



THE Fenway News

HYPERLOCAL NEWS FOR THE FENWAY, AUDUBON CIRCLE, KENMORE SQUARE, UPPER BACK BAY, PRUDENTIAL, LONGWOOD, AND MISSION HILL SINCE 1974 • VOLUME 51 NUMBER 3 • FEBRUARY 28 - MARCH 28, 2025

Council Votes to Extend 12 Urban Renewal Plans That Date As Far Back As 1957

BY ALISON PULTINAS

As chair of the City Council’s Planning, Development, and Transportation Committee, District 8 Councilor Sharon Durkan held an in-person hearing Feb. 11 with four Planning Department staff members: Deputy Chief Devin Quirk, Attorney Lisa Herrington, Senior Policy Advisor Reuben Kantor, and Policy Specialist Max Houghton on the panel. They presented Mayor Michelle Wu’s request to extend 12 urban renewal plans for another two years. The plans—established between 1957 and 1973—currently “sunset” on March 31.

The Fenway Urban Renewal Plan, enacted in 1965, takes in Northeastern University, Wentworth Institute of Technology, the Museum of Fine Arts, the Longwood Medical Area, the Back Bay Fens, and the Fenway residential streets east of the Muddy River. Parcels lie in two Council districts, 7 and 8, and include land originally designated for the Inner Belt highway system.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority set the urban renewal plans to expire after 40 years, but it has repeatedly renewed them. The powers they confer—eminent-domain takings, tax forgiveness, and bypassing zoning restrictions—have been hard to give up.

The power to do good through land disposition agreements (LDAs) is the argument that Wu has emphasized. For

example, her administration has promised preserving community gardens and income-restricted elderly housing. They argue that LDAs associated with projects in the 12 active renewal areas are at risk if the plans expire.

Wu’s 2023 home-rule petition to the state legislature would abolish existing urban renewal zoning but retain the powers the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) has used for urban renewal to pursue goals of equity, resilience, and affordability with a focus on climate readiness. The BPDA would keep its ability to enforce restrictions that protect community assets, such as affordable housing and open space. The petition passed the state’s House of Representatives but not the Senate.

According to the presentation at the Feb. 11 hearing, “While awaiting passage of the Home Rule Petition, the Planning Department must request an extension to Urban Renewal to prevent the loss of important land protections in the City...Today, Boston’s active Urban Renewal Plans protect over half a century’s worth of important land covenants across the city. With the expiration of the Plans, the majority of these land protections would be irreversibly lost.”

The Urban Renewal dashboard on bostonplans.org lists book and page references in the Suffolk Registry of Deeds for hundreds of LDAs. A quick look at Fenway-

associated deeds shows that many contracts—such as the one for the Symphony Plaza residential towers (8947/291)—include the phrase “the provisions of this Agreement shall be binding upon the public body or bodies succeeding to the interests of the Authority [the Boston Redevelopment Authority].” This successor clause seems to indicate that an LDA can legally sit with another government body. That, for example, the BPDA could assign authority to the City of Boston.

North End resident Victor Brogna spoke during the hearing, explaining that the legal language used in the 850 LDAs most often follow a template that includes a successor clause. The standard language permits assignment of the Boston Redevelopment Authority’s (BRA) rights to another public body, including the City of Boston. This implies that it is possible to get rid of the BRA, as Wu the candidate promised.

The focus on the LDAs resonates with councilors, as the feel-good themes of open space, affordable housing, and community facilities are difficult to oppose. As Quirk stated, relatively few Boston residents would be against the extensions.

However, Councilors Ed Flynn and Erin Murphy did have questions about whether other protections are possible and why the State Senate continues to hold up the home-rule petition. Durkan suggested that the Senate

CIVIC AGENDA

Thu 3/6

Town Hall: What’s Next Under Trump?

Sen. Brownsberger, Reps. Livingstone and Ryan, and Councilors Louijeune, Durkan, and Fernandes Anderson discuss how the state and city are responding to disruptive new federal policies. Register at tinyurl.com/fenwaytownhall. 6pm, Fenway Community Center, 1282 Boylston (enter from Jersey Street)

Mon 3/24

Public Meeting: Fenway Transpo. Action Plan

Get an update on the much-delayed neighborhood transportation plan, learn about the “story map,” and provide plan feedback. 6:30–8:00pm, Fenway Community Center, 1282 Boylston (enter from Jersey Street)

does not want to relinquish its hold over Boston. Flynn memorably stated, “I’m not politically correct...I’m not here to be a rubber stamp, that’s the job of other councilors.”

There was some confusion in the Feb. 11 testimony about whether it is the Planning Department or the BPDA involved. However, Brogna pointed out that Kantor, the senior

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SKEPTICAL NEIGHBORS PROMPT ZBA TO ADD LIMITS TO LICENSE FOR W. FENS BEER GARDEN

BY STEVE WOLF

Samuels & Associates won a license from the Zoning Board of Appeals to open a seasonal beer garden on the old Tasty Burger site at Boylston and Jersey streets on Feb 25. But the license came with some strings attached.

Despite support from District 8 City Councilor Sharon Durkan and the Fenway Civic Association, residents and a direct abutter persuaded the ZBA to add conditions to the license intended to stave off at least some potential impacts on residents.

The proposal calls for renovation of the existing restaurant building and hybrid use of its suburban-style parking lot: as a venue holding up to 708 people for acoustic concerts from April 1 to mid-October, and as a parking lot the rest of the year. Dennis Quilty, attorney for Samuels, told the board that Nantucket-based Cisco Brewers would run the facility. He said the beer garden would operate six days a week and assured the hearing that live music would stop at 8pm, with recorded music playing until 10pm.

Outdoor music raised the biggest red flags for residents. Owner of the Viridian, Audrey Epstein Reny, expressed concern about music volume and genres, which she felt threatened to disrupt life for hundreds of tenants in her building across the street. Maura Zlody, a condo owner, amplified Reny’s concern, citing the site’s short distance from her home—roughly 300 feet—on Jersey just south of Boylston. Although Quilty had earlier assured the board that the concert stage’s configuration would direct sound toward Fenway Park, Zlody wasn’t buying it. “It’s a

BEER GARDEN ON PAGE 3 >

TIED UP ON HUNTINGTON AVE.

It has been more than 940 days since street-occupancy permits were first issued for the high-rise project at 252-254 Huntington Ave. That construction has blocked both the south-side sidewalks and the road itself, with traffic and pedestrians forced to detour to St. Botolph Street.



PHOTO: ALISON PULTINAS



KING OF THE 'FENWAY KINKS'?



PHOTO: LESLIE POND

You might have noticed a new “sculpture” of pallets and dirty snow on Boylston Street near the John Boyle O’Reilly monument. Actually, it’s the remains of a snowboarding ramp built on Feb. 10 by a small crew from 686, a maker of ski and snowboarding apparel. Pro snowboarder Cooper Whittier, who specializes in urban snowboarding, attempted to ride the stair rail all the way down to Mother’s Rest. The crew dubbed the rail the “Fenway Kinks”—apparently it’s a highly unusual and challenging configuration for snowboarding. Did he conquer the Kinks? Not while I was there, so we’ll have to wait until the video comes out this fall. (Hopefully, the pallets will have been removed by then.) With the Red Bull Heavy Metal event held late last month at City Hall Plaza, is Boston becoming a hot spot for street snowboarding?

—LESLIE POND

FENSVIEWS

Changing Hearts and Minds Becomes First Task of Resistance

BY JOHN MORAN, STATE REPRESENTATIVE 9TH SUFFOLK

As we enter the second month of the second Trump administration, it's hard for me to believe that less than two years ago that I was sworn in as a state representative. I will never forget that celebratory June day, highlighted by an LGBTQ+ Pride event on the front steps of the State House. In those more inclusive days, I also attended a ceremony at Arlington Street Church recognizing the 20th anniversary of same-sex marriage and watched then-Vice President Kamala Harris deliver a rousing campaign speech in Provincetown. As a gay man, I loved those hopeful days, after years of fighting to have my community recognized as equal citizens.

My, how times have changed in just a few short months for the LGBTQ+ community and other marginalized populations. We now find ourselves targets of a vengeful president whose signature talent is harnessing hatred to drive his self-serving agenda.

At the State House, I will continue to work with my colleagues to pass important pieces of legislation such as the Safe Communities Act and the Freedom of Expression bill. But let's not focus all our efforts on thwarting national policies.

I've learned through emails crossing my desk and from your comments on my social media posts that we all must work to change hearts and minds right here closer to home. Apparently not everyone in our community thinks removing mention of trans people from the Stonewall Memorial or from Medicare forms is a problem, for example. And not everyone feels that we need to continue to fund family shelters, even with new limitations.

And not everyone cares that the demise of DEI may cause highly qualified individuals to be passed over for positions in our institutions across the Commonwealth. I personally have too much experience working for large corporations before DEI to ever ignore that last threat.

As simple as it sounds, I think Job Number One is changing hearts and minds one person at a time on our own blocks through cordial interaction. Though we think we are safe here in Massachusetts, we have a lot of work to do.

Our country is stronger with immigration and with diversity. Maybe we just need to remind our neighbors about that on walks away from iPhones and TV screens! Let's think of that as one action we can control amid the uncontrollable chaos bombarding us daily from Washington DC.

Let's not go back in Massachusetts!

State Representative John Moran's 9th Suffolk district includes areas of the South End that border our neighborhoods of the Fenway and Mission Hill.

GUEST OPINION

I only have to hint about what we see every day in the headlines—the war on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs, the stripping away of the rights of over 2.3 million transgender persons, and the all-too-predictable equating of immigrants with “criminals.” But as an elected representative, I can offer some thoughts on how to navigate these incredibly sad times.

Many of my colleagues have wisely stated that we should try first and foremost to separate the rapid-fire daily pronouncements from the president's actual ability to carry out his wishes. He wants to dazzle us with his fireworks so that we ignore the headlines. We need to keep our cool, analyze each order, and follow up with robust, targeted countermeasures. The courts are already helping with this effort.

Tracks Across the Icy Muddy

PHOTO: LESLIE POND



After a stretch of bitterly cold weather, footprints revealed traffic on the Muddy River between the East and West Fens, near the Richardson Bridge at Boylston Street.

PHOTO: ALISON PULTINAS



CARVING OUT A SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN THE LMA



PHOTO COURTESY OF LONGWOOD COLLECTIVE

The nonprofit Longwood Collective provides services and programs to promote a sense of community in the Longwood Medical and Academic Area (LMA), where its 22 member institutions employ more than 67,000 people. The Collective's placemaking initiative, called Outside//, sponsored “Winter Wednesday” ice carving events (left)—ideal for last month's unusually cold temperatures. Other Outside// programs include free bike safety checks (above), live music, and free coffee.

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. While the Fenway has changed since then, we remain committed to the spirit of identifying problems and making our neighborhood a better and safer place to live.

> NEXT ISSUE <

Our next issue will appear on **Friday, March 28.**

> DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS <

The deadline for letters, news items, and ads for our next issue is **Friday, March 21.**

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55 Bus Coalition Gathers Stories of How Cuts Have Hurt Riders

BY RUTH KHOWAIS

On Feb. 4, the Fenway CDC hosted a 55 Bus Coalition meeting at the Fenway Community Center. This was the coalition's first in-person meeting in quite a while, and it focused on stories about what the bus means to the meeting attendees. Respondents could tell their stories on paper, audio, or video. The fate of the 55 bus, which runs from Queensberry and Jersey Streets to Copley Square, has

been an ongoing issue in the Fenway since the MBTA cut its hours to 10:00 am to 4:00 pm and dramatically reduced its route.

Attendees answered a series of questions: Why is the 55 bus important to you? Where do you use it to go? If taking the Green Line from the Fenway to Copley isn't a good option for you, please share why that is.

Felix Arroyo from the West Fens said, "I ride the 55 often. It takes me to other areas easily because it is the only bus that goes into the West Fenway neighborhood." When asked if taking the Green Line from the Fenway to Copley was a good option for him, Arroyo said, "The distance can cause pain to my osteoarthritis on days when the weather is bad and because it's more complicated and there's more walking involved." He added, "Expanding the 55 to Park Street [which would restore the original

route-Ed.] would allow me to save more by shopping at Downtown Crossing and that area."

Yvonne Dawkins, West Fens, said, "I am a 55 rider. I use a walker and a mobility scooter. Being disabled, the Green Line is not an option. The Green Line has ramps but the ramps are too short and end up being too steep. The Green Line is overcrowded, has limited seating, and stations require stairs or elevator, which can be a hassle when carrying luggage and packages; it also takes more time to travel. People with canes and mobile equipment encounter added hassles."

William Stoll from the West Fens said, "I'm 76 years old and use a rollator. My rollator makes using the Green Line trolley difficult; also it's a long walk. Without the 55 bus, I'd be a virtual prisoner in my apartment."

Stan Everett, speaking on a

previously recorded video, said, "When I first moved to the West Fens, the 55 bus every morning was crowded, and the same in the evening coming home. Then last year, the MBTA stopped this service and ridership has never gotten back to full ridership."

He added, "As a retired person, the 55 bus makes it easier for me to go to Copley Square. I'd love to be able to go downtown. The hours are not convenient. If there were longer hours primarily in the morning, I would go to the library."

Other respondents mentioned that the Green Line can be overcrowded or delayed. One respondent noted that a bus is easier to get on and off, as the driver can lower the steps. On a trolley, the step is often high or there is a large gap to traverse.

Jamie Culbertson, Fenway CDC community organizer, led the meeting. Asked what the FCDC would be doing with residents' stories, she said, "I'm not sure yet, but we'll definitely be sharing the comments with MBTA officials, and we'll also have some type of public sharing like a website or video and potentially a community event."

Ruth Khowais lives in the West Fens.

> URBAN RENEWAL FROM PAGE 1
policy advisor, said at the beginning of the hearing that it was the BRA—still the legal name of the BPDA—not the Planning Department, that was proposing to extend urban renewal in the 12 areas.

On Feb. 12, the full council voted to approve the plan extensions. The next step is a BPDA board vote on March 13.

Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill.

ROXBURY TENANTS OF HARVARD CELEBRATE LUNAR NEW YEAR

PHOTOS: JUSTIN HE AND JINGMING FENG



On Feb. 2, the Roxbury Tenants of Harvard hosted a Lunar New Year celebration, ushering in the Year of the Snake with performances and a speaking program. At far left, RTH board members Pauline Lin and Sophia Deng flank the lion from the Kwong Kow Chinese School lion-dancing team. Near left, Antoinette Lasseur holds the mic while Jingming Feng tickles the ivories (well, the keyboard).

CORRECTION

The February Fenway News misidentified a piece of art on display at Boston University's Stone Gallery. We stated that the pictured work was Michael Zachary's "Stream Bed." The artwork actually shown was Juan José Barboza-Gubo "Desborde." We regret the error.

52ND ANNUAL MEETING

Save The Date

APRIL 29

Celebrate Fenway CDC's past year of accomplishments on Tuesday, April 29, at the Linda K. Paresky Conference Center at Simmons University. Doors open at 5:45pm; the program starts at 6:30pm.

Join us to connect with community members, elected officials, and neighborhood partners, and to provide more input as we formulate our new strategic plan for the coming years!



USE THE QR CODE TO RSVP →



FENWAY CDC ANNUAL MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 29 | 5:45-8:00PM
PARESKY CONFERENCE CENTER
300 THE FENWAY

Running to Support Fenway Cares



Chelsea Lauder, left, lives in the Fenway and works for Northeastern, which wouldn't typically get her photo into our pages. What does make her special is her decision to run this year's Boston Marathon to raise money for Fenway Cares, the Fenway's locally grown mutual-aid group. On her fundraising website, Lauder said "what started as a reactive initiative during the difficult COVID-19 pandemic has flourished as an ecosystem of care for so many across the Fenway." Support her effort with a contribution at givengain.com/project/chelsea-raising-funds-for-fenway-community-center-at-viridian-inc-95826.

> BEER GARDEN FROM PAGE 1

fallacy that you can direct sound," she said, citing disruptive noise spilling over from the Fenway Park concert series, a longtime neighborhood sore point. Her condo association submitted a letter to the board calling the plan "a disaster in the making."

In its vote, the board adopted several measures to address neighbors' complaints. Restrictions included limiting the license to Cisco alone (a change in operator would require a new license);

requiring that live performances end by 8pm and recorded music by 10pm; requiring Samuels to post a sign with contact information for complaints about sound levels or failure to end music on time; and a sunset clause for parking at the site. At the end of three years, Samuels would have to bring the lot into compliance with the long-promised Fenway Transportation Action Plan (the subject of a community meeting on March 24; see the ad on page 5).

Steve Wolf lives in the West Fens.

FUNDING FOR CULTURAL GROUPS

The Mass Cultural Council has begun accepting applications for its fiscal 2026 Operating Grants for Organizations program. In its second year, the program provides multiyear, unrestricted funding to nonprofit groups and affiliates that enrich cultural life across Massachusetts. The Commonwealth's independent arts agency defines its mission as bolstering the creative and cultural sector.

MCC anticipates that grant amounts will begin at \$6,000. It will determine final awards after applications are submitted; grant sizes will depend on the amount of funding available for the program. Organizations can apply annually to renew the grants for up to four years.

Applications are due April 17. Review the guidelines at massculturalcouncil.org/organizations/operating-grants-for-organizations for more information, including instructions on how to apply.

New Athletic Center to Anchor Reworked East End of NU Campus

BY ALISON PULTINAS

The Matthews Arena replacement—officially the 262 St. Botolph Street Multipurpose Athletic Facility—is Northeastern University’s next major capital project. The Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) reviewed the latest renderings on Feb. 18. This was the third BCDC subcommittee to discuss the project.

Commissioner Kathy Kottaridis summed up the discussion, saying that there are “clearly a few things to work on, but I think we’ve taken it as far as we can.” Commissioner Anne-Marie Lubenau added that the architects successfully designed an exceptionally large and complex building as an object but needed to focus more on the public realm and ground-level pedestrian experience.

The new building will be the linchpin of a set of projects proposed for the East End of campus under a new 10-year master plan expected to be filed this spring, explained Quinn Valcich of the City’s Planning Department.

Valcich hosted a Feb. 12 virtual public meeting to gather input on a preliminary slate of community benefits presented by Northeastern staff members Cory Berg, Chimeh Idiokitas, and John Tobin.

The new format for the Planning Department’s Article 80 review for Institutional Master Plans (IMPs) and other large projects rolls the Task Force or Impact Advisory Group and public meetings into one joint session instead of separately scheduling two meetings. As Northeastern Community Advisory Board member Marie Fukuda stated, there is a lot of ground to cover in the presentations, plus the Task Force questions and comments. For the public to wait until the end of the meeting to speak can be difficult and potentially limits participation.

Fukuda also suggested that benefits and mitigation should be tied to actual projects and



A rendering of the main entrance from the corner of Gainsborough and St. Botolph (left side, looking toward Mass. Ave.)

discussed with the community when they are being reviewed, as happened with the review for the permitted future dormitory at 840 Columbus Ave.

In comment letters submitted on the Matthews Arena plans, Symphony West residents Stephen Wells and Kim Kerrigan explained that based on recent demolition and construction at Mass. Ave. and Huntington, they expect the St. Botolph project to be

tremendously disruptive for residents of their building. Should this be a consideration related to the future community benefits package?

The design of the facility locates the main entrance for the public on Gainsborough Street. Access from the Orange Line will be very convenient once the MBTA completes its planned Massachusetts Avenue Station improvements, Gainsborough Street headhouse, and pedestrian bridge.

A July 2024 letter from Jennifer Mecca, MassDOT’s deputy chief of transit-oriented development, estimated the costs for those improvements at close to \$60 million. Mecca’s letter stated that the MBTA “will be seeking mitigation funding or in-kind assistance from Northeastern University to support the station-related planning and improvements.”

Also in February, Task Force members received copies of Northeastern’s 2024 *Community Benefits Annual Report*. The

report is now posted on the project page under *Additional Information*, along with the recording from Feb. 12, on bostonplans.org.

At the meeting, the Northeastern presenters used five themes to describe current and potential programs: community and neighborhood stabilization; campus access; educational attainment; economic mobility and workforce development; and infrastructure investment and the built environment.

Task Force members focused on a proposed Neighborhood Stabilization Fund. As Richard Giordano explained, a Task Force subcommittee first proposed the concept during the prolonged 840 Columbus review. Creation of the fund was tied to the construction permit’s issue date. The Boston Home Center administered by the Mayor’s Office of Housing will hold Northeastern’s \$1 million dollar seed money and potentially additional funds contributed in the future.

Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill.



The building’s “urban experience” along St. Botolph Street, looking toward campus.

COMMUNITY meetings

MON, MARCH 3 The Planning Department hosts a Task Force Meeting for the proposed Institutional Master Plan Amendment for **BOSTON UNIVERSITY CHARLES RIVER CAMPUS**. The meeting will include a presentation followed by questions and comments from the Task Force and the public. Register for the meeting at bosplans.org/BUAmendment. Call in number is (833) 568-8864, meeting ID is 161 193 9088. Contact Tyler Ross at tyler.c.ross@boston.gov with any questions. 6pm.

THU, MARCH 13 Join your neighbors for the March meeting of **FENWAY CDC’S ORGANIZING COMMITTEE**, a group of residents interested in advocating together for affordable housing and other neighborhood needs. Dinner will be provided. Contact lruizsanchez@fenwaycdc.org for more information. 6–7:30pm, Fenway Community Center, 1282 Boylston St.

TUE, MARCH 18 In the lead-up to the Boston

municipal elections this fall, the Boston **WARD 4 DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE** is hosting candidates for mayor, city councilor at-large, and city councilor for District 7 at our upcoming monthly meetings. Ward 4 will welcome Boston City Council candidate for District 7 Samuel Hurtado, City Councilor At-Large candidate Marvin Mathelier, and City Councilor At-Large candidate Will Onuoha. Union Church, 485 Columbus Avenue in the South End. Information at bostonward4dems.org.

THU, MARCH 27 Join the **FENWAY CIVIC ASSOCIATION FOR THEIR 63RD ANNUAL MEETING** from 6pm to 8pm at 521 Overlook, entry on 14 Lansdowne St. The meeting will feature the presentation “Understanding Shadow Impacts on Parkland” by Interim Parks Commissioner Liza Meyer on the shadow study being performed on the Riverway and Back Bay Fens that will guide new parks guidelines and inform future development.

SENIOR EVENTS

For more information, view the calendar at operationpeaceboston.org or drop by between 11am and 3pm for a paper calendar. Call 617 536-7154 to get added to the mailing list.

- Wed, March 12, 19, & 26 at 12pm: ORAL HISTORY with Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly and Northeastern students
- Wed, March 12, 19, & 26 at 1pm: TECH

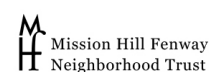
CAFE with Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly and Northeastern students

- Thu, March 13 at 12pm: ST. PATRICK’S DAY PARTY
- Thu, March 20 at 12pm: 10-MINUTE CHAIR MESSAGES
- Thu, March 27 at 12pm: CONVERSATION WITH DISTRICT 4 POLICE

MISSION HILL FENWAY NEIGHBORHOOD TRUST

We invite proposals from organizations seeking funding for projects and programs intended to serve residents of the Mission Hill and Fenway neighborhoods.

Please visit www.missionhillfenwaynt.org to access the on-line application.



DEADLINE: Submit your proposal no later than 5pm on March 31, 2025. Please email HELLO@MISSIONHILLFENWAYNT.ORG with any questions.

PERKINS & WILL + D/R/E/J/M COLLABORATIVE RENDERINGS COURTESY OF NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

NEWSLINES

Raise A Glass To The Huntington's New Liquor License

There's relief coming for the Huntington Theatre staff once the theater obtains its own liquor license. Lobby refreshments are part of the theatergoer experience, and for several years the company has had to reapply for so-called "one day" licenses to serve patrons. When Boston University sold the Jewett Repertory building at 264 Huntington Ave. to the Huntington, the university walked away with the parcel's long-standing liquor license.

The Huntington became one of the first facilities to win approval of one of 15 new licenses reserved for community spaces, including small theaters and nonprofits. Those emerged last year when the legislature approved a bill filed by Gov. Maura Healey to give the city 225 new liquor licenses. Mayor Michelle Wu had campaign for added licenses to bring more economic vitality to neighborhoods that historically had been underserved. The Boston Licensing Board reviewed the Huntington's application on Oct. 16, then voted at its Feb. 13 hearing to approve it. Lily Sweeterman of District 8 Councilor Sharon Durkan's office spoke in favor of the license and mentioned Fenway Civic Association's letter of support. Before the Huntington receives the license, the state's Alcohol Beverages Control Commission needs to sign off, a process that can take up to six weeks.

Responding to Trump, Northeastern Scrubs DEI From Website

Late last month, Northeastern removed most mentions of "diversity, equity and inclusion," from its website. Northeastern replaced the website for its Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion with a webpage called "Belonging at Northeastern." According to *The Huntington News*, Northeastern has indicated that it will replace the department with a new "Office of Belonging." Five of Northeastern's nine Boston-based colleges and schools have removed or altered their DEI web pages and—like many federal agencies responding to White House demands—removed public data on DEI from its web pages.

Second Oil Spill Hits Leverett Pond

Universal Hub reported on Feb. 26 that a Clean Harbors crew had assembled at Leverett Pond to investigate a potential heating-oil spill (the pond, in Brookline, drains into the Muddy River). The oil sheen appeared near the same pipe that poured oil into the pond in December, injuring around 40 waterfowl. If the story turns out to be serious, we'll have coverage next month.

Host A Site Or Just Volunteer For A 'Love Your Block' Cleanup

Take part in the City of Boston's annual Love Your Block spring cleaning, which takes place April 12 in Mission Hill and Kenmore-Fenway. Meet your neighbors while beautifying streets, sidewalks, parks, or open spaces. Sign up to host a site—ideally with at least three other people—using tinyurl.com/loveyourblocksite. Don't want to host? Then just volunteer by signing up at tinyurl.com/loveyourblockvolunteer. After registration closes, the program will contact you and give you a chance to select a preferred site and neighborhood (so, theoretically, you could also clean up in Eastie or West Robury or anywhere else you want). Important: **The deadline for signing up is March 3 at 5pm.**

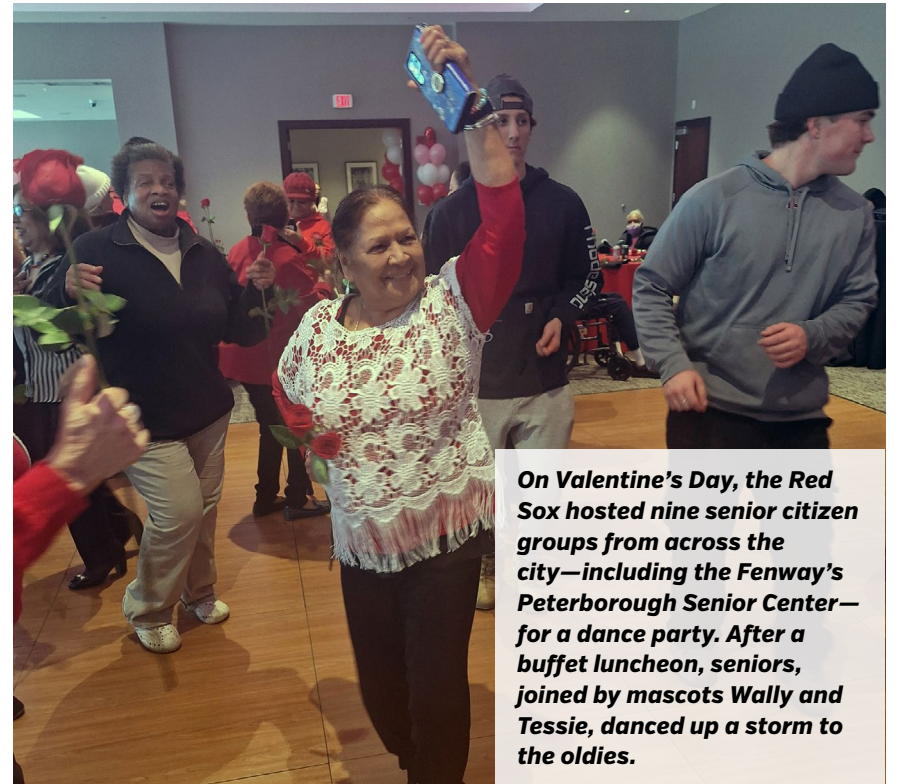
Simmons Receives \$250,000 Mellon Foundation Grant

Simmons University has won a \$250,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation to establish the Center for Information Literacy (CIL). The center will focus on cultivating competencies related to locating, accessing, evaluating, and using information—which makes sense in light of the university's strong library-sciences program. Simmons says it will use the funding to launch the center, which will focus on curriculum-building, faculty professional development, and student-driven programming.

SENIORS HEAT THINGS UP AT RED-HOT PARTY



PHOTOS: RUTH KHOWANS



On Valentine's Day, the Red Sox hosted nine senior citizen groups from across the city—including the Fenway's Peterborough Senior Center—for a dance party. After a buffet luncheon, seniors, joined by mascots Wally and Tessie, danced up a storm to the oldies.

SALE TO B.U. TAKES 13 BUSWELL OFF TAX ROLLS

PHOTOS: ALISON PULTINAS



Boston University added to its South Campus housing portfolio with the September purchase of 13 Buswell St. That sale triggered a February amendment to the university's recently approved two-year master plan. The Planning Department will hold a public meeting March 3 to discuss the amendment. Now the two-block-long street is nearly entirely institutionally owned and exempt from property taxes. Previously, landlord Gloria Hoy and her daughter had owned 13 Buswell as an investment property.



City of Boston
Planning
Department

In-Person Public Meeting

MARCH

24

6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

FENWAY TAP
PUBLIC MEETING

JOIN THE CONVERSATION:

Fenway Transportation Action Plan

We invite you to a public meeting to explore the Fenway Transportation Action Plan and provide your valuable input. Together, we'll walk through the newly released interactive story map, discuss the vision for Fenway's transportation future, and gather your feedback to shape the plan. Don't miss this opportunity to make your voice heard!

LOCATION:

Fenway Community Center

1282 Boylston St #123

Boston, MA 02215

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bit.ly/FTAPweb

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

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

State transportation officials speculated that a freeze-thaw cycle on the heels of extreme cold dislodged a five-foot-long chunk of concrete from the ceiling of the Mass Pike in the tunnel beneath Huntington Ave. on Feb. 21. They reported no injuries but minor damage to some passing vehicles. 🐿️

The Trump administration took a meat cleaver to funding for the National Institutes of Health—although a federal judge has the cuts on temporary hold as ICYMI writes this—and that represents a \$200 million threat to Longwood medical institutions. A *Globe* analysis found that Brigham & Women’s Hospital would lose \$77.5 million under a parsimonious new funding formula, the third-largest loss in New England, behind Yale and MGH. Children’s Hospital would lose \$54.4 million; Harvard Medical School, \$33.8 million; and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, \$33.7 million. The aggregate loss would equal 36 percent of all funding cuts statewide.



🐿️ Some familiar area names popped up as speakers at an affordable housing conference set for March 13: Dr. Ingrid Tucker, CEO of Madison Park Development Corp.; Daniel Cruz of Roxbury’s Cruz Development Co.; and Chrystal Kornegay, CEO of MassHousing (who addressed the Fenway CDC’s annual meeting a few years ago). 🐿️ **No, you and ICYMI haven’t imagined a population boom among rats. It’s real.** A report in *Science* estimated that Boston’s rat population grew by 53 percent between 2011 and 2021, thanks to more humans and a hotter climate. The researchers wrote that “warming temperatures resulting from climate change or urban heat islands may extend the seasonal window for aboveground foraging and [the] active breeding period.” 🐿️ The *Globe* Food section gave a shout-out to East Fens standby Woody’s Grill and its wood-fired oven in a list of notable pizza spots compiled for National Pizza Day. Back Bay’s The Salty Pig (across Dartmouth Street from Back Bay Station) also got a nod. 🐿️ Say goodbye to the “Boit Daughters” for a year. WBUR reported that the MFA will send John Singer Sargent’s beloved “The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit” to New York and Paris for “Sargent: The Paris Years (1874-84),” an exhibition organized jointly by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Musée d’Orsay. Sargent has long enjoyed wide acclaim in the US and UK, where he spent most of his life. “In France, however,” says the d’Orsay, “his name and work remain largely unknown, a situation that the exhibition...hopes to change.” Last day to see the painting in Boston is **March 3**. 🐿️ Number-crunching by a trade association found that B.U.’s endowment grew by 13 percent (to \$3.5 billion) in 2024, outpacing the growth of every other Boston-area college endowment. 🐿️

A SIGN OF THE TIMES?



PHOTO: LESLIE POND

**A torn, twisted flag
Seemingly at half mast
A cry for help?**

LESLIE POND

N Northeastern
City and Community Engagement

COMMUNITY GRANTS APPLICATION

The Community Grants are funds available through Northeastern University’s Office of City and Community Engagement (CCE). CCE’s mission is to be an active and responsible contributor to our local and campus communities by fostering collaborative relationships and partnerships that connect, educate, and engage people and organizations throughout our network.

- Any Boston-area 501(c)(3) organization that has engaged with Northeastern students, faculty, or staff within the last two academic years is eligible to apply.
- Organizations must have a direct impact in Fenway, Mission Hill, Roxbury, South End, and/or Back Bay.
- Organizations that have already received funding from Northeastern this academic year are not eligible.

Submissions are due by
March 3rd, 2025
at 5pm EST

If you have any questions about this application, please feel free to contact Chelsea Lauder.

EMAIL:
c.lauder@northeastern.edu

Learn more and apply for a grant by scanning the code below:



The Arts

BSO and Lyric Opera Turn on the Gloom, Obsession, and Grief in Bravura Performance of Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*

BY JOHN ENGSTROM

Grieving for a loved one can play out in all kinds of ways, from exhausted acceptance to stark denial. At the heart of *Die tote Stadt* (*The Dead City*), a psycho-sexual opera in German by Austrian-born Romantic composer-conductor Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957)—performed in concert to tremendous effect by the Boston Symphony Orchestra on Jan. 29 and Feb. 1—we have a protagonist named Paul, whose endless mourning for his beloved wife Marie leads him into melancholy, obsession, disturbing dreams, the Freudian subconscious, and physical violence.

Paul's mind is so fixated on his departed, so stuck on grieving, that he hoards souvenirs of her (including a lock of her hair), turns his living room into a creepy shrine, and stumbles into a tempestuous, ill-advised relationship with a flamboyant dancer from the city theater (they're about to do Giacomo Meyerbeer's opera *Robert le Diable*) who just happens to be Marie's physical double. Her name is Marietta.

So, Korngold gives us a love triangle between a man and two women but with a twist—one of the women is dead. By the end of the opera, so is the other woman: Paul strangles Marietta to death with the lock of Marie's hair. Then everything turns out to have been his dream.

Die tote Stadt at Symphony Hall, conducted with theatrical bravura by BSO Music Director Andris Nelsons, was the orchestra's first encounter with the complete

opera (the Boston Pops performed an excerpt under star conductor Arthur Fiedler in 1932), but it was not the work's Boston debut. In 2014, conductor Gil Rose and Odyssey Opera gave Korngold's operatic fantasia a creditable concert performance in Jordan Hall.

Based on a Symbolist novel about an obsessed widower in a ghost town called *Bruges-la-Morte* (1892) by Georges Rodenbach, the opera libretto was co-authored by Korngold and his music critic father, Leopold Julius Korngold, and published under the pseudonym Paul Schott.

For *Die tote Stadt*, his third opera, the 23-year-old composer pulled out all the stops: his writing for voice and orchestra is lush, mercurial, emotional, and often loud. (Nelsons's over-eager conducting swamped the singers at a few points.) The vocal lines for Paul, Marie, and Marietta are by turns taxing and muscular, lyrical and romantic. Korngold wrote for ample strings, triple winds, quadruple brass, four keyboards, a wind machine, and an immense battery of percussion. It's a Wagner-sized orchestra that doesn't sound too much like Wagner.

The otherworldly, sinister atmosphere of the murky city (Bruges, a medieval canal city in Belgium) and crazed protagonist is captured musically by gloomy, sacramental bells, augmented by celesta and glockenspiel. Some of Korngold's music has the swollen, over-ripe sound heard in operas by Richard Strauss and Giacomo Puccini (think of soaring strings). Marietta's dance music has the same galumphing glitter as Strauss's *Salome*.

At Symphony Hall, Paul was portrayed

by the fine British tenor David Butt Philip, stepping in for an indisposed Brandon Jovanovich. Butt Philip bravely navigated Korngold's exacting vocal lines and held his own through immense waves of sound from the orchestra. The dead Marie and living Marietta were both performed vividly by American soprano Christine Goerke, a singer with unusual warmth, opulence, and power in her vocalizing. Scottish mezzo-soprano Karen Cargill made a positive mark as Brigitta, Paul's housekeeper.

Religious ritual and symbolism pervade the opera, with a children's choir and the Procession of the Holy Blood on Ascension Day, which wends through the narrative. At Symphony Hall, we had three choruses—Tanglewood Festival Chorus under conductor James Burton; Boston Lyric Opera Chorus under Brett Hodgdon; and Boys of the St. Paul's Choir School under Brandon Straub—to do justice to Korngold's luminous writing for massed voices.

Die tote Stadt at Symphony Hall was billed as a "collaboration" between the BSO and Boston Lyric Opera. The program contained an inspirational essay by BSO Artistic Associate, famed avant-garde theater director Anne Bogart, reminding us that Korngold composed the work in the shadow of World War I with all its attendant grief and horror. To enhance the theatrical mood there were colored lights on the stage walls (red for one of Paul's mad scenes, blue and red circles for the revelers and chorus), and suitable costumes and wigs for the soloists. The attempt at "semi-staging" proved awkward only when a quintet of revelers showed up on stage, then retreated

to a side alcove, then re-entered.

Die tote Stadt was a major hit at the time of its dual world premiere (in Hamburg and Cologne) in 1920. It was also a career milestone for Korngold, an early bloomer who started making music in public as a "wunderkind" with an accomplished ballet under his belt at age 11 and drew amazed accolades from the likes of composers Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler.

But productions of the opera and of the prolific Korngold's other works (symphonic overtures, string quartets, incidental music for Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*) ceased once the Nazis were in power and aiming their propaganda guns at art they deemed "degenerate." Korngold was also in the crosshairs of the Third Reich because he was Jewish.

Fortunately for him, Hollywood tycoons saw dollar signs in Korngold's lively, eclectic orchestration, and beckoned him to compose for their films. He emigrated to Los Angeles in 1934, joining such other noteworthy European artist exiles as Arnold Schoenberg and Kurt Weill. Between 1934 and 1946, Korngold composed 21 film scores for Warner Brothers, winning Oscars for *Anthony Adverse* (1936) and *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938).

An uncredited English translation of the Korngolds' libretto for *Die tote Stadt* was projected on a side wall of the stage of Symphony Hall during the concert. Among its more striking assertions was "my tresses are deathless, they watch over your house."

John Engstrom lives in the West Fens.

In 'Flora And Ulysses,' A Menagerie With One Squirrel, Many Odd Ducks



BY ALISON BARNET

How many squirrels do you know who can write poems on a typewriter?

When's the last time you heard someone exclaim "Holy bagumba!"

How many of your neighbors are named Tootie?

Have you ever slipped off a horse-hair sofa?

You'll experience all of that—and much more—when you see Wheelock Family Theatre's current play, *Flora and Ulysses*, running through March 9 at 180 Riverway in the Fenway.

Adapted for the stage by John Glore, it's based on the award-winning book by Kate DiCamillo, author of 25 children's novels. Joshua Rashon

Streeter, assistant professor of Theatre Education at Emerson College, directs. It stars Livia Ketri, a fifth grader with substantial acting experience, now making her Wheelock Family Theatre main stage debut.

And who, you may ask, is Ulysses? Ulysses is a squirrel rescued by Flora after he was vacuumed up by a Ulysses Company vacuum cleaner. He's got a huge, bushy tail, and a human counterpart, Chris Stahl, who, like most Wheelock Family Theatre actors, has many credits to his name.

Flora's mother (Kayla Shimizu) is a romance novelist whose typewriter is right there on the table; Ulysses feels free to use it to write poetry. Shimizu, like other actors, plays more than one

role. Cheryl McMahon, first involved with Wheelock Family Theatre in 1982, plays neighbor Tootie, the waitress Rita, and Dr. Meecham—all odd ducks. Actor and playwright Damon Singletary plays Flora's father, plus a character out of Flora's favorite comic book, and then Mr. Klaus, who wears a bandage on his head after a cat, whose name is also Mr. Klaus, jumps up on him. What a way to celebrate a Wheelock Family Theatre debut! Jack Baumrind, a young man with familiarity with musicals, plays William Spiver, another odd duck.

Flora's favorite comic books are called *The Illuminated Adventures of the Amazing Incandesto!*, *Terrible Things Can Happen to You!*, and *The Criminal Element is Among Us*. All are

integral parts of the play.

The set, aside from a table in Do-Nut World, is a little two-story house. Words are sometimes emblazoned on the wall behind it, for instance, "A superhero squirrel rested at her feet, and so she was not lonely at all." There are many catchphrases like "Do not hope, observe."

The music is low-key but appropriate, especially toward the end when it becomes operatic and then heroic.

Alison Barnett lives in the South End. The production runs 80 minutes with no intermission. Not recommended for children under 8. Buy tickets (\$30-\$58, including fees) at wheelockfamilytheatre.org or through the box office ([WFTtix@bu.edu or 617-353-3001].



The Arts

'FUTURE FOSSILS' IMAGINES THE RELICS SOCIETY WILL LEAVE BEHIND



Featuring 20 acclaimed artists from around the world, *Future Fossils* at the MassArt Art Museum reimagines the present through the lens of an imagined future. Curated by Ginger Gregg Duggan and Judith Hoos Fox, the exhibition presents contemporary artworks as cultural "fossils" that prompt viewers to consider what will remain of our world long after we're gone. The artists worked in media as varied as glass, metal, plaster, fabric, and cardboard. Two of the "future fossils" appear here. At far left, Nari Ward's "Swing Low" (2015; © Nari Ward Studio. Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York, Seoul, and London, and GALLERIA CONTINUA. At near left is Izaak Brandt's "Deadstock Archive: The Classics" (2021). Courtesy Sarabande Foundation. The exhibition continues through April 13.

March

CALENDAR

Now → Sat, 3/15

When **DINE OUT BOSTON** debuted as "Boston Restaurant Week" it offered fixed lunch and dinner menus at uniform prices at all eateries. Over the years that's gotten much more flexible, and prices now range \$22–27 at lunch and \$36–\$55 (dinner). It's still a great deal, but that flexibility may explain why we count more than 20 nearby restaurants taking part this year, a major increase. **Audubon Circle** has Bar 'Cino and Gyu-Kaku, and **Longwood** has The Longwood Grille. In **the Fenway and Kenmore Square**, try Blue Ribbon

Brasserie, Sweet Cheeks Q, and Mida Fenway. Understandably, the **Back Bay** has the most offerings, but just in the western blocks, close to Mass Ave, you'll find Lucie, Dillon's, Sonsie, Select Oyster, Capital Grille, and Rochambeau. For choices and prices, visit meetboston.com/event/dine-out-boston/83581/.

Tue, 3/4 & Thu, 3/6

Have your say on where the City of Boston should add BlueBikes stations in the Fenway and Mission Hill. The **BLUEBIKES EXPANSION OPEN HOUSE** events start with a presentation, followed by attendees'

reviewing maps and site plans for proposed sites. 3/4, meet in person at the Fenway Community Center, 1282 Boylston Street). 3/6, attend a virtual meeting, register at bit.ly/expansion-march. Both events 6–7:30pm. Details, and online surveys open through March 31, at boston.gov/departments/transportation/bike-share-expansion-2024-2025#events.

Thu, 3/6

The **WHAT'S NEXT? TOWN HALL** is a moderated discussion with local and state elected officials about the new federal administration, followed by a Q&A with attendees. 6–8pm; doors at 5:30pm. Fenway Community Center, 1282 Boylston Street. Registration required at eventbrite.com/e/town-hall-with-elected-officials-tickets-1245139478699.

Fri, 3/7

Celebrate Women's History Month at Mass NOW's **27TH INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY BREAKFAST**. The theme, Action in Unity: Celebrating Women's Collective Power, highlights the necessity for collective action in advancing gender equity and protecting women's rights. 9am–12pm. Simmons University, 300 Fenway. Main room tickets are sold out; details, virtual tickets, and tickets for the overflow room at massnow.org/events/iwd25.

Tue, 3/11

Join the United Nations Association of Greater Boston for International Women's Day. With the theme of **EMPOWERING ENVIRONMENTS: WOMEN LEADING CHANGE IN OUR COMMUNITIES**, the event features a panel discussion with women leaders who have taken innovative approaches to fostering equity and inclusion, followed by a networking reception. 5:30pm. Tickets at eventbrite.com/e/international-womens-day-2025-registration-1142932354439.

Thu, 3/13

39TH ANNUAL BERKLEE INTERNATIONAL FOLK FESTIVAL features Berklee students and guest artists performing traditional music from cultures around the world. Berklee Performance Center, 136 Mass. Ave. 8pm. \$12 advance/\$17 day of show. Details and tickets at Berklee.edu/BPD.

Sat, 3/15

Created by journalist and hiking guidebook author Miles Howard, the **BOSTON WALKING CITY TRAIL** consists of four sections that span 27 miles from the Neponset River Reservation to the Bunker Hill Monument. This year, Howard is working to expand the urban trail of parks, gardens, urban forests, and streets by launching the City On The Hills Trail on Earth Day. Join him for one or both parts of a surveying hike with stops in Allston/Brighton, Brookline, Mission Hill, and Roxbury. The day will feature two back-to-back hikes with a one-hour lunch break in between. The 9 am hike from Allston/Brighton to Brookline will be 3.2 miles, and the 1 pm hike from Brookline to Roxbury will be 2.5 miles. Details at bostontrails.org; register via the Events page at least 48 hours before the event.

Sat, 3/22

- Celebrate the start of the gardening season! The Trustees of Reservations' **49TH ANNUAL GARDENERS' GATHERING** brings Boston-area growers of all kinds together for a free day full of informative workshops, engaging exhibitors, networking, and inspiration. Shillman Hall, 115 Forsyth St. 10am.
- The **LONGWOOD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** presents an intriguing program of old and new music. Zachary Fick-Cambria's *Invictus*, a world premiere, opens the program, followed by Morten Lauridsen's *Lux Aeterna (Eternal Light)* with the Longwood Chorus. Johannes Brahms's Symphony No. 1, op. 68, C minor rounds out the program. The concert benefits the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation. New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, 8pm. Tickets \$15–49; seniors \$12–42; students \$10. Details and tickets at longwoodsymphony.org/.

Huntington & Coolidge Corner Team Up

The Huntington and the Coolidge Corner Theatre recently announced "Stage & Screen," a series that ties of classic films to Huntington productions. The series will explore themes and settings shared by each film/play pairing, with Huntington artists appearing at the Coolidge screenings to discuss how the films inspire and influence their work.

- On March 3 at 7pm, the Coolidge screens *The Rules of the Game*, Jean Renoir's scathing 1939 critique of corrupt French society, cloaked in a comedy of manners. The film corresponds to The Huntington's production of the classic French farce, *The Triumph of Love*. Purchase tickets to *The Rules of the Game* at the box office or at coolidge.org/films/rules-game.
- On May 6, also at 7pm, the Coolidge will screen *Summertime*, David Lean's bittersweet tale of romantic longing starring Katharine Hepburn and set in a sun-splashed (and occasionally water-logged) Venice. The screening will include a discussion with artists from The Huntington's production of *The Light in the Piazza*, a Tony Award-winning musical. Purchase tickets at the box office or at coolidge.org/films/summertime-1955.

Girls Basketball City Championship Game



The Boston Public Schools girls basketball city championship game took place on Feb. 20. Here, Jenalis Mercado, a Snowden High School freshman, battles John D. O'Bryant Schools's Julia Manning and Aissatou Bangura. Despite Mercado's being named outstanding player at the game, Snowden's small team roster—six players, compared to the O'Bryant's twelve—might have undermined its overall performance. Snowden tied the game more than once but lost in the final eight minutes. The final score was 51-39.