

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2020

THE BOSTON SUN

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SERVING BACK BAY - SOUTH END - FENWAY - KENMORE

BMC, MGH receive first doses of COVID vaccine, begin immunizing employees

South End Community Health Center plans for upcoming vaccine rollout

By Seth Daniel

Boston Medical Center (BMC) in the South End received the area's first doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID19 vaccine on Monday morning, taking it into cold storage immediately and, on Wednesday, beginning the first rounds of vaccinations on staff members.

Registered Nurse Cheryl Tull was the first BMC employee to get the vaccine around 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 16. She is also the Associate Chief Nursing Officer at the hospital. The first five vaccinations at BMC were given to Tull, a Family medicine doctor, an Infectious Diseases doctor, a respiratory therapist, and an environmental services employee whose job it is to disinfect patient rooms.

BMC said it expects to vaccinate 1,000 employees through Saturday, and a total of 2,000 by the end of next week. In the



PHOTO BY BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER

Registered Nurse Cheryl Tull, an Associate Chief Nursing Officer, was the first employee of Boston Medical Center in the South End to get the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at 9 a.m. Wednesday morning, Dec. 16. The first five vaccinated were Tull, a Family medicine doctor, an Infectious Diseases doctor, a respiratory therapist, and an environmental services employee. The hospital plans to have 1,000 employees vaccinated by Saturday, and 6,000 within two months.

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

Mass General Hospital (MGH) followed suit in receiving its shipment on Tuesday morning, and also planning to start immunizations of workers at the hospital on Wednesday.

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

"Monday morning, Boston Medical Center received 1,950

(VACCINE , Pg. 6)

BOSTON STANDS BY THE PARIS AGREEMENT



PHOTO COURTESY OF MAYOR'S OFFICE PHOTO BY JOHN WILCOX

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

City Council holds hearing on City's water and sewer infrastructure and looking ahead to the future

By Lauren Bennett

The City Council Committee on City and Neighborhood Services, chaired by Councilor Ed Flynn, held a hearing on December 14 regarding water and sewer infrastructure in the City.

Water and sewer issues are prevalent in neighborhoods like the Back Bay, South End, and Bay Village where there are many private alleys and houses on pilings in the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District (GCOD).

John Sullivan, Chief Engineer at the Boston Water and Sewer Commission (BWSC), and Christian Simonelli, Executive Director of the Boston Groundwater Trust, were on hand to present information and answer questions from councilors and the public.

Councilor Flynn said that with the "recent development boom" in neighborhoods across the City, he wants to ensure that new buildings "don't overburden the system," and that the "integrity of our infrastructure is maintained." He also said

that private sewers and alleys that abut commercial and residential properties is an "issue of concern in the South End."

Councilor Kenzie Bok said that "I think that water and sewer infrastructure is the fundamental bones of our city," and acknowledged "just how fundamental it is to our constituents' lives each day."

John Sullivan gave a presentation on the BWSC, saying that the Commission was created in 1977 to keep the City's water and sewer systems "in

(INFRASTRUCTURE, Pg. 4)

T votes to make short-term service reductions in 2021

By Dan Murphy

Faced with diminished ridership, the MBTA will make a number of short-term changes to service next year following a majority vote on Monday, Dec. 14, by its Fiscal and Management Control Board.

Changes to subway service,

which take effect in March or April of 2021, will include a 20-percent reduction in frequency on the Red, Orange and Green lines, said Kat Benesh, the T's chief of operations strategy, policy, as well as a 5-percent reduction in frequency on the Blue line.

As for changes to bus ser-

vice, which also go into effect next March or April, 80 essential routes will also see a 5 percent reduction in service while, Benesh said, the frequency of "heavily used routes like the 111 and 116 will have little to no change."

(MBTA CHANGES, Pg. 2)

Wishing you & your families a safe and healthy Christmas

The office will be closed Thursday Dec. 24 and Friday, Dec. 25 & Thursday, Dec. 31, and Friday, Jan. 1.

Advertising deadlines for the week of Christmas will be Fri., Dec. 18.

For New Years week: Weds. Dec. 23

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EDITORIAL

THE VIRUS IS IN OUR HOMES

We now are fully amidst the holiday season. Hanukkah is here and the Christmas and New Year's holiday week is fast-approaching.

Public health officials at all levels of government have been warning us for months that we must change our usual manner for celebrating the holidays if we are to have any chance of stopping the deadly spread of the coronavirus.

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

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

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

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

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

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

THANK YOU, GOV. BAKER

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

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

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

REMEMBER THE NEEDY

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

We mention this because during this Christmas season, when many of us normally would be splurging on holiday parties, vacations, and the like, those of us who are fortunate enough not to fall within the 18% must consider how we can use our unspent resources to help our fellow Americans who are dealing with a situation that is even worse than what America faced at the height of the Great Depression.

Hopefully, Congress will get its act together shortly and provide relief for those in need. But until that happens, it is up to each of us to do what we can to assist our fellow citizens through donations to organizations -- of which there are many -- that will help to ensure that every American at least has enough to eat every day.



WINTER SOLSTICE... SHORTEST DAY. DEC. 21

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I SUPPORT A FULL LIQUOR LICENSE FOR THE SoWa POWER STATION

Dear Editor:

I am writing to voice my strong support in favor of GTI/SoWa Hospitality Group's application for a full liquor license. I have been a resident of the South End since 2009 and our young family intends on staying in the neighborhood well into the future. While we moved to our current residence on Warren Avenue in 2019, we called Wareham Street home for the years prior and thus are intimately familiar with this part of

the neighborhood and with the Power Station in particular.

The SoWa area of our neighborhood is one of its most compelling architectural assets and offers some of our most valuable amenities. None of this would have been made possible without GTI's significant and thoughtful investment over the course of many decades - indeed, one could argue that this investment is the primary cause for the broader revitalization which the South End has enjoyed over the past two decades. GTI has breathed life back into some of our city's prime historical building stock and they have created a vibrant, mixed use communi-

ty in so doing. With that history as a backdrop, I cannot imagine a more trustworthy or better situated applicant for the permission they are currently seeking. I eagerly await their final rehabilitation of this spectacular structure and am excited to take advantage of the unique event venue which will doubtless result under their talented curation.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me should I be able to answer any questions or provide further information otherwise.

Thank you,
Stephen Davis

GUEST OP-ED

Staying safe during the holiday season

By Mayor Martin J. Walsh

I want to wish everyone a very happy holiday season, and hope that the remainder of this year brings you the opportunity to reflect on this year, and take time to prioritize your health and wellness. We know that this is a very different holiday season. This is usually the time for traditions and gathering with friends and family, and many people will be hoping for

some normalcy. But, as we all know, this isn't a normal year. That's why this holiday season has to look different.

We must continue to stay

focused, and follow all the public health precautions, to keep our families, our communities,

(Op-Ed Pg. 3)

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OP-ED (from pg. 2)

and ourselves safe. That means continuing to wear a mask, wash your hands on a regular basis, disinfect frequently touched surfaces, stay six feet apart from others, and avoid gatherings — especially indoor gatherings.

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

So, like we did before

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

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

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

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

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

I also ask everyone to think about the families who are struggling to make ends meet. With the needs in our communities greater than ever this year, collecting toys will be a challenge for families who can't afford it. We have Toys for Tots donation boxes all across the City: at City Hall, firehouses, stand-alone BCYF centers, and City of Boston Credit Unions.

If you can, please donate new, unwrapped toys to help Toys for Tots meet their goals, and help ensure every child and family can experience the joy of the holiday season.

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

MBTA CHANGES (from pg. 1)

Additionally, 60 non-essential routes will also be scaled back 20 percent while another 16 routes will be consolidated and four more shortened.

Commuter rail service could be eliminated on weekends on some lines and end as early as 9 p.m. on weeknights beginning in March or April while Charlestown and Hingham direct ferry service will be suspended beginning next month.

The latest changes to service were informed by 10 public meetings, which drew around 2,200 attendees, Benesh said, as well as by 6,723 public comments after the T unveiled its original plan on Nov. 9.

"The service changes approved today will align capacity with ridership demands during Fiscal Year 2021, which ends on June 30, 2021," MBTA General Manager Steve Poftak said in a press release, "and we will continue to analyze ridership and other factors including the economic reopening and vaccine distribution as we plan for Fiscal Year 2022 service levels during our budget process this spring."

Poftak also said he expected ridership would return "incrementally" as individuals make personal decisions regarding returning to work or school.

Transportation Secretary and CEO Stephanie Pollack said in a press release, "Today's action by the FMCB ensures that the

MBTA will provide more than enough service to meet the needs of transit riders this winter and spring. The resulting savings can be reinvested later, when warranted by durable ridership and consistent with the timing of the post-vaccine economic reopening."

Ridership on the T has reportedly dwindled from 330,000 trips on an average weekday from around 1.26 million daily trips prior to the pandemic

An amendment offered by Director Monica Tibbits-Nutt to the Service Level vote that required the FMCB to assess the need for additional service to meet ridership demand by no later than March 15, and, if feasible, to allocate additional resources to meet such a demand was accepted in the final proposal.

The T must also receive approval on a Title VI Service Equity Analysis to ensure that no particular group of riders is disparately impacted or disproportionate burdened, as well as undergo an Environmental Review, which is triggered by the planned 10-percent service reduction in accordance with MEPA (Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act).

For a complete listing of all upcoming changes in MBTA service, including all changes to bus routes, visit www.mbta.com/ForgingAhead.

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PLEASE RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER

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

By Dan Murphy

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

Webinars began Dec. 14 and continue through Dec. 21, including instruction in Cape Verdean Creole and Vietnam-

ese from noon to 1 p.m., and in Spanish and Russian from 6 to 7 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 14; in Haitian Creole and Cantonese from noon to 1 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 18; in Haitian Creole and Cantonese on Sunday, Dec. 20, from 6 to 7 p.m.; and in Mandarin and French on Monday, Dec. 21, from noon to 1 p.m., and they resume again on Jan. 4 based on accommodation requests.

Webinars, which cover how the program works, custom-

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

City Councilor and mayoral candidate Michelle Wu has been a strong proponent of community choice electricity.

She told reporters at a press conference last Friday that "this is a huge step forward in terms of our city's carbon footprint as

well as easing of the pressures on residents."

Wu said that she had heard from "so many residents" that "scam companies" offering green energy had reached out to them, but "having now a seamless, trusted, publicly coordinated purchasing program is a win for the city, and we need to keep ramping up the percentages of renewable energies."

Moving forward, Wu said the city should "take actions on top of that," and "should be convert-

ing to 100 percent green energy for our municipal footprint."

A full schedule of webinars and registration links can be found at bit.ly/38Udh8i, and for more information on disability access or language interpretation, contact aidan.smith@boston.gov. Afterwards, the webinars will also be posted on Greenovate Boston's YouTube page at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDj97_kFFC-Qr4005hDNjpa/vid

INFRASTRUCTURE (from pg. 1)

good shape." He explained that the water system is gravity-fed and run by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA).

Sullivan explained that Boston "continually used more and more water" from 1901 and peaked in 1976, when 151 million gallons per day were used by Boston alone.

But as the years went by, Boston has consumed less water. He said that in 2019, 62.13 million gallons a day were used, which "assures us that we will have adequate water supply for our residents."

Sullivan said that the City has 1,008 miles of water main, 12,730 hydrants, and 17,854 gate valves. A water main from 1848 is still in operation under the Boston Common, he said, and "old pipes don't mean anything as far as the operation of them."

Sullivan said that according to the Water Research Foundation, the average number of water main breaks per year is 250 breaks per thousand miles of pipe.

He said that Boston has "about a thousand miles of pipe," and from 1993 to present, the City has between 35 and 40 water main breaks per year on average. "It's virtually nothing," he said.

"This shows that our system is solid," he said. "We're in very good shape for a very good structural system of pipes delivering water to all of our neighborhoods."

Sullivan also talked about some of the major projects that the BWSC is involved in, including a water main replacement program, a sewer and drain replacement program, and city-wide illegal connections investigations, among others. The BWSC also has a

lead replacement program, a Leak Up to Owner program to help repair leaking residential water service pipes, and sewer lateral financial assistance, in which assistance is provided in repairing waste disposal pipes connecting to a main sewer.

The purpose of this Policy is to allow residential properties on private ways open to public use or travel which are not connected to the Commission's sewerage system to connect to the system, and to allow residential properties on such private ways whose connection to the Commission's sewerage system is in a state of disrepair or is inadequate to meet the needs of such properties, to be repaired or made adequate.

To help deal with private sewers in alleys, the BWSC offers a "betterment assessment" program, which allows "residential properties on private ways open to public use or travel which are not connected to the Commission's sewerage system to connect to the system, and to allow residential properties on such private ways whose connection to the Commission's sewerage system is in a state of disrepair or is inadequate to meet the needs of such properties, to be repaired or made adequate," according to the BWSC.

Christian Simonelli explained that while the Boston Groundwater Trust works closely with the BWSC, the BWSC is "not responsible for maintaining groundwater." He said that about 20 years ago, the Boston Groundwater Trust had about 150 monitoring wells and was "just starting to get a hand on where the water table was."

The Boston Groundwater Trust also has information about buildings that indicates where the tops of pilings are, and has been able to "target

specific areas that have depleted levels."

The organization is also responsible for the "no harm" component of new construction in the GCOD. An engineer must sign a no-harm letter for any below-ground work in a GCOD district that states the work will not have any "negative impact to the water table," Simonelli said.

He said that "one of the bigger challenges going forward" will be digging down and putting in underground parking in neighborhoods like the Back Bay and the South End, as there is an increasing desire to do this.

"If it's not put in right, you're going to be putting those buildings immediately at risk right away," Simonelli said, as disturbances to the water table affect the pilings that rowhouses and other buildings in these neighborhoods sit on.

Councilor Kenzie Bok wondered if or how BWSC expects to incorporate green infrastructures like bioswales or permeable pavement. She said she knows that going from "gray to green infrastructure" requires "more routine maintenance versus set it and forget it items of the past."

Sullivan said that the BWSC has been studying this for several years, and there is a green infrastructure pilot in East Boston. He also said that BWSC has been working with Boston College for a number of years on their green infrastructure system. He said they are studying how these systems need to be maintained (as well as the cost of maintaining them) as well as when they need to be replaced.

The University of New Hampshire is also running tests in Audubon Circle related to holding "the first inch of rain," he said.

Sullivan also said that the BWSC has been "working with several people in the South End," ad after working with the Mayor's Office, agreed that the "burden" of rallying neighbors for the betterment policy shouldn't fall on the neighbors. "We've all agreed we would do that," he said, including knocking on doors and making people aware of the program.

Carol Blair, president of Chester Square Neighbors, said there are several private stone and mortar sewers in the neighborhood. She also said there are five private alleys "in our small neighborhood," along with many buildings that are owned by nonprofit organizations that cannot allocate funds to replace the pipes. She also suggested that green infrastructure be installed in the alleys, but a plan needs to be developed "to help figure out how to pay" for these improvements and replacements.

"We need modern sewers to support public health in the City," she said.

Sullivan said that the BWSC "will take over a sewer if it's a private alley open to public travel." It does not own pipes in backyards leading to private driveways. He said he would contact Blair and "see what we can do, what we can't do, and we'll proceed from there."

Simonelli also talked about ways someone can tell if a building has an issue with its pilings. One is if a hole, called a test pit, is purposely dug and examined by an engineer see what the condition of the pilings is, and another is if there are visible "settlement issues" like cracks above windows or doorways, bulges in walls, and uneven floors.

"Thankfully, since I've been here, those are far and few between," Simonelli said.

He said that "in the event the

building is compromised and needs to be repaired," there is no insurance or program to cover the costs of repairs. Simonelli said the "best thing to do proactively" is to address areas that may have a negative impact and install pumps in basements.

He said that some people may not know the history of buildings on pilings, so it's "important for us to get the word out."

Martyn Roetter of the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB) said that his home on Beacon St. in the Back Bay backs up to a private alley that has no fire hydrants, and he wondered if it was possible for them to be installed.

Sullivan said that there are no public water mains on many of those back alleys, and the BWSC spoke with the fire department "several times," but it was determined that it would be a "massive, very expensive undertaking to build a public fire protection system back there," adding that that the fire department said they are still able to fight fires without public connections in these alleys.

Roetter also wondered why the usage of water in the City has declined over the past few decades.

Sullivan said that building codes have changed, and things like more efficient toilets are now standard in the code. "As a public, we've also become more educated," he added, like installing low flow shower heads or turning off the water to shave or brush teeth, but "really it's the building codes that control that."

Councilor Flynn said he is going to keep this hearing in committee and may have another hearing on this topic sometime in February or March.

"This is just so fundamental to our City," Councilor Bok said.

CELEBRATING THE SEASON



Mayor Martin Walsh and Gov. Charlie Baker were on hand recently for two big holiday ceremonies on the Boston Common. First, earlier this month, the duo met up with Santa Claus on the Common for the City's annual tree lighting festivities, which were performed live but held online. Meanwhile, last Thursday, Mayor Walsh and Gov. Baker help light the first candle during the Boston Common Grand Menorah Lighting on the first night of Hanukkah.



FRIENDS OF THE SOUTH END LIBRARY BOOK GIFTING DAY

In an effort to spread a little much-needed cheer for the holidays to children, the Friends of the South End Library (FOSEL) hosted a book gifting event last weekend, and will continue this Saturday, Dec. 19.

President Yvette Jarreau said they have board books for ages 0-3 and picture books for ages 4-10 that will be given away in person with social distancing and all necessary precautions.

Last weekend they had a good turnout and a lot of excitement.

The remaining date will be: •Saturday, December 19 from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Bring kids to the main entrance of the South End Library to get your free gift book, while supplies last. Please wear a mask and respect social distancing guidelines.



Georgia and Sylvia Pierce, ages 4 and 6, take a look at some of the books.

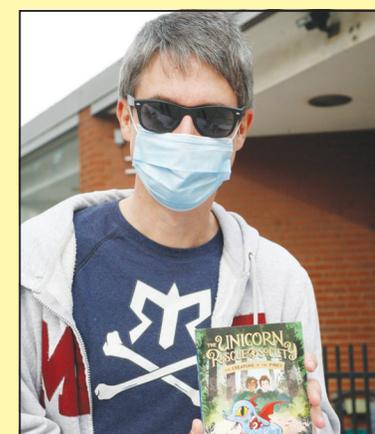


Shown above, librarian Anne Smart and Councilor Ed Flynn at the book gifting table.

Shown to the right, Derek Lessing of FOSEL shows off some of the books for older kids, including the 'Unicorn Rescue Society' series.



Dorothy Kelley holds up one of her favorites, 'The Snowy Day.'



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Mayor Martin J. Walsh

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VACCINE (from pg. 1)

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

The doses were put into a freezer at the BMC inpatient pharmacy.

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

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

“We are taking important steps to prepare for the COVID-19 vaccine to ensure



The BMC supply team walking the first shipment of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to the pharmacy on Monday morning. The first deliveries of vaccine were administered to front-line medical workers on Wednesday morning.

its equitable distribution throughout our communities,” said East Boston Neighborhood Health Center CEO and President Manny Lopes, who is also the chair of the Boston Board of Health. “We have a specific team that will manage all aspects of the vaccine, from preparing for its arrival through to administering doses to our communities. Our Massachusetts COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Agreement has been approved, so we are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it becomes available. This is an import-

ant step in ensuring the safety of our communities, especially our patients that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.”

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

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

In an historic press conference on Monday, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, Dr. Moncef Slaoui and General Gustave Perna –



PHOTOS COURTESY MASS GENERAL BRIGHAM

Technical Research Assistants unbox the shipment of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine on Tuesday at Mass General Brigham. Health care workers at the 12 hospitals in their network were to begin to receive vaccinations on Wednesday.

all members of the Operation Warp Speed vaccine team – reported on the first shipments of the Pfizer vaccine.

The reported that 2.9 million doses of the vaccine had been shipped and another 2.9 million would be held back for the second booster dose that will be given to those inoculated in 21 to 28 days. The Pfizer vaccine requires an initial shot and a second booster for full immunity, they said.

Those shipments would continue through Tuesday, and Wednesday and the rest of the week likely, Perna said. He said they have used a public/private partnership with the federal government, UPS and FedEx to distribute the doses, and now are entering into a “steady drumbeat” of constant shipments as the days and weeks go on.

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

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

There were 425 that would receive shipments on Tuesday, and 66 on Wednesday.

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

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

Meanwhile, Azar said they are confident they will have enough vaccine for anyone that wants it and that no American would have to pay for the vaccine if they want it.

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

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

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COVID positive test rate in Back Bay increases over 50 percent

By John Lynds

The COVID-19 surge across Boston is continuing and Mayor Marty Walsh said the city is focusing efforts on neighborhoods that have a high volume of community spread ahead of the Christmas holiday.

According to the latest data released by the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) last Friday, 34,688 Back Bay, Beacon Hill, North End, West End and Downtown residents were tested for COVID-19 and the data shows that 9 percent of those tested were COVID positive. This was a 52.5 percent increase from the 5.9 percent testing positive the week of Thanksgiving. The citywide positive test increased 45 percent last week and went from 11.9 percent of Boston residents testing positive for the virus to 17.3 percent.

Overall since the pandemic began 3.8 percent of Back Bay, Beacon Hill, North End, West End and Downtown residents were found to be COVID positive.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Movie theaters
Museums
Aquariums

Indoor recreational and athletic facilities (except for youth 18 and under)

This does not apply to collegiate or professional sports.

Collegiate sports teams in the City of Boston may continue to use indoor recreational facilities and fitness centers.

Indoor pools may remain open for all ages under pre-registration format structure limited to one person per swim lane.

Indoor recreational venues with potential for low-contact (batting cages, driving ranges, bowling alleys, rock-climbing)

Sightseeing and other organized tours (bus tours, duck tours, harbor cruises, whale watching)

Indoor historical spaces & sites

Indoor event spaces (meeting rooms, ballrooms, private party rooms, social clubs)

Private social clubs may continue to operate, if they serve food, consistent with restaurant guidance.

Indoor and outdoor gaming arcades associated with gaming devices

The Mayor said bars and restaurants may remain open with bar seating restrictions and a strictly enforced 90-minute seating limit.

The infection rate in Back Bay and surrounding neighborhoods increased 11.8 percent in one week according to the latest city statistics.

The BPHC data released last Friday showed Back Bay, Beacon Hill, North End, West End and Downtown had an infection rate of 245.5 cases per 10,000 residents, up from 219.4 cases per 10,000 residents.

One hundred forty-five additional residents became infected with the virus last week and the total number of cases in the area increased from 1,223 cases to 1,368 cases as of last Friday.

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 11 percent last week and went from 30,342 cases to 33,735 in a week. Twenty-seven more Boston residents died from the virus and there are now 960 total deaths in the city from COVID.

Boston will revert to 'modified version' of Phase Two, Step Two of state reopening plan

By Lauren Bennett

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

museums, aquariums, bowling alleys, sightseeing and organized tours, indoor event spaces, and more. For the full list, visit [boston.gov/reopening](https://www.boston.gov/reopening). He thanked businesses who must close and said they will have the City's "full support in the reopening and recovery efforts."

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

Office space may stay open with 40 percent capacity, but employers are urged to have their employees to work from home "as much as possible," according to the City, and Walsh said that "structured youth programs" may continue, as well as indoor dining "with strict adherence to guidelines" including the state's newly imposed 90 minute timeline, 9:30 closing time, six foot distancing between tables, and six person table limit. Bar

seating, however, "will not be allowed, except with special approval granted by the Boston Licensing Board," Walsh said.

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

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

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

Walsh also addressed the

recent vote of no confidence in Boston Public Schools (BPS) Superintendent Brenda Cassellius by the Boston Teachers Union.

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

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

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

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

"In hard times, we really need to come together," Walsh

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Baker addresses spike in post-Thanksgiving COVID cases, urges residents to stay home during the holiday season

By Lauren Bennett

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

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

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

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

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

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

not be as lucky.

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

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

that it does so well for those who need it.”

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

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

Baker also announced that

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

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

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

Eight Streets get update from Rep. Michlewitz, longs for Holiday gathering

By Seth Daniel

The Eight Streets Neighborhood Association on any normal year would have spent their December meeting in The Eagle on Tremont Street enjoying pizza and drinks and neighborhood hospitality.

Instead they spent the evening on Zoom and conducted their Winter meeting online, a meeting that was uplifted by a comprehensive update from State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz.

Michlewitz has been providing updates on the State Budget and State finances to Eight Streets throughout the pandemic, which is most appropriate due to his being the chair of the Ways & Means Committee.

On most years, that would be a plum spot to be, but during COVID-19’s budget challenges, Michlewitz often finds himself on an island, he said.

Nevertheless, things are looking much better than the update in the fall when the state’s discretionary spending budget was looking at a catastrophic \$6 billion cut. In the end, the deficit turned out to be a \$3.6 billion cut, which was filled in partially with the Rainy Day Fund.

“The shortfall came in at \$3.6 billion,” he said. “That’s nothing to sneeze at, but was much more palatable than the \$6 billion we thought it would be in late spring and early summer. We were able to make no

drastic cuts to our state programs, which is remarkable considering where we were.”

He said they used \$1.2 billion out of the Rainy Day Fund – the largest use ever – to plug up some of the shortfall. The Fund was at \$3.5 billion at the time, so some is still left over to assist future shortfalls in the years beyond this budget cycle.

“We’re hesitant to use the Rainy Day Fund like that because it affects our bond rating, but these were very difficult circumstances,” he said.

Another big issue on the horizon that was passed in the House was the Police Reform Bill, which Michlewitz voted for. That legislation over the last week or so has been bantered about by Gov. Charlie Baker, who has asked for changes.

For Michlewitz, the big change in the Police Reform Bill he voted on was the establishment of a state Civilian Approval Board – which acts like a licensing board for doctors or cosmetologists or any other professional license. Standards are put in place, and every officer must pass them and adhere to them to be certified. They can be de-certified as well if there is bad behavior.

“This would create a set of standards for police officers all over the state to be held up to,”

he said. “We have a lot of good police officers in Boston Police Department, but we do have bad actors locally and nationally. This Board would create an opportunity for these police officers to be disciplined.”

Michlewitz also said he was very happy with the way mail-in voting went in the Primary and General Elections in Boston. There were some hiccups he said, but generally it was a very smooth first-time effort.

“For it being the first time, it was seamless,” he said. “Most of all, it increased access to the ballot box.”

He said he believed it was here to stay.

Michlewitz also touched on the South End Small Business Tour he took right after the Thanksgiving holiday. He said it’s time for the federal government to deliver a stimulus package to help restaurants and shops in the neighborhood.

“It blows my mind we are beyond one month after the election and we still don’t have a Stimulus Package together,” he said. “It’s going to help restaurants and small businesses and expand unemployment insurance and extend credit lines. It’s also COVID-19 testing too. We put some money in at the state, but clearly the testing lines are getting longer.”

•THE BUTCHER SHOP SEEKS ALL ALCOHOL LICENSE

Eight Streets heard a request from The Butcher Shop on Tremont Street for an all-alcohol license upgrade, the spot not only having a beer-wine-cordials license.

Attorney Kristin Scanlan said they haven’t yet applied to the City License Board, and wanted to get neighborhood input first. The idea, she said, is not to turn the place into a bar, but to be able to offer patrons full cocktails and martinis to pair with dinner.

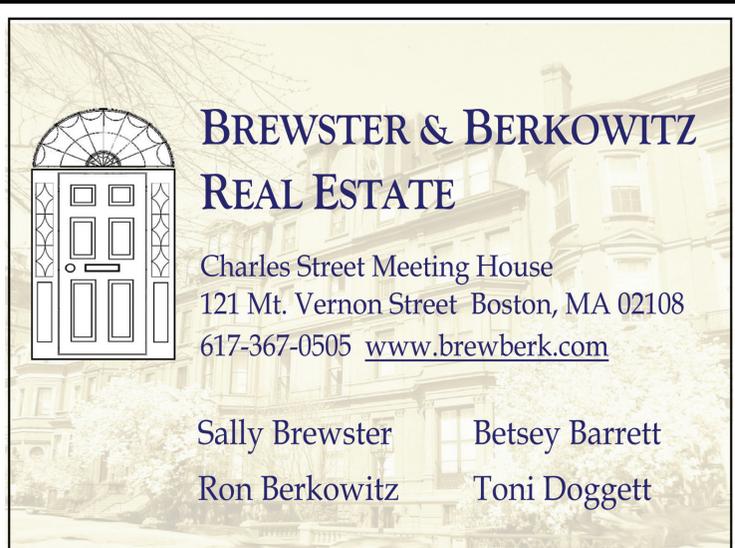
The Barbara Lynch-owned spot has been around since 2003, and would always been focused on the chef’s award-winning cuisine and not alcohol.

“Barbara is first a chef and food will always be important and all our restaurants have kept their for the entirety during their time,” Scanlan said.

They plan to file for their license before Christmas.

•WREATHS IN ESNA

The neighbors in Eight Streets for the first time put out about 30 wreaths on light poles throughout the neighborhood. It was the first time the Association has done such a thing, but they hope to keep it going next holiday season as well.



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

By Seth Daniel

Alexandra Oliver-Davila often tells the youth at the non-profit she leads in Mission Hill to be careful about what they say, because quite often it could come true.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMING OF AGE IN BOSTON

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

Her first work experiences in Boston were for the late State Rep. Kevin Fitzgerald, who represented Mission Hill but was well-known in Charlestown too. She worked in his office and got a foothold in the Boston network through his help.

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

“Being on the School Committee side is tough because you want to do everything people ask you to do, but with finite

resources, you can't,” she said, noting that one has to consider a good decision for some could be a bad decision for others.

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

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

A NEW CHAIR, SOME NEW CHANGES

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

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

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

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

“We cover a lot of things on the School Committee and everything seems urgent and important,” she said. “But it does feel watered down to me because we're all over the place. We need to focus on one or two



As School Committee chair, and also a community youth organizer for years, Alexandra Oliver-Davila said her job working with young people absolutely informs the decisions she makes on the Committee. She said she gets the “real deal” from the kids she works with.

things in year one and have a long-term plan. It helps us to be more grounded.”

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

She said getting the technology out to students has been done very well, and having a

consistent schedule with teachers on screen is a vast improvement. However, she also said she knows many students and parents want to be back in buildings learning in person.

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

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

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

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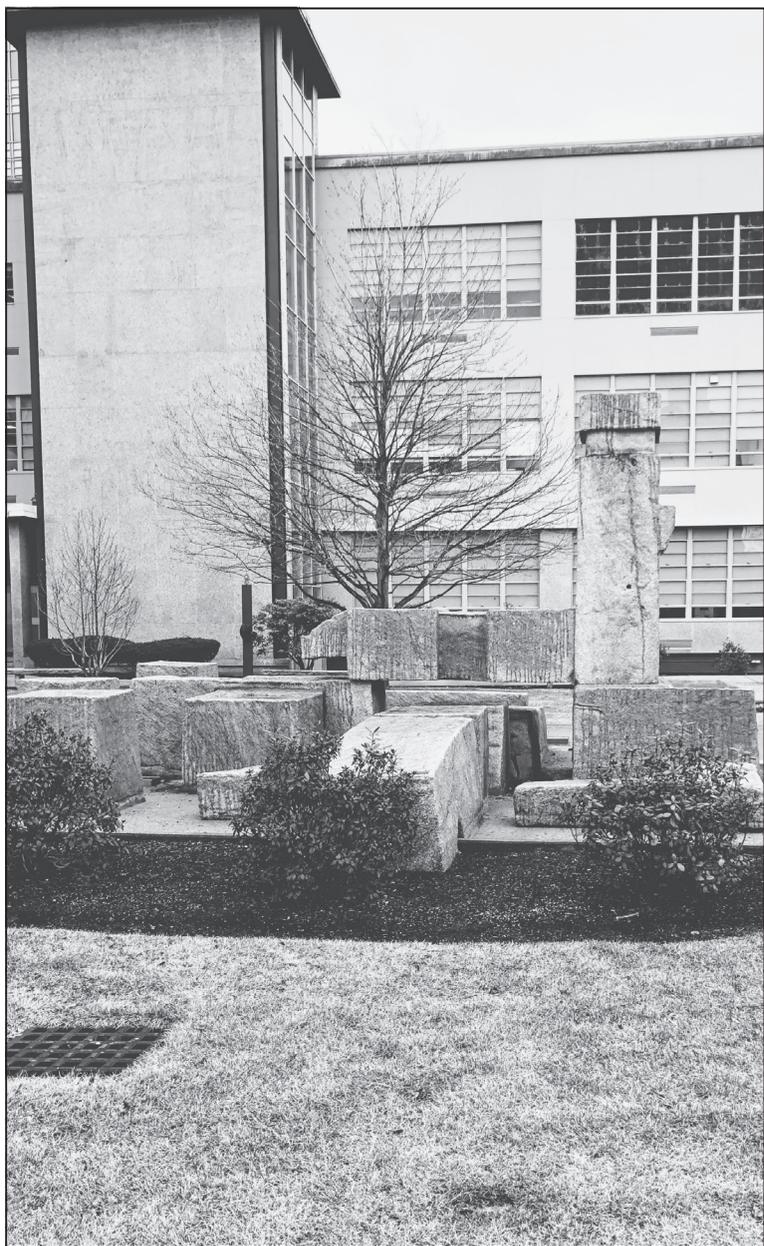
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ATTENTION TO DETAIL

BY PENNY CHERUBINO

THIS WEEK'S ANSWER



The stones in the last clue are a part of Boston University's Fountain sculpture in front of 640 Commonwealth Avenue. It was created by sculptor Edward Peter Monti in 1976. There are several works by Monti on the BU campus.

The next clue will be found in the South End.

Do you have a favorite building or detail you would like featured? Send an email to Pen-ny@BostonZest.com with your suggestion.

THIS WEEK'S CLUE



Real Estate Transfers

BUYER 1 BACK BAY	SELLER 1	ADDRESS	PRICE
McGovern, Kevin	McCabe, Edward D	113 Commonwealth Ave #1	\$435,000
Kornowski, Sophie	Kenneth J Barr RET	261 Commonwealth Ave #7	\$1,892,500
Izzar, Rachid	Corcoran, Leo J	90 Commonwealth Ave #7	\$2,275,000
Marnell, Richard	Cricket RET	9 Dartmouth Pl	\$2,800,000
Immobiliare Santa Per Azi	Joel Warren Lidz RET	234 Marlborough St #2	\$1,070,000
Gloucester St Prop LLC	Mearn, Christopher	12 Gloucester St #3	\$710,000
BEACON HILL			
Brickman, Jason	Ronthal, Berenice	94 Beacon St #4	\$2,000,000
Barry, Kevin M	Beal Robert L Est	21 Brimmer St	\$6,600,000
Barry, Kevin M	Beal Robert L Est	70 Brimmer St #311	\$6,600,000
Doucette, Joan F	Codazzi, Daniel	15 River St #401	\$895,000
BAY VILLAGE/SOUTH END/KENMORE			
Perkins, Ashley N	DeVincentis, Alexia	66 Appleton St #3	\$607,500
Simha, Vikram	Chu, Jaclyn H	1 Charles St S #1504	\$1,975,000
FTP RET 2004	Regan RET	15-17 Harcourt St #306	\$1,565,000
Thopsey, Brian F	Orefice, Robert	700 Harrison Ave #409	\$1,000,000
Ledonne, Eric	Dinicola, Giovanna	12 Keswick St #3	\$810,000
Gamache, Matt G	Martinelli, Roberta	5 Keswick St #3	\$898,000
Slifka, Max	Metzger, Terry L	298 Shawmut Ave #5	\$1,950,000
Lake, Craig A	Noonan, Mary J	602 Tremont St #3	\$1,150,000
Pappas, Felicia A	Douglas L Wooden T	22 Upton St #4	\$1,840,000
WATERFRONT/DOWNTOWN			
Cao, Chenyu	He, Ran	80 Broad St #609	\$650,000
Tamayo, Byron O	Ahearn, Rachel E	151 Tremont St #16C	\$595,000
Jeffrey D Furber RET	Shah, Deborah	165 Tremont St #1002	\$1,250,000
Lee, Brian	Lee, Chung H	165 Tremont St #201	\$1,426,000
He, Ran	Ganda, Kiran	580 Washington St #810	\$875,000

49 new trees planted along Esplanade

By Dan Murphy

Forty-nine new trees were recently planted along the Esplanade, courtesy of the Esplanade Association.

As part of its L.E.A.F. (Lasting Esplanade Arbor Fund), the nonprofit's three-person Horticulture Team planted myriad tree species or cultivars, 12 of which are new to the park, including Crabapple, Honeylocust, Sugar Maple, Serviceberry, and Carolina Silverbell.

"During a time when so much of the state was closed, the Esplanade Association's essential horticulture staff planted the largest number of trees in our organization's history," said Michael Nichols, executive director. "A healthy tree canopy is a critical tool in our effort to make the Esplanade both climate resilient and a welcoming habitat for birds and other wildlife."

All the new trees were planted along the Esplanade in part-

nership with the Department of Conservation and Recreation while the L.E.A.F. Initiative's tree diversification efforts intend to bolster the health of the park's tree canopy against pests and plagues for years to come.

"[The Esplanade] is a priceless natural resource offering a wide variety of recreational opportunities for visitors to

enjoy year round," said DCR Commissioner Jim Montgomery. "Continuing the stewardship of the Esplanade's tree canopy will ensure the park remains a thriving public space, and the Baker-Polito Administration is pleased to continue its public-private partnership with the Esplanade Association as part of the agency's Partnerships Matching Funds Program."

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

By Lauren Bennett

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

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

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

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

Right now, the IDP is for 70 percent AMI, which amounts

to one person making about \$55,000 a year or less, or a household or family of four making \$79,000 or less.

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

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

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

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

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

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

spread the word.

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

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

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

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

Chen added, "We need to

have a stronger requirement so that working families have a fair game in the City of Boston."

Chen also said that the state needs to work with the city to pass Bill H.4115 that "provides increased affordable housing, job training, and autonomy to Boston," she said. "We really need our state legislators in the Boston delegation to call on the state to pass this bill." She said this bill "gives the city the ability to work with the residents to find solutions to the housing need that is so critical and that is so urgent."

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

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

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

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

For more information about the coalition and their mission visit affordableboston.org.

LEGAL NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE

INVITATION TO BID FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, BOSTON - TOWER INTERIOR STABILIZATION AND RESTORATION

First Baptist Church of Boston, the Awarding Authority, requests bids for masonry, structural framing repairs, and waterproofing at the interior levels in the tower of their church at 110 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts, which is listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The project

is being partially funded with a grant from the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund through the Massachusetts Historical Commission. All work must be performed in accordance with the documents prepared by and available from Spencer, Sullivan & Vogt, 1 Thompson Square, Suite 504, Charlestown, Massachusetts 02129 (617-861-4291) and meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. State law prohibits discrimination. Awarding of this contract

is subject to Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity guidelines. Bids shall be evaluated on the basis of price, previous experience with similar types of construction projects, ability to perform the work in a timely manner, and references. All bids must be delivered to the architect's office at the above address no later than 5:00 PM, Friday, January 08, 2021 to be eligible for consideration.

12/17/20
BS

For the Record

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE: Due to public health concerns, the hearings that normally would be held on a week have been postponed or canceled due to the guidance of Mayor Martin Walsh and the order of Gov. Charlie Baker. Some meetings, however, have been moved to an online or teleconference format under the emergency order on the Open Meeting Law issued by Gov. Baker.

From Dec. 17 Boston Water & Sewer Commission meeting, 6 p.m., online via Zoom:

•Rate setting meeting 2021: The proposed change in water and sewer rates represents a combined revenue increase of 8.90% based on the current fiscal 2021 rate structure and consumption. Consumption Water Rate

Sewer Rate Per 1,000 Per 1,000 Per 1,000 (Cu. Ft/Day) Cubic Feet Gallons Cubic Feet Gallons First 19 \$59.59 \$7.967 \$81.16 \$10.850; Next 20 \$63.64 \$8.508 \$88.29 \$11.804; Next 50 \$69.40 \$9.279 \$95.27 \$12.737; Next 260 \$73.97 \$9.890 \$100.60 \$13.449; Next 950 \$77.86 \$10.409 \$106.72 \$14.268; Over 1299 \$81.05 \$10.836 \$110.79 \$14.812.

From the Dec. 17 Public Improvement Commission meeting, 10 a.m., online:

PUBLIC HEARING
On a petition by Huntington Theatre Company Inc. for the granting of an Earth Retention License for the installation of a temporary earth support system within Huntington Avenue (public way), Roxbury, on its south-

easterly side at address nos. 256-264, generally southwest of Public Alley no. 820.

INFORMATIONAL DISCUSSION

Citywide – Mayor's Commission for Persons with Disabilities and the Composition of the Public Improvement Commission – Announcement by the PIC Chairman

FREE BPS BREAKFAST IN SOUTH END/FENWAY

Students who wish to get a free breakfast Monday through Friday, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., have three sites to choose from in the South End and Fenway. This is the BPS initiative, but other organizations are also serving meals in the area as well.

•Blackstone Elementary School

– 380 Shawmut Ave. (South End).

•Boston Chinese Evangelical Church, 120 Shawmut Ave. (Monday, Weds., and Friday only – South End).

•Boston Latin School – 78 Avenue Louis Pasteur (Fenway).

REPORTING WORKPLACE SAFETY CONCERNS

•Workers in any size organization have options if they feel they are being pressured into an unsafe situation. Attorney General Maura Healey has created resources for workers to report safety concerns during reopening. They include an online form at the Attorney General's website and a dedicated Fair Labor hotline at 617-727-3465. People can also find those resources by calling 311.

HOW TO REPORT A PROBLEM PROPERTY

Since taking office in 2014, Mayor Walsh has made fixing quality of life issues a priority in his administration. From investing in Public Works to making sure community policing is a staple in every neighborhood, we are making sure every neighborhood is clean, safe and a great place to live and work in. Unfortunately some properties in Boston need more help than others, and that's why we are here. If you know of a property that fits one of the following criteria: multiple calls to 911, one that's blighted or just a general concern, we encourage you to reach out to your neighborhood liaison.

OVERLOOKING THE PUBLIC GARDEN



81 BEACON STREET #PH
3 BEDS | 4F BATHS | 3,300 SQFT
\$7,200,000



4 STRONG PLACE
4 BEDS | 4F BATHS | 2,380 SQFT
\$3,400,000



333 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE #22-24
4 BED | 2F BATHS | 2,796 SQFT
\$4,750,000



36 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE #1
4 BEDS | 4.5 BATHS | 3,565 SQFT
\$7,990,000



400 STUART STREET #15C
2 BEDS | 2F BATHS | 1,213 SQFT
\$2,050,000

