

# THE BOSTON SUN

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY

SERVING BACK BAY - SOUTH END - FENWAY - KENMORE

## CANDLELIGHT CONCERT SERIES AT OLD SOUTH CHURCH



Show above, the stage is set in the chapel at the Old South Church for the Arabella Quartet to perform their *Back To The Beatles* set last Friday, Jan. 21.

Shown to the left, the Arabella String Quartet: Violist Ettore Causa, Violinist Julie Eskar, Violinist Sarita Kwok, and Cellist Alex Lecarme perform *String Quartet in Bb Major* by Ludwig Van Beethoven. See more photos on page in 6 and 7.

## Winter Walk returns to raise funds and awareness in fight to end homelessness in Greater Boston

By Dan Murphy

Winter Walk - an annual event that aims to raise funds and create awareness in its mission to end homelessness in Greater Boston - returns for its sixth year on Sunday, Feb. 13.

Participants check in at 8:30

a.m. at Copley Plaza, before they set off from there for their two-mile trek around the streets of Boston. (The walk also ends at Copley Plaza). There is a registration fee of \$100 for adults, or \$50 for youth and students, and all registered participants will receive a Winter Walk hat,

as well as a backpack loaded with information and offers from local organizations. The event, which also includes breakfast and live music for participants, is co-chaired this year by Jessie and Enrique Colbert of Wayfair and

(WINTER WALK Pg. 7)

## Vaccination mandate deadline extended for City employees

By Lauren Bennett

Mayor Michelle Wu on Jan. 24 announced that she has pushed back the date for city workers to comply with her vaccine mandate.

The mandate was originally set to take effect on Jan. 15, and those found to not be in compliance would be placed on unpaid

administrative leave starting on that date. It had been extended again until Jan. 24, and is now being extended once more to Jan. 30. Employees must prove that they've received at least one dose of the vaccine by then.

"As you've seen, we are giving our employees one more week to get vaccinated, and that means that there will be no unpaid leave

between January 25 and January 30," Wu said at Monday's press conference. Wu said that conversations are continuing with unions, some of which have expressed opposition to the mandate.

Wu said that more than 94 percent of city employees are

(VACCINE MANDATE, Pg. 4)

## Transformative Proposed zoning plan for Simmons' Longwood campus

By Dan Murphy

An international construction and development company is pitching a proposal to the city to create an overall zoning plan that would allow for the construction of four new mixed-use buildings on Simmons University's residential campus in the Longwood neighborhood.

Skanska USA Commercial Development, which also built the Harlo luxury condo development in the Fenway, intends to redevelop the 5.8-acre site at 305 Brookline Ave. into approximately 1.75 million gross square feet of residential, office/laboratory, retail, restaurant, commercial, community space, and parking. The project, to be built in three phases over a period

of the next seven to 15 years, would comprise four buildings - a 622,000 square-foot office and life science building; a 519,000 square foot life science building; and a 424,000 square-foot residential building. The Planned Development Area (PDA) would be "organized" around approximately 2.3 acres of new public open space, according to the developer, and all on-site parking would be underground.

Through Skanska's partnership with Simmons, the developer is also set to start construction this fall on a new Living and Learning Center at the university's campus at 305 The Fenway, allowing Simmons to create a "more cohesive educational envi-

(PROPOSED PLAN Pg. 3)



COURTESY OF THE BOSTON PLANNING &amp; DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

A rendering of Longfellow Place, the mixed-use development proposed for 305 Brookline Ave. in the Longwood neighborhood.

## Senator Lydia Edwards sworn in

By John Lynds

At a State House ceremony last Thursday Senator Lydia Edwards was administered the oath of office by Gov. Charlie Baker in front of a room of new colleagues, friends and family.

After taking the oath Edwards addressed the Massachusetts Senate for the first time and promised to be a hard worker and asked for her colleagues' prayers as she embarks on a new

journey in public service.

"I can only promise to do one thing and that's to be myself and ask that you help me, pray for me, feed me because I'm a horrible cook, but also, educate me," said Edwards "I asked for your patience, your transparency, your honesty. To my colleagues on both sides of this incredible building, especially those in the Senate, you have in me a hard

(EDWARDS Pg. 5)



# EDITORIAL

## SAFE INJECTION SITES ARE NEEDED NOW

Among the side-effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has been the increase in drug-overdose deaths in this country.

The death rate from opioids finally had begun to decline in 2019, but then came COVID-19 and the number of deaths from drug overdoses began to skyrocket once again.

The nation was reporting fewer than 50,000 fatal overdoses as recently as 2014, but in 2020, drug overdose deaths breached the 100,000 mark.

The chief cause of the surge in deaths is the increase in availability of the synthetic opioid fentanyl, which is being laced into all sorts of drugs -- from marijuana to cocaine to heroin -- by the drug cartels. According to some news reports, nearly half of drugs tested by the DEA contain a potentially fatal dose of fentanyl.

Fentanyl is up to 50 times more powerful than heroin, but is far cheaper to manufacture for drug dealers, who use it as a substitute for heroin powder or press it into black-market oxycodone pills. Fentanyl is now also finding its way into cocaine and party drugs like ecstasy and is even sprayed on marijuana.

It has been reported that fentanyl now has killed far more Americans than all U.S. conflicts since World War II combined. In the past decade, it has claimed more than a half million lives, a toll that is growing daily.

In view of the combination of the lethality and availability of fentanyl, now more than ever our nation needs to address the tragedy of drug overdose deaths with a realistic solution.

Those who think that we can stop the supply of fentanyl are living in a fantasy-world of the 1970s-era movie *The French Connection*. Fentanyl is so powerful that just a few automobile trunk-loads are enough to kill every American citizen.

If old-school heroin were to be compared to conventional weaponry, then fentanyl is a nuclear bomb.

The Massachusetts legislature has before it a number of bills that would allow for clean injection sites, similar to what New York City and the nation of Portugal (where drug overdose rates have been a fraction of the rest of the world for 20 years) are doing.

We urge our state legislators to enact this important legislation forthwith. Every day of delay means more lives lost needlessly to the scourge of drugs.

## OMICRON CAN LEAD TO LONG COVID

Public health officials have defined so-called long COVID as the physical, neurological, and cognitive symptoms that can persist indefinitely after infection.

Over the past two years, we've all seen the countless news stories about the devastating effects of long COVID upon those who are unfortunate enough to suffer from it.

Although the Omicron variant is causing less severe disease in those who are fully-vaccinated, the number of those infected who suffer from the loss of taste and smell, physical fatigue, and brain fog still is quite significant.

During this period of a surge in COVID because of Omicron's high transmissibility, it only makes sense for all of us to continue to take the usual precautions -- wearing a protective face mask (such as an N-95), maintaining social distancing, and avoiding large crowds -- until the Omicron surge begins to wane.

Sure, we can play Russian roulette with our health.

But with the number of Omicron cases already declining (though still high) in Massachusetts, we figure that if we've made this far through the worst of the pandemic, sticking it out for another two months or so by making careful choices only makes sense.

## GUEST OP-ED

### The 3Gpocalypse is coming — Is your car ready?

By Kane DiMasso-Scott

Just this week I heard about something that I'm surprised has not gotten more media coverage on the national level, as it's extremely important to us as consumers. Beginning in February and continuing through the end of the year, 3G networks are being shut down by the major players in the cellular network industry AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile. This poses no problem to our use of cell phones, however, our automobiles are about to get a whole lot "dumber."

Nearly every major brand in the auto industry has, from 2010 to as late as 2021, used these 3G networks in certain models for many of their included and on-board features in their cars. With the shutdown of 3G networks, features like GPS navigation, automatic crash detection, SOS emergency features, remote locking and unlocking, and the ability to connect with your phones (wirelessly), among others, will no longer be functional. Some companies have already announced their plans to address the issue, while others still have not said much.

Certain brands will be offering free over-the-air updates for your vehicle to ensure that the features continue to work such as Subaru, Honda, and GM, while others look to require a hardware upgrade at a dealership to re-enable your features or disable

warning messages that may arise from the lack of connectivity.

The shutdown of 3G networks is not something that comes as a surprise, as it was always an inevitability following 4G and now 5G rollouts. However, what's embarrassing and downright frustrating is the fact that some automakers continued to produce vehicles using this same outdated network, fully aware of the ramifications down the line. I commend the aforementioned companies that are pushing out updates for their consumers, but others who have yet to announce what their plans are is maddening.

More often than not we, as the consumer, will spend tens of thousands of dollars on a vehicle, expecting the features included when we purchased the vehicle to always be available. Now, with the shutdown of 3G networks, it seems like a fair number of vehicles will lose those features permanently, or will require additional purchases to re-enable or modernize these vehicles for 4G.

So not only will some consumers lose access to features they thought they'd have throughout their vehicle's lifetime, but others may also have to pay additional fees to get those features back. This shouldn't be our responsibility. It's on the automakers and dealers to make it right. They continued to produce vehicles on

an outdated network knowing it would be obsolete, but now, the piper needs to be paid and some of them believe that responsibility falls on you.

You can visit <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/01/16/3g-networks-shutting-down-in-2022-could-affect-your-cars-gps.html> or scan the QR code below with your smartphone to see the current list of publicly known affected models. AT&T will shut down their 3G network next month, which certain Honda, Nissan and Volvo models rely on for their features. If this is your first-time hearing about it as well, I suggest you call your dealer, figure out what, if anything, could be done if you have an affected model, and hope for the best.

Good luck.



*Kane DiMasso-Scott is an art director for the Independent Newspaper Group. The views expressed in this Op-Ed do not necessarily represent the views of the Independent Newspaper Group.*

## Fuel Assistance benefits now at \$1,650

By John Lynds

Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) kicked off the annual Fuel Assistance Program at the ABCD offices in the South End and Chinatown.

ABCD ABCD President/CEO

John J. Drew is now urging residents to apply for fuel aid now as federal funding to the program has increased.

Drew said with the new round of funding households at or below the federal poverty level can now receive \$1,650 in

fuel assistance, while those with slightly higher incomes receive increased benefits on a sliding scale.

Residents can apply by calling ABCD Fuel Assistance at 617-357-6012 or get in-person help

(FUEL ASSISTANCE Pg. 5)

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# Councilor Kenzie Bok files policy agenda to expand public goods

Staff Report

Councilor Kenzie Bok has begun the 2022 Boston City Council legislative session by filing a policy agenda focused on the expansion of public goods in Boston. The eight hearing orders filed by Councilor Bok advocate for using public land and finance for the public good and build upon her work in her first term as a Councilor.

“Boston has often been the first American city to invest in public goods. We have a generational opportunity to again invest in public goods to combat the housing and climate crisis. We have the new political leadership, equipped with federal infrastructure and relief funds, to seize this moment,” said Bok.

Five of Bok’s hearing orders aim to move the city closer to achieving housing for all by calling for the creation of new public housing, more affordable homeownership, additional zoning relief for affordable housing,

transforming the use of the Boston Planning and Development Agency’s planning and land-use tools for the public good, and reducing barriers to renting in the city, especially for low-income tenants.

“We must explore every avenue available to us to solve our housing crisis,” said Councilor Bok. “Whether it’s eliminating discriminatory tenant screening methods or building more social housing on public land, our goal must always be to get more folks housed decently and stably in our communities.”

Last session, Councilor Bok successfully championed eliminating parking minimums for affordable housing, but identified a number of further changes that are still needed. “Every time an affordable housing development is approved, we house families who have been stuck on sofas and in shelters. We need to rapidly accelerate the pace of those approvals,” said Councilor Bok.

The City also needs to play a larger direct role in housing. Councilor Bok first urged the city to build 2464 new public housing units, up to its federal Faircloth limit, in 2020. Since then, she has worked with the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) and the Mayor’s Office of Housing to take steps towards doing so, including by commissioning a capacity study of BHA land where additional public housing units could be built and issuing a Request for Proposals to offer this public housing subsidy as a funding component for affordable housing transformation projects. The hearing will provide an update on this work.

Another hearing order from Councilor Bok, co-sponsored with Councilor Liz Breadon, highlights the role that American Rescue Plan dollars will need to play in bold new strategies for the public good. In 2021, Bok took the lead in the City of Boston’s budget process to ensure

that a first tranche of American Rescue Plan dollars were dedicated not only to immediate emergency pandemic needs and revenue replacement, but also to housing, climate change, and municipal broadband. The \$31.5 million supplemental appropriation proposed by Bok and passed by the Council on June 30, 2021 included a major new investment of \$15.4 million in the city’s Acquisition Opportunity Program (AOP) to enable the purchase and stabilization of affordable existing housing, a new \$2 million fund for community land trusts, \$3 million to enable the City to launch a pilot green jobs program, investments in digital access at BHA, and a study to explore municipal broadband.

“We have a unique opportunity to build a more resilient, equitable, and affordable city through COVID-19 recovery funds,” said Councilor Bok. “I am so pleased that Mayor Wu has already proposed using some of these funds

for transformative investments in public transit and public housing. I look forward to working with her and the whole Council to make sure further funds can be used to tackle housing, the climate crisis, and digital access in ways that advance racial equity and put our lowest-income Bostonians first.” The hearing order will enable the Council to discuss the federal dollars invested so far, reporting requirements, and possible future appropriations – especially towards the \$200 million that many Councilors pledged for affordable rental housing and homeownership. Councilor Bok’s remaining two hearing orders concern the conservation corps pilot on which she has partnered with Mayor Wu, Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (Chief of Environment, Energy & Open Space), and a consortium of city departments, and next steps towards analyzing the role for expanded municipal broadband in Boston.

## PROPOSED PLAN (from pg. 1)

Learning Center at the university’s campus at 305 The Fenway, allowing Simmons to create a “more cohesive educational environment” there, while simultaneously freeing up its Longwood campus to generate the additional revenue needed to sustain Simmons in the coming years, said Laura Brink Pisinski, vice president of university real estate development and facilities management, at the first public meeting on the proposed PDA, which the Boston Planning & Development Agency held virtually on Monday, Jan. 25. Simmons will continue to own the Longwood site, she said.

Architect Victor Vizgaitis said they are now focusing on the development plan for the site, and that conversations about the specifics, including the scale and character, of the proposed individual buildings would come at a later date. Furthermore, the developer isn’t seeking approval from the city for the individual buildings, but instead for the overall plan itself, he added.

The plan, said Vizgaitis, is now focused on redeveloping the site as “a place to gather, a place to work, and a place to live,” while reclaiming about 900 linear

feet, which is now an “enclosed enclave, essentially surrounded by a wrought-iron fence with spikes around it.”

Skanska sees this as an opportunity to make this “missing piece” a welcoming, outdoor public place that could be programmed year-round in diverse ways, such a science fair, a food truck festival, or a live music performance, said Vizgaitis.

The plan also proposes the reconstruction of Short Street by setting new construction back from the Winsor School to create a safer bicycle and transportation connection to get people through the site as quickly as possible, said Vizgaitis, as well as a new “through-block” road in the middle of the site between the second and third proposed buildings.

Moreover, the plan foresees streetscape improvements, wider sidewalks and better bike accessibility, along with improved circulation for all modes of movement, as well as a new signalized intersection of Brookline Avenue and Pilgrim Road.

Pilgrim Road would also be widened, said Vizgaitis, and a new, improved pickup and drop-off space would be created there

for the Windsor School, while all of the road’s residential parking spaces would be retained.

Up to 200 units of housing, including “creative” and studios, as well as one-, two-, and three-bedrooms, would also be built as part of the plan, with 15 percent of the units designated as affordable, said Vizgaitis.

A study looking at the composite shadow impact of the plan on March 21 between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. indicates that the new development would create an addition hour of shadow on the Emerald Necklace, which, Vizgaitis said, is “just over the threshold.”

Katherine Greenough, an Audubon Circle Neighborhood Association board member and resident of that neighborhood for the past four decades, said contrary to Vizgaitis’s assertions, Simmons’ residential campus is a “beautiful oasis,” which is home to some trees that more than 100 years old, as well as a place that provides a “nice respite from the bricks and concrete.”

Dan Burns, a resident of Riverwood Square, said he fears that the development plan would exasperate traffic on Pilgrim Road, and that the new

north-facing construction would deplete the sunlight where he lives.

Steve Wolf, a West Fens resident, a Fenway Quality of Life Alliance member, and an Emerald Necklace Conservancy board member, said he wants a commitment from the developer to create a maintenance fund for the Emerald Necklace. Other neighbors objected to any development plans, which would cast any new shadow on the Emerald Necklace.

Fenway resident Marie Fukuda said the plan confirms her earlier reservations about the city’s map amendment to the Fenway Neighborhood District, and added that designating 10 percent of the proposed 200 housing units as affordable housing is “not sufficient” considering the underlying zoning.

Vizgaitis replied that 200 residential units seemed like the “right number to begin with,” and that Skanska is actively looking at how to add more residential units to site while creating comfortable buffers space with commercial activity.

In contrast, Skylar Griggs, who has worked in the area for more than a decade, supported

the plan, which she believes will create more dining options and places of refuge nearby.

Edward Carmody, BPDA senior institutional planner and project manager, reminded those in attendance it was only the first public meeting to discuss the plan, and that many more meetings would follow over the course of the multi-phased project.

A scoping session on the proposed PDA with the developer and city staff is scheduled for Feb. 4, and public comments on the plan can be submitted to the BPDA online until Feb. 18 at [http://www.bostonplans.org/projects/development-projects/305-brookline-ave-mixed-use-development?utm\\_source=Neighborhoods&utm\\_campaign=f72435d6bf-Longwood\\_P1\\_305\\_Brookline\\_Ave\\_Publ\\_1\\_17\\_2022&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_bccda74844-f72435d6bf-274985721&mc\\_cid=f72435d6bf&mc\\_eid=b8908aba9b](http://www.bostonplans.org/projects/development-projects/305-brookline-ave-mixed-use-development?utm_source=Neighborhoods&utm_campaign=f72435d6bf-Longwood_P1_305_Brookline_Ave_Publ_1_17_2022&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_bccda74844-f72435d6bf-274985721&mc_cid=f72435d6bf&mc_eid=b8908aba9b).

To learn more about the Longwood Place proposal, visit [305brookline.com](http://305brookline.com).



# USES' S.T.E.P. program helping to grow financial stability for families

By Lauren Bennett

Since October of last year, United South End Settlements (USES) has been providing 16 families with unrestricted monthly payments of \$800 through its S.T.E.P. (Striving Towards Economic Prosperity) Program.

According to USES' website, "The program is particularly relevant and important now, as families continue to navigate the loss of income, new expenses, and unprecedented levels of stress on household stability and children's academic and social well being brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic."

The Sun spoke with USES Chief of Staff, Melody Valdes, as well as José Massó, Co-Executive Director, to learn more about the

program and how it has helped these residents and many others.

Valdes said that while USES "had been doing coaching," and "had supports for families, we understood that something was missing."

Thanks to the support of donors, USES was given the chance to offer a cash grant program for families, which will last for a total of 18 months.

"This is a direct service of providing cash grants to families with no strings attached," she said—the money is not restricted for any particular use, and Valdes said that this is one of the most important features of the program.

"This is not supposed to take away from what families are already receiving," Valdes said,

as there is "no purpose in substituting private dollars for federal dollars."

The families who applied for these grants went through an "income screening process," as well as an information session.

"We wanted to make sure people understood short-and long-term implications of the program," she said.

Valdes said she believes the program is going well so far, and while participants were more focused on "stabilization" during the first month or so, now, "families have begun to make plans...longer term plans for these funds," she said, such as putting it into college funds for their children or paying debts.

Each family has a monthly budget that is reported to USES, though "we don't do anything with this information," Valdes said.

She added that many of the families in this program have also enrolled in USES' financial coaching program.

"I think it gives them hope," she said. "I don't think it's the end-all be-all solution. I think it gives families an ability to hope."

One participant in the program is an undocumented woman who didn't have the money to get a lawyer and go through the process to get her green card, but that has changed because of this program, Valdes said. "They're telling her in two months she can get her green card. She is now moving her family towards having status. I think this is giving people an opportunity to follow through on their goals."

Valdes said that the "incredible group of donors" are "very understanding" that USES did not want to place limits on what this money could be used for. "They don't want us to interfere with the natural process," she said. "We're able to really give



PHOTO COURTESY OF PERLA SUAZO

Perla Suazo's two children are her driving factor for participating in the STEP program. "I try to do whatever I can for both of them."

families freedom."

USES is "hopeful" that the program can continue for a new set of families once the 18 months is up, but they also understand that there will be an "abrupt transition" for the current families when the program ends, Valdes said.

Aside from the financial coaching which many of them are already participating in, USES also offers career coaching and access to other opportunities like going back to school. She said these conversations are happening now, and families are aware of resources and opportunities so USES "can set them up for success 18 months down the line."

Massó said he wants to thank

Valdes and her team for getting this program under the ground, as it is "clearly in line with our mission."

Families are "shifting from survival mode" as a result of S.T.E.P., he said, and are able to increase their income and connections to other resources. "It really is just a wonderful place to be."

Valdes said that poverty affects more than just a family's finances—it also "affects social and mental bandwidth." She said it's important to "make sure we are listening to people" and provide them with resources that will address their needs.

For more information about USES and the S.T.E.P. program, visit [uses.org/programs/step/](https://uses.org/programs/step/)



PHOTO BY PETE JOHANNSEN

STEP participant, Gabriela Cruzado, with her two sons, 3 and 11 years old, hopes to use this extra income assistance to increase her savings and eventually buy a home.

## VACCINE MANDATE (from pg. 1)

expressed opposition to the mandate.

Wu said that more than 94 percent of city employees are fully vaccinated, which amounts to 18,720 employees.

"I'm incredibly encouraged by this process," Wu said.

Wu also said that "almost every department is at more than 90 percent vaccination rate across the city." She said that 94 percent of Boston Public Schools employees are fully vaccinated,

along with more than 95 percent of the Boston Police Department, 91 percent of the Boston Fire Department, 95 percent of the Boston Public Library employees, 96 percent of the Inspectional Services Department employees, and 97 percent of the Boston Parks Department.

There are also some city departments where 100 percent of employees are fully vaccinated—these include the Registry and Treasury departments, as

well as the City Clerk's office, the Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion, Youth Employment and Engagement, and Office of Streets, Wu said.

Dr. Bisola Ojikutu, Executive Director of the Boston Public Health Commission, said that vaccination remains the best way to "mitigate the impact of COVID-19."

She also said that vaccine clinics were held for employees of the Boston Public Schools, Bos-

ton Fire Department, and Boston Police Department.

"There is a bit of reason to be hopeful right now in the City of Boston," Ojikutu said. She said that vaccination rates have increased recently, and that 70 percent of Bostonians are fully vaccinated, while more than 82 percent have received at least one dose.

Ojikutu also spoke about current COVID trends, saying that at its highest, the city's positivity rate was more than 32 percent,

but for the week ending on Jan. 21, the positivity rate was 18.9 percent.

She said that though the city continues to see new COVID cases, the number of new cases is down 50 percent, and the number of COVID-related emergency room visits are down 16 percent.

Hospitalizations, however, are still "extraordinarily high," Ojikutu said, and are up 12 percent from last week.





Shown above, Sen. Lydia Edwards with Mayor Michelle Wu and former Senators Joseph Boncore, Robert Travaglini, Linda Dorcea Forry and Anthony Petrucci. Shown right, Sen. Lydia Edwards was administered the oath of office by Gov. Charlie Baker last Thursday in the Mass Senate Chambers.

## EDWARDS (from pg. 1)

worker. You have someone who likes to laugh. You have someone who wants to get things done. I won't choose perfection over progress. I will ask that you be totally transparent with me as I will be with you. We are going to get along and we're going to get a lot of things done. This pathway here was not easily paved and includes losses, it includes wins, it includes a lot of different things. I'm gonna keep fighting but more importantly I'm ready to go so let's get to work."

Edwards, who won the state special election democratic primary in December and then the general election earlier this month hails from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan where she was raised by her military mom.

"To my public school teachers, my coaches, my after school program counselor, my babysitter—thank you," she said. "Thank you to all of those hands that helped train me in the art of social justice and service. I also want to thank the immigrant

community of Massachusetts. So much of my pathway here is paved by you, paved by your struggle, paved by your resilience, paved by your fight that I was honored to be a part of. But I have to say I've been told consistently no matter how far I go in my life to not forget where I come from."

Edwards continued and addressed her mother, Bridgett, "Today I look at my mother. You know, the reason why I won was because of your story. My mom, retired Master Sergeant Bridget Edwards of the United States Air Force, raised me and my sister Erica all over the world. When we landed in Michigan, she worked two jobs during the week and a weekend job. Erica and I had jobs and so much of that story is replicated in the men and women I see in my district. So much of who you are and your struggle is what I saw in the nannies and house cleaners that I represented. Because I saw you in them I fight harder because you're in my life. You're an excellent mother. I love you so much. Thank you so much."

## FUEL ASSISTANCE (from pg. 2)

with applications at ABCD's South End Neighborhood Service Center, 554 Columbus Avenue; the Asian American Civic Association, 87 Tyler Street, 5th floor; or the Harrison Avenue Head Start & Children's Services, 595 Harrison Avenue.

There is also a new online system for first-time fuel assistance that can be accessed at [toapply.org/MassLIHEAP](http://toapply.org/MassLIHEAP).

Drew said due to the huge spike in energy costs and the ongoing economic crisis battering our most vulnerable households, benefits from the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) have been increased. Last year the highest fuel assistance benefit was \$1,210.

"We are thankful for this increase and look forward to

the allocation soon of the significant funds committed by President Biden to get everyone safely through the winter and reduce the number of utility shut-offs in April," said ABCD President/CEO John J. Drew.

Home heating oil in Massachusetts is currently at \$3.43 a gallon and up, almost twice the cost last year. It costs about \$800 to fill a tank, and that can run out in a matter of weeks in bitter New England weather. Vulnerable elders and others who cannot afford to keep their thermostats at a comfortable level put themselves at risk of getting sick – or worse.

To keep struggling families and elders from falling through the cracks, help with fuel costs is also available to those slightly above poverty level.

### DND Affordable/Income Restricted Rental Opportunity

Holtzer Park, 137 Amory Street, Boston MA 02119

54 Affordable Units



Rendering courtesy of ICON Architecture, Inc.

# of Units	# of bedrooms	Estimated Square Feet	Rent	Maximum Income Limit	# built out for mobility impairments
1	1	652 SF	\$1,435	60%	0
6*	2	821 SF	30% HH Income	30%	0
31	2	821 SF	\$1,717	60%	3
7*	3	1101 SF	30% HH Income	30%	0
9	3	1101 SF	\$1,979	60%	2

\*6 Homeless Set-aside units (4, 2-bedrooms and 2, 3-bedrooms) will be filled through direct referral from HomeStart. For more information please contact us at the email address or phone number below. For direct referrals, please visit <https://www.homesart.org/bostoninfo>.

Minimum Incomes Set by owner + based on # of bedrooms + Area Median Income (AMI)			Maximum Incomes Set by DND + based on household size + Area Median Income (AMI)		
# of bedrooms	30% AMI	60% AMI	Household size	30% AMI	60% AMI
1-Bedroom	\$22,650	\$45,300	1	\$28,200	\$56,400
2-Bedroom	\$27,180	\$54,360	2	\$32,200	\$64,440
			3	\$36,240	\$72,480
			4	\$40,260	\$80,520
3-Bedroom	\$31,410	\$62,820	5	\$43,500	\$87,000
			6	\$46,710	\$93,420

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Applications may also be picked up in person at our sister community, Amory Street Apartments, located at 125 Amory Street, Boston MA 02119 beginning on Monday, December 13, 2021, through Friday, February 11, 2022, from 8:30 am – 5:00 pm.

We will be holding 2 Information Sessions at the below dates, times and locations:

Day	Date	Time	Location
Tuesday	January 4, 2022	3:00 PM - 7:00 PM	125 Amory Street, Boston MA 02119
Sunday	January 23, 2022	10:00 AM - 2:00 PM	95 Hyde Park Avenue, Boston MA 02130

**DEADLINE:** Applications must be submitted online or postmarked no later than February 11, 2022, at 11:59:59 pm; Paper copies Must be Mailed to 125 Amory Street, Boston, MA 02119 ATTN: Management Office

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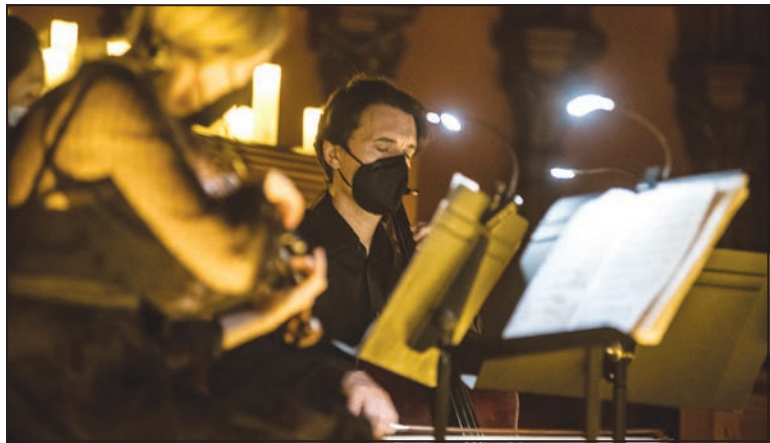


CANDLELIGHT CONCERT SERIES AT OLD SOUTH CHURCH

Photos by Derek Kouyoumjian

The Old South Church was the latest venue for the Candlelight Concert Series as the international Arabella String Quartet performed a Bach To Beethoven

concert specifically arranged for Boston. The main chapel was adorned with electric candles to set a romantic and dramatic mood for the performance. They will be back Jan 28, Feb 4, and March 4.



Violinist Julie Eskar and Cellist Alex Lecarme perform JS Bach Goldberg Variation.



Violinist Sarita Kwok addresses the audience announcing their next piece will be Chevalier de Saint-Georges Concertante Quartets by Joseph Boulogne.



Violist Ettore Causa performs Chevalier de Saint-Georges Concertante Quartets by Joseph Boulogne.



Cellist Alex Lecarme performs String Quartet in Bb Major by Ludwig Van Beethoven.



Violist Ettore Causa performs Il Milonga Del Angel by Astor Piazzola.



Violinist Julie Eskar preforms String Quartet in Bb Major by Ludwig Van Beethoven.



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The Arabella String Quartet: Violinist Julie Eskar, Violinist Sarita Kwok, Cellist Alex Lecarme, and Violist Ettore Causa perform Milonga Del Angel by Astor Piazzola.



# CANDLELIGHT CONCERT SERIES AT OLD SOUTH CHURCH



The Arabella String Quartet: Violinist Julie Eskar, Violinist Sarita Kwok, Cellist Alex Lecarme, and Violist Ettore Causa perform Libertango by Astor Piazzola.



The Arabella String Quartet: Violinist Julie Eskar, Violinist Sarita Kwok, Cellist Alex Lecarme, and Violist Ettore Causa

## WINTER WALK (from pg. 1)

Katie and David Beeston of the Boston Red Sox.

All proceeds from Winter Walk, which have totaled more than \$2 million dollars to date, will go to support 10 organizations dedicated to ending homelessness locally, including Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Brookview House, Common Cathedral, FamilyAid Boston, New England Home and Center for Veterans, Pine Street Inn, St. Francis House, Y2Y Harvard Square, and Boston Medical Center.

Besides being a Winter Walk beneficiary, Boston Medical Center is also the fiscal partner that allows the Winter Walk organization to hold the event as that group seeks its own nonprofit status, said Ari Barbanell, executive director of Winter Walk.

Winter Walk was held virtually in 2021 and last took place as in-person event in February of 2020, just before the pandemic struck, said Barbanell, with around 2,000 participating each time. This year, the event will be held both in-person and remotely, “so people can join in from anywhere and everywhere,” added Barbanell.

As in years past, participants will walk shoulder-to-shoulder with “the housed, the homeless, and everyone in between,” said Barbanell, while “sharing stories and remembering that homelessness is just a state of being, not an identity.”

Besides individual participants, teams also take part in Winter Walk.

“You can sign up as a team, and bring your family, your community group, or any group you want, and groups can participate



PHOTOS BY EUGENIA ELISEEVA

Michael and Joseph are seen during Winter Walk 2020.



Participants in Winter Walk 2019 go arm-in-arm.

either in person or remotely,” said Barbanell, who has taken part in Winter Walk every year since its inception and was also a member of one of the event’s founding teams.

Meanwhile, Winter Walk, which launched in February of 2017, continues to have a significant impact in the battle to end homelessness in Greater Boston, as well as to raise awareness and change perceptions surrounding the issue.

“We can make an impact, and

we can make a change in the situation,” said Barbanell. “But we can only do this if we change our perception of homelessness, and that’s what we’re doing to change the stigma by sharing stories and coming together to end homelessness.”

For more information on Winter Walk or to register for the event, visit [winterwalkboston.org](http://winterwalkboston.org).

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# Colonial Society welcomes public for monthly open houses

By Dan Murphy

The Colonial Society of Massachusetts is inviting the public to tour its headquarters at 87 Mount Vernon St. at its next monthly open house on Sunday, Feb. 6.

“The house really hasn’t been open to the public that much, so we decided this was a good way to let people know what’s inside and what the Colonial Society does,” said Robert Allison, president of Colonial Society, as well as a history professor at Suffolk University, who describes the Colonial Society as “a scholarly nonprofit organization that

primarily publishes books and documents on early American history,” specifically on the early history of Massachusetts.

“Here we have this great house, and neighbors and visitors to the neighborhood don’t know what’s happening inside and what the Colonial Society does,” said Allison, “and we also thought [opening the house to the public] would be a nice amenity for the neighborhood.”

For the open houses, which take place on the first Sunday of each month, the house opens at 1 p.m. and closes at 3 p.m., with a short speaking program by a Colonial Society staff member on

the history of the house and what the organization does starting at 2 p.m. Docents will also be on hand to assist guests as they tour the house.

Renowned architect Charles Bulfinch built the Federal-style mansion at 87 Mount Vernon St. in 1807 as the other half of a double-house built six years earlier at 85 Mount Vernon St. for Harrison Gray Otis. Bulfinch originally intended to live at 87 Mount Vernon St., but after mismanaging his finances, he was forced to sell the house to Stephen Higginson, a merchant and shipmaster, according to Allison.

Higginson in turn sold the house to an attorney, William Sawyer, who resided there with his sister, writer Helen Farnham Lee, for a number of years. Lee’s family subsequently lived in the house until 1954, when a descendent of hers donated it to the Colonial Society.

“It’s a beautiful house that has only been owned by three owners since 1806,” said Allison.

The “driving force” behind the Colonial Society when the organization acquired the house was Walter Muir Whitehill, who collected furniture from other people living on Beacon Hill or things that their children didn’t want in their homes, said Alli-



PHOTOS BY D. MURPHY

The Colonial Society of Massachusetts at 87 Mount Vernon St.

son.

Today, the house contains a variety of paintings, furniture, books; none of which are original to the house, although they are original to the 18th and 19th centuries, according to Allison.

The Colonial Society held its first open house for members only in October, followed by monthly open houses for the public in November and December, said Meghan Gelardi Holmes,

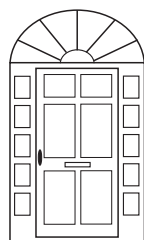
Colonial Society curator.

“Folks pass by and don’t know what’s happening in the house, so we really want neighbors to have a chance to come inside,” she said.

For more information on the Colonial Society of Massachusetts and its monthly open houses at 87 Mount Vernon St., email Robert Allison at [rallison@suffolk.edu](mailto:rallison@suffolk.edu), or visit <https://www.colonialsociety.org/> to learn more about the organization and its work.

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The second-story meeting room at the Colonial Society house, where public lectures were regularly held in pre-pandemic times.



The Colonial Society house's first-floor dining room.



The house's second-story drawing room, whose collection of mirrors are “really quite spectacular,” according to Meghan Gelardi Holmes, Colonial Society curator.



The Colonial Society house's second-story library.



# Attorney General Maura Healey announces bid for Governor

By John Lynds

Standing in Maverick Square in neighboring East Boston last Thursday Attorney General Maura Healey officially announced her candidacy for Governor of Massachusetts.

Healey has long been touted as the successor to Gov. Charlie Baker's governorship and emerged as a frontrunner for the corner office well before Baker announced he would not seek a third term. Healey's political rise began during her upset victory for Attorney General over Warren Tollman who had former Gov. Deval Patrick and former Boston Mayor Martin Walsh in his corner.

With over \$3.5 million in her campaign war chest, Healey is poised to become the first Massachusetts Attorney General to be elected governor since James Sullivan pulled off the feat in 1807 --although many have tried with the last being Martha Coakley's bid against Baker.

"I think about where we are right now as a state," said Healey during her press conference in East Boston. "We have been through a lot or people have been through a lot. Our businesses have been through a lot. Our children have been through a lot, a lot of anxiety, a lot of despair, some incredible hardship. But I have seen over the last two years such incredible acts of resilience, of caring, of compassion. I have long believed, because I've had the privilege of serving as your attorney general for the last seven years, that the state and its people have endless capacity to do great things. We're at a hard time now. But we're going to get through it and we're going to go on and we're going to build forward in ways that we can't even imagine right now. That's what excites me. I want to bring to this as your next governor a lot of things to focus on, a lot of things that need attention, especially getting the economy back on track and making sure that it works for everyone across the state. But I'm just really excited to be here and to be out in a community like East Boston. It's about meeting the people where they are. I've always been driven by the people and engagement with people."

Healey said job one for her administration would be a focus on economic growth and job creation.

"So many people are experi-



Attorney General and now candidate for Governor, Maura Healey.

encing high cost of living, whether it's in health care, housing, even transit, gasoline, you name it right now, and that's something that we've got to deal with as a state," she said. "I recognize there's monetary policy that the federal government is going to control but there are actually levers and things that we can do as a state to better address that situation. But job one will be making sure this economy is back on track that gets to issues of workforce development and job training. It gets to issues of child care, which is fundamental, especially to getting women back to the workforce. So there's a lot of opportunity and a lot of work ahead to continue what's working and address what's not working. The general governing philosophy is if something's working, then let's keep with it and if it's not working let's figure out what we need to do." Healey continued, "That's certainly what I've tried to do in my time holding this office as Attorney General. I think fundamentally the best thing that Massachusetts has going for it are its people and I see so much possibility and capacity there. I think that we've got great people. I think we've got great institutions. We've got some really terrific 'know how' across the state. If you look at some of what's happened just in the last few years in nearby Kendall Square or over in the Seaport, the amount of money that's come into the state in terms of investment. I understand that people wonder if we're ever going to get through this and out of this and I'm just here to say we are and we will and we will move forward in ways that are bigger and better than ever imagined."


In the end Healey said she believes her record will speak for itself when it comes time for voters to pick a new governor.

"I think if you look at my record it speaks for itself in terms of where I am on fighting

systemic racism and inequality, fighting for access to affordable health care, recognizing that across every sector, whether it's climate, transportation, the environment, criminal justice," she said. "We can and should apply an equity lens to everything that we do and bring an intentionality and an energy so that we are in

fact improving the lives and well being and stakes of everybody here in the state, regardless of zip code, race, ethnicity, and the like. There are so many things happening right now and I appreciate people's voices. I appreciate their advocacy. I love people, and I love people's enthusiasm and right now we're in a time where

people are demanding that what hasn't worked in our systems be addressed. I think with COVID there was so much being dismantled, so much being disrupted and now we got an opportunity to move forward in new and different ways that are going to be better for every single person in this state."



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# Zoning Board of Appeals denies addition at 661-661A Tremont St.

By Lauren Bennett

The Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) denied a proposal at 661-661A Tremont St. to build a rear addition to the first floor and basement to create more office space for Concept Properties.

Architect James Christopher said that the addition would be “approximately 13 by 13” feet, and a new stairwell would also be created as a second means of egress to “newly reconstructed decks” that would be increased in size. The occupancy and the height of the building will not be changed.

There is an existing head house and the roof deck is for exclusive use by the top floor unit on the fourth floor. The penthouse is also existing, and the wet bar has been taken out of the proposal.

Concept Properties currently occupies space in the basement and on the first floor, and four residential units are above that, Christopher said.

The proposal has the following violations: it’s in the Ground-

water Conservation Overlay District (GCOD), usable open space is insufficient, the side yard setback is insufficient, excessive Floor Area Ratio, building height is excessive, insufficient rear yard, and extension of the town house/row house.

Christian Simonelli of the Boston Groundwater Trust said that he has received both the approval letter from the Boston Water and Sewer Commission (BWSC) and the no harm letter that are required to satisfy the GCOD requirement. The ZBA confirmed receipt of these letters as well.

Kim Crucioli of the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Services said that “a number of abutters meetings” were held on this proposal, and main concerns from neighbors include issues of privacy, security, size of the addition, and light.

She said that the “abutters also met with the applicant a number of times and couldn’t seem to resolve these issues.” She also said that “numerous

letters of opposition” have been received from abutters and the Pilot Block Neighborhood Association (PBNA). She said the Mayor’s Office wants to leave the decision up to the ZBA.

City Councilors Ed Flynn and Michael Flaherty were in opposition to the project.

An abutter on Tremont St., who identified himself as “Korey” on the online meeting said he is opposed to the project, “mainly for the space that extends and the stairwell, as that will definitely exacerbate the parking situation.”

Matt Ramey, owner of Concept Properties, said he is in support of the proposal.

Noel Blair of the PBNA said that “we are in opposition to this proposal, which disregards both zoning requirements and abutter concerns.”

He said that the “main abutter concerns” are about the lower decks and stair that are proposed for the building’s rear. He said these “intrude on privacy.”

An abutter on Tremont St.,

who identified herself as “Kate,” said that “our owners are opposed for several reasons,” including security and privacy, as well as the responsiveness throughout the community process. This has been going on for a year and a half and we have not seen a lot of concessions within reason to our complaints and concerns.”

Christopher explained that the proposed addition “only comes off the building 13 feet. The stairwell only extends about

a food and a half beyond that addition. It should also be noted that on the abutting property at 663 [Tremont St.], there is a current addition to the first level so our stairwell would not protrude too far past that.”

Additionally, he said that visual screening would be provided on the stairwell, which would primarily be used as a second way of exiting the building.

The ZBA ultimately voted to deny this project.

## Back Bay, surrounding area’s weekly COVID positive test-rate slows a bit

By John Lynds

Ten days after Mayor Michelle Wu and the city implemented the ‘B Together’ mandate that requires all employees and patrons at indoor venues to show proof of vaccination, the Back Bay and the surrounding area’s weekly COVID 19 positive test rate has dipped for the first time in weeks.

The COVID winter surge has wreaked havoc on the city and affected school attendance for both staff and students, closed local business due to staff shortages and put a strain on emergency rooms at area hospitals.

Two weeks ago 2 out of every 10 residents tested for the virus last week turned out to be positive but that number has dropped.

According to the weekly report released Monday by the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC), 2,150 Back Bay, North End, Beacon Hill, West End and Downtown residents were tested and 18.7 percent were positive. This was only a 21 percent decrease from the 23.8 percent that tested positive between January 10 and January 17. The weekly positive test rate has decreased 15 percent in the area overall since January 10.

Four hundred two additional residents have been infected with the virus between January 3 and January 10 and the total number of cases in the area increased to 7,657 cases overall since the pandemic began.

The citywide weekly positive test rate also decreased last week. According to the BPHC 30,644 residents were tested and 24 percent were COVID positive--this was a 24 percent decrease from the 31.6 percent that reportedly tested positive for the week ending on January 17. The weekly positive test rate has now decreased 25 percent in Boston since January 10.

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 9 percent last week and went from 141,491 cases to 154,692 confirmed cases in a week.

However, there were 53 additional deaths in Boston from the virus in the past week and the total COVID deaths is now at 1,607. Deaths, which totaled 19 two weeks ago, increased 179 percent last week.

## BLC approves new pole with small cell on the Esplanade

By Lauren Bennett

The Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) on January 25 approved the replacement of the existing light pole with a new one containing a small cell on the Esplanade at 384-398 Storrow Dr.

Keenan Brinn of ExteNet Systems explained that the light pole “will remain as a single pendant with the new installation, however, there will be an antenna at the top of the pole.”

The pole will also feature a box that will contain the radio equipment. Brinn said that the base of the pole is slightly different from the existing, but the new pole itself will be 25 feet, which

is the same as the existing. However, the antenna will sit two feet above the pole.

“I also think it’s worth noting that this particular pole was approved about two years ago,” he said. He said that this time, the “equipment is pretty much the same but slightly different from what was approved the first time.”

Commissioner David Berarducci said he has “seen these” proposals before, though “maybe not this particular style pole.” He said that while the equipment will be visible, “I don’t know if it’s going to be that intrusive.”

Brinn added that “right now, I know there’s some discussion with the City of Boston about the

color these poles will be painted.”

Commissioner Brad Walker said that “these are always difficult” because they are reviewed one by one, and not as a standard across the entire city. He said that this proposal “I think is better than a lot of them,” as the equipment can easily be changed when the technology is upgraded.

He added that “I appreciate that there’s nothing sort of at the level of a human body that makes it hard to get by on the sidewalk.”

Once presented before the full Commission, they voted to approve the pole as presented.

## LEGAL NOTICES

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## ATTENTION TO DETAIL

BY PENNY CHERUBINO

### THIS WEEK'S ANSWER



The sphere detail in the last clue is on The Dawson-Longley Apartments at 400 Massachusetts Avenue built in 1991. This residence was built by the Tenants' Development Corporation. That organization was founded in 1968 and has developed affordable housing throughout the South End.

You'll find the next clue in the Back Bay.

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

### THIS WEEK'S CLUE



## Supreme Judicial Court further pauses Jury Trials

Staff Report

The Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) issued an order extending the current pause on all jury trials in Massachusetts state court-houses for an additional two weeks, until February 14, 2022. All courts otherwise remain open for in-person business, with a continued emphasis on conducting matters remotely whenever

possible.

"While we are encouraged by the trend in COVID-19 cases in the Commonwealth, the additional two week pause on jury trials is necessary to protect the health and safety of all who enter and work in our court-houses," said Supreme Judicial Court Chief Justice Kimberly Budd. "Assuming the number of COVID-19 cases continues

to decline as expected, we do not anticipate any further pause beyond February 14. As throughout the pandemic, however, all plans and expectations regarding the resumption of jury trials may be adjusted at any time in the ongoing effort to balance the safety of court users and personnel with the fundamental constitutional right to a trial by jury."

Today's order partially amends the existing order regarding court operations during the pandemic, which was issued by the SJC on July 1, 2021, and supersedes a prior amendment issued on December 31, 2021.

The City of Boston reminds you:  
**The legal drinking age is 21.**



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