

T SLASHES SERVICE ON #55 BUS

Starting August 30, the 55 bus route, which serves the West Fens, will undergo a major schedule cut. Inbound service from Queensberry Street will now end at Copley Square instead of continuing to Park Street. Weekday service will drop by more than half, with buses running only during commuting hours and no buses inbound between 9:33am and 3:43pm. Service outbound from Copley will also end during those hours. The T will cut the stop near Fenway Studios at Ipswich Street and Charlesgate East because of access issues created by construction work on Air Rights Parcel 12. The full service alert also warns of temporary detours from all Ipswich stops because of roadwork, but gives no dates. See it at www.mbta.com/schedules/55/alerts. Call the MBTA at 617-222-3200 to register a complaint about the cuts.

PILOT Reformers Zero In On Nonprofits' Outdated Valuations

BY KELLY GARRITY

On August 6, the PILOT Action Group held a virtual town hall to discuss possible reforms to Boston's PILOT program, especially in light of the coronavirus pandemic and the recent call for increased racial justice.

The action group is a coalition of activists from community, faith, and labor groups working to reform the City's Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILOT) program. Although the group has called for changes to the program for several years, the recent crises have led its members to call for more immediate reform.

"Because of the pandemic, a recognition of racism as a public health crisis in our city, and underlying inequities in our city, we believe the time for action and reform is now," said Enid Eckstein of the PILOT Action Group.

The current PILOT program, which began in 2012, allows nonprofit institutions with assessed property values of more than \$15 million, including colleges and universities, to pay the equivalent of only 25 percent of their assessed property value.

It also allows these institutions to offset 50 percent of their payment with "community benefits," defined by the PILOT Task Force created in 2011 as "services that directly benefit City of Boston residents." However, the payments that these institutions make are based on outdated property tax assessments, despite the fact that the PILOT program stipulates that property valuations be revisited every five years.

"It's based on assessments that were done in 2009 and 2010, and that's really important. What was happening in 2009? A global recession," said Jonathan Rodrigues of the PILOT Action Group. "Now we're going on the tenth year of this program and we feel like that has to be a demand of this group, that we have reevaluation of these properties."

In 2009, total assessed value for institutions included in PILOT was \$13.6 billion. Today, the total assessed value has increased to \$13.9 billion. Rodrigues said that members of the PILOT Action Group believe this figure underestimates actual value, and thus the group's first goal is to conduct a

reassessment of these properties.

In addition to conducting a reassessment, the group aims to facilitate creation of a PILOT Commission to define community benefits more clearly, establish better coordination among the institutions, and ensure that all PILOT payments are collected. The increased urgency for these goals relates to the call for more economic and racial equality in the city.

Nia Evans, director of the Boston Ujima Project, and Segun Idowu, director of the Black Economic Council of Massachusetts (BECMA), each spoke during the town hall on behalf of the Black Mass. Coalition. Their coalition believes that Boston needs PILOT reform in the wake of recent police killings across the country.

"We have to move drastically differently

than we have been before, and PILOT is a part of this conversation," said Evans.

Idowu echoed this sentiment. "The Black Mass. Coalition, part of our targets have to do with the role of nonprofits," said Idowu. "We know that while nonprofits play a role in helping to develop communities, they also play a large role in many of the ills affecting us, particularly in Boston in areas of [displacement] and gentrification."

A number of Boston city councilors attended the town hall, including Councilors Kenzie Bok, Ed Flynn, Julia Mejia, Liz Breadon, Annissa Essaibi George, Matt O'Malley, Michael Flaherty, and Lydia Edwards.

Bok, who co-chairs the City Council's PILOT Reform Committee, said that she sees collecting PILOT payments as an issue of fairness. "The fact that we're still sitting with 2009 values on PILOT means that year after year, even with our institutions paying only a fraction of what they would pay if they were taxable, that gap in valuation really adds up," said Bok.

Bok also referred to City Council President Kim Janey's letter titled "A Black and Brown Agenda for Boston," which highlighted PILOT reform as a way to increase economic justice and reduce the wealth gap in Boston. According to Bok, in a letter responding to the council, Mayor Marty Walsh said he looked forward to working with the council to modernize the real estate values for PILOT paying nonprofits. Bok announced that the City Council responded to that letter, urging the mayor to formalize this commitment.

"I'm pleased to say that today a large majority of the City Council together sent a letter to the mayor back in response," said Bok, "saying that we are writing to ask you to formalize that commitment from that June 22 letter by instructing your assessing department to do a full revaluation in the coming calendar year 2021 of the real estate of these PILOT-paying nonprofits."

Councilors Flynn, Breadon, Mejia, O'Malley, and Edwards also all spoke in support of PILOT reform, and Eckstein read a statement of support from Councilor Flaherty.

Kelly Garrity is a journalism student at Northeastern University.

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT VOTING

PRIMARY ELECTION—TUES., SEPT. 1

Deadlines for mail-in and early-voting options have passed, but you can still vote in person, 7am–8pm. Note the change in location for two East Fens polling stations in the box below.

EAST FENS POLLING STATIONS MOVE TO MATTHEWS ARENA

Morville House and Symphony Towers both typically house polling stations, but to avoid possibly exposing their older residents to coronavirus, the City will relocate those stations to Matthews Arena at 238 St. Botolph St. (enter on the Gainsboro St. side). This affects Precincts 5, 6, 7 and 8 in Ward 4. Matthews will undergo periodic disinfection throughout the day, and six-foot-distancing rules will apply to voters waiting in line.

GENERAL ELECTION—TUES., NOV. 3

- **Register to vote** until Oct. 20. Start at www.boston.gov/departments/elections/vote-early-boston.
- **Voting by mail:** You can request a ballot as late as Oct. 28, but given concerns about mail delivery, request and mail your ballot as early as possible—or hand-deliver your completed ballot to the secure drop box just inside the main door of City Hall or at any early-voting site. Track your ballot's journey here.
- **Early voting** runs Oct. 17-30 at sites citywide. Find the schedule and locations on the City's early-voting web page (URL above). Any Boston resident can vote at *any* early-voting site in the city.
- **Voting on Election Day:** If you feel comfortable about it, vote in person, 7am-8pm, on Nov. 3.

With Low-Tech Approach, Can WaterGoat Solve Muddy River's Trash Problem?



The first WaterGoat trash collection effort in the Muddy River took place on August 12. Manufactured in the U.S. and used in rivers across the country, the device is a trash-collecting net attached to buoys and anchored on either side of the waterway. For more than a year, Boston residents Caroline Reeves and Jackie Royce, along with local supporters, raised funds to purchase a WaterGoat through donations and grants, then worked to win city and state environmental approvals. Installation took place the first week of August in a ceremony with local officials. The Muddy Water Initiative (MWI) hopes to recruit volunteers to empty the net (you can sign up as an individual or a team at muddywaterinitiative.org). Their state's Chapter 91 license requires weekly pulls through October. MWI chose the Charlesgate site in order to capture trash in the Muddy before it reaches the Charles River. A team from the Chica Project, a youth-mentoring nonprofit, volunteered for the first collection (photo, left). Caroline Reeves explained that the floating green mat in the right photo green is duckweed, a common plant that grows during hot weather in water with high levels of nutrients. Unsurprisingly, in light of its name, waterfowl eat it.

CIVIC AGENDA

The BPDA holds a virtual community meeting about the Scape proposal for 819 Beacon St. on Monday, Sept. 14. See details on page 6.

When The Old Boston Gave Way to The New

BY ALISON BARNET

The Prudential tower was already up when I arrived in Boston in 1964, and I was unaware of any controversy, although, if I'd lived closer to it, I might have agreed with Arthur Inman.

Inman lived at Garrison Hall, a residence hotel on Garrison Street off St. Botolph. Early on, he became concerned with the “new and appalling” situation of the Prudential Center and the Turnpike Authority’s plan to build the Mass. Pike highway extension. In 1960 he wrote, “Never is the worry and dread of the Prudential Center and the proposed six-lane, toll-road expressway off my mind.”

He watched anxiously as the places he cared about came under the wrecking ball. “[T]he triangle between Huntington and Dartmouth and Stuart Streets is being demolished so that soon the restaurant, Lander’s, where Flood used to buy roast pork for me Sundays, the Copley Theatre where Katinka played, the haberdashery where I traded, the rest of the stores familiar

for long will soon physically be no more.” Born in Georgia in 1895 to wealthy parents, he was right-wing, with strange dietary theories and practices, a neurotic semi-invalid who brought in people to care—and more—for him. His wife lived in a separate apartment at Garrison Hall.

His Boston diary entries running from 1959 to 1963 read more like nonfiction books; two volumes were later published by Harvard University Press. Despite his peculiarities and prejudices, the diaries show him articulate in expressing the deep feelings and fears of people faced with neighborhood change.

In early 1961, he wrote, “Fear... is like waves on an incoming tide: Each wave rises, lunges forward, sucks back, to be followed by another wave...My fear (and it is fear, not just worry, just nervousness, just apprehension) is like a head of water behind a frail dam when freshets flow. It is fear of what’s ahead, how I shall or can meet it.” He often cowered in the dark, hiding in his bathroom to get away from construction lights.



Prudential Building under construction in 1963

rectangular, straight-line superstructures.” He wrote, “I am too old, too tired, too used up to wish, if this building is preempted, to move...I think (I do not know) I’d rather die than be uprooted and set down somewhere else, my roots torn and broken and strained.”

Following a suicide attempt in March 1963 and a stay at Mass. General, he moved to a residence hotel in Brookline, but banging pipes, elevators, and slamming doors became intolerable. Before ending his life that December, he told friends, “I am a turtle which has lost his carapace.”

The Prudential tower was dedicated in April 1965.

In the fall of 1962, he focused on the erection of the Prudential Tower: “28 stories into the sky, soon will be goosing God....The Prudential Tower keeps creeping up to the sky. The wrecking of buildings continues. I feel nervous constantly as to how loud and disturbing traffic will be with all the protecting structures between my bedroom and Huntington Ave. razed.”

He looked back. “I recall the Boston skyline as seen from the Cambridge side when first I came here—church spires and the gold dome of the State House very beautiful in a romantic manner as the sun glinted on bright points.... Well, that is gone, and many of the famous historical buildings continue to be demolished to be replaced by high,

Alison Barnett lives in the South End. All quotes are from Daniel Aaron, ed., The Inman Journal, A Public and Private Confession, vol. II, Harvard University Press, 1985.

WERE YOU COUNTED?

With the Sept. 30 deadline looming, barely half of Boston residents have completed the census. Help the city get an accurate count! It just takes a few minutes at <https://my2020census.gov/>

Help Us Improve Our Climate Change Coverage

The Fenway News would like our readers’ help in planning a series of articles on the environment and climate change. For the inaugural article, we’d love to hear from you about the things you’re doing to help protect our environment and tackle climate change. Are you walking more and driving less? Have you found a great way to reduce plastic use, compost, or recycle textiles? Have you participated in tree planting or another local initiative? Tell us your story by e-mailing fenwaynews@gmail.com (put “climate change” in the subject line). In subsequent articles, we’ll explore climate and environmental topics of particular interest to community members. Do you have questions about the impact of climate change on health? how to achieve greater energy efficiency? City of Boston climate initiatives? Impacts of sea-level rise in the Fenway? Other topics? Send us those questions, too, at fenwaynews@gmail.com.

—Leslie Pond

DEAL CLEARS PATH FOR (EVENTUAL) REDEVELOPMENT OF MIDTOWN HOTEL

The Christian Science Church signed a 99-year ground lease in March for its property at 220 Huntington Ave. That paves the way for Midtown Tenant LLC, a subsidiary of Newton-based National Development, to redevelop the site of the two-story Midtown Hotel and 1 Cumberland St., a handsome four-story brownstone just south of the hotel built in 1891. A recent filing with the BPDA reveals plans for a 10-story building with 325 apartments, ground-floor retail



This view toward Huntington shows the former Perkins School (now condos), inside the St. Botolph Architectural Conservation District; 1 Cumberland, which sits just outside the distric; and the edge of the 1960s-era Midtown Hotel.

and underground parking. For now, Northeastern University will lease the Midtown’s rooms for six months, and the seven apartments at 1 Cumberland will remain occupied. Although architecturally related to the St. Botolph Historic District, the brownstone—which the Church bought in 1967—sits just outside the district boundary, a reminder of what nearby Huntington looked like before urban renewal. National Development’s filing states its plan to demolish all the existing buildings. Even 40 years ago, when the St. Botolph Architectural Conservation District was approved, the likelihood of a taller structure replacing the Midtown was mentioned. “Should this structure be demolished for a new project,” a 1981 study for the district noted, “the scale and design will be significant to the ambience of the St. Botolph area.”

Simmons UNIVERSITY

Simmons University will undergo a comprehensive evaluation visit on October 25-28, 2020, by a team representing the New England Commission of Higher Education (formerly the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, NEASC).

The New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) is one of seven accrediting commissions in the United States that provide institutional accreditation on a regional basis. Accreditation is voluntary and applies to the institution as a whole. The Commission, which is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, accredits approximately 220 institutions in the six-state New England region as well as several American-style institutions overseas.

Simmons University has been accredited by the Commission since 1929 and was last reviewed in 2010, as the accreditations occur every 10 years. Its accreditation by the Commission encompasses the entire institution.

For the past year and a half, Simmons University has been engaged in a process of self-study, addressing the Commission’s Standards for Accreditation. An evaluation team will visit the institution to gather evidence that the self-study is thorough and accurate. The team will recommend to the Commission a continuing status for the institution. Following a review process, the Commission itself will take the final action.

The public is invited to submit comments regarding Simmons to: **Public Comment on Simmons University, New England Commission of Higher Education, 3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100 Burlington, MA 01803-4514** E-mail: info@neche.org

Public comments must address substantive matters related to the quality of the institution. The Commission cannot settle disputes between individuals and institutions, whether those involve faculty, students, administrators, or members of other groups. Comments will not be treated as confidential and must include the name, address, and telephone number of the person providing the comments. Public comments must be received by October 28, 2020. The Commission cannot guarantee that comments received after that date will be considered.



To Mask Or Not to Mask? That Is The Question

BY MARY ANN BROGAN & RUTH KHOWAIS

Our intrepid *Fenway News* volunteers set out to sample mask wearing in the Fenway through entirely unscientific yet suggestive on-the-street observation.

In a walk down Agassiz Road then along the Fenway to Evans Way Park around 11am on a Saturday, we encountered 28 total people. All but one, a jogger, were properly wearing their masks. The jogger had her mask down around her chin. Two other joggers passed us but pulled up their masks well before they

reached our position. At the entrance to the Gardner Museum, we observed that groups of three or four typically had one person not wearing a mask. However, when they got to the front door of the Gardner, they put it on. At the corner of Boylston and Kilmarnock streets on a Monday, we encountered 67 people. Very few were not wearing masks. One person was drinking coffee but pulled their mask up after a few sips. Another pushed his mask up as he approached. Only one person had no mask at all.

A short block away we found a different story. At the corner of Peterborough and Kilmarnock streets, four mothers with small children were in the playground. Of the four, only one wore a mask—two had masks down under their chins, and one had no mask at all. Back at the corner of Boylston and Kilmarnock and looking down Kilmarnock, we counted 100 people wearing masks as they came out of Target and kept their masks on as they walked away. There were only two people on Boylston without masks—one was drinking a beverage and the other was on a bike.

In the East Fen, walking up Mass. Ave. to Boylston Street, we encountered a varied picture of mask compliance. Of 191 people, 135 were wearing masks properly and 43 had no masks or were improperly wearing them. Most of these outliers were running or rollerblading or biking in the Mass. Ave. bike lane. The bikers and runners appeared to maintain at least six feet of distance except when they were stopped at a traffic light. It's easy to become lax and not pay attention to where we are in relation to others. We can all do this better. *Mary Ann Brogan lives in the East Fens. Ruth Khowais lives in the West Fens.*

Lord & Taylor Closes Doors After 52 Years



After 52 years on Boylston Street, the Lord & Taylor at Prudential Center will close its doors as part of the parent company's restructuring during bankruptcy. The store is having a closing sale and will no longer accept online returns or coupons. This was Lord & Taylor's first Massachusetts store.

CORONAVIRUS RESOURCES

If you've experienced food insecurity due to COVID-19 (or for other reasons, such as job loss), the Fenway now has two food-distribution sites. You don't need to be a Fenway resident to stop by either one:

- Stop by the **LIFEBOAT FOOD BANK** at 105 Jersey Street at 4pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays for free, fresh food available to all in Boston experiencing food insecurity. Questions? Contact lifeboatboston@gmail.com. Register at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeyuta4rDpl10aC7QfdRIAAYeLy4mZRxF0yOPYPaZfs8eEfPQ/viewform>.
- On Wednesday, Sept. 2, join Fenway Cares for **FAIR FOODS** distribution in both the East and West Fen at 3:30pm. Delivery or in-person pick-up are both available. First come, first served. Pickups take place at Symphony Community Park, 39 Edgerly Rd., in the East Fens and at the Fenway Community Center, 1282 Boylston St., in the West. Call (617) 446-3949 or email to learn more.

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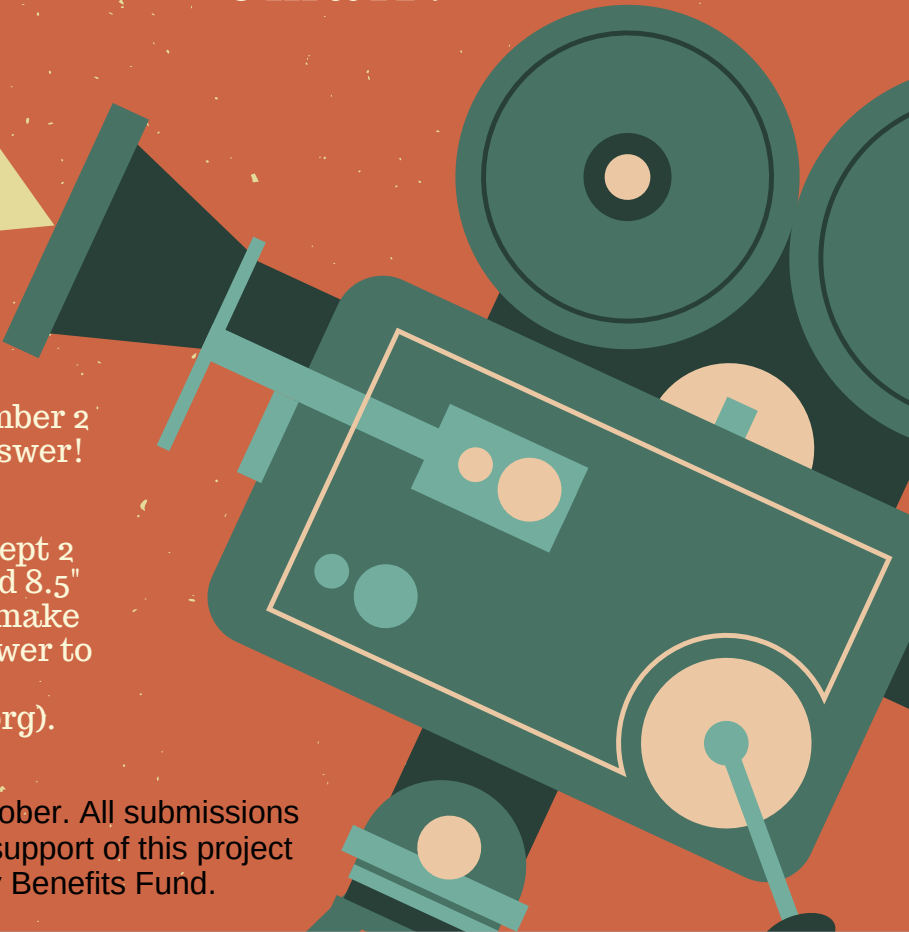
a community
projection event

"What is bringing you hope or joy?"
Share your answer or your
art in our video! Come be
interviewed (briefly) Sept. 2,
or submit your artwork by
email!

TO SHARE BY VIDEO: stop by the SDA Temple parking lot (intersection of Jersey and Peterborough Streets) on September 2 between 10AM and 5PM. A videographer will record your answer! We welcome answers in all forms and languages.

TO SHARE BY ART: Pick up a template at SDA Temple on Sept 2 from 10AM - 5PM. Or, make your own template on a standard 8.5" x 11" paper by drawing or cutting a line 2.9" from the side to make a rectangle! Draw, paint, print, etc to demonstrate your answer to the question above (bold, high contrast designs preferred). Submit your art by email (mallory@operationpeaceboston.org). Call 617-267-1054 if you need alternate arrangements.

Submissions will be projected onto a wall in West Fenway mid-October. All submissions must be appropriate for view by all ages. We thank the BPDA for support of this project through the 2020 Fenway Demonstration Project Community Benefits Fund.



Readers, We Need Your Help!

Even under the best of circumstance, making ends meet has always challenged *The Fenway News*. And who would call 2020 the best of circumstances?

We can't blame everything on the pandemic, even if it did force us to suspend printing of a physical paper. Before it arrived, however, we'd already run up a substantial debt with our saintly printer, who was—until the pandemic hit—willing to look the other way when the account came up for review.

Those days are over, and we need to pay down that debt. At the same time, the pandemic has forced us to take a much harder look at the internet and how we might make better use of to support our work.

So. We've got one big problem and one big opportunity. To move forward on either will require money. Which brings us to you, dear reader.

Later this month we'll launch a GoFundMe campaign with a \$25,000 goal (about 10x what our yearly fund-raising letter nets). We'll use what we raise to clear the debt and to pay for creation of a more robust website.

When you get our email announcing the campaign, please respond. Keeping this community paper

going requires the community's help. *The Fenway News* began in 1974; we hope—and believe—that you want to see the paper survive and thrive as much as we do.

—BOARD OF DIRECTORS, FENWAY NEWS ASSOCIATION



RED ALERT, PEOPLE

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, October 2.**

> DEADLINE <

The deadline for letters, news items, and ads for our next issue is **Friday, September 25.**

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College Openings: Bottom Line Wins, Public Health Loses

BY MARTY ROSS

The residents of Boston are rightfully concerned about the pending influx of college students this fall. The plans local colleges are making and the measures they are taking are commendable but doomed to fail. By forging ahead into the unknown, colleges are putting us all at risk. Colleges need to explain exactly why they are choosing preserving their bottom lines over the safety of students, faculty, staff, and the public.

After developing extensive plans for in-person instruction or hybrid models, many colleges around the country have changed their minds prior to opening or shortly after opening. Notre Dame suspended in-person instruction after experiencing, despite a ban, off-campus partying by students. The University of

California at Berkley abandoned in-person instruction after a COVID-19 outbreak at

a fraternity house. Johns Hopkins and Princeton nixed their in-person opening plans at the last minute. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill went totally online after cases spiked the first week after opening and the positive testing rate jumped from 2.8 percent to 13.6 percent.

These examples should serve as stark warnings for the planned openings of colleges and universities in the Boston area. No matter how good their plans are, they will have little impact on students' off-campus behavior. As a 42-year veteran of

teaching college students in Boston, I can attest to the fact that many will not follow the rules. For proof, one need only look to the images of beaches, bars, and restaurants crowded with young people this summer.

Some years ago, I spent significant time sitting in my car on Mission Hill waiting for my son who lived in an apartment on Hillside Street. I observed how long-time residents, families mostly, shared space with students who didn't always make good neighbors. Many students, especially freshmen on their own for the first time, simply do not consider the consequences of their actions to the same degree that older people do. They are risk-prone and feel invincible—not good characteristics in the age of COVID-19.

It is not just the students, faculty, and staff that will be endangered if universities open with in-person courses, it will also be the local residents and those who work in businesses frequented by students. Opening initially with 100 percent online courses is the safest approach. As conditions improve, in-person courses could possibly be phased in while keeping a close eye on infection rates. Like millions of people and businesses around the country, colleges and universities must also accept the financial burden imposed on us by the pandemic if we are to beat it.

Marty Ross is a professor emeritus in the Department of Marine and Environmental Sciences at Northeastern University. This essay expands on his letter to the editor that appeared in *The Boston Globe*.

were everywhere. Even better: complete silence from Fenway Park for seven glorious weeks. No crowds, no concerts, no dull roaring of fans, no "Sweet Caroline," no helicopters buzzing overhead. That made every night neighborhood night, ideal for strolling in the park, lying on Clemente Field to watch the Prudential Center glowing against an indigo sky, or lingering over an impromptu dinner in a neighbor's Victory Garden plot.

Perspective shifted. This summer I discovered the pleasure of the bike ride to nowhere. Setting out one June evening with no plan beyond stretching my legs, I wound up zigzagging nine miles along the Charles, across Herter Park—where I watched cloud banks mass above downtown, lit pink and gold at sunset—through Brighton and Allston, and down the new Comm. Ave. bike lane to the BU Bridge. I conquered the Minuteman Trail for the first time, riding to Lexington one day, followed by a trip to Concord, followed by a third trek to West Concord—you're practically in Maynard at that point—with its surprising bumper crop of Black Lives Matter yard signs. On a hot July afternoon, headed to Medford for a distanced cookout, I crossed the Harvard Law School quad, shady, cool and deserted; I don't have a Harvard JD, but I did have a nice picnic with friends there the following week.

In her classic children's book *Tuck Everlasting*, Natalie Babbitt compares the days on either side of the summer solstice to a Ferris wheel that stops with your chair at the very top. For tantalizing minutes, time stands still: you rock gently, surveying the countryside, suspended between the long haul up and the inevitable descent. This pandemic summer felt like that. If it gave us a heaping serving of pain and anxiety, it also brought surprising moments of grace. It slowed life down and let us see our world differently—smaller, yet paradoxically fuller—as we swayed at the top of wheel, contemplating our descent.

Steve Wolf lives in the West Fens.

GUEST OPINION

BY STEVE WOLF

Can we place an order for a repeat of summer 2020 next year? Does that sound crazy in a year when a pandemic upended our lives; cheap firecrackers stole hours of our sleep; and anxiety—about health, about race, about the future of the country—clung to everything like the scent you can't wash out of a skunked dog's fur?

Maybe. But I'd still call it a contender for best summer ever.

Time slowed down. A normal sense of time disappeared after the state shut down in March, yet that change ended up making summer feel longer than usual. That's no small thing in New England. A friend likes to joke that summer lasts a week here: It starts on Memorial Day, a day later it's July 4, then you get a few days off in August (with luck, at the beach), and then—bang!—here comes Labor Day. Not this year, when summer seemed to roll on without end.

We had weeks of balmy weather in June. Long solstice dusks brought stars

GUEST OPINION

to a Maxfield Parrish sky night after night. Late July turned insufferably hot, but even that had an upside: rediscovering the tricks people used to stay cool in the days before air-conditioning became the norm, like closing shades and windows to block the midday heat and reopening them to the (relative) coolness of late afternoon. Evenings brought another everything-old-is-new novelty: sitting by a window, fanned by breezes from the Fens, and reading an actual book.

Quiet reigned. Yes, most nights this June sounded like a PBS dramatization of World War I (thank you, NH fireworks stores), but for much of the summer, traffic and traffic noise stayed low. You didn't have to walk to the park to hear birds singing—they

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

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



ICYMI blew it last month by failing to mention Kristen Daudelin as one of two people working in their Victory Gardens plots whose photos appeared in the *Globe* in mid-July. 🐞 **The MFA cut more than 110 positions as it worked to plug the huge hole that the pandemic has blown it its budget. About half the affected employees took an early-retirement offer and half got involuntary pink slips. The loss admissions income left the museum short by as much as \$14 million in fiscal 2020. No word has come on a possible reopening, which the museum had previously said would take place this fall.** 🐞 A BSO violist has helped resurrect a long-forgotten piece of music created in 1940 by a young Black composer at the start of his career. Mary Ferillo found the “Sonatine for Viola and Piano” by Ulysses Kay in the archives of the American Composers Alliance (ACA) while searching for works to perform in a streamed concert from Tanglewood. The historical detective work that landed the Sonatine in the archives in the first place provided the focus for a fascinating feature on Kay by *Globe* critic Zöe Madonna. 🐞 **The *Globe* led a front-page article on harsh business conditions facing local restaurants with a photo of Nia Grace in front of her restaurant, Darryl’s Corner Bar & Kitchen, at Columbus and Mass. avenues.** 🐞 Suffolk Construction can go ahead with a lawsuit against Weiner Ventures over Air Rights Parcel 15 on Boylston Street, although a state judge did narrow the suit’s scope. The development team originally comprised John Fish, owner of Suffolk—which would have built the \$800 million project—and Weiner Ventures, but Weiner pulled out abruptly. 🐞 **Reporter Beth Healy turned to longtime *Fenway News* contributor Alison Barnet to set the scene for a *Globe* magazine feature. In “The Fire That Saved Rosie’s Place,” Barnet recalled residents of then-gentrifying Worcester Square lining up at a meeting in the late 1970s to oppose Rosie’s use of a rowhouse to house its homeless clients. “They didn’t want them here in the beginning and it was very nasty,” Barnet said. “It’s the worst meeting I’ve ever been to.”** 🐞 Dr. Elizabeth Nabel, CEO of Brigham & Women’s, attracted plenty of press attention last month—just not the kind most people want, never mind people who head a major hospital. Earlier this year, Nabel sold \$8.5 million worth of stock in Moderna, a Cambridge biotech firm on whose board she sat. Moderna later chose the Brigham as a site for testing its potential COVID-19 vaccine, prompting the *Globe* to report the stock sale and question potential conflicts raised by the dual roles. Nabel stepped down from Moderna’s board last month, but the issue didn’t die there. Brigham staff reportedly remain angry about the potential conflict of interest *and* the sizable chunk of change Nabel pocketed just as the hospital was cutting jobs and salaries. [Some want her to put the money toward reducing those cuts.] Medical ethicists who’ve weighed in, including NYU’s Art Caplan, haven’t had much positive to say about the arrangement, although the *Globe* later pointed out that other local hospital CEOs have the same potential conflict. 🐞 **Berklee announced creation of the Danroy “DJ” Henry Social Change Scholarship to honor the Black student at Pace University shot by white police in 2010. DJ’s father, Dan, serves on Berklee’s Presidential Advisory Council. The fund—part of the school’s response to the police killing of George Floyd—will support Berklee and Boston Conservatory students “who are financially and academically deserving [and have] the potential to make a significant contribution to society through the performing arts.”** 🐞

STREET CLEANING & TRASH PICK-UP

TRASH & RECYCLING PICK-UP

- **BACK BAY:** Monday and Thursday
- **FENWAY:** Tuesday and Friday
- **MISSION HILL:** Tuesday and Friday

STREET CLEANING

The **CITY OF BOSTON** has resumed ticketing of cars parked in street-cleaning zones, but it hasn’t resumed towing ticketed cars. Check the City website for pandemic restrictions at <https://bit.ly/2KJ3TXV>.

The **DCR** cleans state-owned streets along the Back Bay Fens on this schedule:

- **SECOND THURSDAY**
8:00am–12:00pm: The Riverway

• SECOND FRIDAY

- > 8:00am–noon: The Fenway from Ave. Louis Pasteur to Westland [includes inside lane] + Forsyth Way
- > 12:00–3:00pm: 8 to 54 The Fenway [includes inside lane] + Boylston + Charlesgate East + Charlesgate Extension

• THIRD TUESDAY

- > 8:00am–noon : Park Drive from Boylston St. to Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral [includes inside lane] + upper Boylston Street
- > 12:00–3:00pm: Park Drive from Holy Trinity to The Pierce, then from D Line overpass to Beacon Street

For a map, visit www.mass.gov/guides/dcr-street-sweeping and scroll to Week 3.

Neighborhood Newsline

Northeastern Expands Housing Footprint in Fenway, Roxbury

The Boston Planning and Development Agency has approved Northeastern University’s request for additional off-campus leased housing. Northeastern students will occupy the entire Midtown Hotel, plus 470 to 505 beds at the Westin Copley Place. The university will also lease the Cohen Wing at Symphony Hall for an additional dining facility. Of greater concern for Fenway residents, the university will master-lease more apartments on Hemenway and St. Stephen streets, Huntington and Westland avenues, and at 49 Symphony Rd. Northeastern will also lease units in buildings in Lower Roxbury—at the new development at 1065 Tremont St. and at Douglass Park at 650 Columbus Ave. The largest addition to the master-lease list—20 apartments—will occur at Alpha Management’s 115 St. Stephen St. property. In total, 147 new units will join the master-lease list, which currently comprises more than 300 apartments in the Fenway and Roxbury. Northeastern says move-in for all leased properties on the Huntington side of campus will take place August 30 to September 3, between 8:30am and 6:30pm.

Melnea Cass Blvd. Trees Get New Ally

Passionate advocates for saving trees on Melnea Cass Boulevard made the front page of the *Globe* on August 24. After years of protesting plans to remove dozens of trees in order to add a second bike track and left-turn lanes, the activists welcomed the Conservation Law Foundation’s (CLF) to the fray. CLF filed a request with Parks Commissioner Ryan Woods and the City Attorney’s office for the hearing legally required for removal of public shade trees, a step City officials had bypassed. The road redesign has already received state environmental approval. A certificate issued in 2018 called for cutting only 48 trees, but current plans put the number at more than 100, with root pruning for all remaining trees. An Change.org petition had drawn nearly 7,000 signatures at press time (to see it, go to bit.ly/3luHEWM) and residents have held weekly demonstrations on the boulevard.

E-Line Work Yields Disruptions for Riders

As Mission Hill Main Streets director Ellen Walker tactfully noted, E line track reconstruction has created a challenge for the community. Green Line Transformation Chief Angel Peña’s casual mention of possible lane closures doesn’t give the full picture of the detours and delays that began the evening of August 19 on Huntington Avenue from the Brookline border to Brigham Circle. Inbound Route 39 buses took alternate routes to avoid South Huntington, and riders thought communication about these changes was lacking. On Route 14, riders coming from Nubian Square had to take a nearly two-mile detour into Jamaica Plain, skipping five stops on Heath Street. None of these route changes appeared in the agency’s service alert. MBTA administrators promised that work would wrap up on August 29, when the transformation crew moves back to Commonwealth Avenue for more B line repair.

Public Improvement Commission Pushes Off Kenmore Vote Again

Is it the fourth or fifth? Speculation has mounted about multiple postponements of a Public Improvement Commission vote on rerouting Comm. Ave. and Beacon Street traffic for the proposed Kenmore Hotel project. Why the hold-ups—the developer’s finances, concerns from City Hall, maybe a threatened lawsuit? The new vote is planned on September 3 at 10am. But maybe this isn’t the right time for a new hotel in Boston—developer Robert Korff has his hands full with major mixed-use projects in Newton next to Riverside Station and on Washington Street.

City Creates New System for Neighborhood Meetings

Shanice Pimentel of the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS) has created a public calendar that will list any future confirmed ONS-hosted abutters and community meetings for Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Fenway, Kenmore, and Mission Hill. This calendar will replace her usual weekly newsletter segment. Go to bit.ly/3gQyKQV to see the calendar.

Colleges Announce More Testing and Reopening Measures

On August 24, Northeastern announced that it would increase the frequency of COVID-19 testing for students, from every five days to every three days. Faculty and staff who come onto campus will be tested twice a week. On August 13, Emmanuel College announced it would make its entire fall semester remote and close the campus, including residence halls. On the other hand, Wentworth will open, reducing dorm rooms from quads and triples to doubles and singles and holding classes mostly online. Kathleen Hamill, formerly with Partners in Health, joined Wentworth as its COVID-19 project manager. Like most area colleges, Wentworth will rely on Cambridge’s Broad Institute for rapid-result testing.

The Fenway Gets Six Artist-Designed Utility Boxes

Artists will brighten up Fenway streets later this year with new art on those easily ignored grey metal utility boxes on sidewalks. The Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture PaintBox program has approved designs submitted for six locations. They include two boxes on Huntington Avenue flanking the walkway to Wentworth’s main campus and other near Fenway Park. Kristina Carroll, the Arts and Culture communications director, said her office is waiting on approval from the Department of Public Works, which own some of the boxes, before work can begin. Artists receive \$500 for their work—\$200 up front and the rest after completion.

FENWAY HEALTH



We Believe That Everyone Deserves Access To High-Quality, Affordable Health Care.

Has your employment situation recently changed? Are you currently uninsured?

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**FENWAY HEALTH | 1340 Boylston Street | Boston, MA 02215
617.267.0900 | fenwayhealth.org**

Farmers Markets

It’s a great time of year for peaches, pears, apples, corn, and peppers. Also look for the start of squash, pumpkin, and cranberry season.

ROXBURY CROSSING T STATION (ORANGE LINE)

Tuesday & Friday 11:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m.

COPLEY SQUARE

Tuesday & Friday 11:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

BRIGHAM CIRCLE

Thursday 11:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

Fenway Couple Bags A Top Prize in Citywide Garden Contest



It's a jungle in there—but a Fenway couple clawed their way to the top, parlaying their Victory Gardens plot into a winner in the City's marquee gardening competition. On August 25, when Mayor Marty Walsh announced the winners of the 24th annual Mayor's Garden Contest, Fenwickians Billy and Eric Bain (pictured left) took first place in the Community Garden category. First-place winners in all categories received a "Golden Trowel" award, shown in the photo; second- and third-place winners took home certificates. Judging and delivery of trophies and certificates took place with physical distancing and masks in use. First-place winners also qualified to be entered in a drawing for a grand prize of roundtrip flights for two to any nonstop destination JetBlue flies to from Boston.

CIVIC AGENDA: 819 BOYLSTON

On Monday, Sept. 14 at 5:30pm, the BPDA hosts a virtual community meeting for the 819 Beacon St. project in Audubon Circle. This is one of three SCAPE developments first proposed in 2019. According to a letter of intent filed in November, the project includes approximately 450 residential units and 50 patient-family units created in partnership with Boston Children's Hospital. It would include 215 parking spaces. Reach the BPDA's project manager at Edward.Carmody@Boston.gov or (617) 918-4422. Register for the meeting at www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_glkQqri4T7mQV-lpeMAJCQ.

Local Experts Will Highlight BPL's Upcoming Online Study Group Focused On Climate Change

Concerned about climate change? Want to understand and respond to this challenge? If so, consider registering for the Boston Public Library's seven-week online series, "Climate Action for Everyone: A Learning Circle." Learning circles are lightly-facilitated groups for people who want to learn together in a collaborative, peer-led, supportive environment. A key objective of this one is to identify individual, community, and political actions you can pursue to effectively address climate change and help create a more just and sustainable future.

The BPL will base the series on the University of Michigan's "Act on Climate" course, which covers topics like food, energy, transportation, and the built environment (cities). The BPL's website has further detail about the structure and each topic; find it at <https://bpl.bibliocommons.com/events/search/q=Climate%20Action%20for%20Everyone>. Participants will read and view course content prior to each online meeting. Notably, the learning circle will include material about Massachusetts, and each session will feature a local expert sharing insights as part of the discussion. The seven sessions take place on Wednesdays, Sept. 23 through Nov. 4, from 6:30 to 8pm. You must register, which you can do using the web address above.

If you have questions or want more information, contact Chris Glass at chglass@bpl.org.



Parcel 12

Featuring storefront retail, a hotel, world-class office building, and a landscaped public plaza overlooking the Pike.

Samuels & Associates would like to thank the Back Bay and Fenway neighborhoods for seven years of collaboration and input that helped to bring this exciting project to life.

Parcel 12 is moving forward. We have created the following resources for residents to say informed during construction:

Visit buildp12.com for information on construction information and lookaheads

Please sign up for periodic email notifications on construction status via buildp12.com

For construction related inquiries, please call 617-356-8149

The Arts

Gardner Pulls Back Curtain on Thomas McKeller, ‘Boston’s Apollo’

PHOTO: RUTH KHOWAIS



BY RUTH KHOWAIS

Boston’s Apollo,” an exhibit at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, had just opened when the museum shut down in March. The museum has extended it through October 12, and it is well worth seeing.

This exhibit traces John Singer Sargent’s relationship with Thomas McKeller, an African American elevator operator at the luxurious Vendome Hotel in Boston, where Sargent lived. Born in Wilmington, North Carolina, in 1890, McKeller came to Boston during the Great Migration, right before new Jim Crow laws were enacted in Wilmington. He lived in the South End and by 1913 had secured a job operating the elevator at the Vendome. He and Sargent reportedly met in the elevator in 1916.

McKeller was the model for several famous murals at the rotunda of the Museum of Fine Arts and Harvard’s Widener Library, as well as for the body in a portrait of Harvard President Abbott Lawrence Lowell. Sculptor Cyrus Dallin used McKeller as a model in Sargent’s studio to create his life-size statue of Massasoit for the 300th anniversary of the Pilgrims’ landing at Plymouth.

All of the paintings, drawing, and sculptures McKeller modeled for were of subjects who were white or were depicted as white. Kadahj Bennett, an actor and writer who is a frequent collaborator at the Gardner Museum said, “His body is dismembered, manipulated, and

Sargent’s studies of McKeller, a Black man, became the basis for men and women depicted as white in murals at the MFA and at Harvard.

regenerated for white consumption.”

Sargent never identified McKeller’s blackness and instead transformed him into a Greek God—Apollo for his “Apollo and the Muse” at the MFA, Atlas holding the world on his shoulders, Achilles, and Eros, the Greek god of love and desire, which are all found in the rotunda and grand staircase at the MFA.

In this time of Black Lives Matter, many would agree with Theo Tyson, an art curator and fellow in American Art and Culture at the Boston Athenaeum, who wrote for the show that “Sargent morphs [McKeller’s] body into white gods and goddesses. He wields full control over his muse—a master to McKeller in a relationship reminiscent of slavery.”

Sargent gave the preparatory drawings for his murals featuring McKeller to Isabella Stewart Gardner, so the Museum has a number of these charcoal studies and drawings of McKeller displayed together for the first time. All are very interesting and depict a handsome, well-proportioned man. Also included in the exhibit is an amazing nude oil portrait of McKeller. According to museum notes, Sargent worked on this portrait while commissioned by the MFA but kept it for himself and never exhibited this painting in his lifetime. McKeller in this painting has legs splayed showing his sexual organs, shoulders pulled back, and head back—clearly an erotic pose.

Viewing this exhibit makes one want to dash over to the Museum of Fine Arts to see the rotunda murals, but, alas, they are closed.

Ruth Khowais lives in the West Fens.

EATS BEAT

> **Café Phinista** has softly opened in the former Neighborhoods Coffee & Crepes space on Peterborough Street, offering Vietnamese coffee and crepes (an homage to their predecessor). Phinista, which started as a pop-up concept in 2019, opened on August 1 selling high-quality, Vietnamese coffee using a phin filter—a slow method of brewing that has been described as a cross between a pour-over and a French press. In addition to coffee, Phinista offers a Vietnamese latte in flavors such as mocha, crème brûlée, rose, and lavender. Hours are currently 7am-4pm, with a plan to extend to 9pm in the near future. See the full menu at phinista.com.

- > **On Boylston Street across from the Hynes, McGreevy’s has permanently closed. On August 12, the owners announced that amid the pandemic, the sports bar—which launched in 2008—would not reopen. The bar hosted free comedy shows twice a week and was a live-music and game-day destination.**
- > **Beset by questions raised by the Me Too and Black Lives Matter movements, not to mention a pandemic, the James Beard Foundation suspended its awards program—the Oscars of the restaurant industry—for 2020 and 2021. That left a long list of semifinalists, announced early in 2020, as default winners. Local chefs on the list included Irene Li of Mei Mei in Audubon Circle and Tiffani Faison of Orfano in the West Fens. Congratulations to both!**

NEW BERKLEE CENTER FOCUSES ON ARTS ED. FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

Working with co-sponsor United Sound, the Berklee Institute for Arts Education and Special Needs has created a new clearinghouse of resources for artists, teachers, students, and groups working at the intersection of arts education and special needs. The ABLE [Arts Better the Lives of Everyone] Arts Resource Center will provide a searchable and accessible portal for resources that support arts education, creation and performance for people with disabilities. In addition to active updating and expansion of the network, an editorial board will work with authors and experts to develop new assets that fill gaps they identify in the field.

With ‘Furry’ Culture, A Door to Belonging Opens

BY ADRIAN TARR

Editor’s Note: With the school year starting, and looking a little different than normal, The Fenway News showcases a reminder of simpler times, when students, and all of us could freely congregate—sometimes in elaborate furry suits.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CLINT FOX



Clint Fox in March of this year.

What walks on two legs, barks like a dog and has hair all over? It’s not your weird hippie uncle, it’s a “furry,” the name given for people belonging to a most unusual, and indeed plush, subculture.

Clint “Fox” is a 23-year-old male with a unique “fursona”—an alternative animal personality—who identifies as a furry. Clint’s fursona is a tall feminine fox with orange-and-white fur and sunset yellow eyes who frequently wears a green scarf around their neck. Clint isn’t the only one, either.

Clint belongs to a Boston-based furry group with hundreds of other fursuiters. While smaller than other neighboring universities, Clint says Northeastern’s furry population is close to 20 students. According to furscience.com, an online database founded by investigators with diverse fields of expertise, “the term furry describes a diverse community of fans, artists, writers, gamers, and role players.” The furry fandom is a globe-spanning network of individuals who don suits made to represent an animalistic character of their own creation.

There are quite a few negative connotations and stereotypes associated with the furry fandom. One skepticism involved with group concerns the fetishism of bestiality. Many people with a limited grasp of the breadth of the furry fandom believe it to be a cult for sexual deviants. Others associate the group with mental disability and dissociative disorders.

The original concept of the furry, according to fandom historian Fred Patten, originates from the comic book *Albedo*, written and illustrated by Steven Gallacci. *Albedo* followed the intergalactic exploits of several anthropomorphic characters, garnering a growing following through the 1980s. These followers, who would often meet at science fiction conventions, began to costume themselves as characters depicted in the comic, and would even add their own non-canonized story to the *Albedo* universe.

“I think we’ve all got a little bit of animal in us,” Clint said on his way home. “A lot of us are able to comfortably communicate a different side of ourselves when we put on the suit. I think that’s what it comes down to, feeling comfortable in a community.”

For a lot of furies, the concept of being different—but together—is key. Many are bullied for their involvement in the fandom, but for most, the bullying didn’t begin with becoming a furry.

According to furscience.com, furies are “significantly more likely to have a history of being physically and verbally bullied,” specifically during adolescence, at roughly 62 percent, compared to nearly 37 percent. Bullying and stigma aside, individuals with some form of furry identity benefit from a

specific kind of social interaction that comes with finding like-minded individuals—and there is little shortage here in Boston.

Edmond Lam is a third-year mechanical engineering student at Northeastern. Edmond commonly goes by Ed, but among the furry community, he is best known as Vyle. Vyle is one of a few fursonas under Ed’s supervision. Vyle is a six-foot-five blue-and-red fluffy dragon with neon blue eyes and short red horns. Unlike Clint’s physical manifestation of his fursona, Vyle, at least at the moment, exists only in Ed’s head and in his illustrations.

“One day he’s going to be real... like real [as in] I can touch him,” Ed said with aspiration glimmering through his rectangular glasses. As of right now, Ed doesn’t own his own fursuit. They’re expensive and take quite some time to make. “A good fursuit costs at least \$500,” and that kind of financial investment isn’t in the cards for Ed right now.

I was able to meet Ed the same way a lot of way furies are able to make first contact with one another—through the internet. More specifically, on a Boston-based furry Reddit page. In the anticipation of meeting my first real-life unsuited furry, I had no idea what to expect.

Waiting for him at the proctor station of his dorm, I was trying to picture what Ed might look like—stereotypes running rampant. Was he going to come meet me in a suit? Is there a secret furry greeting that will offend him if I can’t comprehend?

In hindsight, these thoughts were human, yet ridiculous. And that’s exactly what Ed was when I first met him: human. Ed is not a short guy, he’s a little over six feet tall. He looked

> **FURRIES** on page 8

The Arts

> **FURRIES** from previous page smart in his glasses and well-fitting, button-up, cuffed jeans and leather boots. As he took me up to his seventh-floor dorm room, he answered a few of my most burning questions. This was the first time—to my awareness—I had ever properly met a furry.

“Why yes, I am a furry!” Ed said with a cheeky smile, as I asked him if I could call him one. As it turns out, the difference between a fursuiter and furries is squares to rectangles. A fursuiter is someone who actively owns or engages in the full self-decoration of the suit. A furry could be anyone, fur clad or not, who can fit their appreciation for the fandom into their own fursona. Ed’s fursona, Vyle, doesn’t have a suit to his name... yet.

For now. Instead, Ed borrows his roommate’s fursona, Ash. Ash is grey wolf with dark eyes and light blue undertones. When Ed goes to meetups and events, he puts on Ash as a sort of “guest” fursona. Arriving at Ed’s room on the seventh floor, I was almost surprised at how unsurprised I was. Against the right wall was a shelf unit that perfectly fit 5 unique fursuit heads. To my surprise—one of them was Clint’s iconic fox!

“He’s honestly the best roommate... he waters all of the plants!” -A row of ferns and smaller potted plants line the back wall, in front of a large window that casts green light into the room through and off the flora.

Ed lives with two others, Clint, and another furry, Jason Wearer, and the three of them share four different fursuits. Clint takes ownership of his fox fursona, as well as a midnight blue wyvern dragon fursuit named Amethyst. Jason owns Ash, and a white-and-grey husky named Maverick.

“Its like lending a friend your laptop,” Jason said, thoroughly inspecting Ash’s head piece. “But when you get to know and trust someone, you don’t really mind it. You just



Mollie Costanza (right) with fellow furry “Strobes” in October of last year.

want to see them have fun with it.” Jason is a quiet third-year computer science major in his normal clothes. When he puts on Maverick, the story completely changes. He becomes outgoing and an impulsively enthusiastic individual.

According to Dr. Courtney Plante, a social psychologist who contributes to the study of animal-human interaction, this behavior is healthy and not as abnormal as it may appear. Dr. Plante views this as typical behavior of those who have struggled in the past with finding an in-group

“The furry world is one of fantasy, where dragons co-exist with bipedal, talking wolves and impossible hybrids.” Dr. Plante writes. Because the world of furry content is so broad and all-inclusive, the fandom itself tends to reflect those norms. “After all, if I am spending time playing pretend as a neon-blue cat that walks and talks, am I in any position to judge you for what you wear or how you

choose to identify?”

In this way, many furries describe the fandom as one of the first places where they felt they could belong.

Ed went to a medium-sized high school in Manhattan, whose student body he didn’t fit into. “I got a lot of crap for reasons I never got, and eventually I gave up trying to figure [it] out.”

While he wasn’t the only smart, nerdy kid in his high school, the complexities of preteen social dynamics left him mostly friendless there. “I had to outsource my friends in high school” Ed said.

Robotics club was where Ed felt most in his element. “There wasn’t homework or assignments or teachers that kept me there for any other reason, I just wanted to make robots, and so did the other people there.” Lucky for Ed, he now gets to study mechanical engineering at his own fruition, and the furry fandom has become his newer, better robotics club.

It was a cloudy Thursday afternoon, and with my three new friends, I was about to attend my first furmeet. Clint was in his iconic Fox fursona, and Jason was wearing Maverick. The plan was to meet up at around three at Needham Bowlaway, a little over half an hour from Northeastern’s campus.

I felt at ease staring into the endearing eyes of a furry headpiece—but when standing next to three fully decorated furries—I was the odd one out. Being on the taller side, I was unfamiliar with the sensation of being significantly shorter than everyone else. It was like I was at a basketball game with the monsters from Space Jam, but instead of scaly and scary, they were hairy and huggable.

The four of us hailed an Uber for the 30-minute journey. We were in luck to have been paired with a larger-size SUV, thinking about somehow cramming into a Prius was a hilarious thought exercise. Our driver, an older gentleman, seemed perplexed to say the least, but kept to himself throughout our journey.

Upon arrival, I immediately took in the breadth of color and diversity of characters. It was as if I was Snow White in the enchanted forest, and all my vibrant animal friends had grown to almost seven feet.

“Yip! Woot! Grrr!”

Animalistic greetings, exclamations,

and expressions filled the parking lot. Furries hugged, jumped for joy, wrestled and shared some nose-to-nose nuzzles. It turned out I wasn’t the only one unde-rdressed for the occasion. To my surprise, there were a few furries wearing only their headpieces, and others still with just their tails and headband ears.

We crammed into the entrance of Needham Bowlaway like a bunch of fuzzy sardines. The folks running the lanes greeted us with a cheer—they were familiar with their furry patrons. All 25 or so of us were split into five lanes of five. The original four of us were joined by Mollie Constanza, rocking her Gale Frostbane fursona. Gale is a large black-and-blue feline creature with long protruding fangs.

“She’s actually pretty famous around here,” Clint said giving me a few elbows to the shoulder.

“Fluff up, Clint!” said Constanza, which turns out to be quite the common furry expression.

Mollie picked a ball from the rack with a unique two-pawed style, and athletically bowled a nine on her first go. As it turns out, Mollie is a coordinator for Anthro New England, the largest furry convention on the east coast.

At this point in time, the furry community’s biggest gripe is with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS. For the longest time one of the loudest and proudest members of the furry fandom was Tony Barrett, a furry with ALS who was best known as Dogbomb. Before his prognosis in 2018, Tony was a prominent marathon runner and fursuiter in Orange County, California. Notorious for hosting running meetups for both LGBTQ and furry members in his community, his ALS launched him into the national spotlight. A lover and a fighter, in 2018, Tony was given a year to live. He died on April 5 of last year.

Greg Foster, who is not a furry, spoke to me about Tony’s involvement within the furry community: “Tony was a funny, quirky dude with an all-around passion for life. A while back, a runner friend of his invited him to what he thought was a costume party, but was actually a furry hang-out.” Greg explained. He recalled Tony’s feeling ashamed he wasn’t aware of the furry fanbase earlier. “He loved it—he loved the people in it.”

It didn’t take long for Tony to start gathering people around the fandom. “He was like a lamp to the moths, he was a warm light and a passionate, compassionate and driven person.” Tony’s fursona, Dogbomb, was a big and fearless German Shepard. An inspiration to furries all over, Tony left his mark on a lot of people. “I’ve never seen a community come around a person or cause more powerfully.” Ed said, visibly moved. “Dogbomb represented the best of us, he was the ideal furry.” At the end of the day, that’s what the furry community is at its crux—a tight-knit group of unique people with a whole lot of love for each other. In a tweet last year, Tony said “ALS is taking away my body, but it cannot touch the truth of my memories, the wonderful life that I’ve lead, and the paw prints we’ve left on this magnificent piece of the natural world.”

Adrian Tarr is a journalism student at Northeastern University.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MOLLIE COSTANZA

MassArt Trustees Reveiw Youth Program, Racial Equity

BY ALISON PULTINAS

Massart’s summer Artward Bound sessions went virtual this year with a shorter five-week program. For the 32 high school students who took part, as participant Shurvina Herald said in the closing ceremony, the artmaking was a lesson in making do with what you have.

Artward Bound is a free, year-round program led by Chandra Méndez-Ortiz. Students participate during all four years of high school. The summer sessions include classes in the morning and studio work in the afternoon. Assigned reading in 2020 included *All Boys Aren’t Blue* by George M. Johnson. The program’s fall term starts September 30 for seniors and October 2 for everyone else; classes will continue virtually for the year.

Open to Boston-area high school students, the program boasts a 100 percent graduation rate and a 94 percent college-enrollment rate. Of participants, 91 percent are students of color and 65 percent go on to study art and design in college.

The end-of-summer celebration took place on August 11 and featured the first-ever Artward Bound Film Fest, showcasing films created by students during a five-day “Producing Films for The Future” course, taught by MassArt’s

Darren Cole. The films are available on Artward Bound’s YouTube channel.

For acting MassArt President Kymberly Pinder, Artward



Bound exemplifies the JEDI spirit that infuses all MassArt policies and programs. JEDI stands for justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, the work the school is doing to support those principles schoolwide.

At the August 12 board of trustees meeting, Lyssa Palu-ay, dean of the new Office of the Justice, Equity and Transformation, and Kara Lynn Gau, director of the Institutional Research Department, discussed what the school is doing to close equity gaps and improve retention for Latinx and Black students, such as providing mentoring.

The board reviewed data showing the most recent retention and graduation gaps at approximately 9 to 10 percent, trending downward from earlier years.

Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill. Watch the Producing Films for the Future compilation at www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HILW4njCEw.

STILL COURTESY OF ARTWARD BOUND

FENWAY CDC IS HIRING!

> **We’re looking for a part- or full-time Operations and Human Resources Manager. The ideal candidate**

will have a good working knowledge of Windows, Microsoft Office, and database programs; be highly organized and self-motivated; and have strong writing and verbal communication skills.

> **For a position description and application details, please visit www.Fenwaycdc.org/become-a-member/careers/ after September 8.**



Fenway Community Development Corporation
Improving Lives and Building Community

September

CALENDAR

Thu, 9/3

REMEMBER THE TITANS AT THE MFA. The MFA will screen this family film about the first racially integrated high school football team to win a state championship. The screening adheres to strict social distancing guidelines. Bring a blanket or low chair (maximum 3 feet high), a picnic, and nonalcoholic beverages to enjoy during the film. Huntington Avenue Exterior at Forsyth Way at 7:30pm. Tickets are required and available at <https://mfa.org/event/film/remember-the-titans?event=63301>. FREE.

Mon, 9/7

Join the Fenway Community Center for its **VOICE AND JUSTICE** meeting at 7pm. Dr. Nate will be back to discuss “Critical Race Theory and Black History.” Find the link and additional information at fenwaycommunitycenter.org.

Wed, 9/9 & 9/23

FENWAY FAIR FOODS. 3:30pm. Get a free bag of fresh fruits and vegetables at Holy Trinity Cathedral, 165 Park Dr. Residents in need may also arrange a no-contact home delivery. For more information contact Jasmine Vargas at jvargas@fenwaycdc.org or (617) 267-4637 x13.

Mon, 9/14

BOSTON BAKED BOOKS. 6:30pm. All are welcome. This month’s title, *Little Fires Everywhere* by Celeste Ng, is available at Brookline Booksmith and the Boston Public Library. Find the Zoom link and additional information at fenwaycommunitycenter.org.

Fri, 9/11

ANJIMILE AND OOMPA. Tune in at <https://mfa.org/event/music/anjimile-and-oompa?event=63326> for performances by *Anjimile and Oompa* livestreamed straight

to your home from the MFA’s Calderwood Courtyard. 7:30pm.

Beginning Mon, 9/14

PUBLIC SPEAKING AT THE FENWAY COMMUNITY CENTER. 7pm. Learn to be an effective speaker in any environment. Program dates are 9/14, 9/21, 10/5, 10/19, 10/26, & 11/2. Registration is required and available at fenwaycommunitycenter.org.

Beginning Wed, 9/16

READING GREAT PLAYS AT THE FENWAY

COMMUNITY CENTER. 7pm. Like a book club—but for the theatre. Join the FCC biweekly this fall to discuss a diverse collection of well- and lesser-known plays and engage in lively discussion. The program dates are 9/16, 9/30, 10/14, 10/28, 11/4, & 11/18. Registration is required; visit fenwaycommunitycenter.org.

Wed, 9/16 to Sun, 9/20

FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW (F.U.N.) FESTIVAL. Organized by City Awake, the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce’s

young professional platform, F.U.N. is a decentralized five-day festival with 30-plus virtual events highlighting the experiences, challenges, and opportunities for young professionals of color in Boston. Go to www.cityawake.org/programs/fun to register for events.

Thu, 9/17

- **PANEL: WHAT IS AN ABOLITIONIST PRACTICE?** This online panel offer contemporary and historical perspectives on art and racial justice movements in Boston and beyond. Artists, cultural workers, and historians will consider abolition as a horizon and discuss how the arts and culture can contribute to radical imagination and new possibilities. 6pm. Register at https://tufts.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_HSGjRvmdRz2snYBpamrv3g
- **SELENA AT THE MFA.** The MFA screens this classic biopic about Latin pop star Selena. Presented in partnership with the Roxbury International Film Festival and the Boston Latino International Film Festival, the screening will adhere to strict distancing guidelines. Bring a blanket or low chair (maximum 3 feet high), a picnic, and nonalcoholic beverages to enjoy during the film. Huntington Avenue Exterior at Forsyth Way at 7:30pm. Tickets are required and available at <https://mfa.org/event/film/selena?event=63316>. FREE.

Fri, 9/25

MIRANDA RAE AND NAOMI WEST-WATER. Tune in to <https://mfa.org/event/music/miranda-rae-and-naomi-westwater?event=63336> at 7:30pm for performances by Miranda Rae and Naomi Westwater livestreamed straight to your home from the MFA’s Calderwood Courtyard. Each performer plays for 45 minutes, with a 10-minute intermission between sets.

@ THE CENTER

- During the public health emergency, the Fenway Community Center has transitioned to virtual activities. Find the links for all activities at fenwaycommunitycenter.org.
- **Mondays at 10:30am: WORLD OF WONDER, AGES 3-8.** This program delves deep into our connection with nature, based on the premise that direct experience in nature is essential to children’s physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development.
 - **Mondays at 1pm: FCC’S VIRTUAL 5K.** Find support as you prepare to roll, walk, jog, or run your own 5K! Walk on your own, and meet via Zoom once a week to encourage each other and receive tips on walking/running, healthy eating, sleep and relaxation. All ages and abilities are welcome.
 - **Mondays at 6:30pm: SILENT BOOK CLUB.**
 - **Tuesdays at 12pm: NEIGHBORHOOD CHAT.**
 - **Tuesdays at 6:30pm and Fridays at 9pm: AMANDA’S HOME MOVIES.**

- Great films and discussions twice a week. For more information, email fccfirstfridayfilms@gmail.com.
- **Wednesdays at 6pm: GUIDED MEDIATION.** Fenway residents & licensed instructors Pallavi and Vaibhav lead you in reducing stress, improving emotional health, and practicing self-compassion.
 - **Wednesdays at 7:30pm: TRIVIA NIGHT.** Noncompetitive fun with neighbors and friends.
 - **Thursdays at 10:30am: NAVIGATORS USA.** The FCC is forming a new chapter of this contemporary, inclusive scouting movement right here in the Fenway. The chapter alternates between virtual and in-person activities. The Boston Chapter offers free uniform, membership, and outings. Currently, we provide the materials and admission for outings, and families will complete activities independently.
 - **Thursdays at 7pm: GAME NIGHT.** Play Drawful and other online games, all suitable for all ages.

COMMON CAUSE COMMON GOOD

MASK UP.
KEEP DISTANCE.
WASH HANDS.
GET TESTED.
TRUST THE SCIENCE.
WE PLEDGE TO RESPECT
OUR HOME, ON CAMPUS AND OFF.



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