plain, MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve Without Surety on the bond in an unsupervised

administration. IMPORTANT NOTICE You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 01/04/2021. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this

proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you. UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC) A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the

Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration. WITNESS, Hon. Brian J. Dunn, First Justice of this Court. Date: November 23, 2020 Felix D. Arroyo Register of Probate

12/18/20 JP

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## LETTERS

# There is still a lot of work to be done if we are to all get through this

**Dear Editor,**

We are writing as concerned neighbors, activists, and organizers working with our statewide partners in a self-organized response to support, educate, and advocate on behalf of our community to ensure that no one should be left behind in the response to COVID-19.

“When our neighbor reached out to us, it was for basic needs such as food. And now, families are still needing food. Even the families that have little food, they share what they have with other families that are in need. I’m exhausted. My neighbors are exhausted. I feel like we are fighting to protect our lives and our government has abandoned us.” - Mutual Aid Volunteer

For 9 months, we have been filling in the gaps created by local and state government inaction mainly around food, economic, and housing insecurities. We are deeply concerned about the housing crisis that has been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our most vulnerable communities had already been coping with historic disinvestment as well as inequitable and unaffordable housing options. Housing instability has been a long-term problem that has not been adequately addressed.

“There are three families living in a 3 bedroom apartment because two of them were evicted before the moratorium. It’s only going to get worse because the moratorium ended.” - Mutual Aid Volunteer

Governor Baker’s \$100 mil-

lion initiative is not enough and won’t prevent the hundreds of thousands of evictions and foreclosures that are expected across the state. The expiration of the eviction and foreclosure moratorium will now place hundreds of thousands of families in our communities at risk for homelessness and place them in a system that is woefully unprepared to support our most vulnerable community members.

“The RAFT process has been a nightmare. Landlords are willing to work with tenants but it takes too long and isn’t even covering their basic costs.” - Mutual Aid Volunteer

Legislatively the House and Senate majority has not yet found the moral courage to address this crisis. And the looming housing crisis will be catastrophic for our communities. According to the US Census Bureau’s Household Pulse survey taken between November 11 and November 23:

- 17% of MA renters are currently behind on rent (almost 200,000 households).
- 6% of homeowners are behind on mortgage payments (over 127,000 households).
- Of MA renters behind on rent, 29% (over 58,000 households) report that they are very likely to be evicted in the next two months.
- Of MA homeowners behind in their mortgages, almost 23% of homeowners (over 28,000 households) report that they are likely to lose their home to foreclosure in the next two months.
- 29% of MA renters have little

to no confidence they will be able to pay next month’s rent.

- 12% of MA homeowners have little to no confidence they will be able to pay next month’s mortgage.
- 31% of MA residents say it is very or somewhat difficult to pay for usual household expenses.

In addition:

20% of small landlords say they are currently struggling with getting their rent payments.

In the week ending 12/6, over 9,500 NEW eviction cases were filed, affecting over 13,000 MA residents.

For these reasons, we request that you immediately pass equitable public policies that address the basic human needs for housing, food, economic support, and healthcare access.

We request that you support the following actions:

- Pass the Guaranteed Housing Stability Act (H.5018) before the end of the session.
- Revamp the rental assistance process (such as RAFT, City of Boston Rental Relief Fund) to include local groups and providers that have the cultural, linguistic, and community connection to reach the families most vulnerable.
- Provide assistance to small owner-occupying landlords who are at risk of losing their home to alleviate the pressure being put on struggling tenants.
- Work with local mutual aid and COVID response networks who can support creating a mutually beneficial plan that does not per-

petuate displacement practices.

The people who have been impacted by the pandemic will not have a break at the end of this session. Therefore, we ask that before you take yours, you pass legislation to address the housing crisis that hundreds of thousands of our neighbors - both renters and homeowners - are currently facing.

“While juggling schoolwork, internet problems, and babysitting responsibilities, my students are now also worrying about being thrown out of their homes. Many have already had to move in with relatives, making school even more difficult and amplifying COVID risk. The government cannot claim to value education and racial justice while allowing students to be evicted in the middle of a pandemic.” - Mutual Aid Volunteer

In 2021, we urge you take bold, progressive, long-term, and systemic changes in addressing the basic needs of our families by tackling:

- The need for basic necessities, increased affordability of housing, and the prevention of massive evictions and foreclosures of hundreds of thousands of households that are tied to an economy devastated by this pandemic.
- The need for long-term solutions that include equity by funding additional rental assistance and low-income housing opportunities statewide, especially for historically marginalized communities, seniors, and people with disabilities.

• Technology gaps that are leaving many children behind in education, such as free high-speed broadband that is often unavailable to underserved communities across the state.

• And the need for high-quality, accessible healthcare for all through a single-payer government sponsored program accessible by all residents regardless of employment, income, or immigration status.

• We also ask you to support increasing training of primary care physicians with a focus on addressing the racial health disparities exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous, Black, and Brown communities.

More than ever, we need our elected officials to rise to the occasion and to provide relief during one of the most devastating periods of our lifetime. Historically marginalized people continue to be disproportionately impacted by health, economic, and social disparities and by a racism crisis that continues to threaten the well-being of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color.

We look forward to seeing you lead in a spirit of public service and care for our most vulnerable neighbors.

If you have any questions you can contact us at [mutualaidjamaicaplain@gmail.com](mailto:mutualaidjamaicaplain@gmail.com).

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## Regarding changes expected at the BPL

**Dear Editor,**

Recently, Boston Public Library President David Leonard and the management announced that local branch libraries and librarians in distinct departments at the Main Branch would no longer have the ability to select the books for their branches and collections. A team of four people will be selecting all of the books for the entire library system. Leonard appears to support a

plan that denies the existence of distinct neighborhood libraries in favor of one central collection warehoused in various branches. Under this plan, it will be the job of four librarians downtown to select and order all of the books for the entire Boston Public Library system. Boston is a diverse city with people from every corner of the globe and its library collections must reflect and respond to the needs and interests

of diverse communities. Boston is also a city of neighborhoods and these neighborhoods have distinct needs and wants.

Currently, over one hundred fully qualified librarians who work directly with families, researchers, local schools, and community groups, chose the books for their locations. The Professional Staff Association AFT believes that the librarians who actually work with the public in

our communities are much better suited to select the books for their branches and are also much more responsive to neighborhood needs and interests. We need a better collection development plan that will move the Boston Public Library forward toward greater equity, not backward. Please help us by sending the following point-and-click email to Leonard. More details on their plan and how it is a disservice

to Boston Here is a link to the Boston Public Library’s Collection Development Plan: <http://bplpsa.info/contents/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/FY21-Collections-Ordering-Plan-Final-docx.pdf?source=email> Can you join me and write a letter? Click <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/support-local-branches-of-the-boston-public-library?-source=email>

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## EDITORIAL

# The virus is in our homes

We now are fully amidst the holiday season. Hanukkah is here and the Christmas and New Year's holiday week is fast-approaching. Public health officials at all levels of government have been warning us for months that we must change our usual manner for celebrating the holidays if we are to have any chance of stopping the deadly spread of the coronavirus.

Unfortunately however, far too many of us have been ignoring these warnings. Families and friends continue to gather for holiday celebrations as if they are completely oblivious to the existence of a pandemic.

But consider these somber and alarming statistics recently released by the state: The overwhelming numbers of active coronavirus clusters across Massachusetts between the period of Nov. 1-November 28 (coinciding with the Thanksgiving holiday time frame) were traced to households, which accounted for 9393 of the state's 9883 clusters and 23,756 of the 26,451 confirmed cases.

In other words, the coronavirus is being spread by family and household members to each other.

This transmission of the virus among household members is nothing new, but its prevalence is striking -- about 90 percent of new coronavirus cases are now occurring within our homes.

The arrival of vaccines is wonderful news, but until each of us has a "jab" (that's what the British call getting a shot) in our arms, none of us are safe and all of us have to assume that everyone we come into contact with is a carrier.

We realize that staying apart from our family members and friends during the holidays is tough medicine -- but it's the only prescription that will work to suppress the spread of the virus.

## Thank you, Gov. Baker

We'd like to take a moment to express our appreciation to Gov. Charlie Baker, who has demonstrated incredible leadership during the past nine months of a crisis that is unprecedented in our state's history.

Day-after-day, Gov. Baker has confronted a deadly pandemic and an economic collapse (not to mention a dangerous president from his own party) with a degree of intelligence, competence, and assuredness that is unmatched by any governor in the country.

Massachusetts has been very fortunate to have Charlie Baker's steady hand at the tiller of our ship-of-state during this stormy period. And (to extend the metaphor), although we know there are still some rough seas ahead, thanks to Gov. Baker's helmsmanship, we can see clearing skies on the horizon.

## Remember the needy

We saw a statistic the other day that was absolutely mind-numbing: 18% of all Americans, and 24% of American children, do not have enough to eat on a daily basis.

We mention this because during this Christmas season, when many of us normally would be splurging on holiday parties, vacations, and the like, those of us who are fortunate enough not to fall within the 18% must consider how we can use our unspent resources to help our fellow Americans who are dealing with a situation that is even worse than what America faced at the height of the Great Depression. Hopefully, Congress will get its act together shortly and provide relief for those in need. But until that happens, it is up to each of us to do what we can to assist our fellow citizens through donations to organizations -- of which there are many -- that will help to ensure that every American at least has enough to eat every day.



WINTER SOLSTICE... SHORTEST DAY. DEC. 21

## OP-ED

### Staying safe during the holiday season

BY MAYOR MARTIN J. WALSH

I want to wish everyone a very happy holiday season, and hope that the remainder of this year brings you the opportunity to reflect on this year, and take time to prioritize your health and wellness. We know that this is a very different holiday season. This is usually the time for traditions and gathering with friends and family, and many people will be hoping for some normalcy. But, as we all know, this isn't a normal year. That's why this holiday season has to look different.

We must continue to stay focused, and follow all the public health precautions, to keep our families, our communities, and ourselves safe. That means continuing to wear a mask, wash your hands on a regular basis, disinfect frequently touched surfaces, stay six feet apart from others, and avoid gatherings — especially indoor gatherings.

This vigilance is needed now more than ever. Since Thanksgiving, we've seen significant spikes in coronavirus cases, both in Boston and across Massachusetts, on a daily basis. We are also seeing more patients admitted to our hospitals. A big source of transmission is coming from indoor, private gatherings. That is something we can all avoid, and that responsibility sits on all of our shoulders.

So, like we did before Thanks-

giving, we are urging everyone to only celebrate with the people you live with. There should be no holiday parties — that means no family gatherings or assemblies of more than 10 people who aren't a part of your household. And we are strongly encouraging all Boston residents not to travel. Travel increases the chance of getting and spreading COVID-19.

I know that we are all tired of living with this virus, after nine long months of patience and sacrifices. Many of us look to the holiday season as a break from this pandemic, but we cannot let our guard down. This may lead to some difficult conversations with our families about what to expect

this year, and the stakes are too high to take chances. But just because you can't gather in person, doesn't mean you can't come together in other ways. Consider making these connections virtually. This is a time to be creative, and keep the holiday spirit alive.

When you are doing your holiday shopping, we encourage you to shop locally. Our small businesses are the backbone of our neighborhoods, and they have been struggling during this difficult time. We are encouraging people to find safe ways to support neighborhood business-

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

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## LETTERS

### End the use of Qualified Immunity

Dear Editor,

Qualified Immunity is a very flawed and unjust aspect of our justice system. For example, it allows a police officer to ransack a house with some help from a SWAT team and get away with it. This doctrine is basically like a “Get Out of Jail” card from Monopoly. Qualified immunity shields government officials from being held personally liable for constitutional violations. In my opinion, this law was only made for incompetent and inconsider-

ate police officers, who obviously violate people’s rights.

A blatant example of qualified immunity took place on August 11th, 2014 in Idaho. According to *Vox*, a woman came home to see police in her yard. They told her they were looking for a suspect, her ex, and she told the police that he was in the house on that morning, but did not know if he was still inside. She gave the police her keys and even asked them to go in and arrest him. The

police then asked her to leave the area. She came back to broken windows doors, ripped couches, glass everywhere. She expected the police to use the keys, but police brought a SWAT Team, and used tear gas, and shot them through the windows. The most baffling part about this was that her ex wasn’t even there.

With her house being destroyed, she was six months pregnant and had to clean up a raided, and unlivable house. She

sued the police department for, “Unreasonable Search and Seizure” making the argument that she gave police consent to enter the house, but not to destroy it. The Federal Court seemed to side with her, saying that the police “exceeded the scope of the consent.” However, the court finally decided that the police were entitled to qualified immunity, so she lost the case.

Currently, State Senator Sonia Chang Diaz has proposed a police reform bill in the Massa-

chusetts Legislature. While this bill does not eliminate qualified immunity, it does state that police who are de-certified “will no longer receive qualified immunity for lawsuits for their abusive acts.” This is a good start. As a youth leader at the Hyde Square Task Force and a resident of Roxbury, I urge the community to give support to this bill so that it becomes law.

EDWIN JOVANNI MONTALVO

## OP-ED

### Are Republicans cutting our throats, or theirs?

By JOHN SWAN

On the face of it, things look pretty bleak. Only a day after celebrating Joe Biden’s win it became obvious the chaos was not over. And while the media focuses on Trump’s efforts to “win” the election, the backstories are even bleaker.

Trump knows he lost. The real strategy is more sinister. These lawsuits and republican denials of Biden’s win have two purposes.

They are a giant scam to raise money for Trump’s PAC, that is putting it in “leadership funds” with virtually no oversight as to how it can be used. And most disturbing, these bogus efforts are the setup for making sure Biden’s presidency is a failure, despite the need to arrest the Covid 19 crisis and revive the economy. Trump is already putting cronies in positions of power and stripping any Obama regulations he can.

Add to this the intimidation and death threats from Trump

supporters to both democrats or republicans who resist against this coup attempt, and any level-headed American has got to be cringing each time they turn on the TV or a page in their newspaper.

And don’t think it’s finally ended because the Supreme Court laughed out the suit seeking to nullify millions of Biden votes in battleground states filed by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, who himself is under both federal and state investigations, accused of bribery and abuse of office

These criminals have one more card to play. On January 6 the electoral votes will be presented to congress. The republicans plan to contest the electors from the battleground states of Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

If both houses accept all the electoral votes, that part of the scam is over. But if the Senate votes to reject them, it goes to the governors of those states to decide if they want to overturn a

legal election.

And republicans do this brazenly, out in the open, red meat for their base. Sixteen red states, and 126 republicans in congress joined the fraudulent suit.

But it still remains to be seen how the majority of American citizens are going to react to this constant chaos of lies, incompetence, and power grabs, not to mention insanity.

The republican base gets a lot of press because they scream the loudest, and are the most threatening with their guns and anger. What would happen if they begin shooting officials or bomb a building?

They are counting on “soft liberals” to fold, hide out in their (mostly) comfortable homes, and fight over toilet paper. At the same time they are daring the Democratic Party to match their seemingly unlimited audacity, an audacity republican operatives could very well lose control over if the militias turn violent.

Rush Limbaugh and others have already suggested the

South secede, again, from the union, only to pull that back after, I’m sure, talking to his lawyer. But that’s what they do: throw out bombs, then say they didn’t really mean it. Of course, their base gets the message.

The senate races in Georgia will be the first sign of how much public grassroots resistance there is. If, and that’s a big if, the dems pull out both, and even one, of the races, it could signal what Churchill once called, “... the beginning of the end” for the Republican Party.

Bill Pascrell, Democratic Congressman from New Jersey is demanding “that the 126 Republicans who have endorsed a malignant lawsuit to overturn the will of the people and undermine our democracy not be seated in Congress.”

Attorney General Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania has already

called Paxton’s suit “a seditious abuse of the judicial process.”

Sedition is defined as “the act of inciting revolt or violence against a lawful authority with the goal of destroying or overthrowing it.”

It will be interesting to see who continues to support Trump if democrats pull this lever.

Trump knows he’s in for some legal, and possibly congressional, trouble when he leaves office, so he’s willing to do (almost?) anything to save his skin.

The question will be, what are the majority of Americans willing to do? A lot of people are feed up. Are they capable of their own audacity? They may surprise everyone.

*John Swan is a founding staff reporter of Gazette Publications, and is currently a free-lance writer living in Jamaica Plain.*

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## Op-Ed

*Continued from page 22*

es. As a reminder, we offer free, two-hour parking on Saturdays at all parking meters across the City, and this will be available until the end of the year.

I also ask everyone to think about the families who are struggling to make ends meet. With

the needs in our communities greater than ever this year, collecting toys will be a challenge for families who can’t afford it. We have **Toys for Tots** donation boxes all across the City: at City Hall, firehouses, stand-alone BCYF centers, and City of Boston Credit Unions. If you can, please donate new, unwrapped toys to help Toys for Tots meet their goals, and help ensure every child and family can experience

the joy of the holiday season.

So as you are making your holiday plans this year, I hope you will keep these points in mind. We are all in this together. Let’s do our part to have a safe holiday season, so we can get back to seeing the ones we love in the new year. Thank you, and I wish you and your families a safe, healthy, and happy holiday season.

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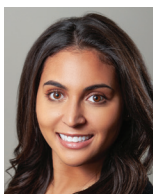
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