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City joins forces to regulate broker fees for renters



Regulating broker fees for rentals in the city is being considered by the Somerville City Council.

By Harry Kane

The demand for legislation to regulate broker's fees on a statewide level was reintroduced by Somerville City Councilors at the latest meeting on November 26 in the hope of reducing the overhead for renters in Somerville.

City Councilors are joining forces with Cambridge and Boston to try to enact a state law similar to what recently passed in New York, which would ban broker's fees that landlords pass on to tenants when signing an initial lease.

"One of the things that makes it so hard to both move into Somerville, and move around Somerville, are the exorbitant costs of moving, including broker's fees," said City Councilor At-Large Willie Burnley Jr.

Continued on page 4

Community engagement and creative recipes are the key to success at Union Square's backbar

By Karenn Umscheid

You may have heard of backbar – it's been named as one of the coolest bars in the world by Thrillist, and one of the best in Boston by Boston Magazine. It has a reputation for being a hidden gem, a speakeasy-style spot in the heart of Union Square. To Somerville residents, backbar is just a gathering place, a welcoming institution since its opening in 2011.

backbar immediately feels warm and welcoming. 90's and New Wave tracks accompany the warm, dim lighting and lively conversation punctuates the music. It's very busy, even on weekdays, but the staff are still relaxed, dancing with each other in between taking orders and making drinks. Some of the decor includes designs in chalk, a galaxy light, candles, and a pride flag of lightsabers.

Continued on page 10



Backbar's rotating menu are a special feature that regulars particularly appreciate.

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The community is invited to see the creativity and holiday spirit of their neighbors by embarking on either a self-guided or SAC-led **Illuminations Tour, December 12, 2024 – January 2025**. The Illuminations map is available to take a self guided tour: <https://somervilleartscouncil.org/illuminationstour>. Join the **Somerville Arts Council** and **Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee** for a bicycle tour of our city's festive holiday lights. Meet at **Somerville High School** at 5:45 pm on **Saturday, December 14**, rolling out at 6 pm. (In case of rain, heavy snow, or icy conditions, they'll postpone to Sunday, same time and location.) This will be a short, family-friendly ride, visiting some (not all) of the locations on the Somerville Arts Council's **Illuminations map**. Light yourself and your bicycle up as much as possible, both for safety and to contribute to the festive atmosphere. Dress warmly.

Community Meeting: Davis Square. Join in and engage in a discussion regarding 231 - 249 Elm Street and 6 - 8 & 12 Grove Street, tonight, **December 11**, 6 – 8 p.m., Somerville Community Baptist Church, 31 College Ave, Somerville.

Happy birthday this week to several locals: Happy birthday to a great photographer and a great person, **Iaritza Menjivar**. We wish her a very special day. We wish all of our Facebook friends, such as **Sandy Piccolomini Ryle**, **Barbara Jewers**, **Barbara J Pinnelle Vivian**, **Heather Balchunas**, **Kimberly Pedersen**, **Erin** *Continued on page 7*

Somerville Weather Forecast

for the week of December 11 – December 17 as provided by the National Weather Service

DAY	CONDITIONS	HIGH/LOW	PRECIPITATION	HUMIDITY	WIND
 Wednesday <i>December 11</i>	Rain	62°/39°	95%	87%	S 17 mph
 Thursday <i>December 12</i>	Sunny	43°/23°	4%	2%	WSW 14 mph
 Friday <i>December 13</i>	Sunny	34°/21°	8%	5%	NW 11 mph
 Saturday <i>December 14</i>	Partly Cloudy	36°/25°	4%	1%	NW 6 mph
 Sunday <i>December 15</i>	Sunny	44°/32°	33%	26%	SW 9 mph
 Monday <i>December 16</i>	Partly Cloudy	44°/33°	22%	17%	NW 11 mph
 Tuesday <i>December 17</i>	Partly Cloudy	47°/30°	23%	18%	WSW 11 mph

NOTE: Conditions subject to change. Always check a daily forecast prior to activities that can be affected by the weather.

TheSomervilleTimes.com Comments of the Week

Response to: Homan’s development: ‘Untangling a knotted necklace’

Jeff says:
Make half of the property parking for the high school and the other half a park. The high school needs more parking, especially if we want to attract good teachers from around the region.

Slaw says:
The high school already has more than enough parking. Parking is an absolute waste of land immediately next to transit. There are other and better incentives to hire teachers, especially considering how transit accessible the school is. The best teachers live close to their students and don’t drive in from somewhere else too.

Response to: Bow Market hosts Small Business Saturday in celebration of local businesses and community spirit

Richard Toledo says:
Great article, very insightful. Learned a LOT

Jake Hatch says:
Great article!

Irene says:
Excellent article!

Blake Benway says:
Thank you for sharing this! Very valuable information.

Log onto TheSomervilleTimes.com to leave your own comments

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Somerville Police Dept Crime Log November 26 – December 2

Shots Fired

24075186: On 12/2/24 at approximately 9:46 p.m., Somerville Police responded to 500 Mystic Ave. for a report of shots fired. Upon arrival, officers observed a vehicle with ballistic damage and located three shell casings nearby. No injuries were reported. Investigation is ongoing.

Assault

24074718: On 11/29/24 at approximately 8:47 p.m., Somerville Police responded to 379 Broadway for report of juveniles vandalizing the building. Upon arrival, officers spoke with the victim who stated he observed a group of teens inside the building trashing it and throwing things around. Then teens then began yelling at the victim and threw rocks and other items at him. Officers identified the suspects.

Assault

24074393: On 11/27/24 at approximately 1:16 p.m., Somerville Police responded to Davis Sq. for report of harassment. Upon arrival, officers spoke with the victim who stated she was walking in Davis Sq and was approached by a male party who began to follow her. She then tried to get away and the suspect grabbed her arm. The victim pulled her arm away and fled the area.

Other Crimes: 2 Package Thefts + 2 Bike Thefts + 1 MV Theft + 4 Car Breaks + 1 Vandalism

— Somerville Police Department



Three former bank tellers indicted in connection with stealing from banks

Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan has announced that three former bank employees, Yeimaly Moscat, 23, of Boston, Yojairis Suazo, 21, of Boston and Angelica Morales, 31, of Mattapan, have been charged after allegedly stealing money from customers' accounts by processing unauthorized withdrawals at three different Citizens Bank branches.

The investigation indicates that, between September and November of 2022, Yeimaly Moscat was employed as a bank teller at a Citizens Bank branch in Somerville. During that period it is alleged that Moscat processed a series of 12 unauthorized withdrawals, totaling \$40,900 from victims' bank accounts. During that same time, Yojairis Suazo was employed as a teller at a Citizens Bank in Dorchester. Suazo

allegedly processed a series of 15 unauthorized withdrawals totaling \$30,850 from victims' bank accounts.

The stolen funds in question, in both circumstances, were paid out in counter transactions to suspected associates of Moscat and Suazo. Moscat and Suazo facilitated the transactions by entering the recipients as "Known Customers," even though the individuals at the counter were not the account holders.

A year later, between November and December 2023, Angelica Morales was employed as a teller at a Citizens Bank branch in Milton when she was allegedly recruited to carry out the same scheme. During this time, Morales allegedly processed a series of five unauthorized withdrawals from victims' bank accounts, totaling \$20,000.

The stolen funds were also paid in counter transactions to apparent co-conspirators.

"The allegations in this case are that three defendants, executed a coordinated scheme to steal funds from bank customers. They used their positions of trust to invade accounts and allegedly used their coconspirators to successfully take substantial sums from the bank," said District Attorney Ryan. "The investigators at Citizens Bank identified the suspicious transactions and brought them to our attention, which has enabled us to seek charges to hold these defendants accountable."

Yeimaly Moscat and Yojairis Suazo were arraigned Thursday in Middlesex Superior Court.

Moscat was arraigned on two counts of Larceny Over \$1200 by Scheme, one

count of Embezzlement by a Bank Employee, two counts of conspiracy to commit larceny and one count of attempted larceny. Bail was set at \$1,000, and she was ordered to stay away from all Citizens Bank locations.

Suazo was arraigned on one count of Larceny Over \$1200 by scheme, one count of Embezzlement by a Bank Employee, one count of Conspiracy to commit larceny and one count of attempted larceny. She was released on her own recognizance and ordered to stay away from all Citizens Bank locations.

Angelica Morales will be summonsed for arraignment on December 12, 2024.

These charges are allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

City joins forces to regulate broker fees for renters

CONT. FROM PG 1

According to Apartments.com, the average rent in Somerville is \$3,154 per month for a 676 square-foot, 1-bedroom apartment. The median rent in Somerville is \$3,300, according to Zillow Rentals.

"For a lot of residents in this city, even when they don't use a broker, and their landlord does, the costs of these fees get put onto them," Councilor Burnley Jr. explained.

The Fairness in Apartment Rental Expenses Act in New York, that was recently passed on Nov. 13, requires landlords to pay broker fees, instead of the tenants.

Massachusetts is considering a similar bill that would shift the responsibility from tenants to landlords when it comes to paying broker's commissions. The new legislation would ease the upfront costs

renters face when moving into a new apartment.

Councilor Burnley Jr. says moving into a new apartment could mean laying out as much as four month's rent, all at once, including the deposit, first and last month's rent, and a broker's fee, which may be equivalent to a month's rent.

"This is a huge barrier to entry that is just uncontrollable for the average person to pay," he said.

Councilor Burnley Jr. says he has heard from many constituents who have experienced financial hardships and are finding it difficult to cover the costs of broker fees. For example, he mentioned one renter had been asked to pay \$9,000 just to move into an apartment, and another renter's entire

savings was spent during a move.

"Somerville cannot lag behind," Councilor Burnley Jr. said.

He said that even if renters did have to absorb the broker's fees, paying the fees over the course of an entire lease of 12 months would be a lot easier than having to pay the fee upfront.

"This is an opportunity for Somerville to join our partners in Boston and Cambridge, to move as a regional unit," Councilor Burnley Jr. said.

Some opponents of the legislation say that landlords may raise rents and pass the costs onto tenants if the broker's fees aren't paid by renters.

But Councilor Burnley Jr. said that kind of rhetoric is just a scare tactic.

"Given the fact that Somerville is mostly renters, this is a landmark piece of legislation that is going to make a huge impact on the community," said City Councilor At-Large Wilfred N. Mbah.

City Councilor President Ben Ewen-Campen said that he supports moving forward with the regulation, or the limiting of broker's fees. He mentioned that previous legislation, which included the regulation of these fees had been discussed, but as a specific piece of legislation, regulation of broker's commissions, needs to be addressed.

"I very much appreciate the decision to move ahead with this as a standalone...I'm completely supportive of it," Councilor Ewen-Campen said.

Show Me Your Bits: ‘Bridging the standup and improv communities’

By Jeffrey Shwom

This is the one of three articles in a series titled, “Laughing around town: Somerville’s comedy scene”

Every third Friday of the month, at The Center for the Arts at the Armory, Jonathan Anderson and his hot, funny friends perform *Show Me Your Bits*. It is a distinct, interactive comedy show that intertwines individual performance with crowd work and audience participation.

Jonathan, creator of the show, explained, “our mission statement is to be a place where you can do weirder stuff and not just fit a mold.” Here’s how it works: Jonathan kicks it off with stand-up, and then folks from the Boston area do stand-up, improv or a sketch character. “Maybe three stand-ups and a bit. The premise is that after the set is done, I go on stage and ask the comedians questions about their bits. The audience can ask us questions too. It’s a challenge for me! Not forcing others to dish it all out.”

Amy Clare Parker, a fellow performer

at Union Comedy and Improv Asylum, told us, “Jonathan is creating opportunities for comedians in Somerville, and his show ... is now a staple in the community. The best shows right now are those that are doing something extra - bridging the standup and improv communities, providing monthly stage time for new voices, and using a silly yet very engaging format.”

The interactive Q&A portion makes every show different and unexpected. Jonathan retells, “I gave an audience member my set list, usually a couple ... in the front row. They pick the jokes I do. And then folks can ask follow up questions during this segment before we get into the rest of the shows.” The full run time is usually between 75 to 90 minutes.

The question-and-answer session tends to have the most laughs. Jonathan shared, “it gets people into an improv comedy space. The questions are worded funny or are deep and that leads to stuff. One time, a comedian alluded to being a Mormon, but not anymore. So, the Q and A was about Mormonism and whether they still believed in God.”



The “Show Me Your Bits” standup comedy show runs every third Friday of the Month at the Arts at The Armory.
— Photos by Jonathan Anderson

Amy Clare Parker exudes, “It feels like a twist on a late-night show like Conan (O’Brien’s) was - the standup segments, but also the ridiculous character bits that his writers would do, so it’s a unique, live variety show.”

Jonathan hopes that, religion aside, the performers get new material or take a different angle. “Sometimes, when we get into the questions, it is when someone asks one that can lead into crowd work,” a benefit of the show that gets the audience to “know this comedian.” Jonathan feels like, “I know the audience better, Continued on page 17

Bus Network Redesign: Phase 1 Changes

Beginning December 15, 2024

15

Frequent Bus Route

Every 15 minutes or better,
5 AM to 1 AM
(Sundays may start as late as 6 AM)

Future Route

86 Route 86

104 Route 104

109 Route 109

110 Route 110

116 Route 116

Discontinued Route Segment

86 Route 86

104 Route 104

117 Route 117

Route 104 will turn east toward the airport. Route 109 will still run between Everett Square and Sullivan Square.

Route 109 will be extended from Sullivan Square to Harvard Station, replacing this part of Route 86.

Routes 116 and 110 will continue to serve these streets. Route 117 will be discontinued.

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

Bus Route Changes

The first phase of MBTA's Bus Network Redesign starts December 15, 2024.

Get ready! Learn how these routes will change:

86

104 15

109 15

110 15

116 15

117

Learn More at [MBTA.com/BNRPhase1](https://www.mbta.com/BNRPhase1)

Sign up for T-Alerts at [MBTA.com/SignUp](https://www.mbta.com/SignUp)

Better Bus Project

Making transit better together



Beacon Hill Roll Call

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Beacon Hill Roll Call can also be viewed on our website at www.thesomervilletimes.com

THE HOUSE AND SENATE: *Beacon Hill Roll Call* records local representatives' votes on roll calls from budget vetoes by Gov. Maura Healey. There were no roll calls in the House or Senate last week.

\$3 MILLION FOR EDUCATION OF EARLY EDUCATORS (H 4800)

House 154-2, overrode Gov. Healey's veto of \$3 million (reducing funding from \$8 million to \$5 million) for a program that provides professional development and higher education opportunities and supports for state-wide recruitment and training needs of early educators.

"I am reducing this item to the amount projected to be necessary," said Healey in her veto message. "Due to substantial resources made available in this budget for MassEducate, critical wrap-around supports for students and new early educator scholarship and loan forgiveness programs, the portion of funding vetoed here is no longer needed to meet the purpose of this item."

The Senate did not act on the veto so the veto stands and the \$3 million was eliminated.

(A "Yes" vote is for the \$3 million. A "No" vote is against it.)

Rep. Christine Barber	Yes
Rep. Mike Connolly	Yes
Rep. Erika Uytterhoeven	Yes

\$300,000 FOR UMASS CENTER IN SPRINGFIELD (H 4800)

House 134-24, overrode Gov. Healey's veto of the \$300,000 for a reserve fund for the UMass Center in Springfield, a satellite of UMass Amherst, where academic programming is offered.

Healey said the veto brought the budget for this line-item back in line with her fiscal 2025 budget recommendation and what the administration understood to be necessary for the operation of the center in fiscal 2025.

The Senate did not act on the veto so the veto stands and the \$300,000 was eliminated.

Sen. Adam Gomez and Reps. Carlos Gonzalez and Orlando Ramos, the three legislators who represent different parts of Springfield, did not respond to repeated requests by *Beacon Hill Roll Call* asking them to comment on the veto and override by the House and why the Senate did not act on the override, resulting in the loss of \$300,000.

(A "Yes" vote is for the \$300,000. A "No" vote is against it.)

Rep. Christine Barber	Yes
Rep. Mike Connolly	Yes
Rep. Erika Uytterhoeven	Yes

ALSO UP ON BEACON HILL

AUDIT THE LEGISLATURE – State Auditor Diana DiZoglio sent a letter last week to top Beacon Hill Democrats, including House Speaker Ron Mariano (D-Quincy) and Senate President Karen Spilka (D-Ashland), demanding that they comply with her plans for an audit of the Legislature. DiZoglio's letter comes after voters in November approved Ballot Question 1 asking them if they favor allowing the state auditor to audit the Legislature.

"Our audit will cover all of the topics we were unable to fully review in our previous audit, due to your [earlier] refusal to participate in the audit process," wrote DiZoglio. "Our work will start with a review of high-risk areas, such as state contracting and procurement procedures, the use of taxpayer-funded nondisclosure agreements and a review of your balance forward line item - including a review of all relevant financial receipts and information."

Mariano's opposition to the audit goes back several years. In March 2023, he said in a letter to DiZoglio, "That your office has the legal authority to conduct an audit of the General Court is a claim entirely without legal support or precedent, as it runs contrary to multiple, explicit provisions of the Massachusetts Constitution and is wholly unnecessary as the public currently has full and ready access to the House's financial information."

A new debate began last week about when the voter-approved law actually takes effect. DiZoglio at a press conference said that it takes effect on Dec. 5, marking 30 days from the November 5th election. Secretary of State Bill Galvin disagrees and maintains the law takes effect on January 4th -- 30 days from the December 4 certification of the November election results.

RAISE THE REQUIRED MINIMUM AUTO INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR PROPERTY DAMAGE AND BODILY INJURY (H 5100) – The Senate adopted and sent to the House a Gov. Healey amendment changing the effective date of a new law that increases the minimum amount of liability auto insurance a driver must purchase, from \$5,000 for property damage to \$30,000; and for bodily injury from \$20,000 per person/\$40,000 per accident to \$25,000/\$50,000. The law approved by the Legislature was scheduled to take effect immediately. Healy's amendment would delay the effective date to July 1, 2025.

Gov. Healey said she supports the increases. "The current amounts have not been updated in over 30 years and the proposed increases would provide meaningful coverage for those who experience personal injury or property damage due to a motor vehicle accident," said Healey. "But I also recognize that the language as currently drafted would become effective immediately upon my signature, providing insurance companies inadequate time for implementation. Insurers must update current policies and submit new forms and rates to the Commissioner of Insurance for review and approval before implementing these changes. Based on feedback from industry stakeholders, pushing out the effective date to July 1, 2025 will ensure that these changes take place in an orderly way."

\$294.8 MILLION FOR CLEAN WATER - The Massachusetts Clean Water Trust approved \$294.8 million in new low-interest loans and grants to help communities build or replace water infrastructure that enhances ground and surface water resources.

Supporters said the funds will ensure the safety of drinking water, protect public health and develop resilient communities.

\$5 MILLION TO PROTECT FOREST LANDS - The Healey Administration announced more than \$5 million in grants to protect forest land which will be managed as reserves. These projects are designed to fight climate change and allow forests to mature, strengthening how these habitats store carbon. The grant program, a result of the Forest as Climate Solutions Initiative, aims to designate 10 percent of Massachusetts forests as reserves, where active management is limited and natural processes play out.

"Forests are our best natural carbon sinks," said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rebecca Tepper. "As trees age, they absorb and store more carbon dioxide – crucial in helping us fight climate change. By supporting community and land trust efforts to limit land conversion and increase permanent land conservation, we are preserving forests for generations to come."

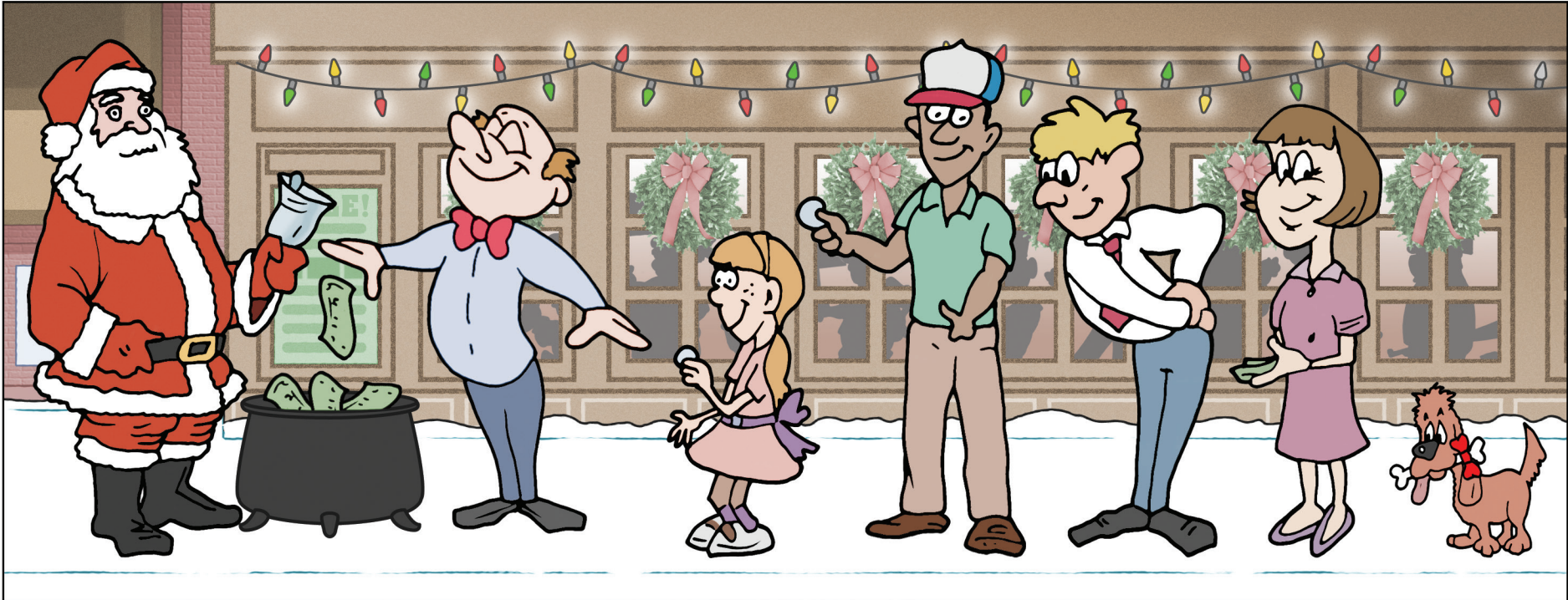
"Few things are more important than protecting our environment, and I'm elated that our state is preserving these beautiful pieces of land in Ashland and around the entire commonwealth," said Senate President Karen Spilka (D-Ashland).

TEACHER OF THE YEAR - Gov. Healey announced that Luisa Sparrow, a special education teacher for fifth- and sixth-grade students at the Oliver Hazard Perry School in South Boston, is the 2025 *Continued on page 19*

COMMENTARY

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Illustrated by Jim Clark



Let's all remember to help the less fortunate this holiday season.

Our View Of The Times

The holiday season gives us that little nudge we sometimes need to take stock in what is most important for us and to share in the sense of appreciation that we feel amongst one another.

Of course, for those of us who may be blessed with material abundance, it is also important to help the less fortunate who may be in need as the winter holiday season unfolds. Consider giving a little of

your time or money to make another's life a little better, particularly during the winter months to come.

For those among who may be struggling to keep it all together, remember to look at what is good in life and remain faithful that change for the better is always waiting just around the corner.

There are many ways to help those in our community who may be in need at this

time. Seek out relief organizations such as the Somerville Homeless Coalition, Project Soup, Community Action Agency of Somerville, Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services (SCES), Elizabeth Peabody House Pantry and any number of others to make a generous donation.

Your support is vital in assuring that those in need get through the harsh winter months ahead.

Of equal importance is supporting our local businesses during the following holiday shopping season as they compete with out-of-town and online shopping alternatives. They need your support as well.

May this holiday season provide a meeting ground for all of us. One in which we can share in the goodness of life and fellowship between us all. There's no better way to express our generosity.

Newstalk CONT. FROM PG 2

Madden Capasso, Olivia Huang and Maria C. Curtatonea very happy birthday. We hope everyone has a great day. To all the others we may have missed, we sincerely wish them the very best of birthdays.

Donate to Local Holiday Gift Drives. In the giving spirit of the season, the city is collecting toy and gift donations at city buildings, libraries, and firehouses through Wednesday, December 18. If you are able and wish to donate, please bring new, unwrapped toys and gifts for children of all ages and age-appropriate gifts, clothes, and winter boots for teens.

All gifts will be distributed to families by two local efforts: Toys for Local Children and the Somerville Toy Drive, an initiative organized by community members, including the organizers of last year's MAMAS (Mutual Aid Medford and Somerville) annual gift drive, as well as other residents. Learn more and find a donation box near you. <https://www.somervillema.gov/news/donate-local-holiday-gift-drives-city-buildings-through-wednesday-dec-18-2024>.

On Thursday, December 26, the Menorah Lighting takes place on the City Hall Concourse (93 Highland Ave.) at

6 p.m. Traditional songs and sing-alongs will be sung. Special gifts will be available for children. Light refreshments will be served.

This upcoming weekend will be the last weekend for the Somerville Police Department's "Fill The Cruiser" Toy Drive benefitting families of the Mystic Learning Center. Officers will be at Target on Friday, (4 – 8 p.m.), Saturday (12 – 8 p.m.), and Sunday (12 – 8 p.m.). Donate new and unopened items for youth ages 0-16 that will benefit families of the Mystic Learning Center this holiday season. SPD and MLC friends will be at the Tar-

get located at 180 Somerville Ave.

Low-income households may be eligible to receive help with winter heating costs through the Fuel Assistance Program. This program is part of the Home Energy Assistance program (HEAP) and serves residents of Somerville and Cambridge. Participants receive assistance with their heating costs between November 1 and April 30. Learn more about the program, check if you qualify, and apply for assistance today at somerville-ma.gov/heatingassistance.

The Somerville Arts

FUN & GAMES

Ms. Cam's

Olio

Olio - (noun) A miscellaneous mixture, hodgepodge

#953

1. Which '60s musical brought had hits like *Good Morning Starshine* and *Aquarius*?

2. Name the band that released the album *Sur-realistic Pillow* in 1967?

3. In what century can the first known Christmas hymns be traced back to?

4. S'mores contain what kind of cracker?

5. In which year did *The Brady Bunch* TV series first premiere?

6. What is the name of the Brady family's home in the TV series?

7. The lollipops with

gum in the center are called what?

8. If you commit a major penalty in the NHL, how many minutes of penalty time are you looking at?

9. Four sticks of wafers covered in chocolate is what?

10. What is a crumpet usually cooked on?

11. For which film did Denzel Washington win the Best Actor for in 2001?

12. For which film did Heath Ledger win posthumously an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor?

Answers on page 14

The Somerville Times Useless Facts of the Week

1. Most pandas in the world are on loan from China.

2. A snail can sleep for three years.

STATEPOINT CROSSWORD

YEAR-IN-REVIEW

ACROSS

1. Cerberus' domain

6. Chop

9. Mama's husband

13. Unsuitable

14. Adam's partner

15. Echo sounder

16. Sunny prefix

17. Armed conflict

18. In a heated manner

19. Highest grossing movie based on Broadway musical

21. Time's 100 World's Most Influential People cover model in 2024 (2 words)

23. "____ and the City"

24. Not exciting

25. Accident

28. Rani's dress

30. Talking points

35. Aflame

37. Spanish sparkling wine

39. Slang for money

40. Velum, pl.

41. November 5th 2024 winner

43. Short for "and elsewhere" (2 words)

44. Met's offering

46. River in Bohemia

47. Queen of Hearts' pastry

48. Super Bowl winners in 2024

50. Visi____ or Ostro____

52. The Alan Parsons Project's "Eye in the ____"

53. ____ of passage

55. Milton's center

57. Miley Cyrus' Grammy-winning Record of the Year in 2024

61. 2024 Summer Olympic Games host

64. Cat's nine

65. Lowest or highest card

67. Accustom

69. E-wallet content

70. Backstabber

71. N in RN

72. Whipping mark

73. R&R spot

74. Support person

DOWN

1. "Say what?"

2. All over again

3. MV ____, cause of 2024 Baltimore bridge collapse

4. Long stories

5. Tends a fire

6. Obscene

7. Spermatozoa counterpart

8. Lost, in Paris

9. Olympic Gold winner Katie Ledecky's "court"

10. Dead against

11. Explore by touch

12. Maisie Williams' "Game of Thrones" character

15. Hello, in Haifa

20. Dead-on

22. Last month

24. Disclose

25. Wreaked state

26. Bet's predecessor

27. Pileus, pl.

29. Like steak order

31. Maya Angelou, e.g.

32. Itsy-bitsy bits

33. Caitlin of college basketball

34. Gin and grapefruit juice cocktail, a.k.a. ____ dog

36. Scarlet O'Hara's home

38. Speaking platform

42. Dinklage or Townshend, e.g.

45. Again but differently

49. Elton John's title

51. Shenzi of "The Lion King"

54. Russian rulers, pre-1917

56. Tedium

57. "One ____ Over the Cuckoo's Nest"

58. Classroom pests

59. Elliptical

60. Sunset location

61. Sheep's milk cheese

62. Little Miss Muffer's morsel

63. Gaelic tongue

66. Upper limit

68. Poetic "always"

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Soultion to last week's crossword puzzle:

FARADLOGSWAY

OMANIEDODIAN

LINTSADOENDOW

KRISTENDICKENS

YAKUSSR

SAPLIMNMEXICO

AFEWNATOVERGOT

LOTHGAWKYALOT

AREASMIREYOKE

DERMISNANSOER

EASEETAJ

FIRTREENAVIDAD

ONAIRIDOAVIDSO

UTICANOGGENIE

RODSEGOEDGAR

34. Gin and grapefruit juice cocktail, a.k.a. ____ dog

36. Scarlet O'Hara's home

38. Speaking platform

42. Dinklage or Townshend, e.g.

45. Again but differently

49. Elton John's title

51. Shenzi of "The Lion King"

54. Russian rulers, pre-1917

56. Tedium

57. "One ____ Over the Cuckoo's Nest"

58. Classroom pests

59. Elliptical

60. Sunset location

61. Sheep's milk cheese

62. Little Miss Muffer's morsel

63. Gaelic tongue

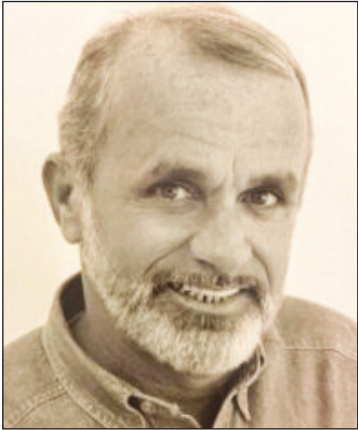
66. Upper limit

68. Poetic "always"

Solution in the next edition of The Somerville Times.

OBITUARY

Kenneth W Lonergan



Kenneth W Lonergan, age 78, of Boston, Massachusetts passed away on Sunday, November 17, 2024. Kenneth was born in Somerville.

The youngest of six children, Kenneth was born in Somerville to John Edward and Ita Marie Lonergan (Delaney).

Kenneth attended Matignon High School and Boston College where he received a BA and MA in education and participated in many college theatrical productions where he honed his artistic talents and worked during the college summer months at one of the many Catskills resorts; this was the beginning of his theatrical career writing, producing, directing and starring in many amateur and professional musicals and plays over the years.

Kenneth spent 30 years at Somerville High School working as a Special Education Teacher and Administrator, directing musical theater and mentoring, coaching and inspiring generations of students, in the words of one student when informed of Kenneth's passing "We needed someone like you to make us see how (we were) strong, independent and full of hope when we didn't see it in ourselves." Another said: "What I'd give for a big ol' hug or an-

other day of in-house suspension with you" and "Every Kid he took under his wing was important to him" just a few of the many praises from his former students.

He founded the SunSetters, a touring band of school students who performed outdoor musicals for the City of Somerville during the summer break. In the 80's he lived in Marblehead where he performed each 4th of July as Sandy Clause and at Christmas as an Elf arriving at the dock by lobster boat with Santa Claus. He directed and starred in many Marblehead Little Theater productions and played a role in the Town of Marblehead donating the old fire house as a home for MLT productions.

During a 2 year sabbatical he worked for the Shubert Company in New York City as a Stage Doorman living his best theater live and befriending Broadway staff and actors, including one of his favorites, Patti Lupone, with whom he bonded over smoke breaks.

When he retired from teaching Kenneth summered in Provincetown where he became a fixture as the Town Crier. He headed up parades and town functions and greeted visitors from around the world with his signature, "ALL IS WELL IN PROVINCETOWN BECAUSE YOU ARE HERE". Kenneth and his tenure as Town Crier was featured in the documentary directed by Mike Syers "Because you're Here" which won Best New England Short Film at the 2018 Provincetown International Film Festival. Kenneth retired from his post in 2022 after 15 years.

Throughout his life, Kenneth was second to none in his love of singing and burst into song spontaneously at any gathering, and his powerful tenor has filled many churches and cathedrals for the weddings and funerals of many friends and family adding to their special memories.

Kenneth's last performance was in the 2023 Provincetown Theaters production of The Fantasticks where he played comic relief character Mortimer and gave a stellar performance with the help of the cast and director who knew he was struggling due to his illness.

Kenneth LIVED his life and made a difference in many of the lives he touched and was much beloved by his family, friends and students.

He leaves behind many wonderful friends, students and family members: His sister Ita Marie Quinn (niece Laura and nephew Joseph), sister Suzanne Perry (husband Richard, niece and God Daughter Denise, nephew Steven), sister Ellen (niece and God Daughter Mary Ellen), sister-in-law Barbara (nephews; Ted, Jeffery and niece and God Daughter Kerry), sister-in-law Marion (nephew John) and his former spouse and soulmate Ann Whiteley. He is predeceased by his brothers Jackie and Edward Lonergan and nephews Allen and Mark Perry.

Donations in memory of Kenneth can be made to the Unitarian Universal Meeting House of Provincetown (UUMH.org) Att: Rev. Kate Wilkinson, 236 Commercial Street, P.O. Box 817, Provincetown, MA 02657.

A Celebration of Life for Kenneth will be held at a future date.
— Neptune Society

The Somerville Times
Historical Fact of the Week



Eagle feathers #318

This article first appeared in the December 12, 2012, edition of The Somerville Times.

A Christmas Carol

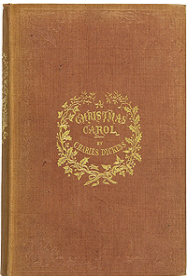
By Bob (Monty) Doherty

Everyone has his or her own favorite Christmas stories, memories and movies. They can range from the classic *It's a Wonderful Life*, a story about the difference one person's life can make in the world, to the recent *The Polar Express*, a story about a special Christmas train.



One day in the winter of 1842, the year of Somerville's birth, a train rolled through the city carrying a young man who, shortly after his visit to America, would change the holiday of Christmas forever.

Upon his arrival to Boston, Charles Dickens travelled from the Commonwealth's capital to the city of Lowell, taking copious notes on everything that he saw. That train – the first American train he ever boarded – rambled past the base of Prospect Hill where the first American flag was flown.



The locomotives' first stop was at the intersection of Washington Street and Tufts Streets, near the McGrath Highway, which, at that time, was near the site of the McLean Asylum. The station is now gone, but the rails remain.

The train brought the legendary author past the snow-filled pastures of what is now the base of Central Hill and Winter Hill. Dickens saw a land that under the Puritanical law of Governor Bellingham, the successor of John Winthrop, the first governor of MA and a Somerville

Continued on page 19

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MassDEP RTN 3-38473

A release of oil and/or hazardous materials has occurred at this location, which is a disposal site as defined by M.G.L. c. 21E, § 2 and the Massachusetts Contingency Plan, 310 CMR 40.0000. To evaluate the release, a Phase I Initial Site Investigation was performed pursuant to 310 CMR 40.0480. The site has been classified as TIER II pursuant to 310 CMR 40.0500. On December 9, 2024, FRALA Realty Trust filed a TIER II Classification Submittal with the Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). To obtain more information on this disposal site, please contact Kevin L. McAndrews, LSP for IES, Inc. at 617-623-8880. The Tier Classification Submittal and the Disposal Site file can be viewed at MassDEP website using Release Tracking Number (RTN) 3-38473 at <https://eeaonline.eea.state.ma.us/portal/dep/wastesite/> or at MassDEP, Northeast Regional Office, 150 Presidential Way, Woburn, MA 01801, 978-694-3200. Additional public involvement opportunities are available under 310 CMR 40.1403(9) and 310 CMR 40.1404.

12/11/24 The Somerville Times

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Community engagement and creative recipes are the key to success at Union Square’s backbar

CONT. FROM PG 1

backbar is helmed by co-owner Sam Treadway, who took the role as bar manager after working as a bartender at numerous places throughout the city. Treadway was fairly new to Union Square, and aspired to connect with the community while also serving high quality cocktails.

“We had an interesting reception of people being like ‘What is up with these drinks? What is up with these prices?’ and we’ve had to play a balancing act of realizing, well, we want to be a neighborhood bar that happens to have higher quality drinks, but we don’t want to put ourselves on some kind of pedestal where it’s this really fancy experience, and alcohol should be fun so let’s make it fun.”

Jacqueline Cain, editor for Time Out Boston, moved to Union Square in 2014 and was immediately enraptured by backbar’s ambiance, particularly the feel of the hidden door entrance.

“You’re like ‘am I in the right place?’ and you get there and the drinks were, like I can’t even describe, I didn’t even know what I was drinking, but I was very game.”

Sam Gabrielli, a bar manager in Cambridge, was a regular over ten years ago. Having just moved back to the area, he says the place still has the same feel it did when it first opened, but more fleshed out.

“It was a skeleton before, but now it is a body,” he said.

backbar’s rotating menus, which feature inventive cocktails, are a product of collective staff input and passions. Apart from the menus, the bartenders also offer the option to create something new for each guest, based on their preferences.

“You show up and you’re like ‘I don’t know what’s going on, I don’t know what half these ingredients are,’ and they’re so ready to give you recommendations or work with you to come up with a drink that you’re gonna love and remember in ways that I had really never experience before and now, ten years on, they still are innovating in that way,” Cain observes.

backbar’s creative cocktails are a result of the inventive, collaborative staff. Current bar manager Iruma Shibuya names the Akbar Sushi cocktail as a favorite invention of his, which involves rum, rice wine vinegar, and mango puree, as well as other ingredients that invoke a vegetarian cucumber mango sushi roll that Shibuya was inspired by.

“backbar is kind of like an artist collective of bartenders, and I kind of liken us to a bunch of artists that make 60 second sketches, but with cocktails instead,” Shibuya says.



Treadway credits the input and creativity of his staff for the menu innovations and themes, which range from Star Wars and Lord of the Rings to a Pride theme in June. The first iteration was a world map, which also featured fantastical locations such as Wakanda and Hogwarts, and proved to be a huge hit with customers.

“This was suddenly like ‘Oh, well now I have to come back, I have to try all the drinks, I need to know what India tastes like and I need to know what Russia tastes like.”

This welcoming nature extends to regular customers and community members. Valerie Li, a Somerville resident and food and drink writer and editor, says that she goes to backbar “on good days, on bad

days, on every other day. My partner and I spend a lot of time at backbar, not only to kind of try their new menu every once in a while, but also to just check in on the people working there, because they are really good friends and some of them are good family to us.”

Despite backbar’s appreciation for the acclaim they’ve received in news outlets, Treadway sees the welcoming space backbar has provided as the bar’s biggest achievement.

“The number one thing we do isn’t make drinks, the number one thing we do is take care of people and make them smile and welcome them into our weird little cocktail den for a couple hours,” he says.



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Advertising your business brings the community together and helps grow positive connections

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We are starting a new feature for the new year. As of January 1, 2025 we will be running a Neighborhood Marketplace page to give businesses a place to come together to advertise to new customers for a great price.

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The Somerville Times

Best of Somerville 2024

Cast your vote!

You have until December 20 to vote for your favorites in each category. To cast your vote, email us at thebestofsomerville@yahoo.com. The winners will be announced on in our January 1 edition. If you don't see your favorite category here, simply add it to this list.

Foods & Restaurants

Best Breakfast
Best Combination Breakfast & Lunch
Best Italian Food
Best Chinese Food
Best Mexican Food
Best Portuguese Food
Best Local Deli
Best Variety and all around Restaurant
Best Seafood
Best Irish Pub
Best Local Bar
Best Thai Food
Best Hamburger
Best Mac & Cheese
Best Hot-Dog
Best Roast Beef Sandwich
Best Pizza
Best Bakery
Best Sub Shop

Best of Somerville Services

Best Coffee Shop Franchise
Best Coffee Shop local
Best Bar Food

Best Electrician
Best Plumber
Best Attorney
Best Teacher
Best Politician
Best City Worker
Best Receptionist
Best Real Estate Agent/Realtor
Best Real Estate Rental Agent
Best Bank Teller
Best Bank Employee
Best Waitstaff
Best Bartender
Best Cook
Best Caterer

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Best Nurse
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Best Eye Doctor
Best Orthodontist
Best Mortgage Officer
Best Somerville Artist
Best Somerville Poet
Best Somerville Writer
Best Somerville Celebrity
Best City Elected Politician
Best City Employee DPW
Best City Employee City Hall/Annex

Best of Somerville Businesses

Best Somerville Bank
Best Real Estate Company
Best Insurance Agency
Best Creative Business in 2024
Best Florist
Best Laundromat
Best Liquor Store
Best Gas Station
Best Auto Body Shop
Best Tow Company
Best Law Firm
Best Pest Exterminator
Best Convenient/Neighborhood Store
Best Somerville Non Profit Agency
Best Bar For Bands

Best Idea in 2024

Worst Idea in 2024

10th Annual Holiday Stroll

The 10th Annual Holiday Stroll took place on Saturday, December 7. A celebration of Union Square sparkle, exploring all that the “38th coolest neighborhood in the world” has to offer. People were asked to visit their favorite Union Square businesses for the Stroll the Square Challenge and snap Elfie Selfies on the Festivus Trail. Pictured here are some of the Elfie Selfies that were taken.



ESMC Cozy Market

Friday nights East Somerville Main Streets Cozy Holiday Market at Deano's Pasta was a night of festive fun. There were activities for the whole family with The Beautiful Stuff Project, singing of Christmas Carols, delicious food from La Cosecha, amazing vendors and artisan with unique holiday goodies and pictures with Santa.



Photos by Devon Moos and Mary Cassesso



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Ms. Cam's

Olio

Answers

1. Hair

2. Jefferson Airplane

3. 4th Century

4. Graham cracker

5. 1969

6. The Brady House

7. Blow Pops

8. 5

9. Kit Kat

10. A griddle

11. Training Day (2001)

12. The Dark Knight (2008)

OBITUARY

Joseph M. Walsh



Joseph M. Walsh of Stoneham passed away peacefully with his family by his side on Thursday, December 5, 2024.

Born and raised in Somerville, Joe was the loving son of the late Michael and Mary (Murphy) Walsh who immigrated to the United States from Ireland as teenagers. Joe was the beloved husband for 52 years of the late Barbara A. (Collins) Walsh. The devoted father of Jay Walsh and his wife Joanie, Kevin Walsh and his wife Linette, Mark Walsh and his wife Michaela, and Kerri Moore and her husband Tom. The beloved “Papa” (grandfather) of Ryan, Cam, Kyra, Tyler, Brenden, Will, Emma, Harper, Timmy, Riley, and the late Casey. Joe was the dear brother of Margaret (Walsh) Mannion

and her late husband Sean. He is survived by many loving nieces and nephews.

Joe was a teacher at heart who dedicated his entire life teaching, supporting, and mentoring kids. He spent over 35 years in the Somerville School System, as both a teacher and principal, most notably at the Southern Junior High School and Winter Hill Community School. Joe’s dedication and commitment positively impacted the lives of many students, teachers and administrators. Joe coached many sports at both the youth and high school levels, always focused on teaching the game and ensuring his teams played the game with respect.

Family meant everything to Joe. He never turned down an opportunity to spend time with his children or grandchildren whether it was attending sporting events or plays, assisting with homework, reading a book, playing a game, treating for lunch, watching a movie or asking about something that happened during their day. Joe cherished every opportunity to provide support in any way to his kids and grandkids. He will be remembered most for his devotion to family, sense of humor, and always holding true to his principles. Joe has left behind many meaningful and happy memories for those who knew and loved him. His friends and family will continue to honor his legacy by always prioritizing family, maintaining a sense of humor, lending a hand to those in need, and living their lives to the fullest.

Funeral from the Barile Family Funeral Home, 482 Main St. (RT 28) STONEHAM Thursday, December 12th at 9am followed by a Funeral Mass Celebrating Joseph’s Eternal Life in St. Patrick Church, 71 Central St. Stoneham at 10am. Family and friends are cordially invited to gather and share memories with the Family on Wednesday, December 11th from 4-7pm in the Funeral Home. Parking attendants and elevator available. Interment St. Patrick’s Cemetery, Stoneham.

Please consider making donations in Joseph’s memory to the Casey-Girl Foundation, Inc. 20 Susan Drive, Reading, MA 01867.

For more information, www.facebook.com/BarileFamilyFuneralHome

Green Line closure in process



Workers stage along Lowell Street at the Magoun Square MBTA station Saturday. The Green Line is currently shut down from December 6th through December 20th between Medford/ Tufts, Union, and Park Street as part of planned track work.

MBTA officials have been working for over a year to resolve track slow down areas, with this section being one of the last in 2024.

For more information, please visit mbta.com/TrackProgram.

— Jeffrey Shwom

SPD's 'Fill The Cruiser' Toy Drive rolls on

Thank you to everyone who came out to the Toy Drive over the weekend. We had a great time meeting new friends and your donations are truly appreciated. This upcoming weekend is the last for the "Fill The Cruiser" Toy Drive benefitting families of the Mystic Learning Center. Officers will be at Target on Friday, (4 – 8 p.m.), Saturday (12 – 8 p.m.), and Sunday (12 – 8 p.m.).

— Somerville Police Department



COMMENTARY

The views and opinions expressed in the commentaries and letters to the Editor of The Somerville Times do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of The Somerville Times, its publishers or staff.

Our Civic Backlog



By Chris Dwan

A casual observer of Somerville politics, dropping in on a meeting or two, might get the impression that the city is overcommitted. It's actually much worse than it appears at a first glance. The city's backlog of projects, commitments, and crises is long enough that it is difficult to even list them all — let alone meaningfully address them.

The first hour of the City Council's November 14 meeting [1] was a painful example of this. The first speaker asked after a stalled playground redesign [2] at the Kennedy School (funded in 2019). The director of Arts at the Armory [3] gave a bleak update on long-term leases and re-iterated her organization's intention to relocate [4] if the city can't get its act together. Finally, a parade of veterans demanded to know where the war memorials formerly displayed on Central Hill are being kept and when they might be restored. The memorials were moved in 2018 [5] during the construction of the High School. According to one of the speakers, they have been outdoors "in a DPW lot in Inner Belt," ever since. As veteran after veteran rose from a packed room to approach the microphone, acting Council President Pineda Neufeld eventually broke in to ask how many speakers there were going to be. The council settled on allowing "two more," though many more than that were ready and willing to stand up and hold the city to account.

The fiasco at the Armory is really something: The city council

took the building by eminent domain in May of 2021 [6] with the express purpose of keeping the current tenants in place. In the ensuing three and a half years, we have failed to offer them long-term leases. We did use the building as an ad-hoc warming center last winter, which came with a raft of entirely predictable challenges. Shortly after the brutal council meeting described above, the administration released a "master plan" [7] for the building. At a glance, that plan seems to kick the work of creating a plan (not authoring leases, but formulating a framework under which leases might be offered) to a notional committee that has yet to be named, much less seated.

At that same November meeting — with overnight temperatures already dipping into the teens — the mayor requested \$388k to fund this year's warming center at the Cummings School on Central Hill. We somehow didn't account for this at budget time just five months ago, nor did we get a head start on the long-deferred maintenance required to make the space safe. Because of that, the city is now in a time crunch and is renting heated bathroom trailers since the indoor facilities are not up to the task. The intended usage also seems to have snuck up on the Department of Public Works (DPW), who are scrambling to move stuff that they had been warehousing there.

Speaking of toilets — it's been nearly two years since the city allocated nearly a million dollars to build "Portland Loos" in Davis, Union, and lower Broadway. Several have been installed in Cambridge during that time, but Somerville's efforts have lagged. While not a panacea, public restrooms sure would help with our ongoing issues of public defecation. As Councilor Ewen-Campen said back in September of 2021: "Access to bathrooms is not



A crane lifts an I-beam to begin repairs to the clock tower at City Hall.

— photo taken from a city update email

a niche or a special-interest issue."

Our effort to establish civilian oversight of the police is another example. In June of 2020, responding to the social upheaval triggered by George Floyd's on-camera murder by a Minneapolis Police Officer, then-Mayor Curtatone proposed a million-dollar budget to establish a program and fund for "Racial and Social Justice" (RSJ). Three quarters of those funds came from the Police Department's operating budget. This is part of the "defunding" that, according to multiple statements [8] from former Chief of Police Femino, have demoralized and reduced the effectiveness of the force. Four years later, we do not have civilian oversight, nor have we "re-imagine"

policing in any substantive way. We did receive a long-awaited Police Department Staffing and Operations Report [9] more than a year ago, but I am not aware of any follow up to either adopt or refute its recommendations. This leaves the department in the position of trying to deliver on an ambiguous mission with reduced staff and a feeling that the city has turned against them — for a fifth year running.

I submitted a public records request in September asking for "reports, presentations, memoranda, and summaries prepared by [RSJ] that convey results or updates on the effort to 're-imagine' policing, establish civilian oversight of the police, establish an alternative emergency re-

sponse program, and encourage 'public safety for all.'" The response included 80 documents — nearly half of which were formulaic opening slides for meetings that exhorted the participants to, among other things, "expect and accept non-closure." The slides also included non-disclosure and photo release agreements that task force members were required to sign as a condition of their participation.

The results did include the staffing study mentioned above and the results of a survey on "Public Safety for All," [10] both delivered more than a year ago. As of this fall, we have a new chief of police and a new director of RSJ. I wish them every success, and I can only

Continued on page 17

Show Me Your Bits: ‘Bridging the standup and improv communities’

CONT. FROM PG 5

individually and as a crowd.”

Jonathan moved to Boston to do stand-up originally. “I was doing open mics for a while and by happenstance, I got invited to what I thought was an improv show but was an improv jam. I did better than I had between doing at open mics.

Though now on a cast at Union Comedy and is an understudy for The NXT Show (which has Atomic Comedy host Addy Gover) at Improv Asylum, his personal journey brought him to develop this show on his own. “I tried to get on the main cast (at Improv Asylum) a year before and I had gotten rejected. I figured I should get back into standup. I booked a spot for Show Me Your Bits. I figured if I had that goal in mind, I would dedicate myself to it.”

Show Me Your Bits, unlike other more traditional Boston comedy shows that may have, say, “15 white dudes in a row doing the same bit,” intentionally has a mixed gender show, Jonathan relayed. “It is three or four dudes (and) three or four girls. We always try to keep it balanced.”

In terms of the space, Jonathan is a fan of the Arts at The Armory. “They let people do what they want. We have done some weird stuff. Someone carved a pumpkin on stage. Someone ate soil. They have been very supportive. I would hate to see new management. The Arts at The Armory is a place where unique people can stand out.”



Our Civic Backlog

CONT. FROM PG 16

imagine that they will need some time to settle in and learn the lay of the land before making any substantial changes. In response to a direct question about when we might see further updates from RSJ, the city’s public records officer told me today that the long-awaited December update will consist of a “save-the-date” for an update to be delivered in January or February.

The negotiations over a community benefits agreement between the Union Square Neighborhood Council (USNC) [11] and Rafi Properties [12], owners of the “Somer-nova” project, are similarly opaque. USNC’s last public update [13] on the process is from June, unless you count a blistering public communication [14] from the co-chairs in the minutes of the most recent city council meeting. The participants in the negotiating process are bound by confidentiality agreements, though they have promised a still-to-be-scheduled “mid-point update” sometime early in 2025.

Whether it’s charter reform, an updated plan for 90 Washington Street, contracts for the majority of the city’s union workers, any motion at all on the former home of the Somerville Media Center [15] – or any of a dozen other supposed priorities, the story always seems to be the same.

To be clear: I do not blame city staff for this situation. It is staff – union staff in particular – who got the schools open on time after the collapse at the Winter Hill School last summer [16], delivered the recent streetscape updates to Wash- ington Ave, paved Highland Ave, seem on track to put a bow on Spring Hill in time for winter and who are currently repairing the clock tower at City Hall. This is not a matter of anybody doing a bad job or failing to show up. Rather, the city is trying to do too many things without clear, un-ambiguous, public priorities and strong ac-countability. We need leadership who will tell us the trade-offs. We deserve to know, in clear terms, what’s not going to happen. We need an administration who will own delays and slipped deadlines for what they are rather than letting the council take the heat while adjusting the goalposts.

We also need to staff up, which means finalizing those union contracts so we can attract and retain workers. The city’s jobs portal has more than 100 open positions right now – a substantial fraction of the city’s total budgeted staff. Pushing things off to contractors and consultants is both more expensive and long-term less effective than building in-house capacity.

There’s an old saying: “No means no to one thing, yes means no to many things.” When we say no, we specify what is being set aside. When we say yes, we usually have no idea what other priorities have quietly slipped off the front page. We’ve said “yes” and “maybe” to too many things for too many years. There is no possible way to deliver on all of them. Under these circumstances, we wind up kicking the can down the road and complaining to the city council while letting the years slide past.

imagine that they will need some time to settle in and learn the lay of the land before making any substantial changes. In response to a direct question about when we might see further updates from RSJ, the city’s public records officer told me today that the long-awaited December update will consist of a “save-the-date” for an update to be delivered in January or February.

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The Racial and Social Justice (RSJ) Project

1. RSJ Project on Reimagining Policing: Civilian Oversight Community-driven process to establish a civilian oversight committee for the SPD	2. RSJ Project on Reimagining Policing: A New Public Safety Model Community-driven process to develop a new public safety model that includes civilian response, holistic thinking, and other approaches
3. Racial and Social Justice Fund Devoted to community-identified and -prioritized investments in racial and social justice initiatives	4. Director of Racial and Social Justice Executive-level position focused on dismantling systemic racism and social inequality in Somerville
	5. SPS RSJ Investments Counseling, family support, and other initiatives to support student wellbeing and growth

A slide from Mayor Curtatone’s FY21 budget presentation in June of 2020, outlining the goals of the new Racial and Social Justice Project.

Links:

[1] <https://somervillema.legistar.com/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=1104561&GUID=6C2813ED-45FF-4B67-92C6-606757E8DB30&Options=info%7C&Search=>

[2] <https://www.cambridgeday.com/2024/11/29/speed-up-work-on-kennedy-school-playground-community-members-say-after-years-of-inaction/>

[3] <https://artsatthearmory.org/>

[4] <https://artsatthearmory.org/about/armory-master-plan/>

[5] <https://www.shsproject.org/central-hill-removals.html>

[6] <https://www.somervillema.gov/news/city-moves-acquire-somerville-armory-building>

[7] <https://voice.somervillema.gov/armory-master-plan>

[8] <https://somervillema.legistar.com/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=1104561&GUID=6C2813ED-45FF-4B67-92C6-606757E8DB30&Options=info%7C&Search=>

[9] <https://www.thesomervilletimes.com/archives/129002>

[10] <https://www.somervillema.gov/psfa>

[11] <https://sites.google.com/view/usnc>

[12] <https://rafiproperties.com/>

[13] <https://drive.google.com/file/d/160c5LSky-WzMcBEDyEhj00AjXhLu-a6E3/view>

[14] <https://somervillema.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7033345&GUID=CED3804D-DD89-4BF8-9895-1B4619869156&Options=&Search=>

[15] <https://www.somervillemedia.org/>

[16] <https://www.wbur.org/news/2023/06/02/fallen-concrete-somerville-school-closure>

SENIOR CENTER HAPPENINGS:

Upcoming Events:

Medical Equipment Program – Through the generosity of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and from the direction of Mayor Ballantyne, the Council on Aging can provide Durable Medical Equipment at no cost to Somerville residents. Residents with a documented need for medical equipment must be over the age of 60, or have a permanent disability, and must be otherwise unable to afford or access needed medical equipment. We currently have available: Commodes, Bath Benches, Rollator Walkers, Incontinence Supplies and Transport Wheelchairs (wheelchairs are intended for transport and are not self-propelling or self-breaking.) For additional information, or for an application, please contact Debby Higgins at 617-625-6600, ext. 2321.

Lockboxes for Seniors - What is the Lockboxes for Seniors program? The Lockboxes for Seniors program is intended to provide Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) access to your residence in the event of an emergency where you are unable to open the door. A key to your residence will be stored in a secure metal storage device, like a realtor's lockbox, at your residence. The access code to the lockbox will only be available to Police, Fire, or EMS personnel and used only during an emergency. Who is eligible? The program is targeted towards Somerville community members who live alone and are aged 65+, or those who are disabled and/or suffer from major medical illness at any age. Individuals living in apartment complexes or other facilities with maintenance staff are not eligible for this program. How do I know this is safe? A member of the Somerville Fire Department will install and demonstrate how the lockbox operates and answer any questions you may have. The four-digit combination on the lockbox will only be available to respond to emergency personnel in the event of an emergency. Who should I contact for more information? For more information, please contact Debby Higgins at the Council on Aging via E-mail at dhiggins@somervillema.gov or by telephone at (617) 625-6600 ext. 2321. The Council on Aging will verify eligibility for services. This program is designed for those who are at most significant risk for falls or have limited mobility. All participants will be required to provide a spare house key to be used in the lock box as well as a safety inspection of the property.

COA Holiday Luncheon – Tuesday, December 17th from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Dilboy Post located at 351 Summer Street. Special performance by A&W Ukulele Players. \$10. Per person. Lunch will be Chinese food including fried rice, chow mein and appetizers will be served at noon. Please RSVP to Debby Higgins by calling 617-625-6600, ext. 2321.

Flu and COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics – Thursday,

December 12th (ages 19+) from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Clinics are open to the public, please register via the City of Somerville Website: www.somervillema.gov Clinics will be held at the Holland Street Senior Center located at 167 Holland Street.

FDIC Money Smart: Financial Fraud – Friday, December 13th starting at 11:00 a.m., representatives from Northern Bank will conduct a presentation on financial exploitation. This presentation will include different types of financial exploitation and tips and techniques for avoiding financial fraud as well as how to avoid being scammed over the phone and the internet. RSVP by calling Natasha Naim at 617-625-6600, ext. 2317 or email Natasha at nnaim@somervillema.gov

Virtual Reality Experiences – Mediation Experience – Tuesday, December 17th starting at 11:00 a.m. at our Holland Street Center. Join us as we travel to different destinations and learn interesting facts about each place. Using ARPA funding directed to the Council on Aging by Mayor Ballantyne, the COA has partnered with Rendever, a Somerville based company focusing on the benefits of virtual reality in older populations. Studies have found that virtual reality can help reduce stress, decrease isolation, reduce pain and lower fall risk. Virtual reality is a 3D, computer generated simulation that is accessed through wearing a headset. RSVP to Molly Pagliuca at 617-625-6600, ext. 2318 or email Molly at mpagliuca@somervillema.gov

Technology Workshops – Mondays, December 16th and 30th from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. at our Holland Street Center. The Council on Aging continues to strive to close the technology gap by partnering with Somerville Cambridge Elder Services to bring technology workshops to the COA. Each Monday session will focus on different topics related to internet use and safety.

Monday, December 16th – Passwords – Discussion and advice about your passwords and how to store them.

Monday, December 30th – Smart Watches – What are they and how to use them.

If you have any questions or to RSVP contact Molly Pagliuca at 617-625-6600, ext. 2318 or email Molly at mpagliuca@somervillema.gov

Tech Time – Drop-in Hours – Tuesday, December 17th starting at 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at our Holland Street Center. Receive assistance with all of your phone, tablet and computer questions. RSVP by contacting Molly Pagliuca at 617-625-6600, ext. 2318 or email Molly at mpagliuca@somervillema.gov

Portuguese Senior Coffee Social – The third Monday of each month (December 16th) from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at our Ralph & Jenny Center located at 9 New Washington Street.

Holiday celebration. This event will be bilingual in Portuguese and English. RSVP to Juliana Bertoldo by calling 978-291-8277.

Knitting Group – Tuesday, December 17th from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at our Holland Street Center located at 167 Holland Street. Calling all crafters! Show off all of the items you have made this year at our Holiday craft party. Items do not need to be holiday themed to be appreciated. Natasha will bring in her yarn swift and winder if you need to wind yarn. Please RSVP to Natasha Naim at 617-625-6600, ext. 2317 or email Natasha at nnaim@somervillema.gov.

Book Club – Meets the 3rd Friday of each month (December 20th) starting at 10:00 a.m. at our Holland Street Center. Do you love books and want to discuss your love of reading with others? Consider joining the Book Club. This month's selection is 'The Dog Went Over the Mountain' by Peter Zheutlin. The group meets in person and concurrently via Zoom. To RSVP or to inquire about the book club selection please call Natasha Naim at 617-625-6600, ext. 2317 or email Natasha at nnaim@somervillema.gov as space is limited.

Please note The Council on Aging will be closed on Wednesday, December 25th in observance of Christmas. The office and centers will be closing at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 24th.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Stay connected via our Facebook page - Informative, entertaining, lots of photos and updates. Vis-it our page at <https://www.facebook.com/SomervilleCOA/>

Follow the Somerville Council on Aging on Instagram! You can find us under the Instagram handle: somervillecouncilonaging If you have any questions or need help following us, contact Debby Higgins at 617-625-6600 ext. 2321 or email her at dhiggins@somervillema.gov

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

If you would like to receive a virtual copy of our monthly newsletter, please contact Maureen Bastardi at 617-625-6600, ext. 2335 or email Maureen Bastardi at mbastardi@somervillema.gov.

If you would like to receive a copy of our monthly newsletter in the mail, please contact Connie Lorneti at 617-625-6600, ext. 2319 or email Connie at clorenti@somervillema.gov.

If you would like to become part of our Google Group, please contact Debby Higgins at 617-625-6600, ext. 2321 or email Debby at dhiggins@somervillema.gov

Historical Fact

CONT. FROM PG 9

Ten Hills’ resident, banned the Christmas holiday altogether citing “superstitious festivals held to the dishonor of God.” This ban was in place for 22 years from 1659-1681. At the time of Dickens’ journey Christmas was not, by any means, celebrated with the fervor that it is today.

On his trip to Lowell, he passed a Somerville factory that manufactured doornails and railroad spikes. His observations from the train would one year

later be published in his work, *American Notes*, in which he described how the passengers huddled around the potbelly stoves for heat. The smoke generated by the stoves created what he described as an eerie ghost-like image throughout the train car.

In Lowell, he saw the arduous plight of many mill workers. Dickens had no trouble relating to them because he had been forced to work in a London blacking mill

from the ages of 9-11 to help free his parents from debtors’ prison. While the mill conditions in Lowell were difficult, he found them to be better than their English counterparts.

Dickens’ train travelled back through Somerville at the end of the day, and he declared the Boston area to be his favorite of all in America. In fact, he was quoted as declaring the day he spent going to Lowell MA as “the most pleasant I spent in the country.”

In 1843, Dickens published *A Christmas Carol*, which was wildly successful and critically acclaimed. It incorporated the themes of winter, ghosts and the social injustices of industry. The novella created the phrase: “Merry Christmas” and no fewer than nine motion pictures and countless other adaptations have been made based upon the treasured tale.

Merry Christmas ... everyone.

Beacon Hill Roll Call

CONT. FROM PG 6

Massachusetts Teacher of the Year.

The Massachusetts Teacher of the Year is the state’s top award for educators and annually recognizes excellence in teaching across Massachusetts through the selection of a teacher who exemplifies the dedication, commitment and positive contributions of educators statewide. The award is sponsored by Wellpoint, a Woburn-based health benefits company which is giving a \$10,000 grant to Sparrow’s school.

“My mom was a school nurse and my stepdad was a public school teacher, so I have a deep appreciation for the incredible work that our educators and staff do day in and day out for their students,” said Gov. Healey. “It was so special to have the opportunity to congratulate and celebrate Ms. Sparrow today for her commitment to creating an inclusive learning environment that helps all of her students grow and succeed together.”

“Ms. Sparrow is an example of the exceptional educators we have in Massachusetts who go above and beyond to support all of their students and foster an inclusive learning environment,” said Education Secretary Patrick Tutwiler. “It’s a pleasure to celebrate with her, her dedicated team, students and school community today.”

“My students, just like all others with significant disabilities, deserve the opportunity to learn alongside their neurotypical peers not because they are able to do many of the same tasks, but simply because everyone deserves a chance to belong,” Sparrow said upon accepting the award.

UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE - The Massachusetts Campaign for Single Payer Health Care (Mass-Care) announced the official results of its Question 6 (or 7), depending on the district, which was on the November ballot in eleven state representative districts. The question was approved in all eleven districts with an average Yes vote of 64 percent.

The ballot question specifically asked, “Shall the representative for this district be instructed to vote for legislation to create a single-payer system of universal health care that provides all Massachusetts residents with comprehensive health care coverage including the freedom to choose doctors and other health care professionals, facilities and

services and eliminates the role of insurance companies in health care by creating an insurance trust fund that is publicly administered?”

QUOTABLE QUOTES

“As soon as we heard the news about Trump’s election, it really sent huge shockwaves through immigrant communities. We heard in the days following the election just so much fear. People are afraid of what’s coming. They’re afraid, for some folks, that they could lose a status, that they could be at risk for being arrested, potentially detained, potentially deported and could be facing family separation. — Elizabeth Sweet, executive director of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA), in an interview with the State House News Service.

“Massachusetts residents have been kept in the dark about the conditions within emergency housing shelters for migrants. The shocking stories coming to light underscore just one reason why the Healey-Driscoll Administration needs to put an end to its open door policy welcoming migrants.” — Mass GOP Chair Amy Carnevale on reports that Jon Fetherston, the former Director of a Massachusetts migrant shelter, has come forward as a whistleblower, exposing deeply disturbing and inhumane incidents within the state’s emergency shelter system.

“The survey’s findings highlight just how prevalent speeding is, especially among drivers who take other risks behind the wheel. Enforcement, community outreach and education continue to be absolutely critical to curbing a wide range of risky driving behaviors and ultimately lowering the number of traffic crash fatalities in the U.S.” — Mark Schieldrop, spokesperson for AAA, on its study that a higher proportion of American drivers admit to speeding, driving distracted and engaging in other risky behaviors than those who steadfastly follow the rules of the road.

“The latest revenue numbers offer clear evidence that the ultra-wealthy are remaining in Massachusetts and paying more in state taxes. Because the ultra-rich are finally paying closer to their fair share of state taxes, Massachusetts can afford to invest in the well-educated workforce and reliable transportation system our economy depends on.


Thanks to the voters who amended our Constitution to establish a fairer tax system, we can make Massachusetts more affordable for working families and start building an economy that works for everyone.” — Andrew Farnitano, spokesperson for the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition, which led the campaign to pass the 2022 ballot question which imposed an additional 4 percent income tax, in addition to the flat 5 percent one, on taxpayers’ earnings of more than \$1 million annually.

HOW LONG WAS LAST WEEK’S SESSION?

Beacon Hill Roll Call tracks the length of time that the House and Senate were in session each week. Many legislators say that legislative sessions are only one aspect of the Legislature’s job and that a lot of important work is done outside of the House and Senate chambers. They note that their jobs also involve committee work, research, constituent work and other matters that are important to their districts. Critics say that the Legislature does not meet regularly or long enough to debate and vote in public view on the thousands of pieces of legislation that have been filed. They note that the infrequency and brief length of sessions are misguided and lead to irresponsible late-night sessions and a mad rush to act on dozens of bills in the days immediately preceding the end of an annual session. During the week of December 2-6, the House met for a total of two hours and 53 minutes 37 minutes and the Senate met for a total of two hours and 50 minutes.

Mon Dec. 2	House 11:02 a.m. to 1:01 p.m. Senate 11:01 a.m. to 1:09 p.m.
Tues. Dec. 3	No House session No Senate session
Wed. Dec. 4	No House session No Senate session
Thurs. Dec. 5	House 11:02 a.m. to 11:56 a.m. Senate 11:13 a.m. to 11:55 a.m.
Fri. Dec. 6	No House session No Senate session

Bob Katzen welcomes feedback at bob@beaconhillrollcall.com



Somerville Fair Housing Commission
Question of the week

Q: My dog is essential to my physical and mental health. Do I have a right to have my dog live with me in my apartment?

A: It depends on whether it's a service dog or a companion for emotional support. They are categorized differently under the law. Service dogs are included in Fair Housing. "Enforcement agencies under the state statute and the Fair Housing Act encourage accommodations of comfort animals as well," according to Attorney William McKamie.

Somerville Fair Housing Commission generally meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at 3 p.m. online. Call 617-625-6600 ext. 2578 for the login information.

\$7 Tuesdays at The Somerville Theatre continues


For most of this year, tickets have been and will be \$7 on Tuesdays at the Somerville Theatre, as well as the Capitol Theatre in Arlington.

This is in celebration of installing solar power at the Arlington location earlier in 2024.

Per yourarlington.com, over 300 panels were installed which will help lower electricity costs at both theatres, since they are owned jointly.

Enjoy a cleaner viewing experience.

— Jeffrey Shwom



Somerville through the eyes of Denise




Jellyfish pavement...

— Photo by Denise Provost

BOBBY'S DAD JOKES CORNER

By Bobbygeorge Potaris



What did one snowman say to the other?
It smells like carrots.

The "Original"
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Dryer Vent/ HVAC Cleaning
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We travel all over Massachusetts
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To advertise in The Somerville Times call
Bobbie Toner
857-488-5138

On This Day in History

December 11

1882 – A production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe* at Boston's Bijou Theatre becomes the first performance in a theatre lit by incandescent electric lights.

1930 – As the economic crisis grows, the Bank of the United States closes its doors.

1936 – Britain's King Edward VIII abdicates the throne to marry American Wallis Warfield Simpson.

1941 – The United States declares war on Italy and Germany.

1951 – Joe DiMaggio announces his retirement from baseball.

1964 – Frank Sinatra, Jr., is returned home to his parents after being kidnapped for the ransom amount of \$240,000.

1967 – The Concorde, a joint British-French venture and the world's first supersonic airliner, is unveiled in Toulouse, France.

1972 – Challenger, the lunar lander for Apollo 17, touches down on the moon's surface, the last time that men visit the moon.

2001 – The People's Republic of China joins the World Trade Organization.

Newstalk CONT. FROM PG 7

Council and the Inside-Out Gallery present **Vernon Street Studios 50th Anniversary Retrospective Exhibit**, curated by **Steven Cabral**. This showcase was a part of Steven's community benefit project as a **Somerville Arts Council LCC 2024 Visual Arts Fellowship Awardee**. 1 Davis Square, Somerville. Learn more about the participating artists here: <https://somervilleartscouncil.org/insideout/vernonstreet50>.

Enjoy a festive evening filled with the classic tale of *A Christmas Carol* brought to life through music, dance, and holiday cheer. **December 14** at the **Arts at the Armory**, 191 Highland Ave, 1 – 5 p.m. **Callisto Stage Co.** is putting on their first production. This theatre company aims to make participating in theatre accessible to working people and all who have a passion. This is a one act adaptation of A Christmas Carol. For tickets and more information visit <https://art-satthearmory.org/>.

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne, the **Council on Aging** and **SomerViva** invite you to participate in their last gathering of 2024. Join in and celebrate another successful and joyful year as a community on **December 16**, 1:30 – 3 p.m. **Ralph and Jenny Center**, 9 New Washington St. For more information and to sign up call **Juilana Bertold** 978-291-8277. The **Senior Coffee Social** is a monthly event designed to provide a welcoming space where the Portuguese-speaking senior community can socialize while learning about city programming and services provided by community organizations. Please note that this event will take place in Portuguese.

This month, the **Somerville Public Library**, 79 Highland Ave., is pleased to display the artwork of local artist **John Ruymann** in the **Gallery @ SPL** with their exhibition: *Narrative Spaces*. Join them for a reception celebrating the exhibit. To learn more about the gallery <https://www.somervillepubliclibrary.org/adults/gallery-spl>.

Arts at the Armory will host **Wicked Good Aht Mahket** on **Monday, December 16**, 4 – 10:00 p.m., 191 Highland Ave. **The Aht Dept.** began as a backyard art show in 2022 put on by a passionate group of local artists trying to showcase their own aht. It has since grown to put

on larger events and festivals that connect artists to each other and the greater community as a whole. They strive to make AHT accessible and provide opportunities for local artists to showcase and sell their creations. Visit ahtdept.com.

Vernon Street Studios 50th Anniversary retrospective exhibit has opened at the **Nave Gallery**. This exhibit features over 50 artists. Celebrate artist both past and present. Exhibit open **Saturday and Sunday**, 1 – 5 p.m. Closes **January 9**, 6 – 8 p.m. Nave Gallery, 155 Powerhouse Blvd, Somerville.

The **Somerville Theatre** is hosting their annual performance of **The Slutcracker through January 5, 2025**. Based on **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's** famed 1890s ballet **The Nutcracker**, it combines high culture with burlesque tradition and gathers together local ballet dancers, strippers, belly dancers, pole performers, hula-hoopers, acrobats, plus other eccentric and exotic dancers. For more information and tickets visit www.somervilletheatre.com.

Free **COVID-19 and flu vaccine clinics** are happening soon: **Thursday, December 12**, at the **Council on Aging** (167 Holland St.) from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. and **Tuesday, December 17**, at **Central Branch Library** (79 Highland Ave.) from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Learn more and register for a vaccine clinic. <https://www.somervillema.gov/vaccinations>.

With the days growing shorter and temperatures dipping colder, the **Somerville Homeless Coalition** is in critical need of new or lightly used jackets for their clients currently living outside. If you have any adult sized coats hanging in your closet that you don't wear, please consider dropping them off at the Somerville Homeless Coalition admin office located at **255 Elm Street**, Suite 204 during the hours listed below. Drop Off Hours: Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., 2 – 5 p.m. Each coat donated provides warmth, dignity, and safety for our neighbors having to face the harsh New England winter conditions.

The **Somerville Flea Holiday Market** is back. Find that unique gift for that unique person. They will have a jam-packed floors of gift buying goodness featuring curated vintage wares and artisan creations. **12th annual Holiday**

Market at the Arts at the Armory, 191 Highland Ave, Somerville. Sip 'n shop starts at noon on **December 15**.

Creative Mending: Hand Embroidery, Thursday, December 12, 6 p.m. at the **East Branch Library**, 115 Broadway. The class will cover several basic embroidery stitches that can be used to embellish your clothing and hide (or highlight) holes and stains. Suitable for beginners with little or no embroidery experience, or those who want a refresher on the basics. This program is intended for adults. Registration required: visit <https://tinyurl.com/yc8btuw4>. Questions? Contact **Liam: lokeefe@somervillema.gov**.

Are you a **Somerville business or property owner** interested in brightening up your building's exterior? The **Somerville Arts Council** is looking for partners who would like to host a **vibrant mural** on their property. This is a unique opportunity to collaborate with local artists and enhance the character of our community through stunning public art. If you're interested in learning more about how they can work together to make your building a canvas for creativity, please reach out directly to discuss potential partnerships and project possibilities. <https://somervilleartscouncil.org/resources/calls>.

The holidays are just around the corner which means the **Somerville Homeless Coalition's Holiday Gift Drive** is now in full swing. This time of year can be especially difficult for their clients and their families which is why they host this drive each year to help spread the joy of the holidays to our less fortunate neighbors. At the moment, they still have 114 clients without a matched sponsor which is why they are asking for your help to make sure that everyone gets to be a part of this year's festivities. If you are interested in providing a gift for a client(s) contact 617-623-6111.

Central Somerville Avenue Wrap-Up and Presentation of Drafts will take place on **Monday, December 16**, 6 – 8 p.m., at **Somernova**, 8 Tyler Street, Somerville. Join in for a meeting to discuss the Central Somerville Avenue Area Planning. This meeting will be held both in person and remotely. Register here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/tZAkde2spzMjHNQpl5U4L-1N6bOOixhtj0SIIm>. For more informa-

tion: <https://voice.somervillema.gov/cen-som-ave>.

The **Somerville Winter Farmers Market** is back at the **Arts at the Armory**, 191 Highland Ave. on **Saturdays**, 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. **from November 2 to April 12**, (except November 30 and December 28). The Center for the Arts at the Armory is proud to offer a weekly winter market with 71+ local food vendors with the best locally grown and regionally produced foods, including fresh produce, cheese, eggs, meats, fish, breads, tamales, pastries, chocolate, skincare products, and more. The market accepts SNAP/EBT and HIP benefits. They also offer a \$15 SNAP match to customers each week. More info available on their website: <https://www.somwintermarket.org/>.

Is **your teen** looking to make some extra money? The city's **Snow Shoveling Program** is hiring youth to assist shoveling seniors and homeowners with disabilities out after snowstorms this winter. Teens and homeowners are paired for the season. After each storm, the homeowner will contact their assigned youth to request shoveling services. Somerville teens ages 14 to 19 are welcome to apply. Looking for snow shoveling services? Apply online or contact **Debby Higgins** at dhiggins@somervillema.gov.

Through the generosity of the **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)**, and from the direction of **Mayor Ballantyne**, the **Council on Aging** can provide **Durable Medical Equipment** at no cost to Somerville residents. Residents with a documented need for medical equipment must be over the age of 60, or have a permanent disability, and must be otherwise unable to afford or access needed medical equipment. We currently have available: Commodes, Bath Benches, Rollator Walkers, Incontinence Supplies and Transport Wheelchairs (wheelchairs are intended for transport and are not self-propelling or self-breaking.) For additional information, or for an application, please contact **Debby Higgins** at 617-625-6600, ext. 2321.

Don't forget, if you would like to subscribe to receive a **digital edition** of our paper, go directly online to our website over to the right side and fill out your email address to receive a free, full PDF copy of the paper.



OFF THE SHELF

by Doug Holder

'Homage' by Kathleen Spivack

Homage

By Kathleen Spivack

Wilderness House Press, Littleton, MA

ISBN: 978-1-7331185-3-8

43 Pages \$12.00

Review by Dennis Daly

Spanning oceans and multiple generations, *Homage*, Kathleen Spivack's newest collection of poems, delivers a movable feast of poets and other influencers of her estimable artistry. Spivack's narratives celebrate famous poets, musicians, painters, and booksellers, many of whom she personally knew and some before her time, as well as teachers, a lighthouse keeper, and other oddly interesting individuals.

Each of these poems seem perfectly weighted, upbeat, and toned with appreciation and even affection. Not an easy task given the ever-present and dark backstories of some of these fraught individuals.

Set in Elizabeth Bishop's apartment in Cambridge Massachusetts, Spivack, in her poem *Ping Pong Sestina for Elizabeth Bishop*, recounts a ping pong match between Bishop and herself. The match is much more than a game of course. The metaphors of career and life and youth and age and talent mesh together in this slightly irregular (read personalized), but masterful, form. Bishop, who is known for writing a terrific sestina herself, would approve.

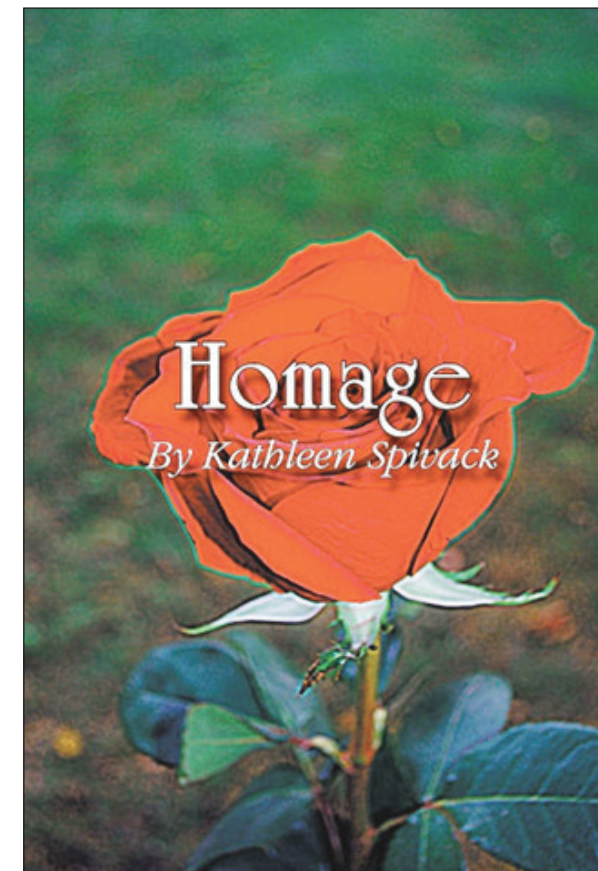
Spivack's admiration for Bishop's determination, despite her arthritic hands, powers up through this poem as she plots to throw the game to her adversary. This passion pushes the piece forward past Bishop's many unsaid torments. Consider these affecting lines,

... You so easily won
friends, admirers, yet always at play
was your encircled suffering, lack of love hinted,
gamely
ignored; the poems and stories in which pain was
handled
so far back behind the eyes that the poetry
stood for itself, was really poetry, not pain. You faced

it only obliquely. Once, showing me a photo, the face
of yourself as a baby, small, stubborn, not at all "po-
etic"

to let pieces of me float freely,
watch them drift into open minds.

Falling into shadows of feelings too deep,
too soft, too careful to bear,



protesting abandonment in crumpled white lace,
hands
tightly folded as if your dear life, even then, was not
a game, as if you sensed you had something dark to play
out, a despairing intelligence behind that winning

For Anne, Spivack's amazing short poem lamenting the death of her poet-friend, Anne Sexton, seems to sear through its printed page. Yes, it has the necessary pathos. Yes, it is resentful of death. Yes, it provides a modicum of solace. But above all that, the piece affirms the friendship of the two poets and salutes Sexton's life. The poem concludes this way,

Friend, from the phonograph you are still wise and true:
you go on talking, wry, amused.
No one could keep you from writing the poem-of-your-death
so I write a poem to your death, as you wanted me to.

Next stop Tours, France, in the lush Loire Valley. Spivack memorializes her former *Continued on page 23*

there's beauty in this gentle heart,
letting my thoughts reach out to others,
without words, without thinking,
an urge to love beyond my pride.

— Sofia Swan

Lyrical

SOMERVILLE

edited by Doug Holder

Our poet writes: "My name is Sofia Swan, and I'm a 19-year-old student from Saugus, Massachusetts, currently attending Endicott College. I wouldn't call myself a poet, but writing has given me a new way to explore my thoughts and emotions. *Unspoken Weight* is a poem about noticing the struggles in others and recognizing how trust and connection can feel both fragile and transformative. It's a reflection on how we carry emotions and experiences, often without words, and how vulnerability can lead to deeper understanding. Writing this poem allowed me to put those feelings into a form I hope others can connect with."



Unspoken Weight

I looked into his eyes,
which were far larger than mine,
calling to places I've never been.

In them, I saw the weight you carry,
the quiet storms hidden inside,
and though my heart felt tired and worn,
it swelled, searching and hoping.

How easy it is to give and care,
to shield the soul from pain and doubt,
to believe in dreams, hold onto scars,
filling the emptiness with passing words.

Trust felt fragile,
something distant, hard to reach,
but in this view, the words turned to air
and fears became a softer truth.

I want to pour myself out completely,
to listen without a second thought,
to give and take trust as it is, raw,

City's annual Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony

Somerville kicked off the holiday season Thursday, December 5, with a Christmas Tree Lighting on the City Hall Concourse. Santa Claus was escorted by the Somerville Fire and Police Departments making his grand entrance atop a shiny red fire truck. Once the tree was lit, children were able to have a meet-and-greet with Santa Claus in the Somerville High School Cafeteria. All children who attended received a special gift from Santa.

— Photos by Bobbie Toner



Off The ShelfCONT. FROM PG 22

French teacher in her poem *Madame Joelle Blot*, my French Teacher. The piece is gorgeous and my favorite poem in the collection. One can almost smell the French language in the metaphoric lilac perfume flooding these well-wrought lines. Mentors with moral and/or emotional authority can often open interior doors in addition to the proper subjects they impart. This clearly is the case between Madame Blot and Spivack. Here is the heart of the poem,

Madame Joelle Blot, my French teacher, determined that I should not spend another night without lilacs in my room.
Then you mouse-stepped down the ladder, little feet in little strappy high-heeled shoes, set the lilacs firmly in a crate and carried them inside, a bushel of lilacs. For me. No one had ever... Selecting just the exact tool, you laid into the lilacs with an enormous antique hammer, mashed down the woody stem-ends splintery and flat. This is how it's done, you showed me.
In France. Where they break eggs to make omelettes. In Tours, where they speak the best French, unaccented and pure, so they say. I wanted to learn that language from

you.
I was foreign, foreign even to myself
And so applied myself diligently to your lessons.
Even the lilacs knew you were boss...
Many writers fantasize at one time or another about being a lighthouse keeper (I have.). The extreme seclusion coupled with grave and undeniable responsibility has its attraction. *The Lighthouse Keeper*, Spivack's paean to that singular calling, does nothing to limit this allurements. She uses the Cape Antibes' lighthouse on the French Riviera as her example. Listen to Spivack's protagonist, enthroned in his glowing dome,
"I am in Paradise.
I live among the birds.
Sometimes I see angels:
I think I am becoming
an angel, drawn in a beam of light, upward, spreading hands over water, guiding ships.
If you listen, you can hear birds also encouraging the sailors, more benevolent than Ulysses' sirens."

If poetic romance and charm delights you, as well as mentoring power, muse upon Spivack's poem, *For George Whitman, Shakespeare & Co. Paris*. Whitman was the proprietor of the second iteration of Shakespeare & Co., a gathering place for American expats, located in Paris, France. Described by Spivack as eccentric and generous, Whitman inspired and promoted his visitors and encouraged them in their writings. The poem exudes joy, possibility, and thankfulness, a far cry from the usual depressing caricatures inherent in literary life. The piece ends thusly,
... all roads led
to Shakespeare & Company. Always had. She looked across the Seine. The vista took one's breath away: the bookshop; Paris spread
before her; conversation, Notre Dame....
To read to write, this was a writer's dream.
All this, and more: the writer's rooms, the cat, the company, including lively Sylvia, she praised.
Few of us get to say thank you to friends, teachers, and mentors who have encouraged us along the way, either directly or indirectly. Kathleen Spivack, capping her storied career as poet, writer, and teacher, found an opportunity to express her homage to those who came before and, using her breath-taking artistry, took it. How refreshing!

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