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BOSTON CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT RUTHZEE LOUIJEUNE HOLDS HOLIDAY PARTY



Boston City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune held a Holiday Party at Savor on Lincoln Street in Downtown. Shown, Boston City Councilor Gabriela Coletta Zapata (center) talks about working with City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune (left) while Former Boston City Council President Larry DiCaro listens. See Pages 4 and 5 for more photos.

Boston Planning Department advances zoning reforms in support of housing, small businesses

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

The City of Boston Planning Department this year made its first substantial changes to the development review process in decades, continued comprehensive zoning reform of the City, and made progress on revitalizing Downtown Boston. Staff also made progress in creating more housing, including through the Office to Residential Conversion Program, the Neighborhood Housing initia-

tive, and approval of projects by the BPDA Board.

Staff advanced 60 new development proposals and 27 notices of project change amounting to 5.8 million net square feet worth approximately \$4.8 billion of investment in our City. This includes 3,773 net residential units, of which 1,278 or 29 percent will be income-restricted. The projects approved this year are estimated to generate 5,987 net construction jobs and 3,776

net permanent jobs. Development projects newly approved in 2025 will generate approximately \$9.8 million in Linkage fees to support affordable housing, and approximately \$1.9 million in Linkage fees to support job training programs.

Continuing to elevate planning and zoning, staff also rezoned Roslindale Square with Squares + Streets zoning districts to expand

(ZONING, Pg. 6)

Wu announces inauguration 2026 week of programming and community events

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

Mayor Michelle Wu recently announced a week-long series of programming to mark the City of Boston Inauguration 2026 and create space for Boston families to celebrate in community. The events and activations will provide an opportunity to engage with residents as the City sets a vision for continuing the work to make Boston a home for everyone.

"This series of events to ring in the new year and new term will bring together residents and families across our neighborhoods," said Mayor Michelle Wu. "As we kick off the new year, these events and activations will create space for joy, belonging and celebration while elevating the community voices and partners who are shaping Boston's present and future. I'm grateful to all of our partners for their leadership to ensure the 2026 Inauguration Week includes events for all, and I encourage every resident to join in the celebrations and be a part of Boston's next chapter."

This year's inauguration programming will deliver events that

(EVENTS, Pg. 3)

CNC MEETING DATES

CNC General Meeting, Tuesday, January 6, 2026, 7 PM, Knights of Columbus

The Charlestown Neighborhood Council will hold an in-person public meeting on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM at the Knights of Columbus, located at 545 Medford Street, Charlestown. Please bring your questions and neighborhood concerns to the meeting or email us at cnc02129@gmail.com



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EDITORIAL

THE MASS SHOOTING IN AUSTRALIA: SHOCKING, BUT SADLY, NOT SURPRISING

The recent tragic shooting in Australia at a Hanukkah festival once again has demonstrated to the world the pernicious and evil effects of anti-semitism, which is the world's oldest form of prejudice.

Anti-semitism may have reached its peak with the Holocaust in Nazi Germany in the 1930s and '40s, but it still remains the number one source of hate in the world today.

In the United States, acts of anti-semitism have spiked exponentially in the past 10 years (long predating the war in Gaza). According to the Anti-Defamation League, there were 9,354 anti-semitic incidents in 2024, the highest number since it began tracking the data in 1979, representing a 344% increase over the past five years and an 893% increase over the past decade.

The stark nature and depth of anti-semitism in our country was on full display in the August, 2017, white nationalist demonstration in Charlottesville, Virginia, when a group of white supremacists marched with candles chanting, "The Jews will not replace us."

New York City's Police Commissioner, Jessica Tisch, speaking on Sunday about the shooting in Australia, unequivocally stated the extent of the scourge of anti-semitism: "This is not an isolated incident. It is part of a wider assault on Jewish life. Jewish communities are being forced to confront a threat that is persistent, adaptive and, as evidenced yet again today, global in scope."

Every synagogue and temple in our country now has armed security guards, something that would have been unimaginable even 10 years ago.

Up until this past weekend, Bondi Beach in Sydney had been a world-famous destination, known for its surf and long stretch of beautiful beach. But now it will be forever remembered as a place where scores of innocent people were gunned down for one reason and one reason only: They were Jews.

A LONG, HARD WINTER LIES AHEAD

We didn't need a weatherman to tell us that December has been unusually cold. So it was not at all surprising when we recently read that this has been the coldest start to December in our area in 17 years.

We've been pretty fortunate in our little corner of the world to have had mild Decembers for quite a while. Winter isn't that tough to take when it's only the months of January and February that dish out wintry weather.

We recall that even the Snowmageddon Winter of 2015 was not really all that bad. We had about six weeks of record-breaking snowfall (115 inches), but that was it (although the mounds of snow lingered until well into the spring on playgrounds and parking lots).

Last winter was oppressive for most of January and February. The daily high temperatures barely broke 30 and the wind chills every morning were in the single digits. But we had plenty of sunshine and that made our daily run on the sandbar near our home (at low tide) easy-enough to take.

We would even go so far as to say that enduring six or seven weeks of blustery winter days makes us feel alive and truly appreciative of the nicer weather when it arrives.

But these past few weeks of below-normal temperatures since Thanksgiving have broken the recent pattern of easing us into winter. Winter's grip already feels oppressive, thanks to the cold and the constant winds that have sent the wind chills dipping into the low single (and even below zero) digits. In addition, the sun has been absent more often than not.

And with our heating bills already going through the roof, spring seems like a long, long time away.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

THE ISSUE IS FAR FROM SETTLED

To the Editor

I am writing in response to an article, "Community Leaders, Officials Express Support for Plans to Redevelop Pier 5 in Charlestown." While the BPDA has approved this plan, the issue is far from settled in the court of public opinion. In fact, that approval only heightens the urgency for residents to continue speaking out. I am deeply troubled that this deal has moved forward despite decades of community advocacy for a truly public, free waterfront park, and I urge my fellow Charlestown residents to oppose what I believe is a deeply flawed and misguided project.

To be clear from the outset, I support Courageous Sailing and

respect its mission. However, the Pier 4/5 expansion plan involving Courageous is not about sailing. It is an aggressive commercial proposal, developed with ASM Global/Legend—a multinational venue operator—to control and manage a multimillion-dollar event space on Charlestown's waterfront. Framing this project as a sailing expansion obscures its true purpose. It is, quite simply, a Trojan horse.

The BPDA's approval of this proposal is baffling. The plan appears to violate several core RFP provisions intended to protect the public interest and ensure transparency. Most critically, Courageous Sailing lacks the capital to fund a project estimated to exceed \$80 million. Instead, the proposal depends on revenue from private, large-scale events—managed for

a fee by ASM Global/Legend—to make the project financially viable. Courageous Sailing is a modest sailing organization, not a private event management company, and Charlestown should not be asked to bear the impacts of a commercial entertainment venue masquerading as a nonprofit expansion.

As Charlestown convenes committees to preserve its historic character, a behemoth private event venue—bringing inevitable noise, traffic congestion, trash, crowds, and environmental risk—has been greenlit for our waterfront, in a known flood zone where climate resilience should be paramount. Charlestown must ask itself: who are we, and what kind of community do we choose to be?

Heather Buzby
Charlestown, MA

State public health officials alert residents about potential exposure to measles in multiple locations

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) confirmed that an out-of-state adult visitor who spent time in Boston and Westborough earlier this month was diagnosed with measles and was present in a number of locations. This could have resulted in other people being exposed to measles virus.

On December 11 at 2:39 p.m., the visitor arrived at Boston Logan Airport on American Airlines flight 2384 from Dallas-Fort Worth, TX. The visitor stayed at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Boston-Westborough in Westborough and departed the state on December 12 via Logan Airport at 9:19 p.m. on JetBlue flight 117 to Las Vegas, NV.

DPH is working with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local partners to identify and notify those who may have been exposed to measles from this individual.

"Measles is a highly contagious, airborne disease, which has increased significantly in the United States because of the unfortunate decrease in vaccination rates. It is also a preventable disease," said Public Health Commissioner Robbie Goldstein, MD, PhD. "This current situation serves as an important reminder of the critical role vaccination plays in protect-

ing our communities. While Massachusetts has not had a measles case this year, 2025 saw the highest number of nationwide cases in more than a decade – nearly 2,000 in 44 jurisdictions, and sadly, three deaths. Fifteen years ago, measles had been considered eliminated in the United States, but that tremendous progress is at risk. Vaccines are one of the most important public health interventions ever – they are safe, effective, and lifesaving."

Measles is very contagious. However, the risk to most people

(EXPOSURE, Pg. 3)



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EXPOSURE (from pg. 2)

Boston-Westborough, Westborough, MA, between 3:30 p.m., Thursday 12/11 and 9 p.m., Friday 12/12

• Logan Airport Terminal C, Boston, MA, 6 p.m.-11:30 p.m., Friday 12/12

Those who could have been exposed and begin to develop symptoms of measles should call their healthcare provider before visiting an office, clinic, or emergency department. Visiting a healthcare facility may put others at risk and should be avoided if possible. Anyone who has had measles in the past or has received two doses of the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccine is unlikely to develop measles even if exposed.

Early symptoms of measles occur 7 to 21 days after exposure and may resemble a cold (with fever, cough, runny nose, and red eyes). A rash occurs on the skin 2 to 4 days after the initial symptoms develop. The rash usually appears first on the head and then moves downward. The rash typically lasts a few days and then disappears in the same order.

People with measles may be contagious up to four days before the rash appears and for four days after the rash appears.

"This case is a reminder that everyone should be vaccinated against measles to protect themselves and others from this highly infectious disease. With multiple measles outbreaks across the country and increased travel around the holidays, now is an important time

to ensure that you and your family are protected. Two doses of MMR vaccine are 97% effective at preventing measles and provides protection against mumps and rubella infection," said Dr. Bisola Ojikutu, MD, MPH, FIDSA, Commissioner of Public Health for the City of Boston. "Children should receive the vaccine at 12-15 months of age and again before kindergarten to ensure strong immunity. Children who are at least 6 months old who are traveling internationally or to areas of the US with active outbreaks should receive an early dose of vaccine before traveling. It is never too late for children or adults to get the measles vaccine even if they are past the recommended age."

According to the CDC, as of December 23, a total of 1,988 measles cases have been reported in 44 jurisdictions across the United States in 2025. The majority were unvaccinated or had unknown vaccination status (93 percent), 3 percent had one dose of the MMR vaccine, and 4 percent had two doses. There have been three confirmed deaths in the US from measles this year.

Due to the increase in measles cases nationally, DPH urges anyone who has not been vaccinated or does not know their measles immunization status to contact their healthcare provider to get vaccinated with at least one dose of the MMR vaccine. Measles vaccine given within 72 hours of exposure may prevent measles disease. Vaccination beyond this win-

dow will provide protection from subsequent exposures.

Health care providers who suspect measles should call DPH

at 617-983-6800 immediately for recommendations and testing guidance. Providers in Boston should call the Boston Public

Health Commission at 617-534-5611.

Learn more about measles on DPH's website.

EVENTS (from pg. 1)

work in making Boston a home for everyone.

Neighborhood: Citywide at partner institutions participating in the Boston Family Days program.

Inauguration of Mayor Michelle Wu and the Boston City Council

Monday, January 5, 2026

The City of Boston will host the inauguration of Mayor Michelle Wu and the Boston City Council at Boston Symphony Hall. The event will begin at 10:00 a.m. The City of Boston Cable Office will stream the program live on boston.gov/inauguration.

Neighborhood: Symphony Hall, 301 Massachusetts Avenue, Fenway

Media interested in attending are asked to RSVP by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, January 2, 2025.

Boston Reads: Make Way for Storytime!

Various storytimes held throughout week of January 5

A citywide celebration of reading, designed for young children, toddlers, and their families. As part of the City's Boston Reads initiative, this program brings families into Boston Public Library branches across neighborhoods for a special storytime featuring the beloved book "Make Way for the Ducklings." Each participating library branch will host interactive readings and activities, providing children and families with an opportunity to engage with literature, explore their local library, and connect with their community. Families who attend

will receive a passport to encourage visits to each library branch fostering early literacy and the joy of reading. Additional information regarding the storytime events can be found here.

Neighborhood: Citywide across multiple BPL branches every day

Morning of Hope: Gathering of Faith and Community

Tuesday, January 6, 2026

Mayor Wu will host a citywide gathering bringing together faith leaders, community safety partners, and City leadership to reflect, pray, and celebrate Boston as a safe, inclusive, and welcoming city for all. The speaking program will include prayers from interfaith leaders, Mayor Wu and Commissioner Cox.

Neighborhood: Roxbury

Rooted in Boston: Celebrating Neighborhood Businesses

Wednesday, January 7, 2026

This celebration, hosted by Mayor Wu and the City's Economic Opportunity and Inclusion Cabinet, will honor the small businesses that anchor Boston's neighborhoods and reinforce the City's continued efforts to help them thrive. This event will bring together grantees from the City's Supporting Pandemic Affected Community Enterprises (SPACE) Grant program and awardees of the City's Legacy Business program. In addition to the Mayor honoring their cultural and economic impact, this gathering will also highlight various partners who support their growth.

Neighborhood: East Boston

Bloom Boston: A Floral Design Event for Seniors

Thursday, January 8, 2026

Mayor Wu and the City's Age Strong Commission will honor Boston's older adults by offering a joyful, hands-on floral arrangement experience that nurtures creativity, intergenerational connection, and a sense of belonging. Led by Boston Flower Co., a Boston SPACE grantee, this workshop also spotlights local entrepreneurship while providing older adults with a calming, confidence-building activity rooted in nature and community pride.

Neighborhood: South End

Teen Takeover: The Future of Boston

Friday, January 9, 2026

Mayor Wu will join the Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement to host a celebration bringing teens from across the City together for an evening of creativity, music, art, games while welcoming youth input into the administration's second-term priorities through an interactive visioning activity. Through interactive stations, art-driven expression, and celebratory moments—including a raffle drawing announced by Mayor Wu—the event uplifts teen voices as essential to shaping a Boston that is safe, thriving, and welcoming now and for generations to come.

Neighborhood: BCYF Mattahunt, 100 Hebron Street, Mattapan

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BOSTON CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT RUTHZEE LOUIJEUNE HOLDS HOLIDAY PARTY



Boston City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune talks about her work giving the best service on representing Boston at-large and the challenges ahead in 2026.



Boston City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune (center) with Larry Keegan and Larry DiCara.



Boston City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune (center) with her campaign's Communications Director Hodan Hashi and Cisnelli Baez.

Boston City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune held a Holiday Party at Savor on Lincoln Street in Downtown. Fellow elected officials joined constituents in celebrating the Holiday Season with her.



Ruth St Louis supports Boston City Councilor At-Large Ruthzee Louijeune.



Boston City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune has a celebratory dance with supporter Alexis Steel.



Boston City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune with Michele David.



Boston City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune (center) with Derrick Young Jr and Jonathan Allen.



Former Boston City Council President Larry DiCara talks about the current City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune.



Attendees of the Holiday Party.

DEREK KOUYOUNJIAN PHOTOS

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BOSTON CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT RUTHZEE LOUIJEUNE HOLDS HOLIDAY PARTY

DEREK KOUYOUNJIAN PHOTOS



Ian Halliday, Heather O'Brien, and Hessann Farooqi.



Boston City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune talks about her work giving the best service on representing Boston at-large and the challenges ahead in 2026.



Boston City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune with Joseph Lafontant.



Boston City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune with Stephanie Keehan and Gbemisola Osadua.



Boston City Councilor Gabriela Coletta-Zapata (center) with Martin Chan, Hung Goon, Gary Yu, and Anny Chen.



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

Visit us online at www.charlestownbridge.com

ZONING (from pg. 1)

areas in Roslindale that allow and welcome more housing opportunity and small business activity. This updated zoning has already resulted in approval of an all-affordable senior housing development with ground floor retail in Roslindale Square, with an additional four projects currently under review.

The Planning Department also continued to advance specific public goals this year on over 750,000 square feet (17+ acres) of underutilized, public land across Boston. These public sites will produce a variety of public benefits and include space for affordable and mixed-income housing, marine industrial and blue tech uses, a community-based non-profit, public libraries, gardens and public outdoor space, and a fire station. Notable new project sites in 2025 included Pier 5, Parcel M, and Welcome Home, Boston Phase 3. Major project milestones

included the conveyance of land for the new Chinatown Boston Public Library branch and affordable housing project at Parcel R1, and the Alma Wright Zen Garden at Parcels S-20 and S-21. Upgrades to Pier 10 in the Raymond L. Flynn Marine Park enabled a new commuter water shuttle stop in partnership with the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority and the Seaport Transportation Management Association (TMA), which opened this summer. These redevelopment efforts further the recommendations made in the City's 2022 land audit to maximize the potential for underutilized sites across Boston to meet goals of producing affordable housing and other community needs.

The Coastal Resilience Delivery Team also released a draft plan for resiliency measures at Long Wharf this fall. This project will

recommend solutions to current and near-term flooding, guidelines to retrofit and protect individual structures on Long Wharf, and a set of alternative designs that will contribute to planning and delivering a comprehensive coastal flood protection system through Downtown and the North End.

The sections below provide more detail on major accomplishments and progress of the Planning Department to help make Boston a home for everyone, and tackle Boston's greatest challenges today: resilience, affordability, and equity.

Planning takes steps to create a more vibrant, residential Downtown through rezoning and office conversions

Following almost two years of zoning-focused engagement with the community, in addition to a multi-year planning process, the Zoning Commission adopted new comprehensive zoning for Downtown Boston in October for the first time in more than 30 years. The zoning meaningfully prioritizes the ability to build new housing and mixed-use development across Downtown in response to the ongoing housing shortage, enabling increased density at the core of Boston's transit network where it can be best supported. Residential uses are now legal throughout the new zoning districts, whereas large hotel, lab, and office uses will require further zoning approval. The zoning also eliminated outdated and prohibitive land-use restrictions to encourage new and diverse businesses like coffee houses, bakeries, fitness studios, and entertainment uses to thrive, fill empty storefronts, and help drive foot traffic and activity Downtown.

Building off of the success of the City's Office to Residential Conversion Program, the new zoning supports historic preservation by eliminating barriers to convert or adapt existing buildings, and also provides extensive design guidelines to ensure sensitivity and preservation of historic areas.

The City of Boston also extended the application period for the Office to Residential Conversion Program through the end of 2026, due to its success since its last extension in the summer of 2024. The program, which formally launched in October of 2023, has received 22 applications to convert 1.2 million square feet of office space across 27 buildings into 1,517 new homes, including 284 income-restricted units, far exceeding initial city goals. Five projects totaling 306 units are currently under construction, and one of the first buildings to apply for

the program at 281 Franklin Street has already been fully tenanted with 15 units. The goal of this program is to support owners and developers of older commercial office buildings in converting them to housing, and to help stabilize the office market downtown while also increasing the housing stock in Downtown Boston. The program is also designed to respond to post-pandemic economic shifts that will prioritize expanding housing options Downtown, creating an 18-hour, mixed-use neighborhood.

Planning makes first substantial changes to development review process in 30 years

In August, the Zoning Commission approved amendments to Article 80 of the zoning code recommended by the Planning Department to improve the predictability and consistency of the development review process, and lay the groundwork for future reforms as part of the Article 80 Modernization Action Plan. The amendments: change the thresholds and procedures for Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) review; make it easier to renovate existing buildings, including rehabilitation for sustainability upgrades and conversions; modernize communication methods with the public; and improve coordination between city departments. Overall, these amendments made the development review process more efficient for housing projects, internal renovations, and sustainability upgrades.

In addition, staff are currently piloting new engagement tools within the review process including: an early engagement toolkit for developers, new training and forms to support increased transparency and clarify expectations for Advisory Group members, signage on the site of a proposed project to better inform the public about new development in their community, and improvements to public meetings to make them more clear and concise. Beginning in July, all new projects began the modernized review process.

All of these improvements will fully go into effect in 2026. Together with the zoning changes, continued operational improvements will lead the city toward a development review process that is easier to use, consistent with existing practice, and set up for future reform.

City releases Anti-Displacement Action Plan

The City of Boston adopted its first ever Anti-Displacement Action Plan, *A Place to Thrive*, this summer, which lays out a two-

year plan for City departments to help stabilize residents, small businesses, and cultural organizations that may face direct or economic displacement, helping to ensure all Bostonians can thrive and flourish here. The City's anti-displacement efforts are grounded in four main tenets: protect, preserve, produce, and prosper. The City is working to stabilize households by protecting people – particularly lower-income and vulnerable renters and homeowners – from displacement; preserving existing housing; producing new housing for people at all income levels; and promoting prosperity through homeownership.

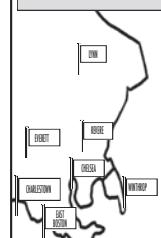
As part of the Plan, the Planning Department will pilot the first ever Direct Displacement Disclosure. Developers will be asked to notify any current tenants on site of their proposed project 30 days before filing the project with the City, and to notify the City of any possible direct displacement of residential, commercial or cultural tenants that may occur as a result of their project. Displacement impacts will be reviewed and, in certain cases based on the unique circumstances of each project, the City may request displacement mitigation measures as part of the project's overall mitigation strategy. This will be piloted for the next year as part of the modernized Article 80 development review process. Staff will evaluate the impact of this new policy, share results, and refine as needed.

Roslindale Square rezoned with Squares + Streets zoning districts

The Zoning Commission approved new Squares + Streets zoning districts in Roslindale Square in May on the recommendation of the Planning Department. This followed a year-long community process. The new Squares + Streets zoning districts are aimed at creating a more mixed-use neighborhood center and connecting streets that support walkability, small businesses, outdoor gathering spaces, and new housing growth. The new zoning districts support creating more transit-oriented housing in the plan area. In addition, new zoning will make it easier to: build more housing in the area, make modifications to existing housing that will help preserve the existing supply and build generational wealth, create a backdrop for community development by allowing new cultural anchors in the plan area, and allow new growth and opportunities for small businesses.

This is the second area of the city where Squares + Streets zon-

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New BCCE rates, providing energy savings to residents and small businesses

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

The City of Boston announced new electricity rates for the Boston Community Choice Electricity (BCCE) program, allowing Boston residents and small businesses to save money on their energy bills. These rates, which go into effect this month, are lower than current and upcoming Eversource rates, providing residents and small businesses electricity bill savings and renewable energy. Between February 2021 and December 2024, Boston residents using BCCE averaged savings of \$200 per year on their electricity bills, in comparison to the Eversource Basic Service, saving Boston residents and small businesses nearly \$260 million over those three years. BCCE's new rates will remain in effect for the next two years.

The City encourages all residents and small businesses to check their electricity bill to confirm their enrollment in Boston Community Choice Electricity. Many residents who are not enrolled in BCCE are unknowingly paying too much for electricity because they are receiv-

ing electricity from a third-party supplier. Third-party electricity suppliers often take advantage of low-income residents and people of color through offering low introductory rates, significantly raising the rates later, and by charging high termination fees. To get help checking your energy supplier or to enroll in BCCE, contact the City of Boston's BCCE team by scheduling an appointment, emailing BCCE@boston.gov or calling 617-635-3850.

"The new electricity rates through Boston Community Choice Electricity give Boston residents an opportunity to reduce their utility bills at a time when many families are struggling with our country's affordability crisis," said Mayor Michelle Wu. "This program proves that here in Boston, energy savings and bold solutions to tackle climate change go hand-in-hand."

About 65 percent of all Boston rate payers are currently enrolled in BCCE, and new utility account holders are automatically enrolled in the program. The BCCE Basic

and Standard rates are both lower than the Eversource Basic Commercial and Residential rates. Below is a comparison of the cost savings per kilowatt hour, as well as the updated BCCE rates for 2026.

A comparison of current Boston Community Choice Electricity rates to Eversource's upcoming Basic Residential rate.

Eversource's winter rates are \$0.15065/kWh for the Residential plan, and \$0.14466/kWh for Commercial. Eversource has also filed a Basic Service Cost Adjustment with the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities which, if approved, may increase the Eversource Basic Service rates by an additional \$0.00565/kWh.

Despite federal cuts to eliminate renewable energy projects, Boston continues to prioritize clean energy and remains focused on reaching carbon neutrality by 2050. This month, the BCCE Program increased the enrollment cap for commercial and industrial accounts from 1.5 million kWh/yr to 2 million, allowing more Boston

businesses to enroll in BCCE, save money on utility costs, and switch to renewable energy. Between 2021-2024, BCCE reduced Boston's Carbon footprint by nearly 200,000 tons of CO₂, the equivalent of taking approximately 46,000 gasoline-powered passenger vehicles off the road for a year.

"Boston Community Choice Electricity is putting money back in the wallets of Boston residents," said Oliver Sellers-Garcia, Environment Commissioner and Director of the Green New Deal for the City of Boston. "Our program shows that clean energy is a win-win for our community, reducing pollution in our neighborhoods while saving our families and small businesses money."

Energy Cost Saving Opportunities for Boston Residents

In October, Mayor Michelle Wu announced the launch of Boston Energy Saver, a new City service helping Boston renters, homeowners, and small businesses upgrade their buildings and lower their energy bills. Currently, there are many energy programs avail-

able to consumers, but it can be difficult to understand where to start. Residents can visit boston.gov/save or call 617-635-SAVE (7283) for a 1-on-1 consultation about available discounts and building upgrade options to save money on energy costs. Potential upgrades include rebates and low-cost financing for energy upgrades, building weatherization, heat pumps, induction stoves, and energy bill check-ups to make sure residents are not being overcharged, among others.

Avoid Scams this Winter

Scammers posing as utility representatives are on the rise. Beware of sophisticated scams that ask you for sensitive information or require immediate payment in the form of gift cards or face utility shutoff. Direct Energy (the energy supplier for BCCE), the City of Boston, and local utilities will never contact you making these requests. Residents can contact BCCE at 617-635-3850 or email bcce@boston.gov with any questions about scam attempts.

ZONING (from pg. 6)

ing districts are now implemented. The first location to be mapped with Squares + Streets zoning was Mattapan Square, following the completion of PLAN: Mattapan.

The Zoning Commission also adopted two new Squares + Streets Districts this year that add a new commercial typology and a mixed-use typology with reduced height, in response to a zoning petition by Hyde Park residents submitted during the Squares + Streets planning process for Cleary Square. Now that these districts have been added to the zoning code, the Cleary Square draft plan and zoning map will be released in January 2026. This plan will include a range of strategies and recommendations aimed at fostering economic vitality, enhancing public spaces, and supporting the unique character of the Square.

Planning for key corridors is an early phase of citywide zoning reform, focusing on high-impact, near-term, and targeted recommendations that can be implemented through zoning changes and capital investments. As Boston's population continues to grow, these corridors play a critical role in connecting neighborhoods and ensuring every Bostonian has access to affordable, sustainable, and equitable places to live, work, and play. Additional corridor locations will be announced on a rolling basis.

Net Zero Carbon Zoning goes into effect

The City this year adopted Net Zero Carbon Zoning to create decarbonization requirements for new development projects that advance the City's goal of being carbon-neutral by 2050. Implemented in July, these updates continue Boston's leadership in the transition to a more sustainable, low-carbon future for both building materials and energy aligned with the City's Building Emissions Reduction Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO). Under NZC, projects subject to Article 80 review will minimize energy use, carbon emissions and use renewable electricity to annually achieve net zero carbon emissions. Three projects, all with income-restricted housing, have already been approved under this new zoning this year, and five others are under review. These projects demonstrate the Mayor's and City's leadership in moving us closer to our carbon neutral 2050 goals, and proving we can build next generation buildings today.

Enabling Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and home renovations

As of September, there were 51 ADUs permitted in Boston in 2025, compared with 34 through all of 2024. Building off the momentum from the ADU Guide-

book released last November, the Planning Department this year began meeting with residents in West Roxbury, Hyde Park, and Roslindale about the Neighborhood Housing initiative. This zoning will expand the types of housing allowed to be built in Boston citywide, including ADUs, thereby helping the city more effectively respond to the housing shortage. In addition, this new zoning will legalize and simplify the upkeep and renovation of homes. A first draft of new zoning districts in these neighborhoods will be released in early 2026.

Planning in Allston-Brighton

The Planning Department hosted an Ideas Reception this summer for the Allston-Brighton Community Plan, and staff anticipate releasing a draft plan and zoning in 2026. The plan is based on the Allston-Brighton Needs Assessment that identified needs such as more accessible and affordable housing, and convenient public open space, among other things.

In parallel, the Beacon Park Yard Regional Framework Plan is guiding the long-term redevelopment of this former rail yard into a new mixed-use district, with a focus on housing, job creation, open space, and improved connections to surrounding neighborhoods. The Harvard Enterprise Research

Campus (ERC) Plan complements this effort by establishing a framework for a major research- and innovation-focused campus, supporting economic development while advancing transportation improvements, sustainability goals, and public realm investments that benefit the broader Allston-Brighton area. Both of these plans will be released in early 2026.

Boston Design Vision produces 'Color Flows on Winter Street' activation downtown

The Planning Department launched 'Color Flows on Winter Street' in the fall of 2025, a multi-week public art and public space activation program with fun, interactive events in Downtown Crossing. Winter Street was transformed by colorful art installations, food trucks, and cultural programming, as part of the City's broader effort to reimagine how Boston's streets and pedestrian zones can be safer, more engaging, and enjoyable for all. 'Color Flows' was one of the first implementation projects coming out of the Boston Design Vision. The activation tested new approaches to transforming public spaces as hubs of community, culture, and economic investment. During the time 'Color Flows' was running, 80 percent of the area businesses surveyed reported an increase in

foot traffic, and 60 percent reported an increase in sales. In addition, 90 percent of people surveyed during the activation reported feeling safer in Downtown Crossing. Staff are now exploring which neighborhood streets might be good candidates for this type of programming in 2026.

Community Benefits

The Planning Department this year presented more than \$433,000 in community benefit grant funds disbursed to 42 local non-profits from projects located Downtown, in South Boston and in Dorchester. The organizations awarded serve the community in a variety of ways including community development, youth programming, and arts and culture.

The City of Boston's Planning Department shapes growth that serves Boston's residents and centers their needs. Our mission is to address our City's greatest challenges: resilience, affordability, and equity, and to take real estate actions and prioritize planning, development, and urban design solutions that further these priorities. We seek to build trust with communities through transparent processes that embrace predictable growth and shape a more inclusive city for all. Learn more at boston-plans.org, and follow us on Twitter and Instagram @BostonPlans.

FRESH AND LOCAL

Jacket Potatoes

By Penny & Ed Cherubino

In this country, we call them baked potatoes, while in the UK they're called jacket potatoes. We can learn a lot from our friends across the water when it comes to cooking and topping these easy and tempting additions to our menus.

Some of the best-known food trucks in the UK are "Spud Bros" and "Spud Man." They both serve humongous portions of personalized jacket potatoes to lines of happy customers. When it's your turn, the vendor will dish up a steaming-hot, well-baked potato from the oven, pop it open, and begin cutting into the fluffy interior.

Then, the rapid-fire questions begin: what kind of butter, what type of sauce, what fillings, what toppings. Popular choices include garlic butter, beans and cheese, chile con carne, cole slaw, tuna salad, chicken curry, and bolognese. The cost for a loaded spud

ranges from \$4.50 to \$7 USD, making these a fast, filling, and relatively inexpensive meal option.

Home Made

We have yet to see a spud truck in our area, and listings of potato options with toppings are not on cafe menus here yet. However, with a few tips and some pantry or freezer items, you can explore the world of jacket potatoes at home. And one of the best parts is that you can make Jacket potatoes for one person or a crowd.

First, you need the right potato to variety. Russets are the closest thing we have to the Maris Piper or King Edward potatoes used in the UK. Next, you have to relearn how to bake potatoes. Set your oven or air fryer to 400 degrees. Scrub the potato, either poke holes in it with a fork or cut a seam down the middle to prevent it from bursting, oil and salt it, and roast it for 45 minutes to an hour until the skin is crunchy and a fork will go through the thickest part

with no resistance. Do not wrap it in foil, which will destroy the crispy skin.

We often change things up by using sweet potatoes for our jacket potato meals. While the potatoes bake, you can have fun deciding on toppings. We made one of our recent favorites from frozen Thanksgiving leftovers. We topped sweet potatoes with a base of sausage stuffing, a layer of frozen peas, and shredded turkey. We served turkey gravy on the side. It was delicious and a nice change from our usual leftover options.

Stock Your Pantry and Freezer

Jacket potatoes can help you avoid food waste. Thanksgiving leftovers aren't the only thing you can use as potato toppings. The next time you make chili, curry, or another family favorite, create some one-potato-sized portions to freeze. Then, when you need an easy meal, roast your spud and thaw the topping. Look around your canned goods, and see what



Here's a jacket sweet potato created from Thanksgiving leftovers of sausage stuffing, frozen peas, and shredded turkey with gravy on the side.

you have that would tempt you on a jacket potato. We would include cans of flavored tuna or salmon to add protein, beans are a popular UK option, and you can also add seasoning to the beans and change up the cheese to create new flavors. Do you have leftover Indian or Chinese takeout on hand? Turn it into a fresh meal by serving it as a potato topping.

For more guidance on this

topic, we suggest visiting Poppy O'Toole's (aka Poppy Cooks) YouTube channel and website. She is a Michelin-trained chef who has taken on the self-titled "Potato Queen" of the internet. She is fun, funny, and stuffed full of great potato ideas.

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

Healey-Driscoll Administration Energy and Environmental Agency releases yearly report

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

The Healey-Driscoll Administration released the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) 2025 Annual Report, highlighting key milestones and accomplishments from its agencies. Over the past year, EEA's organizations have engaged residents and partners across the state through intentional environmental initiatives. These efforts include legislation to lower energy costs for families, investments in extreme weather preparation, and strategies to protect nature. Together, this work has contributed to creating more resilient and

sustainable communities in Massachusetts.

"Our agencies are at the forefront of protecting our natural resources, making energy affordable, building resilient and prepared communities, and expanding outdoor accessibility," said EEA Secretary Rebecca Tepper. "I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our commissioners and the over 3,000 dedicated staff members who tirelessly serve the residents, ecosystems, and wildlife of Massachusetts."

This year, Governor Maura Healey released an Energy Affordability Agenda, as well as filed the

Energy Affordability, Independence & Innovation Act to reduce costs for residents and businesses. The proposed legislation saves customers money, brings more energy into Massachusetts, and drives innovation. Key reforms included eliminating and reducing certain charges on the bill and reducing barriers to new nuclear technologies. An independent analysis found the legislation could save customers \$13 billion.

In addition to increasing energy affordability for residents, this year the Healey-Driscoll administration introduced the Mass Ready Act, a historic bill proposing \$3 billion to strengthen infrastructure and protect communities from extreme weather events. This legislation aims to upgrade roads, dams, and bridges, and establishes a Resilience Revolving Fund for similar projects. It also streamlines permitting for priority housing, culvert replacements, and resto-

ration projects that protect communities from flooding. Additionally, the bill invests in farming and coastal economies and provides communities with resources to reduce flood and heat risk.

Massachusetts is pioneering initiatives to restore ecosystems and strengthen coastal resilience by rebuilding wetlands, upgrading culverts, removing outdated dams, and improving habitats. The Healey-Driscoll Administration set nation-leading Biodiversity Goals for Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game, alongside many partners, has developed a 25-year plan to protect and restore nature, sustain farms and fisheries, boost local economies, and connect people with nature. Likewise, the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) released the ResilientCoasts Plan,

a statewide strategy to support coastal communities in prepar-

ing for storms, flooding, sea level rise, and erosion. The plan aims to save taxpayers billions by guiding smart coastal management decisions and preserving natural buffers to reduce flood risks.

In 2025, EEA and its agencies distributed more than \$237.9 million in grants across 70+ programs, supporting over 1,600 individual awards statewide. Investments supported programs for environmental justice, recycling, outdoor recreation, farmland preservation, drought management and much more.

In 2026, the Healey-Driscoll administration is looking forward to continuing its commitment to protecting and enhancing the state's environmental resources while ensuring a clean energy future for residents.

Read the full end of year report. Printed copies are available upon request.

Bea's Big Freedom Trail Adventure

Now on Sale!

When this spirited puppy wanders too far from home in Charlestown, she finds herself on a big journey along the historic Freedom Trail. From the tall shadow of the Bunker Hill Monument to the masts of the U.S.S Constitution in the Navy Yard, Bea sniffs out surprises as she tries to find her best friend, Tom.

Find it on Amazon

All proceeds from this book support Harvest on Vine Food Pantry in Charlestown

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