



# THE NORTH END

## REGIONAL REVIEW

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## Michlewitz rules out run for Mayor

By John Lynds

Since being elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives over a decade ago Rep. Aaron Michlewitz, who represents the North End, Beacon Hill, South End, Chinatown, Bay Village and Downtown, has been a rising star in state politics.

So it came as no surprise that Michlewitz's name was floating around the top of the list of possible mayoral candidates as Mayor Martin Walsh leaves for DC to become Secretary of Labor.

However, last Friday Michlewitz, who is the current Chair of Ways and Means in the House, released a statement saying he would not run for Boston Mayor.



*Rep. Aaron Michlewitz, who represents the North End, Beacon Hill, South End, Chinatown, Bay Village and Downtown, will not run for Mayor of Boston.*

"I would like to thank all my friends, constituents and colleagues who reached out to offer support and guidance over the past week, your encouragement and

thoughtful input has been invaluable," said Michlewitz. "I will not be seeking the Office of mayor, I

(MICHLEWITZ Pg. 3)

## North End positive COVID tests increase

By John Lynds

Last week the cumulative COVID-19 positive test rate in North End and the surrounding neighborhoods increased while the weekly positive test rate decreased slightly.

According to the latest data released by the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) last Friday, overall since the pandemic started 40,555 North End, Beacon Hill, Back Bay, West End and Downtown residents have been tested for COVID-19 and the data shows that 5.1 percent of those tested were COVID positive--a

6.25 percent increase from the 4.8 percent two weeks ago.

Last week 5,151 residents were tested and 3.6 were positive--a 5.2 percent decrease from the 3.8 reported two Fridays ago.

Citywide, 50,439 residents were tested and 7.6 percent were found to be COVID positive last week.

The infection rate in the North End and surrounding neighborhoods increased 9 percent in one week according to the latest city statistics.

The BPHC data released last Friday showed North End, Beacon Hill, Back Bay, West End and

Downtown had an infection rate of 380.8 cases per 10,000 residents, up from 349 cases per 10,000 residents.

One hundred seventy-seven additional residents became infected with the virus last week and the total number of cases in the area increased from 1,945 cases to 2,122 cases as of last Friday.

The statistics released by the BPHC as part of its weekly COVID19 report breaks down the number of cases and infection rates in each neighborhood. It also breaks down the number of cases

(COVID, Pg. 2)

## Friends create February Valentine Trellis attraction

By Phil Orlandella

February can be such a dreary month but not at Christopher Columbus Park where the well-known Trellis has been transformed into a Valentines Tunnel of Love for residents and tourists to enjoy through February 21.

Each end of the trellis will become a lighted heart-shaped entrance, with five-foot-tall, colorful "conversation hearts" lining the walkway. A Field of Hearts next to the Trellis will inspire visitors with love-themed sayings. Romantic music will fill the air from 4 PM to 10 PM.

FOCCP's Art Curator, Robyn Reed, created Valentine's Day-inspired Trellis design. "Columbus Park is gorgeous year-round, but by February, we all need some

extra beauty to get us through the end of winter," Reed said.

In addition to this uplifting Valentine installation, Reed has also created other engaging and timely works under the park's Trellis including the award-winning Changing Course and the more recent "even if you don't see it, it is there," a meditative response to the pandemic.

"Columbus Park has been named as one of the 'Top 10 Most Kissable Places' in Boston according to Boston Magazine," said FOCCP President Joanne Hayes-Rines.

Not surprising the magazine also rates the Waterfront Park as one of the top green spaces in Boston for proposals. This is certainly a fitting spot for the Valentine Hearts display.

## NEWRA opposes/NEWNC supports 25 Atlantic Avenue proposal

By Phil Orlandella

While the North End Waterfront Neighborhood Council (NEWNC) voted 9-0 to support the 25 Atlantic Avenue proposal by J3 Design Development, the North End Residents' Association (NEWRA) over wheezingly opposed the development 41-1 with one obtention.

NEWNC President Brett Roman and NEWRA President Cheryl Delgreco confirmed the vote.

Plans call for construction of a five-story, six-unit residential building. All units are three bedrooms and two duplex and four single-floor units are planned. The first floor is for parking and there

is a common roof deck for all tenants.

The property is in a multi-family residential subdistrict Zoning violation arise under Article 32 of the Boston Zoning Code, Section 4 (Groundwater Conservation Overlay District Applicability) and Article 54 Section 18 (roof structure restrictions).

With respect to the latter, the ISD refusal letter notes the height of the proposed new construction exceeds the prior height of an existing building, and Section 18 specifies the height of a building existing as of June 24, 1985.

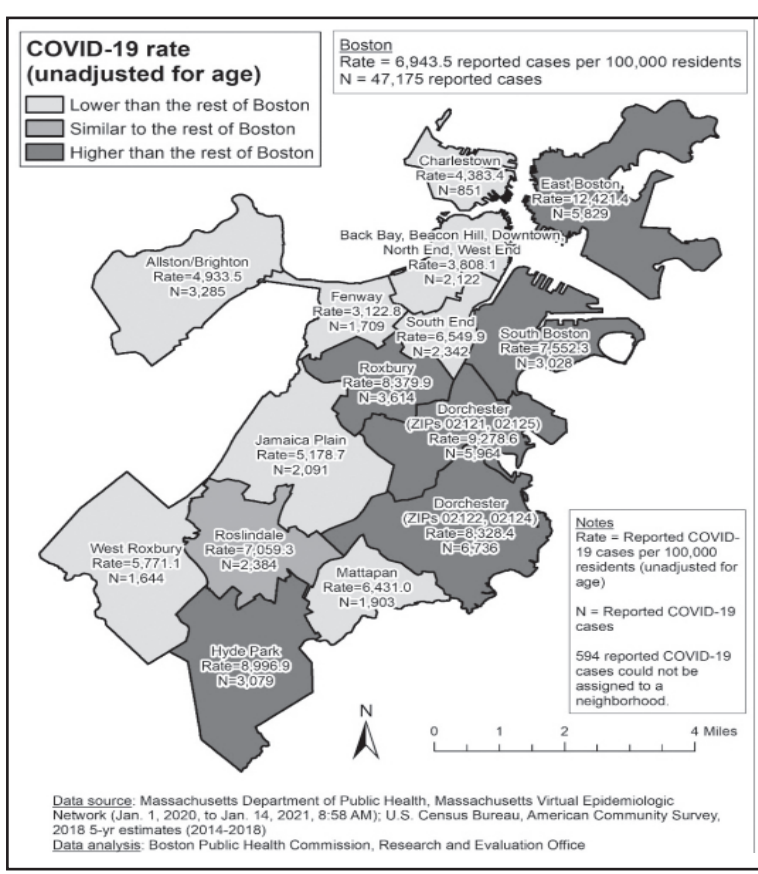
The refusal letter also notes that projections located above the public sidewalk will require approval from the Department of Public Works.

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# COVID *(from pg. 1)*

by age, gender and race. Citywide positive cases of coronavirus increased 3.2 percent percent last week and went from 47,607 cases to 49,137 confirmed cases in a week. Fifty more Boston residents died from the virus last week and there are now 1,102 total deaths in the city from COVID.



On Friday the BPHC released its weekly COVID-19 stats by neighborhood that tracks infection rates and COVID testing results in Boston neighborhoods.

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# BPDA announces expansion of Boston Civic Design Commission

The Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA) last week announced the expansion of the Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) with the appointment of two additional members by Mayor Martin J. Walsh. Jonathan Evans of MASS Design Group and Mimi Garza Love of Utile will fill newly created positions, and Kathy Kottaridis of Historic Boston Inc. will replace the seat being vacated by the retirement of Paul McDonough as the member representing expertise in historic preservation.

“By expanding the Boston Civic Design Commission, we are continuing to build on our work to create a more inclusive, equitable BPDA and City of Boston,” said BPDA Director Brian Golden.

“I welcome Jonathan, Mimi, and Kathy, and look forward to the unique perspectives and experience they will bring to our work. I thank Paul McDonough for his many years of valuable service to the Commission and Boston’s built environment and public realm.”

The expansion of the Commissioners from 11 to 13 will help bring new perspectives to the BCDC and responds to the ongoing pace of development in Boston by helping ensure that there is a quorum at all meetings. Under the change, at least seven of the 13 Commissioners must be professionals in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, or urban design.

The BCDC, managed by the BPDA’s Urban Design Department, is charged with examining the aesthetics of proposed development projects and ensuring that the projects have a positive impact on Boston’s public realm. This includes the review of large projects over 100,000 gross square feet, projects of special significance, civic projects, and district design guidelines.

The BPDA held a public meeting on October 22, 2020 to discuss amending Article 28 of the Boston Zoning Code to expand the number of Commissioners, and the text amendment was approved by the BPDA Board in November 2020, and by the Boston Zoning Commission in December 2020. To learn more about the BCDC, read the 2019 BCDC Annual Report.

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# City offers tips for keeping rats at bay

By Times staff

Rats are an unfortunate reality of city living, and to that end, the Environmental Sanitation Department has some tips from keeping rodents and pests at bay.

Besides keeping your living space clean, other suggestions include sealing all holes around pipes, heating ducts and under cabinets; cleaning all hidden areas under stoves and refrigerators on a regular basis; keeping your yard clean and cutting the grass; storing garbage in metal or heavy plastic containers with tight fitting lids; and removing weeds and debris near buildings and in yards.

Moreover, don't leave pet food

outside; place bird food in a feeder, not on the ground, and clean up spillage daily; clean up animal waste frequently; hire a licensed, insured pest control company familiar with IPM (Integrated Pest Management) techniques; be sure to seal any openings to the house, even above ground level; and repair any breaks in the sewer line connecting your home with the main sewer system.

The Norway Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) is the most common rat in the North East Region, according to the city's Environmental Sanitation Department, and they generally live for one year at which time they can have six to 12 "pups" per

litter, up to seven times a year.

Rats typically burrow in the ground, under buildings and rubbish, and usually living well within 150 feet of food and water source.

The city's Environmental Sanitation Department conducts inspections to make sure there is no rodent infestation present on a property by filing pest management reports; educating residents about mosquitoes and rodents; permitting and reviewing construction plans; and conducting baiting and trapping each season.

Visit <https://www.boston.gov/departments/inspectional-services/dealing-pests-and-rodents> for more information.

## OPINION BY PHIL ORLANDELLA

### PUOPOLO PARK SCHEDULED TO OPEN THIS COMING SPRING

Currently, it's possible for the extensive repairs at Puopolo Park on Commercial Street to be completed by the City of Boston this coming spring 2021.

However, the same is not in the cards for the Little League Park. Expectations are the field will not be completed for the 2022 season.

If in fact the park actually opens, the North End Atlantic Association (NEAA) will be making plans for sports events throughout the summer on the newly renovated park, depending on the COVID-19 situation.

Some of the activities could be soccer, baseball, special events and programs for all ages.

In order for the NEAA to manage these activities the non-profit organization needs volunteers and financial support.

This is a great opportunity for local residents to consider getting involved a few hours a week in the neighborhood.

When what facts are available the NEAA will make ample notice to the neighborhood.

### COLUMBUS SAGA WILL CONTINUE-BET ON IT

Betting line on the street is 14 to make 92 that the Columbus saga will sail back into the harbor when the wind blows in the right direction.

To date, the statue of the navigator has been vandalized several times and beheaded once, and placed in storage by City Hall.

It has been ruled by the Boston Arts Commission that the statue of the navigator is structural unsaved to be placed back at its original site on the Waterfront Park.

The community has been advised that the statue will most likely have a new home on North Margin Street on the site of a new housing development.

The mayor has committed to repairing the statue before it is relocated.

Still on the horizon are apparent demands by an anti-Columbus group calling for, all statues to be removed from public places, renaming of Columbus Park and the cancellation of the Columbus Day holiday.

One can bet the Nina, Pinta and the Santa Maria that rough seas are ahead and cannonballs will be flying.

### MICHELEWITZ (from pg. 1)

believe I can be most effective to the residents of the City of Boston in my current role as Chair of Ways and Means-- with a the seat at the table, leading us through the economic recovery necessary to see the Commonwealth of Massachusetts out of the damage caused by the pandemic. At this time I will not participate in the race but I do believe that the next mayor should be the person who can most reflect, understand and identify with a progressive majority minority City of Boston."

Before becoming Chair of Ways and Mean Michlewitz, a lifelong North End resident, had served as Chairman of the Joint Committee on Financial Services, the Joint Committee on Public Service, and the Joint Committee on Election Laws.

In 2016 Michlewitz was a leading author of Massachusetts's landmark legislation dealing with Transportation Network Companies like Uber and Lyft as well as crafting legislation that would regulate Short-Term residential rentals such as Airbnb

### Old North Historical Chocolate Program

By Phil Orlandella

If one thinks of a chocolate factory, two things come to mind, Schrafft's in Charlestown and Willy Wonka Chocolate Factory that entertained millions at the box office and television.

However, when opened, the Old North Foundation has an acclaimed historic chocolate program on their property in the

North End.

Over the years, the program offered visitors and local residents the opportunity to touch, taste, smell, purchase and experience 18th century chocolate enjoyed by some of Boston's most famous revolutionary era patriots.

In Colonial Boston, chocolate was consumed as a beverage. It wasn't until 1870s that it became a confection as know today.

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# EDITORIAL

## JOE BIDEN NEEDS OUR PRAYERS

With President Joe Biden taking the oath of office this week, America is ready to recover -- both physically and psychologically -- from the four years of "carnage" that has been left behind by the previous presidential administration.

It is fair to say that no incoming President ever has faced more challenges than those that are awaiting Joe Biden:

-- Washington, D.C. looks like a war zone for the inauguration, with 30,000 U.S. troops fortifying the city in the wake of the mob that stormed the Capitol two weeks ago. Similar threats of violence by anarchist, right-wing groups loom all across the country.

-- The COVID-19 pandemic is killing thousands of Americans each and every day, seven days a week, filling our hospitals to overflowing and overwhelming our healthcare system.

-- The nation's economy is in tatters, even more so than during the Great Depression, with record-high unemployment, hunger, and small business failures.

-- America's reputation in the world never has been lower in our entire history. Both friend and foe view us as an unreliable and unstable nation, rather than the moral and powerful leader that we have been since our founding.

-- And last but not least, the Russians have breached our national security with a massive cyberattack, the full scope of which still is to be determined.

The one saving grace for our country is this: No incoming president in the past 50 years has had more experience, and is better prepared for the job, than Joe Biden. The same too, goes for his key Cabinet members. They will be able to hit the ground running to get us back on track.

Still, the task ahead for Joe Biden is daunting -- and he will need all of the prayers we can send his way.

## LET'S GO, TAMPA BAY!

It's okay to admit it, Pats' fans -- we were rooting for Tom and Gronk in their playoff game for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers this past Sunday against the New Orleans Saints.

It has been jarring to see #12 playing in a Tampa Bay uniform this season -- it's like seeing your long-time ex- with someone else.

But with the Patriots' dismal season relegating the Pats to the bottom third of the NFL (where they are destined to remain for a while), Tom and Gronk's playoff run with the Bucs has given us something to cheer about.

True, both are only shadows of their former selves. Brady threw a lot of off-target passes and Gronk had trouble getting open. On the other hand, they connected for a key first-down deep in New Orleans territory late in the game that led to the Bucs' clinching score.

Although it was nowhere as dramatic as that amazing catch that Gronk made late in the 2019 AFC championship game in Kansas City that propelled the Pats to another Super Bowl, it still was a vintage Brady-to-Gronk clutch play that brought a smile to the face of every New England fan. (We should note too, that Gronkowski played a huge role in the Tampa Bay running game with his blocking, just as he did with the Pats for a decade.)

Tampa Bay will face a stiff challenge in Green Bay this Sunday. The Bucs smoked the Packers in their regular-season meeting earlier in the year, but Aaron Rodgers and Co. are playing at an unreal level right now. Let's go Bucs -- we want to see Tom and Gronk in the Super Bowl!



EVERYBODY CAN USE A SHOT IN THE ARM

GUEST OP-ED

## Thank you, Boston

By Mayor Martin J. Walsh

On January 12, I held my final State of the City, which was broadcast live from Boston's newest civic treasure, the completely rebuilt Roxbury branch of the Boston Public Library in Nubian Square.

2020 was a tough year. 2021 is a year for healing as we keep each other safe; get through this final stretch of the pandemic; and build a recovery that moves all our neighborhoods forward.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, we have lost 1,077 Bostonians to COVID-19. They are loved and missed and their families are in my heart. COVID has affected all of us and it has hit some harder than others. Black, Latino, and immigrant communities faced the biggest impacts. Inequities in health, housing, and work opportunities caused more illness and job loss in these communities. Older Bostonians and those with disabilities face the highest risk and the most isolation. Most students have been out of classrooms since March, and families have struggled with childcare.

While 2020 was a year of struggle, it was also a year that brought out the best in our city. We saw nurses, doctors, and medical staff gearing up and going into battle to save lives and provide comfort.

We saw EMTs on the frontlines of a pandemic, helping over 4,000 COVID-19 patients. Firefighters brought recovery coaches to calls, to help those struggling with addiction. Police officers took 800 guns off the street, keeping us safe no matter the risk. Essential workers and City employees answered the call, day after day. Residents stepped up to help each other in a thousand different ways. The heroes are all around us.

As a City, we came together. We built a field hospital in five days. We created a Health Inequities Task Force to address health disparities across race and ethnicity. We've provided over six million meals to children, families, veterans, and seniors. We got 40,000

laptops to students. We got permanent rental vouchers to over 1,000 families with children at risk of homelessness. And, we created the Boston Resiliency Fund, providing over \$30 million to help 250,000 households in need. And in 2020, despite the pandemic, we approved \$8.5 billion of new investment in our city, creating a potential 35,000 new jobs.

In 2021, we will continue that work. One of our next priorities is getting students safely back into Boston Public Schools. We will also continue to support small businesses, renters and homeowners, and those in recovery; push even further towards meeting our climate goals; and invest in Bos-

(Op-Ed Pg. 5)

## REGIONAL REVIEW

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# 'It Ain't Over Til It's Over': Baseball legend Yogi Berra appearing on upcoming stamps

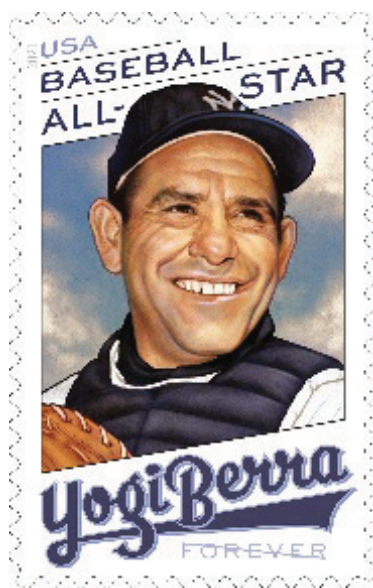
Major League Baseball All-Star Yogi Berra was widely known for his colorful comments. Now, he receives a new distinction as the U.S. Postal Service announces several additional stamps to be issued in 2021 featuring him, science fiction and fantasy author Ursula K. Le Guin and artist Emilio Sanchez.

Additionally, the Postal Service commemorates sun science and tap dance and issues a new 2021 postcard featuring an illustration of a mallard drake.

All stamp designs are preliminary and subject to change. Additional details, including issue dates, will be announced later.

## •Yogi Berra

Honoring Yogi Berra (1925-2015), this stamp salutes one of the best and most celebrated baseball players of his era, winning a record 10 World Series with the New York Yankees. The stamp art is an original digital portrait of Berra dressed in his Yankees cap, pinstripes and catcher's chest protector. Considered the best catcher in the American League in the 1950s, he was also a feared hitter, and in 1972 was inducted into the



Major League Baseball All-Star Yogi Berra will have a stamp.

National Baseball Hall of Fame. Antonio Alcalá was the art director and stamp designer. Charles Chaisson was the artist. The "Yogi Berra" lettering was created by Michael Doret.

## •Ursula K. Le Guin

The 33rd stamp in the Literary Arts series honors Ursula K. Le

Guin (1929-2018), who expanded the scope of literature through novels and short stories that increased critical and popular appreciation of science fiction and fantasy. The stamp features a portrait of Le Guin based on a 2006 photograph. The background shows a scene from her landmark 1969 novel "The Left Hand of Darkness," in which an envoy from Earth named Genly Ai escapes from a prison camp across the wintry planet of Gethen with Estraven, a disgraced Gethenian politician. The artist for this stamp was Donato Giancola. The art director was Antonio Alcalá. The words "three ounce" on this stamp indicate its usage value. Like a Forever stamp, this stamp will always be valid for the value printed on it.

## •Emilio Sanchez

The art of Emilio Sanchez (1921-1999) is celebrated with four new stamps featuring his colorful architectural lithographs and paintings: "Los Toldos" (1973), "Ty's Place" (1976), "En el Souk" (1972) and Untitled (Ventanita entreabierto) (1981). Sanchez explored the effects of light

and shadow to emphasize the abstract geometry of his subjects. His artwork encompasses his Cuban heritage as well as his long life in New York City. Antonio Alcalá served as art director and designer for this pane of 20 stamps.

## •Sun Science

These 10 new stamps in a pane of 20 highlight stunning images of the sun that celebrate the science behind the ongoing exploration of our nearest star. The striking colors do not represent the actual colors of the sun as perceived by human eyesight. Instead, each image is colorized by NASA according to different wavelengths that reveal or highlight specific features of the sun's activity. Art director Antonio Alcalá designed the stamps with digital images from NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory, a spacecraft launched in February 2010 to keep constant watch on the sun from geosynchronous orbit over the craft's ground station in New Mexico.

## •Tap Dance

Celebrating tap dancing as a uniquely American contribution to

world dance, these five stamps feature photographs of different tap dancers performing against brightly colored backgrounds that highlight their form and movement. Art director Ethel Kessler designed the stamps with photographs by Matthew Murphy.

## •Mallard

This new stamped card for 2021 features an illustration of a mallard drake (*Anas platyrhynchos*) from preexisting artwork by illustrator and designer Dugald Stermer (1936-2011). The full-body, left-facing profile was created in pencil and watercolor. Art director Ethel Kessler designed the stamped card.

## •Postal Products

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## Op-Ed (from pg. 4)

climate goals; and invest in Boston's parks and civic spaces that give our residents more opportunities to come together, safely.

We also need to address all the ways systemic racism hurts people in our city. The urgency of this work has never been more clear. Last summer, George Floyd's murder sparked a long-overdue reckoning with racism. I thank Black Bostonians for the way you made your voices heard. And I

thank everyone who joined the movement — Black, white, Latino, Asian, and indigenous peoples standing together. I'm asking all of us to accept this responsibility as our own and commit to fighting racism. It's our deepest moral obligation — and it's our greatest opportunity for growth.

We have tough days ahead of us. But we've been knocked down before, and we always get back up. In 2021, Boston will rise up again.

We will leave no one behind, and our city will be stronger than ever.

As you might know, President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris have nominated me to be Labor Secretary in their administration. I have accepted this honor. If confirmed by the US Senate, I'm not going to Washington alone. I'm bringing Boston with me. This city is not just my hometown, it's my heart. I believe in Boston. This is the city

that welcomed my immigrant parents. This is the city that picked me up when I needed a second chance. This is the city where I fought side by side with you for marriage equality, immigrant rights, addiction treatment, criminal justice reform, education funding, and good middle-class jobs.

Every minute of every day in this job, I spent listening to you, learning from you, working with you and working for you. I will

never forget it, and I will forever be grateful. We may be hurting now, but the state of our city is resilient; the state of our city is united; the state of our city is hopeful; and the state of our city is deep-down Boston strong.

Boston, thank you.

*Mayor Martin Walsh is the current Mayor of Boston and has been nominated for President Joseph Biden's cabinet as Secretary of Labor.*

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Mayor Martin J. Walsh

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## FROM THE GOVERNOR'S DESK

### STATE AWARDS ANOTHER \$78.5 MILLION IN ADDITIONAL GRANTS TO BUSINESSES

The Baker-Polito Administration announced \$78.5 million in awards last week to 1,595 additional small businesses in the third round of grants through the COVID-19 Small Business Grant Program administered by the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation.

To date, the Administration has awarded close to \$195 million in direct financial support to 4,119 small businesses out of a \$668 million fund set up to support small businesses across the Commonwealth.

Additional grants will be announced in the coming weeks for thousands of additional businesses.

"Understanding how significant the need for financial assistance is, we've taken important steps to ensure these resources are directed toward the businesses that have historically been at a disadvantage even before the pandemic, or are located in communities, especially Gateway Cities, that have suffered disproportionately because of this virus," said Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito. "I'm grateful for the partnership with MGCC to provide this important assistance, and I look forward to the coming weeks when we can award even more support for the economic sectors that are most in need."

Representing key industries that have been especially impacted during the pandemic, restaurants and bars, personal care, retail, and health care businesses received the highest number of individual grants this round. These industries have been particularly hard hit during the pandemic. Other grant recipients include women owned businesses, businesses in Gateway Cities, businesses in underserved



Gov. Charles Baker in a ceremonial signing of S.2931, An Act to ensure safe patient access to emergency care.

markets and businesses that have previously received no other forms of financial assistance.

The new Grant Program Application Deadline was Friday night, Jan. 15.

### BAKER SIGNS SAFE PATIENT ACCESS TO EMERGENCY CARE ACT

On Friday, Gov. Charles Baker and Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito participated in a ceremonial signing of S.2931, An Act to ensure safe patient access to emergency care.

Named in memory of Laura Levis, Baker and Polito were also joined by Laura's husband, Pete DeMarco, members of her family, and Sen. Pat Jehlen.

"I signed 'Laura's Law' to safeguard against future tragedies occurring just steps away

from hospital emergency departments," said Baker. "In the wake of her tragic passing, Laura's husband, Pete, undertook an exhaustive effort to honor her legacy and protect others from similar fates. After months of collaboration and hard work with legislators, including Senator Jehlen and Representative Barber, I am proud to sign Laura's Law and celebrate her memory in a meaningful way."

The new law would implement minimum criteria and standards that ensure safe, timely and accessible patient access to the entrances of Massachusetts hospital emergency departments. These regulations will require that entries must be clearly marked, easily accessible and properly monitored by security when appropriate. Additionally, the Department of Public Health will convene a working group on patient access to hospital emergency rooms or departments to report on and make recommendations to inform these policies. In 2016, Laura Levis died of an asthma attack outside of an area hospital

when she was unable to locate an accessible entrance to the emergency room.

### BAKER-POLITO ADMINISTRATION RE-FILES UNEMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION

The Baker-Polito Administration re-filed unemployment insurance legislation initially filed last month. The Governor's legislation aims to sustain unemployment benefits and provide an estimated \$1.3 billion in unemployment insurance relief to the Commonwealth's employers over two years. In addition to a two-year unemployment insurance tax schedule freeze, the legislation also proposes financing measures designed to ensure the solvency of the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund and that federal borrowing that has occurred is repaid in a responsible and affordable manner.

The main provisions of this leg-

islation include:

1. Short Term Employer Tax Relief through a two-year tax schedule freeze. Current Massachusetts unemployment legislative statute requires the employer tax schedule to increase from schedule E to schedule G. This would cause an average per employee tax increase from \$539 to \$866, a nearly 60-percent increase over the previous year. Remaining on schedule E for 2021 and 2022 slows annual employer contribution growth from \$539 average per employee costs in 2020 to \$635 in 2021 and \$665 in 2022.

2. Authorization for the issuance of special obligation bonds for the purposes of repaying federal advances. In order to fund the unprecedented increases in demand on the unemployment system in Massachusetts as a result of COVID-19, the Commonwealth has received federal cash advances. Through the issuance of bonds, the Commonwealth will be able to ensure positive trust fund solvency to enable the continued payment of benefits. The utilization of capital markets also allows Massachusetts to avoid paying punitive federal tax increases on employers regardless of their experience rating if federal advances are not repaid by November of 2022. Bonds issued will be supported by an unemployment obligation assessment and will not be general obligations of the Commonwealth.

3. Establishes an employer surcharge on contributory employers. In 2020 all federal advances taken to pay benefits are interest free. However, interest on federal advances will begin to be charged beginning in January of 2021. The first interest payment is due in the Fall of 2021 and it cannot be paid from the state unemployment trust fund, per federal law. To fund interest payments on repayable advances, the legislation also establishes a separate fund to house surcharge proceeds. The passage of this provision authorizes the Department of Unemployment Assistance to make this assessment but does not require the surcharge if interest is waived through future federal legislation.

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# Treasurer Goldberg and state legislature move forward on investment equity

State Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg announced the inclusion of pension fund diversity benchmarks in the final version of H.4887/S.2842, An Act enabling partnerships for growth.

Treasurer Goldberg, who is the Chair of the Massachusetts Pension Reserves Investment Management Board (PRIM), strongly advocated for the amendment and worked directly with Representative Chynah Tyler and Senator Paul Feeney, who filed the bill. The Massachusetts State Legislature approved the Act last week. It was signed by Gov. Charles Baker

Thursday night.

The amendment will increase the diversity of investment managers that manage the approximately \$80 billion Massachusetts Pension Reserves Investment Trust Fund (PRIT) to at least 20 percent. In addition, it will also advance the diversity of consultants contracting with PRIM to at least 20 percent.

"Our goal is to help level the playing field and increase access for minorities, women, and disabled investment managers and consultants," stated Goldberg. "In doing so, we seek to ensure that

opportunities with the state pension fund will enhance economic equity in the business community for generations to come."

In its 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances, the Federal Reserve Board found that the median net worth of a black American family stood at \$24,100, in comparison to that of a white American family at \$142,500. Business development that combats barriers for communities of color is an effective tool to reduce and reverse the negative impacts of the racial wealth gap.

PRIM will be required to take

affirmative steps to increase diversity and to report to the legislature on its progress. This effort must include consideration of whether current investment policy discourages the use of minority investment managers through quantitative or qualitative restrictions, including, but not limited to, the number of years, track record, and minimum assets under management. Research in this space shows that these requirements severely limit the number of diverse manag-

ers that meet the policy's criteria, without a demonstrable impact on returns.

Working with the Legislature and PRIM Board, Treasurer Goldberg has made important progress to strengthen diversity within investments, businesses, and our economy. Goldberg has supported and proposed many policies that ensure sustained value for the fund, while fostering long-term growth.

## State DPD reports first confirmed case of COVID-19 variant

Officials from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health on January 17 announced that the first case of the COVID-19 variant B.1.1.7 has been detected in Massachusetts, coming from a Boston woman who had travelled to the United Kingdom.

This is the same variant initially discovered in the United Kingdom.

The individual developed symptoms in early January and tested positive for COVID-19. A genetic sample was sent to an out-of-state laboratory as part of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) established surveillance process to identify COVID-19 variants. The State Public Health Laboratory was notified last evening of the results.

The individual is a Boston resident, a female in her 20s. She had traveled to the United Kingdom and became ill the day after she returned. She had tested negative prior to leaving the UK. The individual was interviewed by contact tracers at the time the initial positive result was received, and close contacts were identified. She

is being re-interviewed by public health officials now that the variant has been identified as the cause of illness.

Surveillance testing for the B.1.1.7 variant has been ongoing at the Massachusetts State Public Health Laboratory in collaboration with clinical diagnostic laboratories and academic partners. Surveillance consists of genomic sequencing on portions of COVID-19 positive specimens.

To date, the CDC has reported 88 cases from 14 states in the United States.

Given the increased transmissibility of this variant and the number of states and other countries that have found infected cases, the Department expected the variant to arrive in Massachusetts eventually. The public health risk-reduction measures remain the same. Individuals must continue to wear masks or face coverings while out in public, maintain 6-foot social distancing, stay home when you are sick, and get tested if you have symptoms or are identified as a close contact.

## 'Massachusetts School Choice Week' recognized

For the sixth straight year, the last week of January has been officially recognized as "Massachusetts School Choice Week" by the state's governor.

This year, Gov. Charles Baker's proclamation for the Week recognizes that every Massachusetts student deserves an effective education and the importance of parents exploring and identifying the best school option for their children.

More than a dozen other governors, as well as hundreds of county, city, and town leaders, have officially recognized Jan. 24-30 as School Choice Week. Nationally, more than 33,000 safe celebrations have been planned for the Week, which is transforming into a virtual extravaganza this year due to COVID-19.

Massachusetts' parents,

schools, and other organizers have planned 436 events and activities to celebrate choice and spark conversations about the diverse and innovative learning opportunities that help children succeed. Nationally, schools of every type – traditional public, public magnet, public charter, private, online, and homeschool – will participate in the Week through online fairs and rallies, drive-in events, statewide photo and essay contests, and more.

"We are excited about Gov. Baker's proclamation and Massachusetts families joining in the national celebration of students, teachers, and learning," said Andrew Campanella, president of National School Choice Week. "Families can use School Choice Week to start a conversation about school plans for next year,

or to show their gratitude for their current school and teachers."

National School Choice Week shines a spotlight on effective K-12 education options for children. As a not-for-profit effort, the Week focuses equally on traditional public, charter, magnet, online, private, and home education options. Every January, participants plan tens of thousands of events and activities — such as school fairs, open houses, and student showcases — to raise awareness about school choice across all 50 states. Year-round, National School Choice Week develops resources and guides to assist families searching for schools or learning environments for their children. The effort is nonpolitical and non-partisan and does not advocate for legislation.

## COMMUNITY NEWS

### TUNNEL OF LOVE AT COLUMBUS PARK

Christopher Columbus Park's well-known Trellis has been transformed into a Tunnel of Love for Valentine's Day with music from 4 to 10 p.m. through February 21.

### WINTER HATS AND GLOVES DRIVE

North End Friends of St. Francis Houses collecting donations to purchase winter hats and gloves for the needy. For information call John Romano at 617-750-9749.

### FOOD PROGRAM DONATIONS

Donations are being accepted for the Food Insecurity Program at the NEW Health. Over 100 families per month are served including children from the Eliot School. For details call 857-238-1176.

### PUBLIC SKATING AT N.E. RINK

Public skating at the North End Steriti Rink on Commercial Street is now available at different hours. Schedule can be picked up at the rink.

### STORIES OF THE OLD NORTH

Looking to the future, the Old North Foundation is aiming to create a site wide interpretation plan in 2021 that reflects the rich and diverse stories of the past.

### MBTA POLICE OFFERING FACE MASKS

MBTA Transit Police have started offering face masks to transit riders in need of face covering.

### TOUR LOCAL CENTER

For a tour of the North End Rehabilitation and Health Care Center, 70 Fulton Street, North End call 617-843-5001.

### OLD NORTH SEEKS PROGRAM SPONSORS

The Old North Church Foundation of Boston, Inc., is seeking sponsors to continue to provide programs to students and teachers throughout the country, as they prepare for a mostly virtual 2020-2021 school year. This year, there is a need due to the pandemic and the foundation's dependency on tourism revenue.

The Old North will shift to a virtual strategy with engaging content that combines a core history curriculum.

## OBITUARIES

Effective Jan. 1, 2021

All obituaries and death notices

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## FRESH AND LOCAL

## Local honey

By Penny &amp; Ed Cherubino

The need to restock our supply of local honey caused us to make both our first and last visit to a local farmers market during 2020. The jars in our pantry had dwindled down to one. That led us to take a walk to the market and see if we felt shopping there could be safe, if Foppema's Farm was there, and if they had a supply of our favorite honey. With positive answers to all our concerns, we were soon resupplied.

Over the years, honey has become our sweetener of choice for many reasons. The local honey we buy is less processed. Buying honey from a local orchard is another way of supporting the local foodshed and has a lighter environmental footprint. Most of all, we prefer the taste.

If you would like to take a deep dive into understanding honey, we recommend reading the chapter on it in "On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen" by Harold McGee. He scans 10,000 years of honey history, explains honey creation from the bee gathering nectar, the beekeeper's care of the hives, and process-

ing the product. In his best scientific mindset, he clarifies the differences between honey and other sweeteners.

He explains why honey can be a better choice for baking. "It can be substituted for sugar—1 measure of honey is considered the sweetening equivalent of 1.25–1.5 measures of sugar, although the amount of added liquid must be decreased because honey does contain some water. Because it is more hygroscopic, or water attracting, than table sugar, honey will keep breads and cakes moister than sugar will, losing water to the air more slowly, and even absorbing it on humid days. Thanks to its antioxidant phenolic compounds, it slows the development of stale flavors in baked goods..."

## Crystallized Honey

Some people wonder if crystallized honey is safe to eat. It is. Crystallization is a sign that your honey is not only safe, but also has not had some of its flavor and goodness removed. Solidified honey will quickly liquify when you spread it on toast or spoon it into a hot cup of tea. If you're mixing it into

a cold drink, just melt a bit in hot water or microwave just as much as you plan to use. But, leave your main supply in its unadulterated crystallized form.

## Honey Is Not for Everyone

The website Healthline.com has warned, "Note that you should not give honey to children under the age of 1. This is because raw, unprocessed honey has a risk for botulism in infants. Also, some people who have a severe allergy to pollen can experience a serious allergic reaction known as anaphylaxis after eating honey. This can cause extreme difficulty breathing. Others may experience allergic reactions such as itching or swelling of the mouth, throat, or skin."

Fortunately, we've had only positive results from adding honey to our diet. Friends, knowing we are big honey fans and wanting to keep us supplied, have added new samples of local honey to our pantry. All of them are hits with us.

However, our final visit to our local farmers market last fall was to buy a few extra jars to tuck away for the winter. While we are extremely happy that this area has



To take a deep dive into understanding honey, read the chapter on it in "On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen" by Harold McGee.

more and more choices for local honey, we wanted to have plenty of our favorite on hand.

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

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As communities of faith, Catholic schools instill in students their destiny to become saints. Academic excellence is the hallmark of Catholic education intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person — mind, body and spirit. Finally, service is fundamental to Catholic education and the core of Catholic discipleship. Service is intended to help form people who are not only witnesses to Catholic social teaching, but also active participants through social learning.

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