



THE NORTH END

REGIONAL REVIEW

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FLOWERS IN THE PARK



Throughout Christopher Columbus Park flowers are blooming making the park look and smell like spring.

North End restaurateur finds flaws in PPP

By Dan Murphy

One North End restaurateur believes the federal Paycheck Protection Program could unwittingly hinder recipients.

“When they gave out PPP money, the first thing you have to use 75 percent of it on help while 25 percent can go towards paying rent and utilities,” said Frank Depasquale, president of Depasquale Ventures, whose North End establishments include Assaggio, AquaPazza, Mare Oyster Bar, Trattoria il Panino, Quattro, Bricco Ristorante & Enoteca, Bricco Salumeria + Pasta Shop and Bricco Salumeria Panneteria. “How can you use it on help when you’re not allowed to open?”

Depasquale, who serves

as chairman of the North End Chamber of Commerce, said terms of the program dictate that PPP recipients begin paying 1 percent interest as soon as they collect loans made available through their banks.

“One percent interest is charged on it when you don’t need it,” he said. “You can’t put all the waiters and bartenders back to work...and the PPP won’t work unless people can go back to [their jobs].”

Depasquale added, “The main thing is restaurants have to be allowed to open.

While restaurants could open in Governor Charlie Baker Phase Two plan in three weeks, Mayor Martin J. Walsh says he will not take steps that put anyone under risk and will review all informations before making his decision.

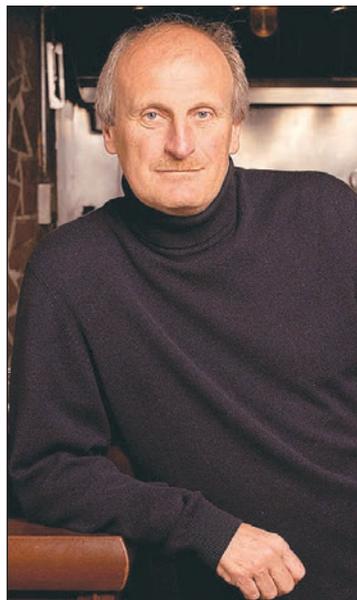


Photo courtesy of Depasquale Ventures

Frank Depasquale, president of Depasquale Ventures.

City Councilors propose cap on fees for third-party restaurant delivery services

By Dan Murphy

Several City Councilors are proposing that Boston follow the example set by Cambridge and other cities by capping fees for third-party delivery services for restaurants.

City Councilors Ed Flynn, Matt O’Malley and Michael Flaherty participated in a virtual public hearing Friday focusing on how to rein in the fees currently charged by the four biggest services - Uber Eats, Grubhub, DoorDash and

Postmates.

City Councilor Flynn said restaurants have informed him that delivery fees range from 25 to 35 percent.

“We currently pay hundreds of thousands of dollars every year on these third-party delivery fees,” he said. “Restaurants pay a significantly larger portion of their revenue to delivery services...and they are dependent on these services.” Third-party delivery fees

(DELIVERY Pg. 3)

St. Anthony’s Feast cancelled this year due to pandemic

By Dan Murphy

St. Anthony’s Feast – a beloved North End tradition dating back to 1919 that traditionally takes place the last weekend of August and has grown to become the largest Italian Religious Festival in

New England - will take a reprieve this summer due to the pandemic.

“For over 100 years, Saint Anthony’s Feast has celebrated faith, family, community and tradition in the North End of

(FEASTS Pg. 2)



Dear Friends:

It is with great sadness that we announce that we are cancelling the 2020 Saint Anthony and Saint Lucy Feast. We come to this decision after much consideration and in consultation with the City of Boston.

For over 100 years, Saint Anthony’s Feast has celebrated faith, family, community and tradition in the North End of Boston. During this current crisis, these values have special meaning that will guide us. Visit our social media pages for further announcements and virtual feast events in August.

The Saint Anthony & Saint Lucy family wish everyone good health during this time of uncertainty. We join with all of you in praying for those around the world affected by this public health crisis. In the meantime, we will begin planning next year’s celebration and commemorate the Centennial of Saint Lucy’s Feast on August 26-29, 2021.

Please continue to follow public health guidelines, be safe and be healthy. God Bless.

Viva Sant’ Antonio e’ Santa Lucia.

The Members of St. Anthony’s Society

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MEMORIAL DAY, 2020

This will be a Memorial Day unlike any that Americans have known.

Ever since the official inception of the holiday on May 30, 1868, when the practice of decorating the graves of the fallen Union soldiers with flowers, wreaths, and flags officially became recognized by the order of General Logan at Arlington National Cemetery, Memorial Day (originally known as Decoration Day) has been a time for all Americans to come together to commemorate and honor those who made the Supreme Sacrifice to preserve our freedom.

When Memorial Day was moved to the fourth Monday of May starting in 1971, the three-day weekend also came to mark the official start of the summer season for Americans of all ages, who gathered for cookouts and other outdoor activities with friends and family.

But in this year of the coronavirus pandemic, all of the usual parades and festivities have been cancelled. With much of the nation still sheltering in place, gatherings of families and friends have been limited to the faux-reality of Zoom.

The pandemic also has brought another set of challenges to our nation, however. The stress we all are feeling, both from the threat of the virus itself and from the economic anxiety it has created, has brought into full view the many, deep fissures in our society which have been lurking beneath the surface for decades.

It is fair to say that America is as disunited as we ever have been since the end of the Civil War itself 155 years ago. This pandemic, rather than bringing us together to face and fight the common challenge of the coronavirus, is threatening to tear us apart and bring to an end the great American experiment.

In searching for appropriate words to capture this moment in which we find ourselves, the Gettysburg address that was delivered by President Abraham Lincoln on the site of the battlefield on November 19, 1863, rings most true, both in terms of honoring those who gave their lives in our nation's wars and for healing the wounds created by the current pandemic crisis.

We hope our readers take a moment to absorb Lincoln's words and reflect upon the meaning of Memorial Day in light of our current situation:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate -- we can not consecrate -- we can not hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.



MEMORIAL DAY MAY 25, 2020

FEASTS (from pg. 1)

Boston," read a statement from the St. Anthony's Society, the event organizer, announcing its cancellation. "We come to this decision after much consideration and in consultation with the City of Boston."

Called the "Feast of all feasts" by National Geographic Magazine, the tradition was initiated more than a century ago by immigrants from Montefalcione, a small town in the province of Avellino in the Campania region of southern Italy,

It honors St. Anthony of Padua, a Portuguese Catholic priest and friar of the Franciscan Order who was born in 1195 and remembered for his undying devotion to the sick and poor; St. Anthony is also known as the "patron saint of lost things." During the event, around 100 vendors peddle traditional Italian street foods including arancini; sausage, peppers and onion; quahog; calamari; pizza; pasta; zeppole; cannoli; and gelato from pushcarts situated along

the neighborhood's streets, and the Feast culminates in a the 10-hour procession of the Statue of Saint Anthony through the streets of the neighborhood alongside marching bands and floats before it returns to the chapel.

While the 101st Feast scheduled for Aug. 27 to 30 of this year has been cancelled, the event is set to return to the neighborhood from Aug. 26 to 29, 2021.

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DELIVERY (from pg. 1)

have been capped at 10 percent in Cambridge and 15 percent in San Francisco and New York while Baltimore is considering taking similar action.

“Here we are in Week Eight of the pandemic with no sit-down service, and we have restaurants that are getting absolutely killed by these fees,” Councilor Flynn said. “If you’re a small restaurant and you use third-party delivery services, you might have to close because the costs associated with these can outweigh it when you don’t have enough pickup and delivery business.”

Amy Healy, Grubhub’s senior director of public affairs and the only representative of a third-party delivery service on hand for the virtual meeting, said this initiative was an example of “overstepping by government officials, and will face a legal challenge [from Grubhub].”

Healy described Grubhub as a “fee-based service” that offers restaurants a range of options, such as marketing assistance.

“There’s a menu of services restaurants can choose from when they decide to work with us,” she said. “The fees are totally transparent and the contract with restaurants is completely transparent.”

Healy said Grubhub charges all restaurants a 10-percent processing fee, and that drivers keep 100 percent of their tips per the current fee structure.

Grubhub pays for Personal Protective Equipment, as well as background checks and insurance, for drivers, she said, and the company incurs additional costs, such as providing customer service 24/7 and protecting the security of its platform.

“We also lose \$10 million a year in credit card fraud, and that’s \$10 million that the restaurants don’t have to eat,” Healy said.

John Schall, owner of El Jefe’s

Taqueria, which has locations in Cambridge and Bethlehem, Pa., said until March 16, deliveries accounted for only 25 percent of sales at both restaurants, with between 7 and 8 percent of revenue going towards delivery fees.

Now, delivery accounts for about 75 percent of sales at both restaurants, and he has paid \$86,000 in delivery fees in the past eight weeks, he said.

Schall said 8 percent of his revenue went towards paying third-party delivery fees before the pandemic hit, but that number has since spiked to between 18 and 19 percent of his total revenue.

He said opening restaurants at reduced capacity would be the only way for them to offset what they are now paying in third-party delivery fees.

“If it’s not addressed permanently, there will be a second wave of restaurant closures and thousands more jobs lost,” Schall added.

Steve Clark, director of government affairs for the Massachusetts Restaurants Association, said according to a recent study, 46 percent of restaurants statewide are now closed, and that 30 to 40 percent of the state’s restaurants might not reopen.

As one alternative to third-party restaurant delivery services, City Councilor Kenzie Bok suggested creating a coop for delivery drivers that would “take care of the drivers’ wages and needs, separate from the giant platform.”

Councilor Bok also requested a “more-detailed breakdown” of how the fee structure works for third-party services, as well as “more transparency in pricing to help [people] make fully informed decisions on how to support restaurants.”

City Councilor O’Malley proposed transitioning [to a working session to more thoroughly explore the matter.

COVID-19 Updates for North End

By John Lynds

With the number of those infected with the COVID-19 virus has increased in some neighborhoods places like the North End seem relatively stable.

According to Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) data the infection rate in the North End, West End, Beacon Hill, Back Bay and Downtown remains low.

In BPHC data released last Friday North End, West End, Beacon Hill, Back Bay and Downtown had an infection rate of 62.3 cases per 10,000 residents up slightly from 53.7 cases per 10,000 residents a week ago. The number of confirmed cases increased from 299 to 347.

When compared to other neighborhoods the North End, West End, Beacon Hill, Back Bay and Downtown has the second lowest infection rates among residents second to only Fenway.

The stats released by the BPHC as part of its weekly COVID-19 report breaks down the number of cases and infection rates in each neighborhood. It also breaks down the number of cases by age, gender and race.

Citywide there are currently 12,050 positive cases of coronavirus-confirmed and presumptive as of Wednesday. So far, 5,121 of these 12,050 residents have fully recovered. There have been 588 COVID-19 related deaths among Boston residents, up from 442 a week ago.

At the mayor’s daily press briefing on Tuesday, Mayor Martin Walsh said the city continues to build a citywide strategy for increased testing, which includes an effort that starts next week to test all first responders.

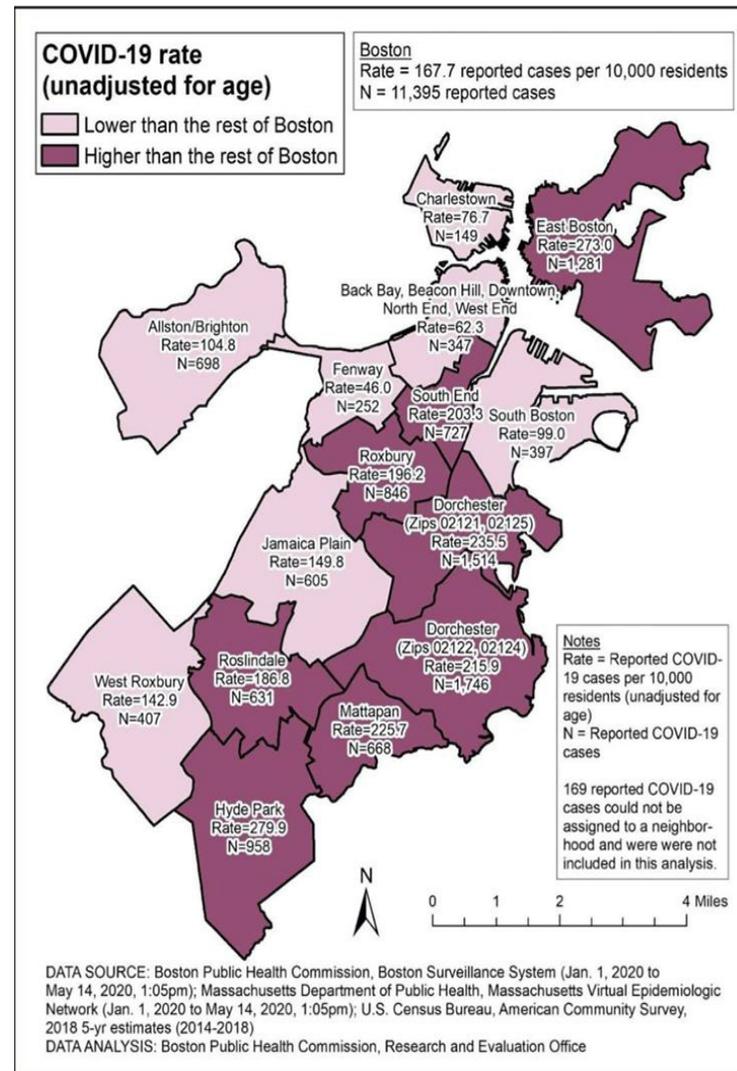
“Overall, the data tells us that we have been moving in the right direction on new cases, positive test rates, and hospitalization for about 3 weeks,” said Walsh.

He also said every data trend gives a reason for caution, in terms of how gradual the city’s progress is, how necessary precautions have been, and how much potential there is for new outbreaks if residents don’t keep doing the right things.

On Monday, May 18, Governor Charlie Baker launched Phase 1 of a statewide reopening plan.

Walsh stressed that reopening does not mean “back to normal”—it means bringing caution and a commitment to stopping the spread of COVID-19 into workplaces and community spaces.

“Boston will continue to meet the needs of families, seniors, and



The BPHC’s latest breakdown of COVID-19 cases and infection rates for Boston that was released Friday.

small businesses, as well as continue to follow the science and public health guidance, while monitoring the data at the city and state levels,” he said.

The Public Health Emergency declared on March 15 in the City of Boston remains in place until further notice. The same applies to the guidelines for physical distancing and face coverings, as well as the citywide recommended curfew of 9 p.m. to 6 a.m.

At the press conference the Mayor noted that Boston is one of the most densely populated cities in the country, which is home to a very diverse population, and doubles in size as a regional workforce enters its workplaces every weekday. Special precautions unique to Boston will need to be taken into account.

“The City will continue to focus on equity and meeting the needs of vulnerable communities, families with children, seniors, and small businesses,” said Walsh.

The biggest question on most businesses owners’ minds is how Boston will start to reopen the North End’s small businesses that are tourist hotspots during the

summer months.

Reopening small businesses:

Under the statewide plan retail stores are allowed to open for curbside pickup on May 25, as well as some services, including hair care and car washes.

“Boston’s approach is the City is ready to help small businesses create plans that not only meet state guidelines, but go beyond them,” said Walsh. “However, we are also urging caution. The Boston Transportation Department has helped facilitate safe curbside pickup for essential businesses, and will expand that work as needed. The City is also developing creative public space solutions for pedestrians in business districts.”

If businesses don’t feel comfortable opening the Mayor said the City will back them in that decision and continue to make services and resources available to them.

“The City will provide more information in the days and weeks ahead to help employers and community organizations stay safe and connected,” said Walsh. “Small business owners can reach out to our Office of Small Business.”



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Baker-Polito administration releases phased reopening plan

By Lauren Bennett

Governor Charlie Baker on Monday announced the phased reopening plan for Massachusetts, and urged residents to continue being vigilant to prevent further spread of COVID-19. The plan has been the task of the governor's Reopening Advisory Board for the past several weeks, where it has met with leaders from many sectors and industries across the Commonwealth.

"Our collective success depends on everyone," Baker said. "We cannot move forward until we commit to slowing the spread."

Before getting into specifics of the plan, Baker said that it will progress through four phases, each lasting at least three weeks but could last longer "if the public health data doesn't support moving forward."

He also said that the plan lays out what businesses and individuals must do in order to be able to reopen during each phase. "The advisory board made every effort to be as clear and direct as possible," Baker said. "This is something no one's ever done before."

In Phase One, called "start," which began on May 18, places of worship were allowed to open "with guidelines," and "outdoor services are encouraged."

Additionally on May 18, essential businesses, manufacturing, and construction were allowed to operate.

Beginning on May 25, lab space, office space (except in Boston), limited personal services—hair salons, pet grooming, and car washes—and retail with remote fulfillment and curbside pickup are allowed to open. On June 1, office space can open again in Boston.

Last week, Baker announced a list of employers who have committed to continuing their work from home policies "for the foreseeable future," including Wayfair, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Harvard Pilgrim Healthcare, Liberty Mutual, and several others. He encouraged employers to continue work from home policies where it's possible to reduce the number of people coming into contact with each other.

On May 18, hospitals and community health centers were also permitted "upon attestation" to "provide high priority preventative care, pediatric care and treatment for high risk patients and conditions," and on May 25, additional health care providers will be permitted to do the same.

On May 25, beaches, parks, drive-in theaters, some athletic

fields and courts, many outdoor adventure activities, most fishing, hunting, and boating, and outdoor gardens, zoos, reserves, and public installations will be permitted to open with specific guidelines.

Baker said that people are still to cover their noses and mouths when six feet of distance cannot be maintained, wash their hands and surfaces often, continue to social distance, and stay home if sick.

"Sticking with these critical tasks is everyone's responsibility," Baker said. "State and local governments will continue to step up testing capabilities alongside the community tracing program. Positive case rates are moving in the right direction," he added.

Baker said that the steps taken in the first phase are for businesses that have "limited face-to-face and customer interactions." He said that people are going to have to change their behaviors and things will not be the same as they were before the virus.

"At some point there will be treatments and a vaccine," he said, but "for the foreseeable future, everyone needs to continue to do the same thing."

This goes hand-in-hand with the Baker-Polito administration's new "Safer At Home" advisory, which advises people to stay at home "unless going to a newly opened facility or activity," he said. Those over the age of 65 and who are at high-risk for the virus should remain at home.

"The virus will be with us throughout the reopening process," Baker said. "How well everyone does these things will determine how well we move into later phases."

He also said that "we'd all prefer to believe that the virus is less serious now and that it's behind us," but "if we don't keep up the fight and do things we know we have to do and can do we run the risk of creating a second spike in the fall."

He thanked those who have been vigilant in playing their part to reduce the spread of the virus and asked that everyone continue everything they've been doing.

"This plan required a tremendous amount of thought, planning, and preparation by the board," said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. "Our work would not have been possible without an extensive municipal engagement," she added.

Polito said that things like campgrounds, community pools,

playgrounds, restaurants and more, could resume in Phase Two with specific guidelines, and in Phase Three, arts and entertainment, gyms, and other activities "push us towards Phase Four of all resumption of activity," in what will be called the "new normal."

However, as the governor has said several times over the past few weeks, public health data will determine whether the state will enter a new phase, and he said it is possible to revert to a previous phase if necessary.

Polito said that a restaurant, accommodations, and tourism work group has met and will continue to have discussions with these industries about "industry specific protocols for meeting safety standards."

She also said that the business community will continue to be supported "as they implement the mandatory workplace safety standards" that the administration announced last week. She added that businesses opening up in Phase One will be required to comply with these standards before they are allowed to open.

"The administration will require businesses to self-certify," Polito said, adding that they must develop a COVID-19 control plan and implement the safety standards.

The state has also created sector-specific guidance that "aim to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmissions in each industry." Materials for these guidelines and safety standards are available on the Reopening Massachusetts section of the mass.gov website.

Childcare And Transportation

Polito also said that "key components" of beginning to reopen the state include childcare and public transportation.

In March, the administration created an emergency childcare system for children of essential workers and others on the frontlines of fighting the virus.

She said that the emergency childcare system already in place will be used to meet the needs of "people with no alternative for care" as people slowly return to work in Phase One. She also encouraged families to find alternatives to group care, and that currently, only 25 percent of emergency childcare is occupied. "The system we established has capacity for 10,000 children statewide," Polito said.

"Summer camps serve an

important purpose," Polito added, saying that additional health and safety standards are being reviewed in preparation for the opening of summer camps. She said that these health guidelines could be implemented in over 1400 camps across Massachusetts, and "pending public health data," camps could open in Phase Two "with limitations and standards in line with CDC guidance."

On the transportation front, "the MBTA has been and will continue to implement measures to prevent the spread," Polito said. "We cannot significantly reduce transmission" without the support of everyone in the state.

She said that riders of the MBTA are required to wear face coverings, and employers should implement work from home practices and stagger the workday to "reduce demand on rush hours."

Polito said that in Phase One, the MBTA will "support the transit needs of essential workers and those returning" by continuing with limited service. By Phase Three, there will be a modified version of full service, and the MBTA will continue to provide protective supplies to workers and clean stations and vehicles often, as well as "actively communicate public health guidance in stations, online, and over social media," Polito said.

"Today, as we move forward in implementing this plan for reopening, I am confident in everyone's ability to play their role," Polito said. "Everyone must do their part."

She said that the "next few weeks are really important," and by helping businesses incorporate workplace safety standards and making sure everyone follows guidelines, "the Commonwealth can stay ahead of this virus," Polito said.

"As we balance the shared goals of activating economy and public safety...our roadmap provides us with a plan and a direction point to get started," Polito said. "The people of Massachusetts are strong; we're resilient, we've come through tough times before and we will come through this tough time again."

To download the full Reopening MA report with details about which industries fit into which phase, visit <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-massachusetts>.

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As the state begins to reopen, Walsh continues to ask for “caution and commitment” from residents

By Lauren Bennett

Mayor Marty Walsh held a press conference on Tuesday, a day after Governor Baker released his four phase reopening plan for the state.

Walsh said that as of Monday, Boston had 11,958 cases of COVID-19 and 587 people had passed away. “The number of active cases in the City continues to decline,” he said.

The City continues to ramp up testing in neighborhoods and “continues to build a Citywide strategy.”

Walsh urged residents to keep staying at home and working from home “as much as possible.” He also said that “we need to continue to practice physical and social distancing,” as well as washing hands, disinfecting surfaces, and wearing face coverings in public.

“Reopening means bringing the same caution and commitment to stopping the spread,” Walsh

said, and “continuing to follow the science and the public health guidance.”

Walsh said that although Baker’s plan allowed for the start of construction on May 18, the City of Boston has implemented a phased plan for the restarting of construction.

Similarly, the governor’s plan allows for the opening of office space starting on May 25, with 25 capacity, but Boston’s offices will not be allowed to reopen until June 1, which Walsh said gives the City more time to “work collaboratively on safety plans.” He said that Boston’s population of roughly 700,000 nearly doubles in size every day as people come in for work, so office space reopening in Boston will be carefully thought out to reduce the spread of the virus as much as possible.

Walsh said that this will include things like continuing to work from home wherever possible, communication with employees, cleaning protocols, ventilation in

office spaces, and more.

He said detailed guidelines for office buildings will be released next week.

For small businesses, retail stores will be able to open for curbside pickup on May 25, and the City is “developing creative public space solutions in business districts,” he said.

“Reopening must only happen in a way that’s safe for you, your workers, and your customers,” Walsh said. He added that just because the date will come where businesses are permitted to open doesn’t mean they have to if they do not feel safe doing so. He said that the City will continue to offer assistance and support to small businesses.

Governor Baker’s plan also allowed for the reopening of houses of worship at 40 percent capacity beginning on May 18. “I know that people are missing their in-person services,” Walsh said, but he advised seniors and those at high risk to skip the in

person services and connect with their religious leaders to continue participating in services remotely.

For those who will be attending in person services, social distancing should be in effect and face coverings should be worn “at all times.”

Walsh said that the City “will not take steps that put anyone under risk,” and assured residents that the City will “continue to reach out to you with information and resources to help you and your family. Our goal is to not return to what existed before, but build a more equitable and resilient City.”

He also made note of the 46th annual EMS week, saying that Boston’s EMS workers “deserve a special thank you” this year for everything they have done to help keep Boston safe and healthy during this pandemic.

When asked about the Boston Marathon that has been rescheduled for September 14, Walsh said that when the original decision

was made to move the marathon, the hope was that COVID-19 would no longer be a health risk. Walsh could not provide any specific updates regarding the marathon, but he said that he is having conversations with stakeholders “on the best way to move forward.”

At Fenway Park, Walsh said that he’d “love to see games played with no fans” this summer as long as players are comfortable doing so, but nothing official has been announced yet.

Walsh urged residents to keep up the work that they have been doing so far to stop the spread of the virus, and he said he appreciates the governor’s phased-in approach to reopening the state, which has been criticized by some for being too quick, and by others for being too slow.

“I think the phased-in approach that the governor is taking is a very thoughtful approach,” he said.

COVID Relief Coalition offers pro bono legal work to state’s small business and nonprofits

By Dan Murphy

One neighborhood lawyer has joined a number of fellow attorneys to provide pro bono work to the state’s small businesses and nonprofits in the age of COVID-19.

Christian Westra, an attorney with the Ropes & Gray and a Charles River Square resident, helped establish the COVID Relief Coalition – an alliance of Massachusetts law firms, nonprofits and government agencies established in late March to help small businesses and nonprofits statewide access emergency loans and other sources of relief during the pandemic. As of May 16, the Coalition had already received 200 requests for pro bono legal work, he said.

“We’re eager to help as many people as we can,” he said. “Small businesses and nonprofits can go fill out an intake form on our website (at covidreliefcoalition.com), and that will go out to the law firms. Then we’ll contact you and set up an appointment, assuming you qualify and most people qualify.”

Westra added, “We’re a pretty

broad-based group, so we try to be as inclusive as possible and get the word out to as many people as we can.”

Through the Coalition, referrals are shared between participating law firms, and they communicate on how to help guide clients through the process with the Small Business Administration, among other entities.

“We also help people how to deal with challenges of not being able to pay rent or utilities, and help with situations that are specific to their businesses,” Westra said.

But, as Westra concedes, even the Coalition members are trying to grasp how the constantly changing and seemingly ambiguous process works.

“Our guidance is continuing to evolve,” he said. “People don’t have a clear understanding of how loan forgiveness works so we help people assess the risks and figure out what makes the most sense for their business and organizations.”

Of particular interest to many of the Coalition’s clients are the terms of the Small Business Administration’s Payment Protection Program (PPP), which

provides forgivable loans to small businesses to help pay employees during the pandemic. “We expect to get more questions as people start to think about loan forgiveness for the PPP,” Westra said.

To help small businesses and nonprofits navigate this terrain, the Coalition has “tried to capture some key documents,” as well as providing contact information for other sources of relief specific to their circumstances. The Coalition also provides information on how to access unemployment benefits and other resources to help individuals.

Westra said his commitment to the Coalition was spurred by his desire to help the neighborhood he loves recover from the ongoing pandemic.

“As a neighbor and someone who lives right next to Charles Street, it was heartbreaking to see all the closed shops and how it impacted people in such a significant way,” he said. “But one of the things I can do as a lawyer is help marshal my colleagues to give free legal advice through the coalition.”

To learn more, visit covidrelief-coalition.com.

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CITY PAWS

Help prevent animal surrenders

By Penny & Ed Cherubino

In difficult times, some people have to make a heartbreaking decision to surrender their animals to a shelter or rescue organization. They may have lost a pet-friendly residence, they may have taken on a second or third job to make ends meet, or they may be simply no longer able to afford the expense of having an animal.

We have also noted all the people who saw their time at home as the perfect opportunity to adopt a dog or cat. People literally emptied shelters. On April 13th, Mother Nature Network reported, "As more people are sheltering at home, they're deciding to do it with a new temporary or permanent family member. Many rescue groups and shelters across the country are reporting success in finding homes and fosters for their furry residents."

When normal times return, some of those animals will need to be rehomed. Foster families will work with shelters and rescue

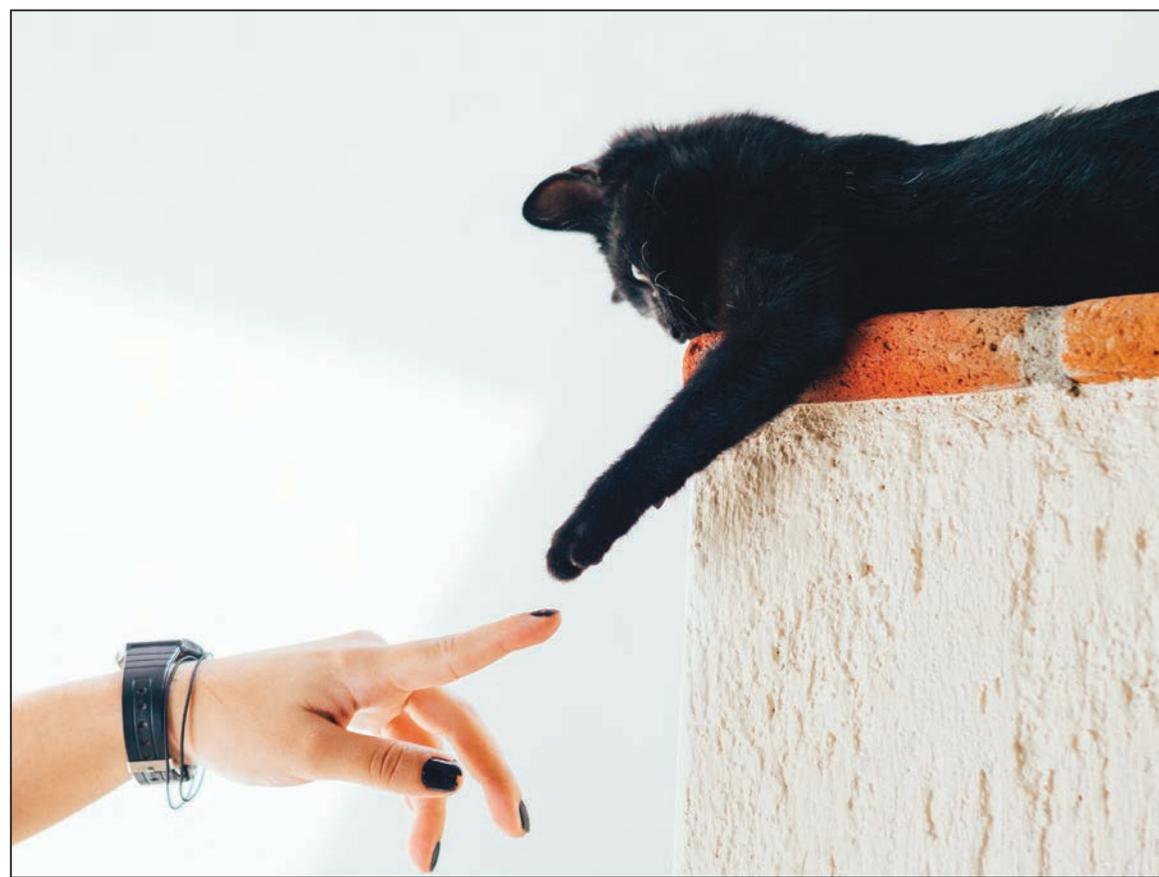
groups to find permanent homes for the animals in their care. Some of those who adopted animals will discover that a dog or cat that fit into a work-at-home, stay-at-home lifestyle is not manageable when they return to a regular workday, social life and travel schedule.

How to Help Those You Know

Begin close to home by keeping a watchful eye on the problems friends and family face caring for their animals. You might be able to use your connections, in addition to theirs, to discover a way forward.

If housing is the issue, you could help find a pet-friendly place. You might know of a second friend or family member who could use a housemate.

When time is the issue, consider matching-making a pet share that would let someone without a dog take over a few of the daily walks, or let the dog visit while their guardian works some extra shifts. If your dog gets along well with a neighbor's dog, you might offer



You could offer to play cat-sitter for a friend who is working extra shifts. (Photo by Humberto Arellano)

to take the two for a walk from time-to-time.

Offer to play cat sitter for someone who has to work long hours. By checking on and playing with the cat during the day, you can help ensure a friend a bit more

sleep when they don't have to deal with a cat who is a bit too full of energy at night.

When money is the problem, consider gifts that will allow those who need to care for their animals to do so. Instead of a specific physical gift that they might not need or want, try giving a gift card that could let them buy pet food, pay for a vet visit, or grooming if that's more important to them.

Collect and Support Community Resources

There are some community resources in place that might help support the effort to keep animals with their families. Something as simple as using a low-cost rabies

clinic rather than paying for a full veterinarian visit to update that required vaccination helps. There are also some lower-cost spay and neuter programs.

However, we are going to need more community-based programs to assist families to keep their animals as they recover from a loss of income and opportunities. In the Greater Boston area, the MSPCA and Boston Animal Rescue League will take a leadership role and will need all of us to support their efforts.

Do you have a question or topic for City Paws? Send an email to Penny@BostonZest.com with your request.

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Without proper Memorial Day exercises due to COVID, visit one of North End's Hero Squares and learn about history

By John Lynds

There are over 1,700 Hero Squares across Boston and dozens in the North End that pay tribute to residents that made the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives for their country during wartime. "These squares are found in intersections like the one we are in today," said Mayor Martin Walsh. "These squares deserve to be noticed and those memorialized for their commitment to service should be remembered."

In 1898, the first Hero Square in Boston was named Dewey Square at South Station. Since then, the city has dedicated more than 1,700 Hero Squares for service members killed in action. The gold star on each sign represents the ultimate sacrifice that was given. It is designated only for those killed in action.

In 2013, the city created and added biography plaques at each Hero Square. These plaques have a barcode you can scan that takes you to a website with more details and photos about the service member.

For example there is a Hero Square for Isadore J. Accardi on the corner of Charter Street and Union Street in the North End

Accardi was born on April 26, 1923 in Lawrence before moving to the North End. After three years of high school, Accardi worked in the fishing industry and later showed his love for our country when he was inducted into the United States Army on March 24, 1943.

Private First Class Accardi proudly served with the 30th Infantry Division, 119th Infantry Regiment until he was killed in action in France on July 13, 1944. Isadore was survived by his father, Joseph Accardi.

There's Louis A. Barone Square at the corner of Cooper Street and Salem Street. Barone was born to Vincent and Catherine Barone on May 7, 1923. He was a resident of Cooper Street in the North End and worked in leather manufacturing after two years of high school. Barone was inducted into the United States Army on July 17, 1943.

Private Barone proudly served in the 179th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Division during World War II. Barone was killed in action on September 1, 1944 in the Fort of Charlemont, Givet, France. He is buried at the Rhone American Cemetery. For the her-

oism he displayed in his service to our country. Barone was awarded the Purple Heart.

He was survived by his parents after the war.

Among the dozens of Hero Squares in the North End there's one for Guy Joseph Destefano

At the corner of North Street and Union Street.

DeStefano was born to Carmela DeStefano on November 4, 1911 and graduated from the English High School of Boston in 1931.

After high school DeStefano enlisted in the United States Navy on December 1, 1931. Carpenter's Mate First Class (CM1).

DeStefano proudly served aboard USS Boise, a Brooklyn-class light cruiser. In August 1942, Boise escorted a convoy to Fiji and New Hebrides. From there she went to Guadalcanal to help cover the landing of Marine reinforcements. A force of Japanese cruisers and destroyers found Boise and her task force during the Battle of

Cape Esperance. She was hit several times with little effect, until one explosion caused a powder fire and flooding.

One hundred and seven crewmen were killed on October 12, 1942, including DeStefano. His body was never recovered. For heroism and honor in service to our country DeStefano was awarded the Purple Heart.

"Hero Squares allow us to pay tribute and honor to our fallen service members in a very visible and

permanent way," said the City's Veterans Commissioner Robert Santiago. "The Hero Square program is very meaningful to the family and friends of a fallen soldier as well as the community they lived in."

To check our more Hero Squares in the North End and for a complete list visit <https://www.boston.gov/departments/veterans-services/hero-squares-veterans>.

May we Never forget that Freedom isn't free.



the Boston Center for Youth & Families AND THE NAZZARO COMMUNITY CENTER



"Veterans are a symbol of what makes our nation great, and we must never forget all they have done to ensure our freedom."

State Representative
Aaron Michlewitz

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NORTH END
ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

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North End



Blue Line work underway

Shuttle services to replace train service from Airport to Bowdoin Stations

By John Lynds

The MBTA will fully close down the Blue Line from Airport to Bowdoin stations and run shuttle busses instead of train service until May 31.

The goal of this is to allow for accelerated track and infrastructure work to take place while ridership and traffic is at an all time low due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The work was originally going to be spread out over a longer period of time and only on weekends.

According to MBTA's General Manager Steve Poftak, during this accelerated work, shuttle buses will replace service between Bowdoin and Airport stations for fourteen consecutive days, including both weekdays and weekends, beginning at the start of service May 18 through the end of service on Sunday, May 31.

"The work accomplished during this closure will lead to numerous benefits, including increased train speeds, shorter travel times, and a more reliable service schedule," said Poftak. "Our main focus continues to be safety, especially during the COVID-19 situation, with the MBTA's shuttle plan including measures that promote social distancing. We know these diversions can be an inconvenience, but the service suspension allows us to expedite critical track and tunnel infrastructure work and remove the restrictions that currently limit train speeds."

Poftak said this work comes as part of the MBTA's plan to quicken the pace of infrastructure projects in 2020 and the MBTA is assessing whether other projects can be further accelerated. This Blue Line work was previously scheduled to

be accomplished through a series of weekend diversions later this year, and doing the work now allows its completion at a time when both transit ridership and traffic on the roadways that shuttle buses will use is much lower than it is likely to be by the fall due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, Poftak said the MBTA recognizes that many essential riders do continue to use the Blue Line and that ridership may rise as the Commonwealth begins to consider reopening opportunities within the coming weeks.

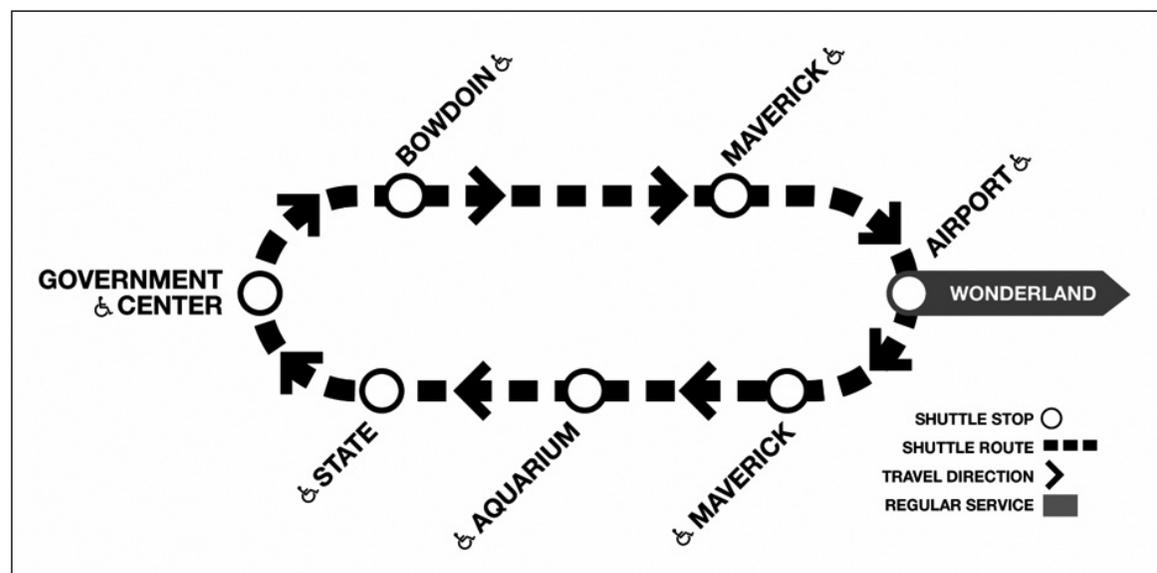
Addressing the ongoing pandemic, Poftak said the MBTA's shuttle plan includes measures to promote social distancing that protect MBTA workers and riders, and the MBTA will carefully monitor ridership levels on the shuttle buses, adjusting service levels if needed.

In compliance with the Executive Order that went into effect on May 6, MBTA customers must wear face coverings while onboard shuttle buses. Additionally, in an effort to promote social distancing efforts and protect the health and safety of MBTA riders and bus operators, ridership on shuttle buses will be limited. The MBTA will also operate additional shuttle buses than originally planned with a robust fleet of shuttles on standby to accommodate ridership demands as needed.

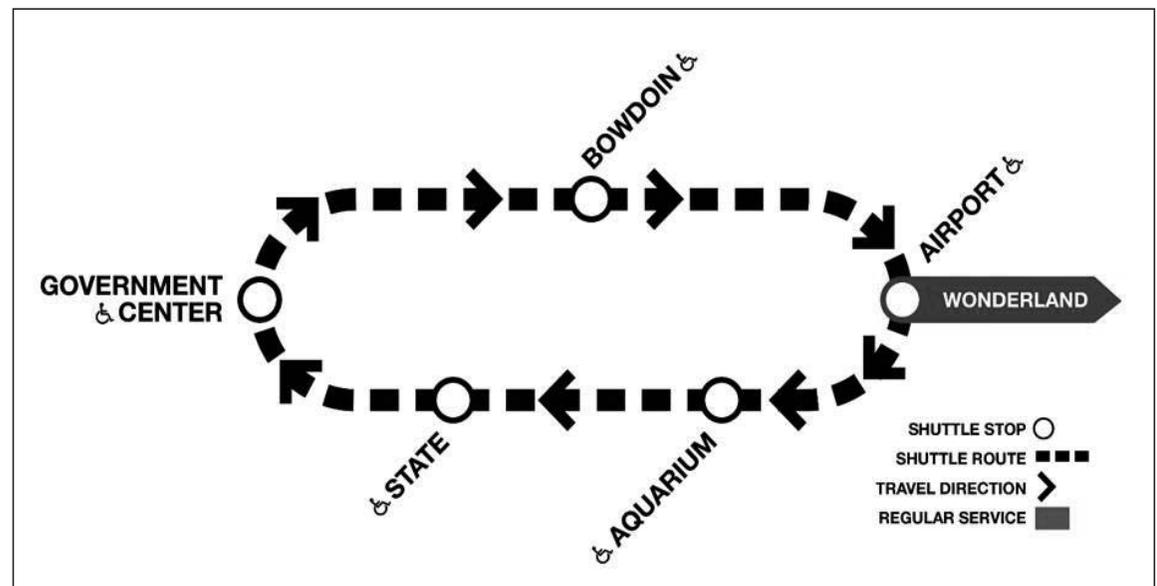
Due to the road geography around most Blue Line stations within the diversion limits, accessible shuttle buses will stop at stations between Bowdoin and Airport in a loop configuration. Buses will travel from Bowdoin to Maverick to Airport to Maverick again to Aquarium to State to Government Center before returning to Bowdoin to repeat the loop.

In an effort to save time and expedite trips for essential riders, an express shuttle bus will operate between Airport and Government Center that makes select stops. Customers seeking the express bus should see station personnel and/or station signage for more information and pick-up/drop-off areas.

For more information, please visit mbta.com/BLwork, www.mbta.com/BBT2020, or connect with the T on Twitter @MBTA, Facebook /TheMBTA, or Instagram @theMBTA.



Full Shuttle Route through May 31 Blue Line Diversion.



Express Shuttle Route through May 31 Blue Line Diversion.

COMMUNITY NEWS

FILE CENSUS FORMS

The 2020 Federal Census is being conducted online and residents are encouraged to participate in the movement, which has an impact on the State and City.

PLAYGROUND CLOSED

The children's playground at Columbus Park has been closed until further notice.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Friends of Christopher Columbus Park (FOCCP) is currently conducting its annual membership drive. For more info visit www.foccp.org.

DOG PARKS CLOSED

Due to non-compliance with the rules, RUFF has closed both dog parks in the North End indefinitely.

RMV MAY EXTENSIONS

Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) has implemented further extensions to renewal timelines for the month of May to 60 days.

NO IN PERSON REGISTRATION

Customers seeking to renew registrations with the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) can continue to do so online at www.Mass.Gov/RMV at this time.

Those seeking to do so in person will not be able to make an appointment and should delay visiting a service Center as well.

RMV DEALS WITH COVID-19

Since Governor Charlie Baker declared a State of Emergency the week of March 19, the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) has implemented measures to reduce the number of people gathering

on a daily basis at their sites.

For more information call the Registry go online at www.Mass.Gov/RMV.

STAR MARKET SHUTTLE

For a Star Market Shuttle schedule call Crystal Transportation at 1-800-879-7433.

CENTER ONLY OPEN FOR FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Nazzaro Community Center, 30 North Bennet Street will only be open as a food distribution site. All other program suspended until further notice.

BPL EXPANDS SERVICES

Boston Public Library (BPL) has expanded statewide remote services and online events.

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Flaherty holds Community Preservation Committee Hearing to review \$24.3 million in CPA funding

Boston City Councilor At-Large Michael F. Flaherty recently held a hearing of the Boston City Council's Community Preservation Committee, in his role as Chair of the committee, to review and recommend the passage of the appropriation of \$24,309,000 in FY20 Community Preservation Fund revenues. The City of Boston's Community Preservation Committee recommended these funds be used to support 40 projects across the city. This year \$15,750,000.00 will be used to support 9 affordable housing projects; \$3,440,000 for historic preservation projects; and \$5,119,000 for projects focused on the creation and preservation of recreational use and open space projects.

Following a very productive virtual hearing on Tuesday May 5th with testimony from project advocates, neighborhood leaders, and representatives from the City of Boston, Councilor Flaherty is prepared to recommend passage of all 40 projects at the amounts designated by the Mayor. "I was pleased with the quality of the applications we received this year. Each and every project we reviewed was fully deserving of funding," said Councilor Flaherty. "Community Preservation Funds are all about making sure residents have a voice in the betterment of their communities and I am confident that each of these projects will go a long way towards improving the quality of life in our City."

The Community Preservation Fund was created upon the adoption of the Community Preservation Act, Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44B in November 2016. In just three rounds of funding to date, over \$67 million has been awarded to 131 projects spanning across every neighborhood of Boston. Councilor Flaherty is proud of the success of this program thus far, having taken a leadership role in the campaign alongside the Yes for a Better Boston Coalition for its passage by popular vote in the City of Boston in 2016 and as the Chairman of the City Council's Community Preservation Committee since its inception. Many projects from earlier rounds of funding are at or nearing completion and have had a transformative effect on their neighborhoods already.

Among these 40 projects are three historical preservation projects in Boston City Council District 1, two projects in Charlestown, and one in East Boston totaling \$820,000. In Charlestown, these funds will contribute to a sprinkler relocation project at the USS Constitution Museum to ensure that this cultural resource is available for generations to come, as well as critical roof repairs to the John F. Kennedy Family Service Center which offers early education, Head Start, and a range of crisis response, anti-poverty services to low-income families and seniors. In East Boston, these funds will contribute to the

purchase and acquisition of the Donald McKay House, which will become the new home of the East Boston Museum.

"In district one, I'm thrilled to see CPA funds utilized for critical investments in historical preservation. Congratulations to both the Kennedy Family Services Center and the USS Constitution Museum for their respective grants to renovate vital learning environments for local children in

Charlestown", said District One Councilor Lydia Edwards. "Thank you to the CPC for it's \$600,000 award to buy, preserve, and renovate the Donald McKay House in historic Eagle Hill to be utilized as the East Boston Museum. We are thankful to the East Boston Museum and Historical Society, the EBCDC, and generations of activists who worked tirelessly to make this a reality. East Boston is one step closer in securing space

for a museum that celebrates our neighborhood's rich history."

"These historic preservation projects are important to keeping our communities connected to places that reflect the rich histories of Charlestown and East Boston", said Councilor Flaherty. "As our City grows and changes, it's important that we preserve spaces where we can honor our history and build and continue to serve our communities."

City's Small Business Relief Fund helps local businesses forgotten by federal bailout

By John Lynds

By now it's common knowledge that the \$650 billion federal relief package intended to help small businesses during the COVID-19 crisis, like those that dot the North and are the backbone of the community, ran out of money in 14 days back in April.

This left many of North End's shuttered mom and pop operations without a lifeline while larger corporations and chain stores across the United States swallowed up the money.

In the North End eight small businesses received funding through the city's Small Business Relief Fund, which kicked off with an initial funding dedication of \$2 million (see list).

The funding helped a wide

range of North End businesses from restaurants to saloons.

"The Small Business Relief Fund grants are critical to help struggling small businesses across the city address challenges brought on by COVID-19," said Mayor Martin Walsh. "These businesses are the backbone of our economy, and the lifeblood of our communities. I'm proud we are able to assist them during this time, and am grateful to our partners who have stepped up in a big way to support Boston's neighborhood business community."

Walsh said in the City of Boston 58 percent of the businesses receiving grants are owned by people of color, 48 percent are owned by women, 44 percent are owned by immigrants.

Unlike the federal relief pro-

gram Mayor Walsh said 95 percent of the city funding went to businesses with 15 or fewer employees.

An additional \$5.5 million in funding is being added to fully fund all eligible grant requests that were submitted during the application process, which combines newly available federal funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development; as well as commitments from Citizens Bank and Eastern Bank.

The North End businesses that received Small Business Relief Funds are:

- 369 Music Group
- Boston Kebab House
- Luxurious Lighting
- Orient Express
- Salon JLS
- Sock it to Me
- Hub Town Tours

All BPS families go receive Pandemic-EBT benefits

By John Lynds

The Boston Public Schools (BPS), in conjunction with Project Bread, announced last week that all BPS and charter school students will receive the Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) food benefit that can be used to buy food from grocery stores while schools are closed.

According to BPS and Project Bread this will be added to SNAP cards for families who receive benefits, or a card will be mailed to others and there is no need to apply.

Under the new plan BPS and charter school households will receive \$5.70 per eligible student per day, or \$28.50 a week.

"If already receiving these benefits, your P-EBT benefits will be added to your existing EBT card," said Project Bread President Erin McAleer in a statement. "If not actively receiving these benefits, you will receive a P-EBT card in the mail for each eligible student in your household."

From the onset of the Covid-

19 crisis Project Bread advocated at the state and federal level for Massachusetts to receive a waiver to operate a P-EBT program, a crisis response nutrition program that helps feed children in low-income households.

"The father who called our FoodSource Hotline last week was representative of thousands of households across the Commonwealth," said McAleer. "Even as he has been able to continue working part-time, something for which he's grateful, the money is not enough to cover the needs of his spouse and two children. This is especially so since the kids are no longer receiving the free school meals they had come to rely on even pre-coronavirus. As he told us, "It's been tough these past weeks trying to make sure there's enough to eat with everyone home."

McAleer said while there are many ways the impact of COVID-19 has increased food insecurity in Massachusetts by a whopping 300 percent, school closures have significantly affected households

that rely on free or reduced price meals to help feed children and make ends meet. Providing two nutritious meals every weekday not only helps these kids thrive, it allows money that would have been spent on food to go toward other necessities like rent or utilities.

Some other good news about P-EBT is that it is available to households regardless of immigration status so undocumented residents are able to receive the funds as long as they meet the general conditions for eligibility.

"We know we need big solutions to solve a crisis of this size, and P-EBT is a great example," said McAleer. "We applaud our leaders here in Massachusetts and the Department of Transitional Assistance for taking action so more than 500,000 kids can buy food that will help keep them healthy during the crisis."

If you have questions about P-EBT or other food resources, call Project Bread's Hotline at 1-800-645-8333 or contact at food@boston.gov.

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The Eliot School in the North has ramped up its virtual learning this week after Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley released new guidance to school.

BPS, Mayor share new policies for the rest of the school year

By John Lynds

Boston Public School (BPS) Superintendent Brenda Cassellius and Mayor Martin Walsh last week shared new policies with families and schools for remote learning that went into effect Monday.

This updated learning plan gives more guidance for students and teachers around attendance, assignments, grading, and scheduling. It also provides predictability for families with routine class schedules and contact between students and teachers.

“Since Governor Baker announced that all Massachusetts schools will remain closed through this academic year, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley recent-

(SCHOOLS Pg. 8)

Michlewitz facing unforeseen challenges in state budget

By Dan Murphy



Rep. Aaron Michlewitz.

This year has brought a set of unique and unforeseen challenges for Rep. Aaron Michlewitz, who is charged with managing the state’s annual fiscal budget in his role as House Chair of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means.

“Because of the shelter-in-place advisory and the number of businesses now closed, the revenue shortfalls could be unprecedented,” said Rep. Michlewitz, adding that traditionally the House would be finished with the budget by this time of year. “A consensus was reached between the House, the Senate and the governor in January at the start of the budget process, but a lot changed once the pandemic hit.”

Now, the state must consider when and how businesses will be able to open back up, and what restrictions will then be in place due to social distancing and other measure taken to contain the spread of COVID-19 in reevaluating its fiscal ‘21 budget, he said.

“Unlike other recessions and the Great Depression, which were the results of the real estate market going bust or the country going to war, because of this public health situation, we’re in a ‘self-induced coma,’ as some have said, and how we wake up from that coma is anybody’s guess,” Rep.

(BUDGET Pg. 5)

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FOR ALL THE LATEST NEWS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

LEGAL NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS THE TRIAL COURT PROBATE AND FAMILY COURT

Suffolk Probate And Family Court
24 New Chardon St.
Boston, MA 02114
(617)788-8300
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION
Docket No. SU20P0595EA
Estate of: Jeffrey G. Saunders
Date of Death: 01/27/2020
To all interested persons: A Petition for Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by Debra B. Saunders of Boston, MA requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that: Debra B. Saunders of Boston, MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve Without Surety on the bond in an unsupervised administration.

IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day

of 06/18/2020. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)
A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

WITNESS, Hon. Brian J. Dunn, First Justice of this Court.
Date: May 07, 2020
Felix D. Arroyo
Register of Probate

5/21/20
RR

LEGAL NOTICE

CITATION ON PETITION FOR ORDER OF COMPLETE SETTLEMENT
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Suffolk Probate and Family Court

24 New Chardon Street
Boston, MA 02114
617-788-8300
Estate of: Andrea E Bader
Date of Death: 01/24/2017
A Petition for Order of Complete Settlement has been filed by Gregory B. Bader of Dallas, TX, Stephen M. Bader of Concord, MA and Justin B. McCarthy of Newton MA requesting that the court enter a formal Decree of Complete Settlement including the allowance of a final account, a determination of testacy and heirs at law and other such relief as may be requested in the Petition.

IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 06/29/2020. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

WITNESS, Hon. Brian J. Dunn, First Justice of this Court.
Date: May 15, 2020
Felix d. Arroyo
Register of Probate

5/21/20
RR

Massachusetts weekly unemployment claimant data

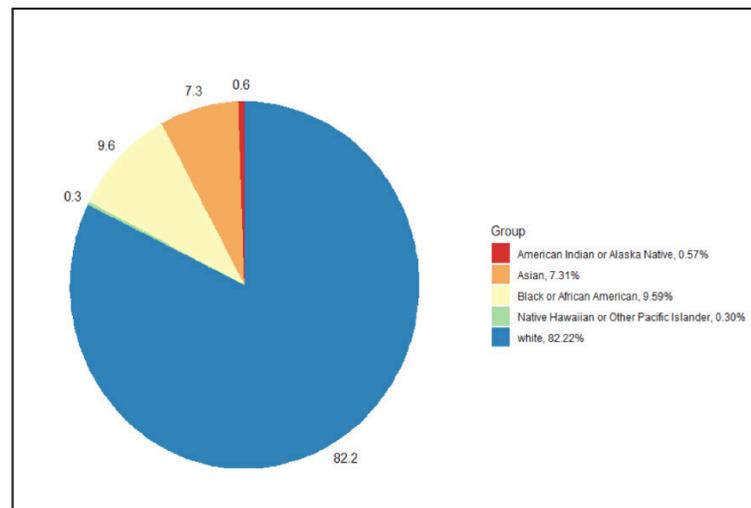
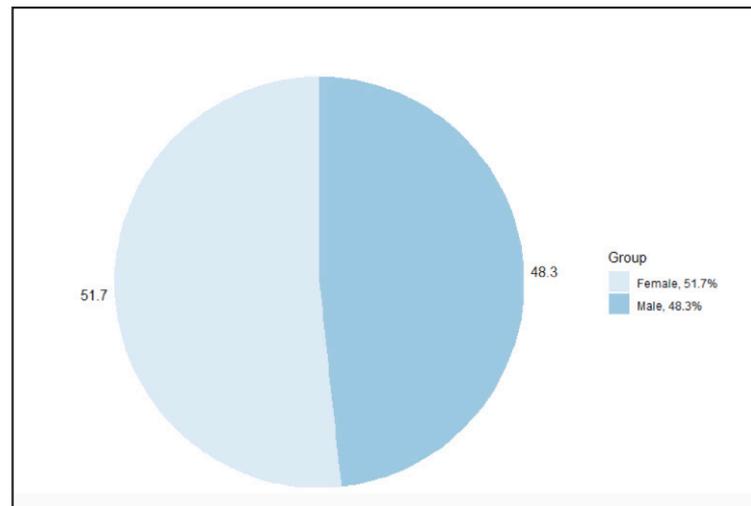
From May 3 to May 9, Massachusetts had 44,274 individuals file an initial claim for standard Unemployment Insurance (UI), a decrease of 10,949 over the previous week, and the sixth consecutive week of fewer initial claims filing over the previous week.

Since March 15, a total of 821,506 initial claims have been filed for UI. For the week of May 3 to May 9, there were a total of 576,172 continued UI claims, an increase of 3.6% over the previous week.

Since April 20, over 255,000 claimants have filed for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).

Between both the UI and PUA programs more than 1 million unemployment claims have been filed in the Commonwealth.

Over the last month, the customer service staff at the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) has grown from around 50 employees to over 1800. The remote customer service operation is now making over 32,000 individual contacts per day and DUA continues to host daily unemployment town halls – which have been held in English, Spanish, and Portuguese - and have been attended by over 240,000 constituents. Massachusetts was one of the first states to successfully launch the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance pro-



gram. Due to DUA's previous efforts to migrate their systems to the cloud, the first unemployment agency in the country to do so, the unemployment online platforms for both regular UI and PUA has maintained functionality throughout the surge in demand.

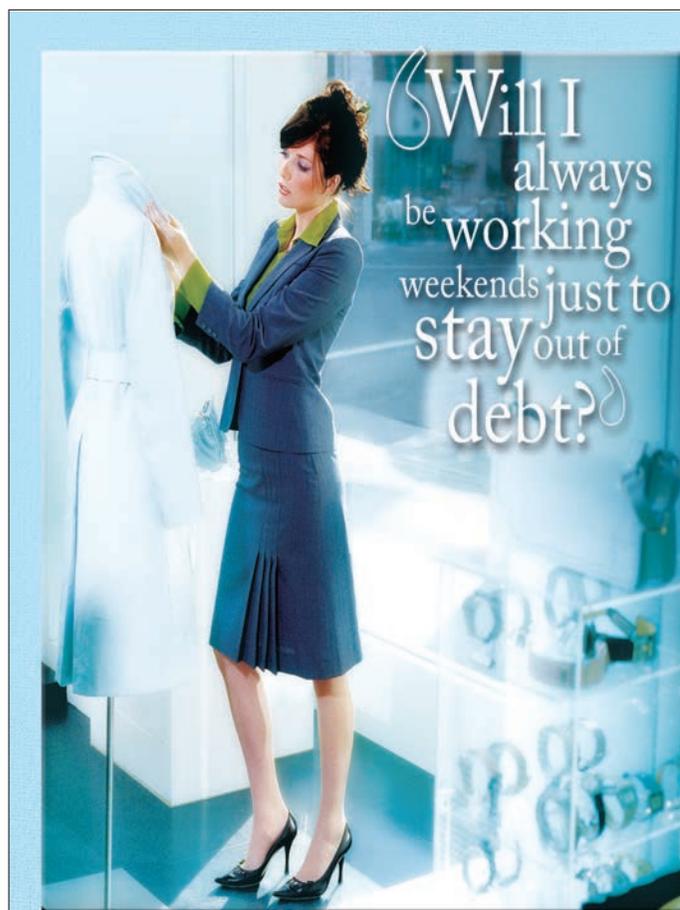
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FRESH AND LOCAL**Potatoes as a leftover platform**

By Penny & Ed Cherubino

Good things can come out of hard times. One of the handiest tips we picked up while sheltering in place was the concept of using baked potatoes as a way to use up leftovers. As sweet potato lovers, we extended this idea to include that tuber.

Picture this – supper time's approaching and there's a mish-mash of leftovers in the refrigerator. Let's say you have a bit of stew that everyone is slightly tired of after a few days of dining on it. Another container has a few spoonfuls of Indian chickpea curry. However, there is nothing for the picky eater in the family who wants pizza.

We're here to tell you that you can make your family happy by scrubbing a few potatoes – russets, sweet potatoes or both. Cut shallow crosses on the top, rub them with butter or oil, and bake until the skin is crisp and the center tender. (Plan on turning and/or

checking for doneness of the sweet potatoes before the russets.)

When roasted to perfection, you can toss a hot potato to each eater and tell them to top it with what they can find on hand. The family carnivore will be quick to grab a bit of the stew to microwave and serve over one regular potato. Your vegetable-forward eater will grab a sweet potato as a base for those chickpeas. A few pantry staples like a jar of pizza sauce and some cheese and pepperoni and a few minutes in that already-hot-oven can turn a baked spud into a twice-baked pizza potato!

What if Time Is Short?

While we both prefer long slow-baked potatoes with oven-crisped skins, we have been known to resort to a microwave when time is of the essence. For those who dine solo, you can microwave a single baked potato in about five minutes. If you have a toaster oven, you can microwave to cook the inside and then pop it in the

oven for a few minutes to crisp the skin.

Be sure to poke a few holes in raw potatoes with a knife or fork to let the steam that builds up inside as it heats to escape. If you microwave more than one potato at a time, try to choose similar sizes and add a bit extra to your cooking time for each addition.

Another way to get those potatoes under something fast is to roast potato planks. For this, you cut your scrubbed potatoes lengthwise into half-inch-thick slices. Toss these with oil, bake in a hot oven, turning to brown both sides, and when done, top with whatever you have on hand.

Make it Your Way

While we love the idea of using potatoes as a platform for leftovers, they can also become a platform for creativity. Our minds went immediately to some of our favorite fillings for tacos, dumpings, or empanadas.



Here, roasted planks of sweet potatoes became a base for a bit of goulash left in a take-out container, adding flavor, nutrition, and fiber to the meal.

Online you'll find endless pages of recipes for stuffed baked potatoes and stuffed sweet potatoes. If you put the phrase "stuffed potato fillings" into a search box, you'll find pages that lead you to 50, 14, 18 or 35 recipes and suggestions for fillings. Some are as simple as bacon and cheese, others help create a specific flavor profile like the pizza potato we mentioned above.

Many are vegetarian, vegan, or easily adapted to other dietary restrictions. A few have inspired us to do some batch cooking to freeze containers of fillings for future baked potato meals.

Do you have a question or topic for Fresh & Local? Send an email to Penny@BostonZest.com with your suggestion.



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