

East Boston

TIMES - FREE PRESS

Wednesday, January 3, 2024

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Officials call for action on child care legislation in East Boston

Photos & Story by Marianne Salza

East Boston Social Centers, in collaboration with Charlestown Nursery, presented the Common Start Regional Event on December 18 to explain how the \$1.5 billion initiative will improve the lives of parents and children by helping them thrive in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Elected officials and educators proposed creating more affordable childcare and increasing pay for early educators to advance economic growth.

"We are fighting for the Common Start vision to ensure that all families have access to affordable, high quality education and childcare," affirmed emcee, Representative Adrian Madaro, co-sponsor of Common Start legislation. "Common Start addresses several key principles: it provides financial assistance to enable more families to afford and access high quality, early education. It prioritizes families at or below 85% of the state median income.



Educators, elected officials, and parents gathering for the Common Start Regional Event at East Boston Social Centers on December 18.

It calls for significant increases in pay for early educators, and provides funding for providers to cover costs that are not met by subsidy reimbursement rates and parent fees."

Additionally, the bill includes elements to in-

crease racial and gender equity in the early education and childcare field, such as loan forgiveness, grant fairness, and cultural competence and bias training.

"I recognize for young parents, this is the first

time you're trusting strangers with the care and education of your children. That can be daunting and overwhelming," acknowledged Madaro, father of two, young sons. "It's one of the most important decisions we can make early

on, as parents. We want all families to have access to quality childcare, regardless of their ability to pay; and a workforce that feels respected and valued for the critical work they do in providing the foundation for the future of our

children." More than 20,000 children in Massachusetts are on a waiting list for a childcare subsidy, according to Madaro, who feels that immediate, long-term

See CHILD CARE Page 5

OATH OF OFFICE



MAYOR'S OFFICE PHOTO BY MIKE MEJIA

Mayor Michelle Wu administers the Oath of Office to members of the Boston City Council at Faneuil Hall.

Louijeune newly elected president of the Council

Special to the Times-Free Press

Boston City Councilor At-Large Ruthzee Louijeune has been sworn in as the President of the Boston City Council, making her not only the third Black woman to hold this position, but also the first Haitian-American.

"It was an honor to nominate Councilor Ruthzee Louijeune as council president," said District 1 Councilor Gabriella Colletta. "I'm confident the Council will promote col-



Boston City Councilor At-Large Ruthzee Louijeune.

laboration, governance, and accountability this legislative session."

"I am excited for what's to come for our city, and

believe that our collective work can transform our beloved city into one where every person feels honored, safe, housed, and healthy," said Louijeune. "I am hopeful, and I am grateful, because the only way we get through, the only way we thrive, the only way we push forward, is together."

"Councilor Louijeune has shown she knows how to build bridges to address issues that impact all Boston residents from tackling crucial city services

to spearheading initiatives that create more affordable housing and uplift our most underserved communities" said District 4 Councilor Brian Worrell. "I am proud to support her as our next Council President in my capacity as Council Vice President and look forward to partnering with her and all of our colleagues to deliver for our City."

There is additional significance to the swearing

See COUNCIL Page 2

Boston finalizes regulations for large buildings to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050

Special to the Times-Free Press

Mayor Wu's administration has provided \$3.5 million to jumpstart the new Equitable Emissions Investment Fund to support decarbonization in environmental justice communities

BOSTON - Friday, December 22, 2023 - Mayor Michelle Wu and the City of Boston's Environment Department have finalized regulations for Boston's Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO). The updated regulations were adopted by the Air Pollution Control Commission during their December hearing. These rules set the standards for implementation of BERDO, which sets carbon targets for existing buildings that decrease over time with all buildings achieving net zero emissions by 2050. This vote for adoption marks the end of the third and final phase of BERDO 2.0 regulations development. Additionally, the City of Boston has invested \$3.5 million in the Equitable Emis-

sions Investment Fund. The Equitable Emissions Investment Fund is an innovative funding tool that will support emissions reduction projects in Boston buildings, while prioritizing benefits to Boston's environmental justice communities.

Buildings in Boston account for nearly seventy percent of citywide greenhouse gas emissions. BERDO buildings are responsible for five percent of the building stock in Boston and account for over forty percent of the total greenhouse gas emissions.

"Policy is only as strong as its implementation, so I'm very grateful to the team for working hard over two years to translate the landmark BERDO ordinance's mandate into specific regulatory details that will make implementation clear and accountable, with dedicated resources to ensure equitable progress across the city," said Mayor Michelle Wu. "The official vote on these BERDO regulations marks a critical milestone

See BUILDINGS Page 3



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Greater Boston bikeshare system plans to add 750 ebikes to growing fleet

The cities of Boston, Cambridge, Somerville and Everett, the town of Brookline, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (“Blue Cross”) and Lyft today announced plans to integrate 750 next-generation ebikes into Greater Boston’s popular Bluebikes program and the renewal of Blue Cross’ title sponsorship through May 2031. The rollout will begin with 50 ebikes hitting the street this week; an additional 700 will join the fleet in subsequent months.

The new seven-year agreement between Blue Cross and the municipal owners further cements a dynamic public-private partnership for sustainable urban transportation. Blue Cross will continue its commitment to promoting the overall health and well-being of Massachusetts residents by supporting the municipal owners of Bluebikes in driving system growth and accessibility through initiatives including station expansions, system enhancements and the integration of ebikes.

“This marks an exciting milestone as we usher in the next wave of transportation in Greater Boston

with the introduction of state-of-the-art e-bikes,” Boston Mayor Michelle Wu said. “Partnerships such as our Bluebikes alliance with Blue Cross are crucial in ensuring our residents have access to healthier, more sustainable, and affordable transportation options. We look forward to continued collaboration with Blue Cross and all our municipal partners as we elevate our bike share system.”

“Bluebikes have become an integral part of so many communities in and around Boston, and we are thrilled to continue supporting the system,” said Blue Cross President and CEO Sarah Iselin. “We’re looking forward to the next chapter of partnership with the cities and towns through the renewal of our Bluebikes sponsorship. Biking is truly one of the best ways to get around, benefiting the environment as well as our mental and physical health. And adding ebikes to the Bluebikes system is an important step toward making biking more accessible to more people.”

The new collection of ebikes is expected to grow the overall Bluebikes fleet to 5,000 bikes

across 500 stations by next summer. Funding for the initial purchase of the ebikes came from a combination of municipal investment from Boston and Cambridge, state funding, federal funding by the Boston Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and support from Blue Cross’s sponsorship of the bikeshare system. Together, Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, and Blue Cross will provide support for affordable user costs of ebikes for Bluebikes members.

The state’s largest health plan became Bluebikes’ title sponsor in 2018. Since the inception of the Bluebikes partnership, the municipal owners – in conjunction with Blue Cross – have made investments, received grants and fostered station sponsorships to accomplish system milestones, including:

- Expanding the system from four to 13 municipalities, representing a 225% increase
- Supporting a 333% growth in the number of available Bluebikes and a 150% expansion in the number of Bluebikes stations
- Bolstering the in-

come-eligible program

- Surpassing 22 million rides taken

“The City of Cambridge is proud to support more affordable, sustainable, and healthier forms of transportation and extend what has been a win-win public-private partnership,” said Cambridge City Manager Yi-An Huang. “Bluebikes have become a critical part of Cambridge’s public transportation system and I am excited that the system is becoming even more accessible through the addition of ebikes to the Bluebikes fleet, which will open up the system to more older adults, people with disabilities, and others who may find traditional bikes hard to pedal. It will also create more opportunities for individuals seeking to maximize their time and access to our busy communities, while reducing traffic congestion.”

Lyft’s ebike was named one of TIME’s 100 Best Inventions of 2022. It features a long-lasting battery with a 60-mile range, a user-friendly interface LCD screen, a smoother ride and numerous safety upgrades. Massachusetts legalized Class 1 ebikes,

climate-friendly transportation that gets cars off our roads. I want to thank Mayor Wu, all the Bluebikes municipal owners, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts for their continued investment and partnership in Bluebikes. Without them, Bluebikes wouldn’t be the tremendous success it is today.”

The municipal owners have prioritized access and affordability for the new Bluebikes ebikes which will be available at \$0.10 per minute for Bluebikes members, \$0.25 per minute for Adventure Pass holders, and \$0.07 per minute for low-income residents enrolled in Bluebikes’ Income-Eligible Program. Income-eligible riders are provided a reduced annual fee for Bluebikes. Earlier this year, Boston also announced the Boston Bikes Pass, which is a Bluebikes membership offered only to City of Boston residents at a reduced annual rate of \$60. Learn more discounted Bluebikes rates at <https://www.boston.gov/departments/boston-bikes/discounted-bluebikes>.

Council // CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

in, as January 1st also celebrates Haitian Independence Day, the most important holiday in the Haitian community. On January 1, Haitians celebrate their role in history as the first free Black republic in the Western hemisphere and the only country in the world founded from a slave revolt. Boston is home to the third largest Haitian diaspora in the country.

As Louijeune was sworn in, the chambers filled with family, friends, and loved ones dawned in red and blue, celebrating both Haitian Independence Day and her history-making appointment.

In her first speech as council president, Louijeune outlined a vision for the city of Boston that addresses historic inequities while envisioning a future that welcomes everyone to the table. From addressing barriers to homeownership, to creating stronger models for waste collection in all of our neighborhoods, to ensuring that every BPS student has the

tools they need to reach their full potential, and working with our unions to make sure that Boston is a city that continues to put people before profit.

Louijeune recognized and offered flowers to her predecessor, Ed Flynn, who served as president during her first term in office. She also welcomed new colleagues Enrique Pepen, John Fitzgerald, Henry Santana, and Ben Weber.

During Louijeune’s first term, she met the moment with passion, work ethic, and deep love for Boston. She successfully led the council through the tumultuous redistricting process, passing a map that met standards set by a federal court order. As Chair of the Committee on Civil Rights and Immigrant Advancement, she pushed for additions in the budget, securing funds for fair housing testers, a municipal wage study, expanding the Office of Returning Citizens, increased housing support for vulnerable populations, and initia-

tives for affordable homeownership. She has been an advocate for legalizing beekeeping citywide, increasing the frequency of trash pickup for cleaner streets, and actively works to bridge gaps and distribute resources to every neighborhood.

As president, Louijeune is committed to building on her previous work, while uplifting the issues that her colleagues hold dearly.

“One thing to know about me is that I unequivocally reject any zero-sum mentality that suggests that for one group to succeed, another must lose,” Louijeune stated.

The newly-sworn in council is a profound representation of the vibrancy and diversity that makes up Boston. Louijeune is hopeful that during her tenure, this body will embrace different perspectives and lived experiences, while also acting as a strong collective voice for the people of Boston.

EBHS BOYS BASKETBALL IN HOOP ACTION



WATCH YOUR BACK: Caleb Florence (12) drives toward the basket, leaving a Lynnfield defender and coach (background) in his wake during the recent game against Lynnfield.



FOR THE DEFENSE: Draggo Tejeda Feliz guards a Lynnfield forward. See Page 7 for more photos.

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ArtsEmerson presents Moby Dick

ArtsEmerson, Boston’s leading presenter of contemporary world theater and film and the professional presenting and producing organization of Emerson College, is excited to kick off its 2024 season with renowned director Yngvild Aspeli and the endlessly inventive Norwegian theater company, Plexus Polaire’s Moby Dick at the Emerson Paramount Center from January 23 – 28, 2024. Herman Melville’s immeasurably influential novel is brought to life in this radiant stage production featuring seven actors, fifty puppets, video projections, a drowned orchestra and a life-sized whale.

Moby Dick is, on its surface, the simple tale of a whaling expedition, but the story’s haunting themes of unparalleled obsession lead us all to question the unexplained mysteries of life and of the human heart. In this groundbreaking production, the classic is reborn with a freshness and urgency that makes it truly unforgettable. The New York Times calls Moby Dick “a stunning work of art.”

“We are thrilled to jump



A scene from Moby Dick by Plexus Polaire.

PHOTO COURTESY CHRISTOPHE RAYNAUD DE LAGE

start 2024 with the wondrous feast for the eyes that is Plexus Polaire with Yngvild Aspeli’s Moby Dick,” says ArtsEmerson Interim Executive Director Ronee Penoi. “We think our audiences will be spell-bound by this poetic and magical piece with breathtaking puppetry.”

“I like how the sea somehow draws invisible lines between the different corners of the world, how it creates points of connection,” says Moby Dick director Yngvild Aspeli. “How, facing this

force of nature, we are all the same. And no-one captures the battle between man and nature like Herman Melville in Moby Dick. An ancient white whale, a captain steering his ship into destruction and the inner storms of the human heart.”

Tickets for Moby Dick may be purchased 24/7 at ArtsEmerson.org, or by calling 617-824-8400 (Tue-Sat from 12:00PM ET - 6:00PM ET). The Paramount Center Box Office (559 Washington Street, Boston) is open for walk-up service Thu-

Sat from Noon - 6:00 PM ET. Tickets start at \$25. Groups of 10+ attending a performance save up to 30%.

Thanks to generous support from Rockland Trust, a limited number of \$10 Mobile Rush tickets will be available at 9:00 AM ET each performance day on a first-come, first-served basis, exclusively through the TodayTix mobile app. For more information, please click on “General Public” when you visit ArtsEmerson’s Offers web page.

News in Brief

SULLIVAN SQUARE TRAFFIC ADVISORY

Motorists should be advised that the Sullivan Square Underpass will be closed beginning on Tuesday January 2 through Friday May 31 to perform repairs to the structure.

Motorists are encouraged to plan accordingly and/or seek alternative routes.

If you have any questions, please contact: pwdengineering@boston.gov.

LYRIC STAGE BOSTON PRESENTS TROUBLE IN MIND

A tale that was meant to be told over 60 years ago, Dawn M. Simmons brings to Lyric Stage Boston, Alice Childress’s unflinching look at the standards of 1950’s Broadway in Trouble in Mind.

Meant for a Broadway run in 1957, Trouble in Mind never made its debut after producers urged Childress to subdue the content. Childress refused, and after a successful Broadway run in 2021, Lyric Stage is proud to present this re-discovered theatrical marvel as the playwright originally intended.

It’s 1955, and after enduring indignities and lost opportunities, Wileta Mayer, a seasoned Black actress, is finally making her Broadway debut. Writ-

ten by a white playwright, her star vehicle is the allegedly progressive “Chaos in Belleville,” which turns out to be anything but. Leading a cast of both younger and experienced actors, Wileta challenges not only the soft racism of her white director but also the veiled prejudice that limits her aspirations and success. With warmth, humor, and sharp insight, this moving backstage look at identity and stereotypes cracks open searing truths about the American theater that remain heart-breakingly contemporary.

Director Dawn M. Simmons says, “Have you ever read something so relevant, so fresh that you wondered who’s been reading your texts? That’s how I felt when I first read Trouble in Mind. It’s funny, “on time”, smart, and so maddeningly current I knew it had to be written by someone working in the theater today. But Trouble in Mind first premiered in 1955. I’ve put together a cracking team of Boston’s finest artists, and we’re gonna put on one heck of a show for you. Laugh, cry, and be outraged with us, but most importantly, be in community with us as we hold the mirror up to nature and take you back to 1950s New York, which sometimes doesn’t feel all that long ago.”

Performances begin Friday, January 12 and run through Sunday, February 4.

Buildings // CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and turning point in building a greener and healthier city for everyone. The properties covered by this mandate are the 5% of buildings that comprise 40% of Boston’s total emissions, so full implementation to decarbonize this sector will be the most significant step we can take. Our charge is to lead the way on climate action for cities, and Boston will continue to accelerate decarbonization through every means possible.”

In 2021, the amended ordinance was unanimously approved by the Boston City Council with the goal of significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, encouraging efficient use of energy and water, and developing investments in a green economy. The BERDO ordinance sets emissions targets and reporting requirements for non-residential buildings greater than or equal to 20,000 square feet and residential buildings that have 15 units or more. The ordinance also established the BERDO Review Board with community representation to increase accountability and transparency, as well as an environmental-justice focused Equitable Emissions Investment Fund. In order for buildings to reduce their emissions, building owners may choose to carry out: energy efficiency improvements, switch to clean, efficient and electric heating systems, or fossil fuel free systems, purchase clean energy, and/or make alternative compliance payments into the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund. Building owners must reduce emissions from their buildings below a sector-specific emissions standard, or limit, and all buildings are expected to reach net-zero by 2050. Buildings must begin complying with these emissions limits in 2025 or 2030 depending on their size.

“The final regulations were designed to accomplish significant emissions reductions while paying attention to equity and affordability,” said Rever-

end Mariama White-Hammond, Chief of Environment, Energy and Open Space. “I am thrilled that Mayor Wu has committed to investing in the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund that will ensure that environmental justice communities have the resources needed to decarbonize and retrofit their buildings.”

The finalized regulations range from topics that address complex building portfolios, individual compliance schedules, hardship compliance plans, fines and enforcement, compliance with emissions standards, and the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund. The new investment fund will collect all alternative compliance payments and penalties made to BERDO and invest them in local building carbon abatement projects that support environmental action while directing funds towards environmental justice communities. In addition to funding carbon reduction projections in buildings, projects supported by the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund may have supporting benefits including improving or promoting affordable housing and tenant protections, local air quality improvement, indoor environmental quality and health for building tenants, economic inclusion, training, and technical assistance for Minority, Women, and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (MWD BE) and cooperative contractors, equitable workforce development training programs for residents who have been disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change, projects with community ownership of housing and renewable energy infrastructure, and reduced energy burdens. All funding awards will be overseen by the BERDO Review Board, a nine-member independent board of volunteers who monitor, enforce, and make decisions on the day-to-day operations of BERDO. The Review

Board is charged with ensuring projects funded by the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund directly benefit the communities that disproportionately bear the burden of climate change.

The regulations and policies that guide the implementation of BERDO were developed in collaboration with a Community Advisory Group composed of ten community-based organizations and leaders in environmental justice, climate action, affordable housing, workforce development, and social justice. Community leaders frequently collaborated with the City to identify the potential impacts of BERDO on environmental justice communities and to provide advice on how to integrate equity into the rules of BERDO. Additionally, over the past two years, the Environment Department hosted seven working sessions and thirteen focus groups with hospital and healthcare institutions, commercial and multifamily real estate, affordable housing, cultural institutions, universities, Boston residents, and various other stakeholders across the City.

“With the finalized regulations for BERDO, the City of Boston is taking a crucial step to equitably achieve net zero emissions by 2050,” said Lee Matsueda, Acting Chair of the BERDO Review Board. “I am grateful to the Mayor, the Environment Department team, and all of my colleagues on the Review Board for working to secure a just transition to a more sustainable future.”

The ordinance was originally passed in May 2013, and required large buildings to report their energy and water use to the City of Boston every year. The ordinance required the City of Boston to make this data publicly available. This revised ordinance is the single most impactful initiative to curb Boston’s carbon emissions. Building owners or managers who are looking for technical support in

complying with BERDO can contact retrofit@boston.gov.

Mayor Wu recently announced the City of Boston’s new rates for the Boston Community Choice Electricity (BCCE) program, which is the largest municipal aggregation program in the commonwealth. Customers may choose to “opt up” to enroll in the Optional Green 100 rate, with 100% of electricity coming from local, renewable energy sources, like solar or wind. By opting up, customers can support the City of Boston in reducing carbon emissions, improving local air quality, and taking climate action within our communities. BCCE Green 100 is one compliance pathway that residents can choose to pursue in alignment with the 2025 compliance deadline. Boston Community Choice Electricity’s Optional Green 100 plan costs less than Eversource’s basic residential rate while utilizing 100% renewable electricity compared to Eversource’s 22%, which is the state requirement for renewable electricity. Residents and business owners can opt-up, down, or out of BCCE at any time with no penalties.



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THE HOLIDAYS ARE OVER -- NOW IT’S BACK TO REALITY

The holiday season may have provided the usual respite for all of us from the strife and turbulence that has been assaulting us daily for the better part of the past decade, but despite the arrival of the New Year, we still have to face our same old problems.

The war in Ukraine continues to grind on, with Vladimir Putin targeting primarily civilians in cities far from the battlefield. The Israel-Hamas war likewise has no apparent end in sight, with civilians on both sides suffering greatly. In addition, with other Iranian-backed terrorist organizations threatening to expand the war not only against Israel, but also against the United States and world-wide commercial shipping, the potential for a much-larger conflict increases with each passing minute.

China, the other member of the Axis of Evil, continues to encroach its military bases and fleet on the sovereignty of other nations and threatens to launch an invasion of Taiwan at any time.

Scientists have confirmed that 2023 was off-the-charts for being the warmest year in the history of mankind, with the trend looming for an even-hotter 2024, promising to bring more devastating storms and climate change-related catastrophes in the year ahead.

Despite the strong economy, homelessness in the United States grew by 12 percent in the past year, with no imminent solution at any level of government. The increase in homelessness is a direct result of the lack of housing that has accumulated over the past decade to the point where it is estimated that the country is five million units short of what is needed to keep up with our growing population.

The situation at the border with Mexico represents a complete failure on the part of Congress and the White House, with the result that the situation for migrants is dire and American cities are being overwhelmed. Even Democratic governors and mayors are feeling besieged by the influx of immigrants for which our local and state governments are ill-equipped to handle.

The lack of meaningful gun legislation to stop the proliferation of deadly military-grade weapons all but assures that 2024 will see more mass shootings throughout the country.

Drug and alcohol abuse also shows no signs of abating and will continue to claim the lives of tens of thousands of Americans in the year ahead. American life expectancy continues to trail the rest of the industrialized world.

And last but not least, the political turmoil in the coming presidential year promises to be the most turbulent not only in our recent history, but since 1861 -- the start of the Civil War.

The prospects are overwhelming for a grim 2024. About all we can say is that we are living in an era that brings to mind the title from the Kevin Costner movie from the late 1980s -- No Way Out.

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Forum

Boston Arts Academy Foundation’s Champion Reception in March

The Boston Arts Academy Foundation, an independent 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organization that raises essential funds to augment the Boston Arts Academy budget, has announced that Hector Piña and Dr. Aisha Miller will be honored with the prestigious Champion Award at the 2024 Boston Arts Academy Foundation Champion Reception on March 21. The event will take place at the iconic House of Blues in Fenway on Lansdowne Street and will be followed by the opening night of the all-student-led performance of *Simply The Best! The Life and Legacy of Tina Turner* as told through song and dance. This year’s event will be chaired by Dylan Leavitt, founder of Studio Dylan.

The Champion Reception is one of several annual Boston Arts Academy Foundation events that raise critical funds for Boston Arts Academy. The money raised helps provide arts programming and life-changing opportunities for students that would be otherwise unavailable to them. Each year, the Champion Award is presented to members of the community who embody the school’s commitment to the arts, scholarship, and citizenship. Previous BAAF Champion Award honorees include Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, former First Lady of Massachusetts Diane Patrick, former Boston Mayors,

Kim Janey and Martin J. Walsh, Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley, Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey, and former Governor Charlie Baker.

“We are thrilled to recognize two exemplary civic leaders who have worked tirelessly to impact the residents of the City of Boston,” said Boston Arts Academy Foundation President and CEO Denella J. Clark. “Hector and Aisha represent our students in so many ways, and truly are servant leaders. Their passion and love for young people, education, and the arts are what our Champions award hopes to recognize.”

Originally from the Dominican Republic, Hector Piña is the CEO and President of Tres Islas Group Corporation and a community leader known for revolutionizing Boston’s culinary scene. Hector and his wife, Nivia Piña, have launched several acclaimed eateries including Merengue, Vejigantes, Doña Habana, and Cilantro Latin Kitchen, earning national recognition for their Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban cuisines. Committed to community involvement, Hector actively serves on Boston Arts Academy Foundation’s Board of Directors and has received numerous awards for his leadership and impact on Boston’s Latino community.

Dr. Aisha Miller is currently the Vice President of Permitting, Community, and Corporate En-

gagement at Related Beal. Dr. Miller has a diverse professional background, including serving as Boston’s Chief of Civic Engagement and holding positions in the Boston Inspectional Services Department. In addition, she has worked as a Suffolk County Probation Officer, was the Regional Steward for Suffolk County Probation Officers, and has served as an aide to political figures. Dr. Miller has received numerous leadership and community service awards, most recently the 2023 Girls’ LEAP Empowerment Champion Award.

Event Chair Dylan Leavitt is a member of the Boston Arts Academy Foundation’s Advisory Council. Leavitt is passionate about building community through education, arts, and culture. Leavitt founded Studio Dylan, a boutique production company, in 2018, and has served as a producer for PBS national television programs including “Antiques Roadshow” and “Lidia Celebrates America.” She has also curated films at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Telluride Film Festival.

“We are grateful to be working with Dylan on our Champions Reception,” said Clark. “Dylan is a fresh, young creative force, and we are excited to be partnering with her on this event.”

After the reception, guests are invited to enjoy the opening night of *Sim-*

ply The Best! The Life and Legacy of Tina Turner, an entirely student-run production that will feature work and appearances from all five core arts majors at Boston Arts Academy. The show was chosen by the students because of its themes of female empowerment and resilience.

Tickets to the Champion Reception and opening night of *Simply The Best!* are available for \$125, while a ticket for all other performances is \$25. Proceeds from the event will directly support BAA’s arts programming. For more information about sponsorships and to purchase tickets for all performances of *Simply The Best!*, visit <https://bostonartsacademy.org/foundation/event/champion-reception-2024>

Boston Arts Academy Foundation, an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, was established in 1999 to raise essential funds for Boston Arts Academy, the city’s only public high school for the visual and performing arts. Each year Boston Arts Academy Foundation must bridge the gap between the school’s allocation from Boston Public Schools and the true cost of a high-quality education that is both arts-intensive and college preparatory. Support from foundations, corporations, and individual donors is crucial to the school’s ability to offer a comprehensive arts and academic education.

Winter pet safety tips

able to locate online.

- Put together an emergency go-bag of all of your pets’ essential items, such as medications, food, bowls, leash, crate, toys, blankets, and identification tags. It’s also pertinent to have your animal’s vaccination and medical records handy, including their microchip number, together inside a waterproof, sealed bag. Keep the bag as close to the door so that if you need to evacuate immediately, you can grab your pet and the bag and leave.
- Identify a neighbor who has access to your home and can grab your pets and their go bag if you are not home during a flooding event.
- Close all windows and doors.

Additional Do’s and Don’ts:

- Do not attempt to walk through floodwater. As little as six inches of moving water can knock you and your pet down.
- Do not allow your pet to drink any floodwater. Floodwater is polluted with chemicals, sewage and other harmful debris

and foreign materials that are harmful to your pet.

- Do not assume your pet can swim. Animals can panic if put in a situation that they are too stressed to handle.
- Do not drive through water or even over bridges that sit above fast-moving water, as they can collapse at a moment’s notice.
- Do dry off a pet as quickly as possible. Wetness can cause bacterial growth and inflammation on their skin.

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Letters must be signed. We reserve the right to edit for length and content.

Child Care // CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

funding is necessary to provide all children with an equal start in life.

Madaro noticed that the high cost of childcare is causing families to relocate out of Massachusetts, and believes that the issue has become a threat to the economic competitiveness of the state.

“We’ve heard from constituents here in East Boston – mostly women – who, coming out of the pandemic, were ready to work in the early education sector; yet couldn’t afford to send their own kids to daycare,” Madaro revealed.

Many early education and childcare providers are finding it difficult to remain open and maintain fully-staffed classrooms. Employers are struggling because their staff is unable to find affordable, early childcare; and educators are leaving their positions due to low wages.

“Our workforce is changing over dramatically because people can’t support themselves. People who are in the early education workforce are often the people in public assistance programs. It is outrageous that this is just a stepping stone and not a career,” admonished Senator Sal DiDomenico. “Half the group stays for 20 years because they love the work and have found a way to make it work; then there is the other half that turns over every year. We have to change that narrative. We’re on the cusp of something big. It’s important to stand united in this.”

East Boston has one of the fastest growing youth populations; and according to Senator Lydia Edwards, families are larger than in any other section of the City of Boston. She believes that Common Start is vital for families to remain in the state, and that early childcare opportunities are important to teach children about life skills.

“It’s a cycle of affordability. Families don’t know what to do. Do they pick up another shift to pay the rent, but then have to find a place for their children,” questioned Edwards. “Afterschool programming is a supplement for kids who do not necessarily have love, or may not have a home to go to. It’s a place for them to feel safe.”

Provider, Thara Fuller, Executive Director, John F. Kennedy Family Service Center, also believes that increasing professional development is critical to having the tools to address the needs of children



Jaqueline Carmenatty, Sprouts Early Child Care, East Boston Social Centers, with her student, Luca Buccella, explaining what he loves about class.

and staff.

“The childcare system is not just for people with kids – it’s a whole infrastructure,” declared Fuller. “We need business partners, too. We need to all work together. It is essential.”

Single mother of three, Jaqueline Carmenatty – accompanied by her Sprouts Early Childcare student, Luca -- has worked at East Boston Social Centers for 19 years, and expressed how the organization has made an impact for her family.

“This journey has been meaningful in my life,” shared Carmenatty. “I recently became a home owner; and because of the pay rate that this provides me, I have comfortability.”

East Boston Social Centers has been supporting the community for 105 years. Today it serves 161 early learners and 159 children in its school-age program. Ninety percent of families receive a form of financial support based on income or other needs.

“We provide high quality curriculum, robust family engagement, transportation, and high quality meals, provided and prepared on site,” described Justin Pasquariello, Executive Director, East Boston Social Centers. “We’re grateful to our partners and supporters in legislation, who have made historic investments in the field. We’re fortunate to be in Massachusetts and have this great commitment. The work is not done. There is a need for high quality, affordable, early education and care for all children, taught by equitably-paid teachers.”



Pegah Rouhani and James Wu, of the Common Start Coalition.



Members of the community and early education gathering for the Common Start Regional Event at East Boston Social Centers on December 18.



Thara Fuller, Executive Director, John F. Kennedy Family Service Center, Mary Dooley, Center Director, East Boston Head Start, and Representative Jeff Turco.



Newtowne School parent and treasurer of the board of directors, Jay Dave, a parent of a 4-year-old, is an advocate for sustainable, predictable funding.



Justin Pasquariello, Executive Director, East Boston Social Centers.




Senator Lydia Edwards expressing that Common Start is vital to encourage families to remain in the state and thrive.



Senator Sal DiDomenico describing his outrage over the dramatic work force changeover each year because of low wages in the early education system.



Kristen McSwain, Senior Advisor and Director, Office of Early Childhood, suggesting opportunities for early childcare educators to earn free associate or bachelor degrees.



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While faith is the binding element in Catholic schools, the Church reiterates that parents are the first teachers of their children. Holding this tenet, Catholic school communities expand beyond the walls of school buildings to envelop the family as an integral part of the school community. Together teachers, administrators, staff, students and parents fuel the light of faith by integrating culture with faith and faith with living.


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FRESH AND LOCAL

Food pathways to consider

By Penny & Ed Cherubino

Rather than make food and diet resolutions this year, we suggest you choose some food pathways to consider. Resolutions are often short-lived goals. That’s because they require you to change something immediately. The only resolution we’ve ever kept was the one we made in 2007 to have a glass of something bubbly to toast each new month. Pathways are taken step-by-step, allowing you to move at your own pace and change direction when you want to try a different fork in the road. Over the past few years, we’ve been wandering down the healthy eating pathway. It’s been a great stroll.

Real Food vs Food-Like Products
The first step on this path is to begin reading food labels. We’re fortunate that industrial food producers have started to adapt to those of us who

read labels and choose processed food with fewer ingredients or, in some cases, single ingredients over highly processed and ultra-processed food with a long list of additives, chemicals, flavor, and texture enhancers. For example, rather than lower quality, out-of-season berries with our morning oatmeal, we’ve recently switched to frozen or unsweetened, dried blueberries, cherries, cranberries, and mixed fruit. These all have just the named fruit on their ingredient list. It’s the same for the frozen peas, corn, minced garlic, and ginger we always keep on hand.

The Eating Healthier Pathway
If you decide to start on the road to healthier eating, you can do that step-by-step with minor adaptations, choosing one area of change at a time. You may have a medical issue that might be im-

proved with more or less of a specific food group. For example, a pre-diabetic could have less sugar and simple carbohydrates. For someone with cardiac issues, it could be foods that lower cholesterol and choosing healthier fats. For those who are healthy now and want to stay that way, your path could be to add more fruit and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and beans to your meals. It doesn’t have to be an all-or-nothing change. We switched to frozen packages of simple brown rice from white rice. Many of us have reduced our alcohol consumption and taken advantage of lower alcohol and alcohol-free beverages. We often choose a glass of sparkling wine, which tends to be 11-12% Alcohol by Volume (ABV), instead of the big, bold reds, which average 13.5% ABV. What’s more, some reds may go as high



If you are new to dried fruit, try a sampler tray, like this one, from Fastachi in Watertown.

as 20% ABV. Again, read the labels.
Make One Little Change at a Time
It took many years of less healthy habits to bring a person to the point where they make a New Year’s resolution to lose 50 pounds or stop their caffeine or sugar addiction. Yet, they think they can undo all the harm in a few weeks. Slow and sure

is a far better way to win this race.
If you have a fast food habit, you can opt to make your lunch at home one day a week and take a walk for exercise instead of going to your local fast food chain. If you have an evening cocktail routine, you might opt for an exciting mocktail a few nights a week.
Step-by-step and de-

cision-by-decision, you can slowly explore a food pathway to make a difference in your life and health. Once you succeed with one change, you can set off toward success on a different food exploration pathway.
Do you have a question or topic for Fresh & Local? Send an email to Penny@BostonZest.com with your suggestion.

More than one-third of Christmas tree home fires occur in January

More than one-third (34 percent) of U.S. home fires involving Christmas trees occur in January. With this post-holiday fire hazard in mind, the National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®) strongly encourages everyone to keep the festive memories and remove the hazards by disposing of Christmas trees promptly after the holiday season.
“As much as we all enjoy the look and feel of Christmas trees in our

homes, they’re large combustible items that have the potential to result in serious fires,” said Lorraine Carli, vice president of Outreach and Advocacy at. “The longer Christmas trees remain in homes, the longer they present a risk.” Carli notes that fresh Christmas trees, which continue to dry out and become more flammable over time, are involved in a much larger share of reported Christmas tree fires than artificial trees.

According to the latest statistics from NFPA, there was an estimated annual average of 150 home structure fires that began with Christmas trees, resulting in one civilian death, 10 civilian injuries, and \$14 million in direct property damage between 2017 and 2021. Overall, fires that begin with Christmas trees represent a very small but notable part of the U.S. fire problem, considering that they are generally in use for a

short time each year.
To safely dispose of a Christmas tree, NFPA recommends using the local community’s recycling program, if possible; trees should not be put in the garage or left outside. NFPA also offers these tips for safely removing lighting and decorations to ensure that they remain in good condition:
• Use the gripping area on the plug when unplugging electrical decorations. Never pull the cord

to unplug any device from an electrical outlet, as this can harm the wire and insulation of the cord, increasing the risk for shock or electrical fire.
• As you pack up light strings, inspect each line for damage, throwing out any sets that have loose connections, broken sockets or cracked or bare wires.
• Wrap each set of lights and put them in individual plastic bags or wrap them around a piece of card-

board.
• Store electrical decorations in a dry place away from children and pets where they will not be damaged by water or dampness.
For more information on home fire safety all winter long, visit “Put a Freeze on Winter Fires,” a winter safety campaign NFPA promotes annually with the U.S. Fire Administration.



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Sports

EAST BOSTON BOYS BASKETBALL IN HOOP ACTION AGAINST LYNNFIELD



CLEAR SAILING: Xander Boutros has a clear path to the basket.



CLOSE COVERAGE: Islam Mohammed (2) guards Lynnfield's Grant Neal.



LONG REACH: Javon Wise Normil reaches past Lynnfield's Chris Daniels to take a shot at the basket.



CLOSE ENCOUNTER: Christian Sanders comes up against the defensive effort of Lynnfield's Chris Daniels.



MAKING THE WAY: Javon Wise Normil (33) gets a shot over Lynnfield's Alex Fleming.

After opening the season with four straight losses, East Boston got on the winning track with a pair of wins to capture the Patriots Holiday Tournament championship last week at Revere High School. In the opening round on Wednesday the Jets trounced Malden 60-37, then came back the next day to beat Lynnfield 59-32.

PHOTOS BY BOB MARRA



UP ABOVE: Christian Sanders (30) pulls down a rebound over Lynnfield's Alex Fleming.



TWIST FORTWO: Caleb Florence avoids the defense of Lynnfield's Harris Hadzihanovic (11) for a layup.

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EAST BOSTON SWIM TEAM COMPETES AGAINST BROCKTON

PHOTOS BY BOB MARRA

East Boston competed against Brockton in a swim meet at the Paris Street Pool Thursday, December 21.



Jeronimo Perez swims freestyle.



Jeronimo Perez swimming the breaststroke.



Coach Dave Arinella checks his stopwatch.



Delia McCrary holds the lap-counter during 20-pool-length legs of the 1000-meter swim.



Jason Taft swims the 500 freestyle.



Jeronimo Perez swimming the butterfly.



Roman Cinelli in the freestyle.



Roman Cinelli swims freestyle.



Ashley Soto swims the backstroke.



Davi Ferreira swims the breaststroke.



Delia McCrary swims the butterfly.



Davi Ferreira prepares to race.



Eastie swimmers watching their teammates race.

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UMass announces scholarships for top 10 percent of community college graduates

The University of Massachusetts announced that the top 10 percent of the Commonwealth’s future community college graduates will receive a minimum of \$5,000 per year above federal and private financial aid if they enroll at one of the four nationally ranked campuses in Amherst, Boston, Dartmouth, and Lowell.

The Community College Advantage Scholarship (CCAS) is designed to incentivize highly talented community college students to finish their associate degree at one of the Commonwealth’s 15 community colleges, and then complete their bachelor’s degree at one of the four nationally ranked University of Massachusetts campuses.

The CCAS also seeks to address two challenges facing public higher education in Massachusetts:

- Providing equitable access to historically underrepresented groups of students in light of the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision on race-based admissions, and
- Strengthening the Commonwealth’s talent pipeline as the number of high school graduates in Massachusetts is projected to decline in the coming years, the existing population is aging out of the workforce, and more young people are leaving the state.

“We want to send a clear message that UMass welcomes highly talented community college graduates to continue their pursuit of a college degree on our nationally ranked Amherst, Boston, Dartmouth and Lowell campuses,” UMass President Marty Meehan said. “We believe this initiative will lead to more community college graduates choosing to finish their four-year degree at UMass, which will accelerate their upward economic trajectory and strengthen the Commonwealth’s workforce.”

“As New England’s first Hispanic Serving Institution, Northern Essex Community College serves thousands of students each year, mostly from the Gateway Cities of Haverhill and Lawrence and towns across the Merrimack Valley, seeking a path to a college degree and greater career and economic opportunities,” NECC President Lane Glenn said. “The Community College Advantage Scholarship will help more of them continue on that path from an associate degree to a bachelor’s degree at one of the state’s outstanding UMass campuses.”

Starting in Fall 2024, the CCAS will help develop and retain diverse talent in Massachusetts by:

- Guaranteeing students in the top 10 percent of their community college graduating class automatic admission to a University of Massachusetts campus and a minimum of \$2,500 per semester (\$5,000 annually) for a total of at

least \$10,000 for the students’ final two years of college.

- Students remain eligible for additional aid based on individual circumstances.
- The CCAS will supplement federal and private grants awarded to the student.

To be eligible for the Fall 2024 CCAS, students must:

- Complete their degree in the top 10 percent of their graduating class at their college. This will be calculated as of the end of the semester prior to the UMass financial aid priority deadline (Students applying for fall admission must have been in the top 10 percent of their class as of the end of the Fall 2023 semester).
- Complete the 2024-25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or equivalent state financial aid application.
- Be eligible for in-state tuition.
- Have earned 45+ credits that are transferable to UMass.
- Be on track to complete their associate degree prior to the Fall 2024 semester.
- The CCAS is the latest in a series of state and UMass initiatives aimed at expanding access to a four-year college degree, which data shows significantly enhances a person’s lifetime income.

The University has increased annual institutional financial aid by 67 percent to \$395 million since 2015 and has launched an early college program that allows high school students in urban centers to earn UMass course credit while still in high school, thereby saving them tuition costs once they get to college.

The state has recently made community college tuition free for students 25 years or age and older and has expanded the Mass-Grant+ program by \$62 million to close make public higher education more affordable for lower- and middle-income students.

Northern Essex Community College, the first Federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution in New England, is an education leader for the Merrimack Valley. Through a supportive learning environment and cultural inclusion, NECC embraces all identities and inspires initiative and excellence through top-notch affordable certificate and associate degree programs online and at campuses in Haverhill and Lawrence. NECC offers many bachelor’s degree transfer options, workforce development and community education classes, and is host to the NECC Police Academy, MassHire Merrimack Valley, and Galaudet University’s Regional Center for the deaf and hard of hearing. Visit Northern Essex online at www.necc.mass.edu.

SEN. EDWARDS DELIVERS COATS TO EASTIE SOUP KITCHEN



Shown above, Sen. Lydia Edwards visit to the East Boston Soup Kitchen where she delivered 30 winter coats that were donated from Amazon.

LOCAL STUDENT EARNS ACADEMIC HONORS

MALDEN CATHOLIC STUDENTS FIRST QUARTER HONOR ROLL

Malden Catholic students have completed the coursework required for the first quarter of the 2023-2024 school year. The school has three categories for outstanding academic performance honors: President’s List (90 - 100 in all classes), First Honors (85 to 89 in all classes), and Second Honors (80 to 84 in all classes).

Malden Catholic Honors –

- President’s List (90 to 100 in all classes)
- Chau Minh Tran
- First Honors (85 to 89 in all classes)

Nyla Taylor

Second Honors (80 to 84 in all classes)

Gianluca Pasquale

Esteban Perez

Malden Catholic High School has shaped emerging leaders in our community, claiming a Nobel Laureate, a Senator, two ambassadors and countless community and business heads among its alumni. Annually, graduates attend some of the nation’s most renown universities including Harvard, Dartmouth, Georgetown, Brown, Cornell, Tufts, Duke, Georgia Tech, Boston College, Northeastern, Boston University and Amherst College. Foundational to student success is Malden Catholic’s codivisional model which

offers the best of both worlds, single-gender academics during the day and integrated social and extracurricular opportunities after school. Malden Catholic is known in the community for its rigorous academics, SFX Scholars Program and award-winning STEM program (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) with electives such as Robotics and Engineering Design. Malden Catholic curricula is designed to improve individual growth mindset, leadership principles and success outcomes along with integrating the Xavarian values of trust, humility, compassion, simplicity and zeal. <https://www.maldencatholic.org/>

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NEWS FROM AROUND THE REGION

DIDOMENICO
UPDATES CITY
COUNCIL
ON POTENTIAL
EVERETT SOCCER
STADIUM

CHELSEA - State Senator Sal DiDomenico appeared before the City Council's subcommittee on conference 1 to clarify the process for a potential soccer stadium for the New England Revolution across from the Encore Casino in Everett.

"I requested this so (DiDomenico) can give us an overview of where things are with the stadium and what our interest is in being at the table," said Council President Leo

Robinson.

DiDomenico noted that there have been a lot of reports in the press and on social media about the potential development of a soccer stadium on the Everett power plant site by the Kraft Group that have not been accurate.

The proposed development was first brought forward about a year and a half ago when the House of Representatives put an amendment to the economic development bill that looked to lift the Designated Port Area (DPA) designation and some of the public engagement process for the site. DiDomenico said the state Senate did not concur with

the House bill, and that amendment never made it out of conference.

"Fast Forward to a few months ago, things started getting a little more traction, and as a result, I brought forward several of the environmental groups who were opposed to what happened in the House," said DiDomenico. "I brought them together at the site to show them what is there, which is a dirty power plant right now. The power plant has been decommissioned and what you see is with the smokestacks and the building is not an attractive gateway to any community."

The clean up of the site alone is expected to cost

ANNUAL EASTIE ELVES



Representing the City of Revere at Eastie Elves, Councillor elect Bob Haas III, School Committee member Jacqueline Monterroso, State Representative Jessica Giannino, Ward 5 Councillor elect Angela Guarino Sawaya, and Councillor Marc Silvestri.

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over \$60 million, he said.

"To get someone to come into a community with private investments and private dollars and clean up that land at their own expense with no federal or state dollars is a big deal," said DiDomenico.

He said the site and building are so contaminated and dirty they have been polluting the land for decades.

The potential private development of the site would not only clean up a brownfields site, but provide a development that residents and the region could enjoy and provide public access to the waterfront.

"I brought the environmental folks together at this meeting with the Kraft Group, the mayor of Everett, and representatives of the city of Everett to talk about how we could proceed and what we thought would be the best avenue," said DiDomenico. "At that time, the environmental groups initiated a conversation with the Kraft Group on a memorandum of agreement."

DiDomenico said that reports that there was a host agreement with the city of Everett for the soccer stadium were false, because there is no official project at this time.

"At this point in time, the environmental folks wanted to have some sort of agreement in place with the Kraft Group before we move forward with legislation," he said. "They felt it was important to have something on paper before anything was done at the State House. They initiated that conversation and they negotiated that agreement."

DiDomenico said the mayor and city of Everett did not negotiate the agreement, but added that the mayor did sign the agreement because

the environmental groups could not sign a binding agreement with the Kraft Group.

"The agreement with the city of Everett will come in the next phase; the mayor will negotiate that at a later date," said DiDomenico.

The senator said there is currently one simple thing going on at the State House now and that there is no move to take away the public process when it comes to developing the power plant property.

"All we are saying is that this land where the power plant is today is on a DPA ... which is maritime use only," said DiDomenico. "There has not been maritime use on that property in several years."

The DPA extends from the Alford Street Bridge in Everett into Chelsea and is one of the largest DPAs in the state, he added.

"We're taking a very small piece of the larger DPA, which is where the power plant sits," said DiDomenico.

By allowing the change in the DPA, it would kickstart the public process for the larger project, he added.

"All we are doing is this one simple step to get to the next step, which is the public process," DiDomenico said. "If we don't lift the DPA, there is no public process after that because there is no project."

If the effort to lift the DPA is ultimately unsuccessful, DiDomenico said there will be no soccer stadium on the site.

"And I fear we will see what we see on that site now in the next five, 10, 15 years – a dirty power plant with smokestacks sitting on a waterfront with no public access," said DiDomenico. "I don't know who else would come into a community and spend \$60 million-plus to clean up the land."

The power plant site would be more expensive to clean up than the Encore casino property, he added.

The present plans for the soccer stadium call for a 25,000-seat stadium with limited parking.

"There has to be a robust public transportation infrastructure in place," said DiDomenico. "That is all going to be part of the process after the DPA is lifted."

DiDomenico noted that there are a number of public transportation improvements for the area that are already part of Everett's agreement with the casino.

The proposal to lift the DPA was initially in a supplemental budget bill that did not make it through the House.

"They had some questions about different things and wanted to have some more time," DiDomenico said. "The next step would be for me to file a stand-alone bill that will entail a hearing for the public and will go through the committee process."

That process could take several months, he said.

Councilor-at-Large Damali Vidot said she understood the need to have positive development on the property rather than an abandoned power plant, but said Chelsea needs to be a part of the conversation about what happens on the site.

"The concern is the impact it has on the quality of life for our residents," she said.

District 1 Councilor Todd Taylor noted that there are many people in the city who are concerned about the mitigation process.

"It seems like a lot of communities around us aren't really stepping up to the plate on a lot of dif-

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Region // CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

ferent issues,” said Taylor. “Chelsea is in kind of a unique situation and we have problems getting enough state funding as it is.”

Taylor said he supports economic activity, but that he doesn’t want Chelsea left behind when it comes to being able to afford taking care of infrastructure and other issues.

HART APPOINTED SUPT. OF EVERETT SCHOOLS

EVERETT - William D. Hart was appointed the new superintendent of Everett schools following a unanimous vote of the School Committee at its Dec. 20 special meeting.

Hart, 63, is officially in charge of the Everett school district after having served in the position in an interim capacity since Nov. 2. He will be in the superintendent’s office Jan. 2 as the approximately 7,500 students return from their holiday vacations.

“I’m excited to begin as superintendent,” said Hart. “Obviously, Everett’s my hometown. I was born here. I love the community. I know a good number of the people, and I know how to do this job, so I’m excited about it.”

A long-time involvement in Everett

William D. Hart is the son of the late Bill Hart and Dolores Hart, who were lifelong Everett residents. He is a graduate of Merrimack College and holds a Master’s degree from Suffolk University.

He was elected to the Everett Common Council at the age of 21, serving for four years and later serving on the Everett School Committee for four years. He has been appointed by several mayors to different positions, serving on the Parks Commission and Board of Assessors, in addition to his work for his church and charitable organizations. He is also past president of the Everett Chamber of Commerce, having also served in that capacity for the Chelsea Chamber of Commerce, where he was a widely admired leader in the community.

Executive director of community college system

Hart brings an impressive record in the field of education to the superintendent’s office. He started teaching in the community college system in the early 2000s, before taking a full-time administrative position. He was vice president of Bunker Hill Community College and became the deputy director and later the chief executive officer for the state’s 15 community colleges – which is the largest segment (more than 140,000 students) of public higher education in Massachusetts.

“Everett was the largest feeder community to Bunker Hill because of the school’s close proximity and our students wanting to take classes and pursue their associate’s degree there,” Hart noted. “I had the opportunity to meet a lot of Everett students when I was working at Bunker Hill.”

Building strong relationships with the Everett School Committee

Because of his presence in the Everett community for many years, Hart has had previous relationships with members of the Everett School Committee. “The returning mem-

bers have been great, I know several of the newer members, and I’m hoping to foster a strong relationship with those whom I don’t know that well,” said Hart. “I’ve reached out to each member to meet me and talk about the school system.”

Hart is also looking forward to working with Mayor Carlo DeMaria and other city officials on advancing the Everett schools.

“I look forward to working with any member of city government who has the kids in mind. I will work with them to do good things for Everett. That’s my No. 1 and only agenda,” said Hart. “I’m doing this job for the right reasons. This is my town and our schools and our students. I’m doing it for them.”

Hart said he will attend the Jan. 5 inauguration ceremony as an invited guest and in the formal role of superintendent, leading the members of the new Everett School Committee into the hall.

Evaluating the state of the Everett school district

During his interim tenure as superintendent Hart visited each school in Everett. He has met with parents and students and will be hosting meet-the-teacher coffee hours. He doesn’t plan any changes in the current makeup of the district.

“I just want to make sure we protect our students and provide our teachers with the resources they need to teach and support students,” said Hart.

Hart will also be reviewing data to “see how Everett stacks up with other school systems.”

Hart said he was pleased to see Everett become one of 19 school districts to advance to the next round in the Massachusetts School Building Authority’s process for the construction of new schools.

“I think there were 300 school districts that applied for support from the MSBA, and we (Everett) were one of 19 invited to the next stage,” said Hart. “The next stage is a project manager being assigned to us and beginning the process and reviewing options with the city about the location, size, and design of the new school [Everett High School].”

REVERE SCHOOL WORKSHOP FOCUSES ON INCLUSION AND EQUITY

REVERE - Revere Public Schools Assistant Superintendent of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Lourenço Garcia is pleased to announce that a group of caregivers, community members and teachers recently engaged in a discussion on cultural proficiency with well-known speaker Dr. Kalise Wornum of KW Diversity, Inc. Dr. Wornum, a nationally sought-after keynote speaker, educational leader, workshop facilitator, and author in the area of anti-racist education and cultural proficiency, led the December workshop that emphasized the importance of being open-minded and accepting when it comes to cultural proficiency.

“The minute we start talking to each other, we realize everybody brings something different to the table,” said Dr. Wornum. “If we’re trying to be a more equitable school district, we all need to be

on the same bus and learn from each other’s experiences, trauma or diversity.”

Using the National Education Association’s definition of ‘cultural prurien-cy,’ Dr. Wornum said, “It’s the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than their own. It entails developing certain personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities, developing certain bodies of cultural knowledge and mastering a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching.”

Dr. Wornum said that while she gets what the definition means, it doesn’t tell us enough. To break down what we’re really talking about, she pointed to the words of Ralph Ellison, author of the 1952 novel Invisible Man.

The Invisible Man reflects on the various ways in which the nameless main character has experienced social invisibility during his life and begins to tell his story.

“He wrote, “Show me how I can claim that which is real to me, while at the same time teaching me a way into the larger society. Then and only then will I sing your praises and help you to make the desert bear fruit,” said Dr. Wornum. “If the first thing we say to kids is to learn this, but we are not curious about who they are, then we’re seeing them as a deficit instead of lifting them up. It has to be relationships before rigor. Relationships before rules. What does that demand of the educator? What does that demand of the teacher? What does that demand of you, the parent? It demands that we first see the child, understand the child and learn about the child before we can teach the child. We have to learn about the child in front of us.”

This strategy, Dr. Wornum argues, challenges us to be more curious about cultures other than our own. For educators, it’s natural to see students’ vulnerabilities and work with them to support their differences, but Dr. Wornum wants educators and caregivers to learn more and dig deeper into all the various cultures of students.

“The anatomy of an inequitable classroom is curriculum without windows and mirrors,” explained Dr. Wornum. “When our schools have a curriculum that does not have a window for students to see a world larger than themselves or a mirror for them to see themselves in the curriculum, it is not equitable. Every lesson you put in front of the child, you need to say, “This is for you, and I designed this for you.”

Dr. Garcia echoed Dr. Wornum and said, by nature, we are the place where we’re born and raised and will carry that history and culture with us for the rest of our lives.

“We are a school system where you have close to 70% of students from different countries,” said Dr. Garcia. “So, it’s our vision and our mission to build an environment that is diverse, that’s anti-racist, and one that really understands where people come from and the history and culture they bring. The vision is to build a community of learners, a place that celebrates the culture around us and addresses inequities when we see them.”

Edwards embarks on a housing tour to address Massachusetts’ unique challenges

Senator Lydia Edwards recently completed an extensive tour of Nantucket, Hyannis, and Provincetown, hosted by Cape and Islands Senator Cyr, to closely examine the housing challenges facing these areas. Accompanied by local leaders and advocates, the Senator’s tour underscored her commitment to understanding and addressing the housing crisis in the Commonwealth, especially in regions impacted by seasonal economies and soaring real estate prices.

The tour included visits to key locations and meetings with significant stakeholders. Participants included Tom Dixon, a member of the Select Board; Brooke Mohr of the Nantucket Resource Partnership; Brian Sullivan, a Real Estate Agent; Tucker Holland, the current Housing Director for Nantucket; and Kristie Ferrantella, the incoming Housing Director for Nantucket.

Senator Edwards’ visit began with a trip on the Hyannis Hy-Line Cruises, followed by a driving tour of various housing projects. This tour provided a firsthand look at the innovative approaches being taken to address housing needs in these communities.

A highlight of the visit was the tour of the Harbor Hill property in Provincetown. This unique housing development, which includes a range of units from studios to three-bedroom apartments, caters to residents earning between 80% and 200% of the Area Median Income (AMI). With rents ranging from \$1,200 to \$2,700, Harbor Hill represents a critical solution for families who earn too much to qualify for traditional af-


fordable housing but still struggle with the high cost of living.

The Senator also engaged in a walking tour of Hyannis Main Street and met with local advocates in Provincetown and the outer Cape to discuss broader housing issues and potential policy responses.

Cape and Islands Senator Cyr, a key figure in this initiative, remarked, “It was a genuine joy to host my friend Senator Edwards in Nantucket, Hyannis, and Provincetown for a housing tour. Senator Edwards did not let any rough seas deter her on-the-ground approach to examining housing challenges in the furthest reaches of Massachusetts. I am grateful she took the time to listen to Cape Codders and Islanders to understand the unique obstacles we face in a seasonal economy with skyrocketing real estate prices. Senator Edwards’ dedication to crafting housing policies that reflect the needs of the whole Commonwealth will provide the Cape and Islands with the policy tools we need to stem our housing crisis.”h

Addressing Senator Cyr’s remarks, Senator Edwards noted “As I traveled through Nantucket, Hyannis, and Provincetown, the diverse housing challenges faced by our communities became vividly clear. From families caught between the cracks of traditional affordable housing to the unique pressures of our seasonal economy, it’s evident that one-size-fits-all policies simply won’t work. I am committed to working tirelessly to develop nuanced, effective housing policies that recognize and address these distinct needs. Our goal is clear: to create sustainable, affordable housing solutions that strengthen our communities and support all residents of the Commonwealth.”

Senator Edwards’ visit underscores her commitment to not only understanding the unique challenges faced by different communities in Massachusetts but also to developing comprehensive policy solutions. This tour is a step towards ensuring that housing policies are inclusive and effective, addressing the needs of all residents across the Commonwealth.



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EASTIE FARM CELEBRATES THE WINTER SOLSTICE

Eastie Farm celebrated the Winter Solstice on December 21. It was noted that the shortest day of the

year has been celebrated throughout history and is a milestone in the yearly cycle. Staff members,

volunteers, and friends of Eastie Farms celebrated this important day as well as the important work

Eastie Farms does for the community.

DEREK KOUVYOUNJIAN PHOTOS



Eastie Farm volunteer Lucy Olbrys with her mother Jen.



This year Eastie Farm organized a clothes swap for the Solstice Party. It was intended that this addition would invigorate everyone’s wardrobe and help people better understand each other’s cultures.



Eastie Farm staff members.



Dennis Sullivan aka Santa with Rick Cresta and Cara Christous.



Kannan Thiruvengadam, director of Eastie Farm, welcomes everyone to the Solstice Party noting that Street The shortest day of the year that there will be a “return of the light.”



Roberto Gomez and Kannan Thiruvengadam, director of Eastie Farm.



Darren and Josie Green.



Jenny Wechter, director of communications for Eastie Farms, preforms in Yaffa, a band with original music about climate change solutions and planetary wellness as it is a milestone.



Oscar Gonzalez and Annette Davis.



Nora Falvey and her mom Lana, a teacher in East Boston High School.



Eastie Farm volunteers assemble.



Eastie Farm Greenhouse is aglow with activity on the longest night of the year.



Some artwork made by young participants in the many programs and workshops at Eastie Farm is proudly displayed.



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