

Young Somerville Snow Plow Driver Tells It Like It Is



NEWS TALK OUT
LOUD/SPEAK UP



Continued to page 6



Somerville Police
Real Life Somerville
Police Stories Page



Somerville/Medford News Weekly
Speakup Line:
SNOW ANGELS In Somerville



Continued to page 5

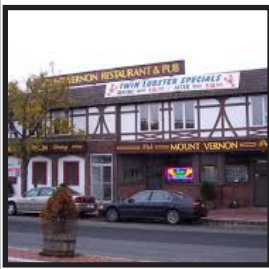
FURTHER EXPAND ELIGIBILITY FOR
SENIOR PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION



Continued to page 7



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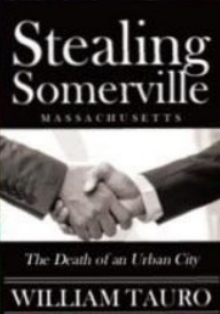
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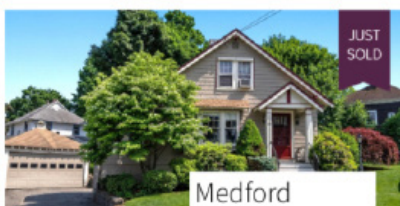
MARKET ACTIVITY

WE HAVE BEEN BUSY...

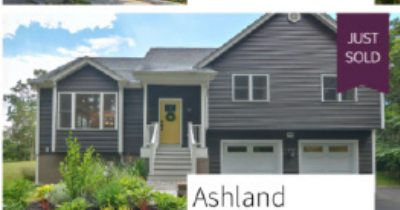
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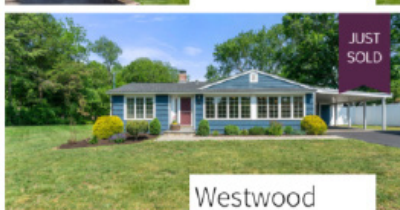
Malden



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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In January 2025, the Civil Service introduced a new ‘Hybrid Hiring Model’ for departments under its purview. This model offers two distinct pathways to become an entry-level police officer:

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2. Getbadged Route: Apply directly through GetBadged.com. Visit GetBadged.com, create an account, and select your preferred exam date. This is on-going.

For more details and the next steps in the new hiring process, please visit our website at medfordpolice.com/becomeapoliceofficer.

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Somerville/Medford Remembering Richard J. Clark



Obituary
Richard J. Clark, of Somerville, passed away suddenly on January 18, 2026, he was 51. Ricky was born in Cambridge and raised in Somerville, the oldest son of Catherine (Murphy) Clark of Somerville and the late Richard A. Clark and his surviving wife Andrea Clark.

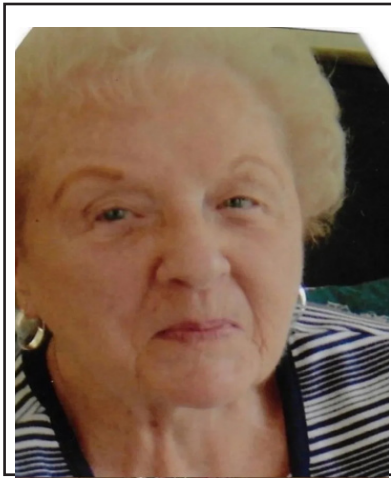
Ricky was a graduate of Somerville High School with the Class of 1992 and went on to further his education first at Bunker Hill Community College and Regis College. Always one to learn new things, he went on to teach at Bunker Hill and later founded his own company, Insight Medical Educators, specializing in CPR training and certification, among other medical training specialties. He was also active with the American Red Cross. Ricky loved following all the Boston Sports teams and time spent on the golf course, but above all he enjoyed time spent with his large extended family during the holidays and events.

In addition to his mother, Catherine (Murphy) Clark, he is survived by his siblings; Adam Miele and his wife Jamie, Shaun Clark and his girlfriend Renee Polcaro, all of Somerville, Joseph Clark and his fiancé Emily Milewska of Peabody, Andrea Clark of Medford and Samantha Caezza and her husband Nick of Dracut. Cherished uncle of Bradley Connors, Logan and Parker Miele, Piper and Dakota Caezza. He is further survived by many loving aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

Visiting Hours will be held in the George L. Doherty Funeral Home, 855 Broadway (Powder House Sq.) Somerville on Tuesday, January 27th from 10AM – 12 noon with a prayer service beginning at 11:30AM. Relatives and friends invited to attend. Burial will follow at Woodlawn Cemetery, Everett.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Ricky's name can be made to the American Heart Association at <http://www.heart.org> or to the American Red Cross at <http://www.redcross.org>

Somerville/Medford Remembering Dorothy A. Costa (Morrissey)



Obituary
Dorothy A. Costa (Morrissey), of Somerville, passed away on January 20, 2026, at the age of 100. She was the beloved wife of 60 years to the late James J. Costa. Dorothy was a loving mother to Ruth Elio and her husband Daniel of Winchester, James J. Costa, Jr. of Somerville, and Martha Costa of Somerville. She was a cherished grandmother to Daniel and Matthew Elio, Jennifer, Michelle, and Amanda Costa, and a great-grandmother to Brady, Connor, Kate, and Brennan.

Dorothy was an active member of St. Joseph's women's Sodality and the American Legion Auxiliary, post # 377 in Somerville. Visiting hours will be held for Dorothy at St. Joseph Church, 262 Washington St. Somerville, on Wednesday morning, January 28, 2026, from 10:00 to 11:00, followed by her Funeral Mass at 11:00. Relatives and friends are invited to attend. Interment will be at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, Arlington.

Somerville/Medford Remembering Katherine “Kay” E. Cassell (Dwyer)



Screenshot
Obituary
Katherine “Kay” E. Cassell (Dwyer) – of Medford, passed away surrounded by her loving family on January 24, 2026.


She was the cherished wife of the late Thomas S. Cassell, with whom she shared over 50 years of marriage. Kay was a devoted mother to James A. Cassell and his wife Carolyn of Florida, Kathleen M. Cassell of Reading, Patricia E. Lee and her husband Gerald of Reading, and Joanne A. Cassell and her late husband Danny Pereira of Somerville. She was also a loving grandmother to Thomas and Brenna Cassell, Kerry Capalino, Jack Lee and his life partner Rosalie Parr, Katherine Lee, David Pereira, and Julie Pereira-Raeke and her husband Patrick Raeke. Her legacy continues with her great-grandchildren, Kiara and Anthony Capallino.

Kay was predeceased by her siblings, Thomas E. Dwyer Somerville F.D., John T. “Jack” Dwyer Lt. Det. Mass State Police and his late wife Theresa, Richard J. Dwyer ATF, Bernard J. Dwyer Assistant DA Suffolk County and his wife Rosemary. She is also survived by many nieces and nephews.

Kay dedicated her career as an administrative assistant for the Metropolitan District Commission Police Department (MDC). She found joy in spending time with her family, enjoying cruises, the beach, her swimming pool, and cheering for all the Boston sports teams.

Visiting hours will be held at the George Doherty Funeral Home, 855 Broadway (Powder House Sq.) Somerville, on Saturday morning, January 31, 2026, from 9:30 to 10:30, followed by her Funeral Mass at St. Raphael Church, Medford at 11:00. Interment will take place at Holy Cross Cemetery, Malden.

Somerville/Medford Remembering Kristopher P. Smith



Obituary
Kristopher P. Smith – Of Somerville, passed away peacefully at home on Sunday, January 25, 2026. He was 66 years young.

Born in Detroit, Michigan, and raised in Caseville, MI. Kristopher was the beloved son of the late Robert T. and Patricia (Buchalski) Smith. He earned his bachelor's degree from the Michigan State University, an accomplishment he was always proud of.

At the age of 31, Kristopher met the love of his life, Christopher Keane, at a party; and from that moment on, the rest was history. Together they built a life filled with love, laughter, and companionship. Kristopher cherished spending time with his husband, whether relaxing at home or traveling and exploring new places together.

Kristopher enjoyed a long and successful career of more than 20 years as a Territory Service Manager with American Wood Molding. Outside of work, he found joy in cooking delicious meals, watching college football and basketball, and simply being at home.

During the warmer months, Kristopher could often be found on the beaches of Provincetown, a place where he truly felt at peace and most at home.

Beloved husband of 22 years to Christopher Keane. Loving brother of Jeffery Smith and his partner Angela Vauhn of Rogersville, TN, Robyn Smith of Oshkosh, WI and the late Steve Smith. Cherished uncle of Kailey and Rebekka. Also lovingly survived by many friends, and extended family members.

A celebration of life will be held at a later date.



Somerville/Medford News Weekly Speakup Line: SNOW ANGELS In Somerville

With all the craziness going on out in the world these days it's nice to find a good heartfelt warm story like this one! Thank you to Deborah Peck for sending us the story!

Dear Billy T and Somerville/Medford News Weekly Speakup Line,

The James OConnell family of Somerville have been snow plowing the entire 1/3 of Linden Ave sidewalks both sides for over 35 + years ! I was able to take a few picture of the family in action as they always are no matter the weather. The definition of good neighbors

if there ever was one. Mr OConnell always gets mad if I try to give him some small payment and even madder if I try to pay his son.

PS in the summer they grew a crop of corn in their side yard do fun to see
Sent from my iPhone

Sincerely

Deborah Peck 47 Linden Ave Somerville a grateful neighbor growing more grateful as I age in place lucky to live near the OConnells.



CHALLENGE TO POSSIBLE MARIJUANA BALLOT QUESTION REJECTED

By Bob Katzen

The State Ballot Law Commission, a five-member body appointed by the governor, issued a decision overruling the objection filed against an initiative petition that would place on the 2026 November ballot a question asking voters to repeal the current laws that legalize, regulate and tax the retail sale of adult recreational use marijuana in Massachusetts. The proposal to put the question on the ballot had garnered the required 74,754 signatures and it will now, like ten other petitions, go before the Legislature for consideration. If not approved by the Legislature by

May 6, 2026, proponents must gather another 12,429 signatures by July 1, 2026, in order for the question to appear on the November 2026 ballot.

The commission's decision cited the lack of admissible evidence presented by the objector. The commission wrote, "The objector's call that the unsupported allegations contained in the objection raise serious questions about the petition's integrity that warrant further scrutiny from the commission itself, rings hollow given that absolutely no admissible evidence has been presented or offered supporting the allegations made."

REGULATE AND RESTRICT CIVIL ARRESTS IN COURTHOUSES BY ICE AGENTS (SD 3607) – Sen. Lydia Edwards (D-Boston) has filed legislation that would require ICE agents to obtain a judicial warrant in order to take someone into custody in a courthouse or on courthouse grounds, for a civil immigration crime such as being present in the U.S. without lawful status and overstaying a visa.

The proposal also requires agents to identify themselves to uniformed court personnel and state the specific law enforcement purpose for their pres-

ence in the courthouse, and the proposed enforcement action the agent intends to take. Another provision prohibits ice agents from wearing masks unless medically necessary.

Edwards said that "the proposal is rooted in a simple principle: courthouses must remain safe spaces where justice is practiced without fear." She noted that Increased ICE activity in and around courthouses undermines the sense of safety within these buildings and grounds and has had a chilling effect on access to the courts – prohibiting residents from fully exercising their right to due process.

"Courthouses exist so people can seek justice – not to be places of fear or enforcement ambush," said Edwards. "When individuals are too afraid to show up to court, justice breaks down for everyone. This legislation is about defending the rule of law, safeguarding due process and ensuring our courts remain places where fairness and equal access are upheld for all."

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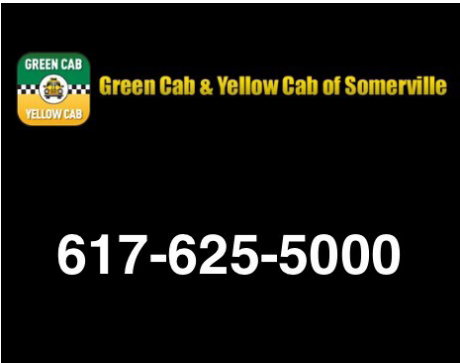
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Letter from the Editor:Young Somerville Snow Plow Driver Tells It Like It Is



Letter from the Editor: I have sincere appreciation for this young man who in his Facebook comment is explaining the hard work and struggles that snow plow drivers go through in keeping our community safe and while driving nonstop for hours overnight ! Hats off to you Conor and thank you for a job well done!

“Conor Scarry
I plowed and salted my route in Somerville for over 30 hours my route consisted of 42 streets in total including highland ave, summer st, elm st, all the way from Lowell st down to Davis square, and I personally got stuck 3 separate times during the storm in a f550 with dual tires on the back in

4 wheel drive. Each time stuck it takes the city to come down with a front loader and chains to pull you out. And that’s why terraces are low on the priority list. It’s nothing personal but the city needs main streets and congested active areas cleared 1st. And if your plowing and you decided to take on one of these skinny dead end terraces

by yourself it’s a liability, cars normally parked on both sides and the chance of getting stuck, I got called to a terrace off of Lowell street to help a stuck city vehicle and got them right out but then tried to do the same thing for a stuck Somerville police officer and ended up stuck right behind him , we both sat for an hour before being pulled out

with heavy equipment. I know it’s easy to judge a situation from the outside looking in but from what I witnessed me and my crew and the Dpw boys worked their asses off. But hard work does not always mean that everything was done correctly. We all human though. So you know. We all make mistakes.”

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

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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.

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FURTHER EXPAND ELIGIBILITY FOR SENIOR PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION (S 2900)



By Bob Katzen

The Senate 36-1, approved an amendment to a bill that would give cities and towns the option to create tax rebate programs for residents who already benefit from a local residential exemption. This new rebate program would allow cities and towns to set income and asset

thresholds, tailoring relief to local residents’ needs.

Amendment supporters said the amendment, sponsored by Sen. Nick Collins (D-Boston), would boost the existing senior property tax exemption by giving municipalities the option of further expanding eligibility by lowering the age eligibility,

raising the income eligibility, raising the asset eligibility and raising the limit of possible exemption from \$1,000 to \$1,500.

“I voted ‘No’ ... because tax classification, exceptions and credits, particularly when novel, should be addressed comprehensively and analyzed in the context of other new pro-

posals and existing law,” said Sen. John Keenan (D-Quincy), the only senator to vote against the amendment.

(A Yes” vote is for the amendment. A “No” vote is against it.)

Sen. Patricia Jehlen Yes

SENIOR PROPERTY TAX DEFERRAL (S 2901)

By Bob Katzen

The Senate 37-0, approved a bill that would expand eligibility for the Senior Tax Deferral Program by lowering eligibility to qualify for it from the current 10 years to seven years of required state residency.

In addition, the bill allows the

homeowner, or their heirs, one-year to pay back the deferral with accrued interest rather than immediately after sale or death; allows municipalities to raise income eligibility to the maximum circuit breaker amount; and delays the date on which a foreclosure petition may be filed until 18 months after their death.

Supporters said the measure will allow seniors to keep more money in their pockets at a time when property values and tax bills are steadily climbing.

“Property tax deferral is an important program that can help older adults stay in their homes,” said amendment sponsor Sen. Pat Jehlen (D-Somerville). “It allows older adult

homeowners to defer all or part of their property tax bill, which is paid back to the municipality with interest when the property is sold. It can be a better alternative to reverse mortgages, especially if the municipality sets the interest rate lower than the 8 percent cap. It is underutilized, and this legislation will remove one barrier by extending the time a municipality can

reduce the interest rate, and the time before foreclosure is allowed. Many cities and towns can do more to inform older homeowners of this option, and this is a chance to do that.”

(A Yes” vote is for the amendment. A “No” vote is against it.)

Sen. Patricia Jehlen Yes

Join the Somerville Condominium Review Board Apply by February 18

SOMERVILLE – The City of Somerville is seeking two new members to join the Somerville Condominium Review Board (CRB). Vacancies consist of one full member and one alternate member.

What is the Condominium Review Board?
The CRB is responsible for administering the City’s Condominium Conversion Ordinance. The ordinance governs the process

for property owners who intend to convert existing rental units into condominiums for sale, or who wish to make substantial updates to existing rental units. The CRB consists of five full members and one alternate member, who serves as needed.

Who Can Join?
Somerville tenants are eligible for the full member vacancy. Somerville homeowners and tenants are welcome to apply for the alternate member vacancy.

What is the Time Commitment?
The CRB typically meets on the fourth Monday of each month at 6 p.m. In addition to monthly meetings, members are expected to review meeting materials ahead of time, for an average time commitment of 5 to 7 hours per month. CRB members serve three-year terms.

What is the Appointment Process?
All members are appointed by the Mayor and approved by the Somer-

ville City Council. Appointments include a monthly stipend of \$300.

How Do I Apply?
Applications are due by Wednesday, February 18, and must include a resume and cover letter.

Where to Apply:
Applications can be sent via email or U.S. Mail to:
Email: condoboard@somervillema.gov
Mail: Attn: Ben Wyner, CRB Interim Staff Liaison, City of Somer-

ville, 50 Evergreen Ave., 1st Floor, Somerville, MA 02145

For questions or more information, email condoboard@somervillema.gov or contact Ben Wyner at 617-625-6600 ext. 2578 or call 311 (617-666-311 outside of Somerville).

Stay Connected:
Want to learn about roles open on other commissions or more ways to engage? Visit somervillema.gov/BeSomerville.

OVERDOSE PREVENTION INSOMERVILLE



Individuals and families across Somerville have been impacted by the opiate epidemic. To help address this public health challenge the Somerville Lions would like to invite the public to an Overdose Prevention Training on February 3rd at 6:15 pm at 9 New Washington Street.

At this training attendees will learn how to identify the signs of an overdose and will learn how to administer narkan. Please contact club VP Liam Seward at 617-821-9529 if you are interested in attending.



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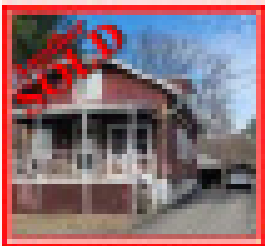
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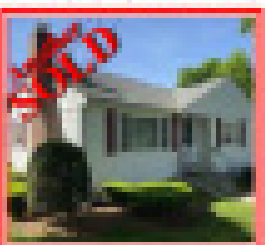
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Sold for \$1,100,000, Sold for \$1,100,000



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Out dosage continued from page 2




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Class Action Lawsuit Regarding Fraudulent and Inaccurate Somerville Water Bills

By William Tauro

We are looking for residents interested to being part of a class action lawsuit to help Somerville home owners, property owners, residents and tenants to obtain the justice they deserve after being victims of fraudulent and/or inaccurate outrageously high water bills caused by faulty water meters and

inaccurate readings.

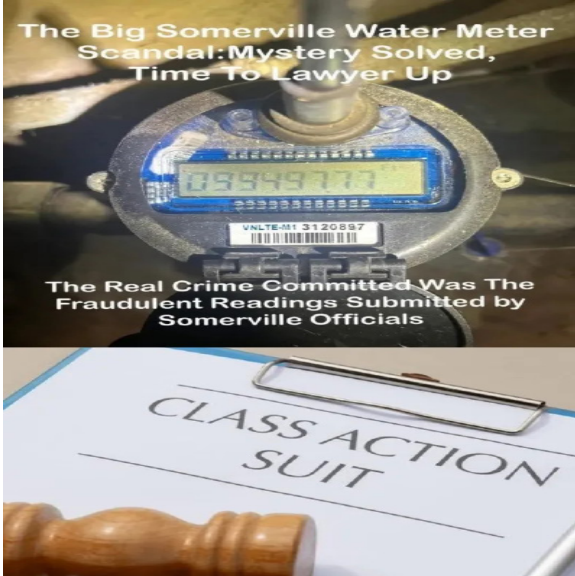
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(Please DO NOT post any contact information in the comments area)

Please include your full name that the bill is in, your address, phone number and email address and we will contact you.

Please feel free to message me or email me at Wm-tauro@aol.com with any inquiries about joining the list of potential plaintiffs in this class action lawsuit.





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OVERDOSE WARNING from SPD

Monday, Jan. 19, 2026:
SPD is investigating 5 overdoses that occurred over the weekend, with 3 being fatal. This spike in overdoses could indicate the presence of a “bad batch” being distributed locally.

Please remember to take precautions:
–Call 911 immediately if you suspect an overdose.
–Access free fentanyl test strip kits and Narcan

available at Somerville Public Libraries (somer-villepubliclibrary.org) and also from 24/7 health vending machines located outside the West Branch Library (40 College Ave) and Project Soup (165 Broadway).

–Find local recovery services and supports by visiting Somerville Hub at somervillehub.org (search on Recovery).



OVERDOSE WARNING

Spike in local overdoses may indicate increased risk

Safety Alert!



Somerville/Medford News Weekly Speakup Line: Was it just an oversight from the previous two administrations or is it Systemic Corruption?

Dear Billy T and Somerville/Medford News Weekly Speakup Line,

Hi Billy,

It's Max (Maninder).

We've known each other a long time, and I don't usually send 10-page emails. I'm sending this one because what's happening with Somerville's water/sewer bills is not an isolated issue. It's part of a larger structural problem where:

the City's growth and land-deal ambitions,

its use of eminent domain and redevelopment tools,

its budget and enterprise-fund structure, and

its rate and billing decisions

end up being carried on the backs of ordinary residents — especially owner-occupants in single-family, two-family, and three-family homes.

You've already started covering the class action on fraudulent/inaccurate water bills. That's one half of the story (bad meters and bad bills). This email lays out the other half:

What happens when the meter is "right," the math is "right," and the bill is still outrageous because the entire system is stacked against normal homeowners?

I'm going to give you:

My property & bill details (with full math)

How Somerville's rate design works now vs. before FY26

The billing-cycle change and why it hides how bad the increase is

How state/local rules trap owner-occupants with single meters

How enterprise funds and outside money (MWRA, state, federal) really work

Major land-taking & redevelopment bets (with dollar amounts)

How those decisions interact with water/sewer rates and property-tax pressure

Why there are effectively two scandals:

broken meters / fraudulent billings; and

a "legal" system that's still abusive

A road map of public records and court dockets you can pull if you want to dig deeper

Use whatever is useful. I'm fine being on the record with this.

1. My property and the bill that set this off

Property: Derby Street, Somerville
Type: Two-family owner-occupied house
Meters:

One standard 5/8" water meter for the whole building (very typical for older two-families)

No separate tenant meters

That means:

The City sees one account.

Every drop used in either unit is billed to me, not my tenants.

If I want tenants to pay by usage, I would have to pay to re-plumb and add new meters, plus permitting and inspection costs — a big capital project in itself.

The bill

Bill date: November 26, 2025
Total due: \$2,258.44

Line items:

Water – Residential: \$815.82
Sewer – Residential: \$1,397.62

Water Base Charge: \$15.00
Sewer Base Charge: \$30.00

Usage:

Current usage listed as 79 units

Somerville defines 1 unit as 100 cubic feet = 748 gallons

79 units = 59,092 gallons

Context:

Prior usage shown in the bills' history is in the same general tank: high 30s to 70/80 units.

No massive spike, no "you must have a hidden catastrophic leak" situation.

We didn't fill a pool, run a commercial car wash, or install an Olympic waterfall in the basement.

It's normal two-family usage... and the total is over \$2,250 for a single billing period.

That's what pushed me to dig into rate tables, City presentations, and the broader financial picture.

2. How the FY26 rate structure actually works (and how my bill is "correct")

The new 3-tier system

In FY26, Somerville moved residential water/sewer to a 3-tier, quarterly rate structure:

Water (per 100 cu ft / "unit")

Tier 1 (0-9): \$7.30

Tier 2 (10-18): \$9.13

Tier 3 (19+): \$10.95

Sewer (per unit)

Tier 1 (0-9): \$12.51

Tier 2 (10-18): \$15.63

Tier 3 (19+): \$18.76

This is a steeply progressive structure on paper: higher usage = higher tier.

But here's the catch for multi-families and larger households:

Tier 1 only covers 0-9 units

Tier 2 only covers 10-18 units

Everything above 18 is Tier 3 (the most expensive)

For a two-family building with kids, laundry, showers, etc., it's almost impossible not to live in Tier 3 for most of your usage.

My bill's usage through those tiers

Usage: 79 units

Split:

Tier 1: 9 units

Tier 2: 9 units

Tier 3: 79 - 18 = 61 units

Now run it through their FY26 rates.

Water:

Tier 1: 9 × 7.30 = \$65.70

Tier 2: 9 × 9.13 = \$82.17

Tier 3: 61 × 10.95 = \$667.95

Water total: 65.70 + 82.17 + 667.95 = \$815.82 → matches my bill exactly.

Sewer:

Tier 1: 9 × 12.51 = \$112.59

Tier 2: 9 × 15.63 = \$140.67

Tier 3: 61 × 18.76 = \$1,144.36

Sewer total: 112.59 + 140.67 + 1,144.36 = \$1,397.62 → matches my bill exactly.

Base charges for a 5/8" meter (quarterly):

Water base: \$15.00

Sewer base: \$30.00

Total:

815.82 (water)

1,397.62 (sewer)

15

30

= \$2,258.44

So:

My bill is not a miscalculation or a clerical error. It is exactly what the City's FY26 structure produces for 79 units.

That's the point: the math is correct, the policy is the problem.

3. What changed from FY25 to FY26 (and why "fairness" is a half-truth)

The old system (FY25 and prior)

There was a special discount tier (for the first 8 units) at a lower combined rate.

Then multiple additional tiers for higher usage.

This meant everyone got their essential water at a cheaper rate.

Combined FY25 "discount block" rate (water + sewer) was roughly:

~\$16.79 per unit for that first block (order-of-magnitude, based on the City tables).

The new system (FY26)

Discount block removed.

Only 3 tiers now.

Lowest combined price (Tier 1, 0-9 units) is:

Water: \$7.30

Sewer: \$12.51

Total: \$19.81 per unit

That's about an 18% increase on the most basic water use — your first showers, flushing, cooking, etc. — before you even touch Tier 2 or Tier 3.

The City says it wants to "reduce the burden on small residential users" and that under the old system, two- and three-family homes were "paying more than their fair share." But in practical terms, here's what happened:

The cheap first 8 units were killed off.

Normal households are now pushed quickly out of Tier 1 and 2 and into Tier 3.

Multi-family owner-occupants like me, with one meter, live almost entirely in Tier 3 for both water and sewer.

My own FY25 vs FY26 comparison

For the same 79 units, using FY25 rates and structure, my bill would have been roughly:

= \$1,927 (approximate, based on FY25 tables and tier mapping).

FY26 bill for the same usage:

\$2,258.44

Difference:

About \$331 more

Roughly a 17% increase for identical usage

And that's before we even talk about the billing cycle.

4. The billing-cycle change: from tri-annual to quarterly

This is the trick move that most people haven't processed.

Before FY26

Residential water/sewer was billed three times a year (tri-annual)

Each bill covered roughly 4 months of usage

You got 3 large bills over 12 months

From FY26 forward

Residential billing shifted to quarterly

Each bill covers roughly 3 months

You now get 4 large bills per year

So you now:

Pay more often, and

Each bill reflects higher per-unit rates and harsher tiers

Residents open a bill and compare dollars, not billing period length. So someone sees a \$2,200 bill and remembers a \$2,000 bill from "last year" and thinks, "Okay, up a bit, must be inflation." They don't realize:

The old \$2,000 might have covered 4 months at lower rates.

The new \$2,258 covers 3 months at much higher rates.

Year over year, when you add the extra bill, the total annual burden jumps sharply.

This is why I say the system is technically honest but functionally misleading.

5. The trap of single-meter multi-family homes

Older housing stock in Somerville — especially:

two-families,

three-families,

and triple-deckers

was often built with one water line and one meter.

Under Massachusetts practice and local regulations:

The account holder (usually the owner) is responsible for the whole bill.

If a landlord wants tenants to pay by usage, they must:

create separately metered lines for each unit,

ensure everything is up to plumbing and building code,

pull necessary permits,

pay for inspections and sometimes main-line work.

That's an expensive retrofit that can easily run into tens of thousands of dollars when you factor in:

opening walls/floors,

replumbing risers,

sometimes reconfiguring basement mechanicals.

So the realistic choices for many homeowners are:

Absorb these bills themselves (and raise rents to survive), or

Leave rent below what they'd need and slowly drown in costs.

Either way, the City's decision to:

remove the discount tier,

compress the tiers,

raise rates, and

bill more frequently

falls hardest on exactly the owner-occupants you'd think they'd want to protect: the ones preserving older two- and three-family homes.

6. Enterprise funds, MWRA, and "outside money" — how it actually works

Somerville runs water and sewer as enterprise funds, which means:

They are supposed to be self-supporting through user fees.

The City tracks them separately from the general fund.

Large components of the budget are:

MWRA assessments for wholesale water and sewer service,

local operations (staff, maintenance, repairs),

and debt service for capital projects (pipes, mains, etc.)

The City does get outside financial help:

MWRA provides:

wholesale services,

certain grant/loan programs (e.g., for pipe rehab, inflow/infiltration reduction, lead service line replacement).

The State and feds provide:

low-interest loans and grants through the State Revolving Fund,

eligibility under ARPA and other stimulus programs for water/sewer and infrastructure projects.

But:

These funds mostly support capital construction and long-term projects.

Debt from these projects still typically has to be paid back from the enterprise funds, i.e., from ratepayers.

In FY25, Somerville used some retained earnings/free cash to freeze rates, then in FY26 snapped back with 18% / 12% increases plus structural changes.

So, yes, there is outside help — but the way the system is structured, ratepayers still shoulder the majority of the burden, and there is almost no meaningful safety net for non-senior, working-age households.

7. Big land-taking & redevelopment bets — and why they matter for this story

This is where you see what the City is willing to risk and spend, vs. what it asks from residents.

Below are four major examples that are already in the public record.

(A) 90 Washington Street — the \$39M public safety building fiasco

Around 2019, the Somerville Redevelopment Authority (SRA) took about four acres at 90 Washington Street by eminent domain for a future public safety building and related projects.

The City's initial payment (the "pro tanto" amount) was about \$8.78 million.

The owner, Cobble Hill Center LLC, challenged the compensation in court.

A jury later determined the fair market value was \$35.306 million, meaning the City had underpaid by roughly \$26.5 million.

With interest and costs factored in, the City's own reporting now puts the total impact around \$39 million.

The City has since backed away from the original public safety building plan at that site and is now trying to regroup.

One decision, one taking, one miscalculated valuation — and the City is out tens of millions of dollars beyond what it planned.

(B) Somerville Armory — 191 Highland Ave — \$5M eminent domain for an arts center

In 2021, the City moved to acquire the Somerville Armory at 191 Highland Ave by eminent domain.

The City Council approved a \$5 million bond to pay the private owner (Highland Armory Realty Trust).

The idea: preserve an arts and community space in public hands.

Again, people can reasonably argue in favor of the goal — but it is still a \$5 million discretionary acquisition, with ongoing costs for maintenance and programming that have to be absorbed somehow.

(C) Union Square / Green Line Extension — North Prospect Block (21 properties)

For the Union Square Green Line station and associated redevelopment, the SRA took what is commonly referenced as the North Prospect Block — a cluster of 21 properties in Union Square — by eminent domain.

Public reporting puts the total compensation for that block at around \$4.5 million.

That works out to roughly \$214,000 per property, in a location:

yards from a new light-rail station,

at the border of Somerville and Cambridge,

in a designated redevelopment zone with large upzoning and density potential.

Given how real estate values behave when you add a transit station and a zoning transformation:

That aggregate number raises serious questions about whether those initial "pro tanto" payments reflected full market value.

In eminent domain cases, property owners often seek additional "just compensation" through the courts after the taking.

We already know from the 90 Washington case that Somerville has underestimated value before, and a jury forced them to pay many millions more.

I'm not claiming that all 21 owners have sued or that there is a specific pending judgment. What I'm saying — and what I think is fair — is:

In a place like Union Square, 21 properties for ~\$4.5M total warrants a serious look at whether those owners were fully compensated, and whether there is existing or potential litigation that has not yet surfaced prominently in the public conversation.

(D) Winter Hill Star Market / 299 Broadway — 17 years of dead land

The old Star Market site on Broadway in Winter Hill closed around 2007-2008.

For roughly 17 years, it sat largely vacant — a blighted, underused property in a major neighborhood node.

The City created the Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan, got state sign-off, and secured eminent-domain authority over that site through the SRA.

At various points, there were disputes between the City and private owners about redevelopment plans, and the SRA publicly signaled that it was willing to use eminent domain if necessary to seize control.

Only very recently has a major \$100M+ mixed-income redevelopment proposal truly started moving there.

For residents who live near that site, what they've seen is:

A large property frozen in time for nearly two decades

Limited tax or community benefit during that span

City resources (legal, planning, political) tied up in trying to steer the outcome

8. What all of that has to do with water/sewer bills

No one is saying "sell every asset and make water free." But there are clear connections:

Risk appetite at the top vs. risk transfer at the bottom

The City is willing to make large, risky land bets (90 Washington) that can explode into tens of millions of dollars of unexpected cost when a jury disagrees.

It is willing to spend millions on discretionary acquisitions (Armory) and long-term redevelopment plays (Union, Winter Hill).

When those costs, debts, and obligations weigh on the budget, the City has two broad options:

Use more general-fund money / free cash / one-time funds to soften the impact; or

Push harder on ratepayers and property taxpayers.

The pattern we see: push hard on ratepayers.

Enterprise funds as pressure valves

Because water/sewer are enterprise funds, the City can raise rates without needing a Proposition 2½ override vote that might draw more public anger.

That makes them a politically convenient pressure valve: when larger budget needs or capital obligations are looming, it's easier to justify higher water/sewer rates with "we have no choice" language.

Residents pay, in multiple ways

Residents pay directly in:

water and sewer bills,

property taxes,

a wide range of local fees.

They also pay indirectly when:

landlords have to raise rents to survive these costs,

older multi-family homeowners can't pass through usage because of single-meter setups,

smaller property owners opt out and sell, making room for larger investors.

Opportunity cost

Every dollar that goes to covering a misjudged land taking or a long stretch of non-productive land is a dollar not available to:

expand affordability programs;

buffer rate spikes;

keep the discount tier for essential water;

or maintain more stable property-tax trajectories.

So when the City says, "Water/sewer rates have to go up; it's just infrastructure," that statement is incomplete. The total financial environment is shaped by choices — and those choices are falling hardest on regular residents.

9. Two parallel scandals, not one

From where I sit, there are really two distinct but connected stories:

Scandal #1: Bad meters, bad reads, bad bills

Faulty meters or misconfigured automatic reading systems.

Residents receiving obviously impossible bills (e.g., usage several times higher than historic patterns).

Class-action lawsuits alleging fraudulent and inaccurate billing.

Clear grounds for individual and class claims.

You're already on this — and it's important.

Scandal #2: A "legal" system that is financially abusive

Rates raised by 18% (water) and 12% (sewer) in a single year.

Discount tier for essential usage quietly eliminated.

Tiers compressed so normal family usage sits mostly in the highest rate.

Billing cycle moved from 3 big bills per year to 4.

Minimal to no meaningful relief for non-senior households.

Enterprise funds leveraged to push financial pressure onto average families, while the City absorbs or backfills risk from bigger bets and land deals.

In Scandal #2, every line item is "technically correct."

That doesn't make the outcome fair.

And politically, it's easier to point at "bad meters" than to admit the entire structure is designed in a way that squeezes residents while maintaining City flexibility and protecting bond ratings.

10. What a serious investigation could ask and pull

If you decide to dig into this as a series, here are some concrete things that are ripe for public-records work:

Full FY24 and FY25 enterprise-fund budgets for water and sewer

All line items: MWRA assessments, debt service, personnel, retained earnings usage.

FY26 rate-setting memos and models

Internal spreadsheets showing how they expected the tier and cycle changes to impact different user classes (especially 2-3 family homes).

Documentation of the tri-annual → quarterly shift

Original rationale and any discussion of its impact on cash flow and annual totals.

Eminent domain case files and settlements

90 Washington: full case file, judgment, and any settlements or post-judgment motions.

191 Highland (Armory): taking documents, bond documents, any follow-on claims.

North Prospect Block: takings documents, pro tanto payments per parcel, and any follow-on "just compensation" lawsuits.

Winter Hill Star Market site

Urban Renewal Plan, SRA minutes, any litigation between the City/SRA and prior owners.

Affordability and discount programs

Internal emails and memos regarding:

expansion of low-income discounts beyond seniors,

legal opinions on using general fund or other dollars to buffer rate increases,

the decision to eliminate the discount tier rather than adjusting it.

ARPA and other one-time funds

How much went to water/sewer related projects, and whether any of that was structured to reduce ratepayer burden vs. purely capital expansion.

This would let you show, in hard documents:

What the City knew,

What it modeled,

What risks it took,

And how much of that risk it pushed downward.

11. Why I'm bringing this to you

You're one of the few people who:

actually understands Somerville's political ecosystem,

has shown willingness to spotlight uncomfortable truths,

and reaches the same people who open their mail and say, "How the hell did my water bill hit \$2,200?"

I'm not asking you to take my word for any of this. I'm asking you to:

see that my bill is structurally "correct",

see how the City built the structure, and

ask why normal homeowners and small landlords are being made to carry the cost of long-term ambitions and high-risk land tactics.

If you want:

I can send my actual bill PDF,

screenshots of the FY26 rate tables,

links to the meeting presentations,

and any supporting documents you need for a follow-up.

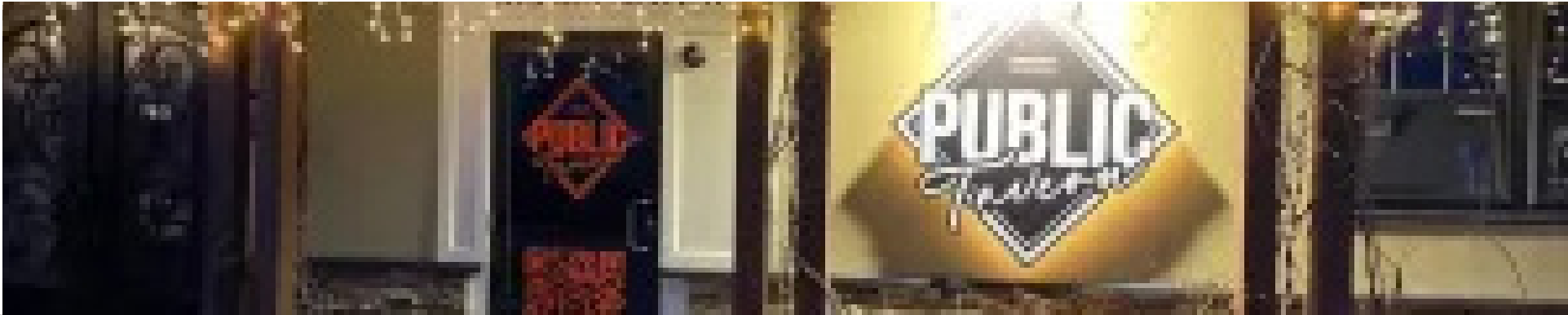
I'm fine being on the record by name.

Thanks for taking the time to read all this. I know it's long, but that's the only honest way to show how all these pieces connect.

Best,

Maninder Singh

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The makers of “Premiere on Broadway” now brings you another Somerville hotspot! Public Tavern at 565 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02145 is now open! Only on Broadway in Somerville! A great place for all! It's a great place to sit down, have a few adult beverages, enjoy your favorite game and enjoy some good food, and some friendly local conversation!



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Somerville/Medford News Weekly Speakup Line:
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What a wonderful book check it out!

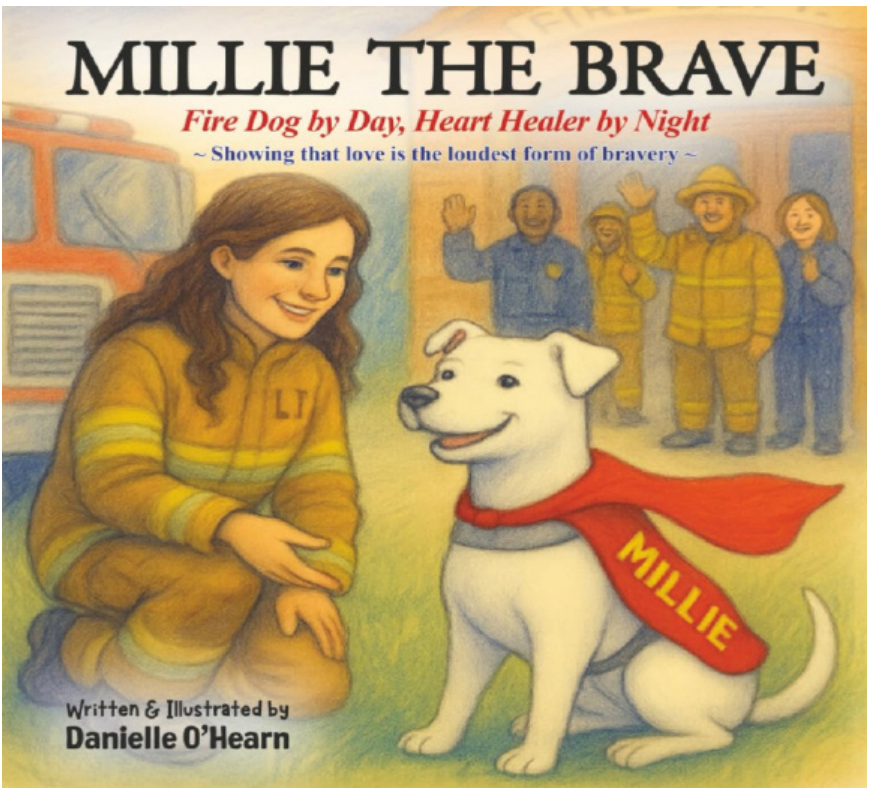
Dear Billy T and Somerville/Medford News Weekly Speakup Line,

Hey Billy
My name is Danielle we've met a few times before, I'm a firefighter in Somerville. I just came out with a children's book.

It's about my dog Millie it was a real life, first responder therapy, dog and rescue and her adventures in firefighting and being a therapy dog. I know you have a huge following. Any shout out about the book would be greatly appreciated. It's available currently on Amazon and hopefully in bookstore soon. Thanks Billy !

Here's the link the title is Millie the brave

<https://a.co/d/9cCS8Lp>



KOWLOON COMEDY NIGHT FEBRUARY 27, 2026

Hi my name is Joe LoRusso a North Reading Resident and Ted Williams Camp Alum, Volunteer for the Jimmy Fund, and raising money for the Jimmy Fund, and have been for many years to help strike out cancer in Children & Adults.

The event I'm running is a expected to draw a lot of people, a great evening of laughs, great food and giving away great door prizes; so get your tickets early, by scanning the QR Code on flier or on Eventbrite website, they are going quick. Thank you all in advance for your support.

Eat, Laugh, and Support!

Door prizes!

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FEBRUARY 27, 2026

doors at 6pm - show at 8pm
18+ only - Tickets \$20

Hosted by Ted Williams Camp Alumni

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For Tickets and more info, scan QR code or search on Eventbrite: Kowloon Comedy for the Jimmy Fund

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Updated Designs for Somerville’s ArtFarm Park at Feb. 9 Meeting



Park in Brickbottom neighborhood will merge recreation, public art, and agriculture above massive flood-control infrastructure

SOMERVILLE— A decade in the making, plans for Somerville’s unique ArtFarm park are taking shape. At a public meeting on February 9, City staff will present the latest community-driven designs that aim to transform the city’s former waste transfer site into a creative hub where gardens, public art, and recreational space bloom above a massive underground flood-control system.

Community members are invited to come learn about the project’s history, design development, and key park features – as well as upcoming timelines. Participants can attend either in person or online.

While a new park for Somerville, there’s history here. Designs for ArtFarm were first drawn up in 2014. The idea arose after the demolition of the Waste Transfer Station at 10 Poplar Street left a blank slate. But the City also needed critical storm-water control. So, this being Somerville, a creative plan to do both was hatched.

The park plans were modified to first accommodate the Poplar Street Pump Station (voice.somervillema.gov/poplar-pump) and a 4-million-gallon underground stormwater storage tank under construction since 2023. This two-for-one approach aims to deliver the park atop

the critical new infrastructure that will mitigate flooding in the city’s eastern half (including the Ward 2 and 3 areas) as climate change brings more precipitation.

For the surface, residents worked with the Somerville Arts Council and the Public Space and Urban Forestry team to envision a common space that “grows” Somerville’s vibrant arts scene, provides opportunities for recreation, and supports community agriculture.

ArtFarm has since become a key part of the Brickbottom Neighborhood Plan (voice.somervillema.gov/brick) adopted in 2024, calling for the district to be defined

by art and creativity. All are invited to learn about the project and what comes next at the upcoming meeting.

Meeting Information:
Date: Monday, February 9, 2026
Location: Triangle Coffee Bar (100 Chestnut St.)
Join via Zoom: bit.ly/4sWOnf8

For more information and to stay up to date with this project, visit voice.somervillema.gov/poplar-artfarm.

Participate in Somerville’s Annual City Census Failure to respond may result in removal from the voting rolls



SOMERVILLE – The City of Somerville is encouraging residents to fill out and complete the city’s annual census form, which is making its way to resident mailboxes in mid-January.

Annual participation in the census is essential for keeping an accurate

population count, and it updates or maintains your status as an active voter for upcoming elections. Failure to respond to the City Census may result in your removal from the voting rolls.

Return your completed census form: In person at City Hall (93 Highland

Ave.)
Via mail to Somerville Election Department, 93 Highland Ave., Somerville, MA 02143
Email: census@somervillema.gov
Fax: (617) 625-5643

For more information, please call 311 (617-666-3311) or visit somervillema.gov/elections.

Somerville Invites Residents to Help Shape FY 2027 Budget Priorities



Virtual meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 10; interpretation available in Spanish and Portuguese

SOMERVILLE— Somerville residents have an opportunity to help shape the City’s next annual budget. The City Council Finance Committee is inviting the community to share input on priorities for the City’s Fiscal Year 2027 budget at a virtual community budget meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 10, at 6 p.m. The meeting will be held on Zoom and is open to all residents. Registration is encouraged but not required.

Community feedback helps shape budget decisions—guiding investments in City services, programs, and day-to-day operations. Residents are encouraged to attend and share what they want to see

prioritized in the year ahead.

Experience with the City budget is not required. Councilors and the Mayor’s Office are interested in hearing what services, projects, priorities, and goals matter most to residents, and any community members can contribute. Everyone is welcome.

And if you want to learn more about past budgets, visit somervillema.gov/budget. Each “fiscal year” starts in July, and runs through the end of June the following year. Fiscal year 2027 runs from July 2026 through June 2027.

Virtual Community Budget Meeting (FY 2027)
Date: Tuesday, February 10, 2026
Time: 6 p.m.
Location: Zoom
Register: bit.ly/49PuSvU

Language Access
Interpretation will be provided in Spanish and Portuguese. Interpretation in other languages is available upon request with advance notice.

Written Comment will also be accepted through February 10, 2026 at 12 p.m. If you’re unable to attend the hearing, you can share comments two more ways:

Emailing the City Council at publiccomments@somervillema.gov
Dropping off written comments at the City Clerk’s Office at City Hall, 93 Highland Ave.

Emailed comments and written comments must be received no later than 12 Noon the day of the Hearing to ensure they are conveyed to the Committee for inclusion with the hearing testimony.

Note that the City Council always accepts comments at this address, but we cannot guarantee that comments received after the deadline will be read prior to the hearing.

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Applications Now Open for Three Income-Restricted Rental Units at Two Properties



Applications Now Open for Three Income-Restricted Rental Units at Two Properties

SOMERVILLE – Applications for three income-restricted rental units in Somerville are now open. Maloney Properties in partnership with the City of Somerville has three studio income-restricted apartments available across two properties: The Guild (154 Broadway) in East Somerville and Prospect Union Square (50 Prospect Street). Apply now through Friday, February 6.

As is standard, units were first offered via Somerville’s Consolidated Rental Waitlist before being opened to all eligible applicants making at or below 110% of Area Median Income (AMI). All income-eligible households as well as mobile voucher holders are now welcome to apply. This is a first-come, first-served opportunity. Apply for these units online at: bit.ly/4rdwfMj.

Being on the Consolidated Rental Waitlist can make it easier to apply for housing opportunities. To learn more and for future opportunities to join it, visit somervillema.gov/consolidated-rental-waitlist.

More information on household income limits is below:


2025 Income Limits for 110% AMI units	
1 Person	Minimum \$92,651
2 People	Minimum \$105,851
	Maximum \$127,358
	Maximum \$145,552

Application assistance is available during the Inclusionary Housing Program’s virtual office hours every Thursday from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. via Zoom: bit.ly/3LJiN3w.

Multilingual resources and application support will be available throughout the application period.

To learn more about Somerville’s inclusionary housing and other opportunities, visit somervillema.gov/inclusionary. To sign up for updates, click the green box labeled “Affordable Housing Alerts: Sign Up Now.”

Somerville Resident Larry Mulrey Reading a Story at his Grandson’s Classroom



Here’s another good heartwarming story happening around the City of Somerville while there is so much chaos going around between snow storms, politics and civil unrest, it’s good to get a good news story once in while!

Please feel free to send me your news stories and/or “Favorite Photos” and/or nominations for “Special Person of the Week” with a paragraph or two about the individual that you nominated!

Please send yours inquires to: Wmtauro@aol.com or simply inbox me here on Facebook Messenger and we will publish it in the Somerville Medford News Weekly as well as post your stories/photos on this Facebook platform for the world to see!

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Somerville Finalizes New Contract with SMEA Unit D Retroactive raises and benefit updates support a strong City workforce



SOMERVILLE – Somerville has signed a new union agreement that will raise pay and modernize benefits for Unit D employees — from ISD and Parking staff to social workers, specialized Police Department clerical staff, and DPW custodial and facilities supervisors — who keep Somerville’s day-to-day services running. The newly signed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) covers Fiscal Years 2023 through 2025.

“When City Hall runs well, the whole local economy is stronger,” said Mayor Wilson. “That starts with the basics: strong services, a stable workforce, and fair union contracts that help us recruit and retain the people who keep this city moving. I’m grateful to Unit D and our team for the good-faith work that brought us to signing today.”

Key provisions include:

3% retroactive cost-of-living adjustments for both FY23 and FY24
One additional week of vacation
Transition to a vacation accrual system, improving consistency and flexibility
Increases to the longevity bonus
Eligibility for the City’s new paid FMLA benefit

View photos of the contract signing with Mayor Wilson and SMEA Unit D here.

As part of the market adjustment, starting rates for FY25 will increase by an average of 13%, while existing employee rates will increase by an average of 14%.

The MOA will now be submitted to the Somerville City Council for funding approval.

EXTEND THE TIME TO FILE FOR AN ABATEMENT (S 2900)

By Bob Katzen

The Senate 36-1 approved an amendment that would increase from 30 days to 75 days the amount of time a property owner has to file for an abatement if they feel that their home evaluation was too high.

Amendment sponsor Sen. Nick Collins (D-Boston) said the amendment would help property taxpayers by simply extending the abatement period and giving them more time. He noted that currently we have the bomb drop on January 1 and people who are in the middle class don’t have

lawyers and accountants on retainer. He said that when the city increases your property value by 10 percent, you usually put your head down and just eat it, and that’s not fair.

“I voted ‘No’ ... because tax classification, exceptions and credits, particularly

when novel, should be addressed comprehensively and analyzed in the context of other new proposals and existing law,” said Sen. John Keenan (D-Quincy), the only senator to vote against the amendment.

(A Yes” vote is for the amendment. A “No” vote is

against it.)

Sen. Patricia Jehlen Yes

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MAKE ASPARAGUS THE OFFICIAL STATE VEGETABLE (HD 5474 and SD 3498)

By Bob Katzen

Sen. Jo Comerford (D-Northampton) and Rep. Homar Gomez (D-Easthampton) filed a bill, requested by some third-grade students at Hadley Elementary School, to make asparagus the official state vegetable. Other areas in the nation are also working to designate their state as the asparagus capital of the world.

“It kind of started by us asking what our state vegetable was, and we really didn’t have one,” said 8-year-old student James Rathbun. “We thought that was interesting, and it would be cool to invite the senator and representative to the class and ask them to make a bill.”

According to the students, back in the 1950s and 1960s, almost 100 percent of asparagus grown in

the Bay State came from fields in Hadley, unofficially making the town the asparagus capital of the world.

“I filed this bill because Western Massachusetts should be more visibly represented across the commonwealth, and there’s no better way to do that than through our amazing farms,” said Rep. Gomez. “The work the children did truly made

this a no-brainer for me.”

“When a classroom filled with passionate third graders advocate for asparagus to become the official state vegetable, I listen closely,” said Sen. Comerford. “It was inspiring to meet with these students at Hadley Elementary School as they shared the history and regional significance of asparagus — also known as Hadley Grass. I am grateful to

these young people for reminding us how democracy works.”



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Join the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Applications
Now Being Accepted for City Resident Representative



SOMERVILLE – The City of Somerville is seeking one new resident to join the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust (SAHT) in a volunteer role. The current vacancy is for a City Resident representative. Applicants must be Somerville residents who are income-eligible for state and/or federal

housing programs. If you're passionate about advancing affordable housing in our community, this is a great opportunity to make an impact.

What is the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust?
The SAHT is dedicated to creating and preserving affordable homes for renters and prospective owners with low- and moderate-income households in Somerville. Through a public process, Trustees evaluate project and program proposals and approve funding allocations to help increase the supply of affordable housing in our city.

Who can join?
Eligible applicants for the

current vacancy must be Somerville residents who are income-eligible for state and/or federal housing programs. Applicants should have an interest in affordable housing issues and a commitment to advancing housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households in Somerville.

What is the time commitment?
The Trust meets virtually on the second Thursday of each month at 5:15 p.m., with meetings typically lasting approximately 1.5 hours. Additional time for review of documents and occasional special meetings may be needed, for an estimated total of 4 hours per month.

What is the appointment process?
Applications are reviewed and candidates may be invited to interview. The Mayor then makes appointments, which must be confirmed by the City Council. New members are onboarded and sworn in by the City Clerk before beginning service.

How do I apply?
Email: housingtrust@somervillema.gov
Mail: Sheniqua Roper, City of Somerville, OSPCD Housing Division, 50 Evergreen Ave., Somerville, MA 02145

When is the application deadline?
Applications are due by Friday,

February 6, 2026. Please submit a resume, cover letter, and any relevant supplemental materials.

Questions?
For questions or more information, contact Housing Trust at housingtrust@somervillema.gov or call 617-591- 3200 ext. 2587.

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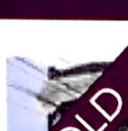
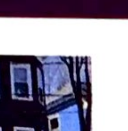


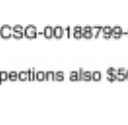
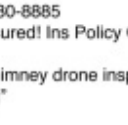
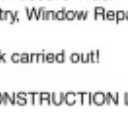



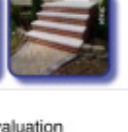
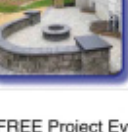




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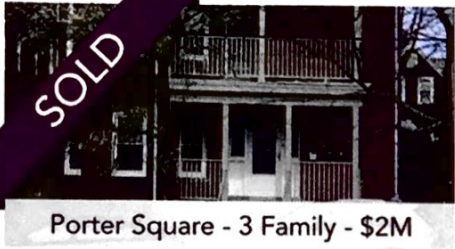
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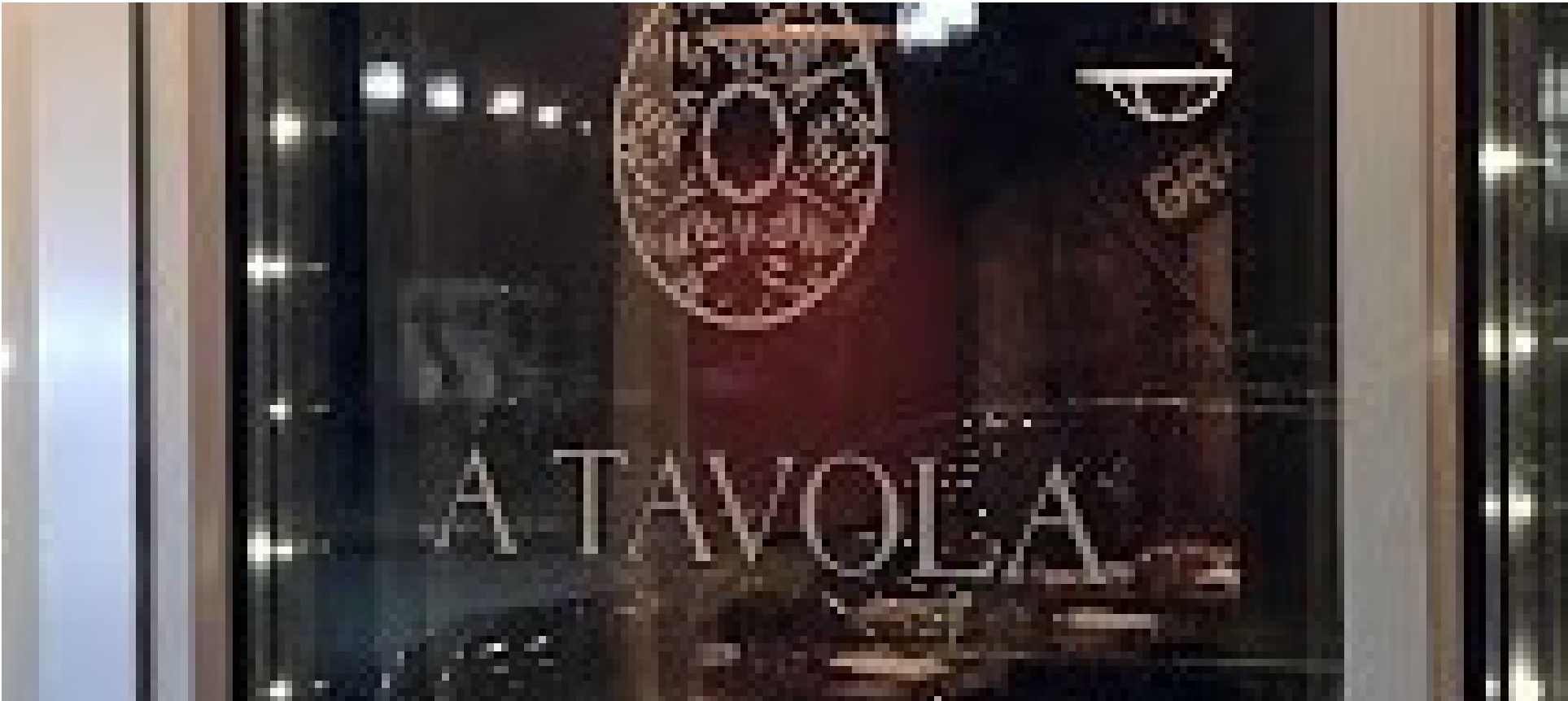
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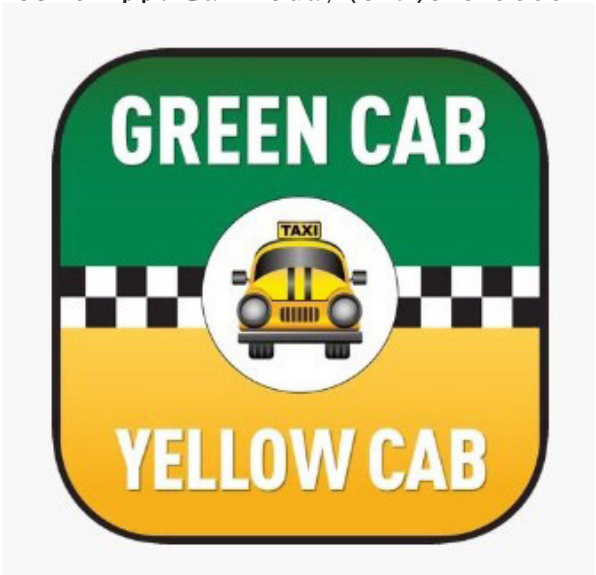


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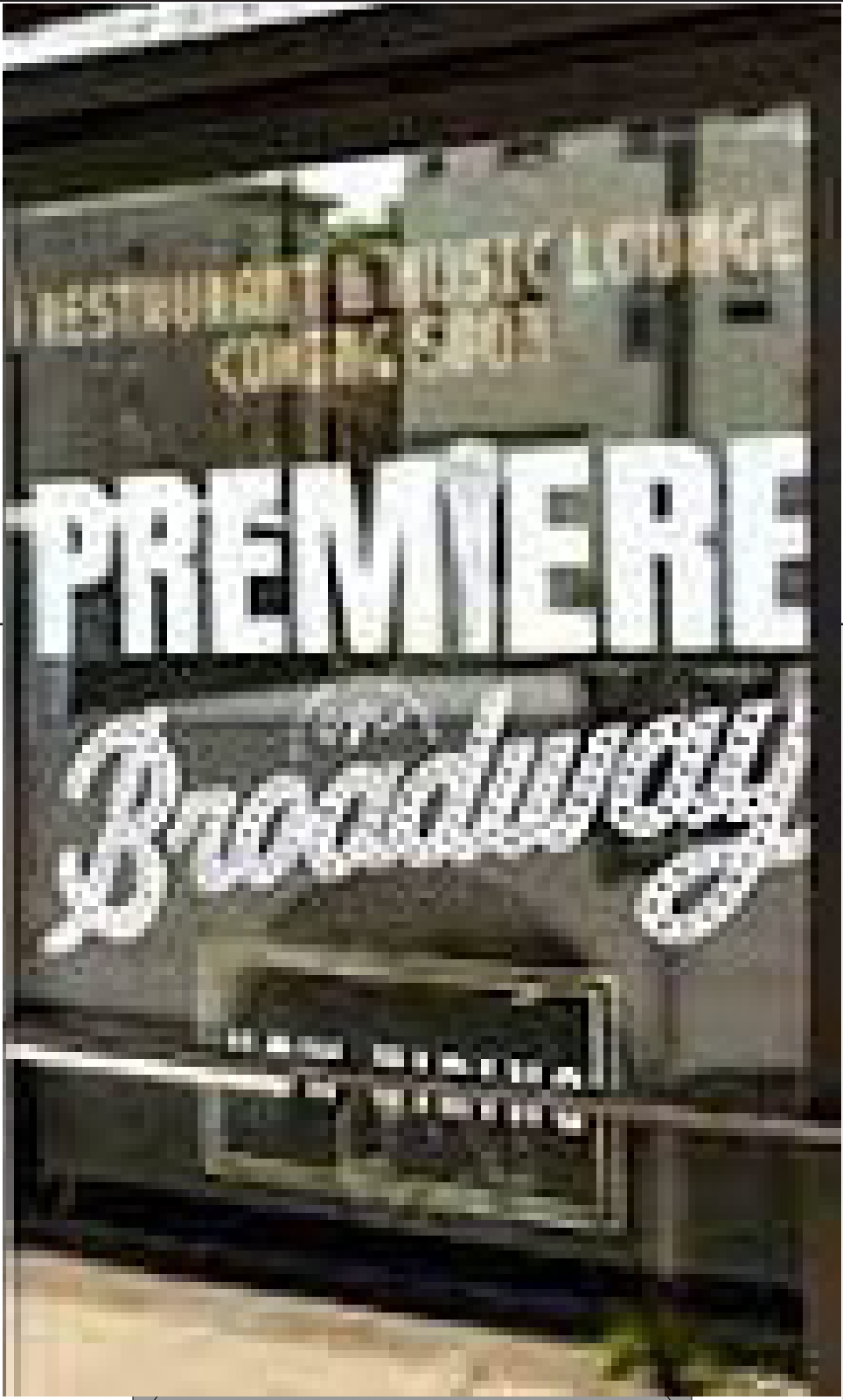
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