

THE BOSTON SUN

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SERVING BACK BAY - SOUTH END - FENWAY - KENMORE

RIBBON OF REMEMBRANCE:

Grant AME Church continues journey of compassion a year later

By Seth Daniel

The first COVID memorial ribbons at the Grant AME Church in the South End were assembled last April in apartments and the basement of the church – an ambitious project coming from Pastor Pedro Castro that no one could have imagined would eventually, and sadly, almost envelop the church a year later.

The colorful ribbons denote all of the official deaths from COVID-19 that occurred in the state, as well as several thousand prayer requests from church

members and the community at-large.

First there were a hundred or so.

Then they hit several thousand.

Now, there are more than 18,000 ribbons wrapped four or five times around the church in an L-shape – including 16,645 ribbons that represent those that passed away from COVID in Massachusetts.

“This isn’t something we played catch-up on,” said Castro. “This has been a journey

(GRANT AME CHURCH, Pg. 5)



More than three lines of ribbons adorn the church in an L-shape. There are more than 16,645 ribbons to denote those that have died in Massachusetts from the virus, and thousands more that represent prayer requests from the church and the community.



Neighbors stand in and around the bus shelter at Jersey and Queensbury streets to protest the suspension of the #55 bus route.

Bok, Fenwickians protest suspension of the #55 bus

By Lauren Bennett

City Councilor Kenzie Bok and residents gathered at the MBTA #55 bus stop at Jersey St. and Queensbury streets on Sunday, the first day that service was

suspended on the line.

“The Councilor, residents, and neighborhood groups are demanding that the MBTA reinstate the bus line in time for the summer schedule,” according to

a press release from Bok’s office.

“This decision by the Governor and the MBTA is harmful to residents, especially seniors, those with mobility challenges,

(#55 Bus Pg. 6)

Baker announces rest of schedule for vaccine rollout; all residents 16 and older will be eligible on April 19

By Lauren Bennett

Governor Charlie Baker on Wednesday announced a timeline for remaining residents to get vaccinated, with the general public becoming eligible on April 19.

“We all know that the anxiety

that’s created by this process can be stressful for many people, and we hope that this clarity will help everybody plan ahead and know what to expect when,” Baker said.

He said that the state “remains on track to meet those original milestones” announced in

December that said the general population would be eligible to receive the vaccine by the end of April or beginning of May.

On March 22, all residents age 60 and older and “certain workers,” such as restaurant work-

(VACCINATIONS Pg. 2)

Officials provide information to BFSNA on Shattuck Hospital’s planned move to East Newton Pavilion

By Dan Murphy

State officials were on hand for the Blackstone/Franklin Square Neighborhood Association’s March 16 meeting to provide information on Shattuck Hospital’s upcoming move to the East Newton Pavilion.

Department of Public Health Undersecretary Lauren Peters and Assistant Commissioner Frank Doyle said the operation

for the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital, a 260-bed medical/surgical and psychiatric hospital in Jamaica Plain that is run in conjunction with the state’s Department of Public Health and Department of Correction and serves many patients who experiencing substance use disorder or homelessness, is being relocated to 88 East Newton St.

The new South End hospital is expected to open in the

second quarter of 2024, said Doyle, “with construction right up to that date to coordinate the Herculean task of moving from Jamaica Plain.”

Construction on the South End facility is expected to take two and a half years to complete, Doyle added, and to kick off in July with demolition work.

Most of the construction will

(BFSNA, Pg. 4)

EDITORIAL

THE FILIBUSTER MUST END

The pros and cons of maintaining the filibuster in the U.S. Senate have reached the forefront of political discussion as never before -- and with good reason. Whether one believes that the filibuster protects the minority from the so-called tyranny of the majority or provides a means for the minority to obstruct the majority, the filibuster clearly is anti-democratic.

The filibuster is not part of our Constitution. It simply is a Senate rule upon which the Senate has carved out exceptions over the years, most notably for Presidential nominations and budget matters. The latter is referred to as reconciliation, which is how President Biden's \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief bill was enacted by a simple majority, as was the Republicans' \$2 trillion tax cut for the ultra-rich in 2017.

The rule allowing a filibuster may have made sense in the early 1800s when the U.S. was not divided between two parties. Political coalitions were much more fluid in the early days of our nation and compromise was common among senators.

However, after the Civil War, the battle lines were drawn between Democrats and the newly-formed Republican party (which only had come into existence in 1854), principally on the issue of race -- with the Democrats from the Solid South coalescing around the issue of segregation.

The so-called Dixiecrats -- embodied by Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina -- used the filibuster from the 1940s through the 1960s in an attempt to stymie Civil Rights legislation, especially the Voting Rights Act.

Though the racist efforts of Thurmond and others ultimately failed (only because the Senate obtained a 2/3 majority to end filibusters on those issues), the filibuster likely will be employed by Senate Republicans to obstruct voting reform measures that are necessary today.

The national Republican playbook to limit voting among non-white citizens once again is surging. Republican state legislators have filed more than 200 bills that would restrict voting in the coming elections in their states.

The very foundation of our democracy rests on the right of every citizen to vote. Legislation presently before Congress would ensure that voting rights are not abridged in any state. However, thanks to the arcane filibuster rule, the passage of a new Voting Rights Act faces little chance of success in the Senate.

The truth is this: The anti-democratic state efforts to limit voting rights most likely will be allowed to proceed because of the anti-democratic filibuster rule in the U.S. Senate -- and unless the Democratic majority in the Senate takes steps to abolish the filibuster rule, the United States will have a democracy in name only.

MARVELOUS MARVIN WAS A GREAT FIGHTER AND A GREAT PERSON

The boxing world lost one of its all-time greats with the sudden passing of Marvelous Marvin Hagler this past week.

Hagler, a native of Newark who moved to Brockton as a teenager, reigned as the undisputed middleweight boxing champion of the world for seven years in the 1980s and is acknowledged as one of the greatest fighters of all time. His bout with Thomas Hearns, which lasted about eight minutes, is regarded as the greatest three rounds in boxing history.

We were fortunate to see one of Hagler's title fights when we covered his title defense for The Chelsea Record against Vito "The Mosquito" Antuofermo in the old Boston Garden in June, 1981 (we were stunned when we realized how long ago that fight was!).

We also had the pleasure of running into the champ after he had retired in an elevator in Boston at One Devonshire Place in the late 1980s. We only exchanged pleasantries, but Hagler's innate humility, graciousness, and sense of humor were apparent in our brief encounter.

Marvelous Marvin Hagler overcame his hard-scrabble background with an unparalleled sense of determination and hard work to become a world champion. His attainment of the pinnacle of his profession serves as a model for success in life in any endeavor.

Marvelous Marvin Hagler was a great fighter and a great person. He will be missed.



IT'S VERY CLEAR THAT SPRING IS HERE, MARCH 20

GUEST OP-ED

Scraps of normalcy from before the pandemic

By James Dilday, president, Alexandra Ball Neighborhood Association

I texted a woman last week about the shutdown. We had been to a BPDA meeting for the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee at the school department building on March 2, 2020 and went out to eat afterwards. I ran across

the receipt for our meal as I was preparing my taxes and realized that I had not seen her in over a year. The strange thing is that we have adjusted to living a different type of life style over the last year. No public meetings, no restaurant dinners, no birthday celebrations with family and the like. Only a sense of seclusion from our normal life style which

included interaction with family and friends. Hopefully with the vaccine being administered and smart compliance with the rules of wearing face masks and maintaining social distance, we as a country can beat this virus.

James Dilday is the President of the Alexandra Ball Neighborhood Association.

VACCINATIONS (from pg. 1)

ers, grocery and convenience store workers, transportation workers, public works employees, and others, will be eligible. For the full list of eligible workers, visit mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccinations-for-certain-workers.

On April 5, residents age 55 and older and those with "one certain medical condition" will be eligible, and on April 19, the general public aged 16 and older will be eligible.

Baker said that the state is "taking an additional step" to "prioritize" those 60 and older and then those 55 and older because there is a "very strong and important correlation between COVID and age."

He said that "we believe adding these groups by age will help us vaccinate more of our most vulnerable population faster."

Though everyone over the age of 16 will be eligible by April 19, the governor said that it could "still take several weeks" for enough vaccine to arrive for everyone, as appointments are dependent on the federal supply of the vaccine.

He said that the state's vacci-

nation sites "have the ability to administer far more doses than we're actually receiving."

For this coming week, Massachusetts will be receiving about 170,000 first doses, including 8,000 "unanticipated" doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, Baker said.

He said that the large number of hospitals and health centers across the state that have been working to administer the vaccine is a huge reason why Massachusetts is a leader in the nation on vaccine distribution. The state remains in the "top 10 among all 50 states for vaccines being administered," Baker said.

"Having so many sites across Massachusetts ensures that everybody will have access to a vaccine when it's their turn," Baker said. "The news about the arrival of more vaccine from the

federal government means we will be able to move faster to get doses to our residents, and this is long overdue and welcome. We're all eager to get back to something like normal and see our friends and loved ones again."

He added that the "vaccines can't come fast enough," but people still need to take all of the precautions that they have been, such as mask wearing, avoiding large gatherings, and washing hands, as "COVID is still very much with us," Baker said.

Baker also said that all residents can now preregister for their vaccine at mass.gov/COVIDvaccine. While the tool is currently only for the state's seven mass vaccination sites, Baker said that more sites are expected to be added in April.

THE BOSTON SUN

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Hynes Convention Center opens as mass vax site March 18

Back Bay site to administer nearly 9,000 shots per day

Staff Report

The Fenway Park mass vaccination site will transition from the old ballfield this week to the Hynes Convention Center, opening on March 18, and scaling up to be the largest mass vax site in the state.

Gov. Charlie Baker announced earlier this month that the Commonwealth would open a mass vaccination site on March 18 at the Hynes Convention Center under the operation of [CIC Health](#). After the administration of more than 260,000 vaccines at CIC Health's Gillette Stadium, Fenway Park, and Reggie Lewis Center mass vaccination sites (as of March 15), the State asked the Cambridge-based health tech company to transition operations from Fenway to the Hynes.

"We are humbled to have been given the opportunity to help Massachusetts become a leader in vaccine rollout. We are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel," said Tim Rowe, CEO and co-founder of CIC Health. "In collaboration with the Commonwealth, the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority, Mass General Brigham, Boston Properties, and multiple health care delivery partners, we are excited to once again expand the State's capacity for safe and accessible vaccinations with the addition of the Hynes Convention Center site."

Per the Commonwealth's decision, CIC Health will transition operations from its Fenway Park mass vaccination site to the Hynes Convention Center this week in the hopes of scaling up to nearly 9,000 shots administered per day. Less than a mile from the ballpark, the Hynes is centrally located and easily accessible by public transporta-

tion. Plus — by sheer virtue of its size — it offers the ability to scale vaccination delivery by more than seven times that of Fenway.

CIC Health is incredibly grateful for its instrumental partnership with the Boston Red Sox, which will have enabled more than 55,000 vaccinations by March 27, the final day of vaccine operations at Fenway.

CIC Health is one of the largest operators of COVID-19 testing services in New England, and the largest operator of vaccine delivery services in Massachusetts. The company applied lessons learned in the testing realm — where it is known for easy online scheduling, no lines, and quick results turnaround — to vaccine administration.

"During the darkest days of the pandemic, the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center was home to the Boston Hope Field Hospital," said David Gibbons, executive director of the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority

(MCCA). "We are excited to now partner with the Commonwealth and CIC Health to use the Hynes Convention Center as a mass vaccination site to meet this critical public health need as we make the transition from treating, to defeating, the coronavirus."

In addition to collaborating with the MCCA, CIC Health has partnered with Mass General Brigham to provide expert medical oversight, Cataldo Ambulance to support preparation and administration of the vaccine, DMSE Sports for on-site vaccine operations and logistics management, and PWN Health for remote customer support. CIC Health is also grateful for the support of Boston Properties, which will offer up to two hours of free parking in the Prudential Center Garage for vaccination appointments.

Vaccinations at the Hynes Convention Center begin with a soft launch on Thursday, March 18, followed by the official launch

on Monday, March 22. The Pfizer vaccine will be administered at this site, but that may change later depending on the vaccine supply the State receives. The soft launch kicks off with capacity for 500 daily appointments, ramping up to 1,000 the following week and, ultimately, to nearly 9,000. Beginning Monday, March 22, the site will be open from 9 a.m.-5 p.m., seven days a week, with plans to extend weekday hours shortly thereafter.

Eligibility for vaccination appointments will continue to follow the State's timeline at mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-covid-19-vaccination-phases. Eligible individuals can preregister for appointments using the State's new system at mass.gov/COVIDvaccine. Individuals without internet access or who cannot navigate the online system may call 211 to preregister by phone. To learn more, visit cic-health.com/vaccines.

Weekly COVID-19 positive test rate sees 4.75 percent decrease in the Back Bay

By John Lynds

Last week Back Bay's cumulative COVID-19 positive test rate remained the same and the weekly positive test rate decreased slightly.

According to the latest data released by the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) last Friday, overall since the pandemic started 46,55 Back Bay, Beacon Hill, North End, West End and Downtown residents have been tested for COVID-19 and the data shows that 6.2 percent of those tested were COVID positive. This was the same percentage reported by the BPHC two weeks ago.

However, last week 2,689 residents were tested and 2.0 percent were positive--this was a 4.75 percentage decrease from the 2.1 percent reported by the BPHC two Fridays ago.

Citywide, 27,597 residents were tested and 3.6 percent were COVID positive--this was the same positive test rate reported by the BPHC two weeks ago.

At his daily press briefing Monday Mayor Martin Walsh said that Boston's numbers have stayed below the thresholds for concern for several weeks. The number of people hospitalized continues to go down, people are getting vaccinated every day and help is on the way from the Fed-

eral government.

While Walsh said there are many reasons to be hopeful the city is still not out of the woods yet. "Everyone has to stay focused so that we don't slip backward," said Walsh. "That means: wearing a mask with a good fit, washing hands with soap and warm water, avoiding gatherings, and getting tested frequently."

The Mayor said that people who have been vaccinated should look at the CDC's guidance on activities they can do safely, which is posted on [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

As far as the St. Patrick's Day holiday Walsh thanked the people of Boston for respecting public health guidance so far during the days leading up to the Irish Holiday and said that the City didn't have many reports of big gatherings.

"City departments were out enforcing safety protocols at restaurants, and for the most part, everyone was in compliance," said Walsh. "No emergency Licensing Board hearings were needed this morning (Monday). We need everyone to keep it up this coming week and weekend, too. As I said last week, having a party and potentially causing an outbreak, isn't worth it. I thank everyone who continues to do their part."

The BPHC data released last Friday showed Back Bay, Bea-

con Hill, North End, West End and Downtown had an infection rate of 520 cases per 10,000 residents, up 2.65 percent from 506.6 cases per 10,000 residents reported two weeks ago.

An additional 75 residents became infected with the virus last week and the total number of cases in the area increased

from 2,823 cases to 2,898 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 1.95 percent last week and went from 59,953 cases to 61,126 confirmed cases in a week. Twenty-seven additional Boston residents died from the virus last week and there are now 1,313 total deaths in the city from COVID.



Virtual Public Workshop

PLAN: Nubian Square

Monday, March 29
6:00 PM - 7:45 PM

Zoom Link: bit.ly/P3Workshop2
Toll Free: (833) 568 - 8864
Meeting ID: 160 056 3575

Event Description

Please join members of the PLAN: Nubian Square team on Mar. 29th from 6-7:45pm to discuss Parcel P3. During this workshop we will continue to review existing site conditions and surrounding development to guide the future RFP. For more information please visit bit.ly/PlanNubian.

Únase a los miembros del PLAN: equipo de Nubian Square el 29 de marzo de 2021 de 6 pm a 7:45 pm para discutir el lote P3. Durante este taller, continuaremos revisando las condiciones existentes del sitio y los desarrollos circundantes para guiar la RFP en el futuro. Para obtener más información visite bit.ly/PlanNubian.

Tanpri rantre nan ekip la PLAN: Nubian Square sou Mas 29 6th nan 7:45 pm. Ekip Nubian Square la ap kontinye revize kondisyon sit ki deja egziste yo ak devlopman ki antoure yo pou gide RFP nan lavni. Tanpri vizite: bit.ly/PlanNubian pou plis enfòmasyon.

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BFSNA (from pg. 1)

take place inside the building and its envelope will remain unchanged, he said, although the façade will be re-clad for “energy savings” in the spring of 2022.

Doyle apologized to neighbors that the site has recently been plagued with issues, including inoperative lighting in an alley; discarded syringes and trash; and snow removal (or lack thereof), as well as overgrown bushes abutting a ramp, and promised he would address them with DCAMM (Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance), the state agency that manages the property.

“These issues haven’t been addressed to me satisfactorily, and especially not to neighbors,” he said.

Once the South End facility is up and running, a maximum of 15 van transports carrying a total of about 24 patients from the Department of Correction, Doyle said, would arrive there each day. The vans would come along the east end of the pavilion, which be renovated into a plaza for ambulances, shuttles and other vehicles picking up and dropping off, he added, to the old ambulance entrance. This area would be restricted and gated, Doyle said, and these patients would be under the supervision of guards throughout the process.

While the budget for the project still hasn’t been finalized, Boyle said the decision to the South End largely came down to

numbers, since the cost to renovate that facility is estimated at \$200 million, while it’s expected to cost around \$400 million to rehabilitate the existing Jamaica Plain hospital, or \$500 million to build a new one on that site.

“Jamaica Plain facility is beyond its life expectancy,” Peters said of the building that dates back to the 1950s. “We have explored several options and found our optimal solution in the South End.”

The 13-acre Jamaica Plain campus, meanwhile, would be redeveloped in accordance with a “vision plan,” said Peters, being developed by a Community Advisory Board, with several South End residents serving as members.

“Maybe it could be a site for recovery services,” she added. “The process is well underway, and we hope to issue a RFP later this year.”

A Request for Proposals [RFP] for this project is expected to be issued for the project in the late summer or early fall, Doyle said, and the design is on target for completion in 2026, with construction commencing soon afterwards.

“There will be a transitional period when we move out in 2024,” he said, “and the time when construction is done in Jamaica Plain.”

Boyle also said he would reach out to DCAMM and return to the group with a project design for them to review.

‘Buy a Bite’ pilot program

BFSNA Vice President Jonathan Alves and Elizabeth Buetel of the South End Business Alliance and AC Hotel Boston Downtown discussed the BFSNA and SEBA’s new Buy-a-Bite pilot program.

The BFSNA has used charitable funds to purchase \$5,000 worth of gift cards from five South End restaurants for distribution, they said, among 10 South End retailers to give to customers as an incentive.

Alves said the initiative would have a “multiplier effect” by simultaneously generating business for both participating retailers and restaurants in the neighborhood.

As for how participating retailers distribute the gift cards, that’s entirely up to them, said Buetel, but the BFSNA and SEBA are asking them to track how they use the card to measure the pilot’s success. “We’ve kind of put the decision in their hands,” she said.

The SEBA website at www.sebaboston.com, said Buetel said, will soon publish information on the pilot program, including how corporate sponsors can get involved.

BFSNA scholarships

Jenni Watson, who co-chairs the BFSNA Scholarship Committee with Lisa Jenks, was also on hand to discuss the scholarship

fund, which currently has more than \$39,000 in its coffers.

Since its creation in the mid-2000s by the late Andrew Parthum, the scholarship fund has raised more than \$180,000 to disperse \$2,000 scholarships to South End high school seniors (or, funds permitting, to those who are significantly involved in a South End community organization), said Watson, to cover the costs of books, computers and fees not typically covered by financial aid.

The committee has also established a \$3,000 scholarship in Parthum’s name, she added, “for outstanding community involvement.”

Watson said she and Jenks are actively looking for new scholarship committee members and assured new recruits that the commitment would be “not very onerous” and “really easy this year.”

New members, said Watson, would be charged with reaching out to local youth organizations to inform them about the program; conducting interviews as part of a group; and planning and executing a small event in June to honor the scholarship recipients.

Interested parties are asked to contact Watson or Jenks via email at bfnsa@blackstonefranklin.org, said Watson, while the scholarship’s next meeting is scheduled via Zoom for Tuesday, March 23, at 6 p.m.

Other matters

Domingos DeRosa appeared before group to discuss his candidacy for one of four City Councilor at-Large seats.

DeRosa, who immigrated to the U.S. with his parents as a child from Cape Verde Island, grew up in Dorchester and Roxbury, and after graduating from Madison Park High and earning a degree from the Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology, he spent 22 years working for Boston Centers for Youth and Families (BCYF). He also served as leader of SEIU Local 888 and learned to work with different city departments under one contract, which, he said, broadened his “understanding of how city budget affects every one of us.”

In his spare time, DeRosa has run summer football combines as president of the Bengals Pop Warner League.

“I’m a family man, a BPS student, and I’ve never left Boston - it’s my home,” he said. “I want to be a voice for voiceless...and represent all concerns and matters.”

To learn more about DeRosa and his campaign, visit www.darosaatlarge.org.

Dr. Robyn Riseberg was also on hand to provide information on Boston Community Pediatrics, the new pediatrics practice she has opened in the BFSNA district on Albany Street.

The operation has “grown exponentially” since opening on Nov. 16 with 150 patients, Dr. Riseberg said, and now treats around 550 patients.

“We’re small, and we’re scrappy,” she said, “and we’re interested in seeing all kids in the neighborhood.”

Risberg offered her practice to use for community vaccination clinics “or anything else to support the neighborhood.”

For more information on Boston Community Pediatrics, visit www.bostoncommunitypediatrics.org.

David Stone, BFSNA president, informed those in attendance of Jeffery Street, which connects with Dedham and Canton streets and is the newest street in the South End, and likely in the city. It’s named for Jeffrey Hull, a South End artist and teacher, Stone said, who died in 2017.

Captain Steven Sweeney of Boston Police’s District 4, said some earlier problems in the neighborhood have been curtailed, including far fewer syringes discarded in Franklin Park and people no longer sleeping in the doorway of the Blackstone School.

Regarding Mass Cass, Sweeney said the area around the highway connector is “looking better,” although there’s still been reports of drug dealing on a stoop in the 600 block between Harrison and Washington streets while much of the other nefarious activity has “unfortunately” moved from District 4 to the C-6 side.

Sweeney also said police are working with Villa Victoria and hope to get bicycle officers to patrol that area.

Meanwhile, the BPDs Street Outreach Unit, which engages in outreach with the homeless just picked up a new sergeant and five additional officers, said Sweeney, who also praised the work of Lauren Schneider, a member of that unit who “has been driving around with officers to see how D-4 works.”

The next regularly scheduled BFSNA meeting will take place via Zoom on Tuesday, May 18, at 7 p.m.



Virtual Community Meeting

Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee

Monday, April 5
6:00 PM - 7:45 PM

Zoom Link: bit.ly/April2021RSMPOC
Toll Free: (833) 568 - 8864
Meeting ID: 161 848 8944

Event Description

The Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee was developed to oversee projects that fall under the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan. The committee meets monthly to discuss development and planning in Nubian Square. Vote on Parcel 8 will take place April 5th. All meetings are held on zoom and open to the public.

For more information, on how to Join, Engage, and Take Action, please visit the website.

Upcoming meetings/Próximas reuniones/Dat pwochen rankont yo se:

April/Abril/Avril 5 (Parcel 8 Vote/Parcela 8 voto /Pasèl 8 vote)
May/Mayo/ Me 3
June/Junio/Jen 7

For interpretation services, contact the planner listed below one week before each meeting.

Para los servicios de interpretación, comuníquese con el planificador que se indica a continuación una semana antes de cada reunión.

Si w bezwen sèvis entèpretasyon, kontakte moun kap planifye a pi ba a, yon semèn anvan chak reyinyon.

Contact:

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GRANT AME CHURCH (from pg. 1)

from the beginning and a story that unfolded, and one where we didn't know where it would take us. Some people have an idea and then create a story, but this has been something that was a journey from the beginning of all of this, and a journey that continues on. We still don't know where it will end."

On Monday, that was all recalled by leaders of the church who said it has brought about an outreach into the community showing compassion and healing.

Rev. Stephanie Castro said they are grateful the idea was conceived, and that it came to fruition.

"I think we are really glad the pastor came up with the idea and even more than it came to pass," she said. "Not all ideas come to fruition. It was great that we were able to remember people and they weren't us another person that passed away...People die every day. To take a snapshot and let everyone be part of it, we were saying we may not know you, but we stand with you to mourn the loss of your loved ones."

Pastor Castro got the idea from a conference he attended in Toronto several years ago, and as the deaths started to be reported in March, the idea resurfaced and he proposed to make a ribbon memorial for all those that died in Massachusetts. He proposed to use colorful ribbons with a number on each ribbon for those reported to have died. He wanted to display these rib-

bons in an L-shape on the outside of the church.

After he shared the idea with the membership, he said he got some puzzled looks, but soon everyone was in on the idea. Each member and volunteer got a bag of ribbons and they were assigned numbers to write on them, such as 'COVID-19 #1' and so on. Those ribbons were brought to the church and stapled onto a clothesline-like structure in 100-foot increments. Once they reach 100 feet of ribbons – about 1,200 ribbons – they have them hung outside with the others.

"At first there were 1,200 or 1,500 deaths a day," said Castro. "It was hard to keep up. Everyone was chipping in. We had to buy two power staplers and we got really good at putting them on. We built a gauge to help space them out and all day long people just stapled, stapled and stapled."

Said Executive Minister Donna George, "I watched TV and just clicked, clicked and clicked on the stapler."

Soon, they also added prayer cards with the names of people who had prayer requests turned into them from the church or even online and from the community. That total number now of the death memorials and prayer requests is far above 18,000 ribbons, they said.

"It is the power of remembrance on display," said Pastor Castro. "This COVID-19 ribbon memorial is an example of what we can do to help the communi-



With more than 16,000 COVID memorial ribbons in the background on the façade of the Grant AME Church in the South End, Executive Minister Donna George, Pastor Pedro Castro Jr. and Rev./Elect Lady Stephanie Castro mark one year since the pandemic began. Their project started at nearly the beginning of the pandemic, and the journey continues to this day.



Memorial ribbons that are ready to be stapled and hung on the church. Each ribbon denotes COVID-19 and the number of the death.

ty grieve. By this single act of the church we have connected with the community and with others to find hope. That's what this ribbon project has brought about. When we re-open, we will take down the ribbons and unfurl them in a ceremony on the street. Then we'll lend them to the Museum of African American History in Boston. They want to display them as an example of everything that happened."

Added Stephanie Castro, "The thing about it is once it got beyond that first 'L' on the outside, it was very visible. It caused people to stop when they walked by. Everyone was asking what all the ribbons were for. That was in April or May. What is going to be so powerful about it being in a museum is some ribbons have been battered and torn...and there are others that are not as

worn that are newer. The lives of the newer ones are forever transformed too, just like the older ones."

Pastor Castro said all of the work on the ribbons sparked a movement in his church to re-connect to the community as the community reached out to the church for healing. They bought 100 meals from Mike's City Diner on Thanksgiving to distribute to those in Grant Manor, and they gave out 100 bowls of soup in January, distributed blankets to the homeless near the church, and had a sneaker/sock drive with the Nurses Association of Canton. That ministry of service, sparked by the ribbon memorial, is a permanent change to the church.

"The church became very visible – the church with all the ribbons on it," said Castro. "It jump-

started the church to say 'there's more we can do and what else can we do?' That's a permanent change in our church – raising funds to make a difference in our community."

Sometime around Labor Day – after major construction is completed on the inside of the church and it is safe to return to services – the church leaders said they will carefully take the ribbons down and have members of the church and community stretch it up and down Washington Street. It will be a solemn remembrance of so many that did not survive COVID.

"That's going to be powerful," said Pastor Castro. "Usually we're standing in the middle of the street because we're protesting. This will be about standing in the street for peace and healing."



City Councilor Kenzie Bok rallies with neighbors, holding signs asking for the route to return to its summer schedule.



A group of residents gather to show their support for the #55 bus route in the Fenway.

#55 BUS (from pg. 1)

and those without access to a car, who rely on the #55 bus to get to important resources within and outside of their neighborhood. Treating public transit as a business, rather than a public good, is short-sighted and will have harmful implications on our neighbors, our City, and our planet," the release continues.

viously spoken out about the importance of this bus route to the Fenway community, especially during and following the pandemic as a way to get to essential places like doctor's appointments.

At Mayor Walsh's most recent press conference on March 15, Congressman Stephen Lynch said that there is a "targeted increase [in funding] for the MBTA" as

part of the federal American Rescue Act, and that he and other state lawmakers are hoping to discuss these issues further with Governor Baker and with the MBTA.

"Our community depends on the #55 bus line," Bok told the Sun in a statement. "There are seniors, veterans, folks living with HIV/AIDS, and other people with mobility challeng-

es that cannot physically get to the Green Line or Orange Line stops. They rely on the #55 to get them everywhere, including to healthcare, basic services, and community gatherings. We can't have our neighbors continue to be isolated after such a hard and lonely year for so many, when they're just now getting vaccinated and eager to finally

meaningfully engage with their community again. Sunday was the 1st day of the suspension. Our intention to be back in the Fenway at Queensberry and Jersey for a brief protest at the same 5:30 time every Sunday for the next several weeks until the MBTA puts the #55 back on the summer schedule, because we need this bus."

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Looking at the News — The Last Meeting

By Seth Daniel

One year ago on March 10, 2020, I pulled up and parked on Washington Street near Ramsay Park – a little early for a 7 p.m. meeting of the Alexandra Ball Neighborhood Association, a meeting that would actually be the last traditional public meeting I attended up to this day.

That, of course, is quite a statement for a reporter that has made a living of attending public meetings, and likely has attended thousands and thousands of those meetings around the region in a long career.

There have been no more meetings, though.

Of course, Zoom has taken over the civic space, and there have been a few outdoor meetings last summer, but none of the traditional, crowded room, contentious battles that have defined the South End and Boston civic life for generations.

Sitting in my car that evening one year ago, I began getting ping after ping on my phone. E-mails and texts and the like flooded in cancelling just about everything for a three-week period. For our network of papers, there were high school sporting events, elementary school plays, then the memory-makers like

Junior Prom and the Catholic First Communion later in the spring.

Then the City put a stop to all in-person public meetings – from the Boston Planning and Development Agency to all neighborhood associations as well. Fundraisers and galas, banquets and pro sporting events – even memorial services were now in question.

Mayor Martin Walsh's St. Patrick's Day senior luncheon in Charlestown, Councilor Ed Flynn's annual St. Patrick's Day fundraiser at J.J. Foley's in the South End, the annual meeting of the Friends of the South End Library and a Women's History Month event in Beacon Hill – all cancelled. All of it had flooded into my phone within a few hours on March 10, and all due to this new threat of COVID-19.

'Cancelled' was the word of the day, and it was also a headline in a small story in the Boston Sun a few days later. I can recall sitting in my car and analyzing all of the changes to the calendar so suddenly. I phoned a colleague with a bit of desperation asking what it was that we would put in the paper over the next few weeks if nothing was happening. I had been following COVID-19 in China since early

January, looking at shocking and quickly-censored videos online from China and some early public health officials signaling an alarm. That said, I had heard the same thing for Swine Flu and it was hard to figure it would be much different.

Still, as I walked into the church, and down to the church basement, I knew things had changed.

First of all, everyone else was freaked out as well – most in an uneasy laughing way. Everyone at the meeting was on edge; there were questions about hand-shaking posed to Mayoral Liaison Faisa Sharif, but the business of the day went on. It cannot be ignored that I, and as I learned later – others – were on edge there all night.

I was almost afraid to breathe. We left not knowing what to expect, but I do recall everyone telling people to be safe. That was new at the time.

As I walked out of the Grant AME Church, I explicitly remember stopping on the sidewalk and gazing at the outside of the church. I'm not sure why; I looked at it a few moments in the darkness – then went on my way.

One year later, last week, I stood on that same spot and looked up at the side of that

same church. But this time, there were well-over 16,000 ribbons hanging from that same façade to denote the number of people in Massachusetts who had officially died of COVID-19.

I don't even think I was able to write a story about the Alexandra Ball meeting that night as everything shifted so fast starting the next day. Clearly, it was a slow descent to a full shutdown over a period of many days. Friday the 13th stands out, as does the following Tuesday, March 17.

But the moment I know I realized that things would be different, that I'd likely attended my last neighborhood meeting as I had always known them, was on March 10 coming out of the basement of the Grant AME.

That is my moment, just as everyone else has their moment.

Will there be another neighborhood meeting ever again?

Yes, I think so. The South End Forum will fight again one day in the cramped quarters of the

Library's upper room. But will there be a computer in the corner running Zoom for those at home as part of it? Yea, I think that will happen too.

We often, however, just move forward with life and forget what we lost or what it used to be like. I remember going to great length to get money out of the bank on a Friday, but I've forgotten all about that routine since ATMs came on the scene 30 years ago. Likewise, I remember pulling up to the airport 30 minutes before a flight and walking to the gate with little to no security and hopping on the plane. There were no hassles, no worries and no taking off my shoes and belt. But I had to be reminded of that recently because I forgot I used to do that.

Time will tell if our civic space will be forever changed too.

I'm guessing that early March evening in the church basement might have not only been the last meeting like that for a year's time, but maybe also for a long time.

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Outdoor dining to return to Back Bay on March 22

By John Lynds

Numerous Back Bay restaurants are expected to take advantage of the City of Boston's 2021 outdoor dining program set to

begin on March 22. This is an earlier start than the previously-announced date of April 1.

Last year the restaurants that dot the neighborhood received a special permit from the city

that allowed them to set up outdoor patios on roadways and sidewalks throughout the neighborhood. The program helped restaurants increase capacity during the COVID-19 pandem-

ic while keeping customers and staff safe.

Last year, Back Bay restaurants along Newbury and Boylston Street took part in the city's successful outdoor dining pilot

program.

With the success of last year's program Mayor Martin Walsh said the city will continue many

(OUTDOOR DINING, Pg. 9)

Community meeting held for proposed cannabis store on Boylston St.

Store to be located in former Little Steve's Pizzeria site

By Lauren Bennett

A community meeting was held on March 15 regarding a proposed cannabis shop at 1114 Boylston St., the former site of Little Steve's Pizzeria.

The Boston Cannabis Board provided Cypress Tree with a Host Community Agreement, and the Zoning Board of Appeal approved the request for a conditional use permit on February 23.

Victor Chiang, President of Cypress Tree Management Fenway, LLC, said that the proposal includes the Little Steve's portion of the building, "as well as the entirety of the second floor." He said the space totals 6,000 square feet, and there is 1800 square feet of basement space for "back of the house" employee use only.

He said that the location complies with requirements for buffer zones for schools, and explained how the process would work with customers.

Chiang said that IDs will be checked and verified upon entrance using IDScan, and people would then queue indoors.

"Our objective is to have no outdoor queuing of any customers," he said. "There will be security personnel outside the building, and there will be "no impact on sidewalks."

Chiang showed two renderings of proposed first and second floors where customers would gather. He said that all COVID protocols and guidelines will be followed while still allowing people to queue indoors.

"Should we need additional space, customers will be placed in a virtual queue to receive a text when there is availability," a slide presented at the meeting reads. "On dates when the Red Sox play or there are concerts at Fenway Park we will increase our security staff to ensure patrons do not block the side walk."

Chiang also said that as a result of previous concerns from the community about public consumption, Cypress Tree has committed to not selling individual pre-rolls, and signage that states the illegality of consuming marijuana in public will be placed within sight as customers leave the store.

"The location couldn't be any worse," said John Bookston of the Fenway Civic Association. He expressed several concerns

with the proposal, including that "how do you know when somebody comes in with a valid ID that it's the ID of that person?"

Chiang said that Cypress Tree's "objective" is to hire retired officers and other people who are familiar with checking IDs. He said they have the "ability" to "validate your ID as you from your picture ID."

Tim Horn, president of the Fenway Civic Association, also brought up several concerns, including that there is a summer program for high schoolers at Berklee College of Music, and the underage students would be right around the corner from the proposed shop. He said this makes him "disagree" with the fact that it is compliant with buffer zone regulations.

Chiang said that according to zoning rules, it is compliant, but "we understand that concern." He reiterated that IDs will be verified both at the door and again before a purchase is made. He said that Cypress Tree will have a "zero tolerance policy" for distributing product to underage individuals, and that employees would be terminated right away if they were found "diverting product" to those under the age of 21.

The presentation stated that "we are the only locally and minority owned applicant siting in and around Fenway," and that "you will have ownership's direct contact information" as a resident of the Fenway. Additionally, Cypress Tree said that they are "committed to positively impact the community" through "local and minority hiring," and "these will be career opportunities and not just a job." Cypress Tree has also made a "commitment to employees volunteering annually with local charitable organizations," and will be a part of "charitable campaigns."

Cypress Tree will also host meetings four times a year "for neighbors to come and share concerns to work together on potential solutions."

A resident asked about the ratio of staff to customers in the store, and Chiang said that while there is "no set ratio" at this point, there is a total occupancy of about 108 people in the store, including employees. He said that the team is "envisioning" 20 to 25 employees per shift, but they plan on hiring more than that to handle shift changes and increases and decreases for busy and slow periods.

He said that he hopes there

will be many customers who "want to engage" in dialogue relating to cannabis education and learning about different product types and how to consume the, safely. He said that Cypress Tree will be "encouraging consultative selling" as opposed to "transactional."

Though the floor plans have not yet been finalized, Chiang said that the first floor will likely be used for those who have placed an order ahead of time and are just picking it up, so they are "anticipating" around four point of sale systems there. On the second floor, where the hope is to have more consultation with customers, there will likely be at least 10 point of sale systems.

When asked about a timetable moving forward, Chang said that in a perfect world, the store would open about a year from now, but the "reality" is that both construction and the final inspection process by the Cannabis Control Commission "can be slow," so it might take longer than that to open.

Chiang told those in attendance that once the store opens, he hopes to have meetings like this "on a quarterly basis, and continue our dialogue with the community."

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B

Mayor Martin J. Walsh

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Garden Clubs in the city find new ways to make ends meet

By Dan Murphy

As gardens and greenspace have become more essential than ever before during the pandemic, it's also made fundraising for groups like the Beacon Hill Garden Club and the Garden Club of the Back Bay, which were both forced to cancel in-person events last year, more challenging and subsequently compelled them to find new and creative ways to make ends meet.

The Beacon Hill Garden Club had to cancel the longstanding Hidden Gardens of Beacon Hill Tour, which typically draws around 2,000 visitors to the neighborhood, last year due to the pandemic, but it's returning this year, albeit as a virtual event this time.

Molly Sherden, president of the Beacon Hill Garden Club, said the Hidden Gardens Tour would take place as a virtual event debuting June 30 and feature seven gardens, at least two of which have never been seen before on a previous tour, and they're both located in Louisburg Square.

The idea was inspired by the virtual tour that the Concord Museum hosted last year, which, Sherden said, proved to be a successful outing for them.

So Sherden said she reached out to Jennifer Craig, the museum's development director and "quizzed her about how they pulled it together and did what they did."

Filming for this year's virtual Hidden Gardens Tour will take place in May, Sherden said, so "the gardens are in a state of bloom," and so that the videographer can then be allotted a full month to edit the video before its release.

While Sherden looks forward to the Hidden Gardens Tour returning as in-person event, she said, "We hope this will be the one year where people can see it from anywhere in the world."

Advance tickets for the Hidden Gardens of Beacon Hill Tour will be available at the Beacon Hill Garden Club's website at beaconhillgardenclub.org for \$25 each, or you can buy a ticket and one of the Garden Club's books for \$45, which, Sherden said, is quite a bargain since a book alone retails for \$35.

The Garden Club of the Back Bay's biggest annual event, the Twilight Gala Garden Party, has been cancelled both this and last year due to the pandemic, so the group has launched an annual appeal to help it raise the approximately \$20,000 it spends

each year to prune and care for city-owned sidewalk trees.

"This year, we knew we couldn't have an in-person event," said Catherine Borden, co-president of the Garden Club of the Back Bay, "so we decided to do an annual appeal, although we want to go back to in-person fundraising again at some point."

Despite the Twilight Gala Garden Party's cancellation last year, it was still lucrative for the Garden Club of the Back Bay, thanks to the generosity of some supporters.

"We were well into planning for our annual fundraiser last year when the whole world shut down," Borden said, "and when

it was cancelled, many of sponsors and guests converted their sponsorships and ticket purchases into donations, which we very much appreciated."

To donate to the Garden Club of the Back Bay's annual appeal to support its tree care efforts, click on gardenclubbackbay.us15.list-manage.com.

OUTDOOR DINING (from pg. 8)

of the successful initiatives from last year's program, such as streamlined permitting. Applications for outdoor dining licenses on both public and private property are now open, and businesses can apply online at the city's website.


"Outdoor dining was one of the bright spots last summer and fall, and we've seen the benefits it has had on our neighborhoods: supporting local businesses, a safe and enjoyable experience for restaurant patrons, and an added resource for Boston's small businesses during this challenging time," said Mayor Walsh. "I'm thrilled we are able to start this program even earlier, and I look forward to businesses and residents taking advantage of it."

The Mayor said the city has also focused on providing resources to businesses of color, and has made more than 200 personalized outreach calls to every business that applied for outdoor dining last year. The Mayor's Office of Economic Development has met with the

Boston Black Hospitality Coalition to ensure added technical assistance is available for businesses to apply. Weekly "Help Sessions" were held from December through January to help businesses navigate the pilot process. The City of Boston is also planning to host additional office hours and workshops to help businesses with their applications as needed.

The 2021 Outdoor Dining Pilot Program season for approved restaurants will begin on March 22, 2021, and will end on December 1, 2021, weather permitting. Restaurants that took part in the 2020 temporary outdoor dining program and who wish to do so in 2021 must re-apply, and the City will also be accepting applications from restaurants that did not take part in the 2020 temporary outdoor dining program.

Additional information on outdoor dining, and applications for businesses, is available on boston.gov.



Virtual Public Meeting

Amend Article 32 Groundwater Zoning

Monday, March 29
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM


Zoom Link: bit.ly/3rsZaNZ
Toll Free: (833) 568 - 8864
Meeting ID: 161 812 6907


Project Proponent:
Boston Planning and Development Agency

Project Description:
This public meeting is to present proposed amendments to Article 32 Groundwater Conservation Overlay District of the zoning code and receive comments in order to extend protection to groundwater levels in areas of the city with older buildings on wooden piles built on filled land. This includes parts of East Boston, downtown waterfront, Roxbury/South End, South Boston and Audubon Circle.

mail to: **Bryan Glascock**
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201
phone: 617.722.4300
email: bryan.glascock@boston.gov

Close of Comment Period:
4/9/2021

BostonPlans.org |  @BostonPlans
Teresa Polhemus, Executive Director/Secretary



Virtual Public Meeting

Amend Accessory Parking Zoning

Wednesday, March 31
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM


Zoom Link: bit.ly/3kUXdqQ
Toll Free: (833) 568 - 8864
Meeting ID: 161 611 0558

Project Proponent:
Boston Planning and Development Agency

Project Description:
This is a public meeting to present proposed zoning changes that would make Accessory Parking a Conditional Use in neighborhood business subdistricts. Currently it is an Allowed Use in basements and first floors where there is an Allowed Use on the upper floors, such as residential. This condition creates a blank street wall with no active first floor use and runs counter to planning goals for neighborhood subdistricts. By making Accessory Parking Conditional, requiring a Conditional use permit, it provides and opportunity for community input and design review. See 3/31/21 on the BPDA Calendar for more info.

mail to: **Bryan Glascock**
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201
phone: 617.722.4300
email: bryan.glascock@boston.gov

Close of Comment Period:
4.9.2021

BostonPlans.org |  @BostonPlans
Teresa Polhemus, Executive Director/Secretary

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

BY PENNY CHERUBINO

THIS WEEK'S ANSWER

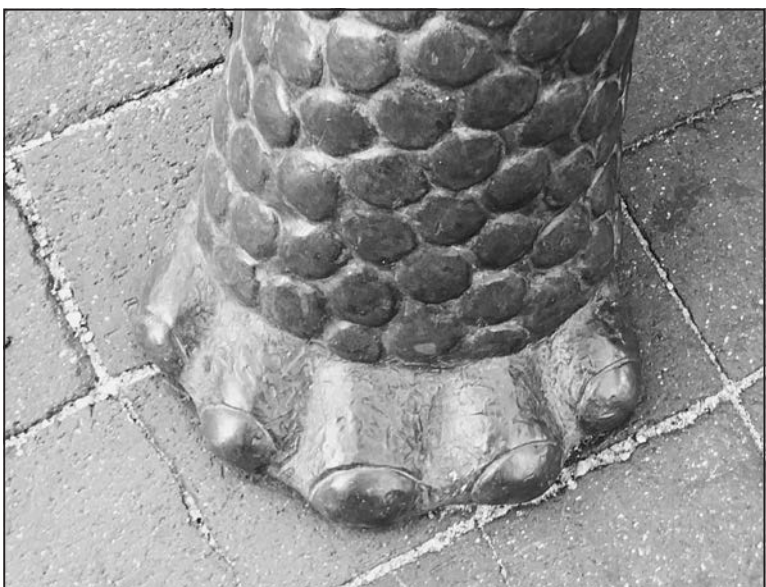


The windows in the last clue are on 557 Tremont Street constructed in 1865. This building's historic name is the Mystic Bridge Building but was better known for the time when it was occupied by The New England Organ company. In 1987, it was combined with the St. Cloud Hotel next door to become one condominium community.

The next clue will be found in the Back Bay.

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

THIS WEEK'S CLUE



Real Estate Transfers

BUYER 1	SELLER 1	ADDRESS	PRICE
BACK BAY			
RDB Clarendon St LLC	46 Clarendon Street LLC	46 Clarendon St #1	\$2,550,000
Crowley, Kathleen	KPT T	75 Clarendon St #609	\$1,550,000
Ripsey, Anne E	Castle, Ashley S	144 Commonwealth Ave #10	\$530,000
Blumenthal, Chintana	Essner, Benjamin	43 Commonwealth Ave #1	\$1,500,000
Oconnor, Susan M	Mcdonough Comm Avenue	63 Commonwealth Ave #3	\$2,350,000
Slocum, Joshua E	Charles W Bishop RET	265-275 Dartmouth St #1E	\$565,000
RDB Clarendon St LLC	46 Clarendon Street LLC	46 Clarendon St #1	\$2,550,000
BEACON HILL			
Dawson, Matthew J	Mclaughlin, Medeith	90 Beacon St #1	\$470,000
Gagnashvili, Veriko	Blum, Betty L	82 Chestnut St #21	\$490,000
Li, Xinwei	Carter, William L	37 Grove St #4	\$660,000
Yang, Xiaowen	Rice, William P	60 Myrtle St #6	\$565,000
J&J Real Estate Inc	Thompson, Judi	110 Riverway #5	\$505,000
BAY VILLAGE/SOUTH END/KENMORE			
Midwood Capital Prop LLC	Rudnick, Robert L	5 Appleton St #1A	\$933,000
Leahy, Jacquelyn	Weatherly, Jimin V	15 Garrison St #2	\$460,000
Ferreira-Bassit, Rodrigo	Darula, Matthew D	12 Isabella St #1	\$1,050,000
King LT	Hoyt, Alan J	38-40 Saint Botolph St #B2	\$623,000
1st Boston Capital Inc	Yu, Tianyi	188 Brookline Ave #24G	\$999,000
Emery, Mark P	Balough, Matthew	15 Concord Sq #1A	\$485,000
Wang, Bo	Hazelton, Bryan C	534 Massachusetts Ave #4	\$840,000
Jaspoint LLC	Grappo, Michael	61 Park Dr #C	\$90,650
Goodrich, Cynthia L	Wood, Taylor	324 Shawmut Ave #2	\$683,000
7 Up LLC	Wilson, William F	7 Union Park	\$6,150,000
J N Spinney Jr 2007	Evan Hornbuckle RET	196 W Brookline St #2	\$3,350,000
Nilsson, Ola F	154 West Concord LLC	154 W Concord St #3A	\$390,000
Stanton, Alexandra V	Litt, Jonathan S	88 Waltham St #5	\$845,000
Cullen, Stephen	Dobbins, Martin F	1 Wellington St #3	\$815,000

First case of the P.1 COVID-19 variant of concern in Massachusetts reported

Staff report

The Department of Public Health (DPH) announced Tuesday that the first case of the P.1 COVID-19 variant of concern, which originated in Brazil, has been detected in Massachusetts. The individual is a woman in her 30s who resides in Barnstable County on Cape Cod.

DPH was notified of her test results from genetic sequencing conducted through the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's national surveillance system. Currently, there is no information available on the woman's illness or whether she has recently traveled. She tested positive for COVID-19 in late February.

As of Tuesday, there have been 213 cases of the B.1.1.7 variant, originally found in the United Kingdom, and 6 cases of the B.1.351, which originated in South Africa, reported in Mas-

sachusetts. The B.1.1.7 variant is known to spread more easily and has caused a rapid surge of cases in the UK, several other countries, and parts of the United States.

The best defense against variants of concern is to prevent the spread of COVID.

This includes wearing a mask, social distancing, avoiding groups, staying home when you are sick, getting tested if you have symptoms or are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID, and getting vaccinated when it is your turn.



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Sally Brewster

Betsey Barrett

Ron Berkowitz

Toni Doggett

Boston to receive \$435 million as part of the American Rescue Act

By Lauren Bennett

Mayor Martin Walsh held a press conference on March 15, where he discussed some updates regarding COVID in the city, and Congressman Stephen Lynch provided some details about the newly passed federal American Rescue Plan.

Walsh said that as of Sunday, there were 137 new cases of COVID-19 in Boston and two new deaths. The seven day positive test rate was 3.6 percent.

“Case numbers have stayed below the thresholds,” Walsh said, but told residents to continue to take all precautions, such as wearing masks, avoiding large gatherings, and washing hands.

He also said that this past weekend before St. Patrick’s Day did not result in the need for an emergency License Board hearing on Monday, as there were no violations.

Walsh also reminded residents that the state’s online system to pre-register for vaccines is now open, and that “anybody” can

pre-register and will be notified when it’s their turn to schedule an appointment.

Outdoor Dining

The mayor announced the outdoor dining, which was previously set to start on April 1, will now begin on March 22 instead. The program allows for dining “on some roadways and public spaces,” and Walsh said that the city’s Disabilities Commission will once again provide ramps to restaurants who need them.

He said that restaurants in the North End will not offer outdoor dining until April 1, as more planning and set-up is required for streets in the North End, but the process will begin on March 29.

Walsh said the city has been “putting a big emphasis” on outreach to businesses owned by people of color.

American Rescue Plan

Rep. Stephen Lynch then spoke about the American Rescue Plan, which was signed by

President Biden last week. Boston will receive \$435 million as part of the plan.

“This bill is meant to address a problem of such enormous scope that is unprecedented that the bill itself had to be of equal scope and equal impact,” Lynch said.

“We looked at the loss of revenue,” he said, to determine what “cities, towns, and states” were bringing in before the pandemic, and reimburse them “for part of what they would have earned had the pandemic not occurred.”

Lynch said that the “main short term areas” covered in the bill include the “research, roll-out, development, and delivery” of the COVID-19 vaccine, and that there is \$130 billion “in that trench of money.”

He said that much of the money in the Act was delegated based on population, he said that the delegation “took a very hard look at areas that had been more heavily impacted, either because of high minority populations or poorer neighborhoods that did

not have the existing infrastructure from a health care standpoint.”

For money related to housing, he said that they “looked at areas that have extremely high rents—such as Boston—for rental relief money.

“We looked at the chronology and the sequencing of putting America back to work,” Lynch said. He said that overall, \$7.6 billion was allocated for community health centers. He said there is a “very vibrant community health center community” and as many of them ramp up to distribute vaccines, legislators “made sure they got “direct funding.”

Lynch also said that by the end of March, it is expected that there will be an “extra 20 million doses” of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which will “help us respond in a more meaningful way. We’re moving in the right direction at an accelerated pace.”

Lynch also spoke about money allocated for relief for homeowners, schools—including parochial

and private schools—and higher education.

There is also a “targeted increase for the MBTA,” Lynch said. “We’re providing taxpayer money to the MBTA to provide services to the taxpayer,” and said that Congress is “in opposition” to the furloughing or laying off of MBTA employees.

He said that “it is incongruous with our intent—speaking for the delegation—that an agency would take federal support from the taxpayer and then cut services to those same taxpayers. That doesn’t work for us.”

He said that they will be “having some hard discussions with the MBTA and with the governor,” and “we hope that more thoughtful ideas would emerge from those discussions and that there would be a pullback on the reductions of service to the public and also an elimination of any proposed furloughs or layoffs for those transportation employees.”

Lynch continued, “This is a big bill. Every aspect of our society is trying to be addressed.”

For the Record

C O R O N A V I R U S 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 the March 17 Conservation Commission meeting, online:

Request for a Determination of Applicability from VHB on behalf of Landmark Center Owner Limited Partnership for a determination whether the site located at 401 Park Drive, Boston, MA is subject to the jurisdiction of the Wetlands Protection Act and Boston Wetlands Ordinance * Continued from the March 3, 2021 hearing

From the March 17 Air Pollution Control Commission, 11:30 a.m., online:

Application for a New Downtown Boston Parking Freeze Permit from The Druker Company Ltd on behalf of Arlington-Boylston Realty Trust for 150 exempt parking spaces located at 350 Boylston St. This permit is for the construction of an underground parking garage with spaces to be shared with lessees, employees, patrons, customers, clients, and guests of the project. Issuance of the permit would have no effect on the Downtown parking freeze bank. * Continued from the December 16, 2020 hearing.

From the March 18 Entertainment Application hearing, 11 a.m., online:

•Rockwood Music Hall,

88 Van Ness St., Fenway.

Request: To maintain and operate the categories of an audio device, five (5) widescreen TVs, two (2) projectors, disc jockey, dancing by patrons, instrumental music up to eight (8) performers, vocal music up to eight (8) performers, stages, and floorshow consisting of comedian, poetry, and readings.

Applicant: Rockwood Music Hall, LLC

M.O.R.: Kenneth Rockwood

From the March 18 Boston Groundwater Trust Trustees meeting, 4 p.m., online:

- Financial Report and Potential Investment Strategies Update:15
- Preliminary Budget Discussion for FY22:20
- Draft Ordinance for Legal Representation Update:10
- NABB Amicus Brief Update: 10
- GCOD Amendments Update:10
- Executive Director’s Report: 10

From the March 19, 10 a.m., CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT HEARING: Order for a hearing discussing commercial vacancies in Boston. This matter was sponsored by Councilor Julia Mejia and was referred to the Committee on January 27, 2021.

From the March 23 Boston Landmarks Commission meeting, online via Zoom (HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/J/82804812459):

DESIGN REVIEW

- Public Garden - 4 Charles Street: At Tool Shed remove and replace existing garage door.
- Commonwealth Avenue Mall: Landscape and lighting Improvements

to the Hamilton, Glover, and Sarmiento statues.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL

•Boston Common - 38 Beacon Street: Placement of bistro tables, chairs, picnic tables, and planters adjacent to the Frog Pond Pavilion.

•Boston Common - 38 Beacon Street: Installation of a carousel between the Parade Ground and the West End of the Frog with a maximum capacity of 22.

•Boston Common - Tremont Street: Installation of 60 bistro tables, 150 chairs, 16 umbrellas surrounding the Brewer Fountain.

•468 Commonwealth Avenue: At front façade replacement of existing signage.

•Emerald Necklace: Extend application 19.263.142 flood mitigation wall within phase two of Muddy River Flood Damage Reduction Project.

From the March 23 Public Facilities Department Community Meeting, 6 p.m., online via Zoom:

•The Public Facilities Department and Boston Public Schools will be presenting the Schematic Design for the Josiah Quincy Upper School Building.

From the March 24 Cable TV License Renewal Hearing, 10 a.m., online:

City of Boston public hearing: License Renewal Comcast of Boston Cable License

- Welcome on behalf of Issuing Authority for the City of Boston
- City of Boston Presentation
- Comcast of Boston Presentation and Response
- Public Comment (Record open until March 19 at 5 p.m.)

The purpose of the hearing is to afford an opportunity for the City of

Boston Issuing Authority for Cable Licensing to obtain public comment on the Renewal License of Comcast of Boston, Inc., for the Boston Cable System. In reviewing a license for renewal, the issuing authority shall consider the licensee’s management & technical expertise, financial capability, and legal ability to operate a cable system. Specifically, the Issuing Authority considers whether the cable operator has substantially complied with the material terms of the existing franchise and with applicable law; the quality of the cable operator’s service, including signal quality, and response to consumer complaints. Comcast of Boston, Inc., is the incumbent provider of one of the city’s existing cable franchises since July 17, 2002, when Transfer and Amendment of the License was accepted from AT&T Corp.

From the Community meeting for proposed Cannabis Establishment in the South End/Back Bay: This is an application by Redemption Co. for a Recreational Cannabis Establishment to be operated at the address of 29 Stanhope St., South End/Back Bay. The scheduled date for the meeting will be on March 25, 2021, at 6 p.m. via WebEx.

SCHOOLS INFO

•School Return Timetables – March 1-4 – Students in K0-Grade 3 (Groups A and B); March 15-18 – Students in Grades 4-8 (Groups A & B); and March 29-April 1 – Students in grades 9-12 (Groups A & B).

FREE BPS BREAKFAST IN SOUTH END/FENWAY

Students who wish to get a free breakfast Monday through Friday, 8:30 to 11:30 am., have three sites to choose from in the South End and Fen-

way. 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.

BURRAGE MANSION



314 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE #2
3 BEDS | 3.5 BATHS | 3,422 SQFT
\$6,995,000



16 EXETER STREET #1
4 BEDS | 4 BATHS | 3,882 SQFT
\$5,900,000



43 MOUNT VERNON STREET #4
3 BEDS | 2.5 BATHS | 2,300 SQFT
\$3,495,000



122 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE #1
2 BEDS | 2.5 BATHS | 2,459 SQFT
\$5,650,000



380 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE #4
3 BEDS | 3F 2H BATHS | 3,704 SQFT
\$6,490,000

