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FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 2026



FREE

# CHARLESTOWN

PATRIOT-BRIDGE

## MAYOR'S CUP WINNERS



COURTESY PHOTO

The Charlestown Squirt AAA team claimed the Mayor's Cup, defeating Dorchester 4-2 on December 23, at BC's Conte Forum. This year's team (pictured above) is coached by Sean Murray, Jim Lister, Dean Carucci, and Eric Darci (not pictured.) On the road to victory, Charlestown defeated every other neighborhood city-wide to win this year's Championship.

## Breadon elected City Council President

### Coletta Zapata withdraws her candidacy

Staff Report

In a major political development that stunned residents, Liz Breadon was elected the new president of the Boston City Council at its first meeting of the year Monday following the inauguration ceremonies.

Local observers were expect-

ing District 1 Councilor Gabriela Coletta Zapata, who represents East Boston, Charlestown, and the North End, to be elected to the top leadership position on the 13-member board. In the weeks leading up to the vote, Coletta Zapata appeared to have garnered the support from her colleagues for the presidency. But Coletta

Zapata withdrew her name from the election Sunday, one day before the vote.

"Upon further reflection, I decided not to seek the nomination for city council president. I'm thankful for those who supported me and I look forward to serving

(COUNCIL, Pg. 4)

## City officials take oaths of office as Mayor Wu promises, 'Boston will be a beacon'

Staff Report

Boston Mayor Michelle Wu took the oath of office for the second time on Monday morning, Jan. 5, before a capacity crowd who witnessed the traditional pomp and ceremony of a mayoral inauguration at Boston Symphony Hall.

Ron Cobb, the official City Messenger, attired appropriately in a top hat and tails, opened the

official proceedings with an introduction of the participants and elected officials.

City Clerk Alex Geourntas, who served as the Master of Ceremonies, then introduced the Color Guards from the Boston Police, Boston Fire, and Boston EMS, as well as six student-athletes from the Boston public schools who led the audience in the Pledge of Alle-

(OATHS OF OFFICE, Pg. 4)



MAYOR'S OFFICE PHOTO BY JOHN WILCOX

Mayor Michelle Wu stands with her family as she takes her Oath of Office from Judge Sarah G. Kim, Associate Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court during the Inauguration Ceremony at Symphony Hall. See pages 4-5 for more photos.



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## COMPASS



# EDITORIAL

## PROUD OF OUR MAYOR

As we were watching this past Monday's inauguration ceremonies of city officials, and then listening to the inspiring Inaugural Address of Mayor Michelle Wu, it really hit home for us the extent to which Mayor Wu and our City Council embody the moment in which we are living.

Mayor Wu's speech, though relatively short (about 20 minutes), starkly laid out in no uncertain terms the extent to which our democracy is under attack. Her clarion call to oppose the forces that threaten to destroy everything that our nation and our city have accomplished since our founding 250 years ago was more direct than anything that we hear from our tired and aging politicians in Washington, most of whom are more concerned about their own self-preservation than they are about the future of our country.

As the daughter of immigrants from Taiwan, it is obvious that Mayor Wu has both a firm grasp of the ideals that have made America great and a clear vision of what it will take to make Boston a model city as we enter the middle part of the 21st century.

We wish Mayor Wu the best as she embarks on her second term as our mayor, knowing fully well that her success will be ours.

## THANK YOU, STRANGER THINGS

The long-awaited conclusion of the hit Netflix series, Stranger Things, finally arrived over the holiday week.

It's hard to believe that it has been more than nine years since the show became a cultural phenomenon when the first season debuted in the summer of 2016.

The series is set in the 1980s, rekindling fond memories of that era for anyone who was around at that time. There were no cell phones or personal computers and kids gathered in their basements to play Dungeons and Dragons with playing cards, game pieces, and handwritten notebooks.

For those who grew up in that era, the show was a trip down memory lane. Although we were a bit older in the '80s than the show's main characters -- who were in middle school when the series began -- what resonated for us was the photographer for the high school newspaper who developed his black & white film and printed his own photos in his red-light dark room.

It reminded us of an era of our life, which we largely had forgotten, when we too, were printing our photos for our newspapers in the dark room in the basement of our newspaper office. Today of course, all of our photos are digital and are transmitted via the internet with a few keystrokes on our cell phones and laptops -- long gone are the spools of 36-photo rolls of film, chemical solutions, and printing paper, not to mention the hours we spent in the dark room making sure that our photos were shaded just right for the next day's newspaper.

The show also introduced us to one of our favorite new actresses, Millie Bobby Brown, and resurrected an old favorite, Winona Ryder, who herself was a teen in the 1980s.

On the surface, Stranger Things can be viewed as a straight-up horror movie involving a parallel universe (known as the Upside Down) that is populated by alien demons and oozing black vines, along with the requisite government conspiracy.

Metaphorically, the Upside Down can be viewed in any number of ways, from the spread of cancer in the human body to having been prescient of what has transpired in the world since 2016 -- the upside down nature of our political life, the onset of the coronavirus, or perhaps the ubiquity of plastics in everything we eat, drink, and breathe.

But in the last scenes of the series finale, the show reminded us that it was at its best when it focused on the loss of innocence that we all undergo -- and endure -- when we transition from childhood to adulthood on the journey from middle school through high school.

That is a universal theme that is applicable to every generation -- and that was captured so well by Stranger Things.

## OUR CHRISTMAS TREES MAY BE FORLORN, BUT ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

The holiday season is over, and the best evidence for that are the discarded Christmas trees that lie forlornly along the sidewalks in front of our homes as they await pick-up by our DPW workers.

We do not want to overstate it, but it seems incongruous for our Christmas trees to suffer such an ignominious fate. It was only a few days before that they stood as the center of attention in our homes, gaily decorated with ornaments and lights, shimmering throughout the day and night, and bringing immense joy for all to behold.

Back in the '60s and '70s, every discarded Christmas tree was still streaming with silver and gold tinsel. But we've noticed that Christmas trees these days do not have as much tinsel (if any at all) as when we were kids -- which is a good thing. The tinsel back then apparently was full of lead (ugh!) and today's tinsel is made of PVC, which is not recyclable.

But now our trees lie abandoned, devoid of any ornamentation and, depending on how long they've been without water, starting to turn brown.

Yet despite our trees' bare appearance on the cold, windswept sidewalks, one thing remains: The wonderful memories they created when our children -- and we ourselves -- scurried to the Christmas tree room on Christmas Day.

Those memories will last a lifetime, both for ourselves and our children -- for which we owe our now-abandoned Christmas trees our everlasting gratitude.

## Prevent a winter blood shortage: Give blood or platelets now

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

The American Red Cross is teetering on a blood shortage this winter, which could lead to a disruption in lifesaving care. Donors are urged to make an appointment to give blood or platelets now.

The Red Cross blood supply is under pressure following a busy holiday season when winter weather and packed schedules made it even tougher to ensure hospitals have the blood products needed for critical care. Without immediate action, doctors may have to make difficult decisions about which patients receive blood transfusions and who will need to wait. Donors with types O, A negative and B negative blood are especially needed now.

Don't wait -- make an appointment to give blood or platelets now by visiting RedCrossBlood.org, downloading the Red Cross Blood Donor App or calling 1-800-RED CROSS.

For the seventh year, the Red Cross and the National Football League (NFL) are partnering in January for National Blood Donor Month to urge individuals to kick off 2026 with a blood donation. As a thank-you to donors for helping address the need for blood during the critical post-holiday time, those who come to give Jan. 1-25, 2026, will be automatically entered for a chance to win an exciting Super Bowl LX giveaway.

The winner and guest will get to enjoy Super Bowl LX in Santa Clara, California, access to day-of in-stadium pregame activities, tickets to the official Super Bowl Experience, round-trip airfare, three-night hotel accommodations (Feb. 6-9, 2026), plus a \$1,000 gift card for expenses. For full details, visit RedCrossBlood.org/Super-Bowl.

### Join a lifesaving team

The Red Cross and Pro Football Champion and blood donor Saquon Barkley are teaming up to remind donors that the best offense against a winter blood shortage is making and keeping blood donation appointments. The blood supply can drop quickly -- now's the time to get in the game and give blood or platelets.

"I gave blood once in college and that was the only time I had ever been asked to give, until the Red Cross reached out this fall," said Barkley. "It was a no-brainer for me to give again. It only takes about an hour and once you realize in that short amount of time how much help it can bring -- it's a beautiful thing."

Upcoming blood donation opportunities Jan. 5-31:

**Charlestown**  
1/24/2026: 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., Charlestown Teamsters, 544 Main Street

How to donate blood

(SHORTAGE, Pg. 3)



**CHARLESTOWN**  
**PATRIOT-BRIDGE**

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# Remembering Marie Alves

By Dan Murphy

Marie R. (Callahan) Alves, a former Charlestown resident who remained steadfastly devoted to the neighborhood throughout her life, died on Dec. 28 at the Kaplan Family Hospice House in Danvers. She was 88 years old.

Born in Boston on Oct. 30, 1937, Marie was the daughter of the late Timothy Callahan and Kathryn (Donahue) Callahan. She grew up in Charlestown, where she was educated in the Boston Public Schools system and graduated from Archbishop Cushing High School.

While Marie and her family would leave Charlestown in 1983 to move to Beverly, she remained devoted to her old neighborhood throughout her life.

"Mom always said, 'once a Townie, always a Townie,'" wrote Marie's daughter, Maura Donahue, in an email. "She repeated it daily after asking anyone she saw if they were Townies. It was a reassuring thought for her."

Marie was especially committed to the Bunker Hill Monument Association, serving in a variety of roles, including as its vice president and later as de facto archivist for the longstanding nonprofit. She was also instrumental in helping to establish the Bunker Hill Museum, which tells the story of the Battle of Bunker Hill through refurbished dioramas and other artifacts.

Bill Foley, current co-president of Bunker Hill Monument Association, became a close friend of Marie's and her husband, John J. "Jack" Alves, during Foley's



COURTESY OF MAURA DONAHUE

Marie Alves.

30-year tenure with the National Parks Service, serving as manager of the Navy Yard and other Charlestown sites.

When Marie was in the role of vice president of the Bunker Hill Monument Association, Foley got to know her well through events and activities held at the Monument.

"Marie was instrument in the early days, making the Monument Association what it is today, and working with National Parks Service to get a museum up across from the Monument," Foley recalled. "She wasn't your average volunteer, and she really took on a lot of major projects that enhanced the future growth of the Monument Association."

Annette Tecce, past president of the Monument Association, recalls the invaluable feat Marie accomplished in documenting the organization's extensive archives

by photographing and cataloguing each item in the archives.

Tecce described Marie's contribution in her role as the organization's archivist as being among the "highlights in documenting Charlestown's important history."

Marie also arranged to have a number of pieces framed for the Bunker Hill Museum, including original submissions from the competition held for the design of the Monument, added Tecce.

"She was a giver," said Tecce of Marie during a phone interview. "She gave to her family, and she gave to her community, even though she wasn't living in Charlestown anymore."

Marie also served as chairperson of the Charlestown Bicentennial, a member of the Charlestown Historical Society, and founder of the Bunker Hill Community Museum. She was a member of the Charlestown Schoolgirls Association and was also very active in the Charlestown Militia, for which she made all of the costumes.

"Mom enjoyed dressing in Colonial garb," recalled daughter, Donovan. "As part of the Ctown militia 1968-1976, sewing militia outfits (ladies group created all outfits for families, marching in the parade (with militia or local politicians) and managing both Charlestown's bicentennial (1975), opening the Museum and



Marie Alves and her husband of 67 years, John J. "Jack" Alves.

Charlestown's 300th anniversary celebrations."

In 1975, Marie even assisted then-Mayor Kevin White in staging an extravagant Colonial ball.

"I truly thought Mom was royalty in her Emerald Green gown (hoop skirt, velvet choker, and a small, handsewn matching purse)," wrote Donovan. "Watching my mother come down the front stairs of our house on Sullivan Street is a core memory. Seeing my parents head to Boston City Hall for the Bicentennial ball as a 10-year-old was quite the enchanting evening!"

Besides her tireless work in

Charlestown, Marie led a very active social life, and she will be fondly remembered as a homemaker who always cared for her beloved family.

"Mom liked to tell all seven of her granddaughters they were her favorite, but only Patrick, her only grandson, could truly say he was her favorite grandson," wrote Donovan.

Marie was the beloved wife of 67 years of John J. "Jack" Alves, and the devoted mother of Vicky Marshall and her husband, Ted; Dawn Byrnes and her husband, Michael; Maura Donahue and her husband, Scott; and the late John J. "Jay" Alves Jr. and his surviving wife, Janet. She was loving grandmother to Megan, Ashley, Lauren, Amanda, Janelle, Alexandra, Emily, her favorite grandson Patrick, and to her great-granddaughter Scarlett Rose. She was also the dear sister of Kathleen Callahan, Deborah Forrest, Dan Callahan, and the late Timothy Callahan, Michael Callahan, and her beloved twin sister, Jean Walsh.

Marie's Funeral Mass was held on Jan. 5 in St. Mary's Church in Charlestown. In lieu of flowers, kindly make a memorial donation in Marie's name to:

The Friends of Ryan "Duce" Morrissey Scholarship Fund  
P.O. Box 290009  
Charlestown, MA 02129



City of Boston  
Landmarks Commission



City of Boston  
Mayor Michelle Wu

## MONUMENT SQUARE LANDMARK DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE OUTREACH AND MEETINGS:

*The Study Committee will identify the historic, architectural and archaeological significance of the resources located in the proposed district, and finalize the proposed district's boundaries. Current and future planning issues will be reviewed and discussed to formulate recommendations to preserve the unique historic character of the Monument Square neighborhood while encouraging contextually sensitive new development in appropriate areas.*

**Meeting: January 14, 2026 @ 6:30pm - Virtual:**

<https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1603630588>

(Meeting ID 160 363 0588)

**All listed events are open to the public.**

**For more information visit: [www.boston.gov/monumentsquare](http://www.boston.gov/monumentsquare)**

## SHORTAGE (from pg. 2)

Simply download the American Red Cross Blood Donor App, visit [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org), call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or enable the Blood Donor Skill on any Alexa Echo device to make an appointment or for more information. All blood types are needed to ensure a reliable supply for patients. A blood donor card or driver's license or two other forms of identification are required at check-in. Individuals who are 17 years of age in most states (16 with parental consent where allowed by state law), weigh at least 110 pounds and are in generally good health may be eligible to donate blood. High school students and other donors 18 years of age and younger also have to meet certain height and weight requirements.

Blood and platelet donors can save time at their next donation

by using RapidPass® to complete their pre-donation reading and health history questionnaire online, on the day of their donation, before arriving at the blood drive. To get started, follow the instructions at [RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass](http://RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass) or use the Blood Donor App.

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides comfort to victims of disasters; supplies about 40% of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; distributes international humanitarian aid; and supports veterans, military members and their families. The Red Cross is a nonprofit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to deliver its mission. For more information, please visit [redcross.org](http://redcross.org) or [CruzRojaAmericana.org](http://CruzRojaAmericana.org), or follow us on social media.



## OATHS OF OFFICE (from pg. 1)

giance. The National Anthem was sung by Baird Lashley, an Emergency Medical Technician with Boston EMS.

Several religious members offered Interfaith Prayers. Among those offering the Interfaith Prayers were Father John Unni of St. Cecilia Parish; Bishop William E. Dickerson II, of Greater Love Tabernacle; Pastor Mima Concepcion de Rodriguez of Nueva Vida United Methodist Church; Imam Abdulqadir Farah, Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center; and Rabbi Elaine Zecher, Temple Israel.

Emmanuel Oppong-Yeboah, the city's Poet Laureate, who is the school librarian at the Joseph Lee School in Dorchester, read his original poem, titled Boston Sonnet, that he said was inspired by the origin of the name of the City of Boston in Boston, Lincolnshire, England.

After the showing of a video that highlighted Mayor Wu's first term, City Clerk Geourntas presented the official Certification of Election of Mayor Wu. Judge Sarah G. Kim, Associate Justice of the Massachusetts Superior Court, then administered the Oath of Office to the mayor, who was accompanied by her husband and three children.

Geourntas next announced the Certification of Election for the members of the Boston City

Council: Councilors-at-Large Ruthzee Louijeune, Julia Mejia, Erin Murphy, and Henry Santana and Ward Councilors Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Edward Flynn, John FitzGerald, Brian Worrell, Enrique Pepén, Benjamin Weber, Rev. Miniard Culpeper, Sharon Durkan, and Liz Brendon.

Mayor Wu then swore-in the councillors.

The program concluded with Wu presenting her inaugural address. She noted that Boston Symphony Hall, which was designed by renowned architects and a Harvard professor, is the most acoustically-perfect hall of its kind in America that reflects a "uniquely Boston blend of science and the arts."

Wu thanked the elected state and federal officials on hand for their partnership and the city's workers "for making everything we do possible," a remark that drew extended applause from the audience.

She noted that 250 years ago, Henry Knox embarked on his epic winter journey that transported the heavy cannons from the captured Ft. Ticonderoga in upstate New York to Dorchester Heights, an against-all-odds feat that ultimately enabled George Washington to force the British fleet and occupying army to withdraw from the city on March 17, 1776, for the remainder of the Revolution-



PHOTOS BY MARIANNE SALZA

Mayor Michelle Wu administering the oath of office to the Boston City Council.

ary War.

Wu highlighted some of the major accomplishments of her first term, including the reduction of gun violence in the city to an all-time low, the construction of 4,200 affordable new homes with 2,000 more in the pipeline, and the expansion of pre-K education for 5,000 families.

"We've seen how much is possible because of how far we've pushed forward together. But we need to keep pushing," Wu said, "because in some ways right now, the world feels helplessly stuck. We know what problems need fixing, but we've lost faith that we can fix them."

"Today the forces we face are not British troops on the Common or ships in our harbor, but they demand no less ingenuity. Isolation, polarization, and misinformation are fraying our connection to trust, truth, and each other. And against this backdrop, the federal government is taking aim at the ways in which we take care of each other," Wu continued, citing the federal cutbacks in emergency management, research, and housing, as well as what she termed,

"the abduction of our neighbors off our sidewalks and outside our schools...and the illegal deployment of our troops against our own families and neighbors in peaceful American cities. This federal administration has plundered our economy, ravaged our reputation, torched our institutions, and destroyed the lives of our people."

"Boston will be a beacon," Wu said to a standing ovation, "and we will not wait for permission to build the world our families deserve."

Wu also promised that her second term will focus on making the city safer and improving the city's parks, playgrounds, streets, services, and schools, as well as streamlining the city's permitting

processes.

"We will work to address the housing needs of our families and seniors, focusing on solutions they want and can afford," Wu said. "Over the next four years, we will continue inventing new ways to use public planning, public finance, and public land to create the homes our residents need, because we know that housing is a public good. We will not be defeated by the affordability crisis of the present."

"If we can invent America, then we can be the city that forges the path forward in this moment. If we are willing to try, with a little help from each other, we can build the future that our families deserve," Wu concluded.

## BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR & SHOVEL YOUR SIDEWALK

**Property owners must clear sidewalks within 3 hours of snowfall ending or 3 hours after sunrise if it snows overnight.**

For more winter weather info & resources, visit [Boston.gov/snow](https://www.boston.gov/snow)



311 Boston 311

## COUNCIL (from pg. 1)

my next term focused on my constituents, protecting Bostonians from divisive federal attacks, and in the health and well-being of my growing family," said Coletta Zapata.

"I respect the outcome and I remain focused on the work ahead in partnership with Councilor Breadon as our new president," added Coletta Zapata.

Breadon, the District 9 councilor who represents the Allston and Brighton neighborhoods, defeated District 4 Councilor Brian Worrell, 7-6, in the vote for the council presidency.



Judge Sarah G. Kim, Associate Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, and Mayor Michelle Wu.



CITY OF BOSTON INAUGURAL CEREMONY 2026

PHOTOS BY MARIANNE SALZA



Boston City Councilors honoring the Pledge of Allegiance.



Mayor Michelle Wu, with her husband, Conor Pewarski, and children, Blaise, Cass, and Mira.



Mayor Michelle Wu presenting her inaugural address.



Boston Police and Fire Departments, and Boston EMS Honor Guards presenting the colors.

# CHARLESTOWN GYM HOCKEY

FINAL STANDINGS			
	W	L	T
Duce 2	9	4	3
Massport's Finest	9	4	3
A-1 Convenience	7	5	4
McCarthy Bros	5	7	4
YMCA	4	8	4
Halligan Club	3	8	5

## PIZZA PARTY / TROPHY DAY

Our Pizza Party and Trophy day is Saturday 1/10/26.  
We use the Boys and Girls Club Green St. building.

**THE SCHEDULE IS:**  
**10:30 to 11:15am**  
Halligan Club, Duce 2, Massport's Finest.  
**11:30am to 12:30pm**  
A- 1 Convenience, YMCA, McCarthy Bros.  
Please do not come before your scheduled time.  
The Charlestown Gym Hockey board would like to  
thanks all the parents and kids for a good season.



## MassDOT announces annual Safe Routes to School Program Yard Sign Design Contest

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), through its Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program, is pleased to announce the launch of the 2026 Yard Sign Design Contest. The annual contest raises awareness for transportation-related themes that help support school safety for walking and biking to school and is open to students in second through eighth grade who attend participating SRTS partner public schools. To become an SRTS partner, school administrators can connect with their Outreach Coordinator or fill out the online form.

“Massachusetts schools are

ranked # 1 in the nation and under Governor Healey, safety for all will always be our top priority. As MassDOT launches this year’s Safe Routes to School contest, we take great pride in partnering with schools, communities and today’s youth to promote safety across all modes of travel to and from school,” said Interim MassDOT Secretary and MBTA General Manager Phil Eng. “By making it fun for students and adults of all ages, it reminds us all that no matter what age we are, we can all participate, teach and learn. Watching the next generation help shape a safer, healthier transportation system for every-

one who walks, bikes, rides and drives or takes transit across our state demonstrates the importance of education and that the future is bright.”

This year’s theme is centered around “no idling.” Students are tasked with creating original designs that highlight the importance of turning off vehicle engines to promote a healthy environment for nearby pedestrians. For the fourth year in a row, multilingual designs are highly encouraged.

All contest materials including a blank template will be available on the Safe Routes to School website under the Encouragement page. You can also view winning

designs from past contest themes. All designs must be submitted by Monday, February 23, 2026.

The Massachusetts SRTS Program, sponsored by MassDOT and with funds from the Federal Highway Administration, promotes safer routes for students to actively get to and from school by fostering partnerships between community-led organizations, local law enforcement, education leaders, and public health departments. The Program currently serves more than 1,290 schools in over 285 communities across the Commonwealth. Through these partnerships, the Massachusetts SRTS Program highlights

the importance of pedestrian and bicycle safety. SRTS also provides information, materials, and resources to support schools and communities with their local SRTS initiatives.

For more information on Massachusetts Safe Routes to School visit:

[www.mass.gov/safe-routes-to-school](http://www.mass.gov/safe-routes-to-school)

[www.facebook.com/SafeRoutesMA](https://www.facebook.com/SafeRoutesMA)

[www.twitter.com/SafeRoutesMA](https://www.twitter.com/SafeRoutesMA)

[www.instagram.com/srts\\_ma](https://www.instagram.com/srts_ma)

[www.linkedin.com/company/ma-safe-routes-to-school](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ma-safe-routes-to-school)

## MBTA closes out 2025 with major progress on service delivery, accessibility, infrastructure

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) reflected on 2025 improvements across the system, from more frequent service to accessibility upgrades, to safety progress, and new innovative technology, as the agency heads into 2026 with continued momentum in its charge to deliver a quality public transit experience for the general riding public.

Under the leadership of the Healey-Driscoll Administration and Interim MassDOT Secretary and MBTA General Manager Phillip Eng, the MBTA accelerated critical investments to rebuild aging infrastructure, modernize system operations, expand service, strengthen the workforce and attract talented professionals, and serve the communities that rely on the MBTA across the Commonwealth daily.

“Congratulations to Phil Eng and the entire team at the MBTA on another successful year,” said Governor Maura Healey. “This continues the progress and significant turnaround at the T since we took office - improving service and reliability across the system, elim-

inating slow zones, and opening South Coast Rail. I want to thank the Legislature for their support in providing funding to support this work. Most importantly, I want to thank riders for continuing to choose the T and playing an essential role in our efforts to improve transportation across Massachusetts.”

“I’m proud of the MBTA workforce for their efforts that have enabled the MBTA to continue to deliver improved and more reliable service across all modes, giving our riders more frequent service and time back in their day with shorter travel times. I want the public to know that we will continue to carry that same focus, discipline, and urgency into the new year,” said Interim MassDOT Secretary and MBTA General Manager Phillip Eng. “Under the leadership of Governor Healey, Lieutenant General Driscoll, and their Administration, we are following through on our commitment to provide a safe mass transportation system that the public and businesses can rely on. With the support of the Legislature, partners across all levels of government, public transit advocates, community leaders, and most of all, the riding public, we are committed to continuous improvement, delivering meaningful projects and service in the most cost effective and efficient manner. I’m honored to work side by side with our dedicated workforce of over 8,000 employees and our industry partners as we head into 2026 and beyond.”

### Key 2025 Highlights

- Major Commuter Rail Service Expansions to Southeastern Massachusetts: Passenger service on SCR began March 24, 2025. The over \$1 billion project brought passenger service to the commu-

nities of Taunton, Freetown, New Bedford, Middleboro, and Fall River for the first time in 65 years on the Fall River/New Bedford Commuter Rail Line.

- Resetting High Speeds on the Red and Orange lines: Red Line Braintree Branch speeds were restored to 50 MPH for the first time in 20 years in March 2025 following the unprecedented work of the MBTA’s Maintenance of Way Department. Orange Line trains began traveling at its maximum speed of 55 MPH (up from 40 MPH) between Oak Grove and Assembly Station for the first time ever in August 2025 following the restoration of track in this area.

- Permanent Later Subway and Bus Service: All subway lines and eight frequent bus routes now offer extended service on Fridays and Saturdays with five of the MBTA’s most frequent bus routes with the highest number of later riders offering extended service every day of the week. Trip end times for these lines and routes are about one hour later compared to past service end times.

- Enhancing Fare Collection with Fare Checks: In September, Fare Engagement Representatives began issuing formal warnings and citations to riders who have not tapped at a fare gate or farebox at downtown stations and onboard vehicles. Fare Engagement Representatives expanded to more stations this winter, focusing on those with high ridership and transfer points.

- Improving Safety with Green Line Train Protection System (GLTPS) Installation: Last June 2025, the MBTA awarded the GLTPS contract to Piper Networks following their successful completion of “demonstration phase testing.” Since that time and throughout the rest of 2025, crews have been hard at work installing

GLTPS equipment along Green Line tracks and onboard vehicles with Phase 1 of the project on track to be operational in summer 2026.

- Rebuilding the Workforce: Since the beginning of the Healey-Driscoll Administration, the MBTA has scaled its workforce and hired over 1,900 employees – the workforce is now over 8,200 strong. Thanks to the Administration and the Legislature, the MBTA will continue to upgrade its workforce in order to deliver even more safe, robust service.

- Critical Accessibility Milestones: After 19 years of steady improvements to the accessibility of its system, the MBTA has fulfilled a substantial amount of its obligations under the 2006 Joanne Daniels-Finegold, et al. v. Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Settlement Agreement. As a result, in December 2025, court-appointed independent monitor Judge Patrick King concluded his oversight role.

- Expanding Access to Income-Eligible Reduced Fares: Since its launch in September 2024, the income-eligible reduced fare program has made MBTA travel more affordable for over 38,000 riders. About 70% of riders have enrolled via an automated verification process that takes under five minutes to complete thanks to partnerships with the Registry of Motor Vehicles and Executive Office of Health and Human Services. This streamlined approach has enabled quick program growth and lays the groundwork for similar improvements coming to other reduced fare programs in the near future.

- Industry Recognition: The MBTA welcomed the American Public Transportation Association’s (APTA) annual TRANSform Conference to Boston in Septem-

ber 2025. APTA TRANSform is the flagship event for public transportation professionals to engage in workshops, attend technical tours, and exchange best practices.

For more information, please visit [mbta.com](http://mbta.com) or connect with the T on X @MBTA, Facebook / TheMBTA, Instagram @theMBTA, Threads @thembta, or TikTok @thembta.

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) opened America’s first subway tunnel in 1897, pioneering public transportation in the United States. Today, the MBTA is one of the largest public transit systems in the country, operating an extensive network of subway, bus, Commuter Rail, ferry, and paratransit services across 176 cities and towns. The MBTA is undergoing a transformative period, focusing on cultivating a culture of safety and excellence, modernizing infrastructure, and improving reliability and accessibility. Current priorities include accelerating critical infrastructure repairs, expanding accessibility, and reducing emissions. The MBTA is committed to providing dependable, frequent, and accessible service that riders can rely on while supporting the region’s economic vitality. Through initiatives like the unprecedented Track Improvement Program, Bus Network Redesign, and Rail Vision, the MBTA aims to connect communities and improve riders’ daily experiences and trips. For questions or assistance, riders are encouraged to contact the MBTA Customer Center at 617-222-3200. Members of the press are encouraged to contact [mediarelations@mbta.com](mailto:mediarelations@mbta.com). For the latest updates on MBTA services, projects, and initiatives, visit [MBTA.com](http://MBTA.com) or follow @MBTA on social media.

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# Wu and the OYEA announce Mayor's Youth Council cohort

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

Mayor Michelle Wu and the Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement (OYEA) recently welcomed the 31st cohort of the Mayor's Youth Council (MYC). The 20 high school students in the new council cohort were inaugurated with a swearing-in ceremony hosted by the Mayor.

"For over 30 years, the Mayor's Youth Council has fostered a direct connection with our young community leaders, sharing ideas to make Boston a home for everyone," said Mayor Michelle Wu. "I am so proud to collaborate with this cohort of changemakers on the issues affecting Boston's young people."

The youth on the 2025-26 Council represent nine schools and 12 neighborhoods. They were selected from a pool of 226 applicants for their leadership, civic engagement, and commitment to their communities. The 22 weeks of council year programming will be split into multiple phases; the council members will first plan and host four town halls this winter to identify the top priorities of their peers. Then, they will develop and implement solutions to address them.

"I am grateful for the young people who have stepped forward to serve on this year's Mayor's Youth Council," said José F. Massó, Chief of Human Services. "The City benefits so much from MYC members' input, guidance and insight and I know this Council will have a big impact as we



*The 31st cohort of the Mayor's Youth Council includes 20 high school students from schools across Boston who will represent their peers in City government.*

tackle citywide issues that impact youth and families."

"Today's swearing-in of the new Mayor's Youth Council members marks a powerful reminder that Boston's future is already stepping up to lead. These young people bring fresh ideas, lived experience, and a deep love for their communities. Their voices will help shape programs and initiatives that impact youth across every neighborhood in our city," said Pedro Cruz, Executive Director of the Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement. "I'm incredibly proud of their commitment to service and to one another. Together,

we are building a Boston where young people are not only heard, but centered in the work of government."

Since the first Council year commenced in 1995, the MYC has empowered nearly 1,000 Boston high school students to grow in their capacity as civic leaders, represent their peers in City government, and collaborate with City officials. Over the last three decades, Mayor's Youth Council members have organized youth town halls and events, engaged in service projects, and created awareness campaigns to help address challenges facing Boston's

youth. Council members have developed their leadership skills, commitment to public service, and understanding of local government.

"The swearing-in ceremony reaffirmed that I am someone who can make change in the City and that I represent other youth with the capacity to make change," said 12th-grader and second-time Council Member Samuel Falke. "Having worked with the Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement before, I'm excited to use what I've learned to deepen my impact, work with newer members of the Council, and

make contributions that will have a lasting impact when I'm no longer on the Council next year."

To learn more about the Mayor's Youth Council and follow along with their work this year, visit [boston.gov/myc](https://boston.gov/myc) and follow @mycboston on Instagram. To stay informed about all initiatives from the Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement, visit [boston.gov/oyea](https://boston.gov/oyea), and follow our social channels @oyeaboston on Facebook and Instagram, and @oyea.boston.gov on Bluesky.

## Kick off the New Year with the City of Boston's free Winter Fitness Series

The Boston Parks and Recreation Department and Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) are pleased to announce the 2026 Boston Parks Winter Fitness Series, sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. The series will offer free weekly classes in City of Boston parks from January 4 through April 4, 2026.

This season, Bostonians can enjoy a variety of healthy activities both indoors and outdoors, including Walking Group, line dancing, Bota Foga, Kids Dance Fitness, Strength and Balance, Tai Chi, Yoga, and more. Classes are designed for all skill levels and ages, with options that are family-friendly, age-friendly, and welcoming to those who may be new to fitness.

"Throughout the winter months, our parks remain active and welcoming places for Bostonians to move, connect, and care for their well-being," said Cathy Baker-Eclipse, Interim Commissioner of the Boston Parks and Recreation Department. "We're grateful for our partnership with the Boston Public Health Commission and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, which help bring free, accessible fitness programming and community connection directly into our neighborhoods this winter."

"The Winter Fitness Series is a wonderful opportunity for everyone in Boston to get moving and participate in free and accessible activities that can improve health and well-being," said Bisola Ojikutu MD, MPH, FIDSA, Commissioner of Public Health for the City of Boston. "Resources like these free classes help reduce the risk of chronic disease, which is one of the goals of Live Long and Well, our citywide population

health equity agenda. By encouraging everyone to engage in physical activity, we are ensuring that Boston is a city where all residents can thrive."

Through this citywide initiative, the Parks Department and BPHC aim to reduce barriers to active living and provide more opportunities for Boston residents to stay healthy and active throughout the winter months. Continuing on the success of the 2025 Parks Fitness Series, the winter series offers the opportunity for residents to stay active during shorter daylight hours while enjoying safe, accessible outdoor options. All classes are free and open to the public.

"We are delighted to continue our long-standing partnership with the City of Boston to offer Winter Fitness, bringing free and accessible fitness opportunities to Boston neighborhoods," said Jeff Bellows, vice president of corpo-

rate citizenship and public affairs at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. "The Boston Park Fitness series offers year-round in-person classes that support the physical and mental well-being of residents."

For up to date information, including weather-related cancellations for outdoor fitness classes, visit [boston.gov/fitness](https://boston.gov/fitness).

The Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD) stewards over 2,200 acres of public open space across 288 properties, including the Boston Common, the Public Garden, and the Olmsted-designed Emerald Necklace park system. Our parks feature walking trails, playgrounds, courts, natural areas, and historic sites, as well as 29 urban wilds, four high school athletic fields, two public golf courses, and more than 40,000 street trees. BPRD offers free cultural and recreation-

programming for people of all ages, helping to create welcoming, active, and connected communities. Learn more at [boston.gov/parks](https://boston.gov/parks) and sign up for updates at [bit.ly/Get-Parks-Emails](https://bit.ly/Get-Parks-Emails). Follow our social channels @boston-parksdept on X, Facebook, Instagram, and @parks.boston.gov on Bluesky.

Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) is the country's oldest health department. We envision a thriving Boston where all residents live healthy and fulfilling lives. To accomplish this, BPHC works in partnership with communities to protect and promote the health and well-being of all Boston residents, especially those impacted by racism and systemic inequities. Learn more about our work at [boston.gov/bphc](https://boston.gov/bphc).



# Wu announces community benefits agreement with Kraft Group for Everett Stadium

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

Mayor Michelle Wu recently announced that the City of Boston and the Kraft Group have agreed on financial and operational terms of a community benefits package totaling nearly \$48 million over the next 15 years and additional commitments around project design review, local hiring, and regional transportation coordination. In addition to annual payments, the Kraft Group will make substantial infrastructure improvements in Sullivan Square in Charlestown prior to the stadium's opening and fund all public safety and transportation management costs for stadium events. This agreement comes after months of negotiations throughout 2025, in which Mayor Wu pursued a project mitigation package that would appropriately address the stadium's impacts on Boston. This final agreement — \$13 million in direct payments and a new, permanent per-ticket revenue source for the City, which is expected to total \$34 million in the first 15 years — follows the Kraft Group's initial offer of \$750,000 in a one time payment for mitigation funds for the City. The deal was reached pursuant to provisions of the Mass Leads Act, the state's 2024 economic development bill, which required the Kraft Group to secure a community benefits agreement with Boston and Everett in order for the stadium project to move forward.

"The City fought for a fair deal for Boston and our residents, and that is what we have achieved through this agreement," said Mayor Michelle Wu. "After months of negotiations, we have secured commitments addressing the needs of Charlestown residents and feedback from community partners. This stadium will enhance Boston's position as the sports and entertainment capital of New England while transforming a blighted site on our doorstep. I'm grateful to all our neighborhood leaders and community advocates who helped us reach this important step, and the legislative leaders who ensured Boston would be at the table. We will continue to engage with the project as it advances to the next stage of review."

"The language we passed into law made clear that the communities most affected by this project should have a voice in how this development moves forward," said Senator Sal DiDomenico. "I want to thank the cities of Everett and Boston, and the Kraft Group for coming together on agreements that address the needs of the com-



Artist rendering of the proposed soccer stadium and waterfront park.

munities and will have a positive and lasting impact in both Everett and Charlestown. I am happy to see the Revolution soccer stadium reach this critical step in making this transformational project a reality. The millions of dollars of investments in our communities continue to show that this stadium will result in economic and environmental wins for our residents."

To support the Charlestown neighborhood, which will be most impacted by the stadium, the Kraft Group will make an initial payment of \$3 million over six years which will be directed to the Charlestown Community Impact Fund. The Fund was created in 2016 to distribute annual community mitigation funds from the Encore casino and annually supports a range of Charlestown organizations. The City also announced that of future annual ticket revenues, anticipated to be \$2 million per year, at least half will be directed to Charlestown-specific municipal projects.

The City and the Kraft Group also agreed to a set of terms to ensure the stadium will be a good neighbor to Boston. These include a commitment to establish an annual Traffic and Parking Management Plan to be approved by the City of Boston; a construction management plan executed with the City of Boston to reduce impacts on Charlestown during stadium construction; annual monitoring of traffic impacts; the creation of a ferry service dock at the stadium for water transportation; the construction of the stadium at 2070 flood resilience standards; prioritization of stadium design features in compliance with zero net carbon operational goals; noise and light pollution mitigation requirements; prioritized hiring for Boston residents

for stadium jobs; a commitment to solicit 25% of both construction and ongoing contracts from local minority, woman owned, and/or veteran owned companies; and an agreement for the Kraft Group to participate in regional working groups to address regional transportation concerns.

"I want to thank Mayor Wu and her team for their tireless efforts in getting the best possible deal for Charlestown on this transformative project," said State Representative Dan Ryan. "There is still a long way to go in this process but the community agreement between the City of Boston and the New England Revolution is a good first step in ensuring that the infrastructure needs of this part of the region are addressed and that Charlestown benefits from this transformation."

"Charlestown has been clear that a project of this scale must come with real mitigation," said City Councilor Gabriela Coletta Zapata. "After months of negotiations, the City secured nearly \$50 million in payments over 15 years, up from an initial \$750,000 proposal, along with funding for public safety, traffic management, and major infrastructure improvements in Sullivan Square and surrounding corridors. These investments will deliver necessary improvements for Charlestown residents before the stadium opens and make clear that major developments in Boston must deliver meaningful benefits to the neighborhoods they impact. Thank you to Mayor Wu, our state delegation, and residents who advocated for what our one-square-mile deserves."

"The strength of our cities are the people we serve and how they continue to work and live while our communities expand with

economic development," said Revere Mayor Patrick Keefe. "We are grateful to Mayor Wu and her team for recognizing the regional mayor's coalition and leading this effort to make sure all can benefit from increased access to public transportation and regional multi-modal transit improvements - it's a good deal for business and much needed investment for our residents."

The agreement incorporates financial guarantees, transportation and public safety requirements, design and climate resilience standards, and community benefits before and during construction as well as while the stadium is operational:

## Financial Details:

- **Upfront Community Payments:** Upon completion of the MEPA permitting process, the Kraft Group will make an immediate \$1.5 million community impact payment, followed by \$300,000 annually for five years (totaling \$3 million in upfront impact funds).

- **Infrastructure Improvements:** The Kraft Group will perform at least \$5 million in safety and access improvements to roadways, sidewalks, bike paths, intersections and transit facilities in Sullivan Square, Main Street, and along Route 99 before opening day.

- **\$5 million Transportation Fund:** The Kraft Group will pay \$333,000 annually for 15 years to the City of Boston for ongoing transportation infrastructure improvements in Charlestown.

- **Ticket Surcharges:** To address ongoing community impacts, \$1.00 per soccer ticket (increasing with CPI) and 1.5% of every concert ticket sold will be paid to the City in perpetuity, which the parties estimate will generate \$2 mil-

lion in the first year of operation, and approximately \$34 million over the first 15 years.

## Transportation and Public Safety

- **Traffic Management:** An annual Traffic and Parking Management Plan (TPMP) must be approved by the City, with a primary goal of preventing stadium-related traffic from cutting through Sullivan Square.

- **Operational Costs:** The Kraft Group will reimburse the City for all event-day costs, including the deployment of approximately 38 Boston Police Officers per event.

- **Ongoing Transit:** The Kraft Group will install a water ferry dock, fund annual traffic data monitoring, and sponsor a Blue-bikes valet service on event days.

## Design and Climate Resilience

- **Neighborhood Mitigation:** Designs will include shielding to prevent field lights from shining into Charlestown and acoustic engineering to ensure noise levels remain below the 70-decibel limit set by the Boston Noise Ordinance. The Stadium will also monitor noise levels during events, operate a hotline for complaints, and perform ongoing mitigation to comply with the noise ordinance limit.

- **Coastal Flooding:** The stadium will be built to 2070 flood resilience standards, effectively closing the current flood path between Route 99 and the site.

- **Sustainability:** The project includes a comprehensive storm-water plan, waste reduction strategies, and a commitment to analyze feasibility for net-zero carbon operations.

## Operations and Community Benefits

- **Event Levels:** The stadium anticipates holding 17-20 soccer matches and up to 20 concerts per year. Any increase would be discussed with the City.

- **Local Sourcing Goals:** 25% of construction and ongoing operational contracts targeted for local MWBE/Veteran-owned businesses.

- **Local Hiring Goals:** 25% of permanent stadium jobs targeted for Boston residents via preferential hiring.

- **Supplier and Workforce Advisory Group:** the Kraft Group and the City of Boston will convene an advisory group to assist with achieving the targets established above.

- **Community Access:** The City



# Wu appoints Lydia Torres and Franklin Peralta, and reappoints Stephen Alkins to Boston School Committee

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

Mayor Michelle Wu announced three new appointments to the Boston School Committee, Lydia Torres, Franklin Peralta, and Dr. Stephen Alkins. Torres and Peralta will begin their first terms, and Dr. Alkins will begin his second term, after first being appointed by Mayor Wu in January 2022. The Boston School Committee is the governing body of Boston Public Schools (BPS).

"I'm excited to reappoint Dr. Stephen Alkins and appoint Ms. Lydia Torres and Mr. Franklin Peralta to the Boston School Committee. These three leaders embody the dedication, expertise, and passion for serving our young people that will help guide our work to make Boston Public Schools the first choice for all our families," said Mayor Michelle Wu. "Each brings a personal connection to our schools and the professional experience to complement Superintendent Skipper's leadership. I'm grateful for their service and look forward to partnering with these members and the entire School Committee in this work."

"There's much generational work to be done. To truly make BPS a high-quality experience for every student, we must focus on addressing critical opportunity and achievement gaps and reimagine the ways we do this in partnership with our families and community organizations," said Dr. Stephen D. Alkins, Jr. "BPS is building upon this through districtwide investment in foundational literacy and inclusive education reform, but we must continue to engage in deep, critical discourse, transparency with families, data analysis, and accountability."

"I have spent my entire life in BPS—as a student, teacher, parent, and school and district leader," said Lydia Torres. "I'm honored to be appointed to the Boston School Committee as the capstone of my career serving the district I love and I look forward to helping the district advance opportunities and outcomes for students."

"It is a true honor for me that Mayor Wu has chosen me to join the Boston School Committee," said Franklin Peralta. "As I said several times through the application process, education has opened doors for me to enter places where I never dreamed I would be. I'm ready to join the talented and committed group of leaders in the School Committee to continue offering these same opportunities



Lydia Torres

to all our students in the Boston Public Schools."

"We are excited to welcome three school committee members who each brings a valuable perspective to our collective work to advance educational equity and excellence across Boston Public Schools," said Boston School Committee Chair Jeri Robinson. "We remain committed to advancing our important work through partnerships with families, educators, and the broader community to ensure every student has access to the high-quality education they expect and deserve. I look forward to working alongside our new and returning members as we continue the critical work of moving our district forward."

"I look forward to working closely with each new and returning school committee member as we continue to strengthen and advance Boston Public Schools for every student we serve," said Superintendent Mary Skipper. "Ensuring the success of our students is a shared effort that takes strong governance, collaborative leadership, and strong partnership with educators, families, and communities. Alongside our school communities and City partners, we will remain focused on improving student outcomes, supporting our educators, and ensuring every school has the resources and supports needed for all students to reach and succeed beyond the classroom."

First appointed by Mayor Wu in January 2022, Stephen D. Alkins, Jr., Ph.D. is the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (and Belonging) Officer (DEIO) and Co-chair of the DEI Council at TERC. With his leadership, Stephen helps craft and implement the vision for DEIB at TERC through his collaboration on NSF STEM education grant development in multiple



Franklin Peralta

learning environments (informal and formal K-16 spaces). His role and responsibilities include recruitment and retention of a diverse research and infrastructure staff, internal policy review, development and analysis of inclusive educational opportunities and social programming, and establishment of collaborative partnerships to promote equity for all STEM learners. A resident of Mattapan and BPS parent, Dr. Alkins received his B.S. in Biology from Morehouse College and his Master's and Ph.D. in Cellular Neuroscience from Brandeis University.

Lydia Torres, a Roslindale resident, has nearly four decades of experience as a Boston Public Schools educator. She began her career as an English as a Second Language teacher at the Hennigan School, and has served as a literacy specialist, literacy coach at the school and district level, Director of English Language Arts for grades 6-12 district-wide, and Assistant Principal and Middle School Director at the Eliot K-8 Innovation School. After retiring in 2018, Lydia has spent her time volunteering with the Boston Teacher Residency program run by Boston Plan for Excellence, supporting new teachers in adopting data-informed instruction for multilingual learners. She has a Master's in Education from Lesley University and a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in Educational Leadership from Cambridge College.

Franklin Peralta, a BPS parent and Jamaica Plain resident, has dedicated his entire professional career to public education, particularly focusing on adult basic education, in Boston and in his native Dominican Republic. He currently serves as Director of Business Engagement and Public Policy at English for New Bosto-



Stephen Alkins

nians (ENB), where he oversees workplace and workforce English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) projects, including needs assessments for companies applying for funds to teach English to employees, and implementation of workplace English training. Prior to joining ENB, Franklin was Student Counselor at the Adult Learning Program of Jamaica Plain Community Centers, and a researcher and social educator at a cultural center in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Franklin is actively engaged in his daughters'

schools, the Sarah Greenwood K-8 School and Boston Latin Academy, and is the elected representative for the Sarah Greenwood on the Citywide Parent Council. Franklin holds a Master's degree in Qualitative Research in Education for Social Change from the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo.

The School Committee is responsible for:

- Defining the vision, mission, and goals of the Boston Public Schools;
- Establishing and monitoring the annual operating budget;
- Hiring, managing, and evaluating the Superintendent; and
- Setting and reviewing district policies and practices to support student achievement.

The School Committee meets approximately twice per month during the school year to adopt, review and modify policies and practices that support teaching, learning and improved student achievement. With the exception of executive sessions, Committee meetings are open to the public, feature public comment periods and are broadcast on Boston City TV.

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# Two flu-related deaths among children under two years old in Boston

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) is informing residents that flu has been associated with the deaths of two children under two years of age in Boston. These are the first reported flu deaths in children in Boston this flu season. One death was referenced in yesterday's press release from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and the second was confirmed overnight, bringing the state total to four pediatric flu-related deaths. As Boston continues to experience a surge in flu cases, BPHC is urging residents to get vaccinated and take preventative measures to protect against severe illness.

"Flu cases are surging in Boston, and we are seeing an uptick in serious cases involving children, including the tragic deaths of two very young children," said Dr. Bisola Ojikutu, Commissioner of Public Health for the City of Boston. "While the flu is usually mild, it can cause hospitalization and death. Children under the age of two are at higher risk. Parents should get their children ages six months and older vaccinated as

soon as possible to decrease the risk of severe complications. Parents should seek immediate medical attention if their child has flu symptoms and also has signs of more severe illness, like trouble breathing, decreased urination, persistently high fever or becomes extremely lethargic and difficult to arouse."

From December 14 to December 27, in Boston there was a 126% increase in confirmed flu cases, and hospitalizations almost tripled. Flu-related emergency department visits also increased 135% in that same time period. The majority of those hospitalized are adults over 65, but hospitalizations among children under the age of five increased 150% in the last two weeks and are double what they were at this time last season.

BPHC encourages all residents over six months of age to get their annual flu vaccine to protect themselves and their families. Vaccines are highly effective at lowering the risk of severe illness and hospitalization from the flu and are essential for keeping families and communities safe this winter. BPHC has four free flu and COVID-19

vaccine clinics planned for the month of January and are scheduling more. These clinics offer free vaccines to everyone age six months and older. No appointment is needed. Insurance and identification are not required, but those with a health insurance card should bring it with them. More information about upcoming free vaccine clinics can be found [boston.gov/vaccine-clinics](https://boston.gov/vaccine-clinics). Since September, BPHC has partnered with Boston Public Schools (BPS), Boston Centers for Youth & Families (BCYF), and community organizations to host 27 free vaccine clinics across 15 neighborhoods this flu season.

BPHC's vaccine clinics are one of many ways people can get vaccinated. People are also encouraged to contact their health care provider, local health center, or pharmacy to schedule appointments, receive vaccinations, or ask questions. Those looking for nearby vaccination providers can also use [www.vaccinefinder.org](https://www.vaccinefinder.org). Residents who need help applying for health insurance can contact the Mayor's Health Line at (617) 534-5050. The Mayor's Health Line is a free, confidential, and

multilingual service that can help families, regardless of immigration status, find routine care.

As cases of the flu continue to increase, especially among children, the Boston Public Health Commission is working with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the City of Boston, Boston Public Schools, and local hospitals and healthcare providers to track cases and provide guidance. BPHC and the City's Office of Early Childhood are working to convene early childcare providers from across the city to ensure providers can recognize signs of severe illness and have strategies and resources to help mitigate the spread of flu. BPHC and Boston Public Schools are monitoring clusters of respiratory illness among students and working in partnership to promote vaccination for students and families.

By practicing core prevention strategies, people can protect themselves and their communities from flu and other respiratory illnesses. Strategies include practicing good hand hygiene, increasing ventilation, and staying home and away from others when sick. Wearing a mask provides added

protection against flu, COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. BPHC encourages Boston residents to wear a mask in crowded indoor spaces when flu and other respiratory illnesses are surging.

Individuals at high risk of complications from respiratory infections, including people under two or over 65 years of age, pregnant people, immunocompromised individuals and people with chronic illnesses, should seek medical care if they develop flu-like symptoms or are exposed to a person with flu; early testing and antiviral treatment of flu and COVID-19 can prevent severe illness and hospitalization.

Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) is the country's oldest health department. We envision a thriving Boston where all residents live healthy and fulfilling lives. To accomplish this, BPHC works in partnership with communities to protect and promote the health and well-being of all Boston residents, especially those impacted by racism and systemic inequities. Learn more about our work at [boston.gov/bphc](https://boston.gov/bphc).

## STADIUM (from pg. 8)

of Boston may use the stadium for community events four times per year. The Revolution will also host at least six free youth soccer clinics annually in Boston.

**Other Commitments**

- Construction Management Plan: The Kraft Group will execute a comprehensive construction management plan with the City of Boston to reduce local impacts during stadium construction.
- Stadium Plan Review: The Kraft Group will submit stadium

plans for the review to the staff of the Boston Planning Department to ensure compliance with this agreement

- Regional Coordination: The Kraft Group and Boston commit to participating in regional working groups to address regional transportation impacts and promote investment in multi-modal public transit improvements

Underscoring the importance of Charlestown residents' feedback, the City of Boston engaged with community members to

understand their concerns. From December 2024 through February 2025 the City received input from Charlestown neighborhood leaders and stakeholders representing climate and transportation advocacy groups in preparation for negotiations. Additionally, on March 11, 2025, Mayor Wu, along with City officials from the Boston Transportation Department, the Planning Department, and Office of Neighborhood Services, attended a community meeting on the proposed stadium

hosted by the Charlestown Neighborhood Council to hear directly what the group hoped to see the City negotiate for on behalf of the neighborhood.

Since August, the City and New England Revolution negotiating teams have had the support of former MassPort CEO Tom Glynn and Rebecca Kaiser, who served as the designated mediators.

A spokesperson for the Kraft Group said, "The Kraft Group has reached agreements with the cities of Everett and Boston, marking an important milestone in our effort to transform a long-neglected industrial site along the Mystic River into a vibrant, publicly accessible waterfront destination and the future home of the New England Revolution. These agreements reflect years of collaboration with city leaders and community stakeholders to ensure the project delivers meaningful, lasting benefits for residents while addressing transportation, environmental, and municipal impacts. We are especially grateful for Mayor Carlo DeMaria's leadership and vision. At its core, this is an investment in Everett and its future. In addition, it provides improved access and an enhanced neighborhood experience by removing a physical and visual barrier for

the residents of Charlestown and we appreciate Mayor Michelle Wu and her team's partnership.

Under the agreements, we will undertake significant environmental remediation and demolition of the long-vacant powerplant, invest in extensive traffic and transportation improvements, and deliver substantial community benefits, including millions of dollars towards infrastructure improvements. The project will open the waterfront with the creation of a new public park, strengthen pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, and enhance access to public transit. We will also support Everett Public Schools, expand local employment opportunities, and make the stadium and waterfront park available for community and school events. Our shared commitment to Everett and Boston residents includes prioritizing local hiring, youth soccer clinics, and community programming. This project is intended to be a true neighborhood asset."

"I want to thank the dedicated negotiating teams from the City, the New England Revolution, and our mediators, Tom Glynn and Rebecca Kaiser, who all worked through the holidays to achieve a fair deal for the people of Boston," said Mayor Wu.

# OBITUARIES

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# Healey declares January as Firefighter Cancer Awareness Month

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

Governor Maura Healey has declared January to be Firefighter Cancer Awareness Month in Massachusetts, joining the Firefighter Cancer Support Network, International Association of Fire Fighters, and fire service agencies around the world to promote cancer awareness, prevention, and early detection in the fire service all month long.

“Firefighters face a higher risk of developing cancer, developing it earlier in life, receiving a later cancer diagnosis, and losing their lives to cancer,” Governor Healey’s proclamation reads. “Raising awareness of cancer risks and promoting best practices in cancer prevention can help protect our firefighters from this insidious dis-

ease and enjoy long, healthy, and happy lives.”

State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine said that nearly 1,400 firefighters took part in free occupational cancer screenings through the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services in 2025 – a record for the DFS Firefighter Cancer Program.

Because firefighters are at greater risk of developing certain types of cancer than the public they protect, the Department of Fire Services coordinates free skin cancer screenings, chest CT scans, PSA blood tests, ultrasounds, and mammograms for eligible firefighters through the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy. Skin cancer screenings are performed by volunteer dermatologists, while

the other screenings are performed by contracted vendors across the state.

“Whether you’re a call, volunteer, or career firefighter, active duty or retired, these programs are available at no cost to you or your department,” State Fire Marshal Davine said. “The worst cancer diagnosis is a late one, so please take advantage of them.”

The number of firefighter cancer screenings provided through the program nearly doubled from 2024 to 2025, State Fire Marshal Davine said. Skin cancer screenings, which have been offered since 2018, rose from 612 to 785. Newer programs saw sharper increases: CT scans increased from 99 to 168; PSA blood tests from 44 to 160; ultrasounds from

91 to 255; and mammograms from two to nine.

“This may be due to increased familiarity with the screening options, or the steps we took to make them more accessible, or word of mouth in the fire service,” said State Fire Marshal Davine. “Whatever the reason, it’s a great result and we want to see those numbers continue climbing. Do it for yourself, do it for your family, or do it for your career – just do it!”

Also in 2025, the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy rolled out a new instructor-led cancer awareness presentation in partnership with the Firefighter Cancer Support Network. The new presentation, “Doing it Right: Reducing Cancer in the Fire Ser-

vice,” updates an earlier cancer prevention program and highlights cancer prevention best practices on and off the job. It also promotes the benefits of early detection through screenings and awareness of baseline health. So far this year, the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy has delivered it to about 600 new recruits, about 50 chiefs and senior officers, and about 230 firefighters at various ranks in between. Another 25 firefighters have taken a train-the-trainer course that empowers them to deliver the presentation effectively at local and regional fire departments.

Learn more about Massachusetts’ firefighter cancer programs at the Department of Fire Services’ website.

## Officials report new study shows increased seat-belt use in Massachusetts

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

During 2025, more Massachusetts road users than ever are likely to use their seat belts to ensure safe travels. A new study has found that seat belt use in Massachusetts has increased for the third year in a row, marking the state’s highest seat belt usage rate on record. The Healey-Driscoll Administration commended the collaborative efforts led by state and local agencies to achieve this result.

The 2025 Massachusetts Safety Belt Observational Study, which is conducted annually, reported a seat belt usage rate of 85.53% – an increase over the state’s 2024 usage rate of 84.36%. Specifically, the report found that the state successfully increased seat belt use among demographics that have historically had lower usage rates. This marks the third year in a row that Massachusetts has achieved an overall increase in seat belt use.

In addition, Massachusetts experienced fewer fatal crashes in 2025 than in the previous year. MassDOT has recorded 342 fatal motor vehicle crashes in 2025, compared to 364 in 2024.

“We know that seat belts save lives, and it’s so important that seat belt usage continues to increase every year in Massachusetts,” said Governor Maura Healey. “We’re grateful for the hard work of our partners in transportation, public safety and local governments to enhance safety on the roads for us all.”

“Whether you’re a driver or passenger, one of the most important things you can do to protect your safety is to buckle your seat belt. This study shows that we’ve made progress in increasing the safety of road users,” said Lieu-

tenant Governor Kim Driscoll.

The annual study is mandated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The study has been conducted every year in Massachusetts except 2020, amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Usage rates dipped in 2021 and 2022 before returning to their upward trend. Since 2015, seat belt use in Massachusetts has increased by more than 10%.

This year’s study was conducted between June 3-28, and NHTSA formally approved the results of the study in November. As the State Administering Agency for all NHTSA grant funds received by Massachusetts, the Office of Grants and Research (OGR) contracted with University of Massachusetts Transportation Center - Traffic Safety Research Program (UMassSafe) to conduct the study. Research teams spread out across 147 locations throughout the state to conduct observational research of drivers and front seat passengers. In total, researchers recorded observations of 24,662 individuals in 23,298 vehicles. The data offer insight into seat belt use by perceived age, race and sex, as well as geographic region, occupant type (driver or front seat passenger), vehicle type and time of day and week.

“Everyone has a role to play in keeping our roads safe, and wearing a seat belt is one of the simplest steps we can take to protect ourselves and the people we care about,” said Public Safety and Security Secretary Gina K. Kwon. “When drivers and passengers buckle up every time, they help prevent serious injuries and make travel safer for families and communities across the Commonwealth.”

“For most of us, buckling up is second nature. This study shows that more and more Massachusetts residents are using their seat belt, and we’re working with partners in law enforcement, transportation, nonprofits and other stakeholders to encourage everyone to wear a seat belt,” said OGR Executive Director Kevin Stanton. “It’s one simple step that could save your life.”

“It’s a known fact that seat belts save lives, and to see seat belt usage continue to increase for a third straight year is fantastic. Under the Healey-Driscoll Administration, safety has been a top priority across all agencies, and it is heartwarming to see that people are listening. Not only is it important to buckle up yourself, but please make sure your loved ones do the same, including young children and those in booster or car seats,” said Interim MassDOT Secretary and MBTA General Manager and CEO Phillip Eng.

“We are pleased to learn that the use of seat belts has been increasing,” said Registrar of Motor Vehicles Colleen Ogilvie. “Buckling up is the best way to prevent injuries and deaths. Be proactive in urging family members and friends to wear seat belts because everyone will be safer – it is an easy and quick step to take when getting in an automobile.”

“Seat belts and child safety seats save lives. Every time someone buckles up, they dramatically reduce the risk of serious injury or death in a crash. Our role as a law enforcement agency is not just enforcement, but education: helping families understand how to protect themselves and their children every time they get in a vehicle. We’re encouraged to see more

Massachusetts residents choosing to buckle up, because those small, everyday decisions make our roads safer for everyone,” said Massachusetts State Police Colonel Geoffrey Noble.

Massachusetts law states that a driver stopped by police may receive a citation if not wearing a seat belt or for any passenger who is unrestrained or not in a proper child safety seat (for children age 8 or younger who are under 57 inches tall). Any passenger aged 16 or older found not wearing a seat belt can also receive a citation.

Wide reaching efforts have been made to increase seat belt use, contributing to a rise in use each year under the Healey-Driscoll Administration. These efforts are part of a larger set of initiatives focused on improving the safety of all road users, including:

- **Municipal Road Safety Grant Program:** Using federal funds awarded by OGR through the Municipal Road Safety Grant Program, 191 local police departments across the state conducted 37,887 hours of traffic safety enforcement so far this year, including 6,470 enforcement hours performed during NHTSA’s May seat belt enforcement period. In October, OGR awarded FY26 Municipal Road Safety Grant Program awards totaling nearly \$6.2 million to a record 210 local police departments to conduct traffic safety enforcement, training and outreach through fall 2026.

- **High-Visibility Enforcement:** Using grants awarded by OGR, Massachusetts State Police (MSP) conducted 8,357 hours of high-visibility enforcement on Massachusetts roads during FY25, which ran from July 2024 to June 2025. This included 1,427 hours

of enforcement conducted during national “Click It or Ticket” seat belt safety campaigns in December 2024 and June 2025.

On Nov. 14, National Seat Belt Day, 32 State Troopers performed a total of 160 hours of traffic safety enforcement, with an emphasis on educating unrestrained drivers and passengers.

- **Traffic Programs Section:** The Massachusetts State Police Traffic Programs Section conducts traffic safety enforcement, education and outreach throughout the year.

- **Outreach Campaign:** In May, OGR issued an original PSA campaign aimed at increasing seat belt use among males and pickup truck drivers, who have historically used seat belts below the state’s average usage rate. The 2025 Seat Belt Observational Study found increased rates among both groups following the campaign’s launch.

- **Community Traffic Safety Grant Program:** Launched by OGR in 2024, \$297,135 in continuation funding was recently awarded four nonprofits to support ongoing traffic safety outreach programs in communities that are overrepresented in traffic crash and fatality data.

- **Child Passenger Safety Education and Assistance Program:** In 2025, OGR provided 78 eligible public and nonprofit organizations with 3,440 child car seats to distribute and professionally install for low-income families in need. Since the beginning of the Healey-Driscoll Administration, a total of 11,240 car seats have been distributed to eligible organizations.

Traffic safety grants offered by OGR are made available using federal funds awarded by NHTSA



SCENES FROM BOSTON’S FIRST NIGHT PARADE AND FIREWORKS

MAYOR’S OFFICE PHOTO BY JOHN WILCOX

Mayor Michelle Wu attends First Night Parade and Fireworks. Boston rang in the New Year with parades, ice skating, fireworks,

and performances at City Hall as the City celebrated 50 years of First Night.



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SCENES FROM BOSTON’S FIRST NIGHT PARADE AND FIREWORKS

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Jenny's Pizza .....	320 Medford St.
Waverly Café .....	229 Bunker Hill St.
Bunker Hill Liquors.....	200 Bunker Hill St.
Kennedy Center .....	55 Bunker Hill St.
McCarthy's Liquors.....	9 Moulton St.
Bunker Hill Cleaners .....	Moulton St.
Police Station .....	20 Vine St. Hayes Sq.
Santander Bank .....	437 Rutherford Ave.
7/11 Store .....	269 Main St.
Zelma Lacey House.....	9 W School St.
Gatehouse Apartment.....	75 W School St.
Ace Hardware .....	Bunker Hill Mall
CVS .....	Bunker Hill Mall
Citizens Bank.....	Bunker Hill Mall
Whole Food Market.....	Bunker Hill Mall
MGH Health Care Center.....	73 High St.
7/11 Store .....	Thompson Sq.
Charlestown Liquors .....	Thompson Sq.
Starbucks.....	Thompson Sq.
Cambridge Savings .....	Thompson Sq.
Warren Tavern.....	2 Pleasant St. & Main St.
Constellation Wharf Condos	1 Constellation Wharf
Harborview .....	250 First Ave.
Basilica.....	106 13th St.
Anchorage Apartment.....	103 13th Ave.
Parris Landing .....	42 Eighth St.
Tuttles Clevergreen Cleaners .....	197 Eighth St.
Flagship Wharf.....	197 Eighth St.
Style Café.....	197 Eighth St.
Building 104 .....	104 First Ave.
Building 110 .....	110 First Ave.
MGH Institute.....	26 First Ave.
7/11 Store .....	1 First Ave.

## South Station commuter rail fare gates in operation

The MBTA and Keolis Commuter Services, the T's operating and maintenance partner for the Commuter Rail, would like to remind passengers that the installation of the Commuter Rail fare gates at South Station has been completed and fare gates are being phased into operation. Passengers need to tap or scan their ticket or pass to exit and to enter the track area at South Station. Conductors will still check tickets on board trains to verify travel zones.

Passengers can use the following types of tickets to exit and enter the gates: the mTicket app, CharlieCards and CharlieTickets with printed zones, \$10 weekend paper tickets, Amtrak tickets, and active military IDs. Reduced fare passengers must still buy a ticket or pass (at a reduced rate). Stored value CharlieCards used for the bus and subway are not accepted at Commuter Rail fare gates.

"Under the leadership of the Healey-Driscoll and with support from the Legislature, we have been improving and delivering improved, safe, and more reliable service. The new fare gates at South Station – one of the busiest travel hubs in the Northeast – is another demonstration to our riders that we are committed to ensuring fares are collected and reinvested into the transit system to better serve the public," said

Interim MassDOT Secretary and MBTA General Manager Phillip Eng. "Fare gates allow the T and its operating partner to more consistently collect fares and ensure our riders pay. Thank you to the MBTA and Keolis employees for bringing this project to completion, and to our South Station riders for their patience and willingness to validate their fare in a new way."

"The debut of the fare gates at South Station is another major step forward in transforming Commuter Rail fare collection," said Keolis General Manager and CEO John Killeen. "Combined with upgrades to on-board sales and record conductor scans, Keolis is collecting more Commuter rail revenue than ever before on behalf of the MBTA. I would like to thank all of our crews who worked to get the fare gates installed and operational."

The South Station fare gates layout includes 40 gates installed around the concourse area, including 11 wider, accessible gates that allow sufficient room for wheelchairs, scooters, bicycles, luggage, and strollers.

The gates will improve fare collection, replace platform ticket checks, and create a more consistent fare-paying experience for passengers. The design and configuration of the fare gates was

developed to align with recent station improvements and builds on the successful implementation of gates at North Station where passengers have tapped tickets or passes 14 million times since those gates opened in 2022. The design also follows industry standards and global best practices in fare collection.

Fare gates are also planned to open at Back Bay Station and Rugles Station in 2026.

Customer service staff at South Station are available to assist passengers with questions about the fare gates. Project details and more information are posted online at MBTA.com/CRgates, including a how-to video.

Keolis Commuter Services has operated and maintained the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's commuter rail system, the sixth largest commuter rail operation in North America, for over ten years. KCS is a subsidiary of Keolis North America (KNA), both headquartered in Boston, and employs approximately 2,500 people throughout the region. KCS and KNA are part of Keolis Group, an innovative global leader in transit services with more than a century of passenger transportation experience and operations in 13 countries.

## More than one-third of Christmas tree home fires occur in January

If you're struggling to part ways with your Christmas tree, consider this: More than one-third (35 percent) of U.S. home fires involving Christmas trees occur in January. With this post-holiday fire hazard in mind, the National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®) is strongly encouraging prompt removal of Christmas trees after the holiday season.

"As much as we all enjoy the look and feel of Christmas trees

in our homes, they're large combustible items that have the potential to result in serious fires," said Lorraine Carli, vice president of Outreach and Advocacy at NFPA. "The longer they're in the home, the more of a risk they present."

According to NFPA data, Christmas tree fires don't happen often, but when they do occur, they're more likely to be serious. That's in part because fresh Christmas trees dry out over time,

making them more flammable the longer they're in the home. A dried-out Christmas tree will burn much more quickly than a well-watered one.

Between 2020 and 2024, there was an estimated annual average of 143 home structure fires that began with Christmas trees, resulting in seven civilian deaths, 13 civilian injuries, and \$15 mil-

See HOME FIRES Page 15

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02/26/2026. If you fail to do  
so, the court will proceed to the

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action. You are also required to  
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WITNESS, Hon. Janine D Rivers,  
First Justice of this Court.  
Date: December 23, 2025  
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1/9/26  
CTN



# Massachusetts officials report fire deaths drop by 12% in 2025

Massachusetts fire deaths in 2025 declined from a seven-year high in 2024, with more than 90% taking place in the victims' homes, State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine said.

Excluding fatal motor vehicle collisions with an ensuing fire, Massachusetts recorded 44 fire deaths in 30 fires during 2025. That number is a decline from the 50 civilian fire deaths recorded in 2024 and on par with the five-year average of 44 per year from 2020-2024. One child – a 4-year-old North Adams girl – was lost to fire, down from three in 2024. Two dozen people aged 65 or older lost their lives in fires during 2025, making them nearly 55% of fatal fire victims but only about 17% of the population.

Single-family homes accounted for 14 deaths, followed by the devastating fire at Gabriel House Assisted Living in Fall River, which claimed 10 lives and represented the greatest loss of life to a single Massachusetts fire incident in decades. Nine people died in apartment or multifamily home fires, four people died in mobile home fires, and three people died in two-family homes.

The unsafe use or disposal of smoking materials was the known cause or a possible factor in 21 fire deaths in 2025, making it by far the most common factor and continuing a decades-long trend. Smoking is especially dangerous in the presence of medical oxygen – a fact pattern that investigators believe contributed to the Gabriel House fire. The Department of Fire Services last year updated its Home Oxygen Fire Safety brochure, which is offered on the DFS website and through the Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Smoke alarm operation could be provisionally determined for 30 of the 40 residential fire deaths. Only 16 of these homes or units of origin had working smoke alarms. The alarms in the remainder were either not working or missing entirely.

“Sadly, the places we should feel safest – our homes – are the places where most people lose their lives to fire,” said State Fire Marshal Davine. “Changes to building construction allow fires to grow and spread faster. Synthetic furnishings create deadly smoke and toxic gases as they burn. The US Fire Administration estimates that we have less time to escape a fire at home than ever before, so it’s vital to have working smoke alarms to alert us to the danger before it’s too late.”

Four people perished in non-residential fire incidents. Three lost their lives in outdoor fires, including one who suffered fatal injuries while using illegal fireworks, and one was overcome by smoke and flames in his vehicle when the engine caught fire.

While fatal fires tend to be most likely in the winter months, the Gabriel House fire caused 10 of the 11 fire deaths in July. November was the second leading month with nine fatalities, followed by March and October, which accounted for four each. Fatal fires were distributed relatively evenly throughout the day, with spikes between 9:00 pm and 4:00 am.

## HOME FIRES (from pg. 14)

lion in direct property damage.

“Fires that begin with Christmas trees represent a very small but notable part of the U.S. fire problem, considering that they are generally in use for a short time each year,” said Carli.

To safely dispose of a Christmas tree, NFPA recommends using the local community’s recycling program, if possible; trees should not be put in the garage or left outside. NFPA also offers these tips for safely removing lighting and decorations to ensure that they remain in good condition:

- Use the gripping area on the plug when unplugging electrical decorations. Never pull the cord to unplug any device from an electrical outlet, as this can harm the wire and insulation of the cord, increasing the risk for shock or electrical fire.
- As you pack up light strings, inspect each set for damage. Throw out any that have loose connections, broken sockets or cracked or bare wires.
- Wrap each set of lights and put them in individual plastic bags or wrap them around a piece of cardboard.
- Store electrical decorations away from children and pets, and in a dry place where they will not be damaged by water or dampness.

For this release and other announcements about NFPA initiatives, research, and resources, please visit the NFPA press room.

About the National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®)

Founded in 1896, NFPA® is a global self-funded nonprofit organization devoted to eliminating death, injury, property, and economic loss due to fire, electrical, and related hazards. The association delivers information and knowledge through more than 300 consensus codes and standards, research, training, education, outreach, and advocacy; and by partnering with others who share an interest in furthering the NFPA mission. For more information, visit [nfpa.org](http://nfpa.org). All NFPA codes and standards can be viewed online for free at [nfpa.org/freeaccess](http://nfpa.org/freeaccess).

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## NON-PROFIT DONATES TO NEW HEALTH FOOD PROGRAM



Last month, NEW Health Center in the North End gratefully accepted a holiday donation for their Food Access Program from Miles for Military, a local non-profit that provides flights home for junior active-duty military personnel in exchange for volunteer service. Miles for Military founder Maureen Byrne (right) presented the donation to New Health Director of Dental Services Erika Omansky and CEO Vincenzo Scibelli. The NEW Health Food Access Program helps members of the Charlestown and North End communities who lack reliable and affordable options for nutritious foods.

## State Fire Marshal reminds bars and clubs of sparkler hazard

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine today sent a notice to Massachusetts bars and restaurants regarding the fire hazard posed by sparklers, which are believed to have contributed to the tragic New Year's Eve fire that claimed dozens of lives in a Switzerland bar.

"Please be advised that sparklers and other pyrotechnic devices, including so-called 'cold spark' pyrotechnics, are illegal for possession, sale, and use in Massachusetts without professional licensing, certification, and permitting," State Fire Marshal Davine wrote in a notice to proprietors of restaurants, nightclubs, bars, and discotheques. "This includes small sparklers that have been sold as novelties or party favors to accompany champagne bottles, which are believed to have caused the New Year's Eve fire that claimed 40 lives and injured more than 100 people in Crans-Montana, Switzerland."

The Marshal thanked the Massachusetts Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission, which has provided the notice to local licensing officials for distribution to licensed establishments, and the Massachusetts Restaurant Association, which is distributing the notice to its members.

Separately, the Department of Fire Services issued a notice to a Hialeah, Florida, business that markets sparklers online. This business, King of Sparklers LLC,

reportedly sold and shipped sparklers that were later recovered by Fall River Fire Department inspectors at a local establishment.

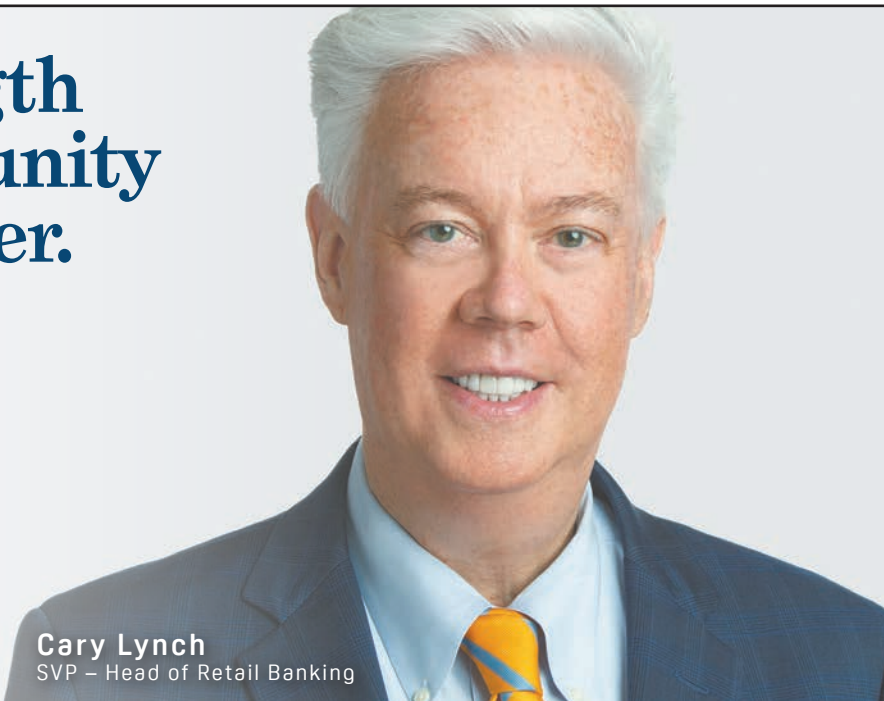
"The shipment of prohibited fireworks products into the Commonwealth constitutes a violation of Massachusetts General Law and the Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Code and presents a significant public safety concern," the notice stated.

State Fire Marshal Davine said that sparklers burn at temperatures of over 1,800° Fahrenheit and cast sparks that can easily ignite furnishings, decorations, and other flammable materials. They can remain hot enough to start a fire even after they've been extinguished, as happened in 2022, when the unsafe disposal of illegal sparklers caused a three-alarm fire in Dracut that displaced nine people. They are classified as fireworks in Massachusetts and their possession, sale, and use require professional licensing and certification.

"The tragic fire in Switzerland has a chilling similarity to the Station Nightclub fire in Rhode Island, which led to numerous safety reforms in Massachusetts bars and clubs," State Fire Marshal Davine said, noting the sprinkler regulations, inspection schedules, and crowd manager requirements that are now in place in Massachusetts. "We just want to help these businesses keep their patrons and staff safe."

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