

# The Somerville/Medford News Weekly



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VOL.1 NO.329-2978

SOMERVILLE/MEDFORD MASS

Tuesday February 3rd, 2026

## Fire at Assembly Row Somerville



NEWS TALK OUT LOUD/SPEAK UP



Continued to page 13

## GOVERNOR PROPOSES \$62.8 BILLION FISCAL2027 STATE BUDGET



Somerville Police  
Real Life Somerville  
Police Stories Page



Continued to page 17

## LITERACY EDUCATION STANDARDS



### MOUNT VERNON RESTAURANT

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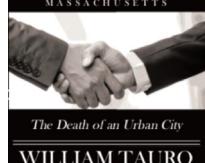
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## BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY HOME SERVICES/ COMMONWEALTH REAL ESTATE

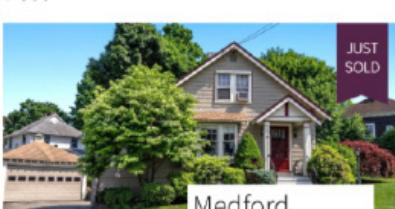
### MARKET ACTIVITY

WE HAVE BEEN BUSY...

**BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY** | Commonwealth  
HomeServices 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 a call!

Helen Praysman Broker Associate REALTOR®  
(617) 610-5382 [Helen.Praysman@commonmoves.com](mailto:Helen.Praysman@commonmoves.com)

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

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Winner of the 2019 President Circle Award  
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## Become A Medford Police Officer



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:

1. Civil Service Exam Route: The first step in this pathway is taking the Massachusetts Civil Service Exam, which is now offered twice a year. Applications are NOW OPEN for the spring 2026 police officer entrance exam. Deadline to apply is February 2, 2026.

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](http://medfordpolice.com/becomeapoliceofficer).

### Medford High School Softball Sponsor Packages 2023

Please complete all the information requested below:

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Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please make all checks payable to: MHS Varsity Softball

Please send both forms and payment to:

Medford High School  
 Attn: Rob Farrell  
 489 Winthrop Street  
 Medford, MA 02155

If you have any questions email us at [MHSVarsitySoftball22@gmail.com](mailto:MHSVarsitySoftball22@gmail.com)  
 MHS Varsity Softball is a non profit organization in affiliation with Medford High School, our tax ID is listed below for your records.  
 Tax ID 04-6001100

Artwork / Logos must be submitted to [MHSVarsitySoftball22@gmail.com](mailto:MHSVarsitySoftball22@gmail.com)  
 Deadline for artwork / logos is March 7th for full season exposure, any late submission banners will be hung starting tournament weekend.

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## Somerville/Medford Remembering Reyna Carmen Mendez-Salazar



Obituary  
Reyna Carmen Mendez-Salazar, of Somerville, falleció rodeada de

su familia el 28 de enero de 2026, a la edad de 42 años.

Nacida y criada en Chiquimula, Guatemala, era hija de los difuntos Rosalio Benjamin Mendez y María Luisa Salazar. Llegó a los Estados Unidos a los 14 años con su tía en busca de nuevas oportunidades. Trabajadora incansable, fundó y dirigió su propia empresa de limpieza antes de su enfermedad.

Especialmente dedicada a su familia, Reyna es la amada pareja de Omar Meza Ramirez. y la querida

madre de Bryan Emmanuel Meza Mendez, de Somerville. También le sobreviven sus queridos hermanos, hermanas, demás familiares y amigos.

Los servicios funerarios se llevarán a cabo en la Funeraria George L. Doherty, ubicada en 855 Broadway (Powder House Sq.), Somerville, el viernes 30 de enero, de 17:00 a 20:00, con un servicio de oración que comenzará a las 19:00. Familiares y amigos están invitados a asistir. El sepelio será privado.

Reyna Carmen Mendez-Salazar, of Somerville, passed away surrounded by her family on January 28, 2026, she was just 42.

Born and raised in Chiquimula, Guatemala she was the daughter of the late Rosalio Benjamin Mendez and María Luisa Salazar. She came to the United States at the age of 14 with her aunt for new beginnings. A hard worker, she went on own and manage her own cleaning company before her illness.

Especially devoted to her family,

Reyna is the beloved partner of Omar Meza Ramirez and cherished mother of Bryan Emmanuel Meza Mendez of Somerville. She is also survived by her loving brothers, sisters and extended family members and friends.

Funeral Services will be held in the George L. Doherty Funeral Home, 855 Broadway (Powder House Sq.) Somerville on Friday, January 30th from 5:00PM to 8:00PM with a Prayer Service beginning at 7:00PM. Relatives and friends invited to attend. Interment will be private.

## Somerville/Medford Remembering Joan Denise (White) Dwyer



Obituary  
Joan Denise (White) Dwyer, formerly of Medford, passed away peacefully on January 28, 2026, after a long illness. She was 89.

Raised in Somerville, Joan is the daughter of the late John and Christina (Cahill) White. Dear sister to Paul White of Saugus. Predeceased by her late husbands Edward Dwyer, who died in 2010 and Herbert Voye, who died in 1986. Devoted and loving mother

to Thomas Voye and his partner Julie Bettencourt of Lakeville, Brenda Reardon and her partner Bill Swanton of Medford, and Maura Gaffey and her husband James of Billerica. Proud and loving "Grammie" to Patrick, Brendan, Stephanie, the late John ("Jay") and great grandmother to Elaine Joan.

Joan was a graduate of Matignon High School; and raised her family in Medford where she resided for 50 years. Joan worked at Wausau

Insurance for many years. After retiring, Joan loved spending time with her grandchildren, having dinner with her friends, working in her garden and spending time with her beloved dog Blarney.

Joan was a devout Catholic. Her religious beliefs brought her joy and strength. She was involved in the St. Raphael parish and the St. Joseph parish.

Visitation hours will be held at

George L. Doherty Funeral Home, 855 Broadway, Somerville on Tuesday, February 3 from 9:30 to 10:30 AM followed by her funeral Mass at St. Raphael Church, 512 High Street, Medford at 11 AM. Services will conclude with her burial at Oak Grove Cemetery, Medford.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Joan's name can be made to CitySprouts <https://www.citysprouts.org>

## Somerville/Medford Remembering Maria L. (Fabiano) Torra



Maria L. (Fabiano) Torra of Revere, formerly of Somerville, passed away

on Tuesday, January 27th, 2026. She was 92 years old. Born in San Sossio Baronia, Avellino, Italy, she was the cherished daughter of the late Vito and Vincenza (Marinella) Fabiano. Prior to her retirement, Maria worked as a seamstress in the clothing industry. She enjoyed cooking, sewing, knitting and working in her garden.

Maria was the beloved wife of the late Domenico Torra, and the devoted mother of Francesco M. "Franco" Torra and

his wife Josephine of Medford, and Vincenza DiFlumeri and her husband Antonio of Revere. She was the adored grandmother of Marianna Torra of Wakefield, Francesco M. Torra, Jr. and his wife Michelle of Wakefield, Palmina Panzini and her husband Eric of Middleton, Annamaria Trichilo and her husband Joseph of Lynnfield and Basilio DiFlumeri and his wife Emma of North Andover. Maria was the loving great-grandmother to Domenic, Anthony and

Mario Torra, Luca Panzini, Vincenzo and Mila Trichilo and Anthony and Cara DiFlumeri. She was the dear sister of Grazia Bonavita of Medford, Gerardo Fabiano of Peabody, Francesco Fabiano of Somerville, and the late Antonio, Luigi and Giovanni Fabiano and Caterina Natola. Maria is also survived by many nieces and nephews.

Visiting hours will be held on Wednesday, February 4th in the Dello Russo Funeral Home, 306 Main

St., Medford, from 4 to 8 PM, and again on Thursday, February 5th at 8:45 AM, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial celebrated in St. Anthony of Padua Church, 250 Revere St., Revere, at 10 AM. Relatives and friends are respectfully invited to attend. Services will conclude with entombment in Holy Cross Cemetery, Malden.

## Somerville/Medford Remembering Lois A. (Johnstone) Burge



Obituary  
Lois A. (Johnstone) Burge — Of Medford, passed away peacefully at home on Saturday, January 31, 2026. She

was 95 years old.

Raised in Somerville, Lois and her beloved husband the late B. George Burge settled in Medford to raise their family where she became an active member of the Medford community. For many years she served on the boards of the Medford Catholic Woman's Club, Ladies Fortnightly and in many different roles at St. Raphael's Parish.

Lois was an avid lover of the sun whether it be summers down the Cape or vacationing in Aruba with friends. One of Lois's favorite past

times was rooting for her beloved Red Sox win or lose.

Above all else, Lois cherished time spent with her family. Being surrounded by loved ones brought her immense joy and meant everything to her. She also appreciated the simple pleasures in life, including savoring a good Manhattan, often enjoyed in good company.

Devoted mother of Linda Corrigan and her longtime partner Robert Abruzese of Medford, Nancy Dyment and her husband Ronald of Hampstead, NH and Thomas Burge and his wife

Sheila of Marshfield. Cherished grandmother of Kerry Doherty and her husband John, Kelly Corrigan, Jason Dyment and his wife Amanda, Timothy Dyment and his wife Allison, Elise Berrada and her husband Steven and Steven Burge. Loving great-grandmother of JP, Ryan, Chase, Jack, Grace and George. She was the beloved daughter of the late Angela P. Johnstone. Also lovingly survived by many loving friends and extended family members.

A funeral procession will be held from the George L. Doherty Funeral Home 855

Broadway (Powder House Sq.) on Wednesday, February 4th at 9:00AM. Followed by a funeral mass celebrated in St. Raphael Church 512 High Street at 10:00AM.

Relatives and friends are invited to attend.

Calling Hours will be held on Tuesday, February 3rd from 4:00PM to 7:00PM.

Services will conclude with burial at Oak Grove Cemetery, Medford.



## JAPANESE INTERNMENT CAMPS (S 2132)

By Bob Katzen

The Senate 37-0, approved and sent to the House a proposal that would designate January 30 of each year as Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution in Massachusetts, in recognition of the birthday of Fred Korematsu and to educate about and honor his life, his perseverance, and his determination to advocate for the civil liberties of all Americans.

Unfortunately, the Senate approved the bill on

January 29 and the bill must be approved by the House and signed by Gov. Healey in order to take effect. Neither of those will occur by January 30 so the actual celebration on January 30 will not take place until 2027.

“During WW II, Fred Korematsu had the courage to challenge the federal government after a military order forced hundreds of thousands of Americans of Japanese descent into internment camps,” said sponsor Sen. Jamie Eldridge

(D-Marlborough). “His stand became a landmark moment in the fight for due process, confronting racial prejudice and the wrongful incarceration of people based on their race and ethnicity. Korematsu’s resistance struck a lasting blow against discrimination and reaffirmed the principle that no American should be denied their civil rights. I am grateful to the incredible advocacy by so many Asian American civic, political action and coalition groups to fight to create Fred Korematsu Day, and to the

Fred T. Korematsu Institute for its vision to use Korematsu’s legal battle as a tool to educate all Americans about history, the U.S. Constitution, and the need to expand and protect legal rights.”

“Fred Korematsu’s story is one of strength and perseverance in the face of discrimination,” said Sen. Joan Lovely (D-Salem). “By marking Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution on January 30 each year, we highlight the historical struggle Asian Ameri-

can and Pacific Islander communities face against discrimination across this country and across the world. I was proud to join my colleagues on the Senate Committee on Rules in advancing this legislation to the floor to honor a man whose conviction, courage and resiliency represent one of the most profound struggles for civil rights in American history.”

(A “Yes” vote is for the bill.)

Sen. Patricia Jehlen Yes

## AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (H 4927)

By Bob Katzen

The Education Committee will hold a hearing on February 10 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on a measure that would allow students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to receive

applied behavior analysis (ABA) services at their school — even if the services are administered by outside providers. Supporters said that currently school districts can impose undue requirements for ABA providers

or deny access altogether.

“This proposal is needed to protect the rights of eligible students, and to ensure that children with ASD are able to receive the care that they need,” said sponsor Rep. Jim

O’Day (D-West Boylston). “At its core, this proposal is about expanding access to care, a mission that is aligned with my broader legislative agenda to help those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I’m confident

that [the bill] will allow for individuals with ASD to receive the services that they are eligible for, regardless of setting.”

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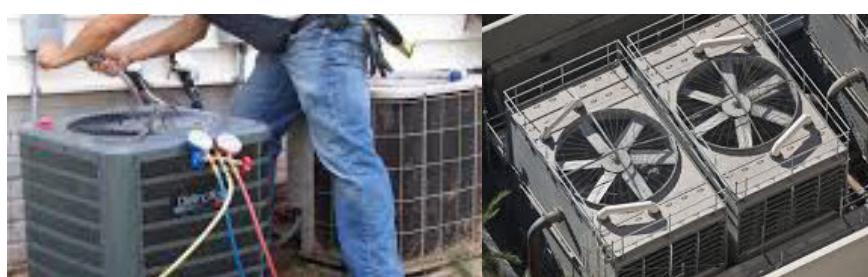
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## THIS WEEK'S QUOTABLE QUOTES ON BEACON HILL

By Bob Katzen

"For countless residents across the commonwealth, these programs offer access to everyday items they need, including food and medical services. Through the work of our fraud examiners, we continue to help ensure they operate with transparency, accountability and equity. Our team will continue to work to ensure taxpayer dollars are used effectively and that resources are available to those who truly need and qualify for them."

—State Auditor Diana DiZoglio on her Bureau of Special Investigations' fraud report for fiscal year 2025 which identified \$11.9 million in public assistance fraud, including more than \$4.1 million in the Supplemental

Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and more than \$1.3 million in in MassHealth, the state's Medicaid program that provides health care for low-income and disabled persons.

"Massachusetts cannot even keep Cape Cod potato chips in Cape Cod. When a company whose entire identity is tied to this state decides it no longer makes economic sense to operate here, that should set off alarm bells on Beacon Hill."

—Paul Craney, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Fiscal Alliance, on Cape Cod Potato Chips parent company, Campbell's, announcing that it will shut down the Hyannis facility in April, eliminating 49 jobs and moving production to facilities

in other states including North Carolina, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.

"In Massachusetts and across the country, we continue to see unlawful and unconstitutional actions by ICE that are meant to intimidate and instill fear in our communities, including against United States citizens who are exercising their constitutional rights. This puts people at risk and in harm's way, and I find it necessary in the interest of public safety to take this action today."

—Gov. Healey upon filing legislation to keep ICE out of courthouses, schools, child care programs, hospitals and churches; make it unlawful for another state to deploy its National Guard in Massachusetts without the governor's

permission; and allow parents to pre-arrange guardianship for their children in case they are detained or deported.

"The solution is not to double down on furthering the divide between the state and federal government as proposed by Gov. Healey. Instead, our state government should be working in partnership with federal authorities to ensure that criminal illegal aliens are identified and apprehended off the streets. These apprehensions are best done in spaces like courthouses."

—Massachusetts Republican Party Chair Amy Carnevale responding to Healey.

"The Trump Administration's willingness to use the power of the federal

government to hurt and even kill United States citizens is shocking. Massachusetts must be prepared for the possibility that President Trump unleashes his masked agents on the people of the commonwealth for having the audacity to stand up to him."

—Sen. Michael Moore (D-Millbury), in a letter sent to Gov. Healey and Attorney General Andrea Campbell, urging their offices to prepare and enact proactive measures that will defend the rights of Bay Staters in the event the Trump Administration decides to send a federal operation to the commonwealth.

## The Somerville/Medford News Weekly



### 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!

For new membership call (781)395-2519



### A TAVOLA RESTAURANT WINCHESTER OPEN FOR OUTDOOR PATIO DINING & TAKEOUT ORDERS: (781)729-1040 34 CHURCH STREET WINCHESTER



"Without all of the hustle and bustle of heading into Boston, why not just head locally right in Winchester at TAVOLA RESTAURANT where a little piece of Italy is waiting for you!"

"It's as close as you can get for a real authentic Italian dining experience that will keep you coming back for more" "Definitely a two thumbs up rating and absolutely worth checking

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.



## REQUIRE DEFIBRILLATORS AT SPORTING EVENTS (H 4993)

By Bob Katzen

The House 154-1, approved legislation that would require an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) to be present at all public stadiums, sports centers, gymnasiums or other facilities hosting or providing athletic or sporting events. The measure does not apply to a school-sponsored athletic event at a school gymnasium.

The measure also would require the

presence of at least one employee of the facility or a volunteer that has completed a training course in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and in the use of an AED; or a volunteer that has completed a training course in cardiopulmonary resuscitation that meets the standards established by the American Heart Association or the American National Red Cross.

If no employee or volunteer is available, the venue operator, or their

designee would be required to make best efforts to identify readily available volunteers, trained in the use of an AED, present at the facility. The request for volunteers may be made through a public announcement.

Another provision requires that a placard be installed at each public entrance to the facility with a map of the location of any AED at the facility.

"With this bill, everyone has the chance to be a lifesaver and not a bystander," said sponsor Rep. Marjorie Decker (D-Cambridge).

Rep. John Gaskey (R-Carver), the only member to vote against the bill, said he voted no "because it's more evidence of the state trying to legislate safety." Gaskey continued, "As stated, there are groups raising money to provide AEDs. Instead of mandating they be installed, forcing

future costs onto struggling communities, we should be encouraging their adoption and helping these groups find more ways to make AEDs available at sporting events."

(A "Yes" vote is for the bill. A "No" vote is against it.)

Rep. Christine Barber Yes Rep. Mike Connolly Yes Rep. Paul Donato Yes Rep. Erika Uyterhoeven Yes

## ESTABLISH FUND TO HELP COMMUNITIES PAY FOR DEFIBRILLATORS (H 4993)

By Bob Katzen

The House 26-130, rejected an amendment that would create a Massachusetts AED Communities Fund to help cities and towns pay for AEDs at public stadiums, sports centers, gymnasiums or other facilities hosting or providing athletic or sporting events, and also pay for any necessary equipment and infrastructure to properly hold and charge the devices.

Amendment supporters said that without this amendment, the bill is an unfunded state mandate forced on already financially struggling cities and towns. They noted that the total cost of acquiring an AEDs

and housing it outside at sporting events is between \$10,000 and \$25,000 each.

"Automated External Defibrillators are essential because they can be used to provide immediate treatment to someone who has suffered a heart attack and help to stabilize them until first responders arrive," said House Minority Leader Rep. Brad Jones (R-North Reading). "However, there are costs associated with maintaining and storing AEDs to ensure they are always fully charged and ready to use. I supported the creation of a Massachusetts AED Communities Fund as a vehicle to help cities and towns offset the costs associated with the purchase and upkeep of these life-saving devices and related

infrastructure."

Rep. Paul Frost (R-Auburn), the sponsor of the amendment, did not respond to repeated requests by Beacon Hill Roll Call asking him to comment on the passage of the proposal.

Reps. Marjorie Decker (D-Cambridge) and Russell Holmes (D-Boston), the co-sponsors of an earlier version of the legislation, and supporters of this new version, did not respond to repeated requests by Beacon Hill Roll Call asking them to comment on the amendment.

Amendment opponents said that amendment supporters are using the term

"unfunded mandate" loosely, acting as if the Legislature has never required cities and towns to do something that will save lives. They noted that existing fire codes and food safety codes are "unfunded mandates" but they are important enough for the state to require communities to follow them.

They also noted there are several nonprofit organizations, including the Preston Settles Memorial Fund (PSMF), that are helping and will continue to help cities and towns pay for the AEDs. PSMF was founded in memory of Preston Blair Settles, who passed away at just 15 years old due to a sudden cardiac arrest caused by hypertrophic cardiomyopathy while playing basketball.

Sudden cardiac arrest is the leading cause of death among young athletes, representing nearly one-third of all athletic field deaths in the U.S.

(A "Yes" vote is for creating the Massachusetts AED Communities Fund to help cities and towns pay for AEDs. A "No" vote is against creating it.)

Rep. Christine Barber No Rep. Mike Connolly No Rep. Paul Donato No Rep. Erika Uyterhoeven No

## 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.

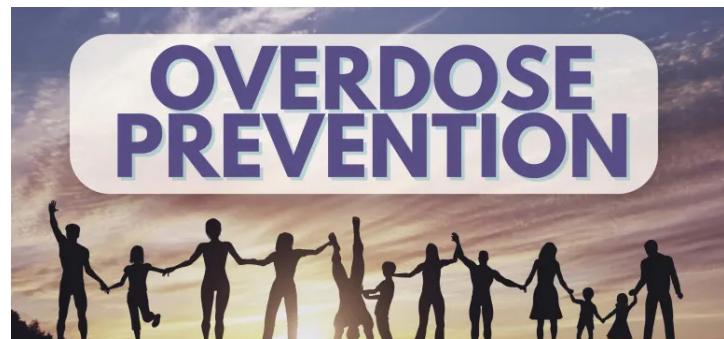
**Where to Apply:**  
Applications can be sent via email or U.S. Mail to:  
Email: condoboard@somervillema.gov  
Mail: Attn: Ben Wyner, CRB Interim Staff Liaison, City of Somer-

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 IN SOMERVILLE



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 narcan. Please contact club VP Liam Seward at 617-821-9529 if you are interested in attending.

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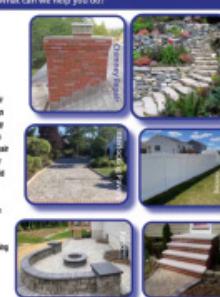
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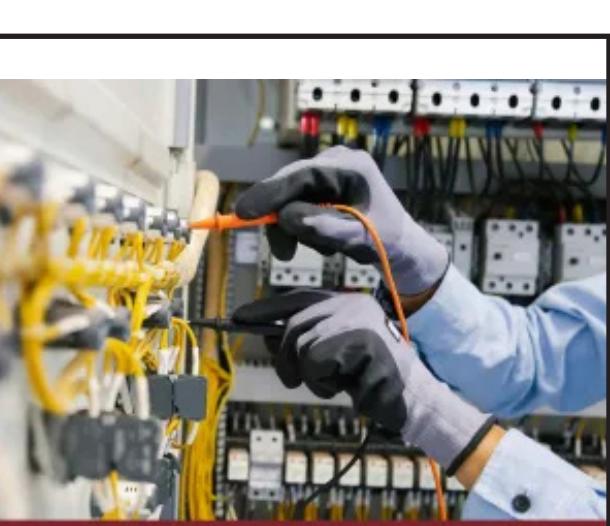
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Out dosage continued from page 2



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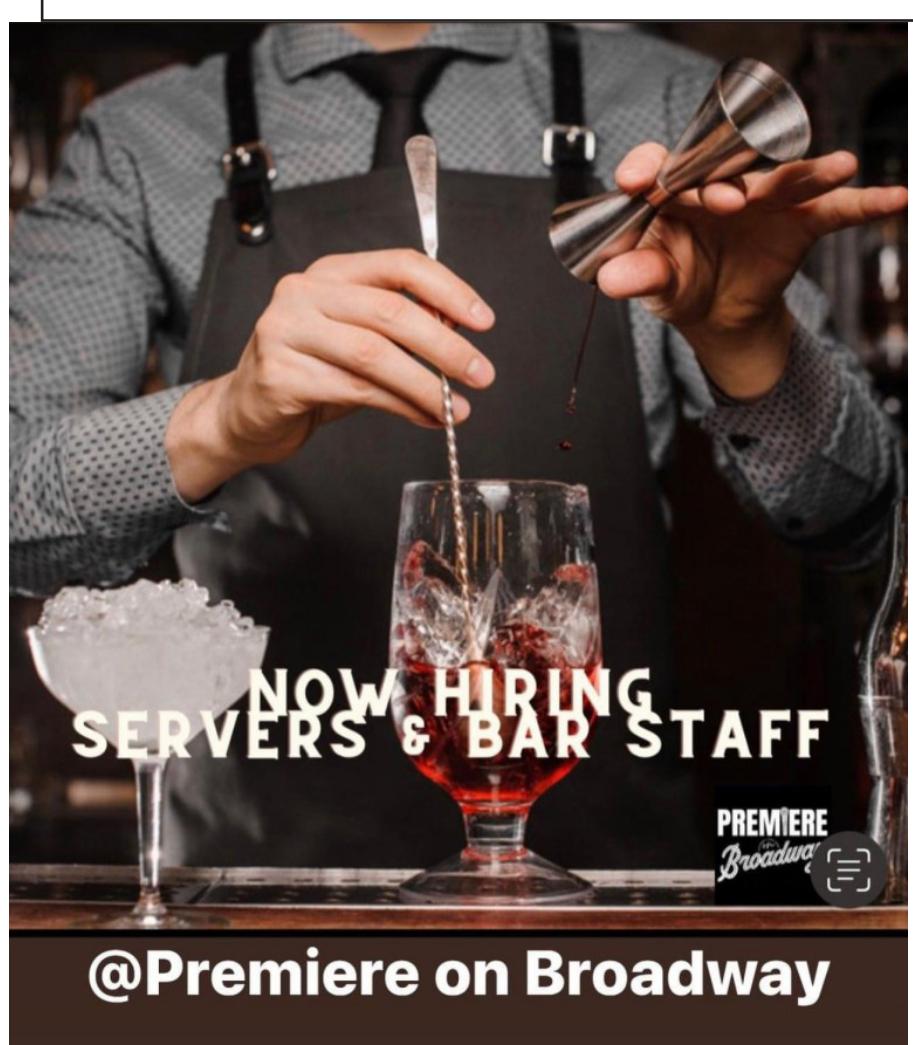
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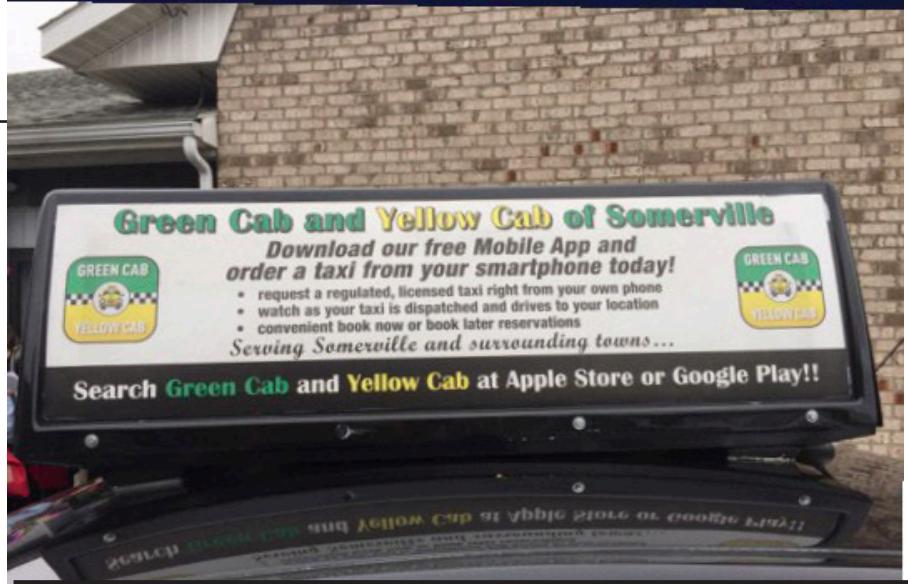
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## Class Action Lawsuit Regarding Fraudulent and Inaccurate Somerville Water Bills

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

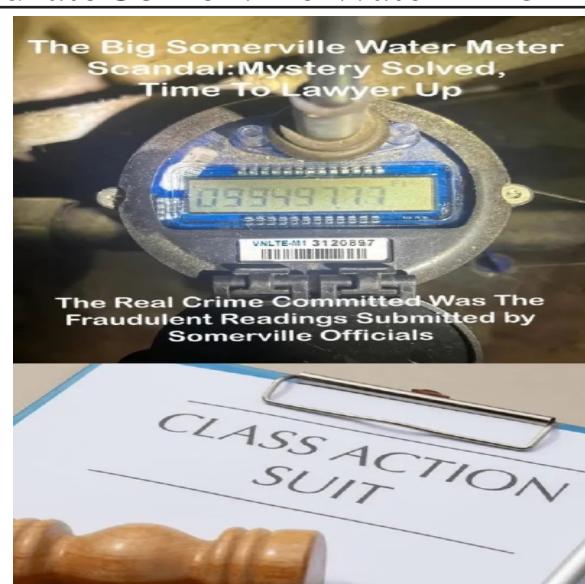
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## Medford VFW #1012 Karaoke Night

Medford VFW #1012 located at 114 Mystic Avenue in Medford is having karaoke on 7/24 and 8/21, 8:00 PM till 12:00 PM!

Somerville's own Scotty Lombardo will be the DJ so don't miss it!



## LITERACY EDUCATION STANDARDS (S 2924)

By Bob Katzen

The Senate 38-0, approved a bill that would require Massachusetts school districts to select kindergarten through 3rd grade reading curricula that meet guidelines set by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) based upon evidence-based literacy instruction and featuring phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and phonemic awareness. School districts would have until the start of the 2027-2028 school year to adopt a K-3 literacy curriculum that meets the new framework, or to secure approval from DESE for a waiver.

The House has already approved its own version of the measure and the Senate version now goes to the House for consideration. A House-Senate conference committee will likely hammer out a compromise

version of the legislation.

Supporters said that schools would have three DESE-approved options to implement the new curriculum requirement: utilize a complete curriculum that is made available for free by DESE; use a curriculum from a list that meets evidence-based criteria; or receive a waiver authorizing the use of another curriculum that meets the same standards but had not been previously reviewed and approved by DESE.

They noted that the bill makes sure parents and schools engage in constructive communication about student progress. They said it requires twice-yearly assessments to gauge every young learner's reading progress and to screen for dyslexia and requires schools to contact a parent or guardian within 30 days if a student has fallen significantly

behind and propose a response if that is the case.

"Today is a monumental moment for children across our state because we are passing my bill through the Senate to ensure all our students learn essential literacy skills," said sponsor Sen. Sal DiDomenico (D-Everett). "We can all agree that teaching our kids to read and write is one of the most important skills we can instill in them, but far too many children in our schools are not meeting basic literacy benchmarks. Working with our teachers and administrators, this legislation will institute evidence-based curriculum to ensure all our students' success in early literacy and give them the bright futures they deserve."

"It is unacceptable that less than half of young students in Massachusetts are proficient in reading at their

grade level," said Sen. Jason Lewis (D-Winchester), Senate Chair of the Committee on Education. "This important legislation ensures that educators use evidence-based early literacy curricula that are backed by science while leaving schools the option to decide what curriculum is best for their students and teachers. Strengthening student literacy through evidence-based instruction is a bipartisan issue with decades of scientific research backing it up. With the passage of this bill, the Massachusetts Senate continues its commitment to providing a high-quality education for all students across the commonwealth."

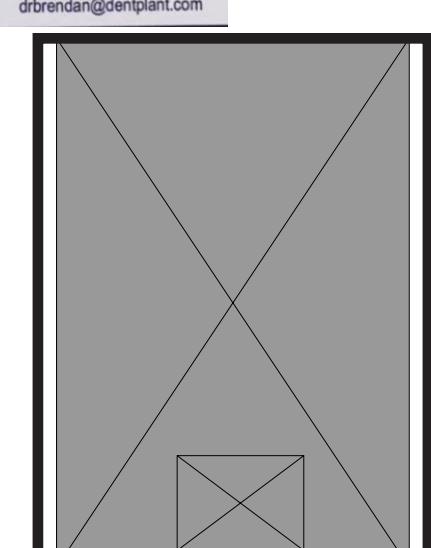
Although no senators voted against the bill, it was not without its critics. "Curriculum mandates are an oversimplified response to a complex problem," Massachusetts Teachers President Max Page said. "There is

no proof that such mandates yield sustained success in any of the states that have passed so-called literacy laws. Massachusetts has always been a leader in education, and we should not follow misguided national trends. Having more trained reading specialists in public schools, adequate funds for school libraries and trained library staff, and high-quality professional development for educators who are given the autonomy to engage in best practices — these are the keys to success, not scripted curriculum packages."

(A "Yes" vote is for the bill.)

Sen. Patricia Jehlen Yes

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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 ([somervillepubliclibrary.org](http://somervillepubliclibrary.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](http://somervillehub.org) (search on Recovery).



**OVERDOSE WARNING**

Spike in local overdoses may indicate increased risk

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## Fire at Assembly Row Somerville



On Tuesday, February 3, at approximately 6:25 p.m., the Somerville Fire Department was alerted to a fire in the Salt & Stone restaurant located at 463 Assembly Row. The restaurant is on the first floor of a six-story building with apartments above.

Firefighters – arriving

quickly from the months-old Assembly Square Fire Station located about a half-mile away – found heavy smoke coming from the roof of the building as well as from inside the restaurant. It was determined that a fire originating in the flue pipe above a gas-fired oven was spreading up into the ceiling area.

The flue pipe extends the entire height of the building and through the roof. An aerial ladder was raised to the roof and hose lines were advanced into the restaurant, connected to the building's internal standpipe system, and advanced onto the roof. Firefighters had to cut open a portion of the flue

pipe and open numerous access panels to put out the fire and ensure it was fully extinguished.

One firefighter suffered a minor injury, and two employees of the restaurant were treated at the scene for smoke inhalation but declined transport to a hospital. The restaurant

sustained significant fire, smoke, and water damage. Smoke entered the occupied apartment units above, but there was no fire damage to the upper floors and no residents were displaced.

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## Somerville/Medford News Weekly Speakup Line: MILLIE THE BRAVE Fire Dog by Day, Heart Healer by Night

What a wonderful book check it out!

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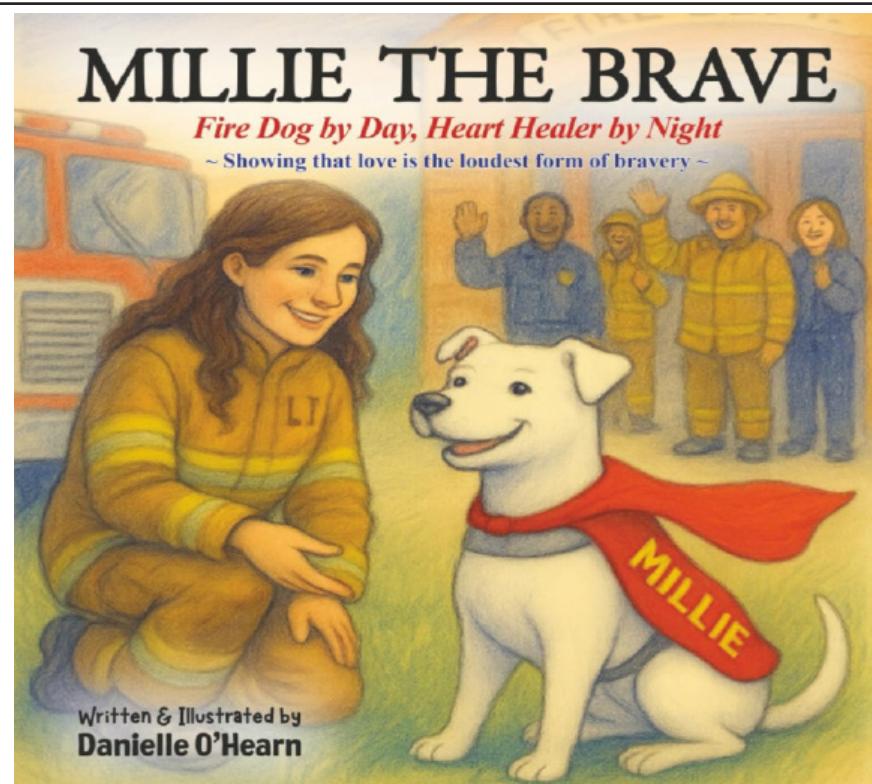
Hey Billy

My name is Danielle we've met a few  
times before, I'm a firefighter in Somer-  
ville. 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 be-  
ing 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>

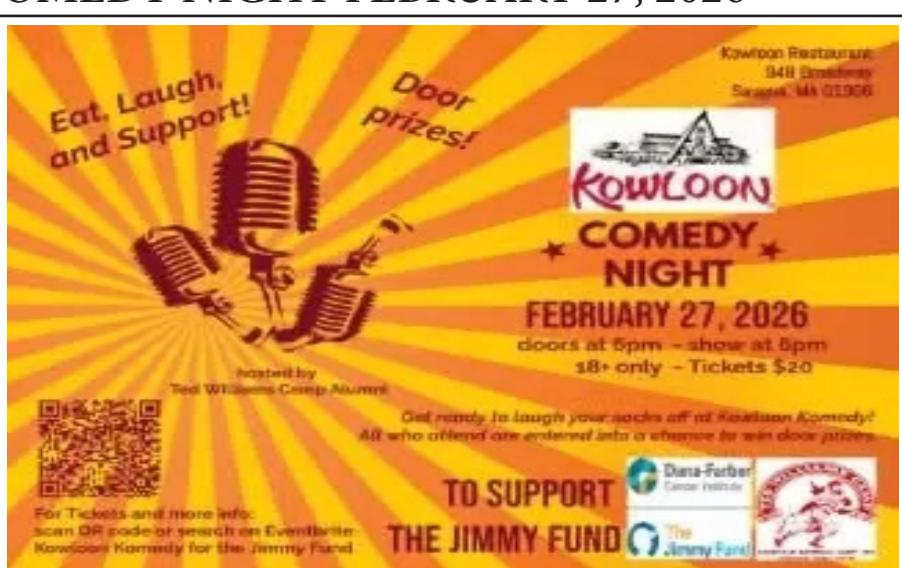


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## Updated Designs for Somerville's ArtFarm Park at Feb. 9 Meeting



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 stormwater 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.somervillem.ma.gov/poplar-pump](http://voice.somervillem.ma.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.somervillem.ma.gov/brick](http://voice.somervillem.ma.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](https://bit.ly/4sWOnf8)

For more information and to stay up to date with this project, visit [voice.somervillem.ma.gov/poplar-artfarm](http://voice.somervillem.ma.gov/poplar-artfarm).

## MENOPAUSE EDUCATION AND AWARENESS (H 4838)

By Bob Katzen

The Public Health Committee held a hearing on legislation that would establish a special legislative commission on perimenopause and menopause care.

Provisions include directing the Department of Public Health to develop a multi-lingual educational public health awareness campaign on perimenopause and menopause; requiring select health care providers to take a continuing medical education course focused on the diagnosis, treatment and

care of patients with perimenopause and menopause; and adding reproductive health, including perimenopause, menopause or related conditions from the list of legally protected characteristics that employers cannot discriminate against and for which they must provide reasonable workplace accommodations.

"When medical schools devote just one to six hours on menopause, despite the fact that women spend nearly a third of their lives navigating it, it's clear why this bill is necessary," said sponsor Rep. Marjorie Decker

(D-Cambridge). "There are currently no consistent standards for access to care, leaving too many doctors and patients uninformed and unprepared to address perimenopause and menopause. Women deserve care that treats the symptoms of menopause, not an expectation that they simply endure them."

ORGAN TRANSPLANT VEHICLES (H 4796) – Another proposal before the Public Health Committee would designate organ transplant vehicles as emergency vehicles when they are transporting human organs or medical personnel for the purpose of organ

recovery or transplantation. Being designated as an emergency vehicle would enable organ transplant vehicles to exceed the applicable speed limit and to drive through intersections contrary to posted traffic signs or signals.

"The reason why I filed the bill is because one of my constituents who is a firefighter but also a driver for an organ transport company, asked me to do so on his behalf," said sponsor Rep. Paul Donato (D-Medford). "The purpose of the bill is ... that if they are transporting an organ from Logan Airport

to Mass General Brigham or from Mass General Brigham to a hospital in Worcester, sometimes getting stuck in traffic on Storrow Drive or on the Turnpike can have a detrimental effect on the organ."

## \$8.4 MILLION TO PREVENT AND REDUCE YOUTH VIOLENCE

By Bob Katzen

Gov. Healey marked the 20th anniversary of the Sen. Charles E. Shannon Jr. Community Safety Initiative (Shannon CSI) by announcing grant awards of \$8.4 million to support evidence-based efforts that prevent and reduce youth

and gang violence in communities across Massachusetts.

With this year's awards, the state has invested nearly \$176.2 million through Shannon CSI, which supporters say serves as a national model for violence prevention. The program

was created in memory of the late Sen. Charles Shannon who represented the 2nd Middlesex District at the time of his death on April 5, 2005.

"Our communities are stronger and safer as a result of these investments and the partnerships built through

this program," said Gov. Healey. "By carrying forward Sen. Shannon's legacy, we are strengthening communities, expanding opportunity for young people and showing what is possible when Massachusetts leads with evidence and purpose."

Supporters said that cities

with Shannon CSI program sites experienced reductions in crimes committed by youth ages 10 to 24, including a 24 percent drop in aggravated assaults and a 52 percent decrease in robberies between 2020 and 2024.

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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](http://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](http://somervillema.gov/consolidated-rental-waitlist).

More information on household income limits is below:

2025 Income Limits for 110% AMI units

1 Person

2 People

Minimum

\$92,651

\$105,851

Maximum

\$127,358

\$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](http://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](http://somervillema.gov/inclusionary). To sign up for updates, click the green box labeled "Affordable Housing Alerts: Sign Up Now."

## DOMESTIC WORKERS' RIGHTS DAY (H 3417)

By Bob Katzen

The House 156-0, approved a bill that would annually establish June 16 as Domestic Workers' Rights Day to honor all domestic workers who work in private homes and in recognition of Massachusetts' historic

enactment of basic labor standards in the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights.

"Domestic workers are more likely to experience wage theft, outright exploitation and unsafe working conditions precisely because their labor happens out

of public view and outside traditional workplace structures and this bill was filed in an effort to bring visibility to this vital industry," said sponsor Rep. Priscila Sousa (D-Framingham). "Providing visibility — intentionally and publicly — is not just symbolic. Awareness is

safety. Awareness is survival. When domestic workers are counted, acknowledged and celebrated, we make it easier for them to know their rights, to assert those rights and to seek help when their rights are violated."

(A "Yes" vote is for the bill.)

Rep. Christine Barber Yes Rep. Mike Connolly Yes Rep. Paul Donato Yes Rep. Erika Uyterhoeven Yes

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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.

## GOVERNOR PROPOSES \$62.8 BILLION FISCAL 2027 STATE BUDGET (H 2)

By Bob Katzen

Gov. Maura Healey filed a \$62.8 billion fiscal 2027 state budget for the fiscal year 2027 that begins on July 1.

Healey's office says that the budget does not

propose any new taxes or fees and represents only a 1.1 percent growth over estimated fiscal year 2026 spending, the lowest spending rate since taking office and well under the rate of inflation.

This includes \$2.7 bil-

lion in Fair Share surtax spending. Along with her budget proposal, Gov. Healey also filed a Fair Share supplemental budget bill to spend \$1.15 billion in surplus fiscal 2025 surtax revenue on education and transportation initiatives.

In April, the House will unveil and eventually approve its own version of a fiscal 2027 state budget. The Senate, likely in May, will follow suit and craft and approve its own version. Then a House-Senate conference committee will

eventually craft a compromise plan that will be presented to the House and Senate for consideration, and when approved, will be sent to the governor.

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## REQUIRE APPRENTICESHIPS IN PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION (H 5032)

By Bob Katzen

The House 154-1, approved and sent to the Senate a bill that seeks to increase the state's trades' workforce by requiring the hiring of apprentices for all contracts awarded for public works projects over \$10 million. One year after the bill becomes law, it would require projects to hire apprentices to work 5 percent of the total amount of hours worked, 10 percent in three years and 15 percent in four years.

Under the bill, public agencies must require, as a condition of awarding a construction con-

tract over \$10 million for any public works project, that all construction managers, general contractors and subcontractors maintain or participate in an apprentice program, approved by the Division of Apprentice Standards, for each apprenticeshipable occupation represented in their workforce.

"From the time I assumed the role of Chair of Labor and Workforce Development, I have heard a consistent message: 'We need clear, reliable pathways to good-paying jobs that allow people to build careers, raise families, own homes and remain here in the common-

wealth,'" said Rep. Paul McMurtry (D-Dedham). "This bill does exactly that by expanding access to high-quality apprenticeship programs that provide critical on-the-job training and a direct path into higher-paying careers. And when the commonwealth invests in major construction projects, it will also be investing in a well-trained, resilient and highly skilled workforce prepared to meet the demands of the future."

"Investing in the trades' workforce will bolster workforce development, ensuring that the commonwealth is able to meet the growing demands for new

infrastructure projects," said House Speaker Ron Mariano (D-Quincy). "Apprenticeships can also lead to the creation of more union jobs and help to replace highly skilled workers who are aging out of the workforce."

"This bill was developed with union representatives and is an example of union representatives not having the political will to tell their members to give apprentices more time in order to gain experience faster," said Rep. John Gaskey (R-Carver), the only member to vote against the measure. "Vocational school enrollment is at

an all-time high and demand is increasing. Unions should be writing this into their contracts. The state should not be mandating labor force makeup."

(A "Yes" vote is for the bill. A "No" vote is against it.)

Rep. Christine Barber Yes Rep. Mike Connolly Yes Rep. Paul Donato Yes Rep. Erika Uyterhoeven Yes

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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](mailto:housingtrust@somervillema.gov)  
Mail: Sheniqua Roper, City of Somerville, OSPCD Housing Division, 50 Evergreen Ave., Somerville, MA 02145

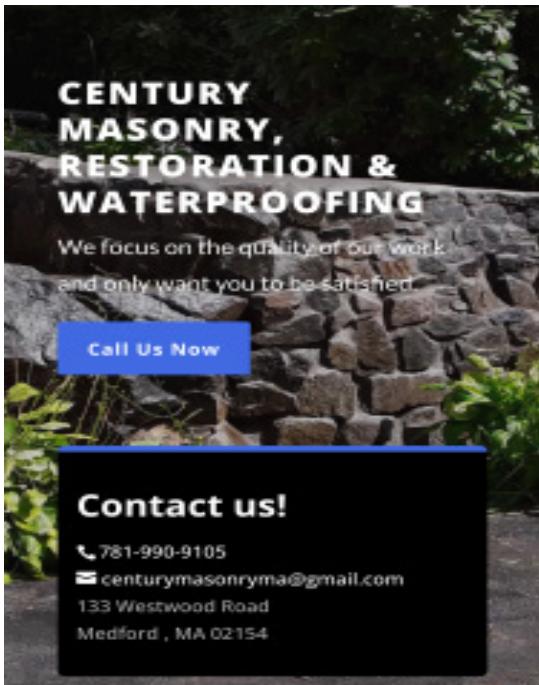
When is the application deadline? Applications are due by Friday,

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](mailto:housingtrust@somervillema.gov) or call 617-591-3200 ext. 2587.

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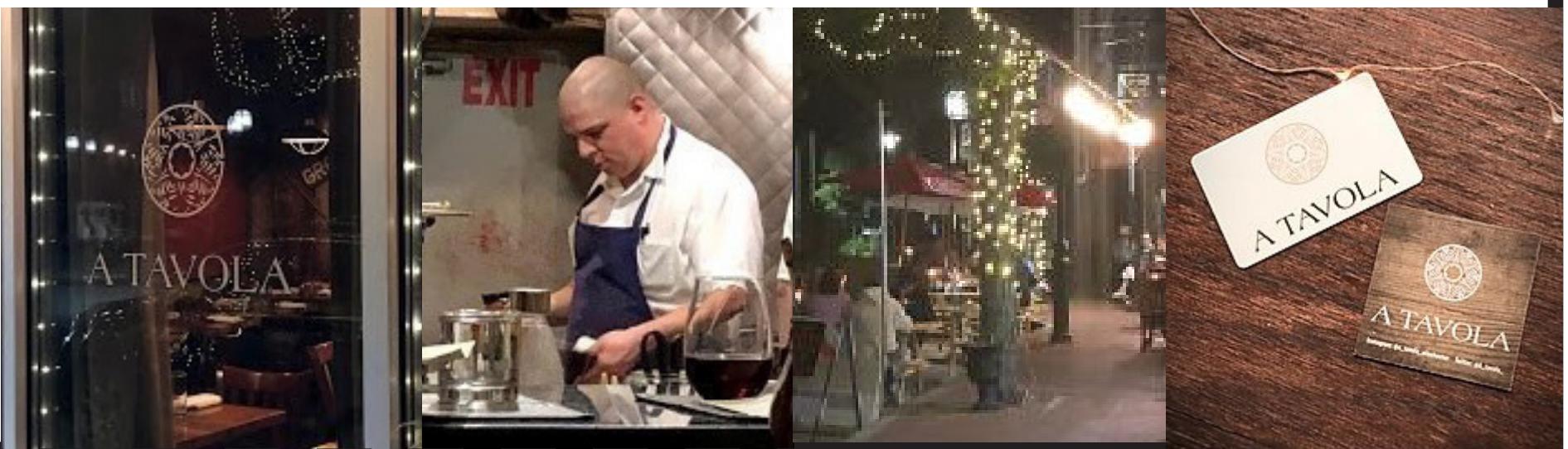
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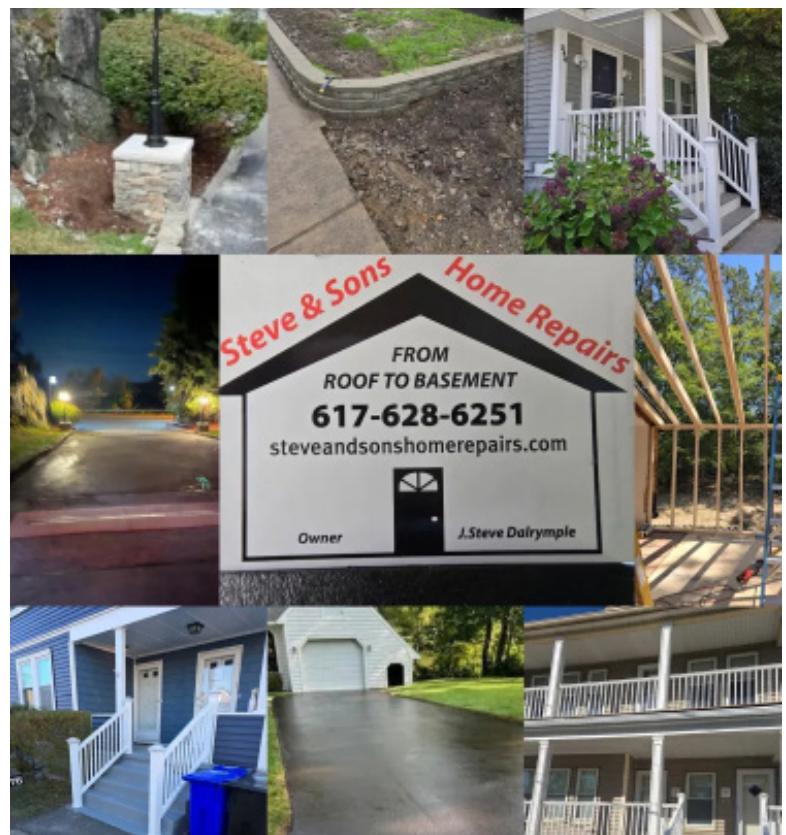
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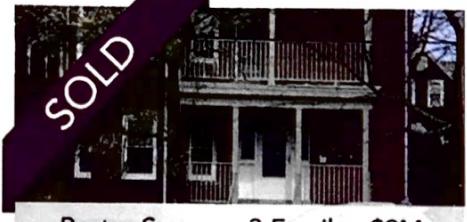
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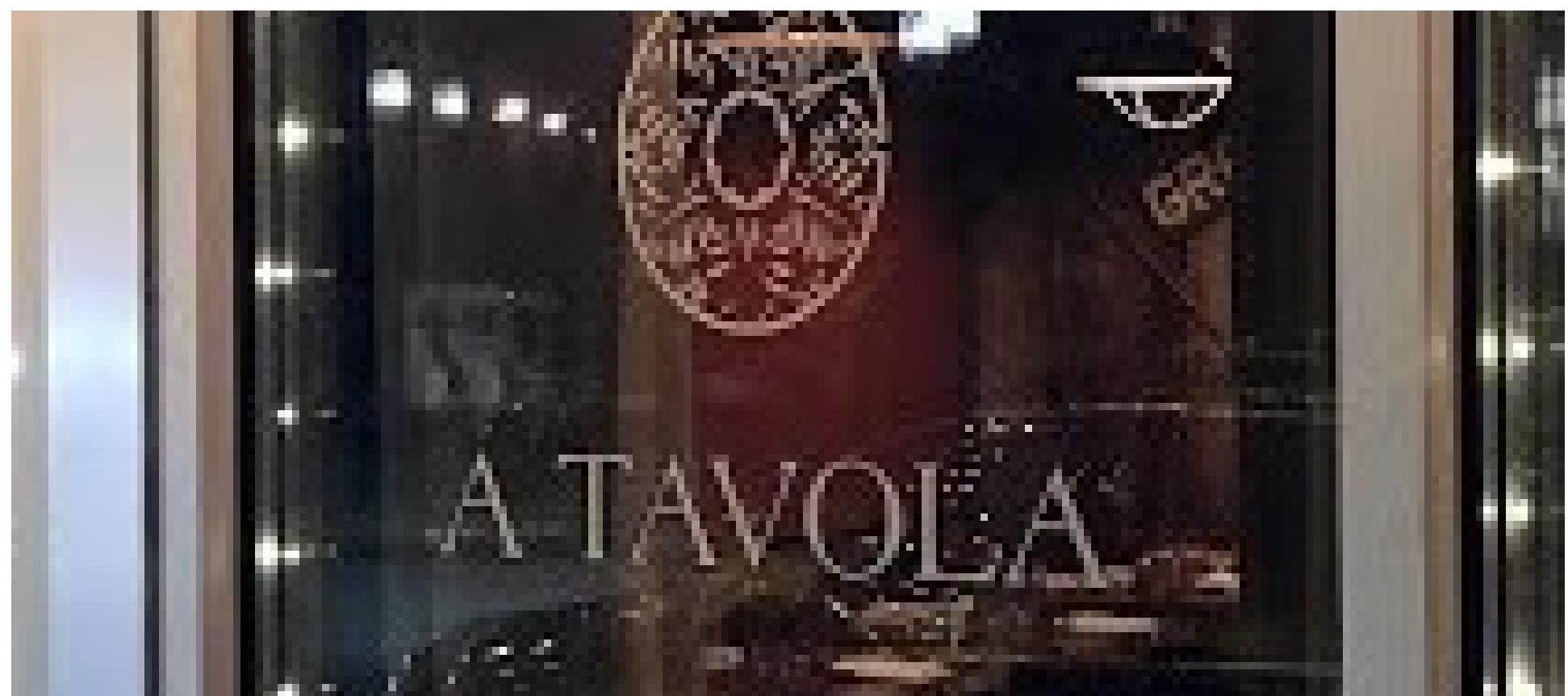
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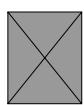
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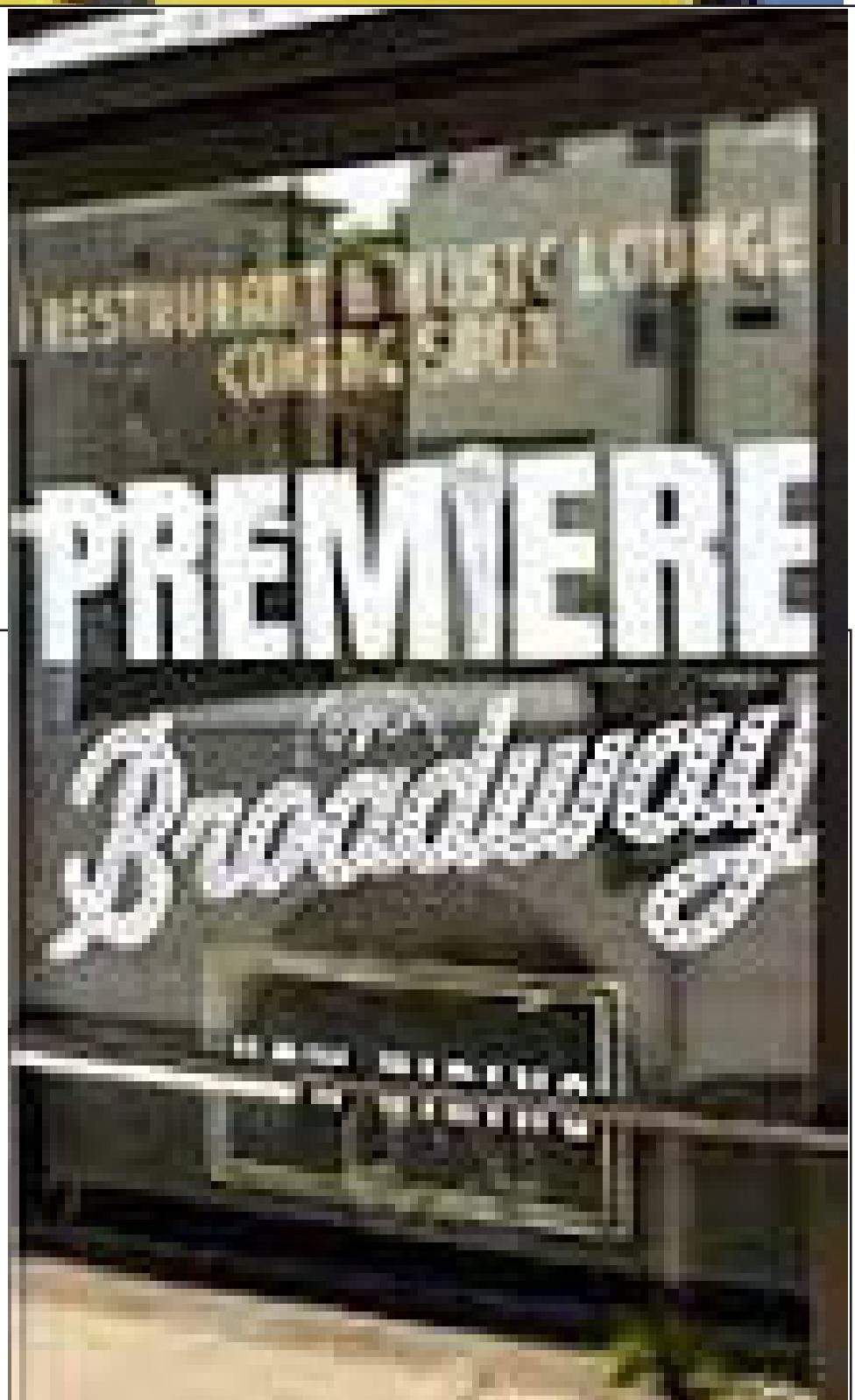
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