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THE BOSTON SUN

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STATE REP. AARON MICHLEWITZ HOLDS ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY



PHOTOS BY DEREK KOUYOUMJIAN

Cosmica at the Revolution Hotel, shown above, was filled with constituents and supporters of Massachusetts State Rep Aaron Michlewitz.

Shown to the right, State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz addresses the crowd, thanking them for their support. See more photos on Pages 8 and 9.



Is rideshare driving too dangerous? Boston attack reignites safety debate

By Arielle Appleby

After a passenger looped a wire around an Uber driver's neck and cinched it tight last month, police say the woman broke free and bolted from her car, screaming as she burst into the closest store in sight, pleading for someone to call 911.

While sitting at a red light at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Columbus Avenue in Boston's South End, police say Christopher Dawkins, 24, of Dorchester, looped a wire around an Uber driver's neck

and strangled her, and then stole her car after she escaped.

Dawkins pleaded not guilty during his arraignment on carjacking, strangulation, assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, and larceny of a motor vehicle charges in Boston Municipal Court on Nov. 27. He was ordered to be held without bail.

For rideshare drivers – especially women and people of color – attacks are an occupational hazard they live with every shift. Car accidents, unruly passengers, and verbal harassment are ever-present threats, but many

vulnerable drivers say they feel like they are risking their lives each time they slide behind the wheel.

According to an April 2023 Strategic Organizing Center report, which was working with the rideshare drivers union about the safety concerns of rideshare drivers, “sixty-seven percent of rideshare driver respondents reported having experienced some kind of violence, harassment or threatening behavior in the last year.”

The attack in Boston is one of
(RIDESHARE ATTACK, Pg. 7)

Route 55 service won't be extended for now due to bus repairs

By Dan Murphy

The desired implementation of extended service on the MBTA's Route 55 won't come to pass this month as buses are now being taken out of service for maintenance.

The T suspended service on the 55 bus route after the pandemic struck, and when service on the line was later restored in June of 2021, its daily hours were reduced to 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., from the previous hours of 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. The last stop on the line was also changed then to Copley Square from Park Street.

As a component of the T's ongoing Bus Network Redesign program, the 55 line has been under consideration to have seen its hours of operation and ser-

vice expanded, including during weekday peak hours, while also connecting the West Fenway neighborhood to Copley Station.

The first phase of the Bus Network Redesign changes began in December 2024, with work in Chelsea, Everett, Revere, Malden, Somerville, Cambridge, and East Boston. A fall rollout of the program was then implemented on Aug. 24, which again didn't include changes to the Route 55 service.

Meanwhile, buses are being removed from service for ongoing maintenance at the garage at the MBTA's Cabot Yard on Dorchester Avenue. When this extensive work has been completed and its bus fleet returns to capacity, the T will then consider making further changes to ser-

(GREEN LINE CLOSURE, Pg. 3)

HOLIDAY DRONE SHOW COMES TO THE COMMON



D. MURPHY PHOTO

Residents stop to watch the MeetBoston 2025 Holiday Drone Show on the Common this past weekend, Dec. 12. See more photos on Page 5.

EDITORIAL

MERRY CHRISTMAS

This is the most wonderful time of the year, to paraphrase the popular song, with holiday music playing in the malls and on our car radios, resurrecting our earliest childhood memories of Christmases-past.

We choose just the right tree, decorate it carefully with our family-heirloom ornaments, and when we first turn on the lights, it brings a smile to the faces of even the most-jaded among us.

Despite our hectic rushing to and fro, everybody, it seems, is in a good mood. We endure the traffic and the long lines in stores because we know that what we are doing will bring joy and happiness to others.

For those of us with young children, we get to see Christmas through their eyes, giving us a second chance to experience the wonder and joy that we felt when we were their age.

Although all of us celebrate the holiday season in our own way, the common thread is one of peace, joy, and happiness, regardless of religious or secular beliefs. Whether it be Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or a Seinfeldian Festivus, the spirit of the season imbues us with a sense of togetherness that transcends whatever negativity may exist both in our own lives and in the world around us.

We wish all of our readers a Merry Christmas and a happy holiday season.

THERE'S STILL TIME TO HELP THOSE IN NEED

It's hard to believe that Christmas is just a week away. We realize that the compressed holiday shopping season has put even more pressure than usual on all of us, but we hope that all of our readers can find the time to remember those in need this holiday season.

The stock market may be booming and unemployment is still near an all-time low, but there was the depressing news this past week that homelessness among Americans once again has increased in the past year and millions of American children (1 in 8) face food insecurity on a regular basis.

The cold, harsh reality for many Americans in 2025 is that the promise of benefitting from a booming economy still is only a dream, where even those who are lucky enough to work full-time are barely getting by thanks to the crushingly-high cost of living, especially housing.

And for those who cannot find a job, or who are unable to work -- and especially for their children -- the holiday joy that most of us take for granted is just an illusion.

We recognize that in our hurry-hurry world where we barely have time to think, the Christmas season brings with it the onslaught of last-minute shopping and holiday preparations. But we urge all of our readers who have the means to do so to take a brief "time-out" in order to consider doing something to make the holiday season a bit brighter for those who are less fortunate.

We can assure our readers that any gift of charity that we make, whether it be to a Toys for Tots program or to a Salvation Army Santa (the Salvation Army provided services to 27 million Americans last year) or a food bank donation, will be the most meaningful -- and most satisfying -- act that we can make this holiday season.

ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS SAFELY

The upcoming long holiday weekend means that most of us will be partaking in traditional gatherings with our families, friends, and co-workers to share the joy of the holiday season.

Unfortunately, this also means that many among us will be overindulging in holiday "spirits."

It is the responsibility of each of us to ensure that where alcohol is present, it is used responsibly, not only by ourselves, but by those around us at our holiday gatherings. None of us wants to wake up the next morning with the regret, "If only I had taken their car keys."

We wish all of our readers a happy, and safe, holiday week.

Annual holiday event connects hundreds of Boston older adults with safety training and free phone calls

Special to the Sun

On Friday, December 12, hundreds of older adults visited Boston City Hall for the annual Holiday Connections event, hosted by Boston's AgeStrong Commission and AT&T. This long-standing collaboration has been held for more than

30 years and provides Boston's older adults with one-on-one technology help, scam and fraud prevention workshops, safety presentations, free domestic and international calling and a day of fun holiday activities.

"Age Strong is so grateful to partner with AT&T on our Holiday Connections event," said

Emily K. Shea, Boston's Age Strong Commissioner. "Hundreds of Boston's older residents will have the opportunity to connect with loved ones across the world, learn new tips for their technology, and enjoy the day together."

The festive event provided breakfast, lunch, holiday-themed activities, hot cocoa bar, music, information booths, and artisan crafts made by members of Boston's older adult community.

In addition to providing a phone bank allowing free domestic and international calls, AT&T and the Boston Police Department presented a Digital Safety workshop about scam/fraud prevention, cyber-safety and general technology training. AT&T technicians also worked one-on-one with guests to help with their phones, tablets and other connected technology and troubleshooting.

"We are grateful for partnerships like this one that create

(AGESTRONG, Pg. 3)



Boston's AgeStrong Commission and AT&T hosted their annual Holiday Connections event.

SEND YOUR NEWS

The Boston Sun encourages readers and residents to submit their local news! Engagements, weddings and birth announcements, news releases, business and education briefs, sports stories and photos for publication.

Submitting does not guarantee publication that week.

Content will be printed on a space available basis. Items should be e-mailed to stephen.quigley@thebostonsun.com or deb@thebostonsun.com

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Keolis hosts annual North Pole Express Train Ride

Special to the Sun

Keolis Commuter Services (Keolis), the MBTA's operations and maintenance partner for the Commuter Rail, hosted Greater Boston-area children for a festive North Pole Express train ride on Saturday. Wearing pajamas and singing holiday songs, more than 1,000 children and their families embarked on a journey to the "North Pole" and back as part of a full afternoon of free holiday activities.

At South Station, guests were greeted with music and holiday decorations, while children were treated to snacks, gifts and activ-

ities, prior to boarding the decorated train. On board, elected officials and community leaders read books and led holiday sing-alongs. The return portion of the trip featured a visit from Santa Claus and his elves. Tickets for this invitation-only event were provided to families served by local nonprofit organizations (see full list below).

"All aboard! It was awesome to join the MBTA and Keolis on the annual ride to the North Pole with so many families. Thank you to the operators, staff and volunteers who made today possible and for helping us spread the holiday cheer," said Mas-



Gov. Maura Healey joins various officials for a group shot with some of the riders aboard this year's North Pole Express.

sachusetts Governor Maura Healey.

"The annual North Pole Express represents the true spirit of the holidays and making dreams come true, inviting

children and their loved ones on an adventure to the North Pole aboard a train filled with treats, stories, and festive cheer. Not only is this a memorable experience for the families and

communities we serve, but the employees that plan and participate truly embrace the spirit and enjoy seeing all the smiles

(NORTH POLE EXPRESS, Pg. 7)



Santa Claus makes his way down the aisle on the North Pole Express, greeting excited children and spreading Christmas cheer.

AGESTRONG (from Page 2)

an opportunity for our officers to connect with Boston's older adults about ways to protect themselves from scammers and other dangers," said Commissioner Michael Cox, Boston Police Department. "Community policing is about building trust and connecting with people and we are happy to be part of this great event."

Since the start of 2024, AT&T and the Boston Police Department have collaborated on a citywide effort to educate older adults about digital safety and scam/fraud prevention, hosting 25 workshops in nearly every city neighborhood.

The Boston Fire Department and the Boston Police Depart-

ment Crime Stoppers also gave safety presentations to attendees.

"Technology allows older adults freedom, convenience, and communication, and it is important that they have the resources to enjoy the digital world safely and securely," said John Emra, President, AT&T Northeast Region. "We are grateful to Mayor Wu, Commissioner Shea and AgeStrong, Boston Police and Boston Fire for their collaboration and commitment to keeping Boston's older adults safely connected. We hope this event provides the warmth of connection with loved ones, the confidence to harness the power of technology, and a lot of holiday joy."

ROUTE 55 BUS (from Page 1)

vice via its Bus Network Redesign program in '26.

"Improving bus service and connectivity continues to be a major priority for the MBTA," wrote MBTA spokesperson Lisa Battiston in an email. "Ample evaluation of ridership data and considerations, such as equity, play a role in bus route changes. Keeping the entire system in mind, we aim to create an even more robust network and are consistently looking at ways to increase service."

Battiston added: "We do expect to have more fleet capacity when vehicle overhauls are completed. Future bus improvements continue to be planned and will be implemented during the MBTA's quarterly seasonal schedule adjustments as bus operators and supporting infrastructure are available and ready."

On Oct. 2, the 55 Bus Route Coalition, which the nonprofit Fenway Forward coordinates, spearheaded a well-attended community demonstration to lobby for extended hours on the Route 55 line.

Nearly 30 participants joined the rally, which started with a 55 bus ride along from Queensberry Street at Jersey Street to St. James Avenue at Arlington Street

and concluded at the MBTA headquarters at 10 Park Plaza. Along with Fenway residents and bus riders, others in attendance included Fenway Forward organizers; Sen. Lydia Edwards and Rep. Jay Livingstone; and representatives from the offices of other elected officials, including District 8 City Councilor Sharon Durkan and City Councilor at-Large Henry Santana.

Moreover, the coalition's petition in support of getting longer hours implemented immediately on the 55 bus line has garnered nearly 70 signatures to date. Visit <https://c.org/GfhRns8bNJ> to sign the petition.

Regarding the present uncer-

tainty surrounding future expansion of hours and service on the Route 55 line, Jamie Culbertson, a Fenway Forward community organizer who facilitates the 55 Bus Route Coalition, wrote: "It's frustrating to hear about this additional delay after Fenway residents have been waiting so long for the promised 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. hours. I hope the MBTA will prioritize extending the hours of this vital cross-neighborhood transportation link as soon as possible."

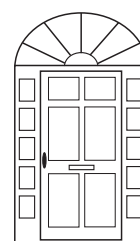
To learn more about the 55 Bus Route Coalition, email Jamie Culbertson at jculbertson@fenwayforward.org.

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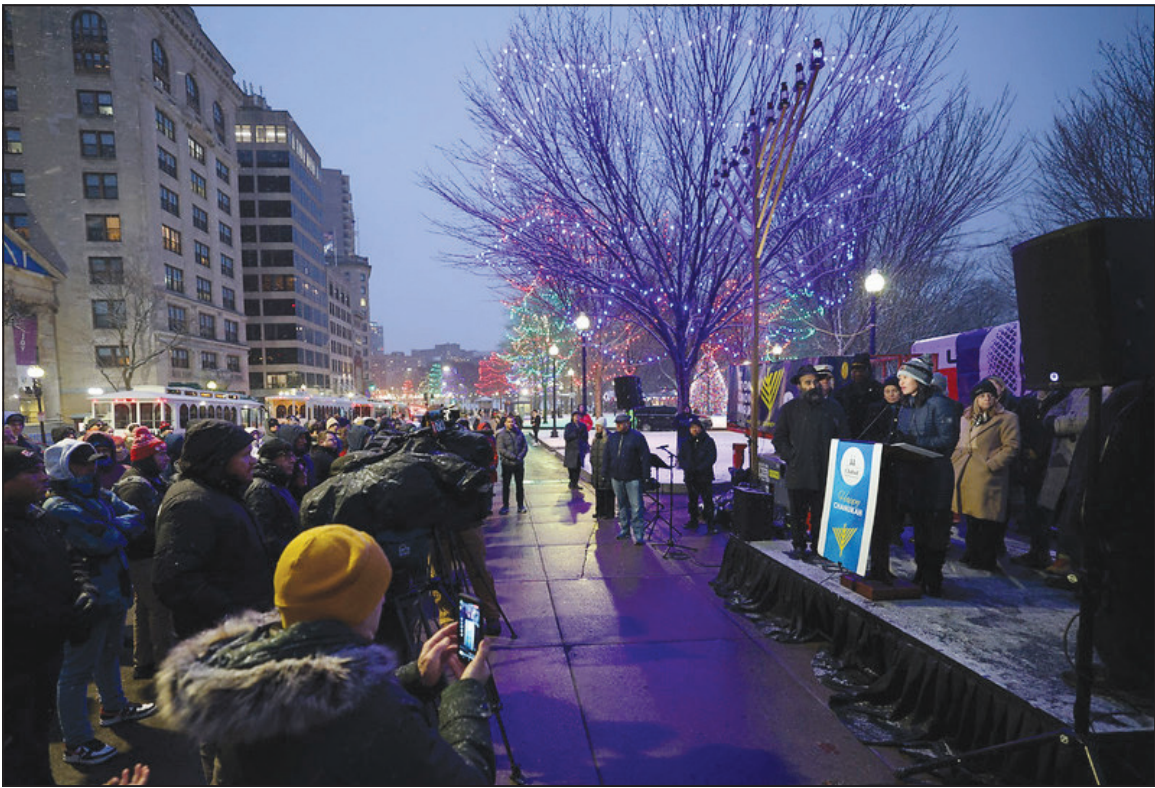
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Rentals

MENORAH ON THE COMMON COMES ALIGHT

Mayor's Office Photos by John Wilcox
Mayor Michelle Wu attends

the 42nd annual Menorah Lighting held Dec. 14 on the Boston Common.



State Fire Marshal reminds residents of Christmas tree fire hazards

Special to the Sun

As the holiday season gets underway, State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine is reminding residents to select Christmas trees carefully, water them every day, and decorate them safely to reduce the risk of a fire.

“A dry Christmas tree can burn like a forest fire in your home,” said State Fire Marshal Davine. “Water it every day, or firefighters might have to do it

for you.”

The Department of Fire Services recommends the following Christmas tree safety tips to help you have a Silent Night:

Choosing a Tree

•Select a fresh tree with needles that bend and stay fixed to the branches. If a tree’s needles crack when you bend them, or if they fall off when you run your hand along a branch, the tree is already drying out and you

should choose a different tree.

•Have about two inches cut from the bottom of the trunk before you put it up. Sap can clog an older cut and prevent it from absorbing water in the stand.

Picking the Right Spot at Home

•Place your tree in a sturdy stand away from doors and windows. These are your escape routes in the event of an emer-

(TREE FIRE SAFETY, Pg. 5)

Merry Christmas

From Senator Nick Collins & Family



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

From your State Representative Jay Livingstone. I am wishing you a joyful holiday season and a happy new year!



HOLIDAY DRONE SHOW COMES TO THE COMMON



Mayor’s Office Photos by Jeremiah Robinson

Scenes from the MeetBoston 2025 Holiday Drone Show held Dec. 12 on the Boston Common.

TREE FIRE SAFETY (from Page 4)

agency, and firefighters may need to use them to enter.

- Keep the tree at least three feet from any heat source, including fireplaces, wood stoves, heating vents, radiators, and space heaters.

Water the Tree Every Day

- A fresh tree will drink a lot of water. It may need to be watered more than once a day at first, so keep the water level high. If the bottom of the trunk is exposed to air, sap could seal it off and cause it to dry out prematurely.
- Even the freshest tree will start to dry out after a few days. Dispose of it promptly after the holiday.

Decorate Safely

- Choose lights that are listed by an independent testing laboratory like UL or Intertek/ETL and follow the manufacturer’s instructions and safety information.
- Before plugging in a string of lights or hanging it on the tree, check the wiring for cracks, pinches, and wear. Discard any damaged strings.
- When decorating outdoors, be sure the lights and extension cords are rated for outdoor use and plug them into an outlet with a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter.
- Almost half of home decoration fires start with candles and other heat sources too close to decorations: Keep lit candles on a sturdy saucer or candleholder at least three feet from the tree. Even better, switch to battery-powered “flameless” candles, which flicker just like real thing.

For a video clip showing a Christmas tree fire under controlled conditions, visit the Department of Fire Services YouTube channel.

CHRISTMAS WEEK
TRASH + RECYCLING
PICKUP SCHEDULE

Hey, Back Bay!

There will be **NO** waste collection
on Christmas Day 12/25.
Collection is **canceled**.

If your second collection day falls on a
Thursday, then Monday 12/22 will be
your **ONLY** waste collection day for the
week of Christmas.



Visit boston.gov/trash-day-app to
view your trash schedule.



City of Boston
Public Works

City Council hearings identify operational issues within Boston Police Department

By Kiran Rajamani

An analysis of 10 months of Boston City Council hearings reveals that city councilors have repeatedly and consistently raised concerns about overtime spending, staffing levels, crime lab operations and a discriminatory promotion system at the city's police department.

An investigation by Boston University's student newspaper, The Daily Free Press, revealed more than 200 instances of BPD-related concerns expressed during public meetings between Jan. 1, 2024, and Oct. 1, 2025. Nearly 1,000 hours of city council hearings and committee meetings were reviewed using artificial intelligence. Each instance was manually verified.

BPD did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Overtime spending exceeds budgeted levels

City Councilor Benjamin Weber said BPD overtime spending has exceeded its budget allocation for multiple fiscal years. In 2024, the department blew through its roughly \$40 million overtime budget by about \$50 million, according to council hearings.

Weber said the city council has oversight of BPD's budget but does not impose a firm cap on overtime hours because of public safety needs, court requirements and security needs during special events.

Some overtime policies contribute to higher costs, Weber said, including a rule that provides a four-hour minimum overtime payment for certain court appearances, even if officers spend only a short time before a judge.

"Some officers make \$300,000 to \$400,000 a year primarily from overtime," Weber said.

Weber added that overtime rules are governed by collective bargaining agreements negotiated between police unions and the mayor's office, which limit the council's power to rein in spending.

Staffing levels contribute to overtime use

City Councilor Ed Flynn said staffing shortages drive overtime spending. At a May 2024 council meeting, police officials said an average of 131 officers leave the force each year and only 108 are hired, resulting in a net decline.

"Because of the significant

staff shortages," Flynn said, "we are forcing police officers to work mandatory overtime, consistently 16-hour days."

He said he has raised the issue during multiple budget cycles, citing concerns about officer fatigue and safety. The staffing shortfall requires the department to rely on overtime to maintain patrol coverage, according to statements made during hearings.

Crime lab leadership and processing delays discussed

Councilors also raised concerns about the operational capacity of Boston Police Crime Laboratory during hearings in 2024 and 2025.

The crime lab conducts DNA testing, rape kit analysis, firearms examinations and other forensic work used in criminal investigations.

During an April 2024 committee meeting, Flynn said the lab failed to test approximately half of all rape kits within the state-mandated 30-day timeframe during fiscal year 2023.

Flynn proposed a \$1 million budget increase for fiscal year 2025 to fund staffing, fill the director position and purchase

updated equipment. While the city council approved the funding, Flynn said at a September 2025 hearing that he had not yet seen measurable improvements.

"I'm not confident in the Boston Police Crime Lab and their leadership," Flynn said during the hearing, citing the prolonged vacancy and delayed adoption of newer DNA testing methods used by other jurisdictions.

Federal court ruled promotional exams discriminatory

Testimony during a January 2025 Government Accountability, Transparency and Accessibility Committee hearing addressed the history of police promotional exams used statewide, including by BPD.

Retired BPD Detective Larry Ellison referenced a 2023 federal court decision that awarded more than \$40 million to officers of color across Massachusetts. The court ruled that the exam used to grant promotions systematically penalized Black and Latino officers in violation of state anti-discrimination laws.

The court found that the exams relied heavily on multiple-choice testing that did not adequately measure supervisory

skills, which produced statistically significant racial disparities. Judges also ruled the state had been aware of the disparities for years and failed to adopt available alternatives.

Ellison testified that concerns about retaliation discouraged some officers from reporting inequities or pursuing leadership positions, describing his own experience after becoming president of the Massachusetts Association of Minority Law Enforcement Officers.

City Councilor Henry Santana, chair of the Public Safety and Criminal Justice Committee, said the hearings underscore the importance of council oversight.

"Oversight isn't about criticism, it's about ensuring that policies, investigations and practices reflect fairness and integrity," Santana said in a written statement. "We strengthen public safety when we address issues openly and work toward solutions that protect all residents."

Kiran Rajamani is a student in the Boston University Journalism program. This story is a partnership between The Boston Sun and the Boston University Journalism program.

Short play penned by Beacon Hill resident Rob Whitney to premiere next month in Newburyport

By Dan Murphy

A short play written by Beacon Hill resident Rob Whitney will be among eight works featured in the two-day New Works Festival 2026, which kicks off Saturday, Jan. 24, at The Firehouse Center for the Arts in Newburyport.

Over the past few years, Whitney and his wife, Marcy Axelrad, have regularly attend small theatre performances at the nonprofit Firehouse Center, along with Lyric Stage Boston in the Back Bay and Calderwood Hall in Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, among other venues.

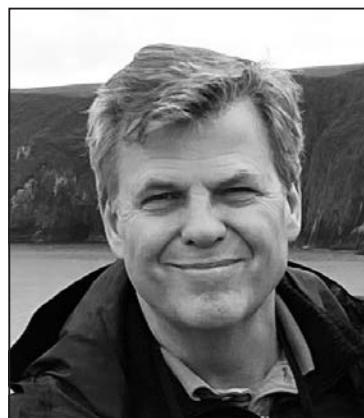
After the couple attended a performance at The Firehouse Center, Whitney went to the organization's website and learned of its upcoming New Works Festival. He decided then to try his hand as a first-time

playwright.

Via the application procedure, Whitney went online and picked hockey from a number of provided selections as the category for his piece. He began the writing process by dictating it in a stream-of-consciousness manner, before printing the first draft and refining it over time.

Whitney submitted the script for his short play, called 'Puck,' for consideration in the festival around May but didn't learn it had been selected until around the end of November. The submissions had all been read and were then selected by a group of three judges, none of whom was aware of the identities of the respective authors, according to Whitney.

"I was shocked and kind of excited," said Whitney of learning that his short play had been chosen for inclusion in the upcoming festival.



MARCY AXELRAD PHOTO
Longtime Beacon Hill resident and now playwright, Rob Whitney.

'Puck' focuses on a conversation between a father and his hockey-playing son in a basement of a Beacon Hill townhouse.

"It's a comedy-drama. Something happens, and the father and son have a conversation about the son's ability to continue playing hockey," said Whitney.

ney.

While Whitney himself never played hockey (he played soccer in his youth instead), his son, Adam, now an 18-year-old freshman at the University of Tennessee, began playing the game at around age 6 in the North End Youth Hockey at Steriti Skating Rink.

Adam continued playing the game through high school, and Whitney admits that much of the dialogue in 'Puck' mirrors conversations he had with his son over the years.

"Some of the dialogue, the funny stuff, is what my son and I talked about," said Whitney.

For the upcoming performances, 'Puck' will be directed by Arlene Bernard, with two unidentified actors as the father and son. Keeping in line with the other short-length plays featured in the festival, it's one act and runs about nine and a half min-

utes long. The same eight plays in the festival, including 'Puck,' will be staged again at the theatre during a matinee festival performance on Jan. 25.

Meanwhile, Whitney, an attorney by profession, is already now at work in his spare time on his next short play, which will focus on a conversation between two people at a Downtown Boston coffee shop, and looking ahead, he said he hopes to write a longer play focusing on a courtroom trial.

Firehouse Center for the Arts' New Works Festival 2026 takes place Friday, Jan. 24, from 7-9 p.m. and again on Saturday, Jan. 25, from 2-4 p.m. at The Firehouse Center for the Arts, located at 1 Market Square in Newburyport.

Tickets are \$15 general admission and can be purchased online at \$15 online via the Firehouse's website at firehouse.org.

NORTH POLE EXPRESS *(from Page 3)*

on the faces of all that join us on this journey,” said Interim MassDOT Secretary and MBTA General Manager Phillip Eng. “Thank you to Keolis and their elves who take great pride in hosting and organizing this wonderful event every year, bringing holiday cheer to so many families. And a big shoutout to Governor Healey, our participating MBTA Board Directors, and other State leaders for adding to the holiday magic and joining us on our trip to the North Pole as we wish everyone a safe, healthy, and happy holiday season!”

“Keolis’ annual North Pole Express event celebrates the magic of the holiday season, and I love the opportunity to enjoy this festive train ride with families from across our communities,” said John Killeen, Keolis CEO and General Manager. “We are grateful to the leaders who join us every year to make this day special for the nonprofit organizations and the hundreds of children who participate.”

Each coach car featured elected officials and community leaders as readers of Chris Van Allsburg’s classic “The Polar Express,” with other special guests attending the festivities, including:

- Governor Maura Healey
- Phil Eng, MassDOT Interim Secretary of Transportation and MBTA General Manager
- Thomas McGee, Chairman of MBTA Board of Directors
- Chanda Smart, MBTA Board of Directors
- Kevin Hayden, Suffolk County District Attorney
- State Senator Nick Collins
- State Representative David Biele
- State Representative Brandy Fluker-Reid
- State Representative Christopher Worrell
- Enrique Pepen, Boston City Councilor
- Henry Santana, Boston City Councilor
- Brian Worrell, Boston City Councilor

RIDESHARE ATTACK *(from Page 1)*

many cautionary tales for rideshare drivers, especially those who are women or people of color.

Attackers typically target those they believe are the most vulnerable. Seventy-nine percent of app-based drivers have felt unsafe, and female drivers experience higher rates of sexual harassment, according to researchers at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Many Lyft and Uber drivers depend on their jobs to provide for their families, and researchers say they often fear that intervening and speaking up may lower their ratings and endanger their jobs.

“When I walk into a Union meeting, it’s like walking onto the pages of a giant John Steinbeck novel,” said Duane Mitchell, curator of the Massachusetts Drivers United website. “They’re really vulnerable and extremely exploited people, especially since a lot of them don’t speak English.”

Mitchell’s prior experience as a Boston cab driver versus an Uber driver illustrates what he says is a stark difference in safety standards.

“I had to take safety classes with training by the Boston police before I could get my cab driver’s license,” said Mitchell. “There is a bulletproof partition

separating you from the driver in cabs, but Uber doesn’t care; there’s none of that.”

Beyond the issue of Uber’s lack of safety protocols, Mitchell said there is simultaneously a lack of community within rideshare drivers. As a cabbie, he said there was a sense of togetherness, and drivers would alert each other about potential dangers.

“Many of us had an extra radio in our cab just to speak with other drivers. We had two radios going, one for the cab company and the other to speak with each other,” he said. “We heard stories all the time and were always aware of the potential danger.”

Uber doesn’t make space for that camaraderie, according to Mitchell, which leads to isolation and fear of self-reporting incidents by drivers.

Attacks on rideshare drivers are rare in Boston, he said, but one wrong ride can change people’s perception of the risk.

“People are nice all over Boston,” Mitchell said, “but all it takes is one lunatic.”

Arielle Appleby is a student in the Boston University Journalism program. This story is a partnership between The Boston Sun and the Boston University Journalism program.



Gov. Maura Healey joins children and their families on the North Pole Express.

- Mela Bush, Co-Chair of Fairmount Indigo Transit Coalition
- Caitlin Allen-Connelly, Executive Director at Transit Matters
- Ryan Coholan, MBTA Chief Operating Officer
- Michael Rooks, MBTA Chief Railroad Officer
- John Killeen, CEO of Keolis Commuter Services

Keolis organized and sponsored the North Pole Express, working with many local nonprofit organizations to invite families with limited financial means to participate in this invitation-only event. Partnering organizations included:

- South Boston Neighborhood House
- The Home for Little Wanderers
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston
- Children’s Friend and Family Services – Salem and Lynn
- Rosie’s Place
- Boys and Girls Club of Lynn
- Horizons for Homeless Children
- Family Independence Initiative
- Boys & Girls Club of Dorchester
- Community Connections of Brockton
- Fairmount Indigo Transit Coalition

- Jack and Jill
- Keolis Commuter Services

has operated and maintained the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority’s commuter rail system, the sixth largest commuter rail operation in North America, for over ten years. KCS is a subsidiary of Keolis North America (KNA), both headquartered in Boston, and employs approximately 2,500 people throughout the region. KCS and KNA are part of Keolis Group, an innovative global leader in transit services with more than a century of passenger transportation experience and operations in 13 countries.



City of Boston
Planning
Department

SIGN UP FOR OUR MAILING LIST!

The City of Boston’s Planning Department will be sharing updates and engagement opportunities with the public online and via email beginning in 2026.

Please subscribe to our mailing list following the QR code or link included here if you would like to receive regular updates about planning and development in Boston.

Website:

bosplans.org/GetInvolved



STATE REP. AARON MICHLEWITZ HOLDS 16TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY



Massachusetts State Senator Lydia Edwards, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu with her daughter Mira, and State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz with members of the Chinatown community.

Photos by Derek Kouyoumjian

Massachusetts State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz held his 16th Annual Holiday Party and at Cosmica at the Revolution Hotel. The State Rep. celebrated with colleagues, supporters, and constituents while taking donations for his toy drive.



Massachusetts State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz thanked everyone for their support. He noted on working in the State House: “the reason why I love the Legislature is you can’t do anything on your own, It takes a membership. You have to make sure you’re working in collaboration.”



Massachusetts State Rep. Jay Livingstone and a constituent.



Massachusetts State Rep. Sam Mondano and family friend Charli with Boston City Councilor Ben Weber.



Boston Mayor Michelle Wu with her daughter Mira.



Massachusetts State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz with Ellis Association Board member Bill Gregor.



Cosmica at the Revolution Hotel was the venue for Massachusetts State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz’s annual Holiday Party.



David and Rosalee Biele with Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey.



Donations for Massachusetts State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz’s toy drive.

STATE REP. AARON MICHLEWITZ HOLDS 16TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY



Former State Senator Joe Boncore, Mike Morris, Massachusetts Treasurer Deb Goldberg, State Senator Sal DiDomenico, and State Senator Nick Collins.



Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey and State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz.



Massachusetts Secretary of Veterans Services Jon Santiago with Allyson Perron Drag, American Heart Association government relations director.



Barry Village constituents Leslie Colburn, Rocque, and Nancy Morrisroe.



Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey with Boston City Councilor-Elect Miniard Culpepper.



Massachusetts State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz and State Senator Lydia Edwards.



Massachusetts State Treasurer Deb Goldberg offers remarks “People love you, appreciate you, and love to come out for you.”



Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey talks about working with Representative Aaron Michlewitz.



Massachusetts State Rep. Adrian Madaro, Caitlin Beresin, former State Senator Joe Boncore, and State Senator Sal DiDomenico.



Massachusetts State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz engages with guests at his Holiday Party.

A Winter Solstice Celebration

Saturday, December 20 | 6:30 pm

Join us for a time of meditation, candlelight and music—featuring James Ruff, tenor and early Gaelic harp.



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Background photo: Noah Silliman on Unsplash | James Ruff photo: Pam Steel



MBTA achieves major milestone with the historic Daniels-Finegold settlement

Special to the Sun

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), disability advocates, and original plaintiffs of a landmark accessibility lawsuit came together December 10, 2025, to celebrate a historic milestone in the ongoing effort to make public transit accessible to all.

After 19 years of steady improvements to the accessibility of its system, the MBTA has fulfilled a substantial amount of its obligations under the 2006 Joanne Daniels-Finegold, et al. v. Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Settlement Agreement. As a result, court-appointed independent monitor Judge Patrick King will conclude his oversight role.

In honor of this milestone, and to demonstrate its ongoing commitment to advancing accessibility system-wide, the MBTA has worked with the original named plaintiffs, the Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL), and Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) to enter into the Next Generation Accessibility Agreement with BCIL, which includes numerous commitments related to delivering best-in-class accessible service for all riders. This agreement also shifts oversight responsibility from a court-appointed monitor to the Riders' Transportation Access Group (RTAG). RTAG is the MBTA's citizen-led advisory committee on accessibility matters, and the organizations will work together to make more progress across the entire MBTA network. Anyone is welcome to become a member of the group.

"Since my very initial days at the MBTA, it was evident that the plaintiffs in the Daniels-Finegold landmark lawsuit were now partners. Their long-term commitment of working with us to improve and advance



Pictured above (from L to R): Robert Park, Thomas Gilbert, Reginald Clark, Andrew Forman, Majda Abbas (GBLS), Bill Henning (BCIL), Laura Brelsford (MBTA), Taramattie Doucette (GBLS), Independent Monitor Judge Patrick King, Chris Hart (MBTA), additional GBLS counsel, Myrnairis (Mic) Cepeda, Joanne Daniels-Finegold, John Martin (MBTA), Interim MassDOT Secretary and MBTA General Manager Phillip Eng

accessibility was not about the case, but rather ensuring that all who wanted and needed to use mass transportation had the same access as everyone else — something that we at the T value equally. That is why this settlement agreement is not only a major milestone but so meaningful for myself and the MBTA leadership as we share that goal. While nationally, the MBTA is one of the most accessible legacy systems in the United States today, we also know we have much more to do," said Interim Secretary and MBTA General Manager Phillip Eng. "I value the dedication shown by each of the plaintiffs — in particular, Joanne Daniels-Finegold, Myrnairis Cepeda, Reginald Clark, Thomas Gilbert, Andrew Forman — along with BCIL led by Bill Henning, Taramattie Doucette and the entire team at GBLS, and Independent Monitor Judge King. I offer my sincerest gratitude for their decades of open communication and partnership as we strived to address accessibility at the MBTA. In addition, I would like to thank Christine Daniels, a community advocate, for her help on this important work. I

am so proud of System-Wide Accessibility Assistant General Manager Laura Brelsford and her entire team's efforts that led the progress we see today. We remain committed to ensuring one day, each and every individual can use the MBTA with safety, dignity, and confidence as we work with RTAG who has now assumed oversight responsibilities."

"The story of the Daniels-Finegold lawsuit and settlement is one that should be shared far and wide," said Assistant General Manager of System-Wide Accessibility, Laura Brelsford. "Two decades ago, a small group of disabled riders, with help from a dedicated legal services organization, spoke up after experiencing years of inaccessible service. And when no one would listen, they kept fighting — ultimately securing what has been recognized as the most comprehensive accessibility-related settlement agreement in public transportation. What's even more impressive is that, once the settlement was signed, they shifted quickly from litigants to partners and have consistently and constructively guided us into becoming one of

the most accessible systems in the country today. It has been a privilege to work alongside them and be part of this story."

"For more than 20 years, the named plaintiffs, Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), and the community have worked with the MBTA to make accessibility improvements that benefit all riders. I'm glad that RTAG will now have the resources and a strong platform to take our legacy into the future," said Joanne Daniels-Finegold.

"It marks a huge step towards ensuring equal rights for riders of all abilities," said Myrnairis (Mic) Cepeda.

"I'm glad we were able to bring the right people at the MBTA together with the community to solve the access prob-

lems. Now, it's up to the community to keep the work going with RTAG," said Reginald Clark.

"It means we have come a really long way compared to 20 years ago. It's far better than it was. We have made a real difference, not just for the MBTA, but worldwide. The MBTA has become a benchmark standard for accessibility," said Thomas Gilbert.

"Thanks to the leadership and foundational work of Greater Boston Legal Services and the plaintiffs, and with the strong team we have assembled — including System-Wide Accessibility, the Boston Center for Independent Living, and the Riders Transportation Access Group — I am confident that we will continue to advance accessibility at the MBTA. Although the transition presents significant challenges, our productive working relationship with the MBTA gives me confidence that full accessibility will ultimately be achieved," said Andrew Forman.

"Today, I am very pleased to see the MBTA's transformation from a decrepit system to one that is finally accessible, dependable, and built for all riders," said Gene Smith.

"BCIL extols the amazing individual plaintiffs who've given over twenty years of personal time to improve accessibility at the T, the great GBLS legal team, and the ongoing commitment

(MBTA, Pg. 11)



Happy Holidays!

Before this paper goes in the bin, consider one of these quick holiday reuse ideas

Wrap Small Gifts: Use pages for rustic, eco-friendly wrapping.

Cushion Fragile Gifts: Scrunch up pages to protect items during shipping.

Streak-Free Cleaning: Use crumpled paper to polish windows and mirrors.

Fire Starters: Twist sheets for a quick way to light a fireplace.



First-named Plaintiff Joanne Daniels-Finegold signing the agreement.

FRESH AND LOCAL

Top It Off

By Penny & Ed Cherubino

Last month, during a hectic week, Penny turned to our freezer stash to make a quick lunch. Right in front was a bag of frozen chicken chow mein that she knew was a fast and easy answer. Unfortunately, it is also rather bland.

While the packaged meal simmered, Penny gathered a few additions to add a bit of crunch and spice. We love adding toppings to personalize food. This

one called for Asian flair, so we each added our desired amount of peanuts, crispy garlic, fried shallots, and chili to our portions. This group of toppings has become so ubiquitous that our supply was from Trader Joe's rather than Chinatown.

Choices Over Time and Cultures

In Victorian times, formal dinner tables required a variety of items for guests to use to personalize their food. These ranged

from individual salt cellars with spoons to cruet sets holding condiments such as vinegar, mustard, sugar, and paprika. Today, many homes and restaurants might have salt and pepper shakers, but even those are becoming scarce.

If you visit a pub, you may find a supply of salt, pepper, vinegar, and ketchup within hand's reach. When we enjoy Lanzhou hand-pulled noodles, they come with chili oil, soy sauce, and vinegar to adjust the meal to

our taste. Your bowl of pho will come with a plate of herbs, lime, bean sprouts, chilies, onions, and sriracha and hoisin sauces. Middle Eastern tables might offer abundant platters of herbs to top the dishes.

Your Topping Pantry

As with all pantry items, your own tastes, allergies, and aversions will guide your choices. If you're a spice head, you probably want to increase the spice level in your foods with a selec-

tion of peppers, chili, and hot sauces on hand.

If you love a particular cuisine, your pantry should reflect that with the seeds, liquids, crunchy bits, and sauces used as toppings for that foodway. Olive oil and grated cheese for Italian food, Feta, yogurt, and olives for Greek dishes, ketchup, mustard, and pickles for many American sandwiches.

Fermented and pickled foods

(FRESH & LOCAL, Pg. 13)

MBTA (from Page 10)

throughout the MBTA's ranks to get it right on the ADA," said Bill Henning, the Director of the organizational plaintiff, Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL).

"Now that plaintiffs will be transitioning to RTAG, it is important to note that the work is not done," said Taramattie Doucette, Esq., who serves as lead counsel for the plaintiffs on behalf of the Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS). "Accessibility is not a box we check; it is a standard we must continue to raise. As systems age, as ridership grows, and as new technologies emerge, the community via BCIL/RTAG must insist that progress continues — steadily, boldly, and inclusively."

"On behalf of the Riders' Transportation Access Group (RTAG), I am honored to accept the baton of responsibility from the Daniels-Finegold plaintiffs, who have worked tirelessly for over two decades to improve MBTA access for everyone," said RTAG Facilitator and Community Organizer Katarina Torres Radisic. "Our commitment will extend beyond the settlement as we continue to promote transparency, equitable and inclusive service delivery, and build public trust in the MBTA."

Since the Settlement Agreement was reached in 2006, the MBTA has made sweeping improvements to virtually every aspect of its fixed-route system in order to ensure riders with disabilities have access to safe and reliable service. Upgrades have included:

- Creating and growing the Department of System-Wide

Accessibility — a clearinghouse of accessibility expertise

- Prioritizing elevator maintenance — in the early 2000s, many of the MBTA's most frequently use elevators were out of service the majority of the time. Today, elevators on average are operational 99.4% of the time. Additionally, a new elevator standard was created, resulting in larger, more transparent elevators

- Transitioning to an entirely low-floor, ramp-equipped bus fleet

- Fully revising and refreshing trainings for frontline employees on how to provide best-in-class accessible service

- Restructuring the process for handling accessibility-related complaints to ensure a fully closed loop system

- Expanding outreach and engagement to older adults and people with disabilities through the MBTA's Mobility Center

- Developing and administering an Internal Accessibility Monitoring Program in order to systematically evaluate the experience of riders with disabilities

- Significantly expanding station accessibility — in 2005, less than 60% of stations were accessible; today, 83% are; 93% of stations are projected to be accessible in the next five years

- Advancing dual-mode public information systems so that important information is broadcast audibly as well as visually

- Rolling out new wayfinding signage standards to make navigating the system easier

- And although not part of the Daniels-Finegold settlement, the RIDE has seen a number of

improvements in recent years — including improved on-time performance and a new rider-facing app

Numerous accessibility improvements are planned for the coming years, including:

- Major accessibility upgrades at over 30 stations

- Advancing the automatic enforcement of blocked bus stops using bus camera technology

- Issuing a first-of-its-kind accessibility training for Transit Police officers

For full list of ongoing initiatives, please visit [MBTA.com/accessibility-initiatives](https://www.mbta.com/accessibility-initiatives) and check out [MBTA.com/accessibility](https://www.mbta.com/accessibility) for additional information.

For more information, connect with the T on X @MBTA,

Facebook /TheMBTA, Instagram @theMBTA, Threads @thembta, or TikTok @thembta.

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) opened America's first subway tunnel in 1897, pioneering public transportation in the United States. Today, the MBTA is one of the largest public transit systems in the country, operating an extensive network of subway, bus, Commuter Rail, ferry, and paratransit services across 176 cities and towns. The MBTA is undergoing a transformative period, focusing on cultivating a culture of safety and excellence, modernizing infrastructure, and improving reliability and accessibility. Current priorities include accelerating critical infrastructure repairs, expanding accessi-

bility, and reducing emissions. The MBTA is committed to providing dependable, frequent, and accessible service that riders can rely on while supporting the region's economic vitality. Through initiatives like the unprecedented Track Improvement Program, Bus Network Redesign, and Rail Vision, the MBTA aims to connect communities and improve riders' daily experiences and trips. For questions or assistance, riders are encouraged to contact the MBTA Customer Center at 617-222-3200. Members of the press are encouraged to contact mediarelations@mbta.com. For the latest updates on MBTA services, projects, and initiatives, visit [MBTA.com](https://www.mbta.com) or follow @MBTA on social media.



Disability advocates, original plaintiffs, the BCIL, and GBLS leadership today celebrated this historic milestone.

Attention to Detail

PHOTOS AND TEXT BY PENNY CHERUBINO

THIS WEEK'S ANSWER



The Navy crest in the last clue is on a memorial marker adjacent to 127 Bay State Road. It is dedicated to the Boston University Reserve Officers' Training Corps, established in 1919 and known as the Charles River Battalion.

You'll find the next clue in the South End.

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

THIS WEEK'S CLUE



Real Estate Transfers

BUYER 1	SELLER 1	ADDRESS	PRICE
BACK BAY			
Lalli, Paul	George Lee Humphrey T	169 Commonwealth Ave #5	\$2,250,000
Latin, Cindy	Sandison, Gary L	265-275 Dartmouth St #6C	\$750,000
285 Comm Avenue LLC	Comm Ave Boston Rt	285 Commonwealth Ave #1	\$10,500,000
285 Comm Avenue LLC	Comm Ave Boston Rt	285 Commonwealth Ave #2	\$10,500,000
Kachru, Monica	Della Spring 2016 T	308 Commonwealth Ave #H	\$2,525,000
Eva Kelly Lt	Connolly, David J	359 Beacon St #4	\$1,420,000
Montasser, Sherif	Schuette, Stuart S	416 Commonwealth Ave #212	\$730,000
Strniste Jr, Peter E	Staffin, Benjamin A	421 Marlborough St #4	\$660,000
Azar, Riad R	Miller Ft	437 Marlborough St #21	\$655,000
Dennis, Grace	Selomily LLC	45 Lawrence St #2	\$1,481,000
Lattarullo, Andrew	Hma Warren Realty LLC	45 Warren Ave	\$3,100,000
Hildebrandt, Bridget	Thomas, Dawn C	492 Massachusetts Ave #53	\$709,000
Godshall, Douglas E	Cft 59 Comm Ave LLC	59 Commonwealth Ave	\$21,000,000
Greenwich Lane 104 LLC	Terrana, Beth F	6 Arlington St #3	\$8,375,000
BEACON HILL			
Waltze, Olivia G	2 Cups Of Chowda LLC	102-102A Myrtle St	\$3,525,000
Baldini, Edward B	Rhoades, Matthew	27 Lawrence St	\$3,200,000
Rando, Anthony	Bancel, Stephane J	21 Chestnut St	\$10,400,000
White, Julianne	John H Cunningham Iii T	21-A Pinckney St	\$1,625,000
Ai, Lijuan	Sassower, Kenneth C	6 Whittier Pl #3J	\$499,000
Ceire 86 Charles LLC	86 Charles St LLC	86 Charles St	\$4,340,000
Berklee College Of Music	S&a 2 Charlesgate LLC	1161 Boylston St	\$28,100,000
BAY VILLAGE/SOUTH END/KENMORE			
144-1 Worcester St Rt	144-1 Worcester Street R	144 Worcester St #1	\$2,480,000
144 South End Rt	144 Worcester Street LLC	144 Worcester St #3	\$3,600,000
Zanderigo, Alicia L	17 Dwight St Unit 3 Nt	17 Dwight St #3	\$725,000
Lin, Zichen	Zhou, Jian	188 Brookline Ave #23C	\$1,308,000
Jennifer W Roby RET	Harriet W Backus RET	170 Tremont St #1102	\$742,800
Kim, William	21 Wellington Street LLC	21 Wellington St #2	\$2,375,000
Pierre Charchaflian RET	Ledermann Us Re Corp	211 W Springfield St	\$2,800,000
Webster, Adam	Wargin, Jeffrey	312 Shawmut Ave #4	\$870,000
Leonard, Michael	Taglieri, Jane L	33 Concord Sq #1	\$1,543,850
Regan, Andrew F	Robinson Leclair Lt	41 Worcester Sq #5	\$410,000
Gorham, Dorothy L	Kenneth P Holmes Ft	74 Appleton St #5	\$1,800,000
Nacopoulos, Kassiani	Siu, Wai M	77 Chandler St #1	\$1,729,000
Okeefe, Connor	Degraaf, Bruce R	12 Isabella St #3	\$465,000
Etude Two LLC	Xue, Yu	159 Saint Botolph St #3	\$1,075,000
Astrape LLC	Tracy, Eva P	197 Commonwealth Ave #7	\$1,758,888
Egan, Michael C	Nancy J Cahn T	23 Piedmont St #23	\$2,900,000
Dellolio, Joseph N	J3h LLC	234 W Newton St #1	\$645,000
Jo-Ann Suna RET	Jo-Ann Suna RET	246 W Newton St #1	\$1,410,311
Collum, Deborah	Dolan, Nancy V	255 Beacon St #53	\$746,000
Struck, Christina	Guidi, Michael A	8 Garrison St #100	\$490,000
Washington 3458 LLC	Keegan Rt	3458 Washington St	\$1,800,000
Foster, Jason J	Jdmd Owner LLC	45 Temple St #202	\$635,000
Habecker, Sara E	567 Tremont LLC	557 Tremont St #9	\$1,950,000
Donohue, Remi A	Asselin, Timothy	565 Tremont St #28	\$1,275,000

Real Estate Transfers

BUYER 1	SELLER 1	ADDRESS	PRICE
BAY VILLAGE/SOUTH END/KENMORE			
Lerner, Hilary A	Thomson, Cheryl	81 Waltham St #6	\$1,250,000
Murray, Bradley A	Chauhan, Abhishek	82 Worcester St #2	\$2,450,000
Chen, Eileen	Levy, Tucker	86 W Springfield St #2	\$607,000
Fox, Daniel J	Ohaver, Briana E	88 Worcester St #4	\$925,000
Berklee College Of Music	S&a 2 Charlesgate LLC	2 Charlesgate W	\$28,100,000
Berklee College Of Music	S&a 2 Charlesgate LLC	6 Charlesgate W	\$28,100,000
DOWNTOWN/WATERFRONT			
Feind, Patricia A	Altieri, Richard M	1 Avery St #16G	\$1,425,000
Blue Front Fulton St LLC	Thiboutot Ft	100 Fulton St #4V	\$1,100,000
Enfield, Jennifer	Sinnott, Robert	103-109 South St #3B	\$820,000
Thibeault Development LLC	Boto Strategic Prop Iii	11 Avenue De Lafayette	\$9,200,000
Iovanna Jr, Michael A	Patel, Hiren	121-123 Beach St #303	\$1,125,000
Mirabella Eclano LLC	142-Unitc2 Com St Rlty L	142 Commercial St #C2	\$490,000
Ozburn, James	Meadow, Cynthia	29 Gartland St #2	\$619,000
Ranck, Darren E	33 Pearl Street LLC	33 Pearl St #2	\$840,000
Demarco, Anthony M	33 Pearl Street LLC	33 Pearl St #6	\$1,140,000
Ohanley, Ronald P	Coogan Jr, Henry W	40 Battery St #305	\$3,400,000
Mattaliano, Cara	Hewson Lachance Ft	53 Jamaica St	\$1,500,000
John C & Tj Santelli RET	Mcaf Winthrop LLC	240 Devonshire St #4203	\$2,650,000
Shi, Yu	Mcaf Winthrop LLC	240 Devonshire St #4609	\$2,600,000
Miller, Mary E	234 Causeway St 1108 LLC	234 Causeway St #1108	\$1,090,000



You can enhance a bowl of Korean soup with a variety of side dishes, called banchan.

FRESH & LOCAL (from Page 11)

from around the world add a sharp note to a menu item. Eastern Europe has its sauerkraut; Korea has kimchi; India has pickles called achar, made from mango, lime, chilis, and garlic.

Nuts, crushed or whole, make excellent toppings and can be used for every course from appetiser to dessert. Seeds, especially when toasted and sometimes mixed, add both crunch and nutrition.

Dairy products, including cheeses, creams, yogurts, and sauces made from them, such as raita or tzatziki, add texture and richness. A dollop of crème fraîche or sour cream can be the perfect accompaniment to a bowl of soup. Mexican crema completes a taco and balances the spice in other dishes. American Thanksgiving is not complete without cranberry sauce or chutney since it is one of the few tangy items on the plate.

We have a collection of small dishes we use to add toppings to our table. Most Asian Markets have a household section offering a variety of condiment plates. If you prefer a matched set, you can purchase those from many retailers.

Or you can return to the past by visiting second-hand shops or antique stores. There you may find cruet sets or lovely cut-glass divided dishes, perfect for this purpose. Finally, be sure to ask the people in your family and friends group who are trying to downsize if they have some fantastic items that could serve your needs.

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Healey-Driscoll Administration awards over \$750,000 in grants to support greater food access in Massachusetts

Special to the Sun

The Healey-Driscoll Administration announced \$779,458 in funding to improve food access in underserved communities throughout Massachusetts by increasing local food production. The funding will directly support the growth of urban farms, community gardens, and food business operations, targeting areas that struggle with food insecurity.

Among the recipients are: \$20,979 to Trustees of Reservations for Improving pathways for senior and mobility-challenged garden implements and \$85,000 to Commonwealth Kitchen, for their Large-scale specialized food processing equipment.

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) is awarding grants through the state's Urban Agriculture Program and the Massachusetts Food Ventures Program to 17 organizations. The funds

will help strengthen the local food system, increase local food production, and expand retail and distribution channels to distribute more healthy, fresh food across the state.

"With President Trump repeatedly attacking the programs that help Massachusetts families afford food, programs like these will increase the supply of locally grown healthy, affordable food," said Governor Maura Healey. "These awards are supporting local jobs, farmers and small food businesses that keep money circulating in our local economy and provide essential food for the people of Massachusetts."

"Investing in community gardens and urban farms gives neighborhoods more control over their own food supply" said Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll. "These projects increase consistent access to fresh and local produce, create real opportunities for skill-building, and

help communities build reliable distribution systems."

The Urban Agriculture Program will provide resources to urban farms and community gardens to increase their production capacity. This means more local food for low-to-moderate income residents who often face challenges accessing fresh, affordable, nutritious food.

The Massachusetts Food Ventures Program helps increase food access by funding infrastructure to support processing, distribution channels, and retail outlets that are located primarily in or near communities of low or moderate income, including Gateway Cities and rural communities. Completed projects will enhance access to Massachusetts-grown, harvested, or caught food products through the development of collaborations with local agricultural enterprises and public/private entities.

"Fresh, affordable food is

a basic need for our communities across Massachusetts," said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rebecca Tepper. "Programs like Urban Agriculture and Food Ventures strengthen our local food system by increasing production and distribution capacity as demand for local food continues to grow."

"Our food access programs have been transformative in helping to create a stronger local food system," said MDAR Commissioner Ashley Randle. "The Food Ventures Program provides opportunities for mid-range businesses, creating greater access to Massachusetts grown food, and increasing post-harvest opportunities for farmers. Through the Urban Agriculture Program, more food will be grown in urban neighborhoods, helping to ensure that residents in these communities have greater access to local fresh produce, improving their health outcomes and enhancing their quality of life."

"I am glad to see the release of this grant funding, particularly to two organizations in Springfield, Wellspring Harvest and Nordica St. Community Farm, who do such great work uniting our communities and providing healthy food and nutritional education to their members," said Senator Adam Gómez (D – Hampden). "We must continue to invest in community centered food resources throughout the commonwealth, shortening the distance that our food travels and mitigating gaps in supply chains that only drive up prices, and I am proud of this administration for prioritizing these efforts."

"I'm thrilled to see much needed help during these troubling economic times," said Representative Steven Ouellette (D – Westport). "This funding will provide opportunities that are critical components to communities in my district and beyond."

Save the Harbor is giving out \$300,000 for free beach events

Special to the Sun

Through the Better Beaches Program, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) are looking for input from community organizations, local groups, and artists to bring diverse and interesting events to DCR beaches in Nahant, Lynn, Revere, Winthrop, East Boston, South Boston, Dorchester, Quincy, and Hull.

Events will be free for community members to attend and should reflect the many interests and identities of the community. Anyone can apply to this grant program, whether they are part of an organization, collective, or a creative individual with a vision for a more diverse and activated waterfront. This grant program is not just about securing funds; it is a way to get involved, bring community to the Boston Harbor beaches, and help shape the future of the waterfront.

Grants from \$2,500 – \$8,500 will be awarded based on a tiered system depending on the number of people the proposed event will serve and the amount of different components involved.

The Better Beaches Program has funded different types of events including wellness/recreational programs, children's programming, performances, to music and cultural events, as long as they involve the community and any one of our region's many beaches. Some examples of previous events Save the Harbor has funded are:

"Community Care and Wellness Fair" with Mutual Aid Eastie where 200 people, mostly Spanish-speaking East Boston community members, participated in various health and wellness

activities, like Reiki, massages, and arts and crafts on Constitution Beach, East Boston.

Abilities Dance Boston's Dance Performance featured performances from dancers and musicians with disabilities who created beach inspired choreography and an original score that wowed over 100 attendees on Constitution Beach, East Boston.

NamaStay Sober Beach Yoga, where over 400 attendees participated in free weekly beach yoga on Revere Beach, especially created with those who are sober and are in recovery in mind.

To apply for a grant or ask any questions about the Better Beaches Program, please contact Maya Smith at smith@savetheharbor.org and Isabella Carrion at carrion@savetheharbor.org. Applications are due by January 31, 2025, 11:59 pm, after which Save the Harbor's Better Beaches Grants Committee will review the proposals and reach out to selected grantees by March 11, 2026.

For more information and a full list of the 2025 grantees, go to <https://www.savetheharbor.org/better-beaches/grant-in>

formation or attend one of the information sessions.

We look forward to receiving your ideas on how to make our public beaches accessible and enjoyable spaces for all of our communities!

Save the Harbor/Save the Bay is the region's leading voice for clean water and continued public investment in Boston Harbor, the region's public beaches, and the Boston Harbor Islands. Since 1986, our mission has been to restore and protect Boston Harbor, Massachusetts Bay, and the marine environment, and share them with the public for everyone to enjoy.

Save the Harbor is committed to making Boston Harbor, the Islands, our beaches, and our programs inclusive, equitable, diverse, and accessible to everyone and anyone. We provide free programs, events and create opportunities for people to experience Boston Harbor and our spectacular urban natural resources first-hand, with an emphasis on breaking down barriers of race, language, income and ability.



Namastay Sober, a program previously funded by the Better Beaches Program, brought free yoga classes to Revere Beach, just north of Boston.

New regulations for Boston food delivery companies set for January as safety concerns rise around e-bikes and scooters

By Milena Fernsler

Oh, the weather outside is frightful ... but thankfully you don't have to face the frigid Boston wind to pick up your lo mein next door. An irresistibly convenient alternative is at the fingertips of most Americans. With the aid of a delivery app, a courier can deliver a steaming dinner to your doorstep within the hour. But what are the consequences of all the mopeds, motorized scooters and e-bikes necessary to carry out these orders?

New regulations for delivery companies in Boston will go into effect in January, the city's most recent attempt to address safety concerns involving micro-mobility vehicles.

What began as a lifeline for restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic continues to gain rapid popularity, according to a City of Boston press release. Colin Zick, president of the Beacon Hill Civic Association, said the volume of food deliveries has "skyrocketed" since 2022, and according to the Boston Transportation Department, so did 311 reports related to delivery vehicles.

The ordinance requires companies like Uber Eats, DoorDash and Grubhub to insure their

drivers, mandates licensing for all delivery vehicles and makes Boston the first city in the U.S. to pass regulations that require data-sharing from delivery apps.

"This ordinance going into effect is long awaited," said Sharon Durkan, city councilor of Beacon Hill's District 8, and a driving force behind the new regulations. "This is one of the top issues I hear about across the district, not just in Beacon Hill."

However, delivery companies pushed back against mandates during a public hearing last February. Uber's public policy manager, Katie Franger, said their current insurance only covers motorized vehicles, and that if they are unable to find a way to insure all couriers, those who rely on bicycles may lose their jobs. She said umbrella insurance would also raise costs for residents and contradict the city's efforts to lower carbon emissions by prioritizing gas-powered vehicles.

"We were trying to strike a balance between understanding that this is folks' livelihood, but also understanding that safety in the city of Boston and license and insurance is incredibly important," Durkan said.

A pedestrian died weeks after being hit by a food delivery driv-

er riding an e-bike in Back Bay in September, which inspired further discussion among city council members.

"Unfortunately, these individual incidents are a symptom of a bigger problem," Durkan said. While crash report data does not specify vehicle type, councilors say it's clear smaller motorized vehicles pose unique safety hazards due to their ability to weave through traffic.

Councilor at-large Ed Flynn, took a more restrictive approach in September with a proposed ban on scooters, mopeds and e-bikes being used by third-party food delivery drivers. The ordinance faced pushback from councilors who cited concerns about penalizing delivery drivers instead of companies.

This concern has not prevented an increase in police enforcement. In an effort BPD refers to as "Operation Safe Scooter," officers have been cracking down on moped and scooter violations in recent months. In October, Beacon Hill's district officers seized three mopeds, issued citations and chased down and arrested a motorcyclist for disregarding traffic laws.

Zick says he would like to see even more targeted enforcement in Beacon Hill. "Usually the

drivers are masked," he said, "so you can't identify anyone who is doing those things that are threats to public safety."

An informal survey sent to Beacon Hill residents by the Beacon Hill Civic Association last month found that 88% of 123 respondents reported seeing scooters driving the wrong way or on sidewalks in the past 30 days. Thirty-seven percent said they witnessed violations daily.

Andrew Blau, a Beacon Hill resident who was walking his dog Billie, said he can't count the number of times he and his pet have nearly been "clocked by moped drivers going the wrong way down one way streets."

"People think it's almost like a bike, where they can kind of just go wherever they want to go," Blau said.

Scooter driver Joshua Acosta has been working for Uber Eats for about two years. He said it takes a lot of experience to navigate Boston streets without breaking laws.

"Those who go the wrong way make us look bad as well, since we are both driving on the same vehicle type," he explained in an interview translated from Spanish. He said Uber Eats provides no training or safety enforcement for their workers.

Acosta sees a bigger problem with e-bikes, which do not require registration or a driver's license in Massachusetts as long as they do not exceed 20 mph. However, the speed of an e-bike can be difficult to distinguish from the outside, sometimes blurring the line between a bicycle and a moped.

"Cyclists go on the sidewalk," Acosta said. "(some) drive in electric bikes, which can run 40 to 50 miles (per hour) like a scooter."

Durkan said another gap in the new regulations is that not every moped and motorbike driver is a third-party delivery driver. "It's not going to solve every single issue," she said.

Even so, she said she hopes the ordinance is a positive step toward solving the problem.

"I encourage all Beacon Hill residents to reach out to me to see the effect potentially of this ordinance and any differences they see moving forward," she said.

Milena Fernsler is a student in the Boston University Journalism program. This story is a partnership between The Boston Sun and the Boston University Journalism program.

LEGAL NOTICES (submit notices to legals@thebostonsun.com)

LEGAL NOTICE

SUMMONS (CITACION JUDICIAL)
CASE NUMBER (Número del Caso): 22STCV01008
NOTICE TO DEFENDANT (AVISO AL DEMANDADO):
Xiaobing Wang
YOU ARE BEING SUED BY PLAINTIFF (LO ESTÁ DEMANDANDO EL DEMANDANTE): BROWN NERI SMITH & KHAN LLP
NOTICE! You have been sued. The court may decide against you without your being heard unless you respond within 30 days. Read the information below. You have 30 CALENDAR DAYS after this summons and legal papers are served on you to

file a written response at this court and have a copy served on the plaintiff. A letter or phone call will not protect you. Your written response must be in proper legal form if you want the court to hear your case. There may be a court form that you can use for your response. You can find these court forms and more information at the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp) your county law library, or the courthouse nearest you. If you cannot pay the filing fee, ask the court clerk for a fee waiver form. If you do not file

your response on time, you may lose the case by default, and your wages, money, and property may be taken without further warning from the court. There are other legal requirements. You may want to call an attorney right away. If you do not know an attorney, you may want to call an attorney referral service. If you cannot afford an attorney, you may be eligible for free legal services from a nonprofit legal services program. You can locate these nonprofit groups at the California Legal Services Web site (www.lawhelpcalifornia.org), the California Courts

Online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp) or by contacting your local court or county bar association. **NOTE:** The court has a statutory lien for waived fees and costs on any settlement or arbitration award of \$10,000 or more in a civil case. The court's lien must be paid before the court will dismiss the case. **¡AVISO!** Lo han demandado. Si no responde dentro de 30 días, la corte puede decidir en su contra sin escuchar su versión. Lea la información a continuación. Tiene 30 DÍAS DE CALENDARIO después de que le entreguen esta citación y papeles legal-

es para presentar una respuesta por escrito en esta corte y hacer que se entregue una copia al demandante. Una carta o una llamada telefónica no lo protegen. Su respuesta por escrito tiene que estar en formato legal correcto si desea que procesen su caso en la corte. Es posible que haya un formulario que usted pueda usar para su respuesta. Puede encontrar estos formularios de la corte y más información en el Centro de Ayuda de las Cortes de California (www.sucorte.ca.gov), en la biblioteca de leyes de su condado o en la corte que le quede más cerca. Si no

puede pagar la cuota de presentación, pida al secretario de la corte que le dé un formulario de exención de pago de cuotas. Si no presenta su respuesta a tiempo, puede perder el caso por incumplimiento y la corte le podrá quitar su sueldo, dinero y bienes sin más advertencia. Hay otros requisitos legales. Es recomendable que llame a un abogado inmediatamente. Si no conoce a un abogado, puede llamar a un servicio de remisión a abogados. Si no puede pagar a un abogado, es posible que cumpla con los requisitos para obtener servicios

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de derecho civil. Tiene que pagar el gravamen de la corte antes de que la corte pueda desechar el caso. The name and address of the court is (El nombre y dirección de la corte es): CENTRAL-STANLEY MOSK COURTHOUSE 111 N. HILLST. LOS ANGELES CA 90012 The name, address, and telephone number of plaintiff's attorney, or plaintiff without an attorney, is (El nombre, la dirección y el número de teléfono del abogado del demandante, o del demandante que no tiene abogado, es): Ethan J. Brown; Kete P. Barnes Brown Neri

Smith & Khan, LLP
11601 Wilshire Blvd., Ste.2080, Los Angeles, CA 90025 T: (310) 593-9890 E: Ethan@bnsklaw.com; Kete@bnsklaw.com
DATE (Fecha): 10/08/2025 David W. Slayton Clerk (Secretario), by S. Bolden, Deputy



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