Somerville Public Schools to maintain mask mandate

By Fernando Cervantes Jr.

Last week the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley, announced updates to mask mandates in schools across the Commonwealth.

In a statement released by DESE on February 9, the department announced that mask mandates in K-12 schools would be lifted after February 28. The mandate was first implemented back in August 2021.

According to vaccination statistics from the CDC, about 78 percent of all Massachusetts residents are fully vaccinated, this rate makes the Commonwealth one of the most vaccinated populations in the United States.

Governor Baker echoed these sentiments in his reasoning for lifting mask mandates in schools. “With Massachusetts a national leader in vaccinating kids, combined

Although mask mandates in schools across the Commonwealth will be eased at the end of the month, Somerville public schools will continue its masking protocols for the near future.

Sweet City: Highlights from the latest ‘Bittersweet’ event

By Ryan DiLello

The Somerville Museum released a recording of the latest event for its ongoing Bittersweet exhibit. The virtual event, which examined the modern history of candy manufacturers in the greater Boston metro area, centered around a presentation from Jeremy Spindler, co-founder of Spindler Confections in North Cambridge.

In addition to churning out an impressive assortment of sugary goods, Spindler and his partner Jeremy Meyers take pride in owning more than 300 artifacts linked to the candy industry.

The meeting kicked off with an introduction from Bittersweet curator, Santiago Montoya. Co-curator, Jose Falconi, was unable to attend the evening’s event. Montoya provided a brief overview of the exhibit before Jeremy Spindler launched into his presentation. Readers can learn more about the Bittersweet project at: http://www.thesomervilletimes.com/archives/114638.
Four Somerville High School seniors have set an impressive tone early in the 2022 college scholarship season, each earning multi-year awards to continue their education. Edrick Pacheco earned the prestigious full four-year QuestBridge Scholarship to attend Tufts University starting this fall. Nathalya Castillo is the recipient of a full-tuition Posse Leadership Scholarship and will attend Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania. JC Welch was awarded a $27,000 Presidential Scholarship at Pace University’s New York City Campus that is renewable for four years, for a potential total award of $108,000. And Aidan O’Donovan, a 3-time Greater Boston League MVP in golf and a five-time League All-Star received a full golf scholarship to the University of Rhode Island. Aidan won the 2021 GBI Golf Championship in November to wrap up an impressive senior season, and was also named to the Boston Herald HS All-Scholarship Golf Team.

The Somerville Arts Council and Nave Somerville present From the Inside Out Exhibition at Nave Gallery, 155 Powder House Blvd. through February 27. Our world shut down during COVID. Like others whose work or schooling moved to their living spaces, many artists turned their focus inward. Some, fearing possible contamination of shared studio spaces or public transportation, moved their creative practice into their homes as well. It was a time of reflection. Relationships between interior and exterior shifted. New perspectives affected artist’s work and lifestyle. For more information visit https://somervilleartscouncil.org.

Happy birthday this week to the following: Happy birthday to Sean Fitzgerald, who is celebrating this birthday. We wish Sean a great day. Happy birthday to Nancy Trane, a great person. We hope she has a great day for herself as well. Happy birthday to City Councilor Kristen Strezo, we wish her a very happy birthday. Happy birthday to Christine Resmini. We hope she has a great day as well. Happy birthday to

Continued on page 7

The views and opinions expressed in Newstalk do not necessarily reflect those of The Somerville Times, its publisher or staff. The column has many contributors.

TheSomervilleTimes.com Comments of the Week

Response to: Somerville writer Steven Beeber: Finding the bagels, knishes and schmaltz in Punk Rock
Thelma says:
Thanks Steve. Wasn’t it the youngest child, not the Wicked Son, who asks the 4 Questions?

Response to: Mayor Ballantyne announces plan to make city boards and commissions more inclusive
ThéoNa says:
Perhaps we can get a motorist on the Traffic Commission.

Sean Cryts says:
I agree

Response to: Somerville School Committee discusses Brown School renovations
Tom says:
The infrastructure of this City is deplorable, knock this school to the ground. Look at city hall, DPW, And fire stations. They should all be condemned

Response to: City creates liaison and subcommittee for seniors
Claude Grant says:
Are there any new developments coming available in Union Square? If so, are there any which are affordable for senior citizens?

Response to: Phone home
Joe says:
enjoyed this very much
Joe

Response to: Tying up some loose ends
harry w says:
Great analysis as always Ken. Keep it going.

Log onto TheSomervilleTimes.com to leave your own comments

Somerville Weather Forecast
for the week of February 16 – February 22 as provided by the National Weather Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>CONDITIONS</th>
<th>HIGH/LOW</th>
<th>PRECIPITATION</th>
<th>HUMIDITY</th>
<th>WIND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Partly Cloudy</td>
<td>65°/28°</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>WSW 15 mph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Partly Cloudy</td>
<td>34°/29°</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>NW 8 mph</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Snow</td>
<td>38°/15°</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>ENE 14 mph</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Sunny</td>
<td>32°/16°</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>WNW 9 mph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Sunny</td>
<td>40°/26°</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>WSW 12 mph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Partly Cloudy</td>
<td>30°/11°</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>WNW 15 mph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Partly Cloudy</td>
<td>27°/20°</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>W 12 mph</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Conditions subject to change. Always check a daily forecast prior to activities that can be affected by the weather.
I just had a very nice visit with my mother and father … in a dream. They have both been gone for over 20 years and I’m just trying to figure out what they were trying to tell me. I asked my father if he wanted to be buried with his Yankees hat and he said yes. Well, that didn’t happen because I still have the hat. Dad was in the kitchen making some eggs and toast then all of a sudden, he came and sat in the living room and I said what happened to your breakfast? And he said he didn’t like the way the toast tasted with the butter that was in the fridge. So, I went to the fridge and got him the “I Can’t Believe It’s Not Butter!” and told him it tasted better than the whipped butter that he used. My mother really didn’t say much. There was a puddle near the sink and she got a cloth and sopped it up. Dad found an old note that had fallen behind something and it said, “Call Louise Scott.” Louise was the landlady and our good friend when we lived on Pearson Ave. up until 1961, when we bought the Hall Ave. house. I had spoken to Louise’s daughter Paula yesterday.

Then my father came and sat in the chair that I’m looking at right now. I remember touching his cheek. And that’s when I asked if he wanted to be buried in his Yankees hat. He suggested changing the subject. It’s only the second time I had a dream about my father and mother since they passed away in 1987 and 1994. It was really nice to see him and mom. I really miss them.

Since then, I haven’t dreamed of my parents. I have an annoying recurring nightmare involving one of my old bosses. He’s been renting space in my subconscious since the first day he fired me. I wish they would stop. He annoyed me enough in real life and now he’s annoying me in my sleep!

Once a while back I had a dream. I was in Davis Square back working at Woolworths, where I worked in 1969. I was behind the luncheonette counter again making grilled cheese sandwiches, hot dogs and frappes, and all the other goodies. That was a great dream. I woke up craving a grilled frankfurter, free of course. Wouldn’t it be great if you could actually go back in time to the place is that we loved? That would certainly be a dream come true. Two-way traffic in Davis Square, tons of bars, two five and ten stores and all the other stores we loved, like Gorin’s and Parke Snows.

The photos are my mom in front of Gorin’s after the Blizzard of ’78, and dad in our kitchen. I miss all the old stores but I miss mom and dad more. Thank goodness for precious photos and priceless memories. What I wouldn’t give to join my mother and father for a nice lunch at the Waldorf. Maybe that will be my next dream!
Somerville Public Schools to maintain mask mandate  

CONT. FROM PG 1

with our robust testing programs, it is time to lift the mask mandate in schools and give students and staff a sense of normalcy after dealing with enormous challenges over the past two years,” Governor Baker said. Although the mask mandate in schools is to be lifted, a new testing program is slated to remain in place. “Massachusetts also has nation-leading school testing programs, including a newly launched at-home testing program for students and educators. These testing options will remain in place,” according to the statement.

Currently in the Commonwealth there are three different ways for K-12 students to be tested for COVID. With At-Home Rapid Antigen Testing, Diagnostic Testing and Pool testing being these options.

Although this update was released by a state agency, individual school districts can continue to require masks in schools. One of the school districts that will continue to require masks in schools is in Somerville.

In an email, Somerville Public Schools (SPS) stated their intention to maintain mask mandates in schools. “Currently, Somerville Public School’s COVID-19 mitigations remain unchanged, including mask requirements,” the email stated. “We’ll continue to evaluate local, state, and national guidance, and modify our safety measures according to community data and expert recommendations.”

In another email sent to SPS staff, the district expressed cautious optimism at the current state of COVID across the district. “We are fortunately seeing a rapid decline in COVID cases across SPS and Somerville. SPS is now back to pre-Thanksgiving levels in terms of weekly cases,” the email said. “While the district will continue multi-layered mitigation, we will be adjusting some protocols to align with lower transmission rates.”

According to the City of Somerville, in the previous 10 days, there have been 275 confirmed cases across the city. Also, according to the same statistics, about 61,000 people in the city are fully vaccinated with all three doses.

In the same email sent to staff, the district outlined mask requirements for sporting events in the future. “In that spirit, SPS is re-opening athletic events to spectators next week and we have updated our testing protocols to align with DESE’s updated testing program. The indoor mask requirement at athletic and school events will remain for now,” according to the email. COVID testing in the district is slated to be mostly done though at-home antigen tests; these test kits are named iHealth kits. The district is expecting for students to receive these kits later this week.

According to protocols, students and staff are asked to use these kits every Sunday before the beginning of the school week. Looking towards the future, the City of Somerville and Somerville Public Schools will keep adjusting mask mandates in schools.” The School Committee and Board of Health will have to vote on changing their respective mask policies. We will be working with the School Committee to address this important issue, but do not anticipate a change in school masking requirements on February 28 directly after February break,” according to the staff email.

Sweet City: Highlights from the latest ‘Bittersweet’ event  

CONT. FROM PG 1

“When you walk around Boston today, unless you know the history and you know what to look for, you would have no idea what the [candy] industry existed here,” Spindler began.

According to Spindler, the Boston area was home to 140 candy factories. “These were not just mom and pop shops,” Spindler clarified, “these were multi-level factories.”

Data from the New England Manufacturing Confectioners Association provided a breakdown of candy production sales on a yearly basis. As Spindler noted, differences in currency conversions from then to today vary due to inflation.

• 1889: $5,800,000.00 (ca. 196 million today)
• 1913: $20,000,000.00 (ca. 1.6 billion today)

Founded in 1888 as a small shop in Dorchester, Massachusetts, followed by the first refinery in 1854 in East Boston. Then 1847 the first candy making machine was invented in Boston; then that same inventor started Chace & Co. in 1847, the first confectionery company in the country. By 1878, according to the Boston Business Directory List, there were 39 confectionery manufacturers, 2 chocolate manufacturers, and 80 confectionery shops.

Spindler discussed the history of a few prominent shops beginning with those in Cambridge, followed by Boston and then Somerville.

Cambridge boasted “Confectioner’s Row,” a stretch about three quarters of a mile from Central to Kendall, teeming with candy manufacturers, wholesalers, shops, and packaging centers. Between 1953-1954, Cambridge had 38 manufacturers, 8 wholesalers, and 37 chocolate shops and ice cream parlors. Today, the city has only one manufacturer (which makes Junior Mints), and 8 chocolate shops. “I think we’ve had a shift in culture,” Spindler said, and noted coffee has taken over with 33 coffee shops in Cambridge alone. Just short of half are Dunkin’ Donuts.

Cambridge was home to many candy establishments, but Page and Shaw was a major one. Founded in 1888 as a small shop in Boston, the company moved to a larger factory in 1911, located on Ames Street, right off of Main Street.

In 1920, an investor named Otis Emerson acquired control of the company and grew it into one of the largest in the world with locations in the bustling city centers of London, Paris, Montreal, and New York. Sales peaked in 1924 then suffered a steep decline as demand for chocolate fell during the depression. In 1930, the U.S. Federal Government found Otis Emerson and two fellow stock brokers guilty of fraud. They were issuing legitimate stock at two dollars a share, then pocketing the money. A year later, Daggett, a candy manufacturer who happened to be next-door neighbors with Page and...
By Kyle Dante

Pest control is an issue faced by many communities. Somerville is no exception, having experienced a significant rodent problem for years.

Last year paralleled the spike of 2019: 28.07% of the 2021 rodent infestation occurred during the summer, with nearly 41% representing the 2019 spike. Despite the percentage difference, both indicate a large number of rodents. As evidenced by the data, the infestation is bad.

Thankfully, there is a plan in motion. Somerville residents made 1,172 phone calls via 311 in 2021. In total, 335 properties received monitoring in addition to bait over a three-week period. Most of the rodent concentration calls came from MacArthur St. and Broadway.

On February 15, the Somerville City Council met regarding the SMART Pilot Program. SMART is a data-driven method for rodent control. It uses GPS devices above and underground for collecting data. SMART collects the following data: rodent movement, hitting the rodents, and capturing them. Two specific methods were covered: hammer strikes in the sewer system and rodent boxes that give off an electrical charge.

Both methods will aid in studying rodent movements and their subsequent decline. The hammer strikes, for example, provide a tech hit when a rodent gets attacked by the hammer. A heat signature emits from the hammer strike before the rodent is captured. It will pinpoint the location in aiding the pest control.

On the other hand, the box capture is an update to baiting. The rodent will eat the bait, setting off an electrical charge. As a result, it will catch the rodents in a box equivalent to the size of a paper shredder.

For the pilot run of SMART, there are four Somerville residents as targets. The selected areas are Davis Square, MacArthur St., Lexington Ave., and Guillemette St. According to the program presentation, these areas are among the most frequented.

A new plan is in place for 2022. Residents will continue to receive information and make phone calls for any pest sightings. In addition, there will be a press release, flyer, social media post, and installation video forthcoming. These will inform Somerville about how SMART operates in order to keep them safe. Residential postcards, which played an active role in informing the public of pest infestations, will be increased in March.

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne has requested that a Rodent Control Inspector position be created for the team. Ballantyne sent a funding request with a decision for late February or March in mind. This will assist in creating a dedicated body to regulate pest control.

Dorothy’s Corner

Cheddar Mashed Potato Waffles

By DOROTHY DIMARZO

This past New Years Eve, I made a prime rib along with a few sides, including haricot verts, roasted brussels sprouts, corn casserole, and even potato waffles. This time around, I chose to make waffles. The waffles came out slightly crispy on the outside and had a creamy texture in the middle. They were a huge hit in my house!

Waffles

2 cups of leftover mashed potatoes
1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese
2 eggs
1/4 cup flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

In a medium bowl, mix all the above ingredients until well blended. Pre-
THE HOUSE AND SENATE. Beacon Hill Roll Call records local representatives’ votes on roll calls from the week of February 14-18. There were no roll calls in the Senate last week.

DRIVER’S LICENSES FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS (H 4461)

House 120-36, approved and sent to the Senate a bill that would allow people who are unable to prove lawful presence in the United States to apply for a Massachusetts driver’s license by providing two documents. The first document is a valid expired foreign passport or valid expired consular ID. The second is a valid non-Massachusetts U.S. driver’s license, birth certificate, valid foreign national ID card, valid foreign driver’s license or a marriage certificate or divorce decree. The measure also provides that when processing an application for a Massachusetts license, the registry is prohibited from inquiring about or creating a record of an applicant’s citizenship or immigration status.

“The idea that individuals can cut in line and illegally enter the United States of America, then be rewarded with the privilege of obtaining a Massachusetts driver’s license, shows yet again just how far left the state Legislature has become,” said Massachusetts Republican Party Chairman Jim Lyons. “This new law will only serve to encourage more illegal immigration and make the problem much worse.”

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

Rep. Christine Barbier Yes
Rep. Mike Connolly Yes
Rep. Erika Utterhoeven Yes

REQUIRE REGISTRY OF MOTOR VEHICLES TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO CITIES AND TOWNS (H 4441)

House 11-125, rejected an amendment to a section of the bill that prohibits the Registry of Motor Vehicles from disclosing personally identifying information and communications regarding any applicant for a Massachusetts driver’s license or learner’s permit, “including failure to provide proof of lawful presence in the United States,” unless specifically authorized to do so under regulations that are to be drafted by the attorney general’s office. The amendment would make this information automatically available to municipal clerks attempting to verify the identity and eligibility of someone using a Massachusetts license to vote or to register to vote.

“I oppose this legislation as it creates an incentive and encourages more illegal immigration to Massachusetts by allowing those who are undocumented and here illegally to get a driver’s license,” said Rep. Paul Frost (R-Auburn). “The federal government must address the matter of those who are here illegally and tackle the flow of illegal immigration into the country before we start giving our government issued IDs to undocumented individuals here illegally in Massachusetts. It sends a wrong message to those who are going through the intended process of legally immigrating to the country.”

“The [bill] will make Massachusetts roads safer and more accessible for all, ensuring all drivers have the same safety training, standardized identification and insurance,” said Rep. Tricia Farley-Bouvier (D-Pittsfield), sponsor of the original version of the measure.

“I could not support the bill because I have serious concerns about the message it sends, how it will be enforced and whether it will truly improve road safety as its proponents have claimed,” said GOP Minority Leader Brad Jones (R-North Reading). “Making driver’s licenses available to undocumented immigrants is unfair to those individuals who have followed the law to secure lawful presence status or citizenship. I’m also concerned that many individuals who will now be eligible for a license will instead continue to drive without a license and without insurance, either because they distrust the government and won’t come forward to apply or because they don’t want to pay the added costs of carrying insurance.”

“I filed this bill to enable all residents, regardless of immigration status, to apply for a driver’s license so they can get to work, take their children to school and doctor appointments and buy groceries,” said Rep. Christine Barbier (D-Somerville), another sponsor of the original bill.

“The idea that individuals can cut in line and illegally enter the United States of America, then be rewarded with the privilege of obtaining a Massachusetts driver’s license, shows yet again just how far left the state Legislature has become,” said Massachusetts Republican Party Chairman Jim Lyons. “This new law will only serve to encourage more illegal immigration and make the problem much worse.”

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

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“I think it’s perfectly reasonable for these regulations to include, at a minimum, language that will ensure the sharing of information with municipal clerks seeking to verify a voter’s identity and eligibility, and with law enforcement officials conducting an investigation,” said amendment sponsor Rep. Brad Jones (R-North Reading).

Rep. Patricia Farley-Bouvier (D-Pittsfield) said she opposed the amendment due to the violation of privacy that would occur had it been adopted not just for immigrants without legal status who would newly be applying for standard driver’s licenses, but also for all license applicants. “[The bill] was carefully drafted to protect the privacy of all who are applying for licenses in Massachusetts and ensure immigrants without status would trust that their legal status would not be disclosed beyond the standards for all current license holders i.e. for law enforcement investigations or insurance purposes,” said Bouvier.

(A “Yes” vote is for the amendment. A “No” vote is against it.)

Rep. Christine Barbier No
Rep. Mike Connolly No
Rep. Erika Utterhoeven No

ALSO UP ON BEACON HILL

THE 2022 STATE ELECTION BEGINS – Secretary of State Bill Galvin announced that nomination papers can now be picked up by candidates who are planning to run for office in the September 6th primary and the November 8th general election. Offices on the 2022 ballot this year include Congress, state senator, state representative, governor, Lt. governor, attorney general, secretary of state, treasurer, auditor, governor’s councilor, district attorney and sheriff.

Nomination papers are available at Galvin’s Elections Division at One Ashburton Place in Boston, at his regional offices in Springfield and Fall River and select city and town election offices across the state. Candidates who are unable to pick their papers up in person may call 617-727-2828 or 1-800-462-VOTE (8683) to request their nomination papers by mail. Depending on the office sought, candidates must collect between 150 signatures (for state representative) and 10,000 signatures (for governor and Lt. governor) from registered voters to be eligible for their names to be put on the ballot.

The deadlines for filing the signatures also vary depending on the office being sought. More information is available by calling 617-727-2828 or 1-800-462-VOTE (8683) or by visiting www.sec.state.ma.us/elections.

$101 MILLION FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE (H 4430) – Gov. Baker signed into law a $101 million COVID-19 response bill. Key provisions include increasing the number of COVID-19 testing sites and COVID-19 tests; the acquisition and distribution of high-quality personal protective masks, including N95s and KN95s, to be distributed to health care workers and children and faculty in elementary and secondary public-school districts; increasing vaccination rates among kids ages five to 11 whose vaccination rates remain low in comparison to older residents; and recapitalizing the COVID-19 Paid Sick Leave Program. The measure also mandates that the Baker administration pursue the highest allowable rate of federal reimbursement for the $101 million package.

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 February 14-18, the House met for a total of six hours and 33 minutes and the Senate met for a total of 50 minutes.

Mon. Feb. 14 House 11:00 a.m. to 11:16 a.m. Senate 11:10 a.m. to 11:19 a.m.

Tues. Feb. 15 House 11:20 a.m. to 11:31 a.m. Senate 11:10 a.m. to 11:19 a.m.

Wed. Feb. 16 House 11:02 a.m. to 4:57 p.m. Senate 11:10 a.m. to 11:19 a.m.

Thurs. Feb. 17 House 11:02 a.m. to 11:13 a.m. Senate 11:13 a.m. to 11:54 a.m.

Fri. Feb. 18 No House session No Senate session

Bob Katzen welcomes feedback at bob@beaconhillrollcall.com

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When so many people start complaining and raising the alarms about how badly our beloved Davis Square is doing in terms of upkeep and infrastructure, we all need to wake up and pay attention.

While the city has invested heavily in the development and promotion of various areas such as Assembly Row and Union Square – and justifiably so – the very heart of the downtown community, Davis, has quietly been suffering a slow death of a thousand cuts. Broken down walkways, damaged lamp posts, peeling paint, etc. It’s enough to make a lifelong resident wonder how things have gone so far.

It seems to be a matter of setting priorities and following through on plans and promises. Citizen action groups like DavisNow have been shedding light on the issues while urging city government to take notice and act accordingly for some three years now.

However, their efforts seem to be yielding few results. City officials and staff have heard the message and have promised to do more to restore the Square to its former glory, but little to nothing has actually been done so far.

The city often cites a failure to secure bids from contractors that meet their budgetary limits as the main contributor to the delays. As host to many traditional events, as well as casual days and exciting nights on the town, the Square deserves to shine like the jewel it once was. It stands to reason that any further delays in its renovation will be a grave disappointment to many who long for its long-awaited revival.

Our View Of The Times

Our View Of The Times

When we fix Davis Square?

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Steven Buckley of East Somerville. We hope Steve has a great day. Happy birthday to great guy, Eamon Fee, who celebrates this week. We hope he has a great birthday. Happy birthday to another good guy, Rod Kreimeyer. We hope Rod has a great day. Happy birthday to David Mangan. We hope David has a great day for himself as well. We wish all of our Facebook friends, such as Celia Taylor, David Tiger Williams, Lauren Daddio, Las Carolinas, Wayne A. Fournier, Ann Bourque, David Mangan, Sarah Marcone, and Lu Alves a very happy birthday. To all those that are also celebrating this week, we wish a happy birthday.

We want to congratulate Tommy Barry on retirement from the DPW. Tommy retired 2 weeks ago after being a loyal DPW employee for 40 years. He worked under five different mayors going back to Mayor August, Mayor Brune, Mayor Caputano, Mayor Roche and Mayor Curtatone. Tommy had a long, distinguished career for over 40 years in the DPW for the City of Somerville, in which he worked tirelessly and effortlessly to help as many residents and constituents as possible. We wish him the best on a well-deserved retirement.

The CHA Somerville Vaccine Center is now accepting walk-ins, as supply allows. The center is open to all, five days a week and some Saturdays. You can get booster shots for ages 12+ and initial vaccines for ages 5+. The vaccines are free, regardless of immigration or health insurance status, and you don’t need to show ID. Full hours and details are here: challiance.org/vaccine. If you’re a CHA patient you can also make an appointment through MyChart: challiance.org/mychart. If you need assistance finding a COVID-19 vaccine or booster, you can call 3-1-1 (617-666-3311).

Massachusetts has established a temporary program requiring employers make paid leave time available for employees impacted by COVID or who have side effects from vaccination. Learn more: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-temporary-emergency-paid-sick-leave-program.

MassDOT will be holding a public hearing on Wednesday, March 2, at 6:00 p.m. regarding the Superstructure Replacement of Maffa Way and Mystic Avenue over the Orange Line and MBTA/BMRR project. More information can be found here: https://www.mass.gov/event/bostonsomerville-superstructure-replacement-of-maffa-way-and-mystic-avenue-over-orange-line-and-mbta-bmrr-project-2022-03-02-200000-0500-2022-03-02-200000-0500.

Somerville Prevention (@sommervilleprevention) will be hosting two focus group opportunities for Somerville adult/caregiver community members to give feedback about youth substance misuse prevention efforts via Zoom. The focus groups are scheduled for Thursdays, February 24, 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. and Thursday, March 3, 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. Participants will receive a $25 Target gift card for participation in the one-hour discussion. For more information and to sign up, visit https://bit.ly/3qBYfMW.

If your child or teen is struggling with stress or anxiety, you can help by reaching out, listening, understanding, offering support, and connecting the student with key staff at school. Learn more about the #SomervilleTogether campaign for youth mental health at http://bit.ly/36UaMf.

Looking for a way to practice social distancing but still remain connected to other people? Look no further than the Somerville Council on Aging’s Friendly Phone Caller program. They have many wonderful volunteers who are waiting to give you a call. Whether you are looking to make a new friend or would just like a friendly chat to look forward to every week, this program has you covered. Call Natasha at 617-625-6600, ext. 2317 to learn more about the program and to sign up.

Live music is back at Sally O’Brien’s, 335 Somerville Ave., Somerville. Visit www.sallyobriensbar.com for a full list of future shows.

Two volunteers are being sought to help supervise indoor basketball for grades 7 and 8 students as part of the Becoming a Man Program. Basketball and/or coaching skills nice but not necessary. Wednesdays, 2:45 – 4:00 p.m. at Healey School, 5 Meacham St. Contact Alex Bermejo if interested.
Ms. Cam’s Olio

Olio - (noun) A miscellaneous mixture, hodgepodge

1. What are the colors associated with Mardi Gras?
2. What is the most famous slogan of Mardi Gras?
3. When is Fat Tuesday celebrated?
4. What are the groups that organize New Orleans Mardi Gras parade?
5. In what year was Jackie Gleason in the Krewe of the Bacchus Mardi Gras parade?
6. What famous father and son were each crowned King Bacchus at New Orleans Mardi Gras?
7. What was the first all-female New Orleans Mardi Gras krewe?
8. What is the signature nature Mardi Gras dessert?
9. What is traditionally hidden inside a king cake?
10. What time does New Orleans law require masks to be removed on Mardi Gras?
11. When the 2021 Mardi Gras parade was cancelled because of COVID-19 what was decorated instead of floats?
12. What states recognize Fat Tuesday as a holiday?

Solution in the next edition of The Somerville Times.

STATEPOINT CROSSWORD

THE 1940s

ACROSS

1. Decree
6. U.S./U.S.S.R.’s cold one
9. Harry Potter’s mark
13. Syrup flavor
14. ____ Khan
15. Bird of prey’s nest
16. Lieu
17. 14+ e.g.
18. Bashful or Happy
19. ‘1984’ author George
21. Best-selling pop artist Bing
23. Writer ____ Monk Kidd
24. Genghis or Kubla
25. Cranberry habitat
28. Not nice
30. Saddle holders
35. Boris Karloff’s movie “The ____,” pl.
37. Actress Barrymore
39. Asian goat antelope
40. Supernatural life force
41. Seethes
43. South African antelope
44. Cook from above
46. Rotisserie part
47. Not cold
48. Italy in Italian
50. What snob puts on
52. .0000001 joule
53. Sound of a dropped tome
55. Beer acronym
57. ____ Doctrine, U.S. foreign policy
60. “How Green Was My ____”
63. Another word for nutria
66. Trip guide
68. Surveyor’s maps
70. Will alternative
71. Additionally
72. Nucleic acid
73. Term of endearment

DOWN

1. Emergency acronym
2. 1949 international org.
3. Copycat
4. Chicken feet
5. Christian hymn (2 words)
6. Graveyard sound
7. Gone by
8. TV’s Yellowstone, e.g.
9. Uses a Singer
10. Underwater hermit
11. Ethereal
12. Gridiron official, for short
15. Apollo Creed’s son
20. City in northern England
22. Old towel, e.g.
24. Roller-skater’s protector (2 words)
25. Disney’s 1942 opus
26. Abstractionism using optical illusion
27. Kind of salami
29. Crafts’ companion
31. Network of nerves
32. Treasure collection
33. Dreamer?
34. “Popular music style
36. Ship canvas
38. 1939-1945
42. Parallel grooves
45. Acid turns it red
49. “Bingo!”
51. Daryl Hannah’s 1984 movie
54. Open up
56. In spite of the fact, arch.
57. Church sound
58. Swedish shag rugs
59. Plotting
60. Velum, pl.
61. Zeal
62. New Haven University
63. IRS employee?
65. Yang’s opposite
67. Canny

Solution to last week’s crossword puzzle:

Solution to last week’s sudoku puzzle:

Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

Answers on page 11
The second virtual meeting on the 90 Washington Street project drew together project team members, associated project stakeholders and the general public to review and look forward to the future of the project as it develops.

A number of sketches and design concepts for the Public Safety Building, adjacent facilities and public spaces were shown to and discussed by participants of the meeting.

Following the main virtual meeting, several breakout rooms were set up for participants to use for general discussion and asking questions of the various team members.

The meeting video can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoCemPXRzAQ&v=6s.

Sweet City: Highlights from the latest ‘Bittersweet’ event

By Jim Clark

The second virtual meeting to envision a new 90 Washington Street, the future home of the Public Safety Building (PSB) and the Washington Street Redevelopment Parcels, took place on Wednesday, February 16.

The project team provided updates on the PSB project and showed options for future development based on the feedback received at the December meeting.

Ted Fields, Senior Planner in the Economic Development Division of the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD), led off the meeting by introducing team members and describing their various functions within the project. He then explained that the main purpose of the meeting was to follow-up on the first meeting held in December of 2021, when participants stated what they wanted to see on the Washington Street site, what sort of new land uses like stores, affordable housing, etc., were desired, along with the proposed safety building. The follow-up was intended to ask participants specifically where they wanted these uses located on the site, including the new Public Safety Building.

OSPCD Director of Capital Projects Melissa Woods provided background information on the acquisition of the site and thanked those who offered input on the results of the December 13, 2021, meeting. "I spent a lot of time over the past six weeks thinking about how to best summarize what this is about," said Woods. "And I've really settled on the analogy of being in a horse race. Now, you may have heard the Kentucky Derby called the most exciting two minutes in sports, or something like that. Our racetrack is a little bit bigger than that. It's going to take us a few years to circle this racetrack. But for any true fans of horse racing the most important thing is that all horses finish the race. And that is the most important thing about the 90 Washington Street project."

Woods continued by reminding participants of the meeting that the City Council and the Somerville Redevelopment Authority took the property because they saw value in having a site that could not only host the Public Safety Building, but also include a community vision. "There's enough opportunity on this site for the Public Safety Building and the implementation of a community vision," Woods said.

Director of Racial and Social Justice Department (RSJ), Denise Molina Capers, Esq., also a member of the Public Safety Building Committee, offered her views on the project saying, "Part of the work that the RSJ Department is doing is making sure that we are closely connected with the different steps and details of the Public Safety Building as far as Capital Projects is concerned. And so, a critical component that the RSJ Department is partaking in is with the staffing and operations analysis of the Somerville Police Department, which includes the fleet concerns that were mentioned in December and doing a study that will inform that." Molina Capers emphasized that those interested in learning how the Police Department operates should reach out to the RSJ Department.

The Somerville Times
FEBRUARY 23, 2022

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PROCUREMENT & CONTRACTING SERVICES

The City of Somerville reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any minor informality in the IFB process, and accept the proposal(s) deemed to be in the best interests of the City of Somerville.

Interested persons may provide comments to the Zoning Board of Appeals at the hearing by or by submitting written comments by mail to Planning & Zoning Division, 3rd Floor City Hall, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA 02143; or by email to planning@somervillema.gov.

The Somerville Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) will hold a virtual public hearing on Wednesday, March 22, 2022, at 6:00 pm through GetSamba.

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this reorganization of the Zoning Board of Appeals will be conducted via remote participation. An audio recording of these proceedings will be available upon request to planning@somervillema.gov.

TO USE A COMPUTER

City of Somerville
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

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LEGAL NOTICES

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MAYOR’S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
KATJANA BALLANTYNE MAYOR

GEORGE J. PROAKIS, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

LEGAL NOTICE - HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION (HPC)
The Somerville Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) will hold a public meeting and public hearings on Tuesday, February 22, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.  The meeting and public hearings will be conducted via telephone.  In accordance with Massachusetts Districts, Act 40C of the Massachusetts General Laws, and for the City of Somerville Code of Ordinances, Pt. 71, Chap. 7, Sections 7-16 – 7-26.

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission will be conducted via remote participation.  An audio recording of these proceedings will be available upon request at historic@somervillema.gov.

TO USE A COMPUTER
Registration URL:
https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7592048569416339877
Webinar ID: 505-264-163

TO CALL IN
Phone Number: 1 (914) 614-3221
Access Code: 564-559

Altered or new uses described below have a public hearing component.

Alterations to Local Historic District (LHD) Properties
HPC.ALT 2022.01 – 135 Parliament Park
Applicant: Alexia Mendes
Owner: Same as Applicant

HPC.ALT 2022.02 – 175 Broadway
Applicant: Hill Group LLC
Owner: Same as Applicant

HPC.ALT 2022.03 – 11 Benedict Avenue
Applicant: Christopher & Loren Galvin
Owner: Same as Applicant

HPC.ALT 2022.04 – 74 Mount Vernon Street
Applicant: Eddie Giron
Owner: Same as Applicant

The Applicant seeks a Certificate of Appropriateness to alter an LHD property by replacing the existing driveway material with brick pavers.

HPC.ALT 2022.05 – 13-19 Aldenney Street
Applicant: Paul Morgan
Owner: TD Building, LLC (Paul Morgan & Carina Endras)
The Applicant seeks a Certificate of Appropriateness to alter an LHD property by replacing the existing driveway material with brick pavers.

HPC.ALT 2022.06 – 146 Central Street
Applicant: Local Tobacco
Owner: Same as applicant

HPC.ALT 2022.07 – 722 Broadway
Applicant: Eddie & Moody Group
Owner: Edda Girón
The Applicant seeks to alter an LHD property by replacing existing windows with vinyl windows and to unify the style of window trim throughout the building.

HPC.ALT 2022.08 – 720 Broadway
Applicant: DT Carlucci Associates, LLC
Owner: Same as Applicant

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

HPC.ALT 2022.09 – 715 Broadway
Applicant: Same as Applicant

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

HPC.ALT 2022.10 – 708 Broadway
Applicant: Same as Applicant

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

DETERMINATIONS OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE (STEP 1 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)

HPC.DMO 2022.01 – 9 Taylor Street
Applicant: D Audio LLC
Owner: Same as Applicant

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

HPC.DMO 2022.02 – 15 Taylor Street
Applicant: Digital TV, Inc
Owner: DaMi MC

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

HPC.DMO 2022.03 – 811 High Street
Applicant: Same as Applicant
Owner: Same as Applicant

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

DETERMINATIONS OF PROBABLY HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT (STEP 2 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)

HPC.DMO 2022.04 – 718 Broadway
Applicant: DT Carlucci Associates, LLC
Owner: Same as Applicant

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

HPC.DMO 2022.05 – 722 Broadway
Applicant: Same as Applicant
Owner: Same as Applicant

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

HPC.DMO 2022.06 – 11 Benedict Avenue
Applicant: Same as Applicant
Owner: Same as Applicant

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

HPC.DMO 2022.07 – 708 Broadway
Applicant: Same as Applicant
Owner: Same as Applicant

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

HPC.DMO 2022.08 – 715 Broadway
Applicant: Same as Applicant
Owner: Same as Applicant

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

Traffic Board Public Hearing on Central Hill Parking Changes, 7:00 p.m.
The City of Somerville Traffic Board will hold a virtual public hearing on Thursday, February 24, 2022, regarding the Somerville Traffic Board incoming citation program.  The incoming citation project was initiated in 1993 to create a period of one year, relative to parking regulations for City and school staff on Central Hill, near City Hall, Somerville High School, and the Central Library (Agenda Items 5 a – d, e, & f).

The public hearing will begin promptly at 7 p.m. The public hearing will open with a brief presentation by City staff on the project history and objectives.  Following the presentations, members of the public will be invited to speak.  The typical two-minute speaking limit will be enforced.

The hearing will be hosted on Zoom. To join in person, copy and paste the following URL and enter passcode 651411:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/350W11w

Written testimony will also be accepted until 4 p.m. on Thursday, February 24, 2022. Written testimony can be emailed to Transportation@somervillema.gov or mailed to: Mobility Division, 121 High Street, Somerville, MA 02143.

Interpretation into Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, or Nepali may be available upon request by contacting the Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs at somerville@somervillema.gov or calling 311 at 877-466-2011.

Persons with disabilities who need auxiliary aids and services for effective communication (i.e., CAFÉ, ASL), written materials in alternative formats, or reasonable modifications in policies and procedures in order to access the programs, activities, and meetings of the City of Somerville should contact the Advisory P.O. Box 311 at 617-625-6000 x2089 or ditta@somervillema.gov.

2/22/22 The Somerville Times
Representative Barber’s driver’s license bill passes in landmark House vote

On February 16, 2022 the Massachusetts House of Representatives voted to pass bill H.4461 the Work and Family Mobility Act, filed by Representative Christine Barber of Somerville and Medford and Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier of Pittsfield, enabling all state residents to apply for a standard MA driver’s license or identification card regardless of immigration status.

The historic vote comes after a 17 year-long fight from advocates, bill sponsors, and the Driving Families Forward Coalition, along with leadership from Speaker Mariano and Chairman Straus who were instrumental in the passage of this bill,” said Representative Christine Barber. “This has been a multi-year long fight for immigrant justice. All parents should be able to take their children to the doctor, safely and without fear of being pulled over for driving without a license.”

H.4461 would allow all qualified Massachusetts residents, regardless of immigration status, to apply for standard Massachusetts driver’s licenses using valid documents. Driving is a key tool of economic mobility, and having a driver’s license allows people to safely get to work, drive their kids to school, and participate in their community.

“Passing the Work and Family Mobility Act is one of the most important steps the state can take to improve road safety and ensure all residents feel safe and can access necessary services and health care,” said Representative Christine Barber. “This bill will have an immediate impact on the lives and success of immigrant families in our state.”

This bill will benefit public safety in the Commonwealth by ensuring more drivers on the roads are properly trained, tested, and insured. With more drivers on the road with insurance, this will bring down the cost of auto insurance for all drivers.

COVID-19 increases the urgency for passing this legislation. Without access to driver’s licenses, immigrants without status are at increased risk of contracting the virus while taking public transit or carpooling with others while going to work. A driver’s license would provide all residents, regardless of immigration status, more reliable access to healthcare services, including COVID-19 vaccinations and testing. With the health of our whole community at risk, it is essential that everyone has access to medical care.

The bill passed the House of Representatives with a 120–36 vote. It now goes to the Senate.

Retirement sendoff for Rudy Revilla

Friends gave him send off with a cake at the Medford Sons of Italy on Wednesday, February 16.

On This Day in History

FEBRUARY 23

1778 – Baron von Steuben joins the Continental Army at Valley Forge.
1836 – The Alamo is besieged by Santa Anna.
1846 – The Liberty Bell tolls for the last time, to mark George Washington’s birthday.
1861 – Texas becomes the seventh state to secede from the Union.
1921 – An airmail plane sets a record of 33 hours and 2 minutes from San Francisco to New York.
1926 – President Calvin Coolidge opposes a large air force, believing it would be a menace to world peace.
1954 – An airliner plane sets a record of 33 hours and 20 minutes from San Francisco to New York.
1972 – President Calvin Coolidge opposes a large air force, believing it would be a menace to world peace.
1992 – Black activist Angela Davis is released from jail where she was held for kidnapping, conspiracy and murder.
SCATV Channel 22/RCN 13/613

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Channel 22 Schedule

Wednesday, February 23
4:00pm Light Show - Practice IV
7:00pm Highland Hill - Bury + Felix
8:00pm SHS Hockey vs Medford
9:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Malden
11:00pm SHS Girls Basketball vs Malden

Thursday, February 24
1:30pm SHS Girls Soccer vs Medford 11-4-21
1:30pm SPL Gardening - Garlic Scapes
2:00pm SHS Hockey vs Winthrop
7:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Reading
8:00pm SHS Hockey vs Chelsea
10:30pm SHS Girls BASKETBALL vs Lynn English

Friday, February 25
12:00pm SHS Girls Soccer vs Malden 11-2-21
1:30pm SHS Girls Basketball vs Medford
5:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Chelsea
7:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Lynn English
9:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs N. Andover
11:00pm SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English
11:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Everett 2-8-22

Saturday, February 26
10:00am SHS Girls Soccer vs Malden 11-2-21
1:30pm SHS Girls Basketball vs Medford
5:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Chelsea
7:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Lynn English
9:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs N. Andover
11:00pm SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English
11:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Everett 2-22

Monday, February 27
12:00pm SHS Girls Soccer vs N. Andover
1:30pm SHS Girls Basketball vs Medford
5:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Medford
7:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Lynn English
9:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs N. Andover
11:00pm SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English
11:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Everett 2-22

GoTV - Comcast 15/RCN 15/614

EdTV - Comcast 22/RCN 13/613

EDTV is Somerville City Cable TV! wreath_2.png

Wednesday, February 23
4:00pm SHS Hockey vs Winthrop
7:00pm Highland Hill - Bury + Felix
8:00pm SHS Hockey vs Medford
9:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Malden
11:00pm SHS Girls Basketball vs Malden

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7:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Reading
8:00pm SHS Hockey vs Chelsea
10:30pm SHS Girls LAX vs Medford 6-22

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Saturday, February 26
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5:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Chelsea
7:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Lynn English
9:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs N. Andover
11:00pm SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English
11:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Everett 2-22

Sunday, February 27
12:00pm SHS Girls Soccer vs N. Andover
1:30pm SHS Girls Basketball vs Medford
5:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Medford
7:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Lynn English
9:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs N. Andover
11:00pm SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English
11:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Everett 2-22

EdTV - Comcast 22/RCN 13/613

Today, March 1
12:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Medford
1:30pm SHS Girls Soccer vs Chelsea 11-8-21
5:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs Lynn English
9:00pm SHS Boys Basketball vs KIPP

Tuesday, March 2
6:30pm Fur, Fins and Feathers
6:00pm LIVE from VOX POP
7:00pm Somerville Labor Show
8:00pm Connecting Communities
9:00pm The World Fusion Show
11:00pm Box House Productions Presents

Wednesday, March 2
12:00am SHS Hockey vs N. Andover
12:00pm Senior Circuit - Veterans' Services
12:00pm Traffic & Parking Committee 2-28-22

EdTV - Comcast 22/RCN 13/613

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1:30pm SHS Girls Soccer vs Chelsea 11-8-21
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Wednesday, March 2
12:00am SHS Hockey vs N. Andover
12:00pm Senior Circuit - Veterans' Services
12:00pm Traffic & Parking Committee 2-28-22
Michael Todd Steffen is the recipient of a Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellowship. His poetry has appeared in journals including The Boston Globe, E-verse Radio, The Lyric, The Dark Horse, Ithaben Street, The Concord Sawtette, and POEM. Of his second book, On Earth As It Is, now available from Cervena Barva Press. Joan Houlihan has noted Steffen’s intimate portraits, sense of history, surprising wit and the play of dark and light—the striking combination of the everyday and the transcendent.

Dear Friend

This morning couldn’t help thinking of you and your Romaine salads, the scallion roots you’d start to grow in the tall glasses of water giving yourself over to the honest labor of transplanting the long translucent “fingers” as you called them into the pear and perlite of the window planter. There are all sorts of these things by habit we throw away we can recycle gardening our garbage, our treasures—the hours I might have composted sleeping in this morning. Thoreau, remember? How to kill a little time without injuring eternity? I stand on the shore of that ocean of time which your recent move has placed between us, shipwrecked as I feel of that ocean of time which your recent move without injuring eternity? I stand on the shore of time that its true—these situations drive us crazy. And the weird part is they happen to all of us all the time.

A few stanzas later she says:

Imagine, for a moment, your head in your hands. The serious turn in the poem is so emotional—effective because the horror was prefaced by humor. She suggests that we live lives filled with tragicomedy.

Kingyens’ comment on marriage partakes of that clear-eyed vision:

No one warns you about the movement in marriage, that slow-motion drift toward indifference. “Write about the things that bother you. The art is a survival tool. It helps us make meaning of our lives by providing us with aesthetic pleasure, much as the beauty of nature does. The mainstream media titillates us with disconnected, most- ly fragmented negative narratives.

The language of art peels back the curtain of confusion and shows us the wizard, for better or worse. Coupling, Carolynn Kingyens’ second book of poems, goes about disclosing what lies behind the veneer of our relationships. She draws from her past and invites us to share revelations that are both humorous and troubling.

Kingyens is particularly good at dramatizing paradoxes we cling to in everyday life. We are influenced by the beliefs we grew up with—even when we no longer entirely believe them.

Each shore/ around your house—a station of the cross/ that’s how far gone I was/ that’s how good you were—in bed.” Like Lena Dunham in the series Girls, the narrator of Kingyens’ poems finds herself stuck in relationships that she’s both surprised and appalled by.

In Alow Now, Kingyens invites us to Imagine for a moment being trapped on a long flight to Tibet; a kind stranger in the seat beside you—who never shuts up. By the fifth hour, your neck begins to hurt from all the nodding.

Readers will no doubt nod along in amused agreement, while having to acknowledge at the same time that its true—these situations drive us crazy. And the weird part is they happen to all of us all the time.

Your version of events was tidy and clean. When you said you knew I was the woman you were destined to marry the moment you saw me… But the truth was: you had no interest in wanting to marry me the day I showed up in your messy doorway… I was ripe, hot, willing to please—not the bitch you would later marry.

One of Kingyens’ strengths is her ability to view, with skepticism, her religious upbringing. Here is her experience of Vacation Bible School:

We sang songs at Vacation Bible School about how Jesus loved the little children of the world… All of us, soldiers for Christ. We drank Jim Jones-colored punch and ate no frills butter cookies…

The Jim Jones reference emphasizes the cult like atmosphere. As children, many of us believed these myths. Kingyens then shocks us with how some of her bible schoolmates turned out:

Years later, Timmy Ainsley would shoot himself in the mouth after he came out to his parents…
And I heard little Regina Hopely, Bethel’s Christ Pageant Mary, became a meth addict…

Taking a poetic approach similar to that of Hugo, Joseph Lawrence, and Doug Holder, Kingyens zeroes in on stories and experiences that stick with her. She shares them with us, prompting us to take a closer—perhaps braver—look at our own lives and relationships. Her poems are rife with the contradictions we all live with; she reminds us that we need good poetry to make sense of our lives.
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