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VOL.1 NO.329-2990

SOMERVILLE/MEDFORD MASS

Tuesday May 5th, 2026

## MUST BE A CITIZEN TO GET HOUSING AID



Continued to page 13



NEWS TALK OUT  
LOUD/SPEAK UP



Somerville Police  
Real Life Somerville  
Police Stories Page

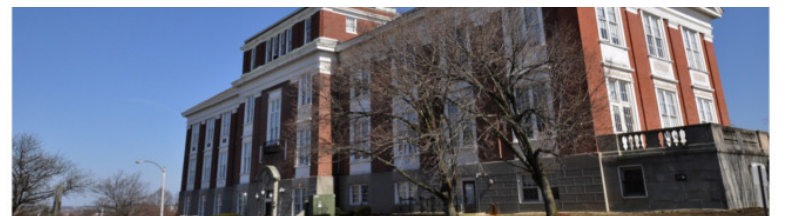


## REQUIRE VOTER ID TO VOTE



Continued to page 20

## Somerville/Medford News Weekly Speakup Line: Housing Frustrations



Continued to page 5



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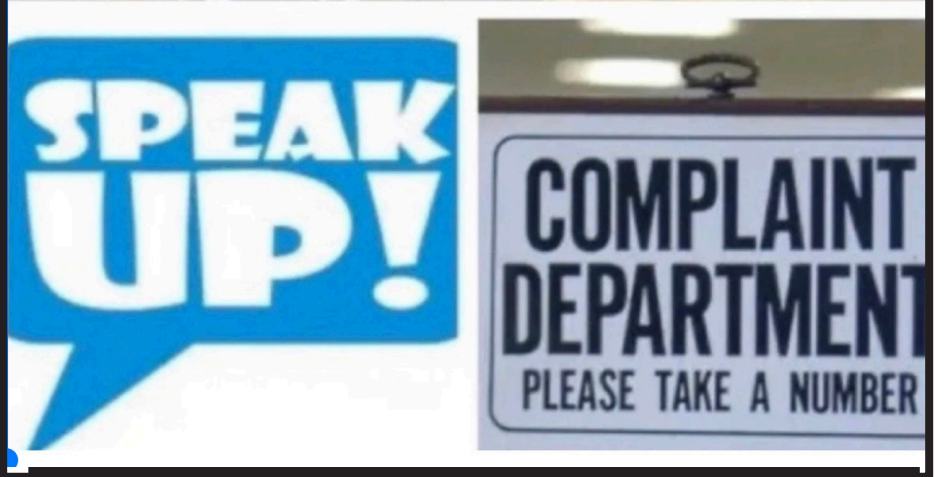
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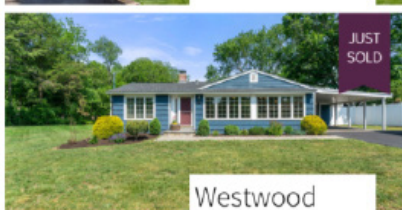
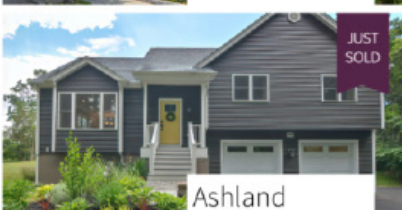
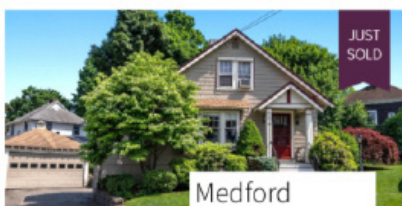
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**WE HAVE BEEN BUSY...**

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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!

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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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.  
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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.

## Become A Medford Police Officer



**NEW YEAR, NEW CAREER**  
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**APPLICATION DEADLINE**  
 FEBRUARY 2, 2026

**NOTICES TO APPEAR**  
 FEBRUARY 20, 2026

**WRITTEN EXAM PERIOD**  
 MARCH 11-14, 2026

**APPLY TODAY**  
[WWW.MASS.GOV/CIVIL-SERVICE](http://WWW.MASS.GOV/CIVIL-SERVICE)

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).

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### Somerville/Medford Remembering Roberta M. Brooks



Roberta M. Brooks, age 86, passed away peacefully, leaving behind a life defined by love, grace, and deep devotion to her family. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, Roberta spent most of her life in Cambridge, where she built a life rooted in family, friendship, and community.

She was a woman whose presence could be felt the moment you were around her. She had a zest for life, an indomitable spirit,

and she made an impact on everyone who had the chance to know her. Her strength was an inspiration and throughout the final stages of her life, she remained as sharp as ever with a distinctive laugh that will always be remembered.

Roberta loved being around people and was naturally at ease making friends everywhere she went. She loved to cook and enjoyed sharing her dishes with everyone. If you complimented her banana bread, you got more of it. Much more.

Roberta also had a deep love of travel and adventure. She especially cherished her visits to San Antonio to spend time with her son Rich and his family. Among her other favorite destinations were Germany, Mexico, and Prague, along with mem-

orable trips to the United Kingdom, Hawaii, North Africa, and Tangier. These journeys brought her great joy and reflected her curiosity about the world and love of experiencing new places and cultures.

Following her “retirement,” Roberta came to work at Brooks & Crowley, her son’s law firm. Driving from Cambridge to Dedham five days a week, in addition to assisting the attorneys in the office, her primary roles were bringing lunch for Steve, sparring with Neil, and entertaining clients and visitors in the reception area. She always kept a full bowl of candy on her desk – the good stuff, not ten-year-old butterscotches – and made sure everyone got to help themselves to “the salad bar” on their way out.

Above all, she was an

amazing mother, grandmother, and friend. Her love for her family was constant and unconditional, and she took great pride in the lives and memories they built together. The traits she passed on—resilience, resourcefulness, kindness, and the importance of hard work—will continue to guide her family for generations to come.

She is survived by her sons John, his wife Jeanne, Steve and his wife Kim, and Richard and his wife Micayla, grandchildren Ryan, Sean Manown, Zoe, Teddy, and Benji Brooks, Jackson Brooks and Evan Drake, and brother Norman Sabbey and his wife Pat along with their children Chris and wife Aliya, Brian and his wife Behhaz and Craig. She was predeceased by her brother John, and left behind many other loved

ones including her sister-in-law Esther and their children Camille, George, and Anne Sabbey, with whom she shared a special relationship.

Other loved ones who will carry her memory in their hearts every day include Roberta Johnson, Roberta Gainsboro, Thalia Pananides and Marty Mcgah.

A Celebration of Life will be held this July at a final date and location to be determined where family and friends will gather to celebrate her life and the lasting impact she made. For details, please reach out to Steven Brooks, [stevenbrooks@BrooksandCrowley.com](mailto:stevenbrooks@BrooksandCrowley.com).

Though she is no longer with us, Roberta’s love remains a gift to all who were fortunate enough to know her. We will miss her.

### TAX AMNESTY (H 5500)

By Bob Katzen

House 27-129, rejected an amendment that would authorize cities and towns to conduct a municipal tax amnesty program over a two-month period, as determined by the local legislative body, any time prior to June 30, 2029. It specifically authorizes communities to waive any or all penalties,

fees, charges and accrued interest if the original overdue tax assessment is paid in full.

“Many cities and towns are struggling to balance their budgets and still maintain essential services,” said amendment sponsor Rep. Brad Jones (R-North Reading). “Previous statewide tax amnesties offered by the Department of Revenue have

proven to be highly successful, and that allowing municipalities to utilize their own amnesty program will give them a proven collection tool to recover back taxes that can help pay for critical local services.”

Rep. Madaro opposed the amendment and said that we all want to offer tax relief, but we need to do so without

unintended consequences. He noted legislators need more time to consider the proposal which should be vetted through the legislative process including public hearings.

(A “Yes” vote is for the amendment authorizing cities and towns to conduct a municipal tax amnesty program. A “No” vote is against

allowing it.)

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

### REQUIRE VOTER ID TO VOTE (H 5500)

By Bob Katzen

House 27-131, rejected an amendment that would require voters to present a valid government-issued photo identification in order to vote, including a Massachusetts driver’s license or state identification card issued by the Registry of Motor Vehicles; a United States passport; a United States

military identification card; a Massachusetts-issued firearm identification card; or any other federal or state government-issued identification card that includes a photograph of the voter.

Amendment sponsor Rep. Marc Lombardo, noting that 36 other states require an ID to vote, said the amendment would

strengthen the integrity of our elections while guaranteeing fairness and access for every eligible voter. He noted that a key provision, ensuring voters would not have to pay for an ID, requires the Massachusetts secretary of state to provide a photo ID at no cost to any registered voter who files an affidavit requesting one.

Rep. Daniel Hunt (D-Boston) opposed the amendment and said similar bills have come before the Election Laws Committee and have had zero support while there was a significant amount of testimony opposing them. He noted that there is virtually no evidence of fraud in our elections and argued the amendment would cause undue delays.

(A “Yes” vote is for the amendment requiring voters to present an ID in order to vote. A “No” vote is against requiring it.)

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

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### Somerville/Medford News Weekly Speakup Line: Housing Frustrations

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

My name is Ryan Pinto and I am writing a description of the situation at 22 Sargent Ave, Somerville from my perspective. I am not a developer but a small time mom and pop landlord who has a few units. I used to live in Somerville on Marshall st right next to Sargent Ave. I also lived in Medford close by for a few years and I enjoyed my years as a youngster in the Somerville/Medford area eating in all those sub shops and diners and meeting friends in pubs and biking in town. I learnt basic house construction volunteering for Habitat for Humanity and helped restore houses during hurricane Katrina and I had a roommate who was in construction.

The first few units that I bought my roommate and I did most of the work such as flooring, drywall tape and mud, trim work and tiling. I used to like

fixing up old houses, planning their work matching modern concrete with some PSI to old mortar and just poking around into how old construction was done and figuring out how to fix it. I liked the architecture of the old houses in New England which were the American Foursquare, the victorian, the english tudor, french tudor and the cape cod style and liked to read up and study how these were built.

I bought 22 Sargent ave, Somerville in Feb 2024. I increased rents to about 10% lower than fair market value. I have attached Section 8 voucher limits for these units. The only reason I increased the rents was the mortgage rate was over 7% and to break even on three units I needed about 8300/- from 3 units combined to meet the mortgage. I was willing to take a small loss on the rent if all the units did not add up to 8300. I was willing to reduce the rent but was not willing to lose about 40K year based on

their old rents. I did not want to lose the property in a foreclosure. Somerville was increasing water and sewer bills at 12% year on year. Property taxes for this building climbed from about 6000/- in 2016 to 12,300 in 2026.

Over 10 years Somerville has increased property taxes for this building by about 90%. I have a young family with three kids and my youngest was 3 years at that time and losing close to 40K a year with older rents was not financially feasible to me.

Once notices to quit were sent tenants did not want increases nor did they want to quit but we were in a period of negotiation. I was not interested in going down the path of evictions and I made that clear in emails to them. Section 8 voucher comps for a 1 bed in that area of Somerville is 2500/-per unit. thought asking for 2200 and then dropping to 2000/- and locking it for a few years at 2000/- was a reasonable request. I could

go down to maybe 1900/- but anything lower than that would risk foreclosure and serious financial loss.

I offered to sell the building to a non-profit of their choice at a break even or small loss and Somerville Land Trust and Somerville Community Corporation looked at purchasing it. I offered to take city funding, Section 8 voucher, I also offered cash settlements of over 5000/- as long as they signed in court. I also offered units at another property that I own in Wakefield which had better condition units close to their old rents and a cheaper mortgage. It appears they wanted the cash settlements but were not willing to sign in court. There seem to be other forces at play who wanted the publicity of this situation with activists and protesters who likely wanted the media coverage of this situation and wanted to portray me as a developer and a luxury builder which I am not. I have attached the negotiation letters. In their last

letter they seem to say give in to their demands of 10K per unit as the neighbors got 15k from a developer or they would have media coverage and a long dragged out process.

I was willing to give them money but I wanted them to sign in court as there was no guarantee that after giving them money whether I would get my property back. I just wanted my property back and that is all. It is my understanding that the litigation expenses for the tenants are covered by the state through tax payer funding. So it would appear that they don't have anything to lose financially with a long drawn out process.

Please let me know what you make of it.



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### Celebrate Haitian Heritage at Flag Raising Ceremony on May 18



SOMERVILLE—Celebrate Somerville’s Haitian community and honor Haitian Flag Day by joining a Haitian Flag raising ceremony on May 18. Hosted by the

City of Somerville’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (SOIA), in partnership with the Haitian Service Providers Coalition (HSPC), all are invited to

attend. The event celebrates Somerville’s Haitian community and honors the history and enduring spirit of Haiti. Attendees will hear from Mayor Jake

Wilson and SOIA and HSPC staff.

Where: City Hall concourse (93 Highland Ave.)

When: 3 p.m., Thursday,

May 18

For more information, please contact 311 (617) 666-3311.

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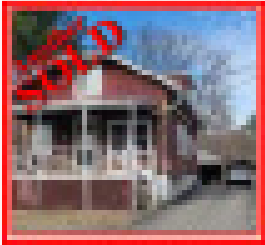
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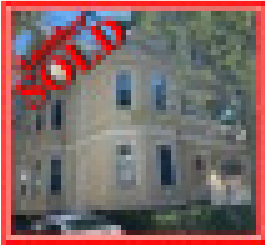


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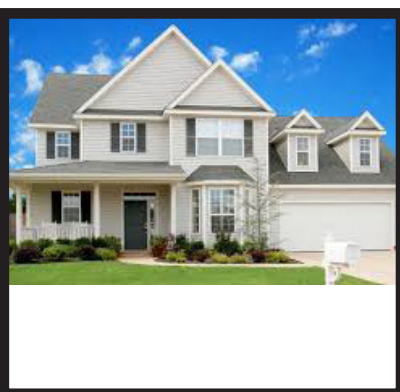
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Here's your weekly News Talk Show  
Out dosage continued from page 2



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By William Tauro

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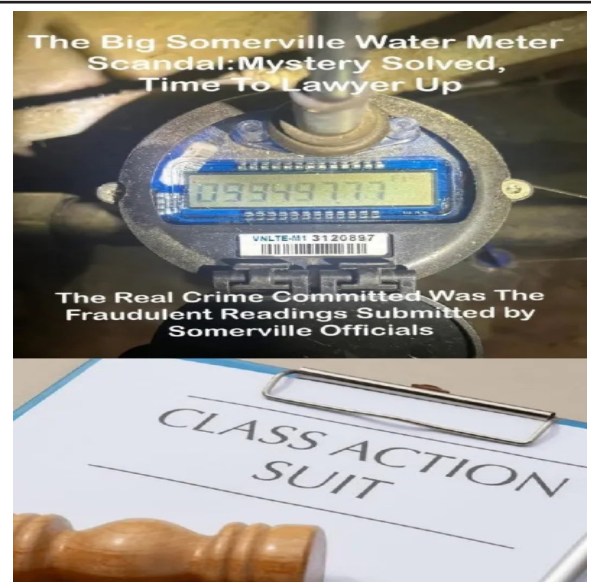
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### HOUSE APPROVES \$63.41 BILLION FISCAL 2027 STATE BUDGET (H 5500)

By Bob Katzen

House 149-9, approved and sent to the Senate a \$63.41 billion fiscal 2027 state budget after three days of debate. The House version now goes to the Senate which will approve its own version. A House-Senate conference committee will eventually craft a compromise plan that will be presented to the House and Senate for consideration and then sent to Gov. Maura Healey.

“As a result of the Trump Administration’s sweeping federal funding cuts and reckless trade war, as well as two proposed ballot questions that seek to cut the commonwealth’s revenues by more than \$5 billion annually, this budget has come during a period of significant economic uncertainty,” said House Speaker Ron Mariano. “That’s why I’m incredibly proud of the invest-

ments that this budget makes despite those challenges, from funding for free school meals and for the final year of the Student Opportunity Act, to robust support for the MBTA, to nearly \$10 billion for cities and towns across the commonwealth.”

“This budget builds off the successes of the last few years by prioritizing our constituents,” said Rep. Aaron Michlewitz (D-Boston), chair of the House Committee on Ways and Means. “Whether it is greater investments into programs like housing stability, public transportation or early education, these initiatives are a reflection of our shared values. By reinvesting in the people of the commonwealth, we will continue to make our economy more competitive and equitable for years to come.”

“[This is] a strong, responsive budget that both serves the needs of our constituents and continues to address the commonwealth’s initiatives for competitiveness and statewide excellence,” said Rep. Kip Diggs (D-Barnstable), assistant vice chair of the House Committee on Ways and Means.

“The budget is all wrong,” said Rep. John Gaskey (R-Carver). “Communities should be the first thing funded behind roads and other infrastructure. School funding needs to be reimagined. We need to work on cutting taxes and energy costs and returning that money back to citizens and communities. Democrats rejected multiple amendments that would move a little back to communities and eventually a little adds up to a lot and before we know it, everyone is fully funded, bills are lower and people have more mon-

ey in their pockets, spending more and the state revenues climb, all by asking for less.

“The Massachusetts House budget is the largest in state history,” said Paul Craney, executive director of the Mass Fiscal Alliance. “It includes no reforms to the state’s welfare system, which is spending \$1 out of every \$4 state dollars on welfare benefits, nor does it include any tax cuts, which were offered as budget amendments. In fact, it doesn’t even address the concern that local aid in Massachusetts is now below the national average levels. State spending has become incredibly reckless and irresponsible, hurting local towns and cities with below national average local aid, and saddling taxpayers with obligations we cannot afford. The House leaders who pushed this state budget are not concerned

with the taxpayers, just like they are not concerned with following the audit law that was passed by the voters.”

(A “Yes” vote is for the \$63.41 billion budget. A “No” vote is against it.)

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

### EXEMPT OVERTIME WAGES FROM INCOME TAX (H 5500)

By Bob Katzen

House 25-132, rejected an amendment that would exempt a worker’s hourly overtime wages from the state’s income tax. The exemption would not apply to salaried employees.

Amendment sponsor Rep.

Marc Lombardo (R-BillERICA) said if workers are willing to put in the extra time, take those additional shifts and work harder to support their families, they should reap the benefits and not be punished with taxes. He noted that overtime, often the difference between getting

by and getting ahead, creates a real incentive for workers to step up and for businesses to meet their demands without adding a new bureaucracy or mandates.

Rep. Adrian Madaro opposed the amendment and said this exemption

is untested, unsupported and would be unwise to implement. He noted that an identical bill received no support testimony at a public hearing.

(A “Yes” vote is for the amendment exempting a worker’s hourly overtime wages from the state’s

income tax. A “No” vote is against exempting it.)

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

### LOWER SALES TAX FROM 6.25 PERCENT TO 5 PERCENT (H 5500)

By Bob Katzen

House 25-131, rejected an amendment that would reduce the state’s current 6.25 percent sales tax to 5 percent.

Amendment supporters

said that this reduction will save consumers millions of dollars. They argued this is a reasonable way to provide relief to taxpayers who are suffering during these tough economic times, including the excessive cost of gas,

groceries and so many other things. Amendment opponents said that the reduction will cost the state up to \$2 billion in revenue and result in reduced local aid and/or cuts in programs

that help millions of Bay Staters.

(A “Yes” vote is for the amendment reducing the sales tax to 5 percent. A “No” vote is against reducing it.)

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

### MUST BE A CITIZEN TO GET HOUSING AID (H 5050)

By Bob Katzen

House 26-132, rejected an amendment that would require the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to verify the United States citizenship of each applicant for any HomeBASE benefit and to deny the benefit to any applicant who fails to provide satisfactory evidence of citizenship. HomeBASE is a state-funded program that provides up to \$30,000 over a 2-year period to help homeless

families in the Emergency Assistance system secure stable housing, by covering rent, deposits, utilities, furniture and some moving expenses.

“This amendment reflects a straightforward effort to ensure that limited taxpayer-funded housing resources are directed to individuals who are lawfully eligible to receive them,” said amendment sponsor Rep. Ken Swezey (R-Duxbury). “At a time when Massachusetts con-

tinues to face a significant strain on its shelter system—including the shifting of thousands of families between programs—it is both fiscally responsible and appropriate to establish clearer eligibility standards. This reform represents a commonsense step toward controlling costs and protecting local aid for cities and towns.”

Rep. Alice Peisch (D-Wellesley) opposed the amendment and said it would result in legal

residents being prohibited from participating in this program which is one of the best ways we have to lead to more permanent housing and to help residents. She said the amendment would lead to women and children sleeping in tents.

(A “Yes” vote is for the amendment denying the housing benefit unless the applicant can provide satisfactory evidence of citizenship. A “No” vote is against the amendment

and favors not requiring an applicant to prove U.S. citizenship.)

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

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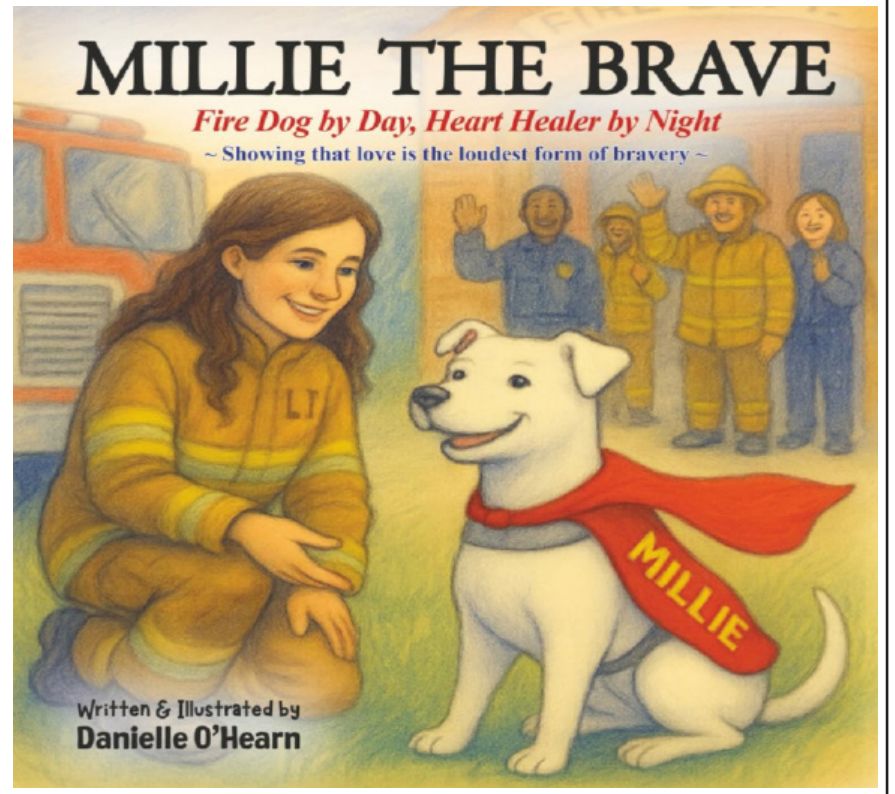
Dear Billy T and Somerville/Medford News Weekly Speakup Line,

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

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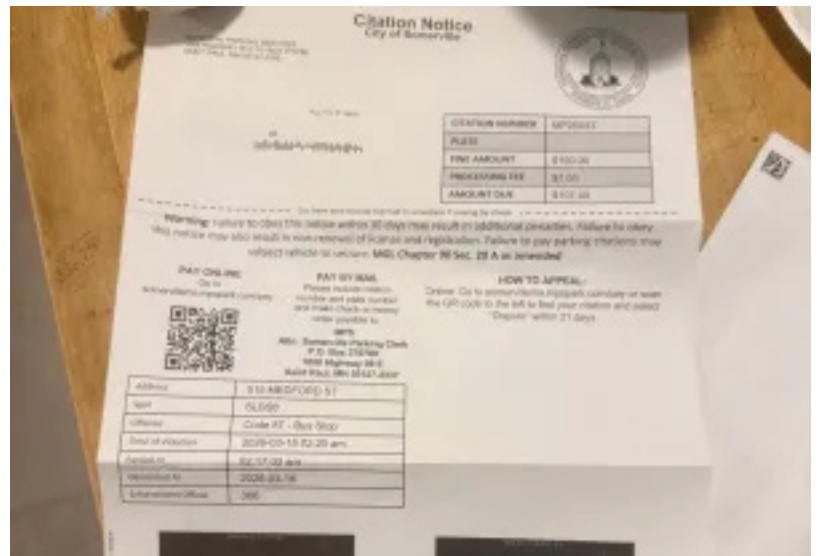


**Somerville/Medford News Weekly Speakup Line: Fake Somerville Bills**

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

Billy, please post this in your news paper and online. A Somerville resident received this notice in the mail.

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# Cities of Cambridge, Somerville, and MWRA Submit Draft Updated Combined Sewer Overflow Control Plan Communities are invited to submit feedback to plan between May-September 2026



SOMERVILLE and CAMBRIDGE, MA — The Cities of Cambridge and Somerville, together with the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), have submitted a joint Draft Updated Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Control Plan to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) to protect local waterways from pollution, the first in the nation to go beyond EPA guidance and prepare for climate change.

The Draft Updated Plan is the first to be taking bold, progressive next steps to eliminate CSOs in a typical 2050 year, and the first to plan for heavier rainfalls due to climate change.

It is the result of more than four years of detailed analysis, engineering evaluation, and broad public engagement. The draft recommends a

set of projects—including new storage tanks, sewer separation, and upgraded conveyance systems—that together are projected to eliminate CSO discharges during a typical 2050 year in the Alewife Brook, Charles River, and the Mystic River. A Combined Sewer Overflow is an overflow of stormwater and sewage into nearby rivers and streams that happens during heavy rain.

This plan prepares for increased and heavier rainfall expected in a typical 2050 year due to climate change, while also balancing water quality, construction impacts, public open space, project timelines, and costs.

Climate change is expected to overwhelm sewer and drainage systems in area communities. This would result in local flooding, health risks, and water pollution equal to or worse than CSOs. To reduce these risks, it is critical that the MWRA, Cambridge, Somerville and other Massachusetts communities continue resiliency planning and investing in major infrastructure projects that manage stormwater and help protect homes, rivers and public health.

After reviewing 39 potential approaches, the following recommendations were made for each body of water.

**Alewife Brook:** Two storage tanks (three million gallons total), eight acres of sewer separation, a 0.75-mile conveyance pipe, and a one-mile micro tunnel. The estimated design and construction cost is approximately \$340 million, and the estimated completion timeframe is 13-18 years.

**Mystic River:** One storage tank (7.4 million gallons) and 95 acres of sewer separation. The estimated design and construction cost is approximately \$260 million, and the estimated completion timeframe is 5-7 years.

**Charles River:** Two storage tanks (12.6 million gallons), 446 acres of sewer separation, and two new storage conduits. The estimated design and construction cost is approximately \$690 million, and the estimated completion timeframe is 28-33 years.

The recommended projects offer major advantages to other alternatives, including:

- Reduce pollution faster due to shorter construction timelines
- Less disruption to neighborhoods, including reduced truck traffic
- Protect parks and open spaces by limiting how much land is needed

The Draft Updated Plan incorporated extensive engagement by residents, advocates, and technical experts. Over the past four years, Cambridge, Somerville and the MWRA hosted six large public meetings (with an average of 247 participants), held nearly 30 community events, conducted seven online surveys, and held nearly 20 meetings with the EPA and MassDEP.

This input helped shape a plan that balances environmental responsibility with affordability, community goals, and long-term resilience. It also builds on decades of investments by Cambridge, Somerville, and MWRA to modernize sewer and stormwater systems and protect local waterways.

“This Draft Plan is the most technically sophisticated and boldest CSO control plan in the country,” said Cambridge City Manager Yi-Huang. “It proposes a level of control that goes beyond regulatory requirements and EPA guidance. It would eliminate CSOs in a typical 2050 year and factors in future rainfall projections that account

for the impacts of climate change. Overall, this represents an important next step toward a cleaner, more climate resilient future and builds upon years of investment and collaboration to improve our sewage and stormwater infrastructure. We are grateful for the ongoing support and partnership of Somerville and the MWRA during this critical process.”

“This new draft recommends bold action on Combined Sewer Overflows and highlights the scale of the challenge for communities across the state who are looking to responsibly manage stormwater in the era of climate change,” said Somerville Mayor Jake Wilson. “I am grateful to our partners at the City of Cambridge and the MWRA, and the many resident voices that helped shape the recommendations. My hope is that this plan will be a valuable contribution to our regional discussions of how we can best prepare our communities for a resilient climate future and rally together as a region to equitably share the financial costs of progress.”

“The Draft Updated CSO Control Plan is a significant and responsible investment of rate payer dollars that balances real environmental benefits and actual water quality improvements,” said MWRA Interim Executive Director Stephen Estes-Smargiassi. “The Draft Plan is just the first step in a thorough public process. Today, we begin a five-month public comment period to solicit feedback from stakeholders and members of the public. The best public policy decisions are made when all perspectives are heard, and we hope to hear from all interested parties during this review.”

**Next Steps: A Five-Month Public Feedback Period**

Between May 1 and September 30, 2026, community members, advocacy groups, and organizations are invited to review the Draft Updated CSO Control Plan and share feedback with Cities of Cambridge and Somerville, along with the MWRA.

A virtual public meeting on June 2, 2026, will provide an overview of the Draft Plan. Two public hearings will be held in September, where residents can provide formal verbal comments.

Local office hours will be hosted by project staff and technical teams.

A dedicated website at [voice.somervillema.gov/joint-cso-planning](http://voice.somervillema.gov/joint-cso-planning) will be available throughout the project and members of the public can submit comments on the plan through September 30.

In addition, Cambridge will launch a new CSO and Stormwater Management Advisory Committee this summer to support continued community involvement. The volunteer committee will consist of members appointed by the City Manager. It represents residents, technical experts, and representatives from several stakeholder groups, who will advise on the planning and implementation of programs, infrastructure projects, and other initiatives related to stormwater quantity, stormwater quality, sewer separation, wastewater, and more.

## EXEMPT TIPS FROM INCOME TAX (H 5500)

By Bob Katzen

House 25-132, rejected an amendment that would exempt up to \$25,000 of a worker's tips from the state's income tax.

Amendment sponsor Rep. Nick Boldyga (R-Southwick) said

the amendment would provide meaningful tax relief to service industry workers at a time when costs are rising. He noted that these workers who serve our restaurants, our hotels, our hospitality businesses and deliver groceries often rely heavily on tips to

support themselves and their families.

Rep. Adrian Madaro opposed the amendment and said it irresponsibly proposes hefty deductions for tips, mirroring a part of President Trump's One "Big Beautiful Bill" and puts Massa-

chusetts in lockstep with a shortsighted and fiscally irresponsible federal administration. He noted a separate similar bill pending in the Legislature has not received any support.


(A "Yes" vote is for the amendment exempt-

ing up to \$25,000 of a worker's tips from the state's income tax. A "No" vote is against exempting them.)

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

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### Somerville/Medford News Weekly Speakup Line: Housing Frustrations



into how old construction was done and figuring out how to fix it. I liked the architecture of the old houses in New England which were the American Foursquare, the victorian, the english tudor, french tudor and the cape cod style and liked to read up and study how these were built.

I bought 22 Sargent ave, Somerville in Feb 2024. I increased rents to about 10% lower than fair market value. I have attached Section 8 voucher limits for these units. The only reason I increased the rents was the mortgage rate was over 7% and to break even on three units I needed about 8300/- from 3 units combined to meet the mortgage. I was willing to take a small loss on the rent if all the units did not add up to 8300. I was willing to reduce the rent but was not willing to lose about 40K year based on their old rents. I did not want to lose the property in a foreclosure. Somerville was increasing water and sewer bills at 12% year on year. Property taxes for this building climbed from about 6000/- in 2016 to 12,300 in 2026.

Over 10 years Somerville has increased property taxes for this building by about 90%. I have a young family with three kids and

my youngest was 3 years at that time and losing close to 40K a year with older rents was not financially feasible to me.

Once notices to quit were sent tenants did not want increases nor did they want to quit but we were in a period of negotiation. I was not interested in going down the path of evictions and I made that clear in emails to them. Section 8 voucher comps for a 1 bed in that area of Somerville is 2500/-per unit. thought asking for 2200 and then dropping to 2000/- and locking it for a few years at 2000/- was a reasonable request. I could go down to maybe 1900/- but anything lower than that would risk foreclosure and serious financial loss.

I offered to sell the building to a non-profit of their choice at a break even or small loss and Somerville Land Trust and Somerville Community Corporation looked at purchasing it. I offered to take city funding, Section 8 voucher, I also offered cash settlements of over 5000/- as long as they signed in court. I also offered units at another property that I own in Wakefield which had better condition units close to their old rents and a cheaper mortgage. It appears they wanted the cash

settlements but were not willing to sign in court. There seem to be other forces at play who wanted the publicity of this situation with activists and protesters who likely wanted the media coverage of this situation and wanted to portray me as a developer and a luxury builder which I am not. I have attached the negotiation letters. In their last letter they seem to say give in to their demands of 10K per unit as the neighbors got 15k from a developer or they would have media coverage and a long dragged out process.

I was willing to give them money but I wanted them to sign in court as there was no guarantee that after giving them money whether I would get my property back. I just wanted my property back and that is all. It is my understanding that the litigation expenses for the tenants are covered by the state through tax payer funding. So it would appear that they don't have anything to lose financially with a long drawn out process.

Please let me know what you make of it.

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

My name is Ryan Pinto and I am writing a description of the situation at 22 Sargent Ave, Somerville from my perspective. I am not a developer but a small time mom and pop landlord who has a few units. I used to live in Somerville on Marshall st right next to Sargent Ave. I also lived in Medford close by for a few years and I enjoyed my years as a youngster in the Somerville/Medford are eating in all those sub shops and diners

and meeting friends in pubs and biking in town. I learnt basic house construction volunteering for Habitat for Humanity and helped restore houses during hurricane Katrina and I had a roommate who was in construction.

The first few units that I bought my roommate and I did most of the work such as flooring, drywall tape and mud, trim work and tiling. I used to like fixing up old houses, planning their work matching modern concrete with some PSI to old mortar and just poking around

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### Somerville/Medford News Weekly Speakup Line: Looking for a Porch for Porch Fest!

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

I'm just forwarding my friend's Porch Fest request here thinking maybe you can help?

"Hello, I'm a homeowner on School St. but School St. is not allowed to

participate in Porch Fest. I am a DJ of 25 years with current residencies internationally. Looking to play fun classics, house, funk and more. I have all gear and live sound. Looking to collaborate, or rent a porch just for fun and good times. Thanks!"



### LOWER INCOME TAX FROM 5 PERCENT TO 4 PERCENT (H 5500)

By Bob Katzen

House 25-132, rejected an amendment that would reduce the state's income tax rate from 5 percent to 4 percent.

Amendment sponsor Rep. Marc Lombardo said that this is another attempt to make the state more affordable and more competitive. He noted that too many residents, including working families and seniors on fixed incomes, are feeling the pressure of rising costs, and businesses and residents are fleeing Massachusetts.

Rep. David Linsky (D-Natick) said that he recognizes that this amendment would lower the state tax rate for personal taxable income and thus lower tax costs, but noted "it must not go unsaid that such cuts would disproportionately benefit the ultra-wealthy while forcing the commonwealth to cut the programs that our communities rely on to survive." Linsky continued, "The implementation [of the reduction] would result in a \$5.1 billion revenue loss to the commonwealth, a loss that would force severe cuts to the resources our residents depend on: our public schools, our police

and fire departments, our hospitals and nursing homes, and all in the immediate aftermath of the Trump administration's reduction in state funding. As such, this would be a deeply irresponsible step for us to take."

(A "Yes" vote is for the amendment reducing the income tax to 4 percent. A "No" vote is against reducing it.)

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



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## Somerville's Porchfest Returns Saturday, May 9: Applications Now Open



Volunteers Invited to be Porchfest Ambassadors

SOMERVILLE — PorchFest returns to Somerville on Saturday, May 9, and applications are now open for participants. The annual event organized by the City's Somerville Arts Council features mini concerts hosted by residents on their porches, yards — and even on stoops — across the city. All musical genres are welcome from alt rock to zither quartets, and hosts are invited to apply by the April 21 deadline to participate. Volunteers are also invited to apply to be Porchfest ambassadors to assist visitors.

"PorchFest is one of Somerville's most awaited events for good reason. Not only is it a sign that spring is truly here but there's nothing quite like seeing porches transform into stages and hosting a citywide jam fest," said Mayor Jake Wilson. "To keep this tradition strong, our Arts Council and public safety teams are working closely together to make sure this year's event is welcoming for everyone, and I can't wait to see it come to life."

In addition to hosting or performing, community members can get involved by volunteering to be a Porchfest Ambassador. Volunteers will orient visitors, answer questions, monitor safety, and serve as points of contact. It's a great way to help make the event a success, and ambassadors get a cool, limited edition Porchfest T-shirt.

**Key Updates & Changes for 2026:** Porchfest has become popular, so the City needs all hosts and participants to help keep the event organized and safe. Please review and follow the information and guidance below as you plan to host, perform, volunteer, or attend:

**Locations & Timing**  
To bring music to a range of neighborhoods

— and to keep the noise impacts in any one area to just two hours — Porchfest is held in 2-hour blocks in three City zones.

This year, Porchfest will move across Somerville in these three timed zones:

**West Zone (West of Willow Avenue):** 12–2 p.m.

**Central Zone (between Willow and Central Streets):** 2–4 p.m.

**East Zone (East of Central Street):** 4–6 p.m.

To ease congestion on streets and sidewalks, attendees are encouraged to use Somerville's Community Path to travel between zones.

If nature calls, there will be additional porta-a-johns available to help keep Somerville clean and safe for everyone. Please use them!

**Street Limitations for Safety:** To ensure firetrucks and ambulances are not impeded, and to keep pedestrians safe, the Somerville Fire and Engineering Departments identify key safety routes for us, and performances are not allowed on those streets.

In some cases, we also need to restrict areas at the ends of the side streets that form intersections with safety routes.

But you still have options even if you are on a restricted street or corner.

Residents on ineligible streets or corners are

encouraged to partner with a neighbor on a nearby designated street. This is a great way to get to know your neighbors while helping keep Porchfest safe.

**Spacing Between Performances:** Imagine if you could hear, say, eight concerts at once. That's not a great way to enjoy music, so performances have to be spread out.

Participating performance locations need to be at least 8 houses apart from another approved PorchFest performance location.

Participants are responsible for managing their volume so each show nearby can be heard.

Use the map to see where performances have already been approved to know if where bands are already playing.

**Apply to Host a Porch Concert:** Applications are due April 21 at 11:59 p.m.

Applying does not guarantee participation. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis by Public Safety officials and the Arts Council.

A map of approved locations will be published online as applications are approved.

Apply at [somerilleartscouncil.org/porchfest](http://somerilleartscouncil.org/porchfest).

**Apply to Host a Block Party:** Block parties must apply separately through Citizen Serve ([somerillema.gov/citizen-serve](http://somerillema.gov/citizen-serve)) to request a block party permit. Applications are open March 17 – April 20 and will be reviewed based on the same street safety restrictions above.

**Apply to be an Ambassador Volunteer:** This is an excellent opportunity for community members who love PorchFest, have seen this event grow, and are interested in keeping it safe, accessible, organized, and neighborly. Apply to be an ambassador at [somerilleartscouncil.org/porchfest/porchfest-ambassador](http://somerilleartscouncil.org/porchfest/porchfest-ambassador).

Be sure to note the deadlines! To ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone, we can't make any exceptions to the deadlines. All information and the application link are available at [somerilleartscouncil.org/porchfest](http://somerilleartscouncil.org/porchfest).

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### REQUIRE VOTER ID TO VOTE (H 5500)

By Bob Katzen

House 27-131, rejected an amendment that would require voters to present a valid government-issued photo identification in order to vote, including a Massachusetts driver's license or state identification card issued by the Registry of Motor Vehicles; a United States passport; a United

States military identification card; a Massachusetts-issued firearm identification card; or any other federal or state government-issued identification card that includes a photograph of the voter.

Amendment sponsor Rep. Marc Lombardo, noting that 36 other states require an ID to vote, said the amend-

ment would strengthen the integrity of our elections while guaranteeing fairness and access for every eligible voter. He noted that a key provision, ensuring voters would not have to pay for an ID, requires the Massachusetts secretary of state to provide a photo ID at no cost to any registered voter who files an affidavit requesting one.

Rep. Daniel Hunt (D-Boston) opposed the amendment and said similar bills have come before the Election Laws Committee and have had zero support while there was a significant amount of testimony opposing them. He noted that there is virtually no evidence of fraud in our elections and argued the amend-

ment would cause undue delays.

(A "Yes" vote is for the amendment requiring voters to present an ID in order to vote. A "No" vote is against requiring it.)

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

### Give Feedback on Designs for Inner Belt-Brickbottom Crossing at May 7 Open House



Learn about the crossing project, review design alternatives, and share feedback.

SOMERVILLE— The Brickbottom and Inner Belt neighborhoods are separated from one another by train tracks.

Currently residents and visitors looking to move between these areas must follow a lengthy route that includes walking under McGrath Highway via the underpass on Washington Street.

To enhance connections between the neighborhoods, provide easier access to community and arts spaces as well as support economic growth, the City is designing an accessible crossing for people walking, rolling, or biking from one side of the green line tracks

to the other near the East Somerville MBTA station. A temporary crossing at East Somerville Station is now in place while designs for a permanent crossing are developed.

Six alternatives were introduced to the public in fall 2025, of which two finalists were chosen in early winter 2026. The two designs, including one bridge and one ground-level crossing, are now actively being advanced and the project team is seeking the community's input.

About the Open House

Time and Date: Thursday, May 7, from 6 to 8 p.m. Location: Ralph and Jenny Center, 9 New Washington St.

Attendees will have the opportunity to learn more about the project, review the design alternatives, and ask questions. Residents are welcome to drop in at any time during the event.

Community members unable to attend the open

house can review the designs and provide feedback through an online survey that will be posted to the project website closer to the May 7 event.

For more project information and to access the designs and survey, visit [somervillema.gov/inner-beltbrickbottom](http://somervillema.gov/inner-beltbrickbottom).

If you have questions, please email [construction@somervillema.gov](mailto:construction@somervillema.gov) or call 311 (617-666-3311).

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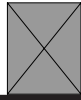
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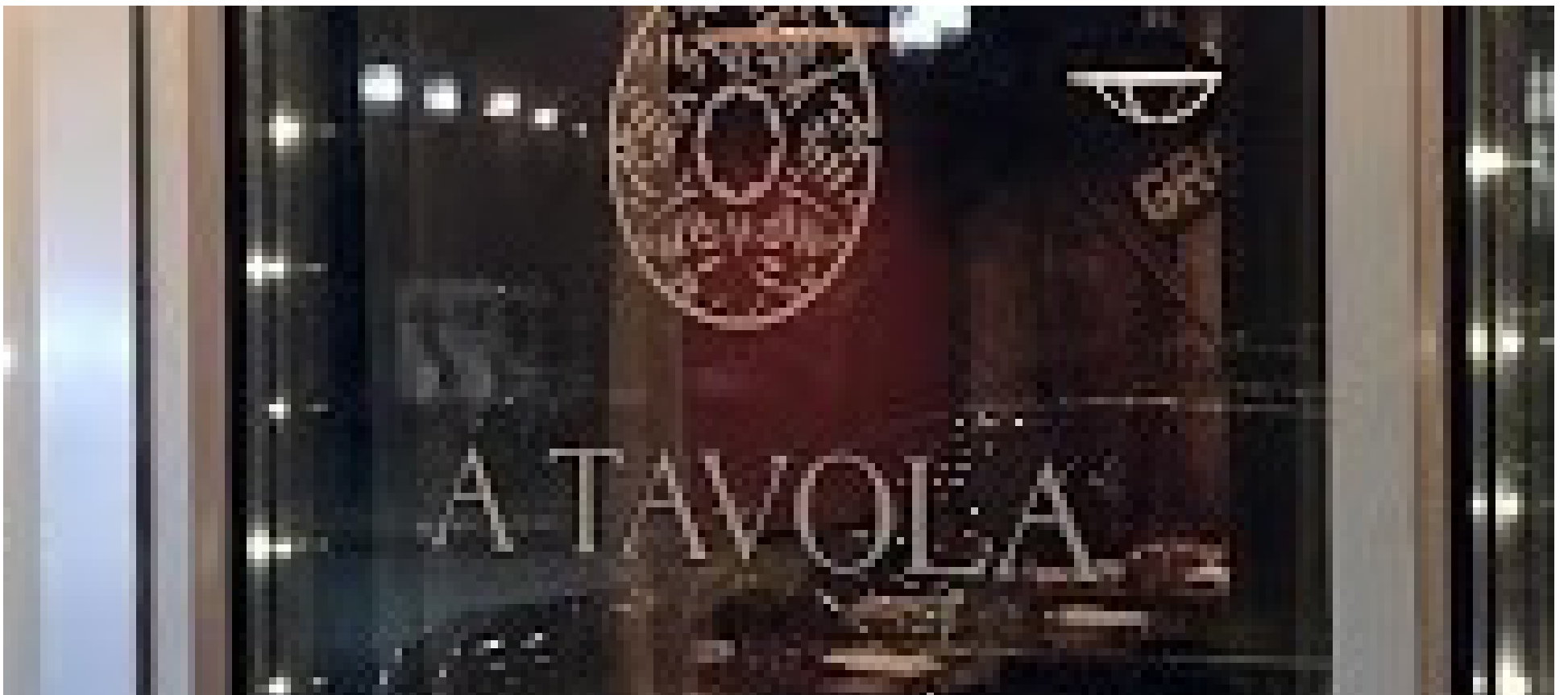
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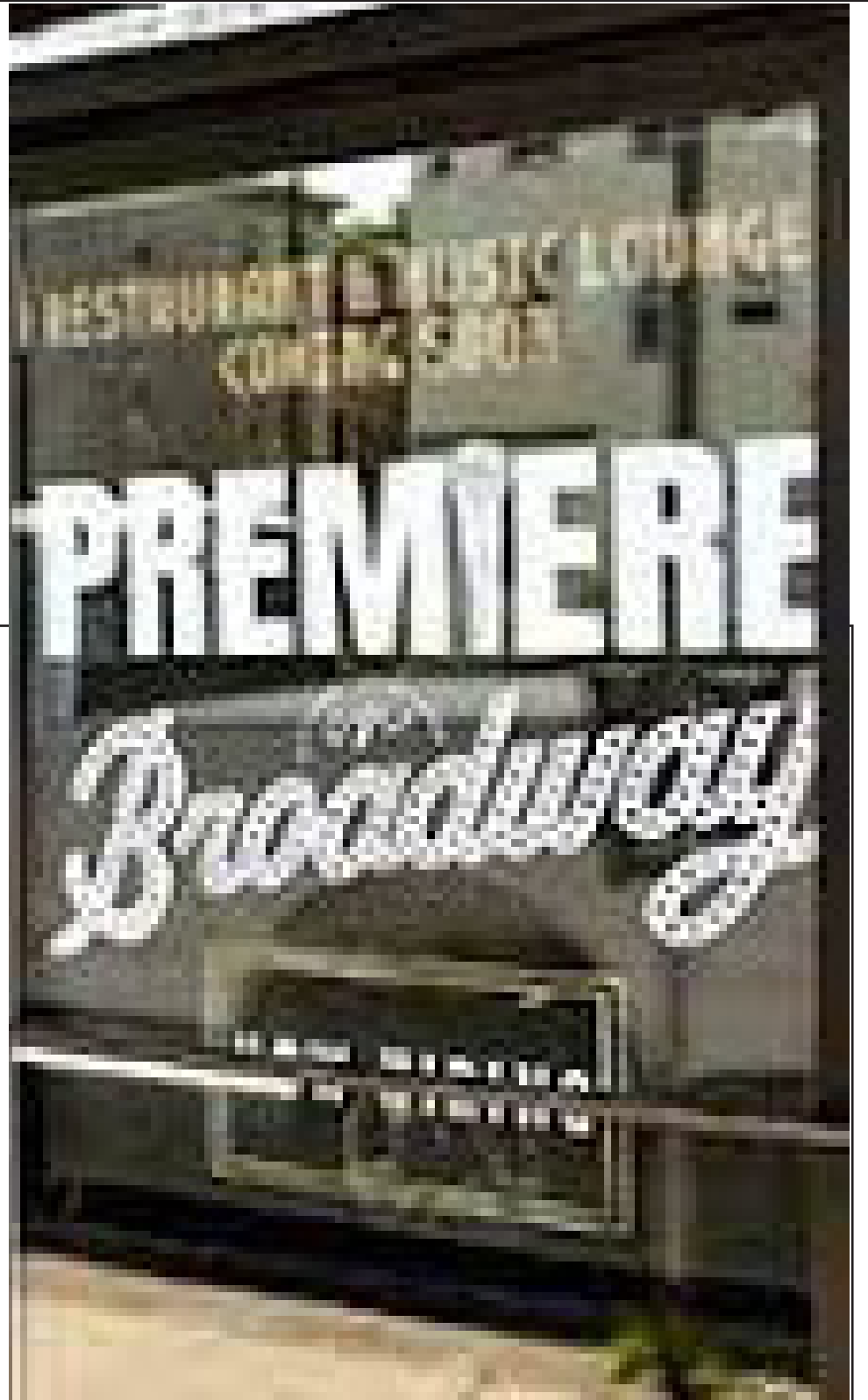
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