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VOL.1 NO.329-28

SOMERVILLE/MEDFORD MASS.

Tuesday January 14th, 2025

Mayor Ballantyne Delivers Landmark Contract Tackling Wage Bias and Boosting Pay for SMEA (now SMEU) Unit B



Continued to page 12



NEWS TALK OUT LOUD/SPEAK UP



Somerville Police

DRUG COSTS AND INDUSTRY TRANSPARENCY

Identification Wanted: On-going Investigation



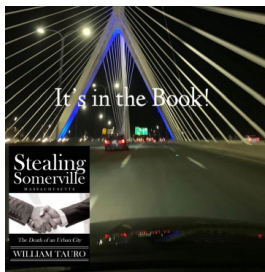
Somerville Police
Real Life Somerville
Police Stories Page



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Continued to page 19



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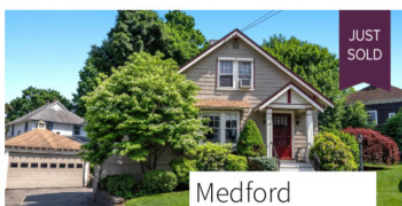
MARKET ACTIVITY

WE HAVE BEEN BUSY...

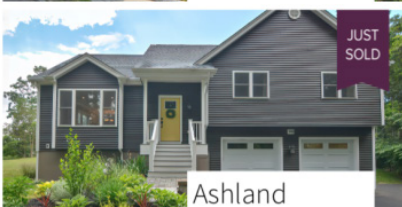
BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY HomeServices | Commonwealth Real Estate



Malden



Medford



Ashland



Westwood

We have been busy, but never too busy for you! These four properties were sold in one month! If you see something you would like to know more about, have any questions or are thinking about buying or selling a property, please don't hesitate to send us an email or give us call!

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Patricia Ng Broker Associate REALTOR®-(617) 818-5736Patricia.Ng@commonmoves.com

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Artwork / Logos must be submitted to MHSVarsitySoftball22@gmail.com
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Somerville/Medford Remembering James W. "Figbar" Fitzgerald



Obituary

James W. "Figbar" Fitzgerald, lifelong resident of Melrose, passed away suddenly on Thursday, January 2, 2025, at age 70.

Jimmy was born in Medford on February 13, 1954, the son of the late James E. Fitzgerald and Patricia A. (Wolsey) Fitzgerald. A Melrose

native, Jim maintained numerous friendships and connections from his days at Melrose High School, Class of 1973. He was bestowed the nickname, Figbar by his father for often keeping fig newtons in his pockets as a young boy. The nickname stuck, and for the rest of his life, all who knew him lovingly referred to him as "Figbar."

Jim worked two jobs for over 25 years. At night, he was a Dam/Bridge Operator on the Mystic River for the Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation. During the day, he was well known as everyone's favorite "bug man" with Kane Pest Control, passionately offering his help and expertise to his customers and friends for decades around Melrose. During the winter, Figbar also worked many years as a plow operator for the City of Melrose.

Always social, Jimmy enjoyed meeting up with his buddies at a local restaurant, or catching a car show or air show around the North Shore. Jimmy enthusiastically enjoyed his passion for cars, especially his favorite Corvettes which he often reminisced about from his younger days. A music lover, he played the drums in his youth, and enjoyed rocking out to Classic Rock while driving around Melrose.

If you knew Figbar, you knew he was one-of-a-kind. He was equally parts quirky and fun loving, but passionately himself, and endeared himself to all with a simple, down to earth way. Often on island time and island mindset, he was famous for late arrivals but arrived ready to share a laugh, reminisce and reconnect and warm the hearts of those

around him. Jimmy was more than willing to help out, never expecting anything in return.

Above all, Jimmy was happiest with his beloved daughters (who he was obsessed with.) He was most recently the proud grandfather of Owen who he enthusiastically took to Disney World twice in his 2 short years of life. He also never missed a chance to (over) feed his grand-dogs who he loved.

Jimmy was beloved by many, and will be deeply missed, but always lovingly remembered for his big heart, great sense of humor, and love for family.

Jim was the devoted father of Jillian O'Brien and her husband Sean of Peabody, and Melanie Arsenault and her husband Robert of Peabody. Proud grandfather of Owen

O'Brien. Also survived by many loving aunts, cousins and friends.

Relatives and friends are respectfully invited to gather in honor of Jimmy's life during Visiting Hours at the Robinson Funeral Home, 809 Main St., Melrose, on Wednesday, January 8 from 4-7pm, and again on Thursday morning at 9am before leaving in procession to Most Blessed Sacrament Church, 1055 Main St., Wakefield for his Funeral Mass celebrated at 10am. Interment at Wyoming Cemetery, Melrose. Gifts in Jim's memory may be made to the American Heart Association, 93 Worcester St., Wellesley, MA 02481. For online tribute please visit <http://www.RobinsonFuneralHome.com>

Somerville/Medford Remembering Catherine M. (Kay) Post



Obituary

Catherine M. (Kay) Post of Somerville passed away surrounded by the love of her family on January 7, 2025, at the age of 94.

She was the beloved wife of the late William D. Post of Somerville. Born and raised in Malden, she was the daughter of the late John Hughes and Anna Mae Hughes, both of Malden.

Kay was the loving mother to William D. Post, Jr. and his wife Frances of Brookfield, Illinois, Stephen M. Post and his wife Virginia

of Somerville, and the late Lawrence G. Post and his surviving wife Susan Callahan Post of Somerville. Kay was the sister to the late Irene Hughes, SSND, of Bridgeport, CT, the late Dorothy Hughes of Malden, and the late Margaret Hughes of Reading. "Nana Kay" was the beloved grandmother to Michael, Laura, Katie, Julia, Stephen Michael, Sam and Sean and great grandmother to Madeleine, James, Colin, Bridget, Benjamin and Stella June. Loving Aunt to many nieces and nephews.

Kay held several occupations over her lifetime and served for many years as secretary and administrative assistant at the James A. Logan Post VFW in Somerville. Above all, Kay was devoted to her family and took great pride and joy in her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Visiting hours will be held in the George L. Doherty Funeral Home, 855 Broadway (Powder House Sq.) Somerville, Friday evening, January 10th 2025 from 4:00 – 6:30,

followed by a Funeral Home Service at 6:30.

Relatives and friends invited.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Kay's memory can be made to:

School Sisters of Notre Dame
345 Belden Hill Road
Wilton, CT 06897

Somerville/Medford Remembering Marie L. (Cavagnaro) Ward



Obituary

Marie L. (Cavagnaro) Ward, a lifelong resident of Somerville, MA, passed away peacefully on January 11, 2025, at the age of 99. She was the beloved wife of the late William B. Ward Jr. and a loving mother to the late William B. Ward III, Virginia Buckley and her husband, John J. Buckley of Med-

ford, and Christopher J. Ward of Somerville. Marie was a cherished grandmother to Suzanne B. Galusi and her husband Matthew of Melrose, Andrea B. Skutul and her husband, David C. Skutul Sr. of Stoneham, Taylor Beaugard and her husband, Jeffrey of Methuen, and Michael and Anthony Ward of Millbury. She

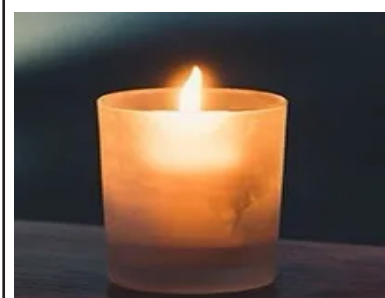
was also a loving great-grandmother to Olivia and Sophia Galusi, David C. Jr. and Nico J. Skutul, and Mia, Ava, and Brock Beaugard.

Marie was deeply rooted in her Christian faith and devoted to her family.

Visitation will be held at the George L. Doherty Fu-

neral Home, 855 Broadway, (Powder House Sq.) Somerville, Wednesday morning January 15, 2025 from 9:30am – 10:30am, followed by a Funeral Mass at 11am in St. Raphael's Church, 512 High St. Medford. Relatives and friends are kindly invited to attend. Interment at Oak Grove Cemetery.

Somerville/Medford Remembering Raymond C. Hardy



Obituary

Raymond C. Hardy of

Somerville passed away on January 11, 2025. He was the beloved son of Richard E. Hardy of Stoughton and the late Julie Hardy. Raymond was a dear brother to Richard Hardy and his wife Janet of Oakham, MA, Cynthia Coelho and her husband

Daniel of Florida, Robert Hardy and his wife Robin of Eastham, Barbara Avani and her husband John of Stoughton, Ronald Hardy and his wife Jenny of Holbrook, and Anne Kennedy of Brockton. He is also survived by many nieces and nephews.

Visiting hours for Raymond will be held at the George L. Doherty Funeral Home, 855 Broadway (Powder house Sq.) Somerville, on Sunday, January 19th from 12:00 to 1:00, followed by a Funeral Home Service at

1:00. Relatives and friends are invited to attend. Interment will be private.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made in Raymond's memory to the Walnut St. Center, 291 Mystic Ave. Medford, MA 02155.



Mayor Ballantyne Delivers State of the City Address Outlines Ambitious Plans for 2025



Geothermal Energy, Free Public Housing Wi-Fi, Massive Sewer Overhaul, and Surpassing Affordable Housing Production Goals on Agenda

SOMERVILLE- Mayor Katjana Ballantyne delivered her State of the City Midterm address Monday night, highlighting the city's accomplishments in 2024 and outlining an ambitious agenda for the year ahead.

Citing upcoming initiatives including a project to explore bringing clean geothermal energy to Somerville, major sewer system overhauls, free Wi-Fi access for public housing, completion of the city's first new fire station in a century - and facilitating the construction of nearly 700 affordable units currently in the pipeline - the Mayor kept the focus on her administration's "guiding force," which is "progress for all."

The Mayor emphasized the importance of addressing the economic and social challenges facing the city, including the rising cost of housing, ADA accessibility needs, and the potential impact of national political trends on immigrant, LGBTQIA+, and other vulnerable or targeted communities.

Addressing what she called "the elephant outside the room" in a reference to leadership changes in Washington, she urged the community to join with the administration in standing up to "hatred and division, be it racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim bigotry, transphobia, ablist, misogyny, anti-Arab sentiment, sexism, or similar attempts at othering."

"We are resilient, creative, and determined. Somerville welcomes all," she said.

City Council President Judy Pineda Neufeld and School Committee Chairwoman Ilana Krepchin also delivered Midterm remarks to the community. Video of all three speeches can be viewed on the City YouTube and Cable Channels via [youtube.com/SomervilleCityTV](https://www.youtube.com/SomervilleCityTV) and [somervillema.gov/CityTV](https://www.somervillema.gov/CityTV).

Key progress and initiatives outlined in Mayor Ballantyne's

address include:

Expanding affordable housing: We are "evolving housing stability supports from a small group of band-aid solutions to a robust ecosystem of initiatives," said Mayor Ballantyne.

Recent initiatives cited include: The administration distributed over \$9.5 million in flexible rental assistance, created the Municipal Voucher Program, introduced a Guaranteed Basic Income pilot, and established and used the Early Action Acquisition Fund to purchase units on the private market and keep them affordable. Somerville also led successful pushes for state legislation passed to seal no-fault eviction records and increase state funding for renter legal assistance.

Coming progress cited include: In 2025, the administration will launch the Older Adults Bridge Program to help prevent low-income seniors from experiencing homelessness, continue to facilitate the production of 684 units in the City's affordable housing pipeline, stay on track to surpass the SomerVision 2030 goal to create over 1,200 affordable housing units, and begin preliminary steps to pursue the recently completed Brickbottom and Assembly Square Neighborhood Plans, which over time could add an additional 1,200 units.

Addressing climate change: "Our goal is to do our part and more - going beyond our borders to fight global warming," said Mayor Ballantyne.

Recent initiatives include: In 2022, the Ballantyne administration raised the City's climate goals to now aim to be Carbon Net Negative by 2050, meaning the goal is to remove more carbon from the atmosphere than the City produces. In 2024, to solidify plans to reach this target, the administration made ambitious updates to its Climate Forward plan.

Coming progress: 2025 will bring a range of initiatives including a new project exploring the potential for neighborhood-based networked geothermal systems and release of the City's report on strategies for moving multifamily buildings off natural gas and onto cleaner electric energy.

Improving public safety: Newly appointed Police Chief Shumeane Benford and the Mayor share the approach that effective public safety is "focused on building trust, fostering collaboration, and preventing issues before they arise," said the Mayor.

Recent initiatives include: Intensive, multi-year community-based work to develop multiple public safety related plans was completed

in late 2024. The City's first new fire station in more than a century is under construction and expected to open its doors in Assembly Square in spring 2025.

Coming progress: In early 2025, the city will release and begin to implement recommendations from the Public Safety for All Task Force, the Civilian Oversight Committee, and the Anti-Violence Working Group.

Investing in our people, building equity and inclusion: "From our oldest residents to our youngest, Somerville supports every generation," said Mayor Ballantyne. **Recent initiatives include:** As other communities make cuts, the Ballantyne administration has centered schools as a top priority, adding school staff and increasing school budgets by 27% over three years, while also expanding afterschool programming and whole student supports. Communitywide, 2024 also saw advances for ADA accessibility including installing dozens of accessible pedestrian crosswalk buttons and expanded workforce development including paraprofessional training.

Coming progress: The City's Economic Development Division and Somerville Housing Authority secured a grant to launch free Wi-Fi for public housing tenants this coming year. The Administration will launch a citywide public interpretation line, will pilot a school-year expansion of the Mayor's Summer Jobs Program, and will continue to expand job training for all ages, including launching "Let's Get Workin': a partnership between DPW and the High School's Center for Career and Technical Education to offer paid, hands-on job training in professions like HVAC, plumbing, and carpentry.

Delivering strong fiscal management: "We can't control national economic forces, but we can protect our community by managing our local resources wisely," said Mayor Ballantyne.

Recent initiatives include: For the second consecutive year, in 2024, Somerville earned a Triple-A bond rating - a first for the City - from Standard and Poors, which saves taxpayers money.

Coming progress: The Mayor noted, "Somerville is facing the same uncertain economic outlook facing the state and our nation. And as we navigate this down cycle, next year's budget will again be tighter. But our teams are hard at work finding operational efficiencies, and we are positioning Somerville to outperform the market."

Investing in workforce, taking on wage bias: "On my watch, Somerville will not stand for unequal pay for equal work," said Mayor Ballantyne.

Recent initiatives: Mayor Ballantyne has been squarely focused on investing in city workers and has made it a central tenet of these efforts to eliminate long-standing wage bias - including gender bias.

Four union contracts completed to date delivered wage and benefit increases and the E911 contract broke new ground by correcting for long-standing gender bias.

Coming progress: Ratification of a landmark new contract with the City's largest bargaining unit, SMEU Unit B (until recently SMEA) is expected this week. The contract "takes on more than inflation. We sent an arrow right at the heart of long-standing bias," said Mayor Ballantyne. "If it is ratified as it stands, it will be a step towards equity that is decades overdue."

Investing in local infrastructure: "We are not just imagining an equitable future - we are literally building it," said Mayor Ballantyne citing work on roads, schools, parks, mobility and the "massive overhaul of sewer systems."

Recent initiatives: 2024 progress included advancement of the \$243 million Somerville Avenue sewer overhaul, the Spring Hill Sewer Separation Project, and the massive Poplar Street Pump Station.

The City opened or expanded four public green spaces and broke ground on the Dilboy Athletic Auxiliary Fields and a new pocket park at 217 Somerville Avenue. Streetscape projects completed include Eastern Pearl Street, Powder House Boulevard, Holland Street, and more - all designed to improve traffic flow, pedestrian safety, and sustainability.

Coming progress: In December, Somerville was one of only four school projects to advance to the feasibility phase in the Massachusetts School Building Authority's state funding program - a significant step toward advancing the Winter Hill School project, which could possibly include the Brown School.

Addressing Homelessness: The Mayor made clear her administration is committed to "addressing the root causes of homelessness with compassion while ensuring that public spaces remain safe and accessible for everyone. Public safety and human dignity are not oppositional forces. We can uphold both," she said.

Recent initiatives: Core actions include increased outreach and support services, compassionate policing, and the Warming Center established by the Ballantyne administration in winter 22/24, which has evolved from a few

days of emergency response to a center now open nightly during the five coldest months, serving meals, and connecting residents to services, including housing.

Coming progress: The City remains in active coordination with local partner Somerville Homeless Coalition and the Somerville Police Department on multiple initiatives including a new program to reduce senior homelessness launching in 2025: the Older Adults Bridge Program.

Inclusive, responsive governance: "From the moment I took office, I made it my mission to ensure that decision-making reflects the voices of our community," said Mayor Ballantyne.

Recent initiatives: With an emphasis on reaching voices not always heard, the Administration brought numerous plans to completion in 2024, including among others: transformative, community-driven plans for the Brickbottom and Assembly Square neighborhoods; the Cultural Capacity and Armory Master Plans to keep and expand the arts in Somerville; Anti-Displacement plans for Residential, Small Business, and Arts and Culture; and the Public Safety for All, Civilian Oversight, and Anti-Violence plans.

Coming progress: Plan releases and related community events are underway and will continue in early 2025. A Public Safety for All (PSFA) Project Manager will be hired in early 2025 to ensure the advancement of steps to realize the PSFA plan as well as Civilian Oversight and Anti-Violence.

Environmental stewardship: "By blending private development, environmental innovation, and community-driven planning, Somerville is building a sustainable future for all," said Mayor Ballantyne.

Recent initiatives: In 2024, the Ballantyne administration launched the City's first-ever Pollinator Action Plan to protect our native pollinators. The City also carried out leading-edge work to expand open space as less public cost through POPs, which are public spaces created through private development, including opening the Boynton Yards POPs park.

Coming progress: DPW just launched a new ice melting approach that came right out of the grocery aisle: beet extract, which requires less salt on roads, has fewer impacts on cars, plants, and trees, and lowers winter maintenance costs. "We're not just fighting snow - we are fighting for our environment, one winter storm at a time," said Mayor Ballantyne.

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ID FOR LIQUOR PURCHASES (H 4131)

By Bob Katzen

Gov. Healey signed into law a measure that would allow alcohol-serving establishments to accept all out-of-state motor vehicle licenses and Global Entry cards issued by the United

States Customs and Border Protection.

“Massachusetts has been the only state in the entire United States that did not permit retailers of alcohol beverages to rely on a valid out-of-state ID

for the purchase of alcoholic beverages,” said a spokesperson for the Massachusetts Package Stores Association (MASS-PACK), a non-profit trade organization representing locally owned retailers of beer, wine and spirits headquartered in

Massachusetts. “This regulation was archaic and irrational. It also impeded commerce across the state.”

“This vitally important economic measure will support our restaurants, bars and other

entertainment venues as they continue to fully recover from losses experienced during the pandemic and allow our out-of-state visitors to enjoy a drink, if they choose,” said House sponsor Rep. Paul McMurtry (D-Dedham)

DECLAWING OF CATS (S 2552)

By Bob Katzen

Gov. Healey signed into law a measure that would ban cat declawing and tendonectomy unless it is done for the medical need of the feline. The measure imposes a fine on offenders of

up to \$1,000 for a first offense, \$1,500 for a second offense and \$2,500 for a third or subsequent offense.

Supporters said that declawing a cat involves amputating the last bone of each toe, which if performed on a human would

be equivalent to cutting off each finger at the last knuckle. They noted that according to the American Veterinary Medical Association, the physical side effects from declawing include both acute and chronic pain, improperly healed wounds,

sudden loss of blood, impaired immune response and behavioral side effects include biting.

“Declawing is an abhorrent practice that most veterinarians view as inhumane,” said sponsor Sen. Mark Montigny (D-New Bedford). “This is

another step in my commitment to protect animals in the commonwealth. As a state we have done far too little to punish heartless abusers and to push back against a weak court system that has too often failed to hold them accountable.”

Somerville/Medford Remembering Peter Louis Guglietta



Peter Louis Guglietta, of Somerville, passed away peacefully on Saturday, January 11, 2025 He was 100 years old. Born in Somerville, he was the son

of Damiano and Maria (Nardella) Guglietta. The beloved husband of the late Lillian (Strozzi) Guglietta, who predeceased him in 2023, together they were married nearly 74 years and raised their family in Somerville. In addition to being a devoted husband and father, Peter was a World War II veteran of the United States Army Air Corps, and served proudly in the Pacific theatre from 1943-

1946. Upon his return from military service, he finished his college education at Bates College and at Boston University. He worked most of his career in sales and sales management in the fire protection systems industry.

Peter is lovingly survived by his sons; Peter D. Guglietta of Illinois and his late wife Gail, who predeceased Peter & Lillian in 2020, Paul C. Guglietta

of Somerville, his cherished grandson, Samuel Guglietta of Illinois, along with 5 nieces and their extended families. He is also survived by his sister, Tina Guglietta of Gaeta, Italy. As well as the in-laws of his son Peter’s marriage. Peter’s sisters, Elizabeth (Albano), Grace (Marseglia), and Nancy (DiCiacio) all predeceased Peter.

Calling Hours will be held in the George L.

Doherty Funeral Home, 855 Broadway (Powder House Sq.) Somerville on Tuesday morning, January 21st from 10:00AM to 11:30AM followed by a prayer service at 11:30AM.

Services will conclude with burial at Woodlawn Cemetery, Everett.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the Sepsis Alliance <http://www.sepsis.org>

MEDFORD VFW POST 1012 HAS A NEW COMMANDER

Congratulations to The Medford VFW on its new Installation of Commander Steve McLaughlin as he takes charge.

Best of luck and we can’t wait to see all the good things that you will bring to the VFW under your guidance and leadership!

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them out!” Somerville/Medford News Weekly/Boston News Group

State of A Tavola:

A Tavola’s outdoor patio dining is open for business! Take-out and delivery is also available! (with-in a small radius of A Tavola).

A special menu and special hours will be posted on our website as well as our social media channels. Please stay tuned

for any and all details.

As always our gift cards will be available through our website, over the phone and in person. Starting Tuesday, for every gift card purchase over \$100, we will add an additional \$20 gift card as a way to thank you for your support.

If there is anything in particular you would like to see from us or if you need help preparing food at home for your families please reach out and we will do

our best to help. Whether it be recipe ideas with random things you might have purchased or if you run out of something that you need that we can help with please don’t hesitate to ask.

A Tavola Restaurant Winchester outdoor patio dining is open for business & takeout orders: (781)729-1040 34 Church St Winchester

Thank you for your continued support.



Jamaica Plain Youth and Medford Professional Celebrate the Power of Mentoring



Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Massachusetts is Enrolling New Matches

From L to R: Damaris Sosa and Anne Castner-Williams at Damaris' Quinceañera. Courtesy of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Massachusetts.

JAMAICA PLAIN, MEDFORD, Mass. – January is National Mentoring Month. Damaris Sosa, 15, of Jamaica Plain, and Anne Castner-Williams, 29, of Medford, are living proof that youth mentoring programs have a tremendous impact on both the youth and families served as well as the adults who volunteer as their mentors.

Castner-Williams and Sosa have been paired together in Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Massachusetts' (BBBSEM) signature community-based mentoring program for nearly seven years, developing a close mentoring relationship. When they were first matched in April 2018, the then 9-year-old Sosa felt shy but over time began to open up to Castner-Williams as the duo bonded over shared interests, like music, theater, and their love of musicals, like Mamma Mia and Hamilton. Their connection goes beyond regular hangouts and walks around the neighborhood as the pair engages in meaningful conversations around challenges and milestones in each of their lives. They consider each other family and include one another in important

celebrations such as Sosa's quinceañera, where Castner-Williams played a key role in the ceremony presenting Sosa's first pair of heels, and Castner-Williams' wedding, which both took place this past year.

"It's really impactful to have one person in my life who chooses to be there for me, outside of family or teachers," says Sosa, now a sophomore in high school. "For other kids, having someone who genuinely wants to spend time with them and be a constant presence can make all the difference, offering support and a sense of security. I always tell my friends to enroll in the program."

Castner-Williams, now a social worker, matched with Sosa when working at BBBSEM as an enrollment coordinator and later a match support specialist, helping to foster connections just like theirs. Having grown up in Miami and California before moving to Boston for college, she always understood the value of having mentors, and she was motivated to become a Big after seeing the need for adult role models in the lives of many young people. Throughout their time together, Castner-Williams has witnessed Sosa grow from a lively, energetic young girl into a more thoughtful and socially aware young adult. Their relationship has been rooted in quality time,

with a focus on supporting each other through life's ups and downs. The connection between them is a testament to the power of mentorship and the lasting bonds it can create.

"Staying connected to and investing in youth is essential to being truly rooted in your community," says Castner-Williams. "The joy of a deepening relationship is powerful, as it allows you to accept a child as they are and support them through whatever comes their way. Mentorship makes a real difference, offering kids a safe, supportive adult presence that helps protect them from life's challenges and fosters the importance of meaningful connections in an increasingly isolated world."

BBBSEM is now enrolling and matching Littles and Bigs. Anyone can become a Big as the agency welcomes youth and adults of all races, ethnicities, cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, and physical abilities. Volunteers must be 18 years old or older and be able to commit a few hours a few times a month for at least a year and have a passion for positively impacting a young person's life.

In its 76 years, BBBSEM has supported more than 25,000

youth. For more information, to become a volunteer or to register your children, visit: www.emassbigs.org.

About Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Massachusetts

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Massachusetts is an innovative, energetic organization that is making a real difference in the lives of nearly 4,000 youth annually by providing them with an invested, caring adult mentor in long-term, professionally supported relationships. With research and proven outcomes at its core, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Massachusetts is working to defend the potential of children facing adversity and ensure every child has the support from caring adults that they need for healthy development and success in life. The organization's vision is to inspire, engage and transform communities in Eastern Massachusetts by helping youth achieve their full potential, contributing to healthier families, better schools, more confident futures and stronger communities. Throughout its 76 years, the largest Big Brothers Big Sisters affiliate in New England has created and served more than 25,000 youth. For more information about the agency and its mission, visit www.emassbigs.org.

Somerville/Medford Remembering Joel Charles



Obituary
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The Somerville/Medford News Weekly

Here's your weekly News Talk Shout Out dosage continued from page 2



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COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSES (H 5139)

By Bob Katzen

The House approved and sent to the Senate a new version of legislation, originally sponsored by Gov. Maura Healey, that would prevent commercial drivers from losing their licenses due to passenger vehicle offenses they committed prior to September 30, 2005.

The Registry of Motor Vehicles recently notified hundreds of bus and truck drivers that they were ineligible for commercial licenses due to at least two past major offenses, blindsiding many motorists who for years thought their infrac-

tions were behind them.

“Over time, the relevance and predictive value of these older offenses has diminished, particularly for those drivers who have remained offense-free since,” said Healey. “In most circumstances, a commercial driver who meets the safety requirements of federal law should not be disqualified from driving due solely to passenger vehicle offenses that occurred 19 or more years ago. She noted her bill would remove consideration of pre-September 30, 2005 passenger vehicle offenses from our disqualification law, except for multiple

instances of operating under the influence.

\$3.2 MILLION FOR MASSACHUSETTS COASTAL COMMUNITIES – The Healey Administration announced the awarding of \$3.2 million in grants for projects that proponents say will support the economic vitality, tourism and ecosystem health of the Bay State’s waterfront and harbors, while helping the state reach its ambitious climate resiliency goals.

“Coastal communities play a critical role in our economy,” said Gov. Healey. “The ... Grants help cities and towns

make infrastructure improvements to prepare for extreme weather caused by climate change while also investing in important blue economy businesses, commercial fishing operations and tourist and recreational enterprises.”

“These investments will support a range of critical initiatives, from coastal resilience and dredging projects to pier infrastructure enhancements that protect our shorelines,” said Secretary of Economic Development Yvonne Hao. “By funding these efforts, we’re ensuring a safer and more enduring future for our coasts from

the North Shore to the Cape and Islands.”

“Maritime communities are important centers of economic activity, drawing many visitors each year and supporting the coastal industries that have been integral to our state’s economy,” said Undersecretary of Economic Foundations Ashley Stolba. “We are proud to fund these projects and look forward to their lasting impact on the future generations of these towns.”



Mayor Ballantyne Delivers Landmark Contract Tackling Wage Bias and Boosting Pay for SMEA (now SMEU) Unit B

14%-17% average salary increases informed by Mayor's push to eliminate wage bias

SOMERVILLE—Mayor Katjana Ballantyne announced today the ratification of a new contract with the Somerville Municipal Employees Union (SMEU, until recently, called SMEA) Unit B that includes unprecedented wage increases designed to address long-standing wage bias. The new contract includes average salary adjustments between 14% and 17% in fiscal year 2025.

The three-year agreement developed by the Administration and Union leadership covers fiscal years 2023-2025 and is based on deep analysis of more than 90 different jobs and compensation in over a dozen comparable communities in the Greater Boston Area.

The SMEU represents three bargaining units within the City. Its Unit B is the City's largest bargaining unit with employees in approximately 25 departments citywide, including Public Works, Water and Sewer, Library, City Clerk, Parking, and Inspectional Services. The new contract not only provides improved wages and benefits for these vital employees but builds in corrective wage

adjustments (also known as market adjustments). These market adjustments are based on the City's Wage and Compensation Study, which was conducted to ensure comparable pay for comparable work for employees across all departments.

The agreement establishes wages competitive with top-paying peer communities and corrects for bias and discrepancies between departments and individual positions. In the first two years of the contract, all Unit B members' wages will increase 6%. In the third year of the contract, starting wages will go up on average 17%, and wages for existing employees will receive a market adjustment increase of an average of 14%. The new contract also includes significant enhancements to Unit B members' vacation, family medical leave, and other benefits. Mayor Ballantyne and union leadership signed the initial tentative agreement on January 6, and Union membership ratified it on January 8. The contract will next go to the City Council for funding approval.

"This contract takes on so much more than inflation. We sent an arrow right at the heart of long-standing bias—that's gender bias, class bias, and educational bias that is pervasive in our society. And

we took a hard look at benefits that needed updating as well for these critical workers," said Mayor Katjana Ballantyne. "Throughout the bargaining process both the City and the Union acted in good faith, and I would like to thank the SMEU leadership for partnering with us to go beyond the usual adjustments to create long-term equity for our employees. I'm honored and proud to be part of a process that once again has Somerville leading the way."

SMEU Union President Ed Haloran stated that, "as a 32-year veteran working for the City's DPW, this may be the best contract the members of this union have ever received and it's a tribute to the members of the bargaining committee, union officers, and the members who have worked on the job in person through COVID, as well as an administration and union that together bargained in good faith."

The agreement includes, among other enhancements, several important updates that will improve workers' compensation and benefits:

Compensation:
Salary increases informed by the

Wage Compensation Study: A retroactive 3% annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for each of the first two years of the contract (FY23 and FY24) totaling 6% over the two years

In year 3 (FY25 starting July 1, 2024), starting wages for new employees will be market adjusted between 3%-46%, with the average increase to a Unit B starting salary increasing 17%

In year 3, wages for existing Unit B employees will be market adjusted between 4% and 33%, with an average increase of 14%

Increases to seniority bonuses: Seniority bonuses will be increased at several levels of the Longevity Scale to establish equity with other City unions

Other Benefits upgrades include:

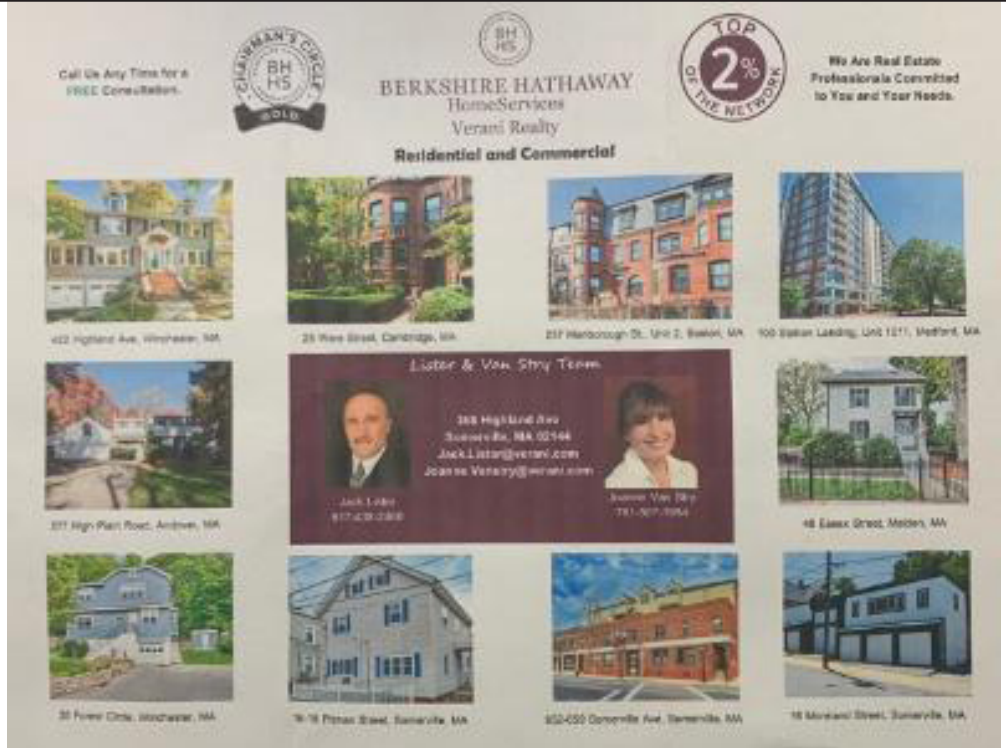
Paid Family and Medical Leave: SMEU Unit B employees will now be eligible for the City's new Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program, which the City is in the process of implementing and will provide eight weeks of paid leave for qualifying absences, including parental leave, under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Increased Vacation and Earlier Access: The agreement increases vacation by an additional week at each tier over current accruals and introduces access to paid vacation

after six months of employment (previously there was a 1-year waiting period). Other enhancements:

Tripling of the stipend paid to employees that regularly drive personal vehicles for City business, while also significantly increasing the mileage reimbursement rate paid to employees that drive intermittently for City business \$150 increase to the annual clothing allowance

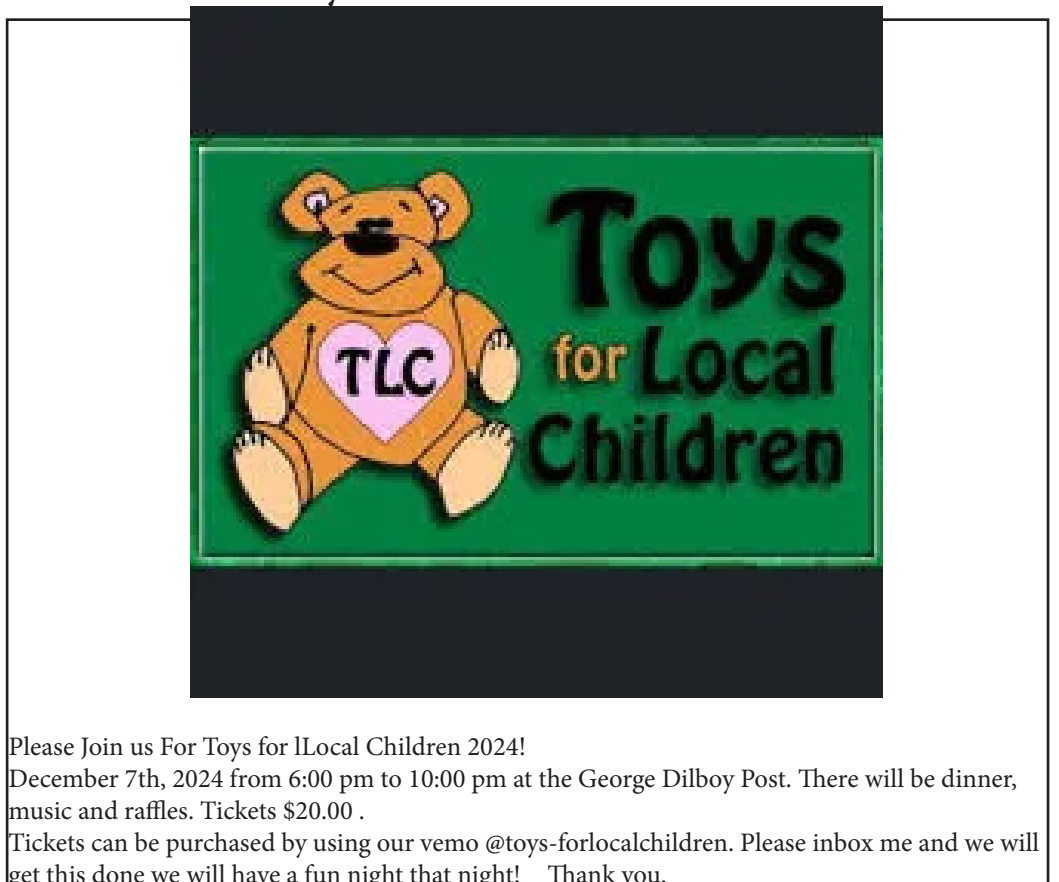
Modernized payroll practices through the implementation of direct deposit and paperless pay stubs, which will allow the City to more efficiently administer employee compensation

The unprecedented anti-bias and market wage adjustments were based on reclassification of all Unit B positions as informed by the City's Wage and Compensation Study. Previously, employees were classified by department, which resulted in independent wage scales for each department. The study allowed the City an opportunity to establish a framework for classifying and paying employees comparably for performing similar job functions across departments. As a result, the City can now pay people equitably for doing similar work citywide.



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Somerville/Medford Remembering Susan M. Murphy



Obituary
Susan M. Murphy – Of Medford, passed away at home on Sunday January 12, 2025. She was 69 years young.

Complete obit to be posted.
Calling hours will be held in the George L.

Doherty Funeral Home 855 Broadway (Powder House Sq.) Somerville, on Friday, January 17th from 4:00PM to 7:00PM. A prayer service will be

conducted at 6:30PM. Relatives and friends are respectfully invited to attend.

BEWARE OF EZDRIVEMA SCAM

By Bob Katzen

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is once again reminding customers to be mindful of text

message-based scams, also known as smishing. The scammers are claiming to represent the tolling agency and requesting payment for unpaid tolls.

MassDOT urges customers to be cautious about email, text and phone scams demanding payment of outstanding toll balances. Some attempts have been made to trick

customers into sharing credit card numbers and other sensitive information by directing them to a website to pay their outstanding balances. MassDOT strongly encourages

customers not to click the link contained in those messages.

AGREEMENT ON \$43.613 BILLIOM IN REVENUE IN FISCAL YEAR 2026

By Bob Katzen

Gov. Healey’s Secretary of Administration and Finance Matthew Gorzkowicz, House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz and Senate Ways and Means Chair Mike Rodrigues agreed on a consensus revenue forecast for fiscal year 2026 of \$43.613 billion.

estimate for fiscal year 2026 responsibly reflects our current economic environment,” said Gorzkowicz. “While our economy and revenues over the past couple years have continued to grow, the post-pandemic rate of growth has slowed and our budgeting must adjust accordingly budgeting process.”

will allow the Legislature and the Healey-Driscoll administration to collectively construct a reasonable and suitable budget for the upcoming fiscal year,” said Michlewitz. “By being ever watchful of the commonwealth’s finances and basing the budget on a judicious consensus revenue figure, we will be able to make fiscally sound decisions over the next few months as we

work to make the critical investments that our constituents deserve.”

“Rooted in sound fiscal decision making, the fiscal year 2026 consensus revenue estimate reflects our ongoing efforts to tighten our belts and further align state spending growth with tax revenue growth in response to increasing post-pandemic spending obligations and the

challenges ahead,” said Rodrigues. “With this agreement, we are laying the groundwork for a balanced fiscal year 2026 budget that prioritizes our state’s economic health, promotes stability and continues to shape a more affordable and sustainable path for the commonwealth.”

“This consensus revenue

“This fiscal year 2026 consensus revenue figure

\$5 MILLION FOR ENHANCED SECURITY



By Bob Katzen

The Healey Administration announced nearly \$5 million in grants to support more than 100 nonprofit organizations ,at high risk of hate crimes or terror attacks, by enhancing their security.

The announcement follows the release of the

2023 Hate Crime Report for Massachusetts by the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security. The report documented 557 hate crime reports statewide —a 26.6 percent increase from 440 in 2022. As in previous years, the most common bias motivation in 2023 was based on race, ethnicity or

national origin, accounting for 45.1 percent of all incidents. Anti-Jewish offenses which rose from 70 in 2022 to 119 in 2023 saw the sharpest increase.

“These organizations offer comfort, services, community and support to those they serve. Our administration is commit-

ted to ensuring nonprofits and all who gather in these spaces are protected from hate and extremist violence,” said Gov. Healey. “Everyone deserves to safely practice their chosen faith, access health care, seek services and gather in community spaces free from the threat of harm.”

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Somerville/Medford Remembering Jean Calixte, Ketline



Obituary

Jean Calixte, Ketline, of Malden, formerly of Haiti, passed away peacefully on Monday, January 6, 2025, after a courageous battle with breast cancer. Surrounded by her loving family, she was 54

years young. Ketline was a woman of unwavering faith, and she believed that her faith would always guide her through life's challenges and bring her peace. Her deep spiritual strength was an inspiration to all who knew her.

She had a passion for cooking, and her kitchen was always filled with the delicious aromas of meals made with love for her family. Ketline found great joy in nourishing her loved ones with her culinary talents.

Above all, she cherished time spent with her family, especially her grandchildren, who brought a constant smile to her face. Their joy and laughter were a source of happiness for her, and she treasured every moment with them.

Ketline was known for her generosity, often spoiling those around her with thoughtful gifts. She had an eye for shopping, always looking for something special to share with others. In her downtime, she enjoyed taking walks around her neighborhood, reflect-

ing on life and embracing the simple pleasures that brought her peace.

She was the beloved wife of 13 years but together for 32 years to Delince Jean. The devoted mother of Jhesica Jean and her husband Papouchy Garcon of Lawrence, Jofftherline Jean of Malden, Freddy Jean of Malden. Cherished and loving grandmother of Oliver Garcon and Leilah Garcon. Dear sister of 4 brothers and 4 sisters. Also survived by many loving nieces and nephews.

A funeral service will be held in the Missionary Church of the Haitian Community 100 Temple St., Somerville on Saturday, January 18th at 10:00AM. Family and friends may visit prior to the service from 8:30AM to 10:00AM in the church.

Relatives and friends are respectfully invited to attend.

Services will conclude with burial at Calvary Cemetery, Waltham.

Save the Date: Somerville Public Safety for All Reports to be Shared With Community on Feb. 4

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne and Somerville's Department of Racial and Social Justice (RSJ) invite community members to attend an event presenting the completed reports from the Public Safety for All Task Force, Civilian Oversight Task Force, and Anti-Violence Working Group on Tuesday, February 4, 2025 (rain date February 6) at Somerville

High School (81 Highland Ave) at 6:30 p.m. Each task force, comprised of residents, subject matter experts, and City Council members, will highlight their findings and recommendations aimed at enhancing public safety and fostering stronger community connections across Somerville.

"Ensuring public safety in

Somerville means listening to our community, embracing transparency, and working collaboratively toward meaningful change," said Mayor Ballantyne. "I encourage all residents to join us on February 4 to hear directly from the dedicated members of our task forces and working group. Their reports reflect months of thoughtful engagement,

research, and a shared commitment to making Somerville safer and more equitable for all."

Reports will be available on Tuesday, January 28, at somervillema.gov/psfa, along with a form where community members can submit questions directly to Task Force/Working Group members ahead of the event.



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PROHIBIT REVOCATION OF PROFESSIONAL LICENSES (H 4937)

By Bob Katzen

Gov. Healey signed into law legislation that would repeal a current state law which creates professional licensure consequences for anyone who defaults on their student loan.

Under current law, a borrower's state-issued professional or occupational certificate, registration or license can be suspended, revoked or canceled if the borrower is in default on an education loan.

"Current laws are potentially harmful to the more than one million student loan borrowers in the commonwealth," said sponsor Rep. Natalie Higgins (D-Leominster). "With all of the uncertainty around the federal

student loan forgiveness and repayment plans, now more than ever, we need to protect student loan borrowers and ensure they can continue their work and have the ability to repay their student loan debt."

Suzanne Rinfret, Director

PROTECT CATS AND DOGS (S 2908)

By Bob Katzen

Gov. Healey signed into law legislation that would prohibit the sale or transfer of any puppies and kittens under eight weeks old. Violators would be fined \$100 per animal.

When the animal is more than eight weeks

old, the outright ban is lifted and replaced with a section that would prohibit the sale or transfer of any dogs or cats at specified outdoor locations, such as flea markets and roadsides. This prohibition would not apply to the transfer of a dog or cat by, or to, a shelter, animal control or animal rescue;

or to the display of a dog or cat as part of a state or county fair exhibition, a 4-H program or similar exhibition or educational program. Violators would be fined \$50 per animal for a first offense, \$100 for a second offense and \$300 for a third and subsequent offense.

"Early separation of puppies and kittens from their mother, and the unregulated roadside sale of dogs and cats, are practices that often lead to serious health or behavioral problems for the animal and no recourse for the new owner," said sponsor Sen. John Velis (D-Westfield). "I was proud to file this

legislation in the Senate this session and am glad that it is one step closer to becoming law and establishing new protections for animals throughout the commonwealth

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DRUG COSTS AND INDUSTRY TRANSPARENCY

By Bob Katzen

Gov. Maura Healey signed into law legislation (S 3012) that supporters say would lower the cost of prescription drugs.

Provisions include requiring insurers to eliminate cost-sharing requirements for one generic drug and to cap co-payments on one brand-name drug at \$25 per 30-day supply for diabetes, asthma and certain heart conditions. It also ensures that consumers are not charged a co-pay if it would be cheaper for them to purchase a drug without using their insurance. Another provision requires insurers to provide continuity of coverage for new members' existing prescriptions when they switch to a new plan.

She also signed into law another bill (H 5159) that supporters say will enhance the market review process and close loopholes in the health care market regulatory process, including gaps in oversight that were exploited for years by Steward Health Care and Ralph de la Torre.

This measure expands the scope of data collection and public review of health care and health care transactions by the Health Policy Commission (HPC) and the Center for Health Analysis and Information with the goal of increasing visibility and accountability for transactions involving private owners of health care resources.

It also includes a provision establishing a primary care task force, co-chaired by Health and Human Services

Secretary Kate Walsh and the Executive Director of the HPC. The task force will study primary care access, delivery and payment, develop recommendations to stabilize and strengthen the primary care system, increase recruitment and increase financial investment and patient access.

"We know that one of the biggest strains on Massachusetts family's budgets is the high health care costs," said Gov. Healey. "These new laws will lower out-of-pocket costs by capping copays at \$25 for lifesaving prescription medications and increasing transparency in the industry. They also close loopholes in our regulatory processes so that for-profit providers like Steward Health Care are subject to the same transparency rules

as non-profit providers. As attorney general, I spent years in court trying to hold Steward to this standard, and I'm glad that our laws will no longer be exploited in this way."

"The bills signed by Gov. Healey today represent the Legislature's enduring commitment to protecting patients, bringing down cost growth and to fostering greater stability and accountability within the health care system," said House Speaker Ron Mariano (D-Quincy). "Before Steward Health Care ultimately collapsed, executives spent years hiding their financial information from state regulators, putting patients and our health care system at risk. That's why ensuring that our institutions are equipped to monitor

the health care landscape, and to guard against trends and transactions that drive up costs without improving patient outcomes, is so important."

"These laws are an important step toward transparency and accountability for our health care system, and making medications more affordable," said Secretary Kate Walsh. "We know primary care access is a critical component of health equity, so I'm especially looking forward to the commitment of strengthening our primary care system to help more people in Massachusetts live healthy lives."

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A "Somerville Blessing Boxes" Facebook page has been established keep everyone updated on donations and the Blessing Boxes inventory status. Please feel free to join the page and follow all the good that is being done everyday by the good people of Somerville.
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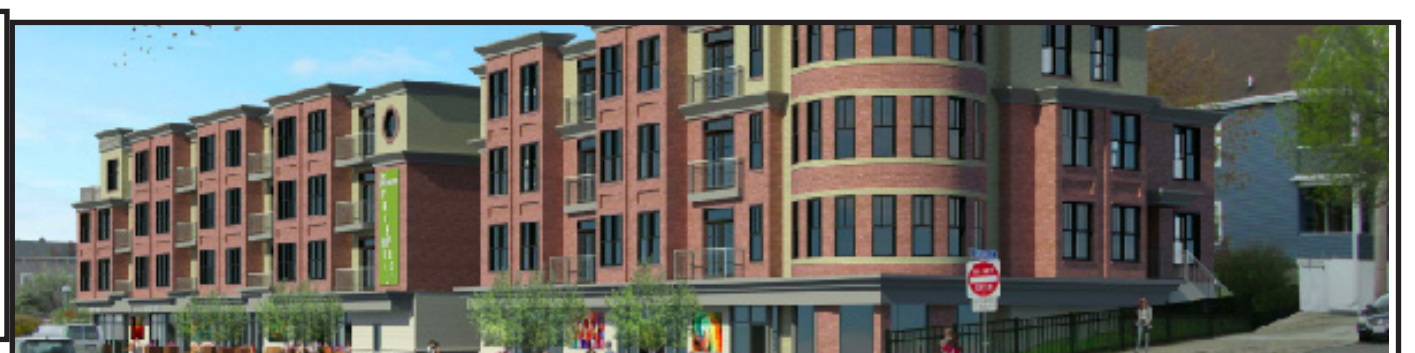
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ADOPT EMERGENCY REGULATIONS TO PROTECT REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE

By Bob Katzen

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Board of Registration in Nursing approved emergency amendments to regulations that will protect nurses from disqualification from licensure and from board

discipline for providing, or assisting in providing, reproductive health care services in the Bay State.

“When Roe was overturned, we worked with the Legislature to take immediate action to protect providers and patients from liability for provid-

ing or receiving an abortion,” said Gov. Healey. “Today, with attacks on reproductive health care and providers escalating across the country, we’re proud to take action to further strengthen those protections. We’re always going to protect people’s rights and freedoms, and

we’re going to make sure that everyone can access the high-quality health care they need.”

“Our nurses and other providers should not fear discipline or legal action for providing essential health care,” said Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll.

“Approving these emergency regulations ... will further ensure that Massachusetts remains a place that everyone can access comprehensive reproductive health care services, including abortion care.”

Somerville Police Department Identification Wanted: Ongoing Investigation

The Somerville Police are asking for the public's assistance identifying the operator of the above pictured Nissan Altima. The Criminal Investigation Division is interested in speaking with the operator regarding an interaction he had with a juvenile. The vehicle is a gray or silver Nissan Altima with Massachusetts plates (possibly 2005 or 2006) with gold Nissan emblems and black side view mirrors. The operator is described as a white male, approximately 50 years of age that smokes and has gray facial hair.

Anyone with information about the vehicle or the operator is asked to call 617.625.1600 ext. 7240.



Somerville Police Department Identification Wanted

Shumeane Benford | Chief of Police
Somerville, Massachusetts

Friday, January 10, 2025



Identification Wanted: Ongoing Investigation



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Somerville Honoring Martin Luther King Jr. Day with Community Panel Discussion and Donation Drive



SOMERVILLE – Mayor Katjana Ballantyne, the Department of Racial and Social Justice (RSJ), and Somerville Public Schools’ Department of Equity and Excellence invite community members to celebrate the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by joining a community panel discussion that touches on themes from Good Trouble, the 2020 documentary that chronicles John Lewis’ 60+ years of extraordinary activism. Following the panel discussion, the Floor Lords will perform, and light refreshments will

be served.

“The work of leaders like Dr. King and John Lewis challenges us to continue pushing for a more just world, where we uplift each other and stand in solidarity, especially with our most vulnerable,” said Mayor Ballantyne. “I am proud of the efforts we are making as a community to keep their legacies alive, and I look forward to engaging in meaningful conversations and acts of service on Martin Luther King Jr. Day this year alongside the people of Somerville.”

Event Details

Date: Monday, January 20, 2025
 Time: 11a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
 Location: East Somerville Community School Auditorium (50 Cross St)
 The panel will include Somerville students, activists, City staff, and more. Prior viewing of the docu-

mentary is not required to participate in or attend the event but is encouraged. RSJ has secured the rights for Somerville community members to stream Good Trouble online at no cost through February 6.

To access the Good Trouble:

Visit: filmplatform.net/events/somervillejohnlewis/
 Select “Register Now” and enter your email address and the event invitation code, JLS-SOM. Participants can return to the link using the same process if they are unable to finish viewing the film in one sitting.

MLK Community Donation Drive Details

During the event, RSJ will collect donated items to help support our unhoused neighbors and be delivered to community partners

supporting unhoused and displaced residents. For the full list of personal products, stable foods, and baby supplies needed, please visit the RSJ webpage.

“I am proud of the fact that the Department of Racial and Social Justice and the City of Somerville have committed to hosting events on MLK Day that extend beyond recognizing the holiday. MLK Day is a day of service – it is an opportunity to reflect on and carry forward the transformative legacies of Dr. King and other civil rights leaders like John Lewis,” shared Amanda Nagim-Williams, Director of RSJ. “As we come together this year, we recognize that their work is far from finished. I look forward to joining people from across Somerville to talk about how we cause ‘good trouble’ and chart a better, more just path forward for all of us.”

“As we reflect on the work of Dr. King, and the efforts of John Lewis, and their tireless endeavors towards equality, it is important that we investigate how we can continue to promote the oneness of humankind and develop cross-racial and cross-cultural collaborations and relationships,” said Caeli Gallitano, Director of Equity and Excellence for Somerville Public Schools. “It is in the work that we do together – across racial and cultural lines – that we will help create a more just and equitable community for our children, our families, and ourselves. This celebration is a wonderful way to do just that. We hope to see you there.”

For questions about the MLK Day event or donation drive, please contact rsj@somervillema.gov. Additional information about the panelists and the donation drive can be found on the RSJ webpage.

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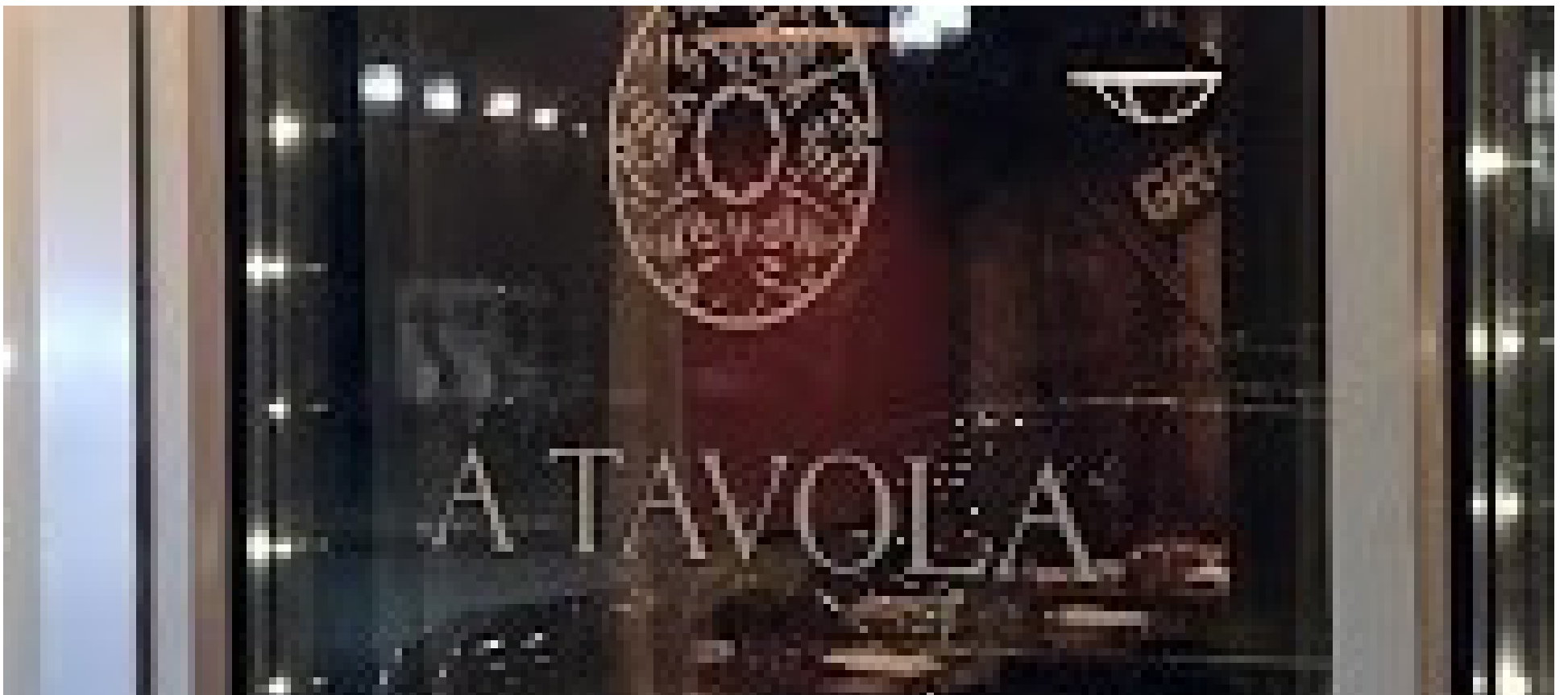
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