

It Wasn't All Glamour: Hotel's Closing Recalls Housing Clashes

BY ALISON PULTINAS

When the Buckminster Hotel in Kenmore Square announced their closing in March, daily rates had dropped to \$104 on TripAdvisor. Boston's media focused on the hotel's well-known history—the 1919 World Series gambling scandal, George Wein's Storyville jazz nightclub in 1950, the basement radio station. All those stories are displayed on plaques on the exterior of the Beacon Street hotel. But there are no plaques celebrating the tenants from the hotel's rooming house years in the 1980s.

In its 123-year history, 645 Beacon St. only served as a hotel—providing accommodations, meals, and other services for travelers and tourists—intermittently and with frequent changes in ownership. In the early 20th century, the Buckminster was described as an apartment hotel, a common form of middle- to upper-class multifamily housing. Many buildings in the Kenmore and Audubon Circle neighborhoods were similar. Apartment hotels housed small households, typically couples and singles.

After 1915, Sylvanus Stokes was the owner who moved the building to the hospitality business. He also owned the Lenox Hotel in Copley Square. In 1938, a Howard

Johnson's Restaurant opened. The famous White Fuel billboard was installed in 1939 and taken down in 1982.

From 1966 to 1977, the Buckminster was a Graham Junior College dormitory. After the school's bankruptcy in 1977, former Boston University student and real estate investor Edward Shamsi bought the property at a bargain price at auction. Shamsi's name is familiar to Boston housing activists, he also owned Back Bay Manor, a high-rise apartment



The Buckminster Hotel in 1912.

Nurses • EMTs • Doctors
Hospital Cleaners & Cooks
MBTA Drivers & Workers
Grocery Clerks
Restaurant Workers
Delivery Service Drivers
Amazon Workers

THANK YOU,
ESSENTIAL
WORKERS!

building at 75 St. Alphonsus St. in Mission Hill, where there have been years of controversy. In the Fenway, he owned 1091 Boylston, also a property he

converted to condominiums in the 1980s.

Shamsi's impact on the lives of the people who lived at the Buckminster in the 1980s, was unforgettable. During the period when owners were converting multifamily buildings to condominiums, it was a familiar story of landlord versus tenant. Boston's economy was in transition, with neighborhoods that had been affordable undergoing gentrification. Investors and landlords saw condo conversion as an easy way to profit from their properties. The first tenant protections were enacted in 1983 by the state legislature, but by then many renters had already experienced displacement. The market pressure put pressure on single-room-occupancy residences across the city.

The Buckminster was the largest lodging house Boston. In 1986 Shamsi filed a master deed for a room-by-room condo conversion. Originally, some, but not all, units had kitchenettes and some used shared bathrooms.

Shamsi's Boston Kenmore Realty was notorious—there were reports of tenant harassment; evictions; code violations; and permits and licenses that were nowhere to be found. This was a scandal that had residents not only afraid of losing their homes but fearful for their safety. Brian Clague, who moved to the building in 1984, said there were frequent fire alarms—it felt like 100 a week. Red Burrows, a resident from 1986 to 1995, said the fire department often did not show up. The City's former Arson Prevention Commission investigated and issued a report, but charges were never filed.

Tenants went door to door surveying their fellow occupants, documenting conditions and listening to people's stories. Burrows, who years later moved

to Jamaica Plain, said that without Clague none of the organizing would have happened. Clague was the leader who wrote the surveys, slipped notes under locked doors and connected neighbors to create the tenants' association. Tenants demonstrated outside Shamsi's Newton home and taped "Shamsi Slumlord" signs in the windows facing Fenway Park during the 1986 World Series. Media outreach was important, but Burrows and Clague acknowledge that support from elected officials was

crucial to their success.

Dick Belin of Foley, Hoag & Eliot served as the pro bono lawyer for the tenants' class action suit against Shamsi's Boston Kenmore Realty. Attorneys from Greater Boston Legal Services filed the initial case with the city's Rent Equity Board and supported the tenants for the duration. Bob Van Meter, a staff organizer at the Massachusetts Tenants' Organization, got involved with the Buckminster through the late John Blanchon of Audubon Circle.

Settlement of the class action suit took six years. A retired judge from Melrose, the late John McNaught, served as the arbitrator assigned to mediate. Although Shamsi had gone ahead with the condo conversion, it was essentially just paperwork keeping the Registry of Deeds busy, as he never sold the condos.

In 1993, tenants won rollbacks in rent, commitments for timely repairs and even some rent-free months. The arbitration agreement was a victory. Some harassment continued, but the settlement conditions gave residents financial security, and a 15-year clause—a legal encumbrance attached to the land—protected 30 rent-controlled units until 2008. Even if the property were sold, the affordability of those 30 units was supposed to be preserved. According to a 1998 building permit application, the Buckminster's six floors included 96 hotel rooms and 30 lodging units, once again a mix, but legal this time. In 1995, Shamsi signed agreements to set aside units for timeshare ownership, but it does not appear that the contracts were ever executed.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

For Clague and Burrows, the lead tenant organizers, the memories are still vivid. Clague even has an archive of saved documents. For both, advocacy for affordable housing and tenant rights became part of their lives forever.

Thirty-four years later, many key
> **BUCKMINSTER HOTEL** on page 2

New Trees Arrive on Park Drive



The state's Department of Conservation and Recreation has completed planting 41 young trees along Park Drive as it loops from the eastern end of Peterborough Street (across from the Victory Gardens) around to the street's western end, facing the Muddy River. A mix of eight native species, the trees include several types Frederick Law Olmsted included in planting plans for the Emerald Necklace. Some larger existing trees in this stretch appear to be in failing health. The Emerald Necklace Conservancy helped choose sites and develop the planting list.

CORONAVIRUS & THE FENWAY

Because of the continuing public health emergency, this month's *Fenway News* appears on-line only, but with a key change: Most URLs are live links to the site mentioned.

- You can find a list of emergency resources on page 4. In place of our regular listings on page 8, we asked community residents how they've made use of their time at home as we enter month two.
- In addition to the Lifeboat Food Pantry (see p4), Fair Foods has resumed free produce distribution for elderly and needy residents, but with a new location and schedule: Tuesdays, 3-6pm, at the

Seventh-Day Adventist Temple on Peterborough Street. Lifeboat continues on Thursdays.

- Last month the City added two community health centers as **COVID-19 testing sites**: Whittier Street Health Center (617-427-1000), near Ruggles Station, and Dimock Street Health Center (617-442-8800), on the Jamaica Plain/Roxbury line. Brigham & Women's Hospital (617-732-5500, photo on page 2), also offers testing. You *must* call for an appointment at any site, but testing is free for any city resident, regardless of insurance or immigration status.

Coronavirus Pushes FriendshipWorks to Retool How It Connects Seniors

BY MARY ANN BROGAN

FriendshipWorks is a local nonprofit dedicated to reducing social isolation, enhancing quality of life, and preserving the dignity of older adults. It has been in operation for 36 years and is the largest organization of its kind in the Boston area. As the new coronavirus continues to dictate how we navigate our daily lives, FriendshipWorks has shifted to virtual connections between its volunteers and elders. During the public health emergency, FriendshipWorks continues to recruit volunteers and match each volunteer with an elder in need of help or who just desires companionship. There are new

matches made weekly. While FriendshipWorks has had to suspend some programs, others have simply moved online. The Friendly Visiting Program, for example, continues within public health restrictions. Instead of in-person meetings, contact is made through Zoom or Facetime, with other options available. PetPal has also gone online, with committed PetPal volunteers making videos of their pets and connecting with their elders through video chats. FriendshipWorks has developed live training sessions to strengthen the volunteers’ ability to work virtually. Videos address topics like “What it’s like to call and listen,” “How to set boundaries in the virtual

world,” and “How to set up structure in a meeting.” While large gatherings have been put on hold, FriendshipWorks is still moving forward with its annual Walk-a-Thon. Walk to End Elder Isolation: A Virtual Gathering will take place May 17. This event raises critical funds for programming and highlights the persistent issue of social isolation and the importance of connection. While the walking portion of the event will need to be carried out independently this year, the Walk-a-Thon will culminate in what the group promises will be a fun-filled virtual meeting at 10am. Mary Ann Brogan lives in the East Fens.

Parks Department Weighs Tree Removal at May 7 Hearing

The Boston Parks and Recreation Department will hold a virtual public hearing on May 7 on a request to remove four shade trees in the Fenway. The request is for the removal of three little leaf lindens measuring two to four inches dbh (diameter at breast height) and one white oak measuring six inches dbh on Avenue Louis Pasteur near its intersection with the The Fenway just north of the main Simmons campus. The trees—two of which flank the bus shelter at left—are slated to be removed for a green infrastructure pilot program being undertaken by MASCO to restore the historic tree canopy along the avenue. Information on attending the virtual hearing appears on page 8.



PHOTO: ALISON PULTINAS

> **BUCKMINSTER HOTEL** from page 1 individuals are still active in their 1980s roles, such as lawyers Jay Rose and Jeff Purcell at Greater Boston Legal Services. Others are long retired, like former city councilors David Scondras, Maura Hennigan, Mayor Ray Flynn, and Chief Justice George Daher of Boston’s Housing Court. Mayor Tom Menino replaced the Rent Equity Board with the Rental Housing Resource Center, and the old files were sent to City Archives. Rent control ended in December 1996. Now laws related to condo conversions require five-year notices for elderly, disabled and low-income tenants. And the rents cannot be raised more than 10 percent during that notice period. In 2003, Shamsi received a Congressional Man of the Year award from Congressman Barney Frank for his leadership with the Sephardic Community of Greater Boston. In 2011 he sold 75 St. Alphonsus St. to Equity Residential. A March 2018 document filed with Suffolk Registry of Deeds officially removed Shamsi and his partners Michael Helmicki and Michael Finn as trustees for Boston Kenmore Condominium Trust. The new owners, the Slomiaks—Ming, Jackson, and Christopher—are local real estate investors. In 1997, Ming Slomiak signed documents as president of the Buckminster Hotel Corp. and was named a trustee. Jackson Slomiak was the public face of the corporation in 2017, and for a short period partnered with Mark Development, LLC, to build a second high-rise hotel in Kenmore Square (see box at left for the proposal that survived). The 19-story development would have replaced the Buckminster parking garage and 651 Beacon St. As of now, the Buckminster Hotel Corporation owns 645 Beacon St. Real estate investors Vincent Barba, José Fernando Miguez Veiras, and Don Ventura are the partners. Uno Pizzeria & Grill is open for takeout, while the Fenmore Grill inside the hotel has closed and Popeye’s shut down last September. And who knows the last lodging house tenant to leave? That’s another story. Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill.

KENMORE HOTEL PLAN MUST CLEAR HEARING HURDLE ON MAY 21

Boston’s Public Improvement Commission (PIC) will vote on widening and relocating portions of Commonwealth Avenue and Beacon Street on May 21 at 10am. Approval will set in motion One Kenmore, Mark Kenmore LLC’s 29-story hotel planned for the Citizens Bank parcel in Kenmore Square. Commenting during an April 23 remote meeting, Audubon Circle activists Dolores Boogdian and Katherine Greenough cautioned commissioners to take an

independent look at the assumptions in the traffic modelling. The developer’s attorney, Jared Eigerman, called this the first in a series of applications for the project. Only after getting the hypothetical curb lines for a new road configuration approved can developers Robert Korff and Damian Chaviano go ahead with a crucial land swap—taking over part of Commonwealth in exchange for a new road and future public plaza. Without PIC approval, the project cannot proceed.

RESPONDING TO PANDEMIC, BRIGHAM EXPANDS EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT



Brigham and Women’s Hospital has set up a tent in its drop-off area as an expansion of its emergency department. For patients who believe they may have the coronavirus, the hospital has established testing at two sites: Outside the emergency department at 75 Francis St. (pictured) and in a parking lot at 830 Boylston St., next to its health care center in Chestnut Hill. Both locations require an appointment prior to arriving.

ZONING HEARING

The Zoning Commission of the City of Boston hereby gives notice, in accordance with Chapter 665 of the Acts of 1956, as amended, that virtual a public hearing will be held on May 13, 2020, at 9:00 A.M., in connection with the First Amendment to the Development Plan for Planned Development Area No. 74, Fenway Center (“First Amendment”), filed by the Boston Redevelopment Authority d/b/a the Boston Planning & Development Agency. Said First Amendment affects Phase 2 of Planned Development Area No. 74, which

would allow for the proposed Building 3 to be a 22-story, approximately 535,000 Gross Square Feet of mixed-use commercial/research and development (“R&D”)/lab and life science space. Building 4 is a 12-story, approximately 185,000 Gross Square Feet of mixed-use commercial/retail space as well as multi-tenant office/R&D/lab and life science uses. The First Amendment also includes a shared-use 5-story parking garage over the Massachusetts Turnpike for up to 600 public and private parking spaces.

This meeting will be held virtually and not in person. You can participate in this meeting by going to bit.ly2/VMjxXO or calling (631) 992-3221 and entering access code 110-901-982. A copy of, the First Amendment, and a map of the area involved may be obtained from f the Zoning Commission electronically, and you can also submit written comments or questions to jeffrey.hampton@boston.gov.. For the Commission, JEFFREY M. HAMPTON, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

SIGN OF THE TIMES



Economy Hardware on Massachusetts Ave. wants passersby to shop local.

Meeting Remotely, Oversight Committee Issues Muddy River Update and Student Teams Come Together for Environmental Symposium

BY ALISON PULTINAS

On April 15, Fran Gershwin of the Muddy River Maintenance and Management Committee (MMOC) hosted a Zoom meeting with an update on Phase 2 of the Army Corps of Engineers' (ACE) Muddy River project.

Gershwin reported that it will be several months before actual work begins. The contractor has not yet filed a schedule with Brookline and Boston officials, and there could be delays related to the pandemic. Disposal sites identified for the dredging material will come from the same list of sites used in Phase 1.

During the meeting, MMOC members reviewed the Feb. 27 public meeting at Emmanuel College, which attracted more than 150 attendees, and suggested ways to continue public outreach. During the question-and-answer portion of the February event, ACE Project Manager Jennifer Flanagan was asked about tree removals and did not have a specific answer. Gershwin said the actual number is 119, with 118 new trees replacing those removed. Brookline's Tree Warden Tom Brady has approved the removals.

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy's Karen Mauney-Brodek, an MMOC member, said the ACE team had a copy of the Conservancy's heritage tree inventory. The Conservancy commissioned a tree-management plan several years ago, which identifies more than 7,000 trees. The Conservancy's website contains conflicting information about whether the minimum diameter for a heritage tree is 32 or 48 inches. The Conservancy's communication coordinator, Evan Bradley, offered to clarify this with Ellen Arnstein, the

group's field operations manager.

During the April 15 meeting, Gershwin announced that Boston's mowing and over-seeding pilot for phragmites is scheduled for mid-May. At a previous walkthrough, Rob Rottenbacher of the Boston Parks and Recreation Department agreed that the Phase 1 maintenance contractor had cut back more of the reeds than necessary.

Also at the meeting, Mauney-Brodek announced that Mary Hickie, special projects coordinator for the Conservancy, had retired. The MMOC meeting has scheduled its next monthly meeting for May 13. Interested residents can find more information on the group's website, muddyrivermmoc.org.

Another Muddy River-oriented event, an annual symposium with the Colleges of the Fenway, took place April 14. A virtual conference replaced the usual public gathering. Cynthia Williams, a humanities professor at Wentworth Institute of Technology who is just a year into her role as director of the Colleges of the Fenway's Center for Sustainability and the Environment, had to quickly pivot from the previous large public event to a video format. The public-health emergency made that shift made more complicated, with the student teams involved in the event no longer together in Boston. Some had been working on community service projects with local organizations that had also shut down in mid-March.

Despite the challenges, the 14th Annual Muddy River Symposium had more than 85 online participants listening to 20 groups of students presenting their projects. The meeting provided were four "breakout rooms" named for environmental scientists and activists: a Greta Thunberg room

focused on sustainability; an E.O.Wilson room focused on the environment; a Bill McKibben room examining "cultures of Sustainability," and a Rachel Carson room for discussion of water.

Two judges assigned to each room reviewed presentations from five student teams. The winners included Wentworth students evaluating sustainability features for existing campus buildings; Emmanuel College students planning for a campus greenhouse and collaborating with

Food Rescue; a joint MassArt/Simmons project for climate cafes to encourage public discussions; and a joint MassArt/Emmanuel team that interned with the Muddy Water Initiative to design banners, business cards and t-shirts to market their message.

Under a tentative plan, a physical event in October will include a rescheduled lecture by the keynote speaker, Alice Brown of the organization Boston Harbor Now.

Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill.

FENWAY PARK'S SILENT SPRING



The coronavirus public health emergency has left streets deserted throughout the city. Outside Fenway Park's Gate B, Van Ness Street looked tranquil near sunset in mid-April. Normally jammed with vendors, fans, and traffic, quiet reined from one end to the other.

PHOTO: STEVE CHASE

DISTANCE PHYSICALLY

Color & share your sign on your window or door, and on social media! #connect2protect

-CONNECT- SOCIALLY

The Fenway News

FENWAY CARES

FENWAY
CDC
Fenway Community Development Corporation
Improving Lives and Building Community

The Fenway News joins with Fenway CDC and Fenway Cares in asking you to #connect2protect. Print out and color in this poster. Display it in your window, on your door, or on social media, and join neighbors in showing solidarity with the community and support for essential workers. Download the PDF of this issue of the paper and print page 3 to produce your coloring-in base.

FENSVIEWS

Moratorium Seeks Balance and Housing Stability

BY WILL BROWNSBERGER

On April 17, The legislature enacted a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures. We should not put tenants or homeowners out on the street while we are trying to enforce social distancing.

The bill is not a rent or mortgage holiday. It does not extinguish the obligations of renters or borrowers. Those lucky enough to avoid job loss during the COVID-19 recession should continue to make their regular payments. Those who defer payments without promptly

offering an explanation of COVID-19-related income loss will face negative credit consequences. After the emergency ends, those whose incomes have been interrupted due to COVID-19 will ultimately have to catch up on payments or face all the usual consequences.

The bill creates a moratorium on legal enforcement of rent or mortgage obligations. The courts will not be available to landlords or banks seeking to remove people from property. The courts had already closed themselves to non-emergency proceedings, creating a de facto moratorium, but the bill extends and broadens this moratorium. Landlords cannot initiate eviction proceedings, pending eviction proceedings are suspended, and even if an eviction order was previously granted, sheriff or constable cannot enforce it. Similarly, banks cannot initiate or prosecute foreclosure proceedings.

Residential landlords are prohibited even from requesting in writing that a tenant vacate a unit, much less going to court for an eviction. This was an important point of contention in negotiations about the bill. Landlords fear that without the ability to send a notice requesting that non-paying tenants leave, many tenants will simply take a rent holiday. Tenant advocates argued that many tenants will not abuse the moratorium. The moratorium lasts for 120 days or until 45 days after the end of the declared COVID-19 emergency, whichever is sooner. If the emergency remains in effect, the governor can extend

the moratorium in increments of up to 90 days. This approach should protect tenants through the emergency, while creating the opportunity to review whether the moratorium is working as intended. If able tenants are abusing the moratorium, it may not be extended. The term of the moratorium on evictions is the same as the term of the moratorium for foreclosures, but the governor can make separate decisions about whether to extend them.

The balance we have struck with this bill is roughly the balance that many other jurisdictions have struck—if you can't pay due to the emergency, you don't have to pay during the emergency, but ultimately you have to catch up.

Some landlords feel we have gone too far and predict widespread abuse by able tenants, loss of income to landlords and foreclosures on landlords. The foreclosure moratorium only covers owner-occupied residential properties with four units or less. It provides no protection to the small landlord who borrowed to buy the house next door and happened to rent to someone who is unable to pay or just decides not to pay during the emergency. Landlords are unlikely to be able to actually collect from tenants who stay put without paying through the emergency and depart afterwards, but their own mortgage obligations are ultimately inescapable.

Some tenants facing job loss feel we have not gone far enough. Knowing that when the moratorium ends they will not be able to catch up on rent, they feel we should have completely extinguished their obligations during the emergency so that when the emergency ends and when they are able to earn again, they could start fresh without any catch-up obligations. They think of landlords as more able to absorb the loss.

The balance we have attempted will work out best if landlords and tenants, and borrowers and lenders talk to each other. We cannot legislate the right formula for all the hard situations that are going to emerge. We will have to work out the difficulties together over the weeks and months to come.

Will Brownsberger is the state senator serving Back Bay, Fenway, Allston, Brighton, Watertown and Belmont.

Editing Understated Severity of Housing Situation

TO THE EDITOR:

I believe the editing of the housing piece in last month's *Fenway News* did not convey the deep impact that steep housing prices are having on the community and elsewhere.

Developers and landlords have refused to build affordable housing for 40 years, despite community pleas. They continue to charge

skyrocketing rents with reckless disregard of the detrimental effect it has on individuals, families, and professionals.

Many people have moved out of state for cheaper housing; some are travelling further to get to their jobs. People are forgoing medical treatment to afford these higher rents. Sometimes, families are doubling and tripling in limited spaces. Many are living out of cars, and some are homeless. There have been stories where people commit crimes to be able to go to jail and get three square meals a day and a cot. Studies show that mental illness increases when people are forced to live in

tight quarters and/or homeless.

Setting oppressive market prices is criminal. It is time to lock up developers and landlords and take away their properties. It

is the only way to get their attention. I never thought it would come to this point, but it has.

LISA FAY, WEST FENS

EMERGENCY RESOURCES

- The Fenway CDC has created a **LIST OF SERVICES AND RESOURCES** for both residents and businesses. Visit www.fenwaycdc.org/events/covid-19/
- **FAIR FOODS** distribtuion of fresh fruits and vegetables to commu-nity elders or residents in need returns. Get a free bag with 10 pounds of produce Tues. and Thur., 3-6pm, Boston Temple, 105 Jersey St. Contact Kris Anderson for de-tails at kanderson@fenwaycdc.org or (617) 267-4637 x29.
- In addition to breakfast and lunch for youth, the City now offers free meals for adults at six sites. The

closest site to the Fenway and Mission Hill is the Egleston Square Y in Roxbury, open 8am-12pm. For more information, call **THE MAYOR'S OFFICE OF FOOD ACCESS** at (617) 635-3717.

- Fenway CDC has created a **JOB BOARD**, which features current job listings and online training programs. Visit www.fenwaycdc.org/jobs-board.
- Visit www.fenwaycdc.org to **SUPPORT LOCAL RESTAURANTS AND SMALL BUSINESSES**. Fenway CDC conducts weekly phone calls to update the list, which includes phones and websites.

LETTERS

Audubon Circle May Get Some Traffic Relief

PHOTO: ALISON PULTINAS



Newly installed traffic lights at the the intersection of Mountfort and Beacon streets should help calm Beacon's six lanes of traffic.

THE Fenway News

Serving the Fenway, Kenmore Square, Audubon Circle, upper Back Bay, lower Roxbury, Prudential, Mission Hill, and Longwood since 1974

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"Comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable."

The founders of The Fenway News adopted this motto to express their mission of exposing and opposing the dangers the neighborhood faced in the early 1970s—rampant arson, predatory landlords, and a destructive urban renewal plan. If the original motto no longer fits today's Fenway, we remain committed to its spirit of identifying problems and making our neighborhood a better and safer place to live.

> FREQUENCY <

The Fenway News reaches distribution sites on the Friday closest to the first of each month. Our next issue will appear on **Friday, May 29.**

> DEADLINE <

The deadline for letters, news items, and ads for our next issue is **Friday, May 22.**

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IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

A LOT HAPPENED IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS SINCE THE LAST ISSUE, INCLUDING...

The Baker administration has tapped an assistant professor of public health at Mass. College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences, Nate Horwitz-Willis, to help direct the new contact-tracing program. ➡ **In a remote meeting of a Red Sox neighborhood advisory group on April 13, BPD Capt. Steve Sweeney reported that crime has dropped 16% in District D-4, which includes much of our circulation area, in the wake of the pandemic stay-at-home orders. Sweeney also reported that BPD “received numerous 911 calls” about shots fired at Kilmarnock and Boylston streets earlier in the month. BPD says a chance encounter between carloads of rival gang members from other neighborhoods led to the exchange of fire. The shots appear to have been fired into the air.** ➡ The Boston Pops cancelled its spring season, which would have started on May 6. It will announce the fate of its July 4 Esplanade concert later this month. ➡ **Three of five state Guggenheim Fellows have local ties. Documentary filmmaker Chico Colvard teaches film at MassArt. Installation artist Steve Locke taught at MassArt before moving to New York; his proposal for a memorial to the slave trade became embroiled in controversy last year, leading him to withdraw it. A third fellow, classical composer Marti Epstein, teaches at Berklee and the Boston Conservatory.** ➡ The Highland Street Foundation has cancelled its summertime “Free Fun Fridays” and will convert the \$750,000 budget into immediate grants to 100 participating arts and cultural sites whose finances have cratered during the statewide shutdown. Locally, the MFA, the Gardner, and the Mary Baker Eddy Library all take part in the program. The foundation hopes to re-create the program later in the year, but it will dole out the money immediately. ➡ **Berklee and Boston Conservatory at Berklee will award honorary degrees to Mikhail Baryshnikov, André de Shields, Sheila E., Cassandra Wilson, and John Legend. This year’s commencement, typically the venue for these awards, will take place virtually on May 9, and student performers from across the college are at work on a virtual performance to accompany the awards. The college plans to host on-campus ceremonies for each honoree during the fall.** ➡ Buried in a *Globe Magazine* article on “Top Places to Live” in Boston was an eye-popping statistic: The median home price in Mission Hill, designated a runner-up among “best” mid-price neighborhoods, has risen 71.8% since 2014. ➡ **Irene Li, chef and co-owner of Audubon Circle’s Mei Mei restaurant, launched a GoFundMe page to support “unsung” small and immigrant-owned restaurants in Boston. At press time, she’d reached her \$10,000 goal, but you can still donate at www.gofundme.com/f/unsungrestaurants (and earmark it if you like).** ➡



Neighborhood Newsline

Parks Department Seeks Ideas for Open Space in New Survey

As it updates the City’s Open Space Plan, the Boston Parks and Recreation Dept. will create a “Parcel Priority Plan” to identify land that merits protection as open space. Among various information sources the agency will use to identify strong candidates for open space across the city, it has created a survey to collect input from residents. Vacant buildings and lots, and other undeveloped land could become open space, which could take the form of permanently protected and publicly accessible urban wilds, conservation land, plazas, sites with sports and recreational opportunities, or simply landscaped areas with seating. Take the Open Space Survey at bit.ly/2W6w9cd. The Parks Department will also hold a series of community forums as another way to collect residents’ ideas.

Bok Leads Council Review of Mayor’s Proposed 2021 Budget

Approving the Mayor’s proposed budget is a significant annual task for the Boston City Council. However, their role is circumscribed—instead of subtracting or changing items, a question-and-answer process forms the heart of the review. District 8 Councilor Kenzie Bok chairs the Committee on Ways and Means, which will run 20 to 30 public hearings where the Council hears from the departments that account for the greatest percentage of the operating budget, as well as a few smaller departments. This spring, Bok initiated a deeper round of reviews and working sessions, which were recorded. At these meetings, City staff present an overview of a department’s budgets, and councilors ask questions. Testimony is not taken in these sessions, only at the subsequent public hearing. Responses will be heard at the public hearings. Bok has set up evening sessions for public comments on the school budget on 5/26 and all other budget matters on 5/28, with a full schedule of hearings on the city’s website. On May 6 at 2pm, a scheduled working session for staffers from the Department of Neighborhood Development and the Environment Department—which includes Parks and Recreation, the Conservation Commission, and the Landmarks Commission—will present their plans for their 2021 budget allocations.

City Workers Addled Nearly 200 Goose Eggs in the Fens

As of April 14, the Boston Parks and Recreation Department had addled 192 Canada goose eggs in the Fens. The department expects at least four goslings to hatch, as staffers couldn’t reach one nest. Addling involves temporarily removing fertilized eggs from a nest, testing for embryo development, terminating development, and putting the eggs back. This misleads the goose into believing addled eggs are still developing. Otherwise, it would lay more. One team told a resident that reed removal has made spotting the nests easier.

LightView Keeps Charging NU Students for Empty Apartments

On April 8, *The Boston Globe* reported that students who live at LightView Apartments, a private dorm owned by American Campus Communities (ACA), must continue paying the company rent—even though Northeastern closed its campus and had students move out of all dorms, including LightView. Monthly rents start at approximately \$1,300 per person. Unlike university-owned dorms, which charge and house students per semester, LightView’s leases run through August. With students no longer living on campus, LightView tenants will have difficulty subletting for the summer—ACA and the university only allow them to sublet to other Northeastern students.

Fenway Park Concerts Fall by Three...So Far

Even as sponsors cancel summer events throughout the country due to coronavirus, the Fenway Park concert series has only seen minimal impact so far. The James Taylor concert (June 21) will be rescheduled; Dead & Company has cancelled its August 7-8 shows. At press time, however, no other artists had canceled or postponed concerts.

COVID-19 Check-In Survey Results

State Senator Will Brownsberger recently released the results of his second COVID-19 check-in survey. The poll found that 95 percent of the 2,662 people surveyed support the state’s social distancing policies or feel they should go even further (this last group represented 30 percent of respondents). Of the participants, 12 percent were unemployed and 2 percent were behind on their bills.

DASHBOARD

TRASH & RECYCLING PICK-UP

- BACK BAY: Trash and recycling on Monday and Thursday
- FENWAY: Trash and recycling on Tuesday and Friday
- MISSION HILL: Trash and recycling on Tuesday and Friday

STREET CLEANING

While the City of Boston began street cleaning again on April 1, in light of the stay-at-home order and the difficulty of finding alternative parking, it will suspend ticketing cars parked in designated street-cleaning zones until further notice. Check the City’s web page with temporary transportation information, <https://bit.ly/2KJ3TXV>.

FENWAY HEALTH

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Looking for a convenient, neighborhood pharmacy?
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FENWAY HEALTH | 1340 Boylston Street | Boston, MA 02215
617.267.0900 | fenwayhealth.org

IN MEMORIAM

Lisa Soli, 1962-2020

BY RUTH KHOWAIS

Well known Fenway activist Elizabeth (Lisa) Soli passed away after a four-year battle with ALS at the age of 58. Lisa was raised in Reading and earned a bachelor of arts degree in political science from Washington University and a master of urban affairs degree from Boston University. She met her husband Kent Knight in 1987, and they celebrated their 29th wedding anniversary last July. She was the love of his life.

For the first half of her career, Lisa focused on marketing and sales in her role as marketing director at Brookline Bank. Starting around 1993, she began volunteering for the board of directors of the Fenway Community Development Corporation (FCDC).

“I admired Lisa so much,” said Kathy Greenough, who served on the board with her. “I first met Lisa in 2001 or so. She was one of the most remarkable people I’ve ever known—fiercely determined, super smart, strong, forthright and insightful. I thought she could do anything. She was an excellent CDC board member and president and could cut through a discussion of ‘How can we resolve this?’ with a concrete, practical solution.

“She faced ALS with determination, humor and no self-pity at all. I feel lucky to have known her.”

Between 1993 and 2006, Lisa consistently held one leadership role or another on the Fenway CDC board—first as clerk, then three years as president, and then as treasurer, where her background in banking proved especially useful. She also chaired a strategic planning task force that helped the board reorganize the staff and stabilize the CDC’s finances.

At the end of those 13 years, Lisa left the board, stepping down to join the CDC staff as senior asset manager. That made the management, finances, and upkeep of the CDC’s then-260-plus units her day-to-day focus. “The board really hoped she’d take the position,” said Steve Wolf, who sat on the board at the time. “We knew our properties—and the nearly 1,000 people who lived in them—would be in very capable hands with Lisa managing them.”

When Carl Nagy-Koechlin left the CDC three years later, in 2009, the board asked Lisa to step up to become interim executive director. “Carl had been with the CDC for 12 years, and most of the staff had never worked for anyone else,” said Wolf. “They all knew and respected Lisa. Because of the uncertainty a big change like that brings, we thought



someone who knew the organization could keep things running smoothly. She handled it with great skill and her trademark calmness.” With the selection of a new executive director in 2010, Lisa returned to asset management, then three years later became housing director.

A longtime Fenway resident, after husband Kent’s retired in 2019, the two moved to Gloucester to a house that had been a weekend retreat for them.

Fenway resident Joanne McKenna said, “One of my happiest memories of Lisa was when she invited a group of CDC board and staff out to the home they were caretakers for on the North Shore, before she and Kent moved to Gloucester. [The house was on Hog Island, a property near Crane Beach owned by the Trustees of Reservations.] It was a beautiful spot, and clearly inspiring and restorative for her. Her photography was also a gift to all of us. I’ll miss her and am grateful for the work she did here in the Fenway.”

A lover of the great outdoors and travel, Lisa was an avid skier and sailor and taught Kent to ski and sail. She went skiing in the Alps as well as New England, made frequent spring visits to Mexico to snorkel and swim, and took a sailing trip around Tortola. Her lifelong goal was to visit Vietnam, which she did along with Cambodia. Her father fulfilled another dream of Lisa’s with the gift of a cruise from Tierra del Fuego to explore the Antarctic peninsula.

Diagnosed with ALS in 2016, she did not let the illness restrain her. A trip to Arizona in her wheelchair took Lisa to the very edge of the South Rim of the Grand Canyon.

In a letter to friends, her husband Kent said, “To me, Lisa is still that most remarkable person who just seemed to know how to move through life with intelligence and style. I know that all who met her miss her terribly.”

Lisa is survived by her husband, her mother Margaret, her brother Eric, and her nephews Nathan and Ben Soli, plus a community of friends whom she cherished and who cherished her. Donations can be made to the ALS Association of Massachusetts or to Massachusetts General Hospital ALS clinic and research program.

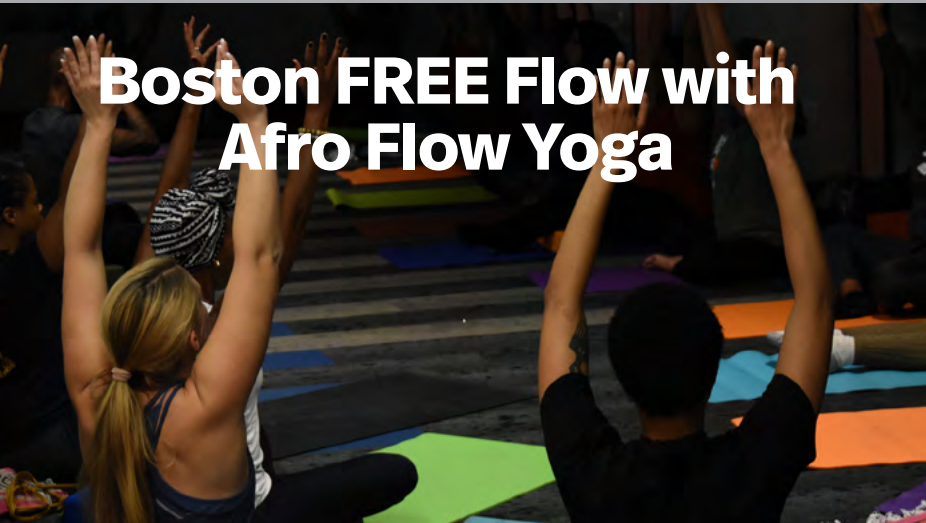
Ruth Khowais lives in the West Fens. Kathy Greenough and Steve Wolf contributed to this appreciation.

BSO and Emerald Necklace Conservancy Deliver Musical Surprises Online

When the pandemic forced the BSO to scrub a ten-day tour of Asia planned for mid-February, it turned its scheduling lemons into lemonade with a week of free concerts around the city. That series culminated in a final performance on February 16, when a full house at Symphony Hall heard highlights from the tour program. Under the baton of Thomas Wilkins, artistic advisor for education and community engagement,

the orchestra played stirring works by Tchaikovsky, Dvorak, Brahms, and Huang Ruo, who did double duty as composer and singer. The BSO has posted the concert through May 20 on [bso.org](https://www.bso.org) (search for *Concert for Our City*), and that stream shows Wilkins to be a charming emcee, coming into the audience between numbers to provide a seamless set-up for each piece. Meanwhile, as composer in residence with the BSO in 2017, Berklee faculty member

Andrew List composed a chamber symphony, *The Emerald Necklace*. Each of its three movements evokes an aspect of the park: its creation, the serenity of Jamaica Pond, and the long history of indigenous uses of the land we now call the Arnold Arboretum. A link in the “What’s New?” section of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy’s home page (emeralnecklace.org) takes you to a Google Drive page where you can listen to the full symphony or download it.



Boston FREE Flow with Afro Flow Yoga

Northeastern City and Community Engagement and Afro Flow Yoga® invites Boston residents, organizations and groups to join us for a unique experience that includes live music, meditation, yoga and dance, and a unique opportunity to connect with Earth, Sky, and Heart in an inclusive and diverse circle of non-judgement.

Six FREE yoga classes will be held on April 15, April 29, May 13, May 27, June 10 and June 24 at 6pm. Currently, classes will be offered virtually until further notice. All levels and ages are welcome.

Participants must complete a registration, then create a one-time Namastream account.

For more information, visit northeastern.edu/crossing

WRITERS’ WEEK

MAY 11 - 16, 2020

For Northeastern Writers’ Week 2020, join us on the video conference platform Zoom for a week-long virtual celebration of writers from across the globe. This year we will focus on anti-racism and writing as a form of community building.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

One Week, One Goal
May 11 -16 | 9:00AM - 9:00PM
RSVP: tinyurl.com/writersweek1w1g

Writing/Righting the World Virtual Mixer
Monday | 6:00 - 8:00PM
RSVP: tinyurl.com/writersweek1

Revamp Your Career Advancing Tools
Tuesday | 6:00 - 8:00PM
RSVP: tinyurl.com/writersweek2

Writing as an Act of Service
Wednesday | 6:00 - 8:00PM
RSVP: tinyurl.com/writersweek3

Peotry as a Lyirc Device
Thursday| 6:00 - 8:00PM
RSVP: tinyurl.com/writersweek4

Language Pieces
Friday | 6:00 - 8:00PM
RSVP: tinyurl.com/writersweek5

For more info: northeastern.edu/crossing

The Arts

HUNTINGTON THEATRE RACKS UP NOMINATIONS TO DOMINATE ANNUAL ELLIOT NORTON AWARDS

BY RUTH KHOWAIS



Despite the shutdowns of local theaters and live entertainment, the Boston Theater Critics Association plans to move ahead with the 38th edition of the Elliot Norton Awards.

Huntington Theatre Company leads with 16 nominations, some of which put it in competition with itself in some categories, including outstanding production, where both *The Purists* and *Sweat* were nominated. Similarly, for

outstanding director at a large company, Billy Porter received a nomination for *The Purists* and Kimberly Senior received one for *Sweat*.

Will LeBow received an outstanding actor nomination for the Huntington's production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Analisa Velez and Izzie Steele in *The Purists* and Jennifer Regan and Tyla Abercrombie in *Sweat* all received outstanding actress nominations.

In the small or fringe theater company category, Ryan Landry

and the Gold Dust Orphans, long based in the Fenway until their 2019 move to South Boston, received nominations for outstanding production and outstanding new script for *The Ebonic Woman*. The show also received a nomination for outstanding ensemble.

The awards ceremony will take place at 7pm on May 11. Its website, elliottnortonawards.com, provides instructions on how to livestream the event.

Ruth Khowais lives in the West Fens.

BPL Is Very Much Open for Business

BY MARY ANN BROGAN

As noted in a recent *Boston Globe* article, Michael Colford, the Boston Public Library's director of library services, and his staff are working hard to upgrade the library's already extensive access to online resources.

The realm of possibilities includes, but is not limited to, test preparation, language learning, business, and software courses. For those looking for online books, movies, and music as we shelter ourselves, the Library subscribes to several online sites.

Most eBooks can be downloaded in Kindle format, or you can search for Kindle only. All you need is a library card, just type in the number under the barcode on the back of your card. If you don't have a card, it is possible to sign up online. During the COVID-19 pandemic, all Massachusetts residents are eligible for Boston Public Library services. The Library has tutorials for every site, an easy way to build confidence in your user skills and get the information you need.

Hoopla is an online site that provides access to 800,000 books, movies, music, and even comic books. For the duration of this crisis, a user can check out up to 12 titles in a calendar month. Books are checked out for three weeks, after which the books are automatically deleted from the user's account. You can reach Hoopla at www.hoopladigital.com or with the mobile app.

OverDrive.com, another digital lending library, includes audiobooks and eBooks in its inventory. Users can borrow up to ten books or audiobooks at a time. In most cases, these are available for 14 days. Some providers regulate different lending times. OverDrive has two smartphone apps. With OverDrive for Teens and Kids, users can search by age group, and find books on the Boston Public School summer reading list.

RBdigital has access to thousands of audiobooks and magazines such as *The Economist*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The New Yorker*. Users are allowed six audiobooks at a time for 21 days, with the option of renewing for 14 more days. Magazines checkouts are unlimited.

Kanopy offers movies and documentaries on demand. Choose from over 30,000 documentaries, as well as both classic and foreign language films; see the article in our online-only April issue for example titles in the collection. Users can watch a total of eight titles per month for the duration of the Library's closure. Each video can be viewed for up to 72 hours.

The Boston Public Library has always offered high-end and business databases for serious researchers. They have stepped up to the challenge posed by the pandemic crisis to improve access to some of these sites. Users can peruse what is "Now Available from Home" in the Resources by Format section of the Library website.

Ancestry Library Edition offers genealogy data from primarily census data, as well as old newspapers. It was previously only accessible onsite., but for the duration of the crisis, it will be available remotely.

Artstor Digital Library is a nonprofit resource that offers digital images in the arts, architecture, humanities and science.

AudioBookCloud contains audiobooks for all ages.

If you need more help, email the Library's online resources at ask@bpl.org or call 617-536-5400.

And if all these riches don't satisfy you, consider some additional online resources that are not part of BPL, including:

- calibre-ebook.com—access to books and magazines.
- kindlebuffet.com—lists of Kindle books offered for free that day.
- gutenberg.org—ebook versions of mostly older literary works published before 1924. Use bookshelves to browse by genre, age group, and topic.

Mary Ann Brogan lives in the East Fens.

ARTS NEWS ROUND-UP

BY KELSEY BRUUN

While local art museums have announced temporary closures—the Museum of Fine Arts through June 30 and the Isabella Stewart Gardner

Museum through at least the end of May, with programming canceled through Sept. 14—arts education

institutions have moved ahead with leadership changes and awards.

- **Berklee College of Music student Sam Zilli has been named a Truman Scholar, one of 62 recipients from 55 colleges and universities across the US to receive the honor, a graduate fellowship awarded to individuals pursuing careers in public service.**



Truman Scholar Sam Zilli

PHOTO: STEVE POMEROY

A professional music major with concentrations in artistry and creative music industry studies, as well as music production and engineering, Zilli, who uses the pronoun *they*, is an award-winning spoken word poet. Zilli plans to pursue a J.D. in civil rights law and dedicate their career to improving government support for survivors of sexual and domestic violence, with a focus on immigrant justice.

- **Also at Berklee, Marti Epstein, a composition professor, has been named one of 175 recipients of the 2020 Guggenheim Fellowship. Epstein is an acclaimed composer whose music has been performed by the San Francisco Symphony, the Radio Symphony Orchestra of Frankfurt, the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, Ensemble Modern, and members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.**
- **At Massachusetts College of Art and Design, David P. Nelson will step down as president. Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Kymberly N. Pinder has been appointed interim president, effective June 15, and will lead MassArt while the board of trustees conducts a search for a permanent successor.**

Kelsey Bruun is the editor of the Fenway News.

Live Cams Open a World of Animal Distraction

BY RUTH KHOWAIS

Who doesn't love watching penguins waddle, exotic fish swim, or diaphanous jellyfish float? While stuck at home, you can enjoy live-cam videos from zoos and aquariums around the country. Here are some of the best:

At the **Monterey Bay Aquarium** in California, a coral reef cam takes you to tropical fish darting in and out of coral reefs. In another cam, otter-ly adorable sea otters teach their pups tricks, roll on the ice, and snuggle together. Best of all, you can participate in a morning guided meditation with moon jellyfish floating ethereally by. Go to montereybayaquarium.org/live-cam.

DO YOU HAIKU?

As a result of the coronavirus shutdowns, Kaji Aso Studio in the East Fens has pushed back the deadline for its annual haiku contest. First prize is \$300, and the new deadline for submissions is July 15. If you've found yourself with more time on your hands right now, perhaps you should try your hand at this ancient literary form. For directions on submitting entries, go to www.kajiasostudio.com.

Back home in Boston, the **New England Aquarium** offers a ringside seat for the nightly feeding of Myrtle, their famous giant sea turtle. Atlantic harbor seal Reggae gets his teeth brushed with a bamboo toothbrush on another cam. And the giant Pacific octopus, all eight legs, grabs its food in a feeding video. You can also join a dive inside the giant ocean tank as one of 96 divers shows the way. Go to neaq.org/visit.

The **Tennessee Aquarium** has a penguin cam where gentoo and macaroni penguins keep busy building their nests, raising their young, and squabbling with neighbors. Check out tnaqua.org/animals.

Other aquariums have gone a step further during the coronavirus crisis: they've released their penguins and let them roam freely in the aquarium building. The idea seems to have originated at **Chicago's Shedd Aquarium**, which released a short video of penguin exploration in mid-March. As a penguin waddles by an ocean tank, there is an iconic moment when it spots a giant beluga whale. The two stop and stare at each other in wonder (youtube.com/watch?v=CdB6I4l8n2A). Tampa's **Florida Aquarium** posted a 16-minute video of eight penguins exploring the empty facility (under the watchful eyes of three minders) at youtube.com/watch?v=Ju-wRiQLvJY.

Zoos also showcase live animals. Metroparks Cleveland has developed a large virtual classroom. Numerous animal videos are available, all with educators explaining interesting features of the creatures. Some favorites are visiting the five black rhinos in their new animal habitat,

a very up-close view of an adorable koala, and a yoga lesson in the woods. There's also a presentation about the Giant Pacific octopus, where zoo staff build intricate contraptions to hide food, usually live crabs, so that the octopus can use its skills to figure out how to open the container and find its food. Go to clevelandmetroparks.com.

The **Atlanta Zoo** has a live Panda Cam. Two giant pandas walk around their domain climbing poles and munching on bamboo leaves. Go to zooatlanta.org/panda-cam.

At the **Oklahoma City Zoo**, you can see red pandas. Currently classified as endangered, they are rare and very distantly related to giant pandas. The zoo has a live cam. You can watch as Thomas and Leela play with their two offspring, eat, and engage with each other. Red pandas also rub their scent glands against trees to mark their territory. Go to okczoo.org/redpanda-cam.

Locally, Franklin Park Zoo does not seem to have live cams but does have a full array of amazing videos. Baby porcupines debuted in October 2019, and a new ostrich chick was featured in 2016. Franklin Park's very popular gorilla, Little Joe, has a number of videos—Little Joe's birthday party, Joe has a snack, Little Joe undergoes physical exam, Little Joe and his gorilla friends. At franklinparkzoo.org.

Last but not least, the Stone Zoo in Stoneham has a super video from 2018 of two four-month-old snow leopard cubs. This is a treat, as there are only 6,000 in the world. At zooneewengland.org/stone-zoo.

Ruth Khowais lives in the West Fens.

Coronavirus Calendar

No Zoom, no Internet, no TV. But it's also hard to read, to concentrate. The only book I was able to get into was Shorty Jarvis's memoir. Jarvis was one of Malcolm X's partners in crime, and he mentions many local pool halls, barber shops, and gambling dens of the 1940s. What's painful for me is that I can't go to the library and look them up in the city directories.—**ALISON BARNET**

One of the things I'm prioritizing right now is getting my continuing education units for RN re-licensure. I'm thinking about getting out there to help once I get that done. Just when I thought I would go the easier route and attend some conferences, the pandemic hit and all the conferences were cancelled. I am also in the middle of picture sorting and labeling. Looking through pictures can bring up a lot of old memories. It pushes the mind into a realm of reflection and thinking about our own mortality. So, labeling pictures becomes a thing to do so that those who follow will know who is who on the family tree. On the more positive note, we have been doing family Zoom meetings weekly with my husband's side of the family. I have also been doing more cooking and that's a positive thing for me.—**MARY ANN BROGAN**

I've been cleaning up my garden for spring, remotely reconnecting, and having extended and meaningful conversations with friends and clients, and I'm also in touch with family every day. I'm taking lots of photos of empty streets and parks, reading a lot—including old journals I'd kept. Revisiting a lot of things that I'd forgotten about and realizing what a life it's been so far. The city feels like an empty movie set—the cast and crew are mostly absent until further notice. On the other hand, for me the Fenway has always been a close-knit neighborhood and I really enjoy running into neighbors in person (albeit at a minimum of six feet distance and masked). I'm grateful for the businesses that are still open. I'm enjoying watching nature respond to the lack of people and traffic. I had my first Fenway coyote sighting one evening a few weeks ago by the entrance to the War Memorials. I've been hoping for that for years to counter our goose, rabbit, and rat infestations.—**STEVE CHASE**

I've been playing Bach and Mozart, Zooming with friends and students, checking on neighbors, and making music videos to send a little cheer into the world.—**BRIAN CLAGUE**

During weekends, I sew cotton face masks for people in need. If you cannot afford

As we approach nearly two months of coronavirus restrictions, The Fenway News asked community members how they're spending their time sheltering at home.

to buy a face mask, please email me at iristwin1@gmail.com or text (857) 234-6509.—**IRIS TAN**

I'm working remotely with one office day per week (there's no one there except for a few members of skeleton crew). I just signed up for CBS All Access [streaming service], free for 60 days.—**TRACEY CUSICK**

My major project is putting together a cookbook, *Cooking and Eating My way Through the 2020 Pandemic*. It will have my favorite 20 recipes from 1969 to 2020. I am cooking one a day. I try to do 10,000 steps each day by walking in the Fens, taking little hikes, going food shopping, and doing three flights of stairs on rainy days, plus stretching. I have a list of my favorite people to call and chat with in the evening after watching the dreadful news all around. My favorite read right now is *Death in Sicily* by Andrea Camilleri, an Inspector Montalbano mystery. Haiku has become an interest. I submitted several to the Kaji Aso Haiku contest.—**BARBARA FAY**

I have been trying to keep up my exercising, watching old series like *Reba* and *Chopped*. Calling friends and family and some Facebook messages. I cook, but don't enjoy cooking as some people do.—**TRACEY HUNT**

I'm finding that a regular routine helps. I'm doing exercise videos from the YMCA, morning meditation with the moon jellyfish at Monterrey Bay Aquarium, and taking art lessons on Zoom. I'm cooking a lot more, which I enjoy, but I miss going to restaurants.—**RUTH KHOWAIS**

We are reconnecting with old friends using technology.—**JOANNE MCKENNA**

Keeping busy and trying to stay sane by tackling a new project in my house, all those little things that never get done. I now have clean grout on my kitchen floor. I'm also taking virtual gym classes and lots of walks in the Back Bay Fens.—**SHERI OLANS**

I've just finished my second read-through of Alessandro Manzoni's 600-page 1840 *I Promessi Sposi (The Betrothed)*, in English of course. I first read it 30 years ago and was blown away. As the cover modestly says, it's

"the greatest of all Italian novels." I asked an Italian musicologist what she thought of it, and she said all Italian students have to study it in school. So, of course, they didn't particularly like it, because it's forced on them. But then, when they're older and pick up the book again, they think it's fantastic. The Pope even mentioned Manzoni during his Easter service this year! Why I would want to read a novel about the 1630 plague in Milan during this current virus situation? Of course, it's inspiring! Although one Capuchin monk is cowardly—and beautifully drawn—the other monks are self-sacrificing and brave. All of the characters are so human and behave pretty much the way Americans are behaving in the current virus situation. The book is based on considerable historical research and even has footnotes. Anyway, I highly recommend it.—**ANDREA OLMSTEAD**

I generally get up and take Miller out for an hour at noon, then I check mail and send the Department of Unemployment Assistance more information if needed (four weeks now and just sent in 10 more pages of information). I do try to do one bit of housework a day. I go online and do some type of workout. I walk Miller for about a half hour around 5pm. I have a puzzle on my kitchen table that I do about an hour a day and I try to do a bit of decluttering in the apartment. I've unloaded about 4 bags of trash and many more recyclables since we began self-isolating. Lastly, I spend time every day gathering legal documents and bank information for my family for my eventual passing. Not sure it's going to be that soon but it will be helpful at that time. Last walk of the day with Miller is sometime between 1am and 2am. Probably the most important thing I try to do each day is to talk/check in with someone.—**JOHN O'NEIL**

Here's what I've been doing: Staying in virtual touch with family and friends—sharing tips, happy hour, book club. Working from home as a volunteer research intern for The Nature Conservancy two to three days a week. Volunteering occasionally in the community. Keeping up with the coronavirus news. Mixing it up with my yoga practice, from vinyasa

flow to Forrest to CorePower. Taking more time to be aware of my thoughts and feelings. Imagining ideal scenarios for a new normal for myself and the world. Pruning possessions. Participating in webinars on topics such as climate change, conservation, and coronavirus. Seeing some of the plays in the Boston Theater Marathon Special Zoom Edition.—**LESLIE POND**

Since the coronavirus has hit Boston, I have been busy inside, developing photos from my computer. I hope to be able to exhibit some of these newly framed photos once things get back to some normalcy. I've also been offered a one-bedroom apartment and have been very busy packing away. My moving date is April 22 and I'm very excited about the move. I will be spending lots of my free time unpacking and decorating my new place. I've gone outside very little since the virus hit. When I do go out, I always wear a mask and only venture to the grocery store. I'm aware that Massachusetts has been hit very hard which is another reason why I'm taking this virus very seriously and being very careful. I value my life and want to live for a very long time.—**MATTI KNIVA SPENCER**

I am a writer and have tried to see this strange time of confinement and social distancing as a sort of writer's retreat. Despite myriad new wonderful distractions that have developed – online socializing and Zoom meetings/programs, etc., it has been a fruitful period, I have taken solace in creating and have found new sources of inspiration.—**DEBBIE WEISS**

The Fenway News has definitely helped me with having a sense of purpose, thinking about future stories to write, getting caught up with online research for background and history, taking photos. A bonus for transparency: I've sat in on a few Zoom meetings for groups and commissions—meetings that were never videotaped in the past, meetings that I likely wouldn't have physically attended such as the Conservation Commission, the Muddy River Maintenance and Management Committee, working sessions for city council committees, and the Boston Landmarks Commission. As far as weekly routines, I look forward to Sunday's newspapers, *The New Yorker*, the daily mail...and cooking for four! I take frequent walks through the wooded pathways at McLaughlin, seeing neighbors outside is a joy.—**ALISON PULTINAS**

MORE BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS FROM TRIDENT

Last month we published book recommendations from Katherine Nazzaro, social media director and lead bookseller at Trident Booksellers and Café. She sent more than we had room for in our April issue, so we're running the rest of her list this month. Order these and other books for delivery or take out food from the cafe at www.tridentbookscafe.com.

UNTAMED SHORE. by Silvia Moreno-Garcia, follows Viridiana, a young woman who yearns for more than the small town she's trapped in. She is hired as the personal assistant to a rich American and his family, but when one of the Americans is killed, the resulting investigation changes Viridiana forever. I couldn't put this book down; watching Viridiana grapple with her longing to live her own life as well as her newfound loyalties and morality was breathtaking.

THE MERCIES by Kiran Millwood Hargrave. A chilling and captivating story of resilience. Set in a Norwegian fishing village in the 1670s, it follows two characters. In the wake of a storm that takes all the village men, Maren must to find a way to live with enormous

loss and the grief that comes with it. Ursa, the daughter of a merchant, was married off to a witchhunter before being brought north. When their paths cross, both women's lives change forever, and they must find a way to survive the perils around them.

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO by Alexandre Dumas. I would be remiss in leaving out this book. If you're of a mind to read one epic classic—now that you have the time—this should be it. The quintessential revenge story follows Edmund Dantes after he's convicted for a crime he didn't commit and locked away for years. It was originally serialized, so each chapter is fun and exciting.

UPRIGHT WOMEN WANTED by Sarah Gailey. I finished this book in one day and immediately started shoving it into the hands of anyone who made the mistake of making eye contact with me. It follows Esther, a stowaway on the run from both an arranged marriage and her own feelings, who teams up with a band of librarians who travel the land bringing "approved materials" to various towns as the law requires—along with "unapproved materials" that fall outside the law.

COMMUNITY meetings

WED, MAY 6 Red Sox community conference call, 6:30pm, will include guest speakers and an update on baseball and ballpark operations. Email sbhabhalia@redsox.com for call-in information.

THU, MAY 7 Fenway CDC Organizing Committee meets, 6-7:30pm, via phone/video. Zoom meeting link will be sent a few days prior to the meeting. To sign up, contact Jaya Aiyer at jaiyer@fenwaycdc.org or call (617) 267-4637 x16.

THU, MAY 7 Boston Parks & Recreation Department holds a virtual public hearing at 10am on a request to remove four shade trees on Avenue Louis Pasteur. Submit comments or questions to parks@boston.gov prior to the hearing with "Fenway Tree Hearing" in the subject line. To join the meeting by computer, log onto Zoom and use meeting ID 953 4431 2720 / password: 5zEgtM. To join the meeting by phone, call (253) 215-8782 OR (301) 715-8592. Use meeting ID 953 4431 2720 / password: 976894.

TUE, MAY 19 Ward 4 Democratic Committee holds a virtual meeting at 6pm. Invited speakers include Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz, Kristina Mensik of Common Cause, and Rahsaan Hall of ACLU Massachusetts. For call info, email ward4dems@gmail.com.

EVERY TUE-WED-THU Join Fenway CDC and the Mass. Voter Table to phone bank for the Census. Phone banks take place Tuesdays, 11am-1pm; Wednesdays, 5-7pm; and Thursdays, 5-7pm. Sign up at eventbrite.com/e/2020-census-ma-virtual-phonebank-tickets-101132116884 or contact Jaya Aiyer at jaiyer@fenwaycdc.org or call (617) 267-4637 x16.

ONGOING Free one-to-one financial coaching by phone. To schedule your personal session, contact Kris Anderson at kanderson@fenwaycdc.org or at (617) 267-4637 x29.

ONGOING Free Career Clinic telephone session. To schedule a personal session, contact Kris Anderson at kanderson@fenwaycdc.org or at (617) 267-4637 x 29.