Southwest Corridor Park voted ‘Best of Boston’ 2020

By Lauren Bennett

The Southwest Corridor Park, known by many as a peaceful escape running through the center of bustling Boston from Jamaica Plan and Roxbury to the South End and Back Bay, was recently chosen as the “Best Secret Garden” by Boston Magazine in its 2020 Best of Boston issue.

The magazine admits the park “isn’t exactly a secret,” as it is used by many to commute, play, or just enjoy some fresh air. However, a lot of hard work from volunteers and organizations goes into keeping the park beautiful and enjoyable for all.

It’s a real team effort and many hands go into helping out with the different sections of the park, but the Sun spoke with Franco Campanello, President of the Southwest Corridor Park Conservancy (SWCP), as well as Jennifer Leonard, Chair of the Southwest Corridor Park Management Advisory Council (PMAC). The SWPC looks after the portion of the park in the South End and Back Bay, was recently chosen as the “Best Secret Garden” by Boston Magazine in its 2020 Best of Boston issue.

After facing sharp criticism from neighbors last week in the Worce- ster Square area on the Mass/Cass Corridor, the City on Saturday released the long-awaited Mass/Cass 2.0 Data Dashboard following sharp criticism from neighbors.

The dashboard had been a low-hanging-fruit promise as part of the 2.0 plan last year, and it was expected to be up and running by December or January. However, delays plagued it and then COVID-19 hit and took away the momentum.

Walsh gives COVID-19 updates, Cassellius discusses BPS reopening

By Lauren Bennett

Mayor Walsh held a press conference on Friday, July 31, where he provided updates on the City’s COVID-19 efforts, as well as invited Boston Public Schools (BPS) Superintendent Brenda Cassellius to speak more about the status of the BPS reopening plan.

COVID UPDATES

Walsh said on Friday that the seven day daily average of new cases remains “very low,” as does the number of COVID patients in hospitals. He said that while there has been a “small uptick” in the number of cases in the state, it is not currently a cause for concern. “Compared to the rest of the United States, Boston and the Commonwealth are working extremely hard to make sure we keep these numbers down,” Walsh said.

Walsh said on Friday that the seven day daily average of new cases remains “very low,” as does the number of COVID patients in hospitals.
WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

As we are writing this, we are awaiting the arrival of Hurricane Isaias, which is the earliest-ever named storm of a hurricane season.

Although Isaias was a weak Category 1 hurricane when it made landfall in the Carolinas and will be a tropical storm by the time it reaches us, it is forecast to combine with a storm front out of the west by the time it reaches New Jersey, bringing heavy rain to western New England and strong winds to eastern New England, similar to what Hurricane Irene did in late August of 2011.

Irene caused widespread power outages in Eastern Mass. (we recall losing all of the contents of our freezer in the basement) and the same is likely for Isaias, so we trust that all of our readers are prepared for some degree of inconvenience in the coming days.

Although Isaias will not cause major damage, the record number of named storms already this season gives us pause. Climate change undeniably is occurring in ways that are not fully understood, but one thing that is clear is that the number and severity of tropical storms are on the increase.

Climate change is bringing warmer ocean temperatures, which are the jet fuel for tropical storms. And for the record, the ocean temperature in Boston Harbor these past two weeks uncharacteristically has been above 70 degrees, which is wonderful for swimmers, but a harbinger of bad things to come.

The Hurricane of 1938 still stands as the fiercest hurricane ever to strike our part of the country, a once-in-a-hundred years weather event. In terms of the odds alone, we are overdue for another major hurricane. But with the effects of climate change factored into the mix, it is clear that Mother Nature could do some serious damage if another coastal storm makes its way here.

So as with everything else in life, it’s just one day at a time as we await the inevitability of The Big One to strike.

DEATHS ARE ONLY PART OF THE COVID STORY

Whether the subject is drunk driving, gun violence, or COVID-19, the headline that grabs our attention always is the death toll, of which there tragically have been more than 150,000 of our fellow Americans from COVID-19.

However, what often goes unreported are the large numbers of injuries, whether caused by drunken drivers, guns, or the coronavirus, that have life-altering consequences for victims.

Recent studies have shown that even individuals who are totally asymptomatic when they contract COVID-19 still are likely to have long-term, if not permanent, damage to their heart, lungs, brain, kidneys, and other organs.

With respect to the heart, a study revealed that more than 3/4 of a group of 100 relatively young and healthy persons who contracted COVID-19 had some degree of visible heart damage -- 76 had evidence of a biomarker signaling cardiac injury typically found after a heart attack -- two months after the virus had cleared their bodies.

We still are learning about the coronavirus, but as time goes on and as our nation moves ahead with no strategy to contain the pandemic, thereby endangering the lives and health of all of our citizens, it is becoming increasingly clear that COVID-19 is a far more insidious threat than initially had been thought.

And as we learn more and more about how damaging COVID-19 can be to even healthy individuals, it is hard to imagine reopening schools to business without a national strategy and adequate funding to ensure the health and safety of our people.

GUEST OP-ED

School buffer zones shackle communities of color from economic freedom

By Linda Champion

Creating drug-free school buffer zones sounds like a good idea. The disparate impacts of these zones led to the mass incarceration of thousands of Black and Brown residents. Now, this same failed policy is being used to prevent communities of color from opening cannabis retail shops in their own neighborhoods -- denying economic opportunities marijuana legalization was designed to create.

As a former Suffolk County prosecutor, I know the profoundly disparate human and societal toll of school buffer zones — zones that our communities of color overwhelmingly fall within. In densely populated urban areas, smoking a joint on your “school-zoned” tenant led to arrest, conviction and mandatory-minimum sentences. For white suburban kids, it was just “kids being kids.”

Same behavior; disparate impact.

Boston’s school zones have been largely reformed but continue to materially block Black and Brown people from opportunities to create generational wealth in cannabis. Boston prohibits even the submission of an adult-use application located within 500 feet of a public or private school serving grades K-12 under the false pretense that the prohibition is a requirement of state law.

Boston does have a choice and the City Council has an obligation to support communities of color by creating buffers that work for all residents.

State law allows Boston to reduce buffers by ordinance or by-law. The State’s Cannabis Control Commission has itself acknowledged that overly strict zoning rules and large buffer zones sharply limit the number of parcels available to potential operators, favoring large corporations with substantial financial resources while disproportionately harming smaller, local companies. Reinstating school buffer zones will significantly raise costs (and the stakes) for minority entrepreneurs.

Today, liquor stores are often located in “school zones”. Why should cannabis be treated any differently? The City Council should ensure communities of color have a choice as to which cannabis businesses should operate in our neighborhoods. Communities like Cambridge have already reduced school buffers to 300 feet, recognizing the restorative justice intended by cannabis legalization and how these overly restrictive buffers run counter to those goals.

Like Cambridge, the City Council also has a choice: choose to respect the self-determination of communities of color and recognize as people of color we are able to advocate and choose for ourselves.

As the Black Lives Matter movement has swelled to become the single largest, organized protest in modern history. While protests can inspire, our policy choices can make them meaningful. The City Council has the opportunity to do just this, by acknowledging the failure of school buffer zones that shackled our communities.

Opportunities to create generational wealth have eluded communities of color. The economic opportunity a vibrant cannabis industry can provide to our Black and Brown residents will not be taken from us this time.

Because of Mayor Walsh and the City Council President Janey, we can celebrate locally and nationally the symbolism of the cannabis ordinance’s passage. However, without further urgent action by the City Council, this ordinance will be a symbol of an unfulfilled promise, rather than a symbol of true restorative justice.

Linda Champion is a Black Korean American attorney and former Suffolk County prosecutor. She serves as an Advisor to the President of Whittier Street Health Center, Board Vice-Chair to CUE Realty, a wholly owned subsidiary of Urban Edge and an Advisor to Boston Shovelstoppers.
City’s ability to focus on anything but keeping those on Mass/Cass healthy. However, as August rolled around, members of the Worcester Square Area Neighborhood Association (WSANA) and members of the Mass/Cass 2.0 Task Force began to feel that the plan was flailing and failing.

Task Force member Mike Nelson said as much last week, saying that the conditions right now on Mass/Cass in the South End were the definition of failure. Others joined him in that summation, and then late on Tuesday, the City released the dashboard.

This week, Nelson said it was a starting point and at least showed some progress on the plan, though late in the game.

“I’m happy to have it up and running,” he said. “Now we have a base line to start measuring against. This is a much needed step in the right direction.”

WSANA Vice President Desi Murphy said he was happy with the unveiling, but said he had hoped to have such data earlier this year.

“It’s a good start for informing residents and providers how the City will measure progress,” he said. “It will be a helpful resource, especially for residents who are currently tracking progress with their eyes rather than with data. I do wish the dashboard had arrived sooner though.”

City Health Chief Marty Martinez said they have been working hard on the plan, including trying to keep people COVID-19 free and to address the issues on the corridor.

“Our City teams have been focused on making the necessary improvements for those who are struggling: those with a substance use disorder, and the residents impacted by the opioid epidemic throughout Boston’s neighborhoods,” he said. “At the same time, we have been working together to overcome COVID-19, which has also made us adjust the way we deliver services across the city. The Mass/Cass 2.0 plan continues to serve as a roadmap for City departments and external partners to balance public health, public safety and quality of life issues. We remain committed to doing everything we can to improve conditions in the area, with our primary focus always being the safety and wellbeing of all people in the City of Boston. The new boston.gov/mass-cass website is one of the action items included in our plan which allows anyone to track metrics and take a deep dive into the many services that are offered in the area. It further reasserts our commitment to transparently communicateing with our residents on the work we have done and what is ahead of us.”

The dashboard includes monthly and year-to-date totals for Treatment Placements – there were 274 in the month of July and 2,603 since Jan. 1. Another key metric is the number of permanently housed shelter guests, and there were 16 in July and 146 since Jan. 1. Residents, however, have been most interested in the needle exchange statistics, and the dashboard gives a running total of those numbers.

In July, there were 73,694 syringes taken in, and 59,727 given out at the AHOPE program in the South End. That is a 1.23 return rate for the month. Year to date, there has been an astounding 635,219 syringes taken in, and 409,977 given out – for a year to date return rate of 1.55.

Long-time WSANA resident and data guru Andrew Brand said this is a good first step, but he had some criticisms that were based on his own exhaustive research over the years.

“Boston has taken a good first step with the Data Dashboard,” he said. “It publishes some Quality of Life metrics we’ve been seeking, such as EMS calls, which are a good indicator of drug overdose in the area. For example, it shows that in June, opioid overdose was almost 5 times more concentrated in Mass/Cass than it was just .5 miles away. While it is a good start, the Dashboard is incomplete.”

He said he thinks for the Dashboard to be useful for residents to see progress in either direction, and for the Task Force to make informed, evidence based adjustments to its efforts, the Dashboard should include the following adjustments.

• Include timelines so that we could see progress or lack thereof over time. Because the impact is seasonal, the timelines should be year over year comparisons.
• Provide data that allows us to compare Mass/Cass to other parts of the city. For example, publish the number of EMS calls for in all of Boston
• Break out the 311 needle pick-up requests, which is a more precise indication of the impact of the opioid problem on residents.
• Break out syringe return rate numbers so that we could know how many needles were brought in by IV users, and how many were discarded in the streets, in parks, and on private property.

Members of WSANA and the 2.0 Task Force are still awaiting the publication of the six-month report on the 2.0 plan, which was due in March.

Bio-Blitz (from pg. 1)

app and website (iNaturalist.org) that Dr. Hitchcock said “was conceived as a Facebook for naturalists.”

After participants make their initial species observation using iNaturalist, they can document it, usually by photographing it, as well as provide information on who they are and where they made the observation. This evidence can include images of species tracks, feathers or waste, “or any evidence of living creatures,” Dr. Hitchcock said.

The visitors are then asked to name the species to the best of their ability, Dr. Hitchcock said, or get it to the family or genus level using automated recognition technology.

Dr. Hitchcock said the information is the disseminated to the Encyclopedia of Life, as well as the Global Diversity Information Facility (GBIF) - a research infrastructure that houses this data.

“The primarily goal is to connect people with nature,” Dr. Hitchcock said of the BioBlitz, “and people just need to get out for an hour or two to record these species.”

Published by the Mass/Cass 2.0 Task Force, the dashboard is a key component of the plan’s implementation. The dashboard allows residents and providers to track progress and helps the City prioritize its efforts. The dashboard includes metrics such as syringe return rates, shelter guest numbers, and EMS calls. The dashboard is incomplete and does not include all necessary metrics. The dashboard will be updated monthly and year-to-date totals will be released. The dashboard also includes the ability to adjust the plan based on data. The dashboard is a helpful resource that shows progress and lack thereof. The dashboard includes some quality of life metrics, such as EMS calls, which are a good indicator of drug overdose in the area. The dashboard shows that in June, opioid overdose was almost 5 times more concentrated in Mass/Cass than it was just .5 miles away. The dashboard is incomplete and should include timelines, evidence based adjustments, and comparisons to other parts of the city. The dashboard will be updated monthly and year over year comparisons should be made. The dashboard should include 311 needle pick-up requests, which is a more precise indication of the impact of the opioid problem on residents. The dashboard should include syringe return rate numbers so that we can know how many needles were brought in by IV users, and how many were discarded in the streets, in the parks, and on private property.

Boston Ward 4 Dems to meet virtually Aug. 18

The Boston Ward 4 Dems August meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 18, at 6 pm virtually. Join fellow Democrats from Back Bay, Fenway, and the South End for a discussion with City Councilors Michelle Wu, Kim Janey, and Ed Flynn. For Zoom information, please email ward4dems@gmail.com.
Major interest sparked for mail-in ballots early in the Primary Election

By Seth Dazian

City officials said this week they had received more than 26,500 applications from registered voters to procure a mail-in ballot for the Sept. 1 Primary Election – which faces a heated race for U.S. Senate between Ed Markey and Joe Kennedy III and a few local races, though many state offices are unopposed in the downtown neighborhoods.

As of Tuesday, the Boston Election Department had received more than 26,500 ballot applications. That number includes all ballot requests: absentee, online/email requests and the new mail-in vote option.

All registered voters have received a vote-by-mail application in their mail boxes during the week of July 20. The application is in a postcard format. To receive a ballot, voters must first complete, sign and return the prepaid postcard application to the Election Department by August 26 for the early voting period and on Election Day. All poll workers will receive face shields, face masks, gloves, disinfectant wipes, disinfectant spray and hand sanitizer. Cleaning will take place at each site every two to three hours. Voters waiting in line will be instructed to stand 6 feet away from others and wear a face covering.

Walsh Updates (from pg. 1)

said. He said that so far, $33 million has been raised for the Boston Resiliency Fund, and more than $24 million has been distributed to nonprofits and organizations serving youth, families and seniors.

More than 1500 meals a week are being distributed to the City’s seniors, and Lyft drivers have delivered more than 2000 bags of food at no cost to the City, Walsh added, which helps keep these drivers employed. Additionally, 100 food pantries and 18 farmers markets are open in the City.

Other food access measures include working with Project Bread to increase SNAP enrollment. “Food access is an equity issue and we’ve been addressing it for a long time,” Walsh said.

He also added that the new mobile testing team will be in different neighborhoods across the city every two weeks, bringing tests to areas that need it the most. “Testing is one of the best tools we have for stopping the spread of the virus,” Walsh said.

The City will also be hosting a series of virtual panels about how the virus has impacted its biggest sectors, including hospitality, construction, retail, and the IT/tech industry. These forums will be “geared towards” college and job training programs, Walsh said, and experts in the industries will be able to share latest market trends as well as answer questions.

Walsh also spoke about the importance of filling out the Census as the city is not undercounted, as funds are needed to support every Boston resident.

“We need people to fill out the Census,” Walsh said. “Everyone counts equally in our democracy.”

BPS UPTDATES

Walsh announced last week that BPS was looking at a hybrid model for students in the fall, where they would be split into groups and alternate remote learning and in-person learning. Parents would have the option to have their children learn entirely remotely.

“Keeping our kids safe is the number one priority,” Walsh said last Friday. “We’re planning for every scenario. We know that we will not start school this year with all in-person learning.”

Walsh made it clear that he does not want to see “an issue” made out of reopening schools. “Let’s think about how we reopen schools safely.” He said if schools can’t be reopened safely at all this fall, they will have to be reopened at some point so the discussion needs to start now about how to do it in the best, safest way.

“We are not these other states where they’re seeing surges,” Walsh said, “and quite honestly, public employees and people are being completely ignored by governments in these other states. You are not being ignored here in Boston.”

BPS Superintendent Brenda Cassellius said that “it wasn’t easy pivoting in four short days to ensure food access to our families, to reinvent a whole new way of educating children; while also giving them the technology while we were sheltering in so they could continue their learning at home.”

She said that since schools closed in March, more than 32,000 Chromebooks and almost 1.4 million meals have been distributed to students across the City. She added that more than 14,000 contacts with students have been made to provide support for mental health.

“We learned a lot,” she said of this past spring’s remote learning experience. “We know now that many students struggle in this new way of learning,” and families need more guidance to help their students at home.

“It is clear that the best place for children to learn is at school, in a classroom, with their teacher,” she said. “But...we will only bring them back if it’s safe to do so. Safety is our top priority.”

Cassellius said that BPS has been “planning for months” and gathering data from students, families, and staff through surveys, as well as walking through schools, looking at blueprints, and “evaluating our spring remote learning.”

She said that facility concerns such as water temperature, bathrooms, fixing windows, and ordering HVAC units is something that is being addressed by BPS, as is working on signage.

She said meetings on reopening safely have included voices of families, students, teachers, school leaders, the Nurses Faculty Senate, and other stakeholders. She said they are hard at work on the hybrid model as well as focusing heavily on the remote learning aspect, as a switch may have to be made to completely remote learning should the virus worsen in the communities.

She said that parents will be able to choose between either the “hybrid or remote model without losing their spot at their school,” and a survey will be released soon asking parents which they prefer for their children.

“Over the last several months, we have witnessed the inequalities that exist in our community, but have become exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic,” Cassellius said. “As we reckon with decades of racial inequality and a systemic oppression and as we ban together in a call to action so our children inherit a better, fairer, and more just society, and as such, we at BPS are keeping equity at the center and are committed to rectifying the barriers and inequalities that exist in our policies, in our practice, and one by one, because our children deserve the opportunity and the access to an excellent and equitable education.”

She said that reinventing education is something that has to be done, because “we can’t just throw up our hands and do nothing.” She said that “our children don’t get a rewind. There’s no do-over.”

Walsh again asked for the reopening of schools to not be a political issue, and to “keep the kids at the forefront” of the conversation.
Families with children in the Boston Public Schools (BPS) will be facing a major decision in the coming days and weeks regarding whether they want to choose to participate in a hybrid, in-person learning model for the fall, or to opt-out and have their children learn in a complete remote environment.

Supt. Brenda Cassellius released a draft plan with Senior Advisor Tammy Pust on Tuesday night, and held a media briefing on Wednesday prior to the School Committee meeting Wednesday night. The push on currently as BPS prepared to submit its initial plan on Monday, a plan that requires the district to submit three plans — one for all remote, one for a hybrid model and one for all-in-person learning. Now, they are having many different meetings to review the plans and try to get input.

“This is a difficult decision and it has weighed on all of us,” she said. “I understand the concern in the community and understand the real complex nature of this decision. I want to assure the community that the mayor, Health Chief Marty Martinez, myself, our teachers and school leaders are putting safety as the number one priority and we are really looking very carefully at the numbers and making sure we don’t get too far ahead of ourselves...That’s why we have put this plan out there early to discuss it and get input.”

Seemingly, the schools have been planning for the re-opening since June, even before last school year was over. Throughout July, plans have been presented, and deadlines have been extended. Cassellius and Pust stressed this is just a draft, and they want more information before they make a decision.

“We are just now starting to put the meat on the bones of this plan so we can safely re-open this fall,” said Cassellius.

Added Pust, “It’s not a final draft but a plan. However, this is 60 pages of our best thinking so far on all the challenges we have and wisdom we have brought to be able to address these challenges.”

The submission to the state will really only consider two options, Pust said, as bus transportation makes it impossible under the current occupancy restrictions to ever transport every student to a building for in-person learning. Bus transportation is a key component in that part of the discussion, as buses will only be able to transport about 50 percent of their normal student capacity.

“That has a lot of ramifications,” she said. “Think of it as dominoes...The in-person plan will be very short because it will say it is not possible. To do that without transportation...To only get half those seats at a particular time means it wouldn’t be logistically possible to get them there.”

So it is, the decision for parents will be to opt-in to the district’s hybrid model — which is not a done deal — or to opt-out and go fully remote.

“Every family will get the chance to decide if they want to participate in the hybrid model or if they want to opt out and go fully remote,” Pust said. “Every parent has that option...If the science says it’s safe, we will start with the hybrid model.”

That will be a key decision due to transportation and school building space. Once the district knows how many students will not be returning to the building, but will stay home with remote learning, they can begin to plan at each individual school for the space necessary to accommodate in-person learning. The hybrid plan has students divided into two groups. Group A would attend school Monday and Tuesday, but learn at home Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Group B would learn at home Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, but learn in school Thursday and Friday. No one would be at the school on Wednesdays. Instead, they would use desks alternating between groups. That way, no student is sharing a desk with another, and the desks remain a safe distance away.

Another key operations for in-person hybrid and all-remote will be attendance and grading policies. Grading won’t change that much from the standard teacher grading systems, with progress reports and an A-F scale. However, attendance will be put on the Aspen system so it is used universally. Last Spring, many were doing it differently and it was confusing. Remote learners will also be monitored using Google Classroom for engagement and using Aspen for attendance.

Finally, Cassellius said they would be measuring student progress and social emotional well-being in the first weeks of school. Academically, they will use the district’s Illuminate platform to test students to see where they are academically — if they’ve progressed or fallen behind since COVID-19 hit.

“We’re going to need to know how schools are doing,” she said.

The district will be contacting each parent in the coming days and weeks to begin thinking about and making the decision about remote learning or the hybrid model. To comment on the district plan or ask questions, e-mail reopening@bostonpublicschools.org.
Crite Park designs set to be unveiled in person and online this month

By Seth Daniel

Allan Rohan Crite Park was no more than a brick wall for decades until recent plans to overhaul it into another gem on Columbus Avenue surfaced last year and have gone into overdrive this spring and summer.

Such a bland tribute to a world-renowned artist who portrayed life in full color, was hardly acceptable for Southender Cheryl Dickinson, and so she and other neighbors and the Ellis South End Neighborhood Association linked up to bring the area to life.

And judging by the designs of Monique Hall of BFC Group, that is exactly what intends to happen there.

Dickinson said they will have a reveal meeting in person at the Park on Weds., Aug. 12, at 6 p.m. with a 3-D viewing stations at a social distance and the ability to ask questions about the design. The rain date will be Monday, Aug. 17, and a Zoom online meeting will take place on Weds., Aug. 26, at 6 p.m.

She said a survey prior to the conceptual design indicated people wanted a spot with lots of shade, they wanted a tranquil spot for respite, they wanted to honor Allan Crite’s work, and they wanted a place for community events.

“We liked the idea of having an active park, not a passive park,” said Dickinson. “People say not another pretty face; we say not another pretty space...For the emphasis on shade, the whole perimeter will be large trees and we’ll get as large as we can afford. We are taking down six trees and putting up eight. Four of the existing trees are dead though and all of them haven’t been pruned since 1986.”

Inside, there will be three separate pergolas to protect people from the sun and to add a “living room” aspect to the space. Some laser cut aluminum placed above will allow the sun to shine through and create patterns on the floor of the park. The pergolas will also solve a problem that has been ongoing with aphids landing on people sitting below the Linden trees.

To honor Crite, the space will feature reproductions of six of his most representative pieces of the South End in an art walk. The Museum of Fine Arts and the African American Museum of Arts will provide them.

“These are six pieces that depict the narrative Crite was aiming for in his art – showing African American people living in the South End in the 1930s and 1940s,” she said.

To activate the park, they plan to have several events, including an annual blockbuster Storytelling Night. The first Storytelling Night will feature speakers who knew Crite and will talk and tell stories about him.

The next step will be to apply to the Community Preservation Committee for funding to supplement the significant amount they have already raised. This week, they have been to the South End Landmarks Commission to present the plans and got positive reviews.

Now, they just need to see what the community says and find a way to pay for it.

“It's time for us to start trying to make this park a reality,” she said.

• Crite Park Board Members: Maryellen Hassell, Betsy Hall, Jennifer Girvin, Ryan Gossing, Regina Pyle, Paul Wilcox, Linda Esposito, Cheryl Dickinson, president.
• Advisory Council Frieda Garcia, Councilor Ed Flynn, Gary Bailey, Anthony Gordon, Jackie Cox-Crite, Clare Corcoran, and Charlie Rose.

Officers potentially save shooting victim’s life on Mass/Washington

By Seth Daniel

Police officers from the D-4 Station are being credited with potentially saving the life of a shooting victim on Mass Ave and Washington Street Aug. 2 when they quickly applied a tourniquet to severe wounds he had from the gunshots.

Sgt. John Boyle said officers treated the man on the scene when they found him shot multiple times and lying on the street bleeding badly.

“The officers applied a tourniquet and it might have been the case that they were able to save him,” said Boyle.

Full notifications for a homicide had gone out upon arrival and seeing the injuries suffered by the man, but upon reevaluation and with the tourniquet applied, he was able to be rushed to a hospital and saved.

Boyle said around 1:12 a.m. on Aug. 2, the ShotSpotter system recorded gunshots near 1904 Washington St. – which is the corner of Washington and Mass Ave in the South End.

Officers from D-4 responded and, upon arrival, observed the victim bleeding from multiple gunshot wounds on the ground next to a vehicle.

There have been no arrests made in the case, and social media sites indicated the man had been shot in the leg and the head. Those posts also reported that others were in the car, including children, at the time of the shooting, but Boyle said there didn’t seem to be anything about that in the report.

Boyle also said that applying a tourniquet on scene has become more common than one might expect as police all carry that equipment since the Marathon Bombing incident.

The shooting is still under investigation and the man has survived.
the corridor from Harcourt St. to Northampton St. in the South End, while PMAC advocates and advises all sections of the corridor.

The two organizations “seek to work together seamlessly,” Leonard said, to “help channel the energy of users, friends, and volunteers into active stewardship,” according to the Southwest Corridor Park website.

Campanello said that the SWCP’s portion of the corridor was not always so inviting. When he lived on Holyoke St. “right on the park” in the 1990s, he adopted a plant bed outside the dog park. “I enjoyed making it look pretty good,” he said.

After four years of maintaining his small area, he moved to California. When he returned to Boston and moved near Claremont Park in 2003, he started taking care of the park outside his house.

At that time, he said the corridor “looked like an abandoned parking lot” with “invasive trees, dead zones; half the shrubbery had died, and the other half were on the way out. There were grass areas that had lost all living material. It became a small sand lot,” he said.

He said it took three years just to remove the invasive trees that had grown in the park, with the help of Betsy Johnson, who was on the Prudential Project Advisory Committee, (PruPAC).

“She got on the PruPAC board and arranged for the park to get mitigation funds for the expansion of the Prudential Center,” Campanello explained. “That was the original source of revenue.”

Campanello became president of the SWCP in August of 2008. “The first thing I did was I realized that people were not going to give money to the park to restore it unless they saw that someone cared for it,” he said. He connected with social service organization Boston Cares to set up monthly park restoration projects. The seed money from PruPAC was used to build fencing “at sensitive areas” that allowed the plant materials to grow without being “trampled on.”

SWCP had become a 501(c) (3) nonprofit, which allowed it to raise money. In 2010, Campanello was a realtor with Coldwell Baker in the South End, which he said gave him access to everyone who lived and owned property in the South End and St. Botolph area. “We designed a card and sent about 1000 letters out to people asking for money,” he said, and received about $10,000.

“That was absolutely a great surprise to us all,” Campanello said. “We didn’t know there were that many people in the neighborhood who cared about the park.” Every year since, SWPAC has reached out to the community asking for donations, except this year because of the virus.

“I always thought it was a crime that such good property had gone to waste,” he said of the original state of the park. “There isn’t a lot of green space in the City of Boston,” he added, and here was a “perfectly good green space that was completely neglected.”

So far, 86 trees have been planted and Section One of the park between Camden St. at Northeastern University and Harcourt St. at Copley Place, there are 60 different species of trees, a number of hedges, and more than 400 species of plants, Campanello said.

Campanello, who said he’s “been a gardener as long as I remember,” has taken gardening classes at the Arnold Arboretum, at a community college on Long Island, and various other places. As a former science teacher as well, he said his interest in horticulture really helped him dig into these planting and restoration projects.

He said that more projects are happening, and snow shoveling. Since the MBTA owns the land, they are responsible for trash pickup and other repairs may be necessary.

Leonard said that while the “network of volunteers who do hands on work falls under [SWPAC],” many of those members are also members of PMAC, which oversees the volunteer work and ensures open communication around issues of maintenance and upkeep.

“Hopefully there are plans afoot for the Northampton Green,” Campanello added. He said that part of the area is where Martin Luther King resided when he lived in Boston, adding that it is hopeful that restoration of the park will happen when other construction is done and they can figure out how to get water to the park for the new plantings.

Aside from the active planting, PMAC works alongside SWPC to orchestrate community events in the park as well as rally volunteers to help with the planting and the upkeep. Jennifer Leonard said that PMAC’s mission includes “advising, advocacy, and action,” which includes running youth and family programs every year.

Many would argue that maintenance and public safety are key factors in the upkeep of a healthy park. Leonard said that the state Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) provides a “majority of the maintenance,” such as grass cutting, hedge clipping, and snow shoveling. Since the MBTA owns the land, they are responsible for trash pickup and other repairs may be necessary.

Leonard said that while the “network of volunteers who do hands on work falls under [SWPAC],” many of those members are also members of PMAC, which oversees the volunteer work and ensures open communication around issues of maintenance and upkeep.

As far as public safety goes, Leonard said PMAC partners with other groups and agencies, including state and city officials, to ensure that the park remains safe. Volunteer safety is also emphasized, she said.

“We look at what we can do to advocate for bigger services and solutions around who is doing things around addiction and recovery,” she added.

“Our membership overlaps in terms of conversations,” she said. (3) nonprofit, which allowed it to raise money. In 2010, Campanello was a realtor with Coldwell Baker in the South End, which he said gave him access to everyone who lived and owned property in the South End and St. Botolph area. “We designed a card and sent about 1000 letters out to people asking for money,” he said, and received about $10,000.

That was absolutely a great surprise to us all,” Campanello said. “We didn’t know there were that many people in the neighborhood who cared about the park.” Every year since, SWPAC has reached out to the community asking for donations, except this year because of the virus.

“I always thought it was a crime that such good property had gone to waste,” he said of the original state of the park. “There isn’t a lot of green space in the City of Boston,” he added, and here was a “perfectly good green space that was completely neglected.”

So far, 86 trees have been planted and Section One of the park between Camden St. at Northeastern University and Harcourt St. at Copley Place, there are 60 different species of trees, a number of hedges, and more than 400 species of plants, Campanello said.

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He said that more projects are still on the horizon for the community events orchestrated by PMAC include a children’s garden at Jackson Square by the Mildred Hailey Apartments, which has been going on for several years but is not active this summer due to the virus.

PMAC also runs a mini-grant program in partnership with Northeastern University that supports youth and family programming in the Southwest Corridor Park, “nurturing the next generation of park leaders,” she said.

In the South End, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA) has organized the painting of a mural by children as well as last year’s round of garbage can and electrical box paintings in the park. Unit- ed South End Settlements has also held a paint night for people to come out to the park and paint on canvases, and Boston Explorers, headquartered in Jamaica Plain, has used the park as a place to bike and explore.

Many residents and neighbors have shown interest in contributing to the Southwest Corridor Park in some way over the years, and a large network exists to help ensure it stays welcoming for years to come. From neighbors pitching in, to college and corporate groups coming out for large volunteer days, those who have gotten involved in the betterment of the park “love our story,” Leonard said.

“I think everybody who touches the park just loves the story.”
Restoration on Shaw 54th Memorial moves forward

By Dan Murphy

As the ongoing restoration of the Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Regiment Memorial on the Boston Common progresses, the sculpture’s stonework is being disassembled bit by bit before the bronze sculpture can be removed as one piece and taken off site to be refurbished.

“We’re in the process of carefully removing every stone at the plaza level — railings, urns and other elements — and last week, we took off the top of monument with the capstone,” Ben Rosenberg, a principal at the structural-engineering firm Silman Associates’ Boston office, said Friday. “Then we’ll work down, removing stones from the back and the sides.”

The approximately $3 million restoration of the bas-relief monument that pays tribute to the first Northern black volunteer infantry unit enlisted to fight in the Civil War and was created by American sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens marks a unique partnership between the Friends of the Public Garden, the City of Boston, the Museum of African American History and the National Park Service.

During this phase of the project, supplemental steel will be installed within the monument itself, followed by the installation of a protection system for the existing beams within the plaza. The monument will also undergo a “cathodic protection run,” Rosenberg said, during which an electric current will be discharged through its steel beams to prevent additional corrosion (although the method can’t remedy existing conditions).

The monument will also be “retro-fitted seismically” to withstand earthquakes, Rosenberg said.

“We think about the project as having interrelated scopes that dance around each other as the work proceeds,” Rosenberg said. “To date, we’ve really concentrated on the beginning of stone removal to clean and replace it and the initial stages of bronze restoration, such as documenting and photographing [the sculpture] and protecting it in advance of taking it off site to get it restored.”

Once all the bronze work is revealed and accessible, Rosenberg added, a steel cage will be installed around the sculpture before it can be removed and transported to Skylight Studios in Woburn for refurbishing.

Restoration work on the Shaw 54th Memorial commenced at the end of May after construction restrictions due to the pandemic were lifted, and it’s expected to wrap up around November.

SELDC grants mandatory Certificate of Exemption to Villa Victoria Center for the Arts

By Lauren Bennett

The South End Landmark District Commission (SELDC), against their wishes, granted a Certificate of Exemption to Villa Victoria Center for the Arts.

This project has come before the Commission several times, and several community meetings have been held regarding the building. The building is owned by Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA), which provides education, arts programs, affordable housing, and more to the community.

The Commission’s goal (and IBA’s original goal) was to save the building, but IBA has repeatedly stated that their only option is to demolish it and build anew, and on August 4, the organization formally requested a Certificate of Exemption from the SELDC.

“This has been a long and hard process for all of us,” IBA CEO Vanessa Calderon-Rosado said at the hearing on Tuesday night. She thanked the Commission for their work and engagement during this process.

“The building at 85 West Newton played a critical role to IBA,” she said, as it was home to many of IBA’s programs and functioned as a community center. Issues with this building have been going on for quite some time, as the historic church was not properly taken care of over the years.

Peter Munkenbeck, IBA’s development consultant, explained that in 2016, IBA embarked on a mission to restore the historic church and make it safe and usable for years to come. The project was to be done in two phases, beginning with the building envelope.

The SELDC had approved the scope of work for Phase One, and in the fall of 2017, Shawmut Design and Construction was awarded a nearly $11 million contract to carry out the Phase One work, Munkenbeck said.

During the initial weeks of work, it was discovered that the basic structure of the bell tower was not sound, and many other structural issues were discovered, deeming the building unsafe.

The project team has returned to the SELDC several times with photos and letters from engineers stating the building is unsafe.

In September of last year, the City condemned the building and IBA was told to evacuate the as it was unfit to be occupied.

In December, IBA received a violation notice from the City of Boston Inspectional Services Department (ISD) stating that IBA’s only two options were to restore the building or to demolish it.

IBA has stood by the position that their only option would be to demolish the building and build a new one, as restoring the existing church would cost double the original budget and there weren’t enough funds to cover the additional costs.

Back in December, the Commission had asked the project team to come up with alternatives to demolishing the building, as they would rather see it preserved. While the Commissioners...
Two homicides on Mass/Cass in one week define recent uptick in violence

By Seth Daniel

The Mass/Cass area has been hit with two homicides this week, one on Saturday night and the other on Monday morning. The Crudup parking lot was the site of the Saturday night shooting, where a 20-year-old man was shot and killed. Police said the victim was involved in a dispute with another man over a lost wallet.

On Monday, a 21-year-old man was shot and killed in the area of the Mass/Cass shelter. Police said the shooting was a result of an argument over a stolen cellphone.

Commissioner for Preservation John Freeman said that the two shootings illustrate the need for more resources to combat violence in the area.

The Commission has been working with community groups to increase safety in the area, but Freeman said more needs to be done.

Stay Home, Stay Safe

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission has been focusing on preventing the spread of the virus in the city's historic districts.

Freeman said that the Commission has been working with local health departments to ensure that people are following the guidelines for social distancing and wearing masks.

The Commission has also been working with the Boston Public Health Commission to provide information about the virus and its impact on the city.

Other Commissioners agreed, saying that the Commission had to be proactive in order to ensure the safety of the public.

Commissioner Mary Cirbus said that the Commission had been working closely with the city's health department to ensure that the city was prepared to respond to the pandemic.

Cirbus also said that the Commission had been working with the city's homeless population to ensure that they had access to the resources they needed.

The Commission has also been working with community groups to provide resources to the city's homeless population.

The Commission has been working with local groups to provide resources to the city's homeless population, including food and shelter.

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Back to School…at a five-star hotel?
Some colleges surprise residents with hotel plans

Plans for college and university students have begun to settle into the neighborhoods this week, surprising some and causing all to pause and think about what such a massive amount of students in hotels, residential apartments and even the Boston Symphony Orchestra building might mean for quality of life – whether good or bad or both.

So far, Emerson College and Northeastern University have been the most active in Bay Village, St. Botolph, Fenway and the Back Bay – securing a variety of locations for students to live and to take classes. A representative from Emerson College told the Sun that for the fall semester, it hopes to house 208 residents and eight residents assistants at the W Boston hotel on Stuart Street in Bay Village “pending City of Boston approval.” The students will live in rooms on floors five through 14, and other than “Emerson student hotel residents,” no other visitors will be permitted on those floors.

“This decision has been made in order to de-densify housing on Emerson’s Boston campus,” the College said. “The College considered a number of options and

Real Estate Transfers

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The arched windows in the last clue are on 364 Boylston Street. Once, this building was an example of Harold Field Kellogg’s Art Deco design when he remodeled an optician’s store at this address. The Art Deco style remained until another remodel in the 1970s.

The next clue will be found in the Fenway area.

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

THIS WEEK’S CLUE
selected the W Boston hotel for its close proximity to campus, and its ability and readiness to support Emerson students residing there this Fall.

Northeastern University has announced that rooms at both the Westin Copley Place Hotel and the Midtown Hotel have been reserved for students this coming fall. Additionally, 147 apartments in the Fenway and Roxbury have been leased through the university’s master-lease program, according to a letter to the community from John Tobin, Vice President of City and Community Engagement at Northeastern University. He also said that the university has made an agreement with the Boston Symphony Orchestra to lease space in the Cohen Wing at Symphony Hall for additional student space in the Cohen Wing at Symphony Hall for additional student space.

“Our students will be expected to adhere to all Northeastern on-campus housing policies, practice social distancing and wear face covering in public places,” Tobin wrote. “The students in both the Westin Hotel and the Midtown Hotel will also be monitored by Northeastern residential staff.” Tobin also told the Sun that he’d be “happy to set up Zoom calls to talk with neighborhood associations, leaders, and elected officials about what the plans are,” and said that Northeastern had participated in the City Council’s recent hearing on the reopening of colleges and universities.

Martyn Roetter, chair of the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB), sees how housing students from the area’s colleges and universities at hotels could be a mutually beneficial arrangement. “It seems to me in the case of hotels in particular, it’s a win-win, up-the-losses kind of a deal,” Roetter said, and even if the costs for student housing are reduced from regular rates, “Hotels will welcome a guaranteed stream of income for seven months, if not the whole school year.”

And some Back Bay businesses could also benefit from the influx of more students into the neighborhood, as Roetter said, “Students contribute in a significant way to economy and the revenue of certain kinds of businesses.”

What concerns Roetter, members of NABB and Back Bay residents most, however, is how students might behave outside of the hotels they will be living in, as well as how their behavior could result in increased COVID-19 infection rates.

“Our main concern is the actions of the students on the streets and in areas where [the schools] can’t control,” he said. “There are more risky things that could get out of control or there would be more infections than there would be otherwise.”

Still, Roetter remains confident that “good channels of communications” between colleges and universities, the city, and civic organizations like NABB “could help deal with issues when they arise in as cooperative a manner as possible.”

Bethany Patten, president of the Bay Village Neighborhood Association, anticipates both risks and advantages – economic, as well as social – of returning college students living in hotels.

“The economic risks are of course that universities are needing to bear the cost of utilizing increased external spaces, which puts a strain on an already strained sector,” Patten wrote. “The economic benefits are that there is more revenue to the hotels, and area businesses that keeps them viable.”

But Patten doesn’t expect that an influx of students would result in a boom for businesses because she doesn’t think retail will recover anytime soon and most schools have required meal plans for students, which would discourage them from dining out.

Meanwhile, Patten said she hopes that colleges and universities would opt to house their students at local hotels, rather than at national chains like the W. “The only benefit to our community when universities go with a multination chain is the jobs, which of course is both good for unemployment, but disproportionately affects underrepresented and underrepresented-risk communities,” she wrote.

Patten added that she believes “universities are really trying to be good citizens and contribute to the common good,” and that BVNA leadership is scheduled to meet with representatives from Emerson College soon to learn more about their plans for the fall. “The only concern is that the students in the hotels will be any more or less supervised than they are in dorms, or are not when they live in private housing,” Patten wrote.

“All college campuses have resident assistants that manage underage parties, and other behaviors. In a pandemic, I can only assume these roles will take on greater behavior monitoring responsibilities. I’m not sure why there is an assumption that students will be supervised. In fact, a well supervised group of students in a hotel seems even more safe than individuals in a hotel who can choose how they want to behave regarding health and safety.”

The Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) said it had posted guidance on its website about plans for local universities and colleges. The BPDA also said the matter had been discussed by Mayor Martin Walsh in a daily briefing last week.

The BPDA said institutions are required to engage with residents about their plans, protocols and how the housing or hotels would be used.

“Every institution that requests to utilize off-campus spaces for temporary student housing is required to engage nearby residents and civic associations about their plans and address potential concerns,” read a statement from the agency. “In addition, they are encouraged to provide a video for residents to reach out directly if an issue arises. The BPDA will be working closely with institutions to ensure that this process happens prior to any students moving into a temporary off-campus housing site.”

A Zoom call for the St. Botolph Neighborhood Association (SBNA) has been set up for next week, Aug. 11, with Northeastern’s Tobin. On that call will be State Rep. Jon Santiago and Councilor Ed Flynn. The announcement from SBNA indicated they would talk about use of the Midtown Hotel, and other locations in the area.

Back to School (from pg. 10)
**HISTORIC BEACON HILL BROWNSTONE**

- **73 Mount Vernon Street #1**
  - 3 Beds | 3.5 Baths | 3,082 SQFT
  - $4,295,000

- **8 Byron Street**
  - 4 Beds | 3 Baths | 2,720 SQFT
  - $4,500,000

- **54 Pinckney Street**
  - 5 Beds | 4f 2h Baths | 3,825 SQFT
  - $5,995,000

- **5 Joy St #PH** - $6,499,000
  - 3 Joy St #I - $4,599,000
  - 3 Joy St #II - $2,950,000

- **26 Holyoke Street**
  - 5 Beds | 3.5 Baths | 5,090 SQFT
  - $6,990,000

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**Open Sunday**

**12:00 - 1:00**