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# Jamaica Plain GAZETTE

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FEBRUARY 26, 2021

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PHOTO BY CHARLIE ROSENBERG

Alex Ponte-Capellan of City Life/Vida Urbana led the in-person rally, where people gathered at a safe distance from one another to show their support for affordable housing in Jamaica Plain.

## Local residents, groups hold rally in support of affordable housing

BY LAUREN BENNETT

On Saturday, February 20, Boston residents, along with City Life/Vida Urbana and the Boston Tenant Coalition, gathered outside the site of the proposed Pine St. Inn affordable housing project at 3368 Washington St. for a rally to support affordable housing in

the neighborhood.

A simultaneous virtual rally was held via Zoom, and participants both in person and virtually took turns saying why they believe affordable housing is important.

The rally was in support of

*Continued on page 5*

## JP cannabis dispensary and social justice cannabis museum to open March 6

BY JOHN LYNDIS

Jamaica Plain's first adult-use cannabis dispensary will host a soft grand opening on Saturday, March 6.

Core Cannabis Dispensary, located in Hyde Square, has al-

ready gained national recognition for being the first dispensary in the US with a Social Justice Cannabis Museum attached to the project.

Back in June, Core made headlines when the operators commissioned a mural of George

Floyd that was painted by artist Alexander Golob on the side of Core's building. Floyd's death at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer sparked widespread protests against systemic racism

*Continued on page 10*

## E-13 Police review January crime stats

BY LAURA PLUMMER

On Thursday, Feb. 4, District E-13 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 pro-

vide year-to-date 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 33 per-

*Continued on page 2*

## La policía de E-13 revisa las estadísticas de delitos de enero

LAURA PLUMMER

El jueves 4 de febrero, el Distrito E-13 del Departamento de Policía de Boston (BPD) presentó su reunión mensual de relaciones policiales y comunitarias. La reunión es una oportunidad para que el público haga preguntas a la policía local.

En cada reunión, los oficiales proporcionan estadísticas sobre delitos hasta la fecha. Un cuadro examina los datos delictivos de la Parte Uno. Son los delitos de naturaleza más grave y no incluyen delitos menores como el vandalismo, el tráfico de drogas

*Continued on page 2*

## Salmagundi hat shop ready to open after major flood

BY SETH DANIEL

When Jessen Fitzpatrick and Andria Rapagnola heard there might have been a flood in their shop after a winter storm Feb. 2, as they rushed over to check out what had happened, they could have never imagined they would be greeted with several inches of water standing in their popular showroom and water pouring into their storage areas down-

stairs.

What they thought might be a small problem turned out to be a catastrophic blow that nearly closed their 13-year-old custom hat business. Already challenged by the constraints of COVID-19 in the retail space, as well as the cancellation of special events and galas that drove sales, they stood in ankle-deep water, looked at each other, and sincerely wondered if their future included

continuing their business.

"When we opened the door, the water was just racing in," said Fitzpatrick. "It was like looking at each other and saying, 'What do we do first?' There was easily more than an inch of water on the floor."

The biggest catastrophe was the storage space in the basement, which accommodates pro-

*Continued on page 4*

**For the latest news in JP that you need to know, check [jamaicaplainingazette.com](http://jamaicaplainingazette.com)**



# ZBA approves JPNDC affordable senior housing project

By Lauren Bennett

The Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) on February 23 approved the 39 unit affordable senior housing project at 3371-3375 Washington St., as well as approved as final arbiter the project at 35 Brookley Road after previously approving it in July of last year “subject to design review by BPDA with attention to reducing density and massing and for compliance with the rear yard setback requirement,” according to the ZBA.

## 3371-3375 WASHINGTON ST.

The proposal at 3371 Washington St has been presented to the JP community on several different occasions, and consists of 39 affordable units of senior housing as well as a space for El Embajador restaurant to operate, as it currently operates out of this location. The project is being developed by the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPNDC) and New Atlantic Development.

Teronda Ellis, CEO of the JPNDC, said that the site had been “acquired for eviction prevention of the small businesses who were at risk here.”

She also said that all units are one bedroom units between 489 and 629 square feet. There is no parking proposed for the project.

“We have worked with members of the community and the BPDA to revise our plan such that the parking in front of the building will be available for the residents of the building for loading and drop-off and pick up...”

When asked about parking spots for seniors who may have cars, Ellis said “we manage quite a number of senior properties,” and they have found that many of the seniors do not have cars. There was originally a small amount of parking proposed in 2019, but the plan for that has since fallen through and there is no parking proposed at all.

There will be a live-in responder on the ground floor, Ellis said, and there is no roof deck proposed. She said the proposed community room could be used for JPNDC senior health and wellness/preventative care programming, such as gardening, yoga, Zumba, or other activities that seniors may have an interest in. It can also be used for

other programming and things like potlucks, “so they’re not just living in their units, but taking advantage of the ground floor community space,” she said.

The Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Services was in support, as was Councilor O’Malley, though a representative from his office said that the councilor would like the project to go through Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) design review, and “keeping in mind ideally some buffering for the Union Ave. neighborhood.”

Councilor’s Annissa Essaibi George and Michael Flaherty also expressed support.

While this project has received an outpouring of support from the community, as many have expressed there is a great need for affordable housing in the community, John Lincecum, co-owner of Turtle Swamp Brewing, which directly abuts this project, has some concerns about it.

He said that he and his business partner “strongly agree that JP needs affordable senior housing,” but “being the business most impacted by this, we feel very strongly this goal must be balanced with the goal of protecting existing small businesses such as ours who have created 15 local jobs for JP residents...”

He said that Turtle Swamp’s concerns include that they have not received enough detail about how the construction of the new building along Turtle Swamp’s lot line “will not force our business to close.”

He also said that “the number of variances is truly unreasonable.” He also said that there have been several other projects in the area that have all been approved and was concerned about the impact of all of the development.

ZBA Chair Christine Araujo said that the “challenge for us is that the relief goes with the property. There is a functional business adjacent to you. How will your residents, as they turn over, acknowledge the fact that this is a use that runs late into the night?...How will you manage that and that expectation of your proposed residents?”

Ellis said that the JPNDC has “had roughly 45 years” of working with the community “in challenging sites and neighborhood dynamics.” She added, “our

goal is always about the spirit of community partnership.”

She also said that “our residents understand that they’re living in the city. Seniors are very vocal, but very reasonable.” She said that working with Turtle Swamp is part of the JPNDC’s goal of championing a sense of community.

“We want to be neighbors,” Ellis said. “We’re typically good neighbors with our abutters and our businesses.”

Kathy Brown, a longtime JP resident and supporter of affordable housing, said “this project is so important.” She also said it’s important that El Embajador will be allowed to return to a new space.

The ZBA unanimously voted to approve the project with BPDA design review, but Araujo “encouraged” Lincecum to continue working with the JPNDC to alleviate any concerns.

“I think there’s a way forward,” she said.

## 35 BROOKLEY ROAD

Attorney John Pulgini was on hand to explain that the project at 35 Brookley Road to demol-

ish the existing building and construct a new 46 unit residential development, which was approved in July of 2020 with a proviso that it appear before the ZBA as Final Arbiter, has gone through “extensive discussions with BPDA staff.”

The building will have 22 percent affordable units, and five artist/live work spaces.

Pulgini said that a letter from Michael Cannizzo of the BPDA that outlines that the BPDA believes that this proposal meets the recommendations of PLAN: JP/Rox.

The plans that the ZBA approved in July of last year have not since been changed, Pulgini said, but added that there might have been a “misstatement.” He said that there is a seven foot rear yard setback and a passageway, but ZBA member Mark Erlich said that “our proviso was based on the assumption that it went to the lot line. If there is a seven foot setback and passageway that the BPDA has reviewed,” he said it is “less of a problem than I thought.”

Araujo said that “since our hearing then, there has been

nothing that’s changed in reducing the density or massing,” which is what many neighbors had concerns with.

“There has not,” Pulgini confirmed, adding that “there’s no open space violation. By providing the neighbors access through this midblock...it is for the benefit of the entire community.”

Aisling Kerr of the BPDA said that “this project did go back to the BPDA after this board’s original approval in July. The BPDA remains supportive of this project and feels very strongly that it is, by and large, compatible and compliant with the recommendations of PLAN:JP/Rox.”

She said that in her opinion, the concerns heard from the community primarily have to do with PLAN:JP/Rox, as “people in the neighborhood continue to struggle with PLAN:JP/Rox broadly.” Kerr said that the density and planning are all compatible with the plan.

“It functions very well with what’s happening in this area,” she said.

*Continued on page 3*

## Crime stats

*Continued from page 1*

cent in the city of Boston compared to this time last year. So far this year, there have been 79 reported crimes, compared to 105 last year, a decrease of 25 percent. This represents a greater reduction in crime than in the neighborhoods of East Boston, South Boston, Brighton, West Roxbury and Hyde Park.

The new year is starting off

## Estadísticas

*Continued from page 1*

o la posesión ilegal de armas.

Según el resumen, el crimen Parte Uno ha bajado un 33 por ciento en la ciudad de Boston en comparación con esta época del año pasado. En lo que va del año, se han reportado 79 delitos, en comparación con 105 el año pasado, una disminución del 25 por ciento. Esto representa una mayor reducción del crimen que en los vecindarios de East

on a good note. The only Part One crime that has seen an uptick compared to 2020 is auto theft. Crimes that saw a decrease so far this year include rape and attempted, robbery and attempted, domestic assault, non-domestic assault, all burglary and all larceny. The homicide rate of zero remains the same.

It is important to understand the distinction between burglary, robbery and larceny. Burglary is also known as breaking and entering, and involves accessing a residence or business unlaw-

Boston, South Boston, Brighton, West Roxbury y Hyde Park.

El nuevo año comienza con una buena nota. El único crimen de la Primera Parte que ha experimentado un repunte en comparación con 2020 es el robo de automóviles. Los delitos que vieron una disminución incluyen violación e intento, robo e intento, asalto doméstico, asalto no doméstico, todos los robos y todos los hurtos. La tasa de homicidios de cero sigue siendo la misma.

Es importante comprender la distinción entre el robo, el atraco y el hurto. El robo implica

fully with the intent to remove items. Robbery is taking items off of one’s person by force or intimidation. Larceny does not involve force, and includes things like shoplifting, pickpocketing or stealing items from one’s lawn.

The police and community relations meeting is held on the first Thursday of the month at 6:30pm on Zoom. The next meeting will be on Thursday, March 4. All members of the public interested in public safety are encouraged to attend.

acceder ilegalmente a una residencia o negocio con la intención de retirar artículos. El atraco es quitarle artículos a la persona por la fuerza o por intimidación. El hurto no implica la fuerza, e incluye cosas como la ratería y el hurto en tiendas.

La reunión de relaciones con la policía y la comunidad se lleva a cabo el primer jueves del mes a las 6:30 pm en Zoom. La próxima reunión será el jueves 4 de marzo. Se anima a que asistan todos los miembros del público interesados en la seguridad pública.



# Baker announces plan to eliminate remote learning for elementary schools by April

BY LAUREN BENNETT

Governor Charlie Baker on Tuesday announced that the state has a goal of getting elementary school students back into the classroom full-time by April.

"I think we all know that when COVID hit last year, just about this time, teachers, staff, and students experienced an incredible disruption to their daily routines in school," Baker said, "and ever since, have been adapting and adjusting to the challenges that came with the pandemic."

Baker said that districts across the state have made adjustments to help their students adapt to the challenges put forth by the pandemic, "but I think we all agree there's no substitute for in-person learning, especially for kids in elementary school," he said.

"Our administration has been clear for months that the best place for kids is in the classroom," Baker said.

He said that Jeff Riley, the Commissioner of the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, began a process on Tuesday with the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education "to get more kids back into the classroom full time by phasing out remote-only learning in April" and allow students, beginning with elementary school students, to attend classes in person Monday through Friday.

## Housing Project

*Continued from page 2*

The ZBA voted to ultimately approve this project, but Araujo said she is opposed because there is still a lot of opposition from the community and "residents who felt unheard. I feel as the chair

Baker said that the process would begin with students in elementary school, and that the state "hope[s] to be moving ahead soon," he said. "We know the pandemic's been difficult on everyone, but it's been really tough on kids and their parents as they struggle to be out of the classroom and detached from their teachers and their peers."

Approximately 80 percent of the state's school districts are currently providing some sort of in-person learning, whether it be a hybrid model or fully in person, Baker said.

"Districts with in-person learning, regardless of how high COVID transmission is in their community, have seen few, if any, examples of in-school transmission," Baker said. He said that with "proper mitigation strategies" and compliance with protocols, "schools across the Commonwealth have been able to safely welcome kids back to the classroom for many months now."

However, about 20 percent of the state's school districts are still fully remote, which translates to about 400,000 kids, Baker said, "most of whom haven't been in a classroom since March [of last year]."

Baker said that students' "social, mental, and emotional well-being has been significantly impacted" by being out of the classroom.

"The science is pretty clear on this one: there are now dozens of reports from all over the world that it's safe to be in school,

of the board that our concerns have gone unheard in adjusting this project so that it is reduced in massing, it is reduced in density, and that there was more attention to the rear yard. If there had been a robust community process after our hearing, I don't think we would have heard any of these comments from the community."

and doctors and public health experts, including Dr. Fauci, all agree that getting kids back in school needs to be a top priority," Baker said.

He said that the state has "committed funding, resources, and supports to schools and districts to return to classrooms."

Commissioner Riley said he would "take a phased-in approach to returning students to the classroom, working closely with state health officials and medical experts."

He said he would work first to return elementary school students to in-person learning, "with the plan likely extending to middle school grades later in the school year and possibly high

schools as well."

Parents who do not wish to send their children for in person learning will not be required to do so, and they can remain learning remotely through the end of the school year, Riley said, adding that "there will be a waiver process for districts who may need to take a more incremental approach," Riley said, adding that fully remote schools could

first transition to a hybrid model.

Baker said that "with COVID cases and hospitalizations continuing to decline and vaccines well underway, it's time to set our sites on eliminating remote learning by April and starting with elementary schools." He said the state will continue to ramp up vaccine distribution as much as possible and open more mass vaccination sites statewide.



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# Salmagundi

Continued from page 1

duce for their North End store and online sales. They keep about 12,000 hats at any one time in the store – some 3,000 in the upstairs showroom and 9,000 in the basement storage. That storage room is sealed on all sides from flooding and regulated with a HEPA filter too. “The storage room is masonry dry locked and has HEPA filters and is protected, but the ceiling wasn’t,” said Rapagnola. “The water on the hardwood floor upstairs seeped through and by the time it got to the basement storage area, it looked like tea and smelled awful.”

In all, due to quick action, they believe they lost about 1,000 hats, and it could have been much more, but that has still been a major blow to inventory and a major loss to the business in a time when retail cannot shoulder large losses. So clearly, the future was in question in that moment. The good news this week is that the future does include Salmagundi on Centre Street, and it’s through the overwhelming kindness of the community and the perseverance of the two shop owners that will have rescued the venture. Both said they are on track now to open next week. “We have put so much into being open, safe and clean and keeping our business going that

we were kind of ready,” said Fitzpatrick. “We’ve endured COVID, but this flood was like nothing else. If we hadn’t been preparing for the worst and hadn’t been able to jump into action, this would have killed us.” Said Rapagnola, “On top of COVID, this took such a physical, psychological and emotional toll on us that I’m pretty much ready for anything now.” The irony in it all is that the store had been adjusting to COVID right before the flood, renovating the store space so that the front of the store was an expanded and more interactive experience for customers. Meanwhile, the former shop space at the back of the store was transformed into an online headquarters to accommodate more internet sales traffic. Meanwhile, the custom hat workshop downstairs and other areas there were being renovated as well. Both said they were just hours away from finishing the project.

“When we came in on the day of the flood, we were going to be doing the final adjustments in the workshop,” said Fitzpatrick. “It was literally the day we would be doing the finishing touches of the renovation. It was so ironic it became the day of the flood.”

Not to mention the fact that their hat venture was being propped up by the JP store and the inventory within it. With things at their store in the North End slow due to lack of tourists and closed restaurants, they were keeping things going by activity at the JP store. With it flooded and closed, and COVID still exacting a pound of flesh on the business, both said they were exasperated. “It couldn’t have come at a worse time,” said Rapagnola. But they put their noses to the grindstone and saved as many hats as possible, cataloged their losses, and worked about a



Salmagundi hat shop on Centre Street has waded through the challenges of COVID-19 on their retail business, but they never expected this month to have to wade through several inches of water in their store. A leak in the roof on Feb. 2 destroyed the store, and through perseverance and help from the community in a Go Fund Me campaign, they will re-open next week. Here, Jessen Fitzpatrick is seen removing ceiling panels to release water from the flood, with his son Theo lending a hand.



Andria Rapagnola dropping new carpets on the floor as the owners of Salmagundi put the shop back together.

## Gazette Pet of the Week

by Sarah Carroll



### RATS

Ever considered adopting a rat? Rat owners often compare these intuitive little creatures to dogs. They are smart, social, and affectionate with people. They also enjoy spending time with one another and should be adopted and kept in pairs or groups. We have several male and female ratties that are looking to go in same-sex groups. These babies are at the perfect age to learn to trust people. They will easily warm up to their new adopters and are the perfect size for small and big hands alike. If you’re looking for a sweet, playful, and relatively low-maintenance pet, consider adopting two or more ratties. You won’t be able to resist their curly whiskers! Email adoption@mspca.com to inquire about these babies!



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70-hour week to button up the initial issues. An insurance claim was submitted, but those are questionable and slow to make payment. That’s when some customers began to suggest turning to the community for fundraising efforts. Both were very wary, but were finally convinced, and the response was remarkable – bringing about some emotion in the two and showing them how much the community values their space as not just a store, but a valuable place in the community. “In 13 years, we never considered a Go Fund Me page or a Kickstarter campaign,” said Fitzpatrick. “When we started business in 2007, people were still on MySpace. It wasn’t the kind of party we have today...A lot of customers after the flood told us to do a campaign, but it’s not in our nature to ask for help. Some customers made some compelling arguments...In the end, the way people responded to the Go Fund Me campaign was blow away. It takes courage to show you’re vulnerable, but it feels good too when the community responds to help.” Rapagnola said the response to the flood campaign, and the sentiment they’ve gotten from customers during COVID, has put their business in a different perspective. Though they always knew people came in not just for hats, but for advice and for the experience, they didn’t know how much of a cornerstone they were to the community. “Coupled with the pandemic, it has been an interesting time to go forward with the support of the community,” she said. “This has been amazing and there is light at the end of the tunnel. We can see it and we’re so happy to re-open and move past this.”



# Housing rally

*Continued from page 1*

202 units of affordable housing—140 for people coming out of homelessness and 62 for low and moderate income families—at 3368 Washington St., proposed by Pine Street Inn and the Community Builders, which has a lawsuit brought against it by the owner of 3377 Washington St., Monty Gold. 3377 Washington is the home of Turtle Swamp Brewing.

A request for comment was not returned by Gold's attorney by press time.

The rally also supported the proposed 39 units of affordable senior housing and the preservation of El Embajador restaurant at 3371 Washington St. by the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPNDC).

There is also a petition put together by City Life/Vida Urbana that asks Gold to drop the lawsuit, according to JP resident Sarah Horsley. She said a few thousand people have already signed it, and once you sign, an email gets sent directly to Gold, and "he may even email you back," she said.

Katy Connolly was in charge of livestreaming the in-person rally, where neighbors gathered with signs that said things like "Housing for People NOT for Profit," and "Housing is a Human Right," among others.

JP Ferreira, an East Boston resident, said on Zoom that he stands in solidarity with the Jamaica Plain residents, as he sees displacement and unaffordable homes being built in his own neighborhood.

"I see my neighborhood changing by the second," he said. "I want more people to have incentives to stay here, not incentives to get out. They make the city better and I think that affordable housing is something to fight for regardless of where it is in the city."

Grace Hall, a Somerville resident, said, "I have a very nice place to live and it bothers me that anyone in Massachusetts can't have a decent house, enough food, and access to health care. It seems to me that those are minimum things that everybody ought to have." She said that she wants "to help get things more equitable" in whatever way she can.

Alex Ponte-Capellan, a community organizer for City Life/Vida Urbana, led the in-person rally and said that "when we found out that there was a lawsuit blocking [the Pine St. Inn project] from happening... personally I was upset," he said. He added that "the biggest affordable housing" project for formerly homeless people is "being stopped. Why?" Those in attendance chanted "greed!"

He said that Gold "masks" the greed through claiming the project is too high and has issues with the parking, but "we see right through that—it is racist and it is classist."

Ponte-Capellan also talked about the JPNDC senior housing project.

"That building is going to add much more affordable housing for seniors," he said. "Shelters are getting crowded. People are rooming with their friends and family." He said that not having enough affordable housing is "going to lead to deaths. People's lives are on the line right now."

Resident Shameeka Moreno said that she had worked with homeless families before becoming homeless herself. "The community comes from the mom-and-pop shops, kids who grew up here with their families," she said. "I wanted my kids to be well-rounded," and she said that being forced to move out of the

suburbs would provide the same experiences that living in a city would provide to her children.

"I'm from here," she said. "Why should I have to leave here to accommodate somebody else?"

Sara Driscoll, a resident of the Farnsworth House on South St., said that she had been evicted several times over the years for things like property owners selling their buildings and gentrification. "Just keep fighting," she said. "You've got to make it happen."

Resident Bonnie Rovics said she's lived in JP for nearly 30 years. "I was homeless; I left home young," she said. "I used to know every homeless person in Boston 30 years ago," and she said that a great deal of homeless people "are just amazing people who need a house," and she said creating more housing for them is absolutely necessary.

Without more affordable housing, she said that JP will lose more restaurants, businesses, and teachers. "We'll lose the neighborhood," she said. There are "so many reasons why we need these projects."

Kathy Brown from the Boston Tenant Coalition spoke about the group's Coalition for a Truly Affordable Boston that asks "luxury developers to provide more affordable housing," as the city currently only requires 13



PHOTO BY LAUREN MILLER

An affordable housing supporter holds up a sign at the affordable housing rally last Saturday.

percent for projects with units over a certain number as part of its Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP). She said that this is important to "make sure it's actually affordable for Boston residents" to stay in their neigh-

borhoods. She said that about 20 organizations are currently part of it, and there is also a hearing coming up on this topic.

"We are the powerful people," said JP activist Betsaida Gutierrez.

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JP OBSERVER

Conspiracy groups emerge as major domestic threat

By Sandra Storey / Special to the Gazette

An angry mob made up of thousands of members of various conspiracy groups and their believers burst through barricades, then windows, and into the fully occupied U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, waving weapons and flags and yelling their heads off.

From all over the country, including Massachusetts, believers worked in concert to do violence in support of the most publicized conspiracy theories of the year.

For two months before, and during a “wild” rally down the street just an hour before, their

hero, President Donald Trump, insisted loudly that thousands of election workers, scores of state officials, 60+ judges, the entire Democratic Party—and, most recently, even his Vice President Mike Pence—must have conspired to “steal” the Nov. 3 election from him.

As the bizarrely costumed mob laid siege to the Capitol, it became clear that conspiracy theory groups that advocate and practice illegal behavior have become a major menace to our country and the rule of law. They

succeeded that day in halting the counting of ballots that would show Trump lost and threw Congress into chaos for hours.

The Department of Homeland Security activated the terrorism alert system for the first time in more than a year in the aftermath of the riot. The warning, according to the Chicago Tribune, pointed to extremists “fueled by false narratives.”

The gallows the rioters erected for Pence’s neck, their hand-to-hand combat with police, their shouts of threats to kill Pence

and Nancy Pelosi were supported by flagpoles (Trump and American ones, with a few Confederate thrown in) used as weapons, hockey sticks, gas masks, 2x4s, ax handles, and truncheons they brought with them. Once inside they also used doors, police shields, and fire extinguishers to battle police. Six people died as a result of their actions.

The FBI first identified “fringe conspiracy theories” as a domestic terror threat in May, 2019 in an intelligence bulletin from its Phoenix office obtained by Yahoo News.

galoo Bois, Last Sons of Liberty, Oath Keepers, Skin Heads (several local chapters), National Socialist Movement, Insurgence USA, Alex Jones (heads Infowars, famous for broadcasting all sorts of unfounded conspiracy theories; organized fundraising for the Jan. 6 rally). Cowboys for Trump (has advocated violence against Democrats), Plandemic (covid virus is faked by a conspiracy of CDC and others for profit), America First, Women for America First, Stop the Steal Movement, Pennsylvania Three Percent or Three-Percenters.

Super Happy Fun America, a group that behaves the opposite of its name, was there, or at least two people from the Massachusetts group were. They held a “straight pride” parade from Copley Square to City Hall in 2019 led by a pro-Trump float. Leader Mark Sahady of Malden, who was arrested after the Jan. 6 riot, is also a member of a group called “Resist Marxism” that held a so-called “free speech rally” in 2018 on the Common. At both Boston events they were vastly outnumbered by counter-protesters.

So, how many conspiracists and groups—made up of people who express beliefs not backed by evidence, but by their own negative emotions like anger, fear, anxiety and hate—exist in this country? Have their numbers grown? Hard to know.

According to an article in the Feb. 15 Washington Post, “Since ancient times, pandemics have spurred sharp turns in political beliefs, spawning extremist movements, waves of mistrust and wholesale rejection of authorities.” It cites a recent NPR-Ipsos poll in which “nearly 1 in 5 said they believe Satan-worshipping, child-enslaving elites seek to control the world.”

Joan Donovan, who studies media manipulation and extremism and serves as the research director of Harvard’s Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics, and Public Policy was quoted in the New Yorker on Feb. 2. “You don’t have to go to the dark corners of the web to find this [conspiracy theory talk and organizing] any-

“The FBI assesses these conspiracy theories very likely will emerge, spread, and evolve in the modern information marketplace, occasionally driving both groups and individual extremists to carry out criminal or violent acts,” the document states. It went on to say the FBI thought conspiracy theory-driven extremism was likely to grow before the presidential election.

So, where were the FBI and DHS before and on Jan. 6? Investigations where that question should be asked have started in Congress.


We have known about conspiracy groups for years, especially self-styled militias and other white supremacists. It’s physically sickening to put on paper what many of the people and groups that ransacked the Capitol say they believe.

QAnon and the Proud Boys, who had lots of supporters in the Capitol mob, are on the FBI’s domestic terror list.

Two QAnon believers were recently elected to the U.S. House, causing much uproar. QAnon believes many Democrats and celebrities are pedophiles, and Trump was supposed to bring them down. Now some of them are saying Trump will be inaugurated president on March 4, and Biden will step down. Like most predictions by conspiracists, hilarious if not so horrid.


The Proud Boys are unashamedly violent and believe everyone is bad except white, extreme right, straight Christians.

Other conspiracy gangs that joined the riot, as compiled from various news reports, are: Boo-



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# One man arrested in Monday's Jamaica Plain bank robbery

By JOHN LYNDIS

A Jamaica Plain man has been arrested in connection with Monday's bank robbery on Centre Street in Jamaica Plain.

Richard Pimental, 60, of Jamaica Plain, was arrested and charged with Armed Robbery and was arraigned in West Roxbury District Court.

Members of the Boston Police Violent Crime Task Force arrested Pimental just before 1 p.m. Monday following an on-going investigation into recent bank robberies in the area.

Officers witnessed a male, later identified Pimental, exited a black motor vehicle in the area of Harris Avenue and Centre Street. He was seen by police

allegedly entering and exiting three different banks located on Centre Street in Jamaica Plain.

Pimental then allegedly entered Citizens Bank, located at 696 Centre Street, only to exit a few minutes later running away from the bank and looking back over his shoulder. While running from the bank officers saw Pimental allegedly remove a hat,

mask and gloves.

Pimental ran back towards Harris Avenue and was seen by police in the rear of the same black motor vehicle he exited earlier.

Upon confirming that a bank robbery had just occurred officers conducted a traffic stop at 46 Carolina Ave. and placed Pimental under arrest.

Officers recovered a pocket

knife, \$681.00 in United States Currency, as well as other items of evidentiary value.

Bank personnel determined that the total loss to be \$681.00, and provided the officers with the bank robbery demand note from the teller station.

Police said the operator of the black motor vehicle was identified and released.

## JP Observer

*Continued from page 6*

more," she said. "Through these influencers, through these political propagandists, it's all brought in through your news feed...."

Use and development of websites, social media, Youtube channels, email, messaging, Zoom and cellphones have burgeoned the last 20 years. They help conspiracy groups spread disinformation, recruit and gather believers and organize actions, including illegal ones like the riot, on local and national levels like never before, the FBI has noted.

Many rioters, subscribed to several unrelated conspiracy theories, including Ashlii Babbitt—the veteran who was shot and killed by a police officer as she tried to plunge through a broken window into the Capitol wearing a Trump flag tied around her waist and an American flag around her shoulders.

"The best predictor of belief in a conspiracy theory is belief in other conspiracy theories," according to Viren Swami, a psychology professor who studies conspiracy belief at the University of Westminster in UK quoted in an excellent article called "Why People Believe in Conspiracy Theories" in "verywellmind," a medically vetted mental health website.

Many in the mob at the Capitol accuse Democrats and anyone else not on the political right, of doing terrible deeds, some in the past, but also predicted for the future. The conspiracists express fears "the Left" will take over and do violence to the country. They are usually specific about the violence. "Antifa alert they'll attack your homes if Joe's elected," said a poorly punctuated Trump email to supporters.

Conspiracists can be very

intimidating. Witness the pro-Trump gangs that gathered outside at election officials' homes to shout at and threaten them in November. How about the people who issued threats against impeachment managers and their families earlier this month? They were just plain attempting to intimidate people into cheating on election counts.

What to do? First, it's well past time for law enforcement to stop treating lawbreaking conspiracists as though they are innocent protestors or kooks or political groups exercising what they call "free speech." This applies to elected officials, candidates, and other VIPs as well.

Conspiracy promoters need to be arrested or stopped whenever they break any law. No more militia displaying serious firearms in a statehouse. No more threatening people's physical well-being. State and local police need training and support to start reining in lawless conspiracists no matter how "small" their infraction first appears.

The organizers of the Trump rally near the White House Jan. 6 had a rally permit but did not have a march permit. No one tried to stop Trump from announcing a march or the marchers from marching without one. What's the point of requiring a permit, if those who don't get one aren't stopped?

Arrested rioter Dominic Pezola of the Proud Boys, wrote on Facebook, encouraging attendance at the Trump rally, that we now live in "a post-legal society." He and other conspiracists might think so based on experience and observation in 2020.

Not taking legal action against upset conspiracy believers gives them the dual dangerous messages that 1) it's really OK to do illegal things for a "cause" and 2) they are so tough and righteous, no one will try to

stop them.

Second, a great, old tactic has re-emerged against hate-spewing conspiracists: Users "inoculate" the public against them. They do it by foretelling what the conspiracists will probably do to try to poison people's minds.

According to an article in the Boston Globe on Feb. 5, now-Senator Raphael Warnock (D-GA) practiced inoculating Georgia voters before his election was in full swing. Warnock did a commercial saying that opponents were going to say he did and believed terrible things. They might even say he hates puppies. Then Warnock said he refused to take his focus off the real issues during the campaign.

"And by the way," he said, hugging a beagle, "I lo-o-o-ve puppies."

Inoculation can be used in

many ways. Early last summer now-President Joe Biden and a few media commentators warned people that Trump might refuse to engage in a peaceful transition of power if he lost. Though many pundits at the time said Trump can't do that, and it would never happen, many thinking people went on the alert and prepared strategies for dealing with the problem if Trump lost.

Third, and most important to stopping the disinformation landslide, is public education, in schools and also through mass media. Students should learn civics taught by well-trained educators, with curriculum about various levels of government, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. People need to understand conspiracy groups: how they think and recruit, what they do and why; and how to

do critical thinking, including analyzing arguments. An excellent source if information is "The Conspiracy Theory Handbook" a PDF by Stephen Lewandowsky and John Cook: (<https://www.climatechangecommunication.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ConspiracyTheoryHandbook.pdf>).

All of us need to pay better attention to the threat that conspiracy theories pose to this country at all levels. The most dangerous, as we saw broadcast on national television last month, comes from home-grown extremists who help coordinate individuals and groups to plan and carry out violence and intimidation against any idea, person, or policy with which they simply disagree.

*Sandra Storey is the Founder/Publisher Emirita of the Jamaica Plain Gazette.*



## Virtual Public Meeting

# 3193 Washington Street

**Tuesday, March 9**  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

**Zoom Link:** [bit.ly/3193WashPublicMeeting](https://bit.ly/3193WashPublicMeeting)  
**Toll Free:** (833) 568 - 8864  
**Meeting ID:** 161 307 4942

### Project Proponent:

At The Stoneybrook LLC and CRM Property Management Corporation

### Project Description:

The 3193 Washington Street project was originally approved by the BPDA Board on October 20, 2016, as an approximately 42,170 square foot, five-story building, containing 40 residential units, ground floor commercial space, 20 vehicle parking spaces, and 40 bicycle parking spaces (the "Project"). On January 15, 2021, At The Stoneybrook LLC and CRM Property Management Corporation (the "Proponent") filed a document with the BPDA requesting to change the residential units in the Project from condominiums to rentals. The purpose of this public meeting is to discuss and review this proposed change in the residential program of the building.

mail to: **Raul Duverge**  
Boston Planning & Development Agency  
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor  
Boston, MA 02201  
phone: 617.918.4492  
email: [raul.duverge@boston.gov](mailto:raul.duverge@boston.gov)

**Close of Comment Period:**  
03.19.2021



# Kim Janey announces members of mayoral senior leadership team

STAFF REPORT

Boston City Council President Kim Janey has named members of her senior leadership team in anticipation of her assuming the responsibilities of Mayor of Boston. As Janey works to ensure a seamless transition from Mayor Walsh and focuses on tackling the City’s most pressing challenges, she has appointed Chris Osgood as Chief of Staff, Mary Churchill as Chief of Policy and Planning, Stephanie Garrett-Stearns as Senior Advisor to the Mayor, Omar Boukili as Senior Advisor to the Mayor on COVID-19 Response & Strategic

Initiatives, Samuel Hurtado as Senior Advisor to the Mayor, and Lindsey Butler as Deputy Chief of Policy.

“I am thankful that these dedicated public servants — who bring with them decades of municipal management and public policy experience — have agreed to join my leadership team as I assume the office of Mayor of Boston,” said Janey. “They will each add their own unique expertise to the terrific team of public servants currently at City Hall as we work together to ensure a seamless Mayoral transition and begin Boston’s recovery from these unprecedented pub-

lic health, economic and equity challenges.”

### Chris Osgood, Chief of Staff

Chris Osgood — a 15-year veteran of Boston City Hall — previously served as Mayor Walsh’s Chief of the Streets, Transportation & Sanitation. In that position, he worked with the Public Works and Transportation Departments to deliver exceptional City services, build great streets and implement a transportation plan that works for everyone. Prior to serving in that role, Chris co-founded the Mayor’s Office of New Urban Mechanics, a nationally replicated civic innovation group that experiments with new ways of using data, design and technology to improve the constituent experience. Osgood joined the City in 2006, serving as a Mayoral Policy Advisor and working on the team that implemented the City’s performance management program and rebuilt its 24-hour hotline. Chris is a graduate of City Year, Haverford College and the Harvard Business School.

### Mary Churchill, Chief of Policy and Planning

Mary Churchill was previously the Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives and Community Engagement at the newly established Wheelock College of Education and Human Development at Boston University. Prior to her role at Boston University, she was the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) at Wheelock College in Boston. She is also on the board of the Massachusetts Network of Women Leaders in Higher Education which is affiliated with the American Council on Education’s Inclusive Excellence Group and involved with ACE’s Moving the Needle initiative focused on advancing women leaders in higher education. She, her husband and their teenage son are active in their Roxbury neighborhood and Mary serves on several community-based committees and boards. She earned her Ph.D. and M.A. in Sociology from Northeastern University in Boston and has

taught courses in International Studies, Sociology and Political Science.

### Stephanie Garrett-Stearns, Senior Advisor to the Mayor

Stephanie Garrett-Stearns was previously vice president of communications and fund development for The Community Builders, Inc., a position she held since 2015. She led communications and fundraising strategy and program execution for a leading nonprofit developer of residential and commercial real estate. She joined the organization in 2011. Garrett-Stearns was previously head of public relations and chief corporate spokesperson for the Siemens division, Osram Sylvania. Garrett-Stearns serves as an advisor and board member for several non-profit organizations including the Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth (MassINC), Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and the Boston Chapter of The Links, Incorporated. She completed the Business Management Institute at Cornell University in 2008. She holds a Master of Business Administration degree from Washington University in St. Louis and a bachelor’s degree in human resources management from Michigan State University. Stephanie lives in West Roxbury with her husband and daughter.

### Omar Boukili, Senior Advisor to the Mayor, COVID Response & Strategic Initiatives

Omar Boukili brings over a decade of experience in municipal management to Boston City Hall, most recently serving as the Incident Commander for the City of Somerville’s COVID-19 Emergency Response Team. He has also served in the past as Policy Advisor and Director of Governmental Affairs for the Mayor of Somerville and as Chief Administrative Officer of the City of Revere. He was also a Fellow and a consultant at the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative. He earned a Bachelor’s Degree from the University of California, Berkeley and a Masters


of Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

### Samuel Hurtado, Senior Advisor to the Mayor

Samuel Hurtado was previously the Chief of Staff to City Council President Janey. Samuel has more than twenty years of experience in organizing and advocacy. He is a founder and the former executive director of South Boston en Accion (SBEA) and was instrumental in SBEA’s growth as a dynamic, member-led organization that provided high-quality services and community building. Before that, he was part of the Boston School Reform Project at Massachusetts Advocates for Children where he focused on the rights of English Language Learners. He holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Human Services with a concentration in community organizing from The University of Massachusetts Boston’s College of Public and Community Service. Samuel lives in Roxbury with his wife, two children and dog.

### Lindsey Butler, Deputy Chief of Policy

Dr. Lindsey Butler is an environmental epidemiologist with a Ph.D. in Environmental Health from the Boston University School of Public Health where her research focuses on the health impacts of climate change and environmental pollutants. She also holds a Masters in Environmental Health from the BUSPH and a Bachelor’s Degree in Environmental Science from Simmons University. For several years, she has served as a conduit between the scientific community and the public, advocating for environmental action and the public health of urban communities. Lindsey serves as a scientific advisor to the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, is a recipient of a BU Initiative on Cities Early Stage Urban Research Award and is a graduate of the BU URBAN program, a multidisciplinary scientific training program aimed at developing solutions to urban challenges.



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\*These units are available to those who earn more than 80% but less than 100% of AMI

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Household size	80% AMI	100% AMI
1	\$66,650	\$83,300
2	\$76,200	\$95,200
3	\$85,700	\$107,100
4	\$95,200	\$119,000
5	\$102,850	\$128,550
6	\$110,450	\$138,050

**Maximum Asset Limits**

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After careful consideration and an abundance of caution, the City of Boston has decided to cancel the in-person application distribution period. If you cannot complete the application online, please call us at **781-992-5308**, to request that we mail you one and to ask us for any guidance you might need to complete the application.

Fully completed + signed applications must be submitted online or postmarked no later than **Wednesday, March 17, 2021**

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Equal Housing Opportunity



# JPNC discusses members election; fills three vacant seats

BY LAUREN BENNETT

The Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council (JPNC) met virtually on Feb. 23, where members discussed updates from the committees, decided to postpone their upcoming election, and voted in three new council members.

## PUBLIC SERVICE COMMITTEE

Public Service Committee chair Michael Reiskind reported that Top Mix Bar and Kitchen JP came before the committee asking for a 7-day common victualler all-alcohol license with a closing hour of 11:00pm Sunday through Thursday, and 2:00am, on Friday and Saturday, a seasonal outdoor patio with 20 seats, and an entertainment license for five TVs and up to three live performers.

Reiskind said this proposal is “similar to The Frogmore,” and Joseph Correia would be the manager. He also said that the same layout would be kept, with the “bar on one side, and the restaurant on the other.”

He said that there were concerns with noise or the “potential for noise,” and concerns about trash pickup. Reiskind said that Correia promised there would be no trash pickup after 11:00pm and before 7:00am.

The JPNC voted to approve this request with the proviso that the applicant come back to the community for a meeting within six months of opening.

## ZONING COMMITTEE

Zoning Committee Chair Dave Baron reported that there were four matters heard by the Zoning Committee in February. As previously reported by the Gazette, they include proposals at 3326-3328 Washington St., 3371-3375 Washington St., 14 Meehan St., and 11 Danforth St.

At 3326-3328 Washington St., the proposal is to construct a new 43 unit residential building—10 of which are affordable units—which was approved by the full Council on Tuesday evening.

The proposal at 3371-3375 Washington St. by the JPNC and New Atlantic Development to build a five story building with 39 units of affordable senior housing and a commercial space for El Embajador restaurant was approved by the JPNC Executive Committee, but the Zoning Board of Appeal on Tuesday ap-

proved it before it reached the full Council.

At 14 Meehan St., the proposal is to change the occupancy of the building from a one unit building with artist studio and garage to an office in the basement and first floor and two residential units, and add a roof deck and off-street parking. There was some contention in the Stonybrook neighborhood around this proposal, but the JPNC voted to approve it with the proviso that there are “assurances of screening and buffering at the developer’s expense for the parking area,” as recommended by the Zoning Committee.

The proposal at 11 Danforth St. was to renovate the attic space for Unit 3 to create two bedrooms and two bathrooms as well as add an interior stair. The JPNC approved the project at the recommendation of the committee.

## DISCUSSION OF ELECTION

Members of the JPNC engaged in discussion about their upcoming election that was scheduled for the end of April.

Outreach Committee Chair Max Glikman said that there is “obviously still a global pandemic happening,” and called for a vote on whether or not to postpone the election for a second time.

The members discussed potential safety protocols that could be put in place, such as collecting signatures online and campaigning using social media, and the outreach committee said that they are “ready to begin the voting process” should that be the route desired by the full Council.

“It’s difficult to separate it from COVID,” JPNC member Gert Thorn said. He said it is difficult to tell “people who we are and what we do; what we’re all about,” and suggested postponing the election to late summer.

“How do we reach them?” he asked. “That’s my concern overall.”

JPNC member Carolyn Royce said “I hear a lot of what Gert’s saying,” but she said that waiting until the end of the summer or even later would mean that kids are back in school, and people will start to think seriously about the mayoral and council elections that are upcoming this

fall.

Glikman said that while campaigning can be done online, the “election itself would be in person,” though there would be an option to mail in a ballot or drop it off at Curtis Hall. He also said that people could still “walk around and talk to people as long as you’re six feet away,” though this still probably isn’t the best option, he said.

Thorn said he feels it is “impolite” to go door to door during the pandemic.

After further discussion and back and forth about which month would work best based on vaccination availability and the potential for pope to start traveling again, the JPNC voted to postpone their election until July, and revisit the topic in April for further discussion on preparation.

## NEW MEMBERS

After announcing vacancies for three different seats on the Council, the JPNC welcomed Pratik Dubey, Brandon Iizuka, and Robert Kordenbrock as members on Monday night.

Dubey is a graduate student at Northeastern University studying public policy, and he

has worked for Council President Kim Janey as her constituent services specialist. He said he also campaigned as a housing justice organizer at Northeastern, and he is interested in housing and development as well as zoning issues.

Brandon Iizuka worked with Dubey in Councilor Janey’s office, and currently services as a legislative aide to Rep. Chynah Tyler. He said he is a “strong advocate for language access and affordable housing,” and is “grateful for any opportunity to

get involved in my local community.”

Robert Kordenbrock lives in JP with his wife and son, and currently serves as the Executive Director of the Fenway Community Center. Before that, Kordenbrock said he “worked in a variety of different nonprofit settings,” and has experience working with elected officials. He said he and his family intend on living in the neighborhood “for the long term, and he wants “to make a positive impact on the neighborhood.”

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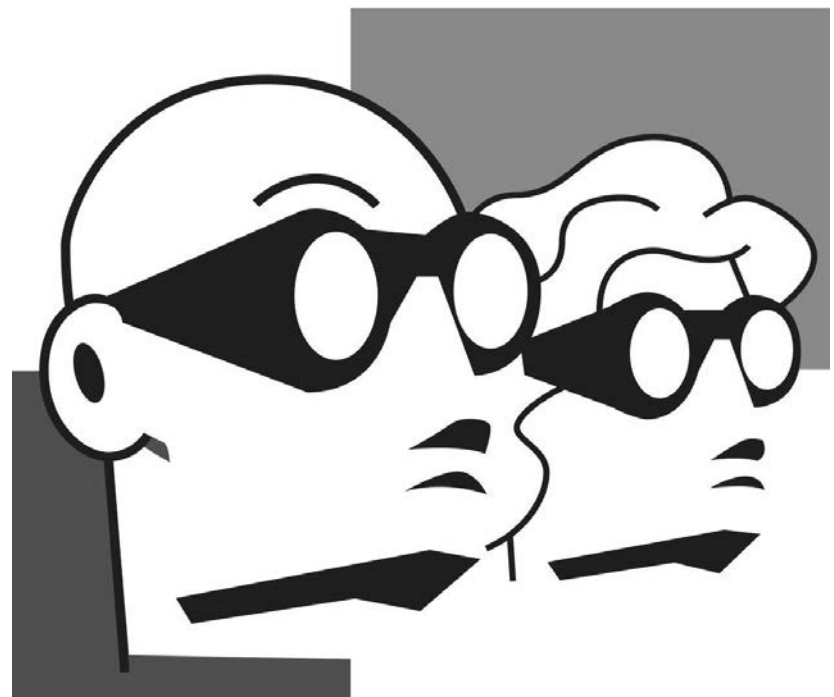
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# Bates joins Focus Real Estate team

SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

Focus Real Estate in Jamaica Plain has announced that Eddie Bates has joined the agency as a Licensed Realtor. Bates had previously served as a Community Planner for the Town of Brookline.

A native of Plymouth, Bates brings a passion for community development and a deep knowledge of Boston area neighborhoods to his new position. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Wagner College and a Masters of Community Planning



Eddie Bates.

from the University of Maryland College Park.

Focus Real Estate's team of agents and brokers represent buyers and sellers throughout the Greater Boston area, with particular expertise in the neighborhoods within the City of Boston.

# Core Cannabis

Continued from page 1

and calls for police reform over the summer.

"The Social Justice Cannabis Museum is a very unique aspect of this cannabis shop," said Core's CEO April Arrasate. "We have a curating council of six people that are experts in social justice-- an Ivy League professors, best Selling authors and they will help to curate various exhibits."

Arrasate said once the shop is open the first exhibition at the museum will be about incarceration in America and how that has been impacted by cannabis prohibition and the drug war.

"Core is just trying to give people an understanding of what

incarceration is like in this country," said Arrasate. "I learned a lot and it's really interesting. The museum will include a space that features a six by eight replica jail cell with the story of people whose lives have been derailed by the drug war. Guests will be able to sit in the jail cell and listen to those stories. One of the things I found pretty jarring was that more arrests were made in 2019 for cannabis than for all violent crimes put together. So that is the type of information we're trying to convey to our guests so that we can promote a healthier conversation around drug policy in America."

Arrasate said 81 Percent of Core's investor dollars came from minorities.

"Eighty-two percent of Core is owned by locals and we are 72 percent women owned," said Arrsate. "Owners of this company have spent collectively over 10 years incarcerated by the war on drugs."

Even before opening its doors Core has partnered with a lot of local organizations.

"Despite not being a revenue generating business we've made a lot of contributions to local nonprofits," said Arrasate. We supported the JP Music Fest. We were sponsors of the La Chica Project. Recently, we supported the Manning School's "Burger Slam" event, which is the school's

number one fundraiser for its after school programs. We also supported the Puerto Rican and Caribbean festival."

As for the dispensary itself, Core has over 6,000 square feet of space that will house all the adult-use cannabis products that are for sale to consumers.

"Our store is licensed for recreational use and the one thing that's interesting about our store is we are not vertically integrated," said Arrsate. "This means we do not grow or process our own products. So what's good about that guests will be able to find a very wide variety of products and brands at Core. Typically if you go to a dispensary that has its own product you're buying their products. We hope to have the largest variety of brands and products available in the state."

Arraste said Core's staff will be well trained and knowledgeable on what sort of products guests are looking for.

"We have a full staff of knowledgeable purveyors and they will be trained specifically on every product and how to guide people towards the right product for them," said Arraste. "Whether it's someone who's been consuming cannabis their whole lives or someone who has never consumed cannabis we want both of those guests to feel comfortable here and leave with the appropriate products."

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# JP's cumulative positive test rate up slightly

JP's cumulative positive test rate up slightly, weekly test rate drops dramatically

BY JOHN LYNDIS

Last week the cumulative COVID-19 positive test rate in Jamaica Plain increased slightly but the weekly positive test rate dropped dramatically according to the latest data released by the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) last Friday.

According to the data 33,070 Jamaica Plain residents have been tested for COVID since the pandemic began and 7.6 percent overall were found to be positive—an increase of 1.3 percent from the 7.5 percent reported on February 5.

Last week 2,205 Jamaica Plain residents were tested and 1.2 percent were found to be COVID positive—a 65 percent decrease from the 3.4 percent reported by the BPHC on February 5.

Citywide, 29,757 residents were tested and 3.8 percent were COVID positive—a 21 percent decrease from the 4.8 percent

testing positive two weeks ago.

At a press briefing last Thursday Mayor Martin Walsh said the average number of positive tests recorded each day was 209. That's down by about 13% from the week before, and daily new cases have continued to go down since early January.

"Our current community positivity rate was 4.8 percent," said Walsh. "That's below our 5 percent threshold, and the lowest positivity we've seen since October. The rate went down in every neighborhood, and every neighborhood is now below 8 percent, which is good news. An average of 4,263 people were tested each day. That's up by 3 percent over the week before and does not include college testing."

The Mayor said Boston continues to work with the State on the vaccine rollout.

"On Wednesday, the Governor announced that, as of February 18, anyone 65 or older, or who has two or more qualifying medical conditions, is now eligible for the vaccine," said Walsh.

The Mayor noted that moderate and severe asthma are now included in that list of conditions, which is a good thing.

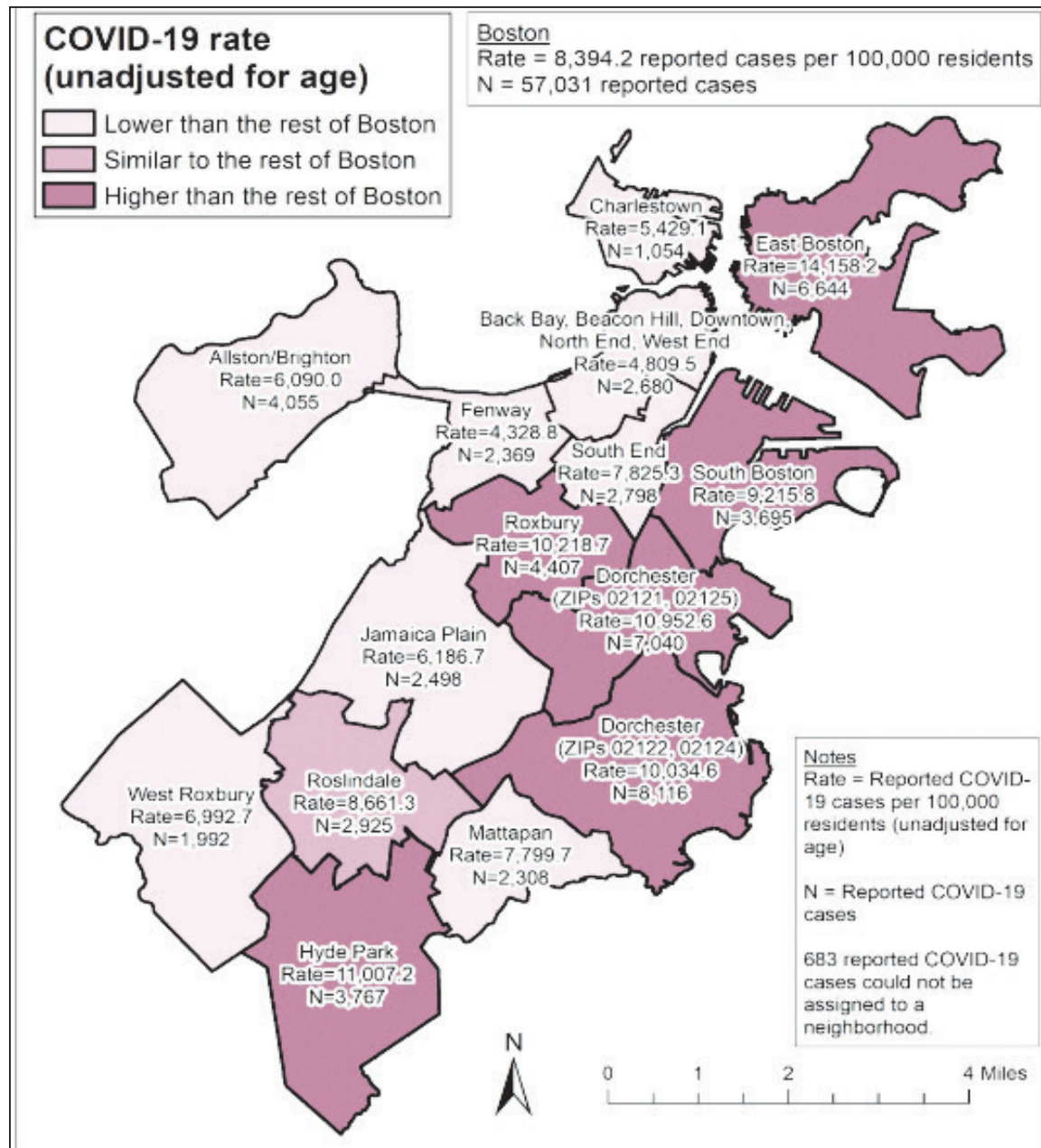
"This was an important decision, to ensure that more residents of color who face elevated risk are eligible sooner," said Walsh. "In addition, everyone in Phase 1 continues to be eligible if you have not been vaccinated yet -- including health care workers, first responders, and residents and staff in long-term care and congregate care settings."

The full updated schedule is at [mass.gov/CovidVaccine](https://mass.gov/CovidVaccine).

Walsh said the City of Boston will continue to advocate on behalf of Boston residents, and increase equity in this process for any resident or community that may face barriers. He said the City is focusing on access in the Black community; the Latino community; the Asian community; and our immigrant communities.

"We're also focusing on access for elderly residents and those with disabilities," he said. "We're doing targeted outreach to these communities through City departments, Community Health Centers, and nonprofit partners."

According to the BPHC data,



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

Jamaica Plain's infection rate increased 4 percent since February 5.

Jamaica Plain went from 594.8 cases per 10,000 residents to 618.6 cases per 10,000 residents.

An additional 96 Jamaica Plain residents became infected with COVID-19 since February 5 and the number of total cases here went from 2,402 cases to 2,498 cases in the neighborhood.

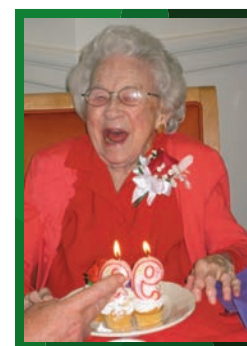
The statistics released by the BPHC as part of its weekly COVID19 report breaks down the number of cases and infection rates in each neighborhood. It also breaks down the number of cases by age, gender and race.

Citywide positive cases of coronavirus increased 3.4 percent last week and went from 56,079 cases to 58,020 confirmed cases in a week. Forty-two additional Boston residents died from the virus last week and there are now 1,256 total deaths in the city from COVID.

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# BLC approves Curley House restoration, asks for different design for storm windows

By Lauren Bennett

The Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) on February 23 approved improvements to the James Michael Curley House, “including: roof repair and replacement; installation of snow guard system; repair and re-pointing of masonry; restoration and re-painting of wood trim, siding, windows and doors; installation of storm windows; replacement of three aluminum windows with wood six-over-six windows; reconstruct East Mudroom; restore

North Sunroom’s paneling and pilasters; replace metal roof canopies at East Wing with compatible roofs; restore masonry balustrade at East Wing; repair wood trim, replace door, and install new man door at garage; restore fence posts and replace fencing in-kind; and relocate existing walk from parking area to new central Mudroom entrance,” according to the BLC hearing notice.

Margaret Dyson, Director of Historic Parks for the Boston Parks and Recreation Department, and architect Scott Win-

kler explained the details of this “comprehensive restoration of the exterior of the building.”

Winkler explained that on the front elevation, the main change was to the sunroom on the north side of the building, which he said had some work done on it at some point. The original pilasters had been covered over with plywood, he said.

The team is “looking to restore those and a little bit of wood repair,” he said of the paneling and pilasters, adding that they are also proposing to add

storm windows “to the majority of the building” that would consist of a “historic replica” painted wood, and provided some more details about those.

He then spoke about the mudroom addition, where they are proposing to rebuild the mudroom “in the same footprint with something that’s a little more compatible.”

Currently, there are no storm windows on the house, but the ones proposed are designed to be left on year-round, thought they do have the capability to be

removed. The Commission raised several questions and concerns about the storm windows, and Commissioner David Berarducci said that he believes they will “have a big visual impact on the windows.”

In the end, the Commission voted to approve all proposed work except the storm windows, and asked that the applicant return with a different design for them, “setback within the window opening to preserve the depth of the window sash within the opening,” according to the BLC.

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# Friends of Blessed Sacrament release public statement, petition to preserve the church for community use

BY LAUREN BENNETT

The Friends of Blessed Sacrament/Amigos de Blessed Sacrament put out a public statement on February 15 to lay out requests to future developers of the Blessed Sacrament church, as it is now being sold by the Hyde Square Task Force (HSTF) for \$2.5 million, after no development partner was found to make necessary repairs to the church building and make it usable for the community.

The Friends of Blessed Sacrament “represent the voices of hundreds of residents, small business owners, former parishioners, youth advocates, artists, and community leaders in Jamaica Plain and the City of Boston,” the group said in their statement.

“We are united in our commitment to preserve the Blessed Sacrament Church’s legacy as a shining jewel of the Hyde/Jackson Square neighborhood of Jamaica Plain.”

It continues, “together we are speaking with one voice to let potential developers know that we are ready to work together to make sure that future development of the former Blessed Sacrament Church building meets the vision of the residents, artists, merchants, and young people of Jamaica Plain and Boston’s Latin Quarter.”

The statement outlines requests to potential future developers, elected officials, and the Hyde Square Task Force, and includes asks to not raze the existing church, to include affordable housing should a potential project be residential, and calling for elected officials to support these asks. The group also asks Hyde Square Task Force to “be flexible with the final sale price to encourage creative development ideas and partnerships,” as well as keep the process transparent with the community.

The Friends also say that they “support the work of the Hyde Square Task Force.”

There have been no official proposals for the property yet, but the Friends of Blessed Sacrament put out this statement as well as a petition to make their points clear about what they would like to see in a future development.

Betsaida Gutierrez, a long

time JP resident and community activist, said that “we’re worried” that the building is being sold with no restrictions. “How is this going to impact the neighborhood and our efforts on saving the church?” she wondered.

She said that she and others want to work with Hyde Square Task Force, and said she would like to see the church be used for cultural events and programming around music, art, and theater.

“I notice that we need to work all together to make this happen,” she said.

Vanessa Snow, a community advocate and a former youth organizer for the HSTF, said that she had participated as a youth leader when the Catholic Church was selling the property.

“Hyde Square Task Force had its young people involved in the discussions because we knew that Jamaica Plain was rapidly gentrifying but also one thing our community came together around was this church project,” she said, adding that along with the HSTF, Urban Edge and the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPND) were involved as well. It was a “huge community-wide effort to make sure that campus would meet the needs of all types of community members.”

She said that as an adult, she was working at the HSTF when the church was up for sale again, and was “part of the effort to keep the JPND from selling its share to another development partner” who could have turned it into luxury condos.

“I think HSTF has done an awesome job activating the plaza,” she said, adding that “HSTF is not a property developer,” and she “respects” their decision to sell the church.

“I don’t have any hard feelings against the HSTF and their decision to sell,” she said. “All of those things make a lot of sense to me.”

She said as someone who grew up in a “working class Latinx community,” it is very important to her that any potential projects for the site preserve the community and do not erase its history.

Snow said that she hopes that whoever purchases the church “understands the context in which they’re coming into that property. Hopefully they can show some good intentions and good will in how they’re going to come into the community.”

As far as potential programming for the future space, Snow said she would like to see space for performance and art pieces, as well as recreational activities for families. She also said that it would be “an awesome place to have different markets” and pop up shops where local business could be supported.

She also said the existing plaza should remain “accessible for all different types of community events.”

Snow said that the \$2.5 million asking price is “very fair, and I know that at that minimum price, it will also be able to secure the role of HSTF in the community for a long time.”

But the development of lux-

ury condos would be a severe detriment to the neighborhood, Snow said, and “I would like to see some community benefits in terms of housing stability and supporting small businesses, especially the ones that are already there.”

Damaris Pimentel, owner of Ultra Beauty Shop and the leader of the Latin Quarter Business Association, said that “the church is an icon and a landmark in our neighborhood.”

She was a former parishioner who attended mass every Sunday, and she said that both of her kids went to Blessed Sacrament School.

She, too, said a cultural space for musical and artistic expression would be an ideal future use of the church space, and agreed with Snow that a small market would also be a nice addition.

“Something that represents the diversity of our neighborhood,” she said is what she would like to see.

Pimentel also stressed the importance of retaining the exterior of the church building and keeping the interior intact as much as possible, though repairs are necessary.

“Knocking it down would be stripping the neighborhood of an icon,” she said.

Dorothy Malcolm is a former parishioner of the Blessed Sacrament Church who said that the church is “almost overwhelming. It’s just wonderful.” he said members climbing up the choir ladder as a choir girl and the

grandness of the building.

“Just looking at it as a piece of architecture and a piece of art,” Malcolm said that someone would “get a sense of why we need so much to save this building.”

She said that there are “such good people” living in the neighborhood, and “I would like a future developer with an eye toward community service and equality with a cultural endeavor. I want to see something beautiful and cultural as well as local and grassroots.”

Malcolm said she would like to see space for performing arts and art exhibits that would bring in “the youth of JP and their families,” as well as expand out to the greater Boston area. She said it could also potentially be used as a facility for auditions and chorale and orchestral groups.

She said HSTF “deserves credit for all they’ve done” in the neighborhood and their efforts to try and redevelop the building. “You cannot fault them, because they’ve done a remarkable job,” Malcolm said.

“Our hands are not tied. That’s where we come in.”

The Friends of Blessed Sacrament petition can be found at [change.org/p/mayor-boston-gov-save-blessed-sacrament-church-for-the-community?utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_medium=custom\\_url&recruited\\_by\\_id=762b60e0-315e-11e6-8729-61d24ecdb47a](https://change.org/p/mayor-boston-gov-save-blessed-sacrament-church-for-the-community?utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=custom_url&recruited_by_id=762b60e0-315e-11e6-8729-61d24ecdb47a).

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# Two firms announced for Boston's first Urban Forest Plan

STAFF REPORT

Martin J. Walsh and Boston Parks and Recreation Commissioner Ryan Woods on Friday announced two consultants have been selected to develop Boston's Urban Forest Plan.

Boston landscape architecture firm Stoss Landscape Urbanism and forestry consultant Urban Canopy Works have been selected to co-lead the effort to develop the City of Boston's first Urban Forest Plan. Stoss was awarded the contract with Urban Canopy Works as a subconsultant. The 20-year plan will set citywide goals for canopy protection, be responsive to climate change and development, and enhance the quality of life for all Bostonians. The Urban Forest Plan will be a collaborative effort that includes a community advisory group, interdepartmental working group and community

outreach. Recognizing that environmental injustice exists in Boston, the planning process will embed support for communities that have been disproportionately impacted by environmental stressors. Planning will touch upon a wide variety of topics, such as ecology, design, policy, practices and funding.

"Trees are an important part of making Boston's communities resilient. This plan is the first of its kind in Boston, and it will expand and protect one of our most precious natural resources, while prioritizing the needs of our residents," said Mayor Walsh. "Developing an urban forest plan is important to ensure our tree canopy in Boston is equitable, responsive to climate change and ensures quality of life for all Bostonians. This collaborative project with Stoss Landscape Urbanism and Urban Canopy Works will prioritize community

input to ensure that residents in our neighborhoods have a central voice in this process."

Said Woods, "It's no coincidence that many of the communities disproportionately impacted by poor air quality and the urban 'heat island' effect, also have inadequate tree cover. We're excited to collaborate with these partners to find opportunities for growing tree canopy in the places that need it most."

The project team will also work closely with a community advisory group and an interdepartmental working group with input from residents, community organizations, businesses, and institutions. Kicking off in spring of 2021, the planning process will take approximately one year to complete. The community advisory group will be formed in late spring of this year. The public will have an opportunity to weigh in on the plan in early fall, after the assessment and scoping phases.

One of the project tasks, along with scoping the project and assessing the existing state of the canopy, will be to develop a plan for engaging the community. The outreach plan will prioritize pop-

ulations that have been disproportionately exposed to environmental stressors; be sensitive to differences in cultures, economic realities, and built environments across Boston; incorporate City of Boston Language and Communications Access guidelines; consider equity and accessibility in both in-person and online engagement strategies; and retain flexibility to adapt engagement strategies in response to changing public health recommendations.

Joining Stoss Landscape Urbanism and Urban Canopy Works, the plan will be developed with contributions from American Forests, Nitsch Engineering, PlanITGeo, local experts, and the public. Dr. Neenah-Estrella Luna will support the effort to make environmental justice the foundation of the project.

The final plan document will highlight policy tools to control canopy loss on private property, as well as guidelines for protecting and expanding canopy on public property, like streets and parks. Over the past five years, tree removals on residential, private, and institutional property have been the main contributors

to canopy loss. The finalized plan will provide recommendations for canopy protection and expansion through proposed changes to the development review process, as well as new policies and ordinances, including draft language and methods of enforcement aimed at protecting and expanding the tree canopy.

The Urban Forest Plan is a critical piece of the vision for the City's tree canopy goals laid out in Imagine Boston 2030 and Climate Ready Boston.

In addition to the \$500,000 budgeted for the Urban Forest Plan, historic investments in Boston's tree canopy this year will also support the hiring of a new arborist and the added capacity for up to 1,000 additional tree plants, doubling the total capacity to 2,000 trees planted per year. The Tree Canopy Assessment, released in September, supports efforts to increase access to trees and their benefits in "under-treed" neighborhoods, as a part of the City's commitment to environmental justice. For more information about Boston's Urban Forest Plan, please email parks@boston.gov.

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# Opera (In) House: New operatic film breaks barriers, includes three local musicians

By SETH DANIEL

After the Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) was ushered off the stage suddenly last March – never to return to this point – they took their talents beyond the stage to produce and distribute an innovative operatic film, “The Fall of the House of Usher” by Philip Glass, that is visually interesting, musically refreshing and politically challenging.

Any yet, none of it is live – and all of it was recorded last fall with strict COVID-19 protocols in place that sometimes didn’t even allow all the musicians to be together at the same time in rehearsals or recordings. Added on to that was the fact that it was the first time many of the musicians had played with another musician for a real production since the abrupt March closure of all performance companies.

“It was a bizarre experience to be working in this way, but a lot of instrumentalists have had experience recording before and it took us only a few minutes before we were totally on the same page and like no time had passed,” said Brett Hodgdon, a JP resident who played synthesizer and was an assistant music director for the film. “It’s so strange to be apart from each other for so long and only interacting on screens. But after a few minutes of just getting used to it again, there’s something that’s really easy and invigorating about getting back that connection.”

Said musician Richard Flanagan, “Coming back in October to perform and them putting this

together was such a surprise. It wasn’t planned. It came together and had all the pieces come together to make it work. They did a lot to figure out how to keep the opera company going and for us to make money we hadn’t made in months and months. It was a gift. That’s how I explain it.”

In addition to Hodgdon, Jorgeandrés Camargo of Mission Hill sings the part of the Servant, and Flanagan, of JP, plays percussion in the Orchestra.

The film is described as a gripping, ground-breaking new creation that launches Edgar Allan Poe’s Victorian gothic horror tale into modern times. Using hand-drawn and stop-motion animation techniques alongside curated archival footage, this version of USHER tells the mysterious story with Glass’ complete score and Arthur Yorinks’ full libretto, while building a new, cinematic framework around it.

Helmed by film and opera director James Darrah, and boasting a fresh treatment by Spanish screenwriter Raúl Santos that places the opera within the story of a young immigrant girl named Luna who is detained on the U.S. border, “The Fall of the House of Usher” debuted exclusively on BLO’s operabox.tv last month and will be available until June.

Watching the film is mesmerizing and intriguing, but the final product doesn’t begin to tell the lengths the company and the musicians had to go to in order to make the project happen. First of all, COVID guidelines prevented a huge orchestra from coming together close, and recording times

were limited by time requirements, and singing in COVID times is a major no-no.

For singers like Camargo and musicians like Hodgdon and Flanagan, rehearsals were not the usual fair. In fact, much of it was done one-on-one with BLO Music Director David Angus – who was in the United Kingdom last fall. Musicians would go over parts individually with him, and they would use a pre-recorded “click track” to rehearse the voice parts. That went on for some time and was the way the musicians prepared for the recording sessions.

For Camargo, he actually had his first audition and rehearsal while in the middle of the woods in Minnesota – probably a first in history situation for the opera world.

The Mission Hill resident said he was helping a friend participate in an endurance road race in Minnesota when he got an e-mail from Angus wanting to do a rehearsal immediately.

“I was in the middle of the woods and on Zoom and not in a rehearsal hall like I am used to,” he said. “I was in the car in the woods singing with Brett (Hodgdon) in Boston and David (Angus) on Zoom back in the UK somewhere. We crossed 12 different time zones there and that was amazing. I would never expect a company to have to do that.”

Hodgdon said preparation was a challenge for the production, but one they overcame successfully.

“That was a challenge of this



Footage from the operatic film ‘Fall of the House of Usher,’ shows a unique perspective on the Philip Glass opera based on Edgar Allen Poe’s story. The Boston Lyric Opera produced the project last fall in a very creative way in adhering to COVID-19 protocols and also producing something interesting.

process because there were rules about how long we could rehearse with each other,” he said. “So the idea was to make it as streamlined as possible. We recorded a click-track which is basically a metronome synced with the entire score so everyone rehearsing would be at the exact same tempo at the exact right time. That allowed us to make a recording of the piano part that singers could use for the time. They didn’t need to spend hours and hours of prep time. They could do that in their own and then we were all on the same page when we came together.”

In two days last fall, the orchestra came to the massive GBH music studio in Allston and spaced themselves out and recorded the musical score. That was mixed and then the singers had to come in individually or in pairs and record their parts using the pre-recorded score.

“Singing was a very different experience alone with a recording, but it showed a lot of ingenuity on the part of the company,” Camargo said.

“It felt a little sterile, but it was a good sterile feeling,” he added. “Because we were in a pandemic environment, it was happy and sad at the same time. However, everyone was intensely excited to be able to perform.”

With the visual elements added after the musical score was finished, the final version of the

film was prepared and released in late January.

It has been a curious endeavor as it has opened up a potential new possibility for the BLO. The project is certainly not just a video of musicians and singers doing opera, but a version of opera that challenges the previous notion of the art form.

Will it have a place after the pandemic, or just be a bit of crisis nostalgia.

Flanagan said he thinks it can be a permanent part of the BLO going forward – a supplement to their in-person performances when COVID-19 allows such performances.

“I have a feeling it could be used to a huge advantage for the BLO going forward,” he said. “It would really expand people’s love of music and keep music around another 100 years...This might be that perfect storm. It has a lot of upside because the production we did with Usher was fulfilling from many perspectives on every level...Every box was checked with a ‘yes.’ It was a home run really.”

“The Fall of the House of Usher” is made available on-demand (\$10 for a seven-day rental) on the BLO’s operabox channel. Operabox.tv is available at the operabox.tv website and through branded apps available on Apple, Google, Amazon and Roku platforms.



The storyline with the opera details the animated story of ‘Luna,’ a young immigrant girl who is detained on the U.S. border.



# BPDA approves Centre Street project

By JOHN LYNDIS

At its February Board meeting the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) approved the mixed-use development project at 632-638 Centre St. that will bring both new residential units and commercial space to Jamaica Plain.

Developers of the Centre Street project, GCB Realty, LLC, will construct a four-story, mixed-use building with four ground-floor commercial units and 18 rental units.

According to the BPDA ruling, four of the 18 residential units will be income-restricted units as part of the BPDA's Inclusionary

Development Policy.

There will also be seven vehicular parking spots, one electric vehicle charging station, 18 interior bicycle storage spaces for residents and eight exterior bicycle storage spaces for visitors.

"Community benefits associated with the project include 8 bicycle storage spaces along Centre Street for use by the public, and accessibility improvements to the nearby sidewalks and pedestrian pathways," wrote the BPDA in its ruling.

GCB Realty Manager Andrew Zuroff said the proposed project will create a need for 25-30 construction jobs and one permanent job for an on-site property man-

ager.

"The jobs will be an additional public benefit that will contribute to help strengthen the economic vitality of the local Jamaica Plain neighborhood in the City of Boston," he said.

The Proposed Project has undergone extensive community review over a period of twenty-eight months which has resulted in an improved and more responsive development. The community review process began with an abutters meeting held by the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services in May 2018 and concluded with a public meeting sponsored by the BPDA in November 2020.



An artist rendering of the BPDA approved project on Centre Street in Jamaica Plain.

## South End State Rep. Jon Santiago launches mayoral campaign

By SETH DANIEL

Bringing a wealth of experiences from the State House, the emergency room and overseas deployments in the military to the table, South End State Rep. Jon Santiago announced on Tuesday his intentions to run for mayor.

Santiago has been considering run since January, and has said as much in the media, but not made an official announcement until now. He made the announcement in a two-minute video available in English and Spanish.

He comes into the race as the only major male candidate in a field of three women from the Boston City Council, including Councilors Andrea Campbell, Anissa Essaibi George and Michelle Wu.

More importantly, though, Santiago said he comes into the race ready to listen and engage, he said. As a doctor in the emergency room at Boston Medical Center, a physician in the Army Reserves and a state representative, he said his approach has always been to engage and listen to people first. That, he said, will be more important than ever in what he said was an historic, open-seat election for mayor.

"I think this mayor's race will be the most consequential mayor's race in our City's history," he told the paper, noting issues of COVID-19, health care, good schools and a revived economy.

"We are a City of neighbor-

hoods and many are different, but I'm hearing from everyone that they want to come back building a better and stronger Boston," he said. "That message is resonating all over the city. I feel comfortable going to Southie and West Roxbury and having conversations because they are about the same things as in Roxbury and Dorchester. People all want good schools, housing options, good transit, access to vaccines and they really want to be heard. My goal is to reach out to each and every area of this city...The people of Boston need someone ready to serve...That's the way I've always done medicine and politics. My first state rep race I knocked on 9,000 doors...I think right now people want someone who will bring them together and engage and listen and be respectful." That approach – which he hinted would be different than many polarizing forces nationally – has been honed at the State House, where he has been trusted early with key positions advising on COVID-19. Also, it has come in the emergency room as he has embraced solutions to the recovery and opioid epidemics he sees at the hospital daily. With the Mass/Cass area in his district, and seeing its effect on people every day at work, Santiago said there is no other candidate that is as equipped to understand the opioid epidemic and to forge real solutions to combat it.

"I live a block from Mass Ave and walk to work every day and I understand what it's like to find needles in your front garden, people passed out on your front



Jon Santiago, a South End State Rep. and physician at Boston Medical Center, announced on Tuesday that he will be running for mayor of Boston. His announcement came on video Tuesday (as seen here) and makes him the fourth major candidate in the open-seat mayoral race.

steps or someone overdosing and needing help," he said, noting that he has already secured more than \$1 million in state funds to address the epidemic. "I'm proud of those victories, but we have a lot more work to do. I'm the best candidate to understand the situation and to live the situation."

Santiago also credits his military service in the Army Reserves, where he is a captain, as forming how he would lead as mayor. In fact, after working on the COVID front lines at the Boston Hope Hospital in the South Boston Convention Center, Santiago was deployed to the Middle East as a physician treating soldiers and allies in Kuwait. He returned from that deployment in December.

"Many Puerto Ricans joined

the military as a way to do something with their life and to be a part of something bigger than themselves," he said, noting his uncle and grandfather were also in the military. "I joined seven or eight years ago...It taught me about leadership and bringing folks together...I'm very proud of that. The military will teach you how to get things done."

In his announcement for mayor, Santiago stressed that the next mayor will write a "new chapter" for all of Boston. He said that new chapter would include a more equitable City for everyone.

"We are living through an unprecedented crisis, the impact of which will last far beyond today," said Santiago. "It's a turning point for our city, but in it I also see great possibilities. I see and hear it in the voices of my neighbors, patients, and constituents. I've spent my life in service to others and now I'm running for

mayor to lead us through this moment and to a recovery rooted in equity and opportunity. I will bring our city back, stronger than ever."

Santiago added, "Today, we set out to bring neighbors together to write the next chapter of our Boston story."

Santiago is currently serving his second term as the State Representative for the 9th Suffolk District representing the South End, Roxbury, Back Bay, and Fenway neighborhoods of Boston. He is an emergency room physician employed at Boston Medical Center, the city's safety net hospital. He serves as a captain in the U.S. Army Reserve and has deployed overseas. Prior to these experiences, Santiago served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Dominican Republic. He lives in the South End with his wife, Alexandra.

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EDITORIAL

An unfathomable number

When COVID-19 first came into our national consciousness more than a year ago, it was just a blip on the news. The prospect that a viral bug originating halfway around the world would alter every aspect of our lives seemed inconceivable.

And even if the virus did come here, America was not some third-world country. We had confidence that the world's best medical care system and scientific minds would work together to prevent something as seemingly trivial as a mere virus from overwhelming our nation.

But one year -- and 500,000 American lives -- later, that which was unimaginable has become a nightmarish reality.

To be sure, the unprecedented incompetence and outright malevolence of the previous administration contributed substantially to amplify and worsen the problems brought on by the pandemic.

But even in a best-case scenario, the virus would have upended every aspect of our lives. Although the politicization of the virus contributed to our nation's suffering, the pandemic still would have caused death and economic turmoil to an unprecedented extent.

The official count of 500,000 COVID deaths was surpassed this week. Let's hope that as we move forward and as the daily numbers of deaths and hospitalizations continue to decline, we have learned that despite our high-tech lifestyle, we are no match for Mother Nature.

The pandemic has exposed many problems in our country, including the inadequacy of our health care system, especially for minority groups, and the danger of politicizing scientific information.

Hopefully, we have recognized our multitude of mistakes and we will make the necessary investments in our health care and pandemic detection systems to ensure that we will be ready for the next pandemic.

As the philosopher succinctly put it, those who do not learn from the past are condemned to repeat it.

Spring is in the air

This winter has not been a particularly difficult one for us in the Northeast, although February has been colder and stormier than January.

But with temperatures reaching the 50s by the middle of this week, there is the feeling that spring is just around the corner.

We realize that "spring" is a relative term for those of us living on the Massachusetts coast, but undeniably the onset of warmer weather will provide more opportunities to get outside and enjoy the fresh air and sunshine after months of being cooped-up amidst our pandemic quarantines.

Spring traditionally symbolizes rebirth and rejuvenation. That thought is especially meaningful in the spring of 2021.

Hopefully, the coming of spring and the availability of mass vaccinations will enable all of us to emerge from our cocoons and allow us to return safely to our pre-pandemic lives.

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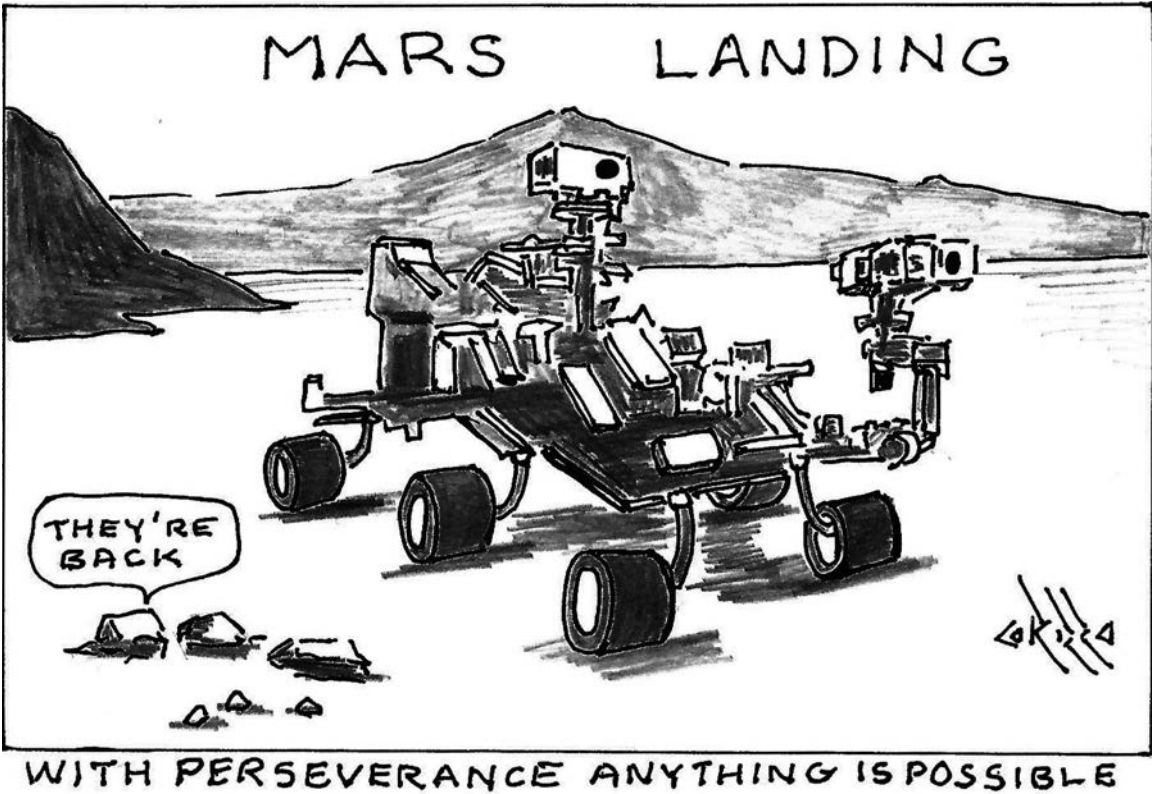
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WITH PERSEVERANCE ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE

Op-Ed

Making your funeral arrangements

Dr. Glenn Mollette

A good friend died recently. At the age of 80 all his life insurance had expired and his savings was spent. His family, financially, were living from week to week. His failing health along with Covid-19 put him in an Intensive Care Unit for days apart from his family where he died. His hospitalization brought more bills and financial hardship for those left behind. Needless to say, there wasn't any money to pay for a casket, embalming, plot of ground and a grave marker.

His young adult son put together their dire scenario and sent it out to everyone his family knew. Within a week 103 friends had given \$20,300 to momentarily rescue this family from their perilous situation. It was enough money to buy a casket, embalming, a plot of ground and a small grave memorial marker.

Do you have 103 friends who would give \$20 to \$2000 each to pay for your burial expenses? I know I do not. Such an outpouring was a testimony to his life and the lives of so many he had touched. This story is a sad reminder that we must take prudent steps toward covering our burial/funeral costs.

I don't want my wife or children to have to figure it out after I'm dead. Often, we don't get a choice. We die way before we have time to make our final arrangements. This happens a lot. This is why we need to do it now or as soon as we can. Another dear friend recent-

ly died very young. Her family was strapped for cash and went the rout of cremation. Cremation is costing between \$2500 to \$7500 depending on where you live. Not cheap. My Navy son said, "Dad, just cremate me and scatter my remains over the north Atlantic." I pray he lives to be a hundred and his grandchildren have to do that.

Some of you know my wife died back in 2002. Her funeral cost me about \$10,000 and her grave plot was \$600. I was cash strapped at the age of 47. I had nothing but medical bills and a house payment. I wasn't prepared for a funeral, mentally or financially. The only thing that saved me was a year before she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, a good friend sold us small life insurance policies. He also talked us into paying extra for a disability wavier on the policy. The disability wavier was the only way I was able to maintain that life insurance policy which we used 13 years after he sold it to us. It was the only way I could have paid for that funeral, unless I could have borrowed more money on my house. This was doubtful because I already had a second mortgage on the house from trying to pay other medical bills. I would have been hurting and probably would have had to go the cheapest route available for her funeral. It was simply the grace of God and a wise insurance agent who saved us in that respect. My mother and father in law

both died recently and their funeral expenses alone were over \$14,000 each. Fortunately, they had saved enough money to cover these costs. You can spend less and you can spend more of course. The question is do you want your family to have to figure it out? Sit down with a trusted funeral director and begin making preparations now.

Decide which route you want to go. Decide howmuch you want to spend. Youcan plan everything. Pick out everything. Most likely pay for everything. Just make sure you are dealing with a very trusted funeral director. Write out everything you want done including music speakers and anything specific you want them to say. It's up to you of course. Make several copies of your wishes and what you have done. It's amazing how people lose stuff.

When we are dead, we won't care. We won't know, but we care now. I know most of us care about those we leave behind. This is one way we can help them to know how and what we want done and relieve their burden by making the arrangements ourselves.

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



# JPNC Zoning Committee approves proposals at 11 Danforth St. and 14 Meehan St.

BY LAUREN BENNETT

The Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council (JPNC) Zoning Committee met virtually on February 17 to discuss proposals at 11 Danforth St. and 14 Meehan St., which has been fairly contentious among residents of the Stonybrook neighborhood.

## 11 DANFORTH ST.

Kyle Matthew of the Wilbur Group and KM Construction proposed on behalf of 11 Danforth St. owner Shira Karman to renovate her existing attic to add two bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a stairway with no change of occupancy.

Matthew said that Karman has lived in Unit 3 since 1984 and has “always wanted to finish the attic space.”

He added that there are “numerous three family dwellings in the area that have created four floors of living space,” and this proposal “falls in line with what other neighbors have been approved and permitted for.”

Karman’s reasoning for wanting this addition is so her daughter who is in EMT school can have her own space.

“This design utilizes the existing 700 square feet of attic space,” he said, and will also use the existing back stairway to lead to the master bedroom and bathroom.

“Mrs. Karman’s daughter will get the independence she’s hoping for,” Matthew said. The new fourth floor will include the two bedrooms and two bathrooms, and the existing bedrooms on the third floor will be turned into a home office/guest bedroom and an art studio.

Matthew said that the other people who live in the building are in support of the project, and the project requires variances for Floor Area Ratio and insufficient side yard.

There wasn’t much discussion on this project amongst committee members or members of the public, and the committee voted to approve the project.

## 14 MEEHAN ST.

The proposal at 14 Meehan St. is to change the occupancy of the building from a “single-family dwelling with accessory artist studio and one-car garage to office in basement and first floor and two (2) residential dwellings;

add roof deck for third-floor unit; three off-street parking spaces,” according to the notice from the meeting.

This project has gone back and forth with the Stonybrook Neighborhood Association (SNA) and the developer, as the SNA still has outstanding issues with the proposal, particularly with the loss of the artist space.

Attorney Daniel Toscano represented Scott Dabney, the owner of 14 Meehan St., who currently operates his real estate/development office out of the building.

The purpose of the proposal is to make his office officially recognized as an office space within the building, and to keep the existing residential unit and add a second one in the existing artist studio space, neither of which will be affordable units.

Toscano said that the “only zoning variance needed is the use for the second unit,” as another residential unit is a forbidden use.

He said that Dabney “feels it is a more reasonable use than an art studio,” and there are several other residential units in the area, even though it is zoned for local industrial use.

One of the points of contention with the neighborhood was a potential accessible ramp leading up to the building that was proposed to be one foot away from 16 Meehan St. Toscano said at this meeting that they are “able to eliminate the handicapped ramp,” due to an exception where the ramp would not be needed. “16 Meehan should be happy about this,” he said. “It was a big concern.”

Another large portion of the discussion was focused on proposed parking for the building.

Toscano said that the office use requires two parking spaces and one each for the residential units, so four parking spaces are being proposed. He said that some residents have concerns about green space and privacy when it comes to the parking.

He said that permeable materials will be used for the parking area, and the team will work with the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) design review team. He said a fence or shrubs will be used for screening and buffering for the abutting neighbors, though no materials have been officially

selected.

Toscano also spoke about the proposed roof deck, which he said will be for the exclusive use of the third floor tenants. He said a roof deck can be built on the building as-of-right. The SNA had also expressed concerns with the roof deck, saying it was too large and too close to 16 Meehan St.

Toscano said that the originally proposed roof deck was 500 square feet, eight feet from the roof line, and 17 feet from the property line. It has since been moved away from 16 Meehan St. and closer to Williams St.

It is now about 400 square feet, 10 feet away from the roof edge, and 19 feet away from the property line and will include a hatch for access.

Patty Yehle, a resident of 11 Meehan St. and a member of the SNA subcommittee on this property said that this has “been zoned as an artist studio space since 1980. I’d like to point out that we’ve already been through this process.” She said the previous owner of this building also proposed to turn the artist space into a residential unit, but the “Stonybrook neighborhood voted against it,” and the “JPNC did not,” she said.

Yehle, who is opposed to this project, said that she and other Stonybrook residents have tried to talk to Dabney about creating an artist live/work space, as “artists need space” in the neighborhood. “He showed very little interest in it,” Yehle said.

Sue Zobel, also on the subcommittee and opposes the change in use, said that “artist space is valued and needed in the area,” and said that she believes Dabney is “pushing the lot for what it can bear.” She said that while she is “glad the ramp has disappeared,” she would still “like some assurance that it’s not going to reappear.”

Karima Ridgley, a resident at 16A Meehan, which directly abuts this building, said two of the proposed parking spots “will face directly into my unit. Even with a privacy fence it will have an impact on what I look out at and the sunlight coming into my unit,” she said.

She said that while she appreciates the addition of some sort of privacy fence, she “loves the character of JP,” and she believes artist spaces are important, so she is in opposition of this

proposal as it stands now.

Zobel said that as far as the roof deck goes, it is a “very dense neighborhood,” and “putting more things on the roof doesn’t allow people to interact with each other.”

Toscano said that the team “will work with neighbors” on the design review for the screening, and that the “deck has already been move twice.”

There was also a suggestion for cars to pull backwards into the parking spots to eliminate headlights going into abutters’ windows, and Toscano said he is “not opposed to it,” but he’s also “not sure it’s something that can be enforced.”

JP resident and JPNC member Peg Preble said that it “feels kind of odd” that the goal is to try and remove a handicapped ramp and also that Dabney has never had an artist in that space and is not considering it now. “It’s uncomfortable to me,” she said.

Toscano said that it’s not because Dabney “didn’t want them,” and Yehle also said that “it’s not that we did not want the ramp.” She said that the subcommittee had asked for the ramp to

move to a different location, and “it was really vague—the plans kept changing.”

SNA Steering Committee member Paige Sparks said that the “neighbors are not against having accessibility,” but rather the “issue is it was a foot away from the property line and the existence of the ramp kept changing.”

The JPNC voted to approve this proposal with the current plans (which do not include the ramp) and “assurances of screening and buffering at the developer’s expense for the parking area.”

JPNC Chair Dave Baron said he approves of this project because it calls for the addition of another unit of housing that does not change the envelope of the building, and it “seems like a consistent use for the area.” Two committee members voted in opposition of the proposal.

“I believe that this has moved in a much better direction,” committee member Marie Turley said. “I’m concerned about the loss of the artist space but I think there are things to be gained by the community.”

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

## Jamaica Plain GAZETTE

Circulation 16,400

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

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