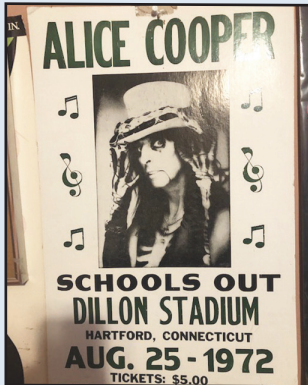




Inside:



Front Row

page 3



Cottages and lot splits

page 5



Patriots' Day Colonial Fair

page 13

Finance Director indicates 'limited disruption' in budget outlook



Chief Assessor & Chairman of the Board Francis J. Golden, Director of Finance/Auditor Ed Bean, and Budget Director Mike Mastrobuoni presented FY27 budget outlook at City Hall.

By Harry Kane

A number of factors, like inflation and limits on local tax increases, have led to a "perfect storm" for many municipalities, but Somerville's Finance Director Ed Bean said there will be "limited disruption of our services" during a Fiscal Year 2027 budget outlook presentation.

The financial management team presented a summary of Somerville's financial condition in a slideshow presentation, with an overview of revenue and expenditure forecasts, at the special Somerville City Council and School Committee joint meeting on April 14.

"We're seeing the headlines almost daily about the mounting fiscal pressures for municipalities," said Bean. "Most municipalities are *Continued on page 4*

Artwear: The SOS 2026 Fashion Show

The term Artwear refers to clothing and other wearables designed as conceptual or fine art. Artwear operates outside of the boundaries normally presented in fashion to favor an approach that prioritizes style and vision. This show makes it possible for textile artists to be included in open studios in a way that is more conducive to their art form than a studio opening or a gallery.

This year, the SOS fashion show will once again be held at the Crystal Ballroom in Davis Square on Thursday, April 30. The Crystal Ballroom is directly above the Somerville Theatre. Doors open at 6 p.m. for cocktail hour with the show beginning at 7 p.m.; seating is first come, first served. The venue will have a full bar and runway seating. The event is free for the public to view original textile art by Somerville artists, as part of Somerville Open Studios 2026.

Crystal Ballroom, 55 Davis Square (Somerville Theatre building), Thursday, April 30. Doors open at 6 p.m., show begins at 7 p.m.



Grace DuVal's work worn by Sirena Nuñez.

— Photo by Jack Field



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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.

Somerville community members are invited to take a first look and provide public comment on proposals to redevelop **90 Washington Street**, a nearly four-acre site near the **East Somerville Green Line station**. At the public meeting of the 90 Washington Street Civic Advisory Committee (CAC) on **Wednesday, April 22**, from 5:30 to 7 p.m., CAC members will review and share input on the recently received proposals and will also welcome feedback on the proposals from members of the public. 90 Washington Street Proposal Review Community Meeting, https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_TapQDsQUSxGMIXykSDi62Q#/registration. To learn more, visit www.somervillema.gov/90-washington-redevelopment

On **Saturday, April 25**, community members across all seven wards can join their ward's **Spring Cleanup**, the first major activation of the city's **Year of the Neighbor initiative**. From 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., residents can join their neighbors, local elected officials, and community groups to spruce up streets, parks, and public spaces – and to get to know the people they share them with. The city will provide supplies, and DPW crews will handle pickup – so residents can focus on the satisfying part: making their block a little better. Participants will also receive a City of Somerville water bottle or small thank-you item while supplies last. For locations, visit <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/office-mayor-jake-wilson/year-neighbor>. *Continued on page 6*

Somerville Weather Forecast

for the week of April 22 – April 28 as provided by the National Weather Service

DAY	CONDITIONS	HIGH/LOW	PRECIPITATION	HUMIDITY	WIND
 Wednesday April 22	Rain	46°/42°	51%	38%	S 12 mph
 Thursday April 23	Partly Cloudy	60°/40°	11%	7%	NW 15 mph
 Friday April 24	Sunny	54°/40°	2%	1%	NNE 8 mph
 Saturday April 25	Partly Cloudy	51°/39°	7%	3%	NE 11 mph
 Sunday April 26	Partly Cloudy	53°/42°	5%	2%	ENE 10 mph
 Monday April 27	Partly Cloudy	56°/40°	22%	15%	NE 12 mph
 Tuesday April 28	Rain	50°/44°	53%	42%	ENE 14 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: *The wrong use in the wrong place*

Jose Miller says:

This argument is stuck in a bygone playbook. Commercial demand has cratered—remote work, empty labs, and the vacant spaces across Union Square make that obvious. Yet Bill keeps insisting we need more of what’s already sitting unused.

And the biggest giveaway? His article doesn’t even describes the proposal he’s attacking. That vacuum speaks volumes. The plan that was shown to the Neighborhood Council includes 20% affordable housing, a park, and community space—exactly what Somerville needs now and consistent with Somervision. Pretending those elements don’t exist doesn’t strengthen his case; it just makes his argument look out of touch with today’s conditions.

At this point, it feels like the author’s own preconceptions are keeping him from recognizing something that would actually serve the community well.

Claire Murphy says:

Jose’s” argument is what produced our current “grossly unbalanced” property tax base. “Commercial demand” is cyclical. Somerville’s leaders historically lacked the foresight and discipline to preserve land for much needed commercial development. Today, a few have swallowed the YIMBY Koolaid, along with a planning staff that has much to answer for.

Somerville YIMBYs deny the reality that office, R&D, or hotel space will produce ten times the net municipal income that the equivalent residential space will. They promote regional and national supply-and-demand studies that are irrelevant to Somerville’s reality.

They force feed their dogma with the self-righteousness of fundamentalist zealots, while remaining indifferent to the actual suffering of so many of their neighbors. We don’t need more unaffordable units for people who don’t live here to drive up surrounding housing costs for people who do. Too many people who we love and were essential to our communit have already been priced out.

Log onto TheSomervilleTimes.com to leave your own comments

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Publisher – Somerset Valley Publishing Inc.

Editor – Jim Clark

Assignment Editor – Bobbie Toner

Advertising Director – Bobbie Toner

Arts Editor – Doug Holder

Writers: Jim Clark, Harry Kane,
and Cathleen Twardzik

Contributors: Jimmy Del Ponte,
Dorothy Dimarzo, Bob Doherty
Photographer: Claudia Ferro

The Somerville Times is published every Wednesday

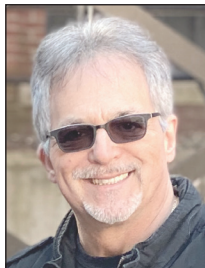
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Life in the **VILLE** by Jimmy Del Ponte

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.

Front Row



Today, some concert tickets cost thousands of dollars. Back in the day, I think I paid between seven and \$10 for concerts and sometimes even less. Around 1970, I saw Queen open up for Mott the Hoople (*All The Young Dudes*) at The Orpheum

Theatre.

The quotes are from different readers sharing their memories.

“My first concert was Alice Cooper. It was crazy, and I was probably way too young. Snuck outta the house and surprisingly didn’t get caught!”

“The Rolling Stones! Stevie Wonder was the backup! The Stones got arrested in Providence and did not make it to the Garden until 1:15 a.m.! Memorable night!”

“We used to go to every show that came through. It was like \$5.”

“Had tickets for the Grass Roots at Boston Garden, guessing 1969. They were no-shows, so we got two hours of Sam & Dave! They brought the house down! I think we got the better end of that deal.”

“J Geils played a dance at Somerville High 1971.”

“Elton John with Kiki Dee at Schaefer Stadium 1976. The first and best of all time!”

“Warren Zevon at the Orpheum, April 1980. Tickets were \$12.50.”

“Dave Clark Five. I think it was 1965.”

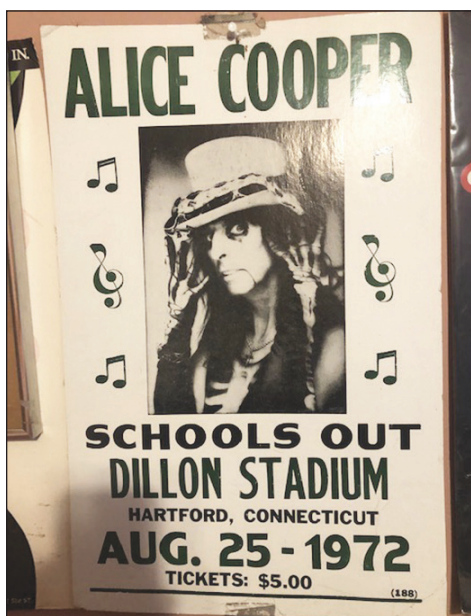
Some of my favorite concerts I’ve seen



have been The Rolling Stones, Aerosmith, Billy Joel, Elton John, Alice Cooper, Ringo Starr and his All-Star Band.

The best concert I ever went to was see-

ing Paul McCartney a few years ago when I worked for oldies 103. We had awesome seats, and I had tears in my eyes for most of the concert. It was unbelievable.



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Money Map Tip of the Week

By Vincent Hicks, CPA

Q: I missed the tax deadline and didn't file an extension — how much trouble am I in? What should I do now?

A: First — don't panic! In many cases, the outcome is better than people expect. The most important step is simple: file your return as soon as possible.

Here's why:

♦ **If you're owed a refund, there's no penalty for filing late.**

The late filing penalty only applies when taxes are owed. Many people who file late still receive their full refund — just don't

wait too long, as refunds can be lost if not claimed within three years.

♦ **If you do owe taxes, filing sooner helps limit penalties.**

Penalties and interest can apply, but filing now helps keep them from growing.

♦ **Filing starts the clock.**

Once you file, it begins the IRS statute period — generally three years — which limits how long the IRS has to review your return.

♦ **You may receive interest on your refund.**

In some cases, the IRS pays interest on delayed refunds, depending on timing.

Bottom Line:

Missing the deadline isn't ideal — but it's not the end of the world. Filing sooner rather than later can limit issues, start important timelines, and in many cases still result in a full refund..

Any questions? I'm Vincent Hicks, a CPA based in the Cambridge–Somerville area. Reach out at vincent@hickscpasolutions.com or (859) 553-0788.

Disclaimer: This column provides general financial information and should not be considered legal, investment, or tax advice. Individual situations vary. Always consult a qualified professional for personalized guidance.



Mbah at Medford celebration

Somerville Councilor at Large and Vice President, Will Mbah, and his family visited Medford's Patriots Day celebration before heading to Foss Park on Monday. The Medford community gathered at Medford City Hall for a Sarah Bradlee Fulton Statue Dedication & Ceremony. The dedication honored Sarah Bradlee Fulton, known as the "Mother of the Boston Tea Party" for her role in the 1773 protest and other Revolutionary War contributions.



Finance Director indicates 'limited disruption' in budget outlook

CONT. FROM PG 1

navigating this perfect storm of fiscal pressures."

The skyrocketing operational costs and "rigid revenue limits" of Proposition 2½ are creating a financial crisis, he explained.

"We're not in the same dire situation as other communities right now," said Bean. "We are not experiencing the same level of distress."

Some municipalities are facing significant layoffs and staff reductions due to budget shortfalls. He mentioned health insurance and state-mandated tuition for out-of-district special education placements as two "big budget drivers."

"We do have a budget gap," he added. "But I do believe we can contain that with limited disruption of our services as we move along into Fiscal 2027."

For FY27, "We're looking at a \$4.5 mil-

lion gap between the revenue projection and the level service projection for all the budgets — school and city — at this particular point in time," said Bean.

Somerville's growth in the past was due to an expansion of the commercial property tax base, he said. "Tremendous and unprecedented economic development and prudent management over time."

The city's general fund budget has grown from \$211 million in FY16 to \$381.5 million in FY26, which is an increase of 80.8 percent. The budget increase of the general fund this year was 5.54 percent, which is a lower increase than in recent years.

"This year we had to tighten our belts quite a bit here in fiscal 2026," he said, due to commercial property tax growth that has declined.

Bean says revenue is on target in FY26.

"We'll probably exceed our revenue budget, but by less than 1 percent."

The FY27 total revenue projection is \$392,665,060 million, according to the April 14 report. That is a potential \$12,738,952 million in revenue growth.

Early projections by the assessor estimate new growth in property taxes will decline from \$7.8 million in FY26 to \$5 million in FY27, said Bean.

"We frankly don't think that the economy is going to turn around soon, so we're going to pencil in \$5 million for the next three years," said Bean. "Most communities would envy getting \$5 million dollars in new growth, so it's a dramatic drop for us, but it's still a very, very good number."

Bean explained that development has stalled due to inflation and high interest

rates that have made financing for new development projects more expensive, causing many planned commercial projects to be delayed or canceled.

"If we could get some life science interest in the city, that'd be phenomenal for all of us," he said.

City Councilors and School Committee Members asked questions and made remarks following the presentation. Many of the comments focused on how budget decisions may impact teachers and students.

Ward Six School Committee Member Dr. Emma Stellman asked Bean about potential budget cuts at Somerville schools and whether critical services might be part of the funding reduction.

Bean answered by saying that schools are "the first priority" and that "they will not be exorbitant cuts."

Attorney proposes zoning amendments for backyard cottages and lot splits

By The Times Staff

Attorney William A. White, Jr., who served 24 years on the Somerville City Council, has formally proposed four zoning text amendments to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) to address concerns of affordability and transparency regarding backyard cottages and backyard lot splits.

A public hearing was held on Thursday, April 16, at a joint Land Use Committee meeting with the Planning Board, for the public to hear expert testimony and gauge community sentiment about these proposed zoning text amendments that the applicant, Mr. White, would like city officials to enforce.

Proponents of these proposed zoning text amendments believe that without the updates, this continues to give incentives for developers to replace existing housing with super-dense condominiums. They feel the overdevelopment of luxury condos is promoting a tear-down culture that harms middle-income people trying to buy homes, and displaces tenants when homes

are demolished.

Mr. White filed four proposed zoning amendments back on March 4, stating in the letter that he has seen a “trend” developing in Somerville’s residential neighborhoods because of city government policies that developed during the prior administration. Based on his experience as a Somerville real estate attorney, Mr. White is of the opinion that these policies are reducing the supply of rental housing and removing two and three-family houses from the market because developers are buying these properties instead.

Basically, city policy now allows developers to purchase lots as small as 6,200 sq. ft., split them in half, and then build a three-story luxury condominium building and a 1,500 sq. ft. backyard cottage on each half of the lot. Because of the huge profit opportunity, these developers are outbidding folks who would buy the house to live in and rent the additional units.

Also, when the developers knock down the existing homes, they reduce the availability of rental property. City affordability requirements were removed so that a de-



Zoning amendments proposed by Attorney William A. White, Jr., address affordability and transparency concerns regarding backyard cottages and backyard lot splits.

veloper can build 8 luxury condominium units, displace existing rental properties, and not provide any affordable housing. White raised the concern that if this trend continues unchecked, all of the lots in our residential district will end up being bought by developers, with a drastic reduction in rental properties and two and three-family homes owned by residents.

Mr. White explained that these impacts were especially made clear to him when he undertook the representation of former Alderman and State Representative Denise Provost before the ZBA when a lot was split next door to her. He believes that these city development policies violate state law and Somerville’s own zoning ordinance, so he is representing Denise Provost in a lawsuit before the Land Court challenging these policies. He explained that because the building permit was already approved with regard to the lot next to Denise, these zoning amendments would have no effect on her case. He stated that he is not representing Denise or being paid by her in any way for the zoning amendments. He explained that he has filed them because he wanted to alert our current city government and the public as to the policies that he believes violate zoning laws and ordinances in the hopes that they are implemented to put an end to the current practice.

Mr. White’s first proposed zoning text amendment creates transparency and opportunity for public comment on lot splits. Lots are “split” when the city approves a request to divide them into two or more smaller lots. This stratagem is used to increase the total number of units built - the

maximum number of units, multiplied by the number of new lots.

Under controlling law, the city’s Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) is supposed to decide on lot split requests. Normal ZBA processes would put these requests on a meeting agenda, with notice to abutters, and an opportunity to be heard at the meeting – basic elements of due process. The ZBA could then amend the developer’s plan after learning of its impact on the neighborhood.

In current city practice, a lot split is deemed a minor plan change. They are decided privately by planning staff. The public does not know when a lot split application is filed or granted. Mr. White’s third amendment simply removes the language that gives planning staff blanket authority to decide lot splits on their own, in private, without public knowledge or input.

After discussing lot splits, White then discussed backyard cottages. White asked the question whether backyard cottages should be 1500 square foot luxury condominiums with 3 bedrooms and a finished basement located 3 feet from abutters’ lot lines as the city currently allows. White stated that this current city policy violates local zoning and submitted two proposed amendments that would establish ways to make backyard cottages more affordable.

Homeowners sometimes create small units, as housing for a family member. These are referred to as a ‘granny flat’ or ‘in-law apartment.’ They can also be rental units. Mr. White’s second amendment makes it clear that backyard cottages are accessory structures and therefore must be rental units. This amendment would *Continued on page 11*





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COMMENTARY

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Our Roads Are Getting Fixed But Our Schools Are Facing Cuts



By Erika Uyterhoeven, State Representative, 27th Middlesex, candidate for 2nd Middlesex State Senate

As construction season begins and we all start dodging the potholes that winter left behind, I want to share some good news and some numbers that have been weighing on me. Last week, the House voted on a \$2.2 billion transportation bond bill that includes a historic increase to the Chapter 90 program, which is how the state pays to fix your roads, bridges, and other transportation projects.

Somerville's state aid grew 5% in twelve years, while inflation grew 37%. I want to break down what that actually means for Somerville, and then share something that has been weighing on me about the bigger picture.

For more than ten years, Chapter 90 was frozen at \$200 million

while construction costs kept climbing. Somerville residents filed more than 1,200 pothole reports through 311 last year, a 38% increase over the year before. This bill raises the program to \$300 million, a 50% increase, with \$200 million distributed through the traditional formula and \$100 million based on road mileage.

For Somerville, that means \$1.53 million in Chapter 90 funding under the new formula, up from \$1.23 million, a 24% bump.

Chapter 90 was stuck for over a decade, and people said it could not be increased, but the Massachusetts Municipal Association pushed, municipal leaders organized, I as your legislator made the case, and the state delivered. That is real progress.

But that only covers roads and transportation. Here is the part that has been on my mind.

Chapter 90 fixes roads but does not pay for your child's educator, or the firefighter who responds when you call 911, or the librarian who keeps the doors open on weekends. That comes from a different pot of state money called general state aid (formally, Unrestricted General Government

Aid), and it has not gotten anything close to the same treatment.

Here is what happened to Somerville's funding: since 2014, the state has sent the city more dollars every year, about 44% more in total. But the city's costs grew faster. The result: the share of Somerville's budget covered by state aid has shrunk from 25% to 15% over the last decade, and the difference lands on your property tax bill.

The state did not cut Somerville's aid. It did not have to. By growing aid more slowly than the city's costs, the state shifted more and more of the burden onto your property tax bill, with some of it absorbed by Somerville's growth and new development. Proposition 2½ means there is a limit to how much the city can raise revenue. That is why Somerville has limited options to cover growing costs and is proposing to cut school budgets right now.

In Somerville, the initial budget proposal is asking public schools to face a \$1 million cut. Something that the Somerville Educators' Union calls putting the school budget "well below level-service."

This is not a uniquely Somer-

ville problem. In Medford, the city had to ask voters for a tax increase for the first time in 44 years in order to prevent educators from losing their jobs and to begin addressing tens of millions of dollars in deferred road and sidewalk repairs. In Winchester, an \$11.5 million override (the largest ever proposed in Winchester) failed by fewer than 300 votes and is facing educator layoffs, possibly reduced library hours, and cuts to first responders. In Cambridge, the city is bracing for the loss of \$23 million in annual federal funding on top of the state aid gap.

Four cities, one pattern. Every one of these communities has been stretching every dollar, and the gap is not local, it is structural.

Chapter 90 was stuck for a decade, and the state stepped up because people made the case with data, organized across communities, and refused to accept that level-funding was good enough. If we can do that for roads, we can do it for the aid that funds our schools, our firefighters, and our libraries.

Because when we organize and fight for what we need, we win it. We just proved that works with

roads and transportation funding, and we proved it was possible when we fought and won over \$1.5 billion more dollars into our public schools through the Student Opportunity Act (something the naysayers initially said couldn't be done).

I dug into twelve years of state financial records for every city in our district, because I believe you deserve to see what is actually happening with your money, not just hear that local aid is at "record levels" (because of inflation).

That is how I approach this work: not just showing up for the vote, but doing the work before and after. The state's share of your city's budget has been shrinking for over a decade, and that did not happen by accident. It happened because nobody on Beacon Hill fought hard enough to change it.

This is a problem we can fix. And I intend to be the person who fights hard enough to fix it.

Data sources: MA DOR Division of Local Services, Schedule A General Fund Revenue Reports (FY2014–FY2025); Cherry Sheet Trend Data; H.5375 (the transportation bond bill).

Newstalk CONT. FROM PG 2

Happy birthday this week to several locals: Happy birthday to **Mike Moccia** of **Ball Square Café**. We wish him a great day. Happy birthday to former alderman and great guy, **Jack Connolly**. We hope he has a great birthday. Happy birthday to **Anthony Fraser**. We wish all of our Facebook friends, such as **Rachel Strutt**, **Paul Stanford**, **Bob DiGuardia**, **Benjamin Holmes**, **Celia Miller-Saltman**, **Jim Ospenson**, **Susannah Buzard**, **Blake Maddux**, **Sylvia Cabrera**, **Tina Kneeland**, **Bella Khadijah**, **Sarah Joseph Barnstable**, **Angelmarie DiNun-**

zio, **Debbie Shansky Murray**, **Kate Sherlock Guiliano**, and **Dom Panzino**, a 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.

The **Somerville High School Robotics Team** needs your help. The team went to the **New England District Championships** this past weekend. They couldn't have done it without the support of this community. Even better news, their alliance came in first place in their division

and earned a spot at the **World Championship** in Houston, TX, **April 29 – May 3**. It costs a lot of money to fly, house, and feed 10 students and 2 chaperones with just over one week of planning time. They are turning to the community to help make this trip happen. They would appreciate any contribution you are able to make to help their team. Any money raised above their goal will be used for future team projects. If you want to donate, visit <https://gofund.me/0ce6b0b0a>.

Become a **PorchFest Ambassador**. If

you're familiar with Somerville, passionate about music and the arts, or have experience with events and festivals, the **Somerville Arts Council** would love to have you join the team. There are two roles available: **Zone Managers** and **Ambassadors**. Time commitments vary by role, and all volunteers receive a PorchFest t-shirt. Sign up today: <https://somervilleartscouncil.org/.../porchfest-ambassadors/>.

Join the **Dormition Church** and the **Somerville Garden** *Continued on page 7*

COMMENTARY

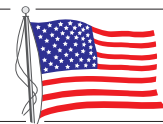
SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Illustrated by Jim Clark



Happy Earth Day, Somerville.

Our View Of The Times



It began after a bad oil spill that took place in 1969 off the coast of California. A year later, the first annual Earth Day was celebrated to demonstrate universal support for environmental protection and responsible stewardship of the planet and its people.

Since then, public and official awareness of the negative impacts of human activity – such as air and water pollution – has been raised to a level where concrete

action is being demanded to mitigate those effects and heal the ills that have been inflicted on our world.

This year's event, held on April 22, features the theme "Our Power, Our Planet," focusing on accelerating the transition to renewable energy and encouraging global community action. The 56th annual event emphasizes mobilizing collective action, voter engagement, and climate education,

with over 10,000 events planned worldwide, including cleanups and rallies.

The occasion may represent an opportunity to reflect on how fragile our biological and environmental systems truly are, and the need for proper care and implementation of procedures that will ensure the optimal health of both the large and small on the only home we have, our precious planet Earth.

Similarly, the many factors affecting our environmental health demand that immediate and meaningful measures be taken as soon as possible.

Cooperation between nations, corporations, informed experts, and the common inhabitants of this world is clearly the best hope for saving us all.

May all of us gather together in the common cause of doing just that.

Newstalk CONT. FROM PG 6

Club for their third annual plant swap on **Saturday, April 25**, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., 29 Central St, Somerville. The event will be held in the church's Heritage Hall on the lower level of the building. A raffle will be held, and coffee and refreshments will be served.

Somerville High School is currently accepting **prom donations** on behalf of our senior class. We welcome attire to help make this special night accessible for all students. Monetary gifts are appreciated; however, we ask that cash donations not be given. Thank you for being so supportive in making prom a memorable experience for

our seniors. All donations can be dropped off at the Somerville Police Station.

Vendors are wanted for a **Flea Market** to be held at the **Somerville Community Baptist Church**, 31 College Avenue near Davis Square, on **Saturday, May 9**, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Seeking vendors of items, either useful or fun, such as vintage finds, household items, toys, knick-knacks, handmade crafts, etc. It costs \$20 to rent a table. For more information or to reserve your table, contact Heather Roderick, hroderick32@gmail.com

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vation, and Zoning (PPZ) Newsletter. Stay informed on the updates shaping your neighborhood and city. Curated by PPZ staff, get quick updates on planning initiatives, efforts, and zoning updates. Sign up now and explore other cities and department newsletters at www.somervillema.gov/subscribe.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our **Arts Editor, Doug Holder**, for setting up a **GoFundMe** campaign for **The Somerville Times**. With the cost of printing going up and a lack of businesses having the resources to advertise, free papers feel the effect. We sincerely thank all

who have already contributed and thank any future contributors. If you are interested in helping, please visit <https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-the-somerville-times>. Or if anyone is interested in advertising, please contact Bobbietoner@aol.com. We offer great discounts to help our advertisers be able to advertise. Thank you all so much for your support!

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Olio - (noun) A miscellaneous mixture, hodgepodge

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- The "Treaty of Paris" ended which war?
- Which branch of the U.S. armed forces used the slogan "It's not just a job, it's an adventure"?
- Which early president was considered a political philosopher and the "Father of the Constitution"?
- Who was the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War?
- What New Jersey town is home to a statue of Frank Sinatra?
- Which U.S. Constitution amendment provides for freedom of speech, religion and the press?
- What is the name of the pet dinosaur on the TV cartoon *The Flintstones*?
- What identity document is required to travel to different countries around the world?
- Who was Johnny Carson's longtime sidekick on *The Tonight Show*?
- Dubbed the Black Death, what plague swept through Europe in the 1300s?
- Who was the first author to submit a typewritten manuscript for publication?
- Johnny Depp's portrayal of Jack Sparrow from *Pirates of the Caribbean* was influenced by who?

Answers on page 11

The Somerville Times Useless Facts of the Week

- Many oranges are actually green.
- There are 293 ways to make a change for a dollar.

STATEPOINT CROSSWORD

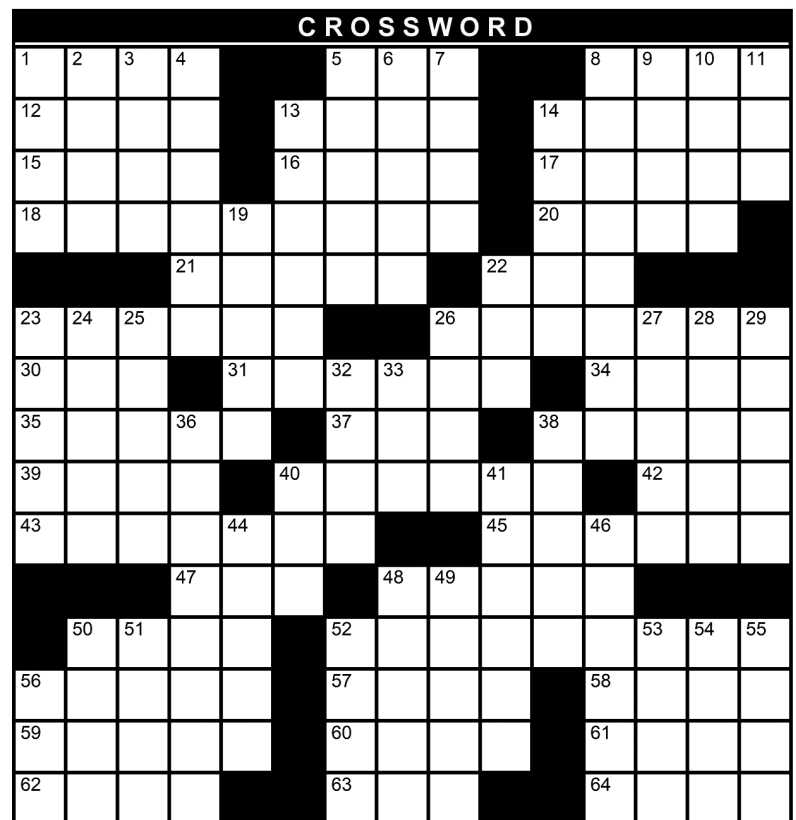
THE 1970s

ACROSS

- Verbal abuse
- Failed constitutional amendment, acr.
- Google ____, navigation aid
- Strip of roadway
- Dripping faucet sound
- Chef's headgear
- Tel ____, Israel
- Prima donnas' problems
- Occupied (2 words)
- 1974 scandal
- Flight-related announcements, acr.
- Attempt again
- Male aristocrat's honorific
- Town, in Spanish
- Recitation of wedding vows, again
- Santa ____ winds
- Apnea, in U.K.
- Operatic solo
- ____ or do nothing
- Finish line
- 1976 Woody Guthrie biopic: "Bound for ____"
- Field worker
- Avian rest stop
- What lintel and mantel have in common
- Ring-shaped
- 1979 Nobel Prize-winning nun
- Alfa Romeo Giulietta, e.g.
- Italian bowling
- Type of tournament
- #33 Down Oscar winner
- Lie in wait
- Place one's stake
- Skin woe
- "Roots" by Alex ____
- House of Lords member
- Chalupa alternative
- Hoopla
- "Right" coast time
- *"The Barbara ____ Show"

DOWN

- Deli side
- ____ lamp, 1960s invention popular in 1970s
- Newton, e.g.
- Echo
- "Pomp and Circumstance" composer



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Soultion to last week's crossword puzzle:



- ____ Tooty Fresh 'n Fruity
- Cathedral part
- 1976 Summer Olympics location
- Caribbean color
- Boot-wearing cat
- Johnny Nash's "I Can ____ Clearly Now"
- Spinning toy (2 words)
- Make a logical connection (2 words)
- 4 x 4 race
- Dead one or Black one, e.g.
- Ottoman Empire bigwig
- Teamsters, e.g.
- Consumed
- "Sanford and Son" star
- "That's all she ____"
- Buenos follower
- Eric Clapton's 1970 hit
- Not ever, contraction
- 1975 movie "____ Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"
- Kung Fu movie star (2 words)
- Domenikos Theotokopoulos, a.k.a. El ____
- Away's partner
- Old master print maker
- Scrawny
- Feel sympathy
- Common hops
- Eight performers
- No problem
- Cheap reads
- Back of neck
- a.k.a. horse mackerel
- Jacqueline Susann's best-seller "____ Is Not Enough"
- Noble gas
- "Zip it!"

Soultion in the next edition of *The Somerville Times*.

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.

A Parent's Journey Through Autism and SPS' AIM Program

Imagine, you've just received an autism diagnosis for your child.

The panic sets in. What kind of life will they have? Is it my fault? What can I do? Boom- your life has changed! You forget who your child is without this label. You feel like you're drowning.

Autism is NOT a progressive disorder. Your child does not get "worse." They are still the child they were a day ago, before their diagnosis. The child that holds your heart. The one whose laugh can brighten your day. It's time to learn what to do and what they need. Autism diagnosis is different for every person. It is a spectrum after all. Remember this. Autism is not "one size fits all or most".

Appointments, Parent teaching sessions, ABA, and social groups all while still holding yourself together. Celebrating that first word, that "delayed to others" milestone. Seeing and being part of your child devel-

oping. Yes, I am doing right by my child! Buying everything that says "sensory" on Amazon. Explaining at restaurants that my child is autistic. This is our life, but looking back I wouldn't change this journey for anything.

You trust the professionals that are helping your child as they must have your child's best interests in mind. RIGHT??

School starts! They tell you first your child will go to the Capuano, and then the AIM program at Winter Hill, as they are the BEST schools for your child. No one tells you why- but again, they have your child's best interests in mind....

COVID! Your child is home. They are remote learning now. At the beginning it wasn't structured. Your child is dysregulated and you are now a teacher?! The panic that you felt before is back, but stronger. You survive remote Kindergarten and first grade. You try to have your child repeat

the grade as again you feel that they need a real teacher and the social aspect of school that you could not provide during remote times. They tell you that your child is "sooo smart and would be bored."

2nd grade is in person! Yay! First real year at the Winter Hill! This is going to be good now, right? IEP Meetings... talking about what your child needs, and trusting that what they say is what the IEP says. You sign.

Winter Hill has now broken. The Kids are home again! Dysregulated. Panic. The AIM program is moved to the Edgerly. Numerous bumps in the road- none of them ADA accessible- but we survived them. Next 2 years, your child gets into a routine. They are regulated. They have comfort people at their school.

March 2026 you receive a written notice, "Your child has to go to a different school next year, across town, and will be tak-

ing buses for the first time. Everything is changing." Why? Who decided this? How did they decide this? Welcome back to the panic, stress, and fear of dysregulation.

You go to a meeting hoping for clarification, and maybe, for getting help from the school system. Instead, you are met with a stone wall that has no room for compassion for you. There is no clarity. There is no data. There is no compassion. The more you learn, the more you realize the professionals seem more wrapped up in politics than what's best for your child. Maybe your faith was misplaced.

My story may not match perfectly to every parent who has a special needs child in AIM here in Somerville, but it needs to be said:

Who has decided to separate the kids from both teachers and peers that a lot of them have had since the first school? It wasn't the full IEP team. Do they understand Autism? These *Continued on page 12*

Dorothy's Corner

BY DOROTHY DIMARZO



Chicken Caesar Salad

One of the best things about this salad is that everything can be made in advance and assembled right before you're ready to serve it. Whenever I have leftover bread, I also like to make croutons so I have them on hand pretty much most of the time. See the recipe below for the salad and a link for the crouton recipe.

Baby Kale (5oz package)

Grilled Boneless Skinless Chicken Breasts, sliced (1 1/2-2, 6oz each serving per person)

Croutons 1 Cup, here's my recipe, <https://www.thesomervilletimes.com/archives/73172>

Caesar Dressing

1 Cup Mayonnaise

2 Garlic Cloves, pressed or finely

minced to a paste consistency

1 Teaspoon Worcestershire

1 Teaspoon Dijon Mustard

2 Tablespoons Lemon Juice

5 Drops Fish Sauce

1/4 Cup Grated Parmesan Cheese, plus extra to add to the salad

1/4 Teaspoon Kosher Salt

1/2 Teaspoon Freshly Grated Black Pepper

In a small bowl, add all the ingredients listed above and blend well. Store it in the refrigerator in an airtight container for up to a week. To assemble, place 1/3 cup of the Caesar dressing into a large bowl, then add the package of baby kale and the croutons to the bowl and toss it well until everything is lightly coated with the dressing. You can always add more dressing to your liking and serve extra on the side. Divide the mixture between three bowls or plates. Add the sliced



grilled chicken and top off with either grated or shaved Parmesan cheese. Serving size for 3.

Visit Dorothy's website at <http://ddimarzo2002.wix.com/thymethief>.

LEGAL NOTICES

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City of Somerville
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
City Hall, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) will hold a virtual public hearing on **Tuesday, May 5, 2026**, at 6:45pm through Zoom.

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025, this meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission will be conducted via remote participation. A recording of these proceedings can be found online here: [Agendas, Minutes, & More](#).

TO USE A COMPUTER

Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/join/wn_UtLQRCzSiW8eA2N_roYiA

TO CALL IN

Attendees must register for the meeting online in order for a call-in number to be emailed to them by Zoom.

The Historic Preservation Commission will consider the following pursuant to the Historic Districts Act, Chapter 40C of the Massachusetts General Laws, as amended, and/or the City of Somerville Code of Ordinances, Pt. II, Chap. 7, Sections 7-16 – 7-28.

Determinations of Historic Significance (STEP 1 IN THE DEMO REVIEW PROCESS)

54 Highland Avenue Applicant: Niranjan Gawli
Owner: 54 Highland Ave LLC
The Applicant seeks to demolish a building constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

Development review application submittal materials and other documentation may be viewed online at

<https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/historic-preservation/hpc-cases>. Interested persons may provide comments to the Historic Preservation Commission at the hearing or by submitting written comments by email to historic@somervillema.gov.

Persons with disabilities who need auxiliary aids and services for effective communication (i.e., CART, 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 ADA Coordinator in advance at 617-625-6600 x 2059 or ADA@somervillema.gov.

4/15/26, 4/22/26 The Somerville Times



LEGAL NOTICE
CITY OF SOMERVILLE CABLE TELEVISION
LICENSE RENEWAL PUBLIC HEARING

The City of Somerville, by the Mayor as the statutory Cable License Issuing Authority, or her duly delegated Hearing Officer, will hold a cable license renewal public hearing on **April 29, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.** as part of the City's RCN Cable Telecom Services of Massachusetts (a/k/a As-tound Broadband) license renewal process. The purpose of the hearing will be to allow the public an opportunity to comment on the performance of the cable television operator, RCN, during its current license term and to hear testimony on future cable-related needs and interests of the Somerville community. Please note that this public hearing will be virtual and can be attended by desktop, laptop, tablet or phone via the following link or number(s):

<https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/23918221163604?p=RbWTiK4gXAZqYvknF>

Meeting ID: 239 182 211 636 04

Passcode: MB6ji2ya

Copies of City license renewal documents, if any, may be made available for public inspection at the Office of the City Clerk or by contacting Steve DeCarlo, Office of Cable Communications, c/o City Hall or Municipal Cable Counsel, William August (617-548-3735). By order of the Mayor as statutory License Issuing Authority.

4/15/26, 4/22/26 The Somerville Times



Section 00 11 13
ADVERTISEMENT TO BID
MGL c.30 §39M Over \$50K

The **SOMERVILLE HOUSING AUTHORITY**, the Awarding Authority, invites sealed bids from Contractors for the Parking Lot Improvements - Bryant Manor at State Aided Development: Bryant Manor (667-4) in Somerville, Massachusetts, in accordance with the documents prepared by **GCG ASSOCIATES, INC.**

The Project consists of but not limited to:

Removing and reconstructing existing parking lot, installation of a new dumpster pad, line striping, curbing and all other work as specified in the contract documents. Any reference to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) shall be replaced with the Somerville Housing Authority (SHA). The EOHLC Construction Handbook will still be used as referenced.

The work is estimated to cost **\$115,000.00**.

All bidding Requests for Information (RFIs) shall be submitted online by 05/01/2026 at 12:00PM EDT for general bids.

Bids are subject to M.G.L. c.30§39M and to minimum wage rates as required by M.G.L. c.149 §526 to 27H inclusive.

THIS PROJECT IS BEING ELECTRONICALLY BID AND HARD COPY BIDS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Please review the instructions in the bid documents on how to register as an electronic bidder. All Bids shall be submitted online at biddocs.com and received no later than the date and time specified.

General Bids will be received until **07 May 2026 at 11:00AM EDT** and publicly opened online, forthwith.

General bids and sub-bids shall be accompanied by a bid deposit that is not less than five (5%) of the greatest possible bid amount (including all alternates) and made payable to the **SOMERVILLE HOUSING AUTHORITY**. Note: A bid deposit is not required for Projects advertised under \$50,000.

Bid Forms and Contract Documents will be available for review at bid-docs.com (may be viewed and downloaded electronically at no cost).

The Contractor and all subcontractors (collectively referred to as "the Contractor") agree to strive to achieve minority and women workforce participation. The Workforce Participation benchmark is set at **6.9% for women and 15.3% for minorities**. The Workforce benchmark percentages are a **statutory** requirement under MGL c. 149 § 44A(2)(G).

PRE-BID CONFERENCE / SITE VISIT: None

The hard copy Contract Documents may be seen at:

Nashoba Blue Inc.
433 Main Street
Hudson, MA 01749
978-568-1167

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CITY OF SOMERVILLE
PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING SERVICES DEPARTMENT
INVITATION FOR BIDS
IFB #26-61

The City of Somerville, through the Procurement and Contracting Services Department, invites sealed bids for:

Bus Transportation Services

An Invitation for Bid (IFB) may be obtained online at <https://www.somervillema.gov/procurement> or from the City of Somerville's BidExpress page at <http://www.somervillema.gov/BidExpress> or from the PCS Department, Somerville City Hall, 93 Highland Ave., Somerville, MA, 02143 on or after **Wednesday, April 22, 2026**. Sealed bids will be received at above office until: **2:30 PM Wednesday, May 6, 2026**. The Chief Procurement Officer reserves the right to reject any or all bids if, in her sole judgment, the best interest of the City of Somerville would be served by so doing.

Please email chukhatsang@somervillema.gov for more information.

Thupten Chukhatsang
Senior Procurement Manager
617-625-6600 x3400

4/22/26 The Somerville Times



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE
167 HOLLAND STREET, 3RD Floor
SOMERVILLE, MA 02144
RFP #S2027-02

The School Committee of the City of Somerville invites sealed proposals for:

A Vendor to Provide An Enrichment Based Afterschool Program for Students in the Somerville Public Schools-at One (1) Elementary Schools for the period August 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027.

Each Proposal shall be submitted in two separate sealed envelopes clearly marked "Price Proposal for Vendor Services for the Afterschool Enrichment Program" and a "Non-Price Proposal for Vendor Services for the Afterschool Enrichment Program" in accordance with the Request for Proposal and Contract Documents which may be obtained at the Finance Office, Somerville School Department, 167 Holland Street, 3rd Floor, Somerville, MA 02144 on or after **April 23, 2026** between the hours of Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

All Proposals shall be filed no later than **4:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 7, 2026** at the Finance Office, Somerville School Department, 167 Holland Street, 3rd Floor, Somerville, MA 02144. Proposals will be reviewed by an Evaluation Committee which may include possible interviews with the proposal finalists.

Please contact Leah Arredondo (larredondo@k12.somerville.ma.us) or call 617-629-5218 to receive the proposal and register as a proposal vendor.

The School Committee of the City of Somerville reserves the right to reject any or all bids or any part or parts thereof, waive any minor informality in the Bid process and to award the Contract that is deemed to be in the best interest of the City of Somerville School Department.

Robert A. Berretta
Interim CFO
Somerville Public Schools

4/22/26 The Somerville Times



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE
167 HOLLAND STREET, 3RD Floor
SOMERVILLE, MA 02144
BID #S2027-03

The School Committee of the City of Somerville invites sealed bids for:

ELA Curriculum Materials Only: Textbooks, Library Books, Consumable Materials, E-Books and Online Curriculum Materials That Align to the Massachusetts DESE ELA Curriculum Frameworks.

The IFB package may be obtained by emailing Leah Arredondo in the Finance Office, larredondo@k12.somerville.ma.us or can be picked up at the Somerville School Department, Finance Office, 167 Holland Street, 3rd Floor, Somerville, MA 02144 on or after **Tuesday, April 21, 2026 @ 10 a.m.**

Sealed bid responses will be received no later than **2 p.m., Wednesday, May 6, 2026** at the Finance Office, Somerville School Department, 167 Holland Street, 3rd Floor, Somerville, MA 02144 at which time and place they shall be publicly opened and read aloud.

The School Committee of the City of Somerville reserves the right to reject any or all bids or any part or parts thereof, waive any minor informality in the Bid process and to award the Contract that is deemed to be in the best interest of the City of Somerville School Department.

Robert A. Berretta
Interim CFO
Somerville Public Schools

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**CITY OF SOMERVILLE
PROCUREMENT & CONTRACTING SERVICES DEPARTMENT
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP# 26-65**

The City of Somerville, through the Procurement & Contract Services Department invites proposals for:

Meals for Summer 2026

The RFP package may be obtained online at <https://www.somervillema.gov/procurement> or from the City of Somerville's BidExpress page at <http://www.somervillema.gov/BidExpress> on or after: **Wednesday, April 22, 2026**. Sealed responses will be received at the PCS Department, Somerville City Hall, 93 Highland Ave., Somerville, MA, 02143 or via Bid Express until: **3:00 pm, Thursday, May 7, 2026**.

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

Please email chukhatsang@somervillema.gov for more information.

**Thupten Chukhatsang
Senior Procurement Manager
617-625-6600 x3400**

4/22/26 The Somerville Times



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE
PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING SERVICES DEPARTMENT
INVITATION FOR BIDS
IFB #26-71**

The City of Somerville, through the Procurement and Contracting Services Department, invites sealed bids for:

Poured-in-Place Surfacing Repairs

An Invitation for Bid (IFB) may be obtained online at www.bidexpress.com, <https://www.somervillema.gov/procurement>, or from the PCS Department, Somerville City Hall, 93 Highland Ave., Somerville, MA, 02143 on or after **Wednesday, April 22, 2026**. Sealed bids will be received at above office until: **2:30PM Thursday, May 7, 2026**. The Chief Procurement Officer reserves the right to reject any or all bids if, in her sole judgment, the best interest of the City of Somerville would be served by so doing.

Please email Felisa Garate at fgarate@somervillema.gov for more information.

5% Bid Deposit required. Massachusetts Prevailing Wages apply.

**Felisa Garate
Senior Procurement Manager
617-625-6600 x3406**

4/22/26 The Somerville Times



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE
PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING SERVICES DEPARTMENT
INVITATION FOR BIDS
IFB #26-70**

The City of Somerville, through the Procurement and Contracting Services Department, invites sealed bids for:

Kennedy School Parking & Playground Construction Phase I

An Invitation for Bid (IFB) may be obtained online at www.bidexpress.com, <https://www.somervillema.gov/procurement>, or from the PCS Department, Somerville City Hall, 93 Highland Ave., Somerville, MA, 02143 on or after **Wednesday, April 22, 2026**. Sealed bids will be received at above office until: **2:00PM Thursday, May 14, 2026**. The Chief Procurement Officer reserves the right to reject any or all bids if, in her sole judgment, the best interest of the City of Somerville would be served by so doing.

Please email Felisa Garate at fgarate@somervillema.gov for more information.

5% Bid Deposit required. Massachusetts Prevailing Wages apply.

**Felisa Garate
Senior Procurement Manager
617-625-6600 x3406**

4/22/26 The Somerville Times



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE
PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING SERVICES DEPARTMENT
INVITATION FOR BIDS
IFB #26-63**

The City of Somerville, through the Procurement and Contracting Services Department, invites sealed bids for:

Restaurant Food Health Inspector

An Invitation for Bid (IFB) may be obtained online at www.bidexpress.com, <https://www.somervillema.gov/procurement>, or from the PCS Department, Somerville City Hall, 93 Highland Ave., Somerville, MA, 02143 on or after **Wednesday, April 22, 2026**. Sealed bids will be received at above office until: **3:00PM Wednesday, May 6, 2026**. The Chief Procurement Officer reserves the right to reject any or all bids if, in her sole judgment, the best interest of the City of Somerville would be served by so doing.

Please email Felisa Garate at fgarate@somervillema.gov for more information.

**Felisa Garate
Senior Procurement Manager
617-625-6600 x3406**

4/22/26 The Somerville Times

Attorney proposes zoning amendments for backyard cottages and lot splits

CONT. FROM PG 5

assure that a backyard cottage be subordinate to and in the same ownership as the principal

Currently, Somerville allows these accessory units to be sold off separately. Somerville allows developers to build highly lucrative backyard cottages as large condominium units, typically behind 3-unit buildings. These are sold separately, as freestanding, market-rate, single-family homes - which are also condos. This practice gives developers the opportunity to build 'bonus' fourth units on each lot - a huge financial incentive to outbid middle-income home buyers in Somerville.

The third proposed zoning text amendment would limit the size of a backyard cottage to no more than 900 square feet in size. The planning staff currently allows zoning for up to 1,500 sq. ft. White said that this 900 sq. ft. is the same square footage used in the State model ordinance and is more appropriate for a building located as close as 3 feet from neighboring lot lines and for the construction of affordable rentals for a family.

The fourth proposed zoning text amendment would restore affordability requirements for lot splits in the Neighborhood Residence (NR) district.

In recent years, the city has eliminated the 20% affordability requirement in residential neighborhoods. Under current zoning, a developer need not provide a single affordable unit when building 8 luxury condominium units on a lot as small as 6500 sq. ft.

White's last amendment would require that developers provide one or more affordable units whenever a residential lot is split into two or more smaller lots. If the total number of units constructed adds up to 5 or more units,

20% of those units must be affordable. White added that in the event the city did limit backyard cottages to rental units, then it might not be appropriate to require affordable units, as the profit potential is much less than that for luxury condominiums.

With regard to the four proposed zoning text amendments, written comments must be submitted by noon on May 15. The email address for public comments on the zoning amendments is publiccomments@somervillema.gov.

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From on page 8

Ms. Cam's Olio

Answers

1. The Revolutionary War	7. Dino
2. The Navy	8. A passport
3. James Madison	9. Ed McMahon
4. George Washington	10. The bubonic plague
5. Hoboken	11. Mark Twain
6. The First Amendment	12. Keith Richards



Somerville Fair Housing Commission
Question of the week

Q: My landlord is refusing to fix the back stairway. Is there anything I can do about that?

A: Possibly! You didn't mention whether the back stairway is the second exit that's required for safety purposes. If it is, the landlord HAS to keep it in good order, and the City's inspectional services could fine him and force him to fix it. And there are laws saying he can't retaliate against you. Or it could be a Fair Housing issue. Did you recently start living with someone else, and is that person a member of a protected class? Or are you living with someone you're not married to and your landlord objects? Or did you recently have a child? If you suspect you're being discriminated against, call the Shannon Lawler at the City's Housing Department, 617-625-6600 ext. 2569, for advice..

The 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.

A Parent's Journey CONT. FROM PG 9

kids NEED familiarity and routine. Parents, you all are doing amazing! SPS can you please help on your end? Maybe bring some of that "Family Engagement" to the table? You know the one- the table that's supposed to include the seats families that are supposed to have as part of their child's IEP Team.

This is a parent's plea for understanding, transparency, and participation in their disabled child's education. This is

a plea that should not have to be made. If you're an AIM family feeling this way too, please make your voice heard here:



— Somerville Parent

Want to write local Somerville stories?
Call 857-488-5138
and speak to the Assignment Editor

BOBBY'S DAD JOKES CORNER 

By Bobbygeorge Potaris

Someone complimented my parking today! They left a sweet note on my windshield that said "parking fine."

The "Original"
All Types Vent Cleaning
Restaurant Hood Cleaning
Dryer Vent/ HVAC Cleaning
Power Washing
Licensed and Insured
in Massachusetts
We travel all over
Massachusetts
Call today to find out
our weekly specials!
Call Jimmy 857-366-3761

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Somerville
Times
call
Bobbie Toner
857-488-5138

Somerville through the eyes of Denise



Hidden fountain... — Photo by Denise Provost

On This Day in History

April 22

- 296 – St. Gaius ends his reign as Catholic Pope.
- 1500 – Pedro Alvarez Cabral discovers Brazil.
- 1509 – Henry VIII ascends to the throne of England.
- 1529 – Spain and Portugal divide the eastern hemisphere in the Treaty of Saragossa.
- 1792 – George Washington proclaims American neutrality in the war in Europe.
- 1889 – The Oklahoma land rush officially starts at noon as thousands of Americans race for new, unclaimed land.
- 1915 – At the Second Battle of Ypres, the Germans use poison gas for the first time.
- 1954 – The Senate Army-McCarthy hearings begin.
- 1955 – Congress orders all U.S. coins to bear the motto "In God We Trust."
- 1976 – Barbara Walters becomes the first female nightly news anchor on network television.
- 1995 – Rwandan troops kill thousands of Hutu refugees in Kibeho.

Patriots' Day Colonial Fair 2026

The Patriots' Day Colonial Fair will take place on Monday, April 20, at Foss Park in Somerville. Participants and attendees enjoyed History In The Park for the 250th Patriots' Day Commemoration. Featured attractions included colonial games and activities, delicious refreshments, and a chance to greet Paul Revere. Presented in collaboration with the City of Somerville.

— Photos by Claudia Ferro





OFF THE SHELF

by Doug Holder

'Special Operation'
by Mark Pawlak*Special Operation*

By Mark Pawlak

Beltway Editions, Rockville, Maryland

ISBN: 978-1-957372-22-8

41 Pages

Review by Off the Shelf Correspondent Dennis Daly

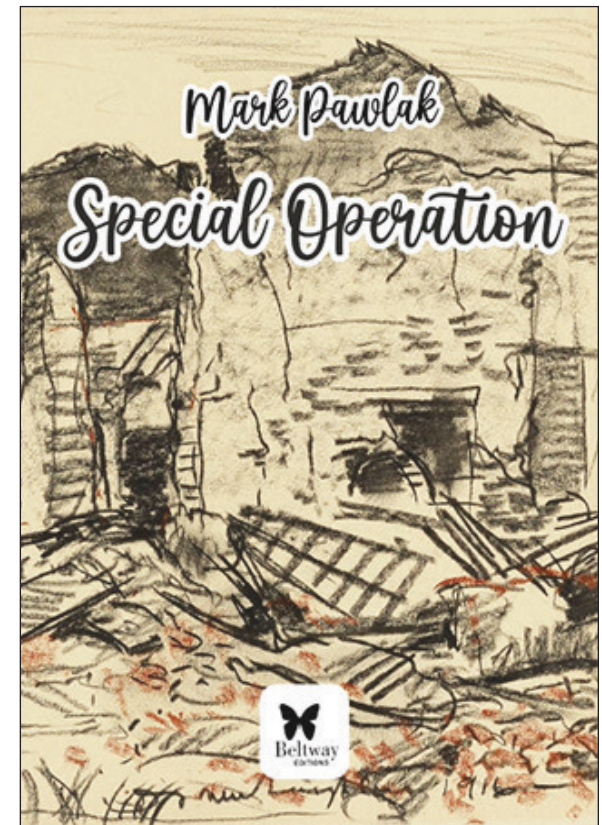
Generally, I try to avoid political poems as well as anti-war poems. Not because they don't have an important place in those overlapping genres – they do. Or because they can't effectuate changes in belief systems with their emotional and sometimes rational appeal – they can. But even so, overcome with their own self-importance or consumed with the certainty of true believers, the poets, who write them, usually fail. Brilliant exceptions like Sigfried Sassoon (First World War), Wilfred Owen (First World War), and Michael Casey (Vietnam War) prove the rule. Therefore, when confronted with reviewable collections of this verse type, I walk, nay, I run in the other direction. But not today.

Carl von Clausewitz, a Prussian military strategist, once claimed that "War is merely the continuation of politics by other means." Well, he got part of that right. But war does more. In its classic form, the clashing of grounded armies, it transforms patriotism and high-minded glory, and common hospitality into human rage and bloody slaughter. It highlights an awful history of horror, bloodletting and the much darker and deeper and bestial nature of mankind. Great conquerors, like Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, T'ien Wang (leader of the Taiping Rebellion), Napoleon, et al, celebrated by many in modern nation-states, brought untold suffering and death to their fellow man.

Special Operation, Mark Pawlak's new collection of war poems, set in the god-awful Ukrainian-Russian quagmire, focuses not on who is winning and who is losing but what, euphemistically, the military class calls collateral damage. And in wartime collateral damage unerringly refers to the very old and the very young. In fact, Pawlak addresses Babusya (meaning grandmother) in a number of his more poignant pieces.

In Pawlak's opening poem (doubling as his title piece), *Prologue: Don't Worry*, his narrative details two sisters, one in Moscow and the other in Kharkiv discussing the war. The Moscow woman assures her sibling that Vladimir Putin's war machine in his "special operation" targets only military installations. The second sister responds this way,

"Good," she says. "So please ask him



why his Operation's missile struck
your niece's kindergarten."

Erasure, Pawlak's poem lamenting the historic looping of war and regret since time immemorial, uses a well-worn slogan to great effect. The phrase Never Again seems to have been popularized during the First World War and later associated with Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor and Pope Paul VI in his 1965 address to the UN. Pawlak relates how survivors of the last war painted this slogan on bricks of newly constructed buildings only to later have those same two-word slogans altered to a single word by modern munitions. The poet concludes his dirge with not a little irony,

... "Never Again."

But when artillery shells and missiles
demolish buildings,
they create by erasure—

as this new war demonstrates—a new slogan
on brick facades and survivors' lips:
"Again."

When everyday life mixes with murderous technology on warfare's tableau, it causes the observer (or reader) to question the very fabric of ethical reality. Pawlak's *The Gift* conjures up this juxtaposition for all to see. The poet/narrator councils his grandmother on the degraded condition *Continued on page 15*

Lyrical

SOMERVILLE

edited by Doug Holder

Our poet writes: "I'm Irina Canute, a student at Endicott College currently enrolled in Professor Doug Holder's Creative Writing course. I am majoring in Health Science and expect to graduate in 2027. This poem is in response to a sculpture at the Manninen Center for the Arts at Endicott College."

The Deer and the Child

The child leans into the curves of the deer
Their stillness matches
They grow quiet together
Breath by breath

White on white
Soft and softer
Two bodies connected
one language

The antlers rise
Like thoughts the child can not name
But they blur into one

No longer separate
No edges
One edge ends
another starts
The deer holds the child
The child becomes one with deer

It's hard to tell
where one ends
and the other begins.

— Irina Canute

To have your work considered for the Lyrical send it to:

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Off The Shelf CONT. FROM PG 14

of her home and garden. He tells her to consider the advantages of the recent bombardment of her property (Is this a Monty Python skit?) and to consider the bright side of things. Indeed, low comedy has a way of merging with tragedy in these dire situations. Here the poet, in a kind of despair, winks at the devastation,

Come summer, the shattered door, burst windows,

shell shocked walls
will provide ventilation.
And your garden plot, Babusya,
won't need digging: already cratered, trenched,
it's well prepared for spring planting.

Elderly refugees from the Ukrainian meatgrinder understand all too well humankind at its worst. All illusions long since vanished, they plod ahead because they must. This is also man's nature. In Pawlak's poem *Survivor*, the reader follows the dreadful trek of a 98- year- old woman, having already experienced Stalin's man-made famine (ten million dead), and now seeking existential comfort in her piety and prayers. Her footwear, contrasted with the bombastic and grisly landscape surrounding her, tells the tale in, alas, hor-

rendous detail. Here's the heart of the poem,

Rifle fire, explosions, occupation.
One Russian soldier shoots the family's barking dog.
"What have you done? That was our protector!"

"I'm your protector now," he says.
Rifle fire, explosions.

Separated from family, fleeing west alone,
no food, no water, on foot,
in house slippers.

Exploding artillery shells, cratered roads...
she steps over dead bodies,
walks past cars, trucks:
blasted, smoldering.

My favorite poem in Pawlak's collection, *The Gardener*, sneaks up on you with its candor and calm in the midst of devastation. Yet another elderly woman continues on with her ordinary life in spite of everything. She keeps to her routine and ignores what she cannot change. She endures in spite of the madness that surrounds her. Pawlak explains,

Her son is at the front.
Now the only resident of her block,
she tends her garden,
the one she's kept for 30 years:

her hands weeding,
spade and pitchfork turning earth—
in the bomb craters
she plants new flowers.

All around: destruction;
in her apartment, order:
Czech crystal displayed
on top of her dresser.

Rules of war are laughable. William Tecumseh Sherman, a commanding general during the Civil War, once argued that "War is cruelty. There is no use trying to reform it. The crueler it is, the sooner it will be over." That very recognition causes shame. And shame can be efficacious. We need to be reminded in painful detail of war's essence and humanity's capacity for barbarity. Poets like Mark Pawlak serve as essential mitigating forces. He deserves our thanks.

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