



THE

Fenway News

HYPERLOCAL NEWS FOR THE FENWAY, AUDUBON CIRCLE, KENMORE SQUARE, UPPER BACK BAY, PRUDENTIAL, LONGWOOD, AND MISSION HILL SINCE 1974 • VOLUME 5 NUMBER 1 • JANUARY 9 - 30, 2026

City Approves Northeastern's IMP And New Pledges for PILOT Money, Housing, Street Trees

BY ALISON PULTINAS

At its Nov. 13 meeting, the board of the Boston Planning and Development Agency approved Northeastern University's new 10-year Institutional Master Plan (IMP) and the 262 St. Botolph St. athletic facility. The vote drew applause in the ninth-floor board room. John Tobin, Kathy Spiegelman, and Viktorija Abolina represented Northeastern at the meeting.

Public comments were all favorable, and project manager Quinn Valcich noted that the appointed task force supported approval. A City press release followed up with a celebratory statement issued jointly with the university summarizing the new plan and promised community benefits.

Board members Ted Landsmark and Matt O'Malley recused themselves from the vote because of potential conflicts of interest. Members Kate Bennett and Raheem Shepard praised the massive (500-plus-page document) effort and praised the engagement process.

The breakthrough agreement included a negotiated five-year PILOT document (Payment in Lieu of Taxes), under which payments to the Assessor's office will increase from \$1.9 million to \$2.6 million by fiscal 2030.

The PILOT Action Group, a coalition advocating stricter enforcement of PILOT

agreements, hasn't yet seen the agreement and can't say whether the increase would be gradual or immediate (they weren't involved in the negotiations). The group's 2018 report, posted at pilotaction.weebly.com/, showed that in 2017 Northeastern paid the City \$1.3 million of a \$5.48 million request (after subtracting the community-benefit credit), leaving \$4.18 million uncollected.

Senior staff at City Hall negotiated the new five-year plan with Northeastern. Stephen Chan, the Mayor Michelle Wu's Senior Advisor for Partnerships, negotiated alongside the Planning Department and Mayor's Office staff.

City Councilor Sharon Durkan spoke at the beginning of the hearing, mentioning her reluctance to support the master plan back in May until further commitments were made "that responded to the real impacts of Northeastern's growth on housing and neighborhood stability."

The Planning Department also expressed concern with the initial March draft because of the projected low target for housing students on campus. Months later, a revised IMP upped to 65 percent of the university's goal for housing students and added perks such as increased public access to Carter Playground and an economic community

empowerment program.

Another significant agreement now memorialized allocates \$1 million annually for 10 years to the Housing Stabilization Fund or other affordable-housing programs overseen by the Mayor's Office of Housing.

At the November meeting, board Chair Priscilla Rojas asked about enrollment projections. Spiegelman, Northeastern's vice president and chief of planning, real estate and facilities, said that the university expects modest growth in undergraduate enrollment, and stronger growth of grad students. Valcich emphasized an accountability mechanism (a required BPDA public hearing) if the number of off-campus students exceeds the 2024 count.

Abolina, Northeastern's associate vice president of campus planning and design, said the university does not anticipate acquisition of additional land. Spiegelman said future dormitories will all take the form

of partnership projects with developers like American Campus Communities.

Spiegelman described the school's efforts to add geothermal energy. Discussing the replacement of Matthews Arena, she praised the design of the new athletic center and said its gray brick will shimmer in different lights. Board member Shepard commented that the bricklayers unions will be happy with this project, not veneer or panelized brick but the authentic classic material.

Pre-demolition work at the arena site started in December. A hearing with the Parks Department tree warden allowed the removal of 11 honey locusts on St. Botolph Street. Max Ford-Diamond, Boston's tree warden, explained that tree replacement bonds for \$30,250 would be required with a check made out to the Fund for Boston's Parks and Recreation.

The bonds are calculated at a rate of \$550 per inch of the measured diameter of the trees to be cut down. The school can recoup the money based on the size and number of the new trees that will be planted as compensation.

Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill.

On-Street EV Charger Goes Live in East Fens



PHOTO: MARY ANN BROGAN

As part of the Boston Transportation Department's "Recharge Boston: Zero Emissions Vehicle Program," the City has begun installing electric vehicle charging stations throughout Boston. If this photo of a charging station looks vaguely familiar, that's because it ran in our November issue. This East Fens station, on Norway Street at Hemenway, is now active. To use it, simply download the app from the vendor, itselectric.us. The website explains how to get a free cable and an RFID card to start charging. The cable locks on both ends, so it's secure when in use. A full charge costs about \$13 and takes about six hours. Happy charging!

—MARY ANN BROGAN

A BUILDING NO ONE WILL MISS



PHOTO COURTESY OF CONTACTOR CHECRALLIAN ABICHAKER

On Jan. 5 the City received an application for approval to demolish a one-story shed adjacent to the sidewalk at 6 Pontiac St. in Mission Hill. Plans for the property are unknown.

NEW YEAR BRINGS NEW CITY GOVERNMENT

On Monday, Jan. 5, the inauguration of Mayor Michelle Wu and the swearing-in of the Boston City Council took place at Symphony Hall. At right, Wu swears in the new City Council. Below right, new District 7 Councilor Miniard Culpepper receives acknowledgement from the other councilors. Below: Wu addresses the audience.



PHOTO: MAYOR'S OFFICE, ISABEL LEON



PHOTO: MAYOR'S OFFICE, JEREMIAH ROBINSON



PHOTO: MAYOR'S OFFICE, JOHN WILCOX

M.L.K. DAY

Martin Luther King Day falls on January 19, and we've got ideas for celebrating:

- The award-winning Boston Children's Chorus presents its **23RD ANNUAL MLK TRIBUTE CONCERT, "WHERE CONSCIENCE WALKS,"** a salute to the late U.S. Rep. John Lewis and his relationship with Dr. King. Symphony Hall, 4pm, tickets \$40-85. Details and tickets at bso.org/events/
- Embrace Boston launches a "weekend that brings Boston together in powerful, joyful ways." The **INAUGURAL MLK BOSTON BELOVED COMMUNITY WEEKEND** comprises four days of concerts, service opportunities, a community breakfast, and special events. Visit www.embraceboston.org/ for details and registration information.
- The Museum of Fine Arts presents its **MLK DAY OPEN HOUSE** with art-making, talks, dance performances, gallery tours, and a gospel concert. 10am-5pm; free admission. Details at mfa.org/event/open-house/mlk-day?event=152991

FENSVIEWS

Start Boning Up: 2026 Could Break Record for Ballot Questions

BY JONATHAN COHN

This fall, you might have felt as though you saw more people with clipboards outside of grocery stores than ever before. You wouldn't be wrong.

This November, voters could see a record-breaking 12 ballot questions. The current record is nine questions (seen in 1972, 1976, and 1994) and typically there are three to four.

If you want to be an informed voter next November, it's good to start early.

Only one of the 12 currently has its spot on the ballot secure: last year, the Gun Owners Action League (GOAL), the state affiliate of the NRA, collected signatures for a referendum on the gun safety bill passed by Beacon Hill in 2024. The bill, which passed 35–5 in the State Senate and 124–33 in the House, modernizes existing firearms laws to address issues such as untraceable “ghost guns,” strengthens the state’s “red flag law,” protects safety in public spaces, and increases

violence prevention programming. As a result of the law,

we jumped from number five to number two (after California) in state rankings of strongest gun laws, and we should be proud of that. This question is already on the ballot due to the tim lines required to repeal an existing law.

The new proposals started their signature collection this fall, and 11 questions claim to have reached the necessary 74,574 certified signatures need to advance beyond the first step.

Given the increasingly unaffordable cost of living, housing reliably tops the list of priorities for Massachusetts voters. Two ballot questions seek to address this. Tenant rights’ advocates are organizing a ballot question to bring rent control back to Massachusetts, with a proposed statewide limit on annual rent increases (with tailored exemptions for small landlords and new construction). Interest in rent control has surged over the past few years amidst skyrocketing rents in Boston and across the Commonwealth. Another question would take aim at exclusionary zoning laws that set high minimum lot sizes for any new construction, guaranteeing that any new houses built will be unaffordable for most residents.

Two questions take aim at the lack of transparency and small “d” democracy in Beacon Hill. Massachusetts is the only state where the Governor and Legislature claim full exemption from the state’s public records law. One of the ballot questions would change that, offering a new tool for legislative accountability and transparency—

especially important, as the Legislature has refused to comply with the results of 2024’s ballot question authorizing an audit. Similarly, a coalition of good government advocates has organized around a question to reform the hierarchical pay structure in the Legislature. Currently, legislators can more than double their pay through stipends attached to various leadership posts. Critics rightly deride these stipends as “loyalty pay,” given how they make their recipients indebted to the House and Senate Leaders who dole them out.

Continuing the democracy theme, two other questions focus on our election system. Secretary of State Bill Galvin collected signatures for a question on Election Day registration, a time-tested reform that allows voters to register or update their registration at the polls. We are an outlier in New England in not already having it. Our ten-day registration cutoff and early September elections are a perennial recipe for disenfranchisement.

Another ballot question would seek to end party primaries in Massachusetts, with all-party runoff elections like those in California and Washington. Voter beware: polling for California’s gubernatorial elections next year show two MAGA Republicans might advance to the general election in this deep blue state due to the fractured nature of the Democratic field.

As Massachusetts faces the threat of cuts to health care, food assistance, education, and much more due to the Trump tax bill, the CEOs of the Massachusetts High Tech Council want to blow a bigger hole in the budget with two ballot questions: one to cut the state income tax by 20 percent (a \$5 billion cut to the state budget) and one to tighten archaic limits on the Commonwealth’s ability to raise revenue and invest in essential services.

Rounding out the dozen are an effort to enable public defenders to form a union, one to re-criminalize recreational marijuana, and one to dedicate funds from the existing state sales tax on sporting goods to a fund for protecting and conserving water and nature.

Sound like a lot of ballot questions to keep track of? Don't worry; you have months to study up.

This year each qualifying question will be filed as a bill with the Legislature, and Beacon Hill will have several months to decide what, if any, action they want to take. And if legislators do nothing? The campaigns must conduct another, smaller, round of signature collection in May and June before qualifying for the ballot. Get ready.

Jonathan Cohn is the policy director of Progressive Mass and secretary of the Boston Ward 4 Democratic Committee.

GUEST OPINION

IN MEMORIAM

John B. Kelly

COMPILED BY RUTH KHOWAIS WITH ASSISTANCE FROM JON BALL

Disability rights activist and longtime Fenway resident John B. Kelly died on Nov. 14. He was 67.

Born in New Jersey, John grew up with two brothers and a sister. He graduated number one in his class from Middleton High School and attended Yale University, where he graduated with a degree in religion. He then received a master's in sociology from Brandeis University.

According to the *Boston Globe*, a sledding accident in January 1984 left him quadriplegic for the rest of his life. In the subsequent years, John became involved in disability rights issues in the Boston area.

He was a plaintiff in a lawsuit about deteriorating sidewalks and inaccessible curb cuts where sidewalks intersect with streets in the Fenway. He cited asphalt patches on Huntington Avenue and curb cuts at Symphony Hall as particularly egregious. He argued that this violated the Americans with Disability Act. John wrote a regular column for the *Fenway News* about disability issues and served on the Fenway News Board. His March 2007 essay in the paper, “Why We Fight for Access,” noted pitted concrete and asphalt patches on streets in the Fenway.

John also fought legalization of assisted suicide, serving as director of Second Thoughts Massachusetts: Disability Rights Advocates Against Assisted Suicide. He was also regional director for Not Dead Yet (NDY), a national, grassroots disability rights group that opposes legalization of assisted suicide and euthanasia.

On its website NDY eulogized John, “our incomparable disability rights champion, beloved colleague and friend. As Communications Director and previously as Regional Director for Not Dead Yet, as Executive Director for Second Thoughts Massachusetts, and as the Chair of Boston Disability Advisory Commission, John’s expert knowledge



and unwavering dedication to his work for disability rights motivated all who worked with or alongside him to do the same, and to keep going when the going got tough, which it often has.”

John wrote in a blog in 2017 about New Mexico’s rejection of assisted suicide, “CBS News reported in 2014 that 12 million Americans are misdiagnosed yearly. About 15 percent of people given less than six months to live are not ‘terminally

ill.’ Thousands of people ‘graduate’ from hospice yearly. Assisted suicide programs turn the best result under hospice—learning that you weren’t ‘terminal’ after all—into the tragedy of dying with years or decades of life remaining. This reality alone should be enough to stop any assisted suicide proposal cold. We cannot predict the future. The ‘choice’ promised by assisted suicide is an illusion.”

John’s column in the October 2012 *Fenway News* focused on a Massachusetts ballot question that would have allowed medically assisted suicide (which lost, narrowly, the following month).

John led a protest at the now-closed Regal Cinema when it showed *Me Before You* in 2016. In the film, a disabled young man plans an assisted suicide to free his girlfriend so she can live a full life. John helped organize a lineup of wheelchair occupants and supporters to hand out literature about the film. Jon Ball, who attended, called John “a fighter against all oppressions.”

In 2012 the City of Boston declared July 26, 2012, John B. Kelly Day in the City of Boston, recognizing John “for his ongoing efforts on behalf of the disabled community.”

John leaves behind his siblings and five nieces. Contributions in his memory can be made to Not Dead Yet or a charity of your choice.

A Celebration of Life will be held at Spaulding Rehab in Charlestown on Saturday, Jan. 17, from 2pm to 5pm.

Ruth Khowais lives in the West Fens.

THE Fenway News

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DEADLINES & ADVERTISING

NEXT ISSUE APPEARS

Friday, January 30

ISSUE DEADLINE

Send letters, news items, and ads by
Friday, January 23

SUBSCRIPTIONS \$30/YEAR

[LIMITED INCOME, \$20]

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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.

> NEXT ISSUE <

Our next issue will appear on
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FENS VIEWS

Local Stories That Mattered in 2025

Fenway News Board Members reflect on the big issues of the last year and how the paper covered them.

ACTIVISM

It was a year of activism across our communities. From the Mayor’s inspiring defense of Boston’s immigration policies in Washington in March—to the No Kings rallies that drew hundreds of thousands (and countless epically creative signs) to the Boston Common—to the gender-affirming care protest in front of Fenway Health in November, our leaders and neighbors have felt the urgency of showing up and speaking out.

Back in May, Leslie Pond reported on the first local Tesla Takedown rallies and their growing momentum nationwide. Her article captured the mix of “anger and humor” and, most importantly, the motivations of the protestors (many of whom traveled as far as 50 miles away to attend). Protestors decried Elon Musk’s “leading role in gutting government agencies and threats to democracy,” as well as the increasing federal dismantling of constitutional protections. One stated, “We need to stand up to bullies.” Another added, “My mood has been a lot better since these [protests] started, because it feels like we’re actually doing something.” I’ll bet that others who read *Fenway News* reporting were moved to join in that spirit of personal uplift and common cause.

CAROL LASKY

THE RANGE OF OUR WRITERS

When I think about the stories that mattered in the *Fenway News*, I think about our terrific writers. Our writers are all volunteers—they are paid nothing. Yet they are dedicated, enthusiastic, and competent.

Case in point: Ed Ballo who writes

the “Urban Detective” column. Ed always gives us a closer look at sites and events in the Fenway and Mission Hill, including sculptures we may have passed by but not known their origin or people who emerged from the area and went on to luminous careers.

One of Ed’s articles last year offered “A Closer Look at the Sculptors Behind the WWII Memorial.” I have passed by that memorial many times and admired the graceful, winged victory sculpture but knew nothing about the sculptor or his background. In the article, Ed explains that the sculpture was completed in 1949 and was financed by a fund established by Boston philanthropist George Robert White. Italian American sculptor John Francis Paramino graduated from the North Bennett Street School in the North End, America’s first trade school, and later the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. His work is also in the State House and in the Boston Common. Ed’s comments enhance my appreciation of the sculpture.

Alison Pultinas, who covers so many meetings and events, keeps us up to date on zoning board goings on, institutional master plans, and real estate dealings in Mission Hill, Longwood, and the Fenway. In 2025 she wrote about the Park’s Commission votes that affect projects in the Fenway, Wentworth’s amendment of its Institutional Master Plan, a redesign of Joslin Park in the Longwood area, and updates on Community Preservation Act funding awards, among other stories.

Mary Ann Brogan focuses on cultural events and local artists and musicians. In a 2025 article, she wrote about the artist who lives next door and the violinist who holds concerts for neighbors. With three schools of music, major museums, a repertory theater, and a celebrated children’s theater, the Fenway attracts talented people,

and Mary Ann loves to show us these neighbors.

Of course, there are many others, as our monthly newspaper is packed with news and local stories. We don’t do fluff, and that’s one reason I and others love the *Fenway News*.

RUTH KHOWAIS

RESISTANCE, DEVELOPMENT

There were so many great stories. I’m proud we’ve covered so many events on regime resistance by our neighbors. I can’t single out one in particular.

Ditto on real estate developments. Special kudos to Alison Pultinas for her tireless research and writing in issue after issue. Many thanks, Alison!

I also enjoy every article by Ed Ballo on local history.

STEVE CHASE

REGIME RESISTANCE

Looking over the 12 issues, what really stuck with me were the photos and articles about demonstrations from Leslie Pond, as well as Arlene Ash and Ruth Khowais. It reflected the continuing significance of the advocacy and actions going on in the world. The photos of homemade signs were really eye-catching. Coupled with Dolores Boogdanian’s letter to the editor in April about her disappointment with local elected officials at a March community meeting, there’s a theme going on that is hard to ignore: Regime resistance, definitely!

ALISON PULTINAS

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Year after year, you can count on dramatic physical changes in the neighborhoods we cover. In

the Fenway last year this meant large projects proposed, under review, under construction—and even a fire-sale auction of a ghost proposal. In Mission Hill, changes generally took place on a smaller scale but in ways that tore at the neighborhood’s historic and finer-grained fabric.

A cooling real estate market drove several stories. In the Fenway, lab developer IQHQ hit pause on Phase II of its air-rights project, Fenway Center, even as its just-finished building sat vacant on Brookline Avenue. Developer Moro’s failure to secure financing for 2 Charlesgate forced it to sell the project at auction (including City approvals for a monster building with 400 apartments) to Samuels & Associates—who turned around and sold the site to Berklee.

Which brings us to another regular theme, institutional growth. We’ll surely get some clues about what the college plans to do with 2 Charlesgate when it launches its Institutional Master Plan this year. IMPs, in fact, were big for both the Fenway and Mission Hill: Northeastern won approval for its IMP (with a dramatic new athletic complex) and Wentworth Institute had to file an amendment to its just-approved IMP to bring in a private dorm developer. On the Mission Hill side of Wentworth’s campus, a new athletic center and playing fields opened.

Even in a slowing market the Fenway did see two new proposals, for 55 Lansdowne Street—a Camden Yards-flavored office and retail building for the Red Sox—and a Samuels plan for 79 apartments on the old Linwood Grill site on Kilmarnock Street. Mission Hill saw several projects at a similar scale, most of them already under review by the City, including the controversial Chabad Center. As usual, Alison Pultinas ably tracked the ups, downs, and controversies of Mission Hill development.

Other changes came from the public sector. MassDOT began rebuilding the crumbling Bowker Overpass, which will take four disruptive years to finish. Contractors tore up streets in the West Fens, Mission Hill, and Kenmore Square to replace 19th-century water and sewer lines. And the MBTA continued to ignore a commitment it made before the pandemic to connect the Fenway Multi-Use Path to the Riverway near Fenway Station.

STEVE WOLF

In ‘The Fenway,’ Three Letters Make a World of Difference

BY STEVE WOLF

It happens almost daily: A *Globe* reporter or Boston broadcaster calls the Fenway simply “Fenway.” No *the* in the name. Worrying about a small word gone AWOL might sound like nit-pickery, but that little word plays an outsized role in safeguarding neighborhood identity. Newbies, clueless Sox fans, social media, and general ignorance all seem intent on burying that *the*.

But let’s not dig that grave without a fight.

One of the first things I noticed when I arrived from the Midwest was the endlessly curious naming choices our Brahmin forebears adopted. Streets named for where they went (*Brookline Avenue*, *Cambridge Street*). Streets named for long-dead eminences (*Boylston Street*, *Hemenway Street*, *Huntington Avenue*). Streets that changed names with no warning when they crossed other streets (as *Hemenway* turns into *Ipswich* when it crosses *Boylston*).

And something else I’d never encountered before: Streets and places with a “the” built into their name, relics of a time when the

powers that were in our provincial capital imagined that we could

become London if we sounded like London. (Which actually might have worked: European visitors often say that Boston reminds them of London.) In any case, that *the* definitely got around: *the Arborway*, *the Jamaicaway*, *the Riverway*, *the Fellsway*, *the Fenway*. Neighborhoods like *the North End*, *the South End*, *the West End* (RIP). Even *the Esplanade* sounds haughtily upper crust.

Then there were the institutions with built-in the’s. Hospitals (*the Brigham*, *the Faulkner*, *the Deaconess*, *the Beth Israel*—their merger put an end to that). Schools (*the Massachusetts Institute of Technology*). Cultural institutions (*the Museum of Fine Arts*, *the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum*).

The seemingly insignificant *the* of “the Fenway” draws on this eccentric lineage, but today it also helps the neighborhood stand apart from a certain 800-pound-gorilla of a sports facility.

For years “Fenway” (no *the*) has served as a nickname for Fenway Park, drawing on another local love for shortening long names (Consider *Southie*, *Eastie*, and even *Dunks*). “Fenway” can draw 35,000 extra people for a home game. Oblivious to the fact that thousands of people live around the ballpark, these vast crowds, treat our residential blocks as Instagram backdrops. Seeing us as a stage set for the ballpark makes it a lot easier to park a car illegally, toss littler into the street, or pee on a lawn.

The neighborhood has always had a fraught relationship with the ballpark. Previous Sox owners proposed paving over the Victory Gardens for game-day parking and, later, wanted to gobble up *Boylston Street* frontage for a new stadium. The current ownership group cut deals with the City to secure—at bargain-basement prices— the right to privatize *Jersey Street* during games and eternal use of air rights above *Lansdowne Street* for those (very lucrative) Green Monster seats. They seem to think that showy but insubstantial gestures like sending Wally to dance around at annual meetings make them a good neighbor—rather than, say, making regular donations to community groups. Harsh? Maybe, but you can’t say that this neighbor, which raked in more than \$500 million in revenue in 2024, couldn’t do more to support the community around it.

This fraught history makes it more galling every time the Fenway’s identity as a neighborhood—marked by that little *the*—gets swamped by the identity of its *the*-free neighbor. Residents have limited ways to rein in our 800-pound gorilla. Yet, we can strike a small blow for independence. From new arrival to deeply rooted old-timer, we can all help keep our *the* alive, ask other folks to do it, and strike a small blow for *the* Fenway’s identity.

Steve Wolf lives in the West Fens.

GUEST OPINION

❖ FAREWELL ❖

SOME OF THE FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS WE SAID GOODBYE TO LAST YEAR

Delia Alvarez

Delia Alvarez lived for decades in the Fenway. She cultivated an award-winning garden in the Victory Gardens and volunteered in multiple capacities around the neighborhood. She was especially committed to the Peterborough Senior Center. Delia took immense pride in the nieces and nephews whom she helped to raise and guide throughout their lives.

Alan Andersen

Alan Andersen, a former resident of Queensberry Street, was a regular at Fenway community meetings and an avid member of the Fenway Garden Society. He had a warm and gregarious nature.

Catherine “Kay” Gallagher

One of the founders of the Back of the Hill Community Development Corporation, Kay served as its president for many years and spearheaded many successful affordable housing projects. Neighbors remember Kay’s generosity for all Back of the Hill community events. Even in her 80s she served as treasurer for the Mission Hill Link bus and on the board of Mission Hill Housing Services.

Betsy Shure Gross

Betsy Shure Gross was one of the founders of the Muddy River Restoration Project Maintenance and Management Oversight Committee (MMOC) and the guiding spirit behind the project’s mission of environmental protection and stewardship. Betsy

was an astute, generous, and creative champion of citizen activism on behalf of our treasured natural resources.

Carmen A. Pola

Carmen A. Pola’s work life was community activism. Carmen moved to Mission Hill in the early 1970s, quickly getting involved with multiple organizations and with public housing tenants at Mission Main and Mission Extension. An advocate for bilingual education, safe and affordable housing, and substance-abuse programs, Carmen worked with a long list of neighborhood groups and led several that had a citywide focus.

Susan St. Clair

Susan St. Clair spoke up at public hearings, wrote letters, and walked the line at the many community protests of institutional expansion and speculator pressures reshaping Mission Hill. As her obituary in the *Boston Globe* noted, she was “one of the few leaders able to successfully shift from fighting against to fighting for.”

Om Sharma

Om Sharma and his wife Santosh lived in the Fenway for more than 34 years. Om loved gardening, working on projects around the house, solving word puzzles, and spending time with family. Om and Santosh were frequent visitors to the Peterborough Senior Center.

Artists Get Political On MassArt Sidewalks



During the fall semester, messages protesting the Trump Administration (and whose creators did not mince words) appeared on the sidewalk outside MassArt.

PHOTOS: ALISON PULTINAS



Northeastern University's City and Community Engagement provides individuals with complimentary access to a conference room and classroom space. Advance reservations are required for both spaces. Event organizers may only host programming that is free to participants.

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- communityengagement.northeastern.edu
- 617-373-2666

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BPS Confirms Closures, Tweaks Admissions

BY ALISON PULTINAS

Mayor Michelle Wu has promised to make Boston Public Schools a policy priority in 2026. Fenway residents and special education advocates hope to learn about the future of the Mel H. King Schools on Peterborough and St. Mary’s Streets. The schools house alternative-education therapeutic programs, but they rank among the system’s worst in in terms of their physical conditions.

Facilities and declining BPS enrollment constituted an emotional topic at the December Boston School Committee meetings. During the meetings, the committee voted to close four schools—including three high schools—permanently in June 2027. That list included one dramatic loss, the nationally recognized full-inclusion Henderson High School in Dorchester.

A lack of transition plans for current students at the schools and the fast turnaround for the announcement (the effected schools only learned about the plans in mid-November) were striking. Superintendent



The Dec. 13 citywide school showcase at the Bolling Building

Mary Skipper said that the process was timed to give families choosing schools in 2026 to receive the information in advance. For next school year, priority registration began Jan. 5

and ends Feb. 6 for students entering K0, K1, K2 and 6th, 7th, or 9th grades.

A new K0 classroom for 3-year-olds opens in September 2026 at the Tobin Elementary on Smith Street in Mission Hill, adding another pre-K option to the neighborhood. Tobin family liaison Angie Pino has scheduled an open house tour for Jan. 15 at 5pm.

Given the array of options for families, high school admission is complex. At the Bolling Building in Nubian Square, Understanding BPS High School Options information sessions will take place every Tuesday in January, 8am–7pm. Families can drop in anytime.

Locally, applications for admission to Boston Arts Academy, a competitive process, are due Jan. 17; and auditions will take place Jan. 23. Students applying to one of the system’s three exam high schools for September 2026 were required to take the Measures of Academic Progress Growth Test last year. Their score, combined with their grade point average, make up a significant factor in admission decisions.

The School Committee voted in November to revise exam-school admission

criteria by changing the way it awards points to applicants based on their current school. A public debate about exam-school assignments went on for months. The November adjustment represented the third revision since the point system debuted five years ago. In contrast, the recent conversations about school closures happened with barely five weeks of discussion. At the committee’s December meetings, current students and staff from the affected schools demonstrated outside the Bolling Building and filled the auditorium. Public testimony universally cited the value of small high school programs for teens who would feel lost in bigger schools.

On Jan. 3, Mayor Wu announced three new appointments to the Boston School Committee: Lydia Torres, Franklin Peralta, and Dr. Stephen Alkins. Torres and Peralta will begin their first terms, and Alkins will serve his second, following his initial appointment in January 2022. The committee’s nominating panel received 22 applications and interviewed 13 of the candidates in November. Brandon Cardet-Hernandez, the most outspoken member of the Committee, reapplied, but was not reappointed.

Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

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

If those walls could talk...Northeastern closed the doors at Matthews (né Boston) Arena, on December 13 and plans to build a large athletic complex on the site. The 115-year-old building hosted politicians from Teddy Roosevelt to John F. Kennedy; concerts from Chubby Checker to Aretha Franklin to Phish; and pro sports, first as the pre-Boston Garden home to the Bruins and much later to the New England Whalers (now the Carolina Hurricanes). The university plans to start demolition in February. Ed Ballo’s “Urban Detective” column in our January 2023 issue has more on the arena’s storied past at tinyurl.com/ywru3kbr. 🚩 In other labor news, nurses at Brigham & Women’s burn center are definitely not happy with the top brass at Mass General Brigham. The healthcare giant notified the State’s Department of Public Health that it plans to move the Brigham’s burn-care practice to Mass General—where, perhaps not coincidentally, nurses earn less and have no union. The State would need to okay the consolidation, which the nurses say would result in lost knowledge and experience because their contract forbids forced relocations. Together the two hospitals treat roughly 500 burn victims annually, according to the Globe, but evolving fire safety and suppression technologies have reduced burn cases in recent years.

🚩 Singer-songwriter Burna Boy—one of Nigeria’s biggest musical stars, with 20 Grammy nominations—visited Boston Arts Academy last month. At his surprise appearance, Damini Ebunoluwa Ogulu announced that he would sponsor the school’s new food pantry, established to help students from food-insecure families. Bonus: he donated 20 free tickets to his TD Garden show. 🚩 Boston police arrested a third suspect in the late-night “street takeover” that saw a rowdy crowd of more than 100 people trash the intersection of Mass. Ave. and Tremont Street in October. BPD tied David Antonio Moran of Norwalk, Conn. to street takeovers elsewhere in New England. 🚩 The driver of a small SUV jumped the curb and killed a Back Bay man and his dog on the Comm. Ave. Mall at Hereford Street; Boston Police called the attack intentional. WCVB reported that the victim was 79-year-old John Axelrod, whom the MFA identified in a statement as a significant donor of 20th-century American fine and decorative arts. BPD arrested a suspect within 24 hours. 🚩 A former aide to Mayor Michelle Wu, who lives in the Fenway, announced that he intends to challenge State Sen. Will Brownsberger in the Democratic primary this year. 34-year-old Daniel Lander has worked on political campaigns and in City Hall but hasn’t run for office before. 🚩 The scandal at Harvard Medical School’s morgue ended with a prison sentence for the morgue’s former manager. A federal judge in Pennsylvania handed down an eight-year sentence for the former manager and a one-year sentence for his wife and co-conspirator. The case took place in Pennsylvania because a buyer there bought multiple parts of corpses donated for medical research. 🚩 Fenway-area shoppers just can’t catch a break. Close on the heels of REI’s announcement that it will close its Park Drive store later this year came word that TJX shuttered the TJ Maxx store at Mass. Ave. and Newbury Street on the last day of December. And later this year, the Star Market on Boylston Street will relocate to the ground floor of the new building at 401 Park Drive (see Newsline item about a new parking garage there) 🚩

NEWSLINES

Ballpark Workers Endorse Five-Year Contract With Aramark

On Dec. 27, Fenway Park and MGM Music Hall concession workers—members of UNITE HERE Local 26—announced overwhelming ratification of a new contract with Aramark (the vote was) 246-35. UNITE HERE Local 26 head Carlos Aramayo called it a “very, very significant agreement” that will enable the union’s 1,000 workers “to live in this city and to prosper in the city along with the team and with Aramark.” The agreement includes wage increases for tipped and non-tipped workers, improved commissions, and income guarantees. Non-tipped workers will see a \$10 wage increase over five years. Tipped workers will see a \$5 increase over five years as well as a retroactive \$2 raise and an additional \$0.75 by the start of the season. The growing use of automated concession machines was a major sticking point. The contract stipulates that one ID checker and one beer seller will oversee every two self-checkout machines.

ZBA Allows Questionable 38 The Fenway Plan in Historic District

On Dec. 9, the Zoning Board of Appeal approved plans to convert 38 The Fenway from a four-story house into a six-story, five-unit apartment building. The building has been vacant for years. The renovated building will feature an elevator, roof deck, and two parking spaces. Owners Mark Ehrman and Chee Kwong will move into the building once it is renovated, and expressed interest in constructing an ADA-compliant house. They confirmed they do not plan to rent to students or short-term guests.

City OKs 820-Space Garage for 401 Park Addition

Before the holiday break, Boston’s Inspectional Services Department approved the creation of 820 parking spaces at 401 Park Drive. Project proponents Samuels & Associates and life-sciences real estate operator Alexandria wanted the added capacity for the addition nearing completion on the north (Green Line) side of the complex. The garage—with three levels underground and one floor above—comes in the final phase of Landmark Center Redevelopment and includes 100 spaces for Star Market customers. The supermarket is set to move from Boylston Street to the ground floor later this year, although no official date has been announced. In winning approval in 2021 of this final phase of redevelopment of the old Sears Building, Samuels said that “depending on future parking demand, some or all of the above-grade parking...may be converted to provide additional office/lab area, amenity space and/or other permitted uses.”

These Books Caught Boston Readers’ Fancy in 2025

In mid-December, the Boston Public Library released its end-of-year wrap-up for 2025. Systemwide metrics include lending a combined 7.5 million physical and digital items, welcoming more than 3.2 million people to branches throughout Boston, providing Wi-Fi access to 1.4 million users, and signing up nearly 130,000 new cardholders. BPL’s Reader Services Department included in the wrap-up its annual list of the most-borrowed titles of the year.

Across the system, these 10 books topped the list of most-borrowed books:

- *Onyx Storm* by Rebecca Yarros
- *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, Sarah J. Maas
- *Happy Place*, Emily Henry
- *Demon Copperhead*, Barbara Kingsolver
- *The Wedding People*, Alison Espach
- *Sunrise on the Reaping*, Suzanne Collins
- *The Women*, Kristin Hannah
- *Shield of Sparrows*, Devney Perry
- *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*, Suzanne Collins
- *Great Big Beautiful Life*, Emily Henry

The **Central Branch** in Copley Square, these five titles led the list:

- *The Wedding People*, Alison Espach
- *Great Big Beautiful Life*, Emily Henry
- *Intermezzo*, Sally Rooney
- *Sunrise on the Reaping*, Suzanne Collins
- *Atmosphere*, Taylor Jenkins Reid

At the **Parker Hill Branch** in Mission Hill, these five titles led the list:

- *Dog Man*, Dav Pilkey
- *The Scarlet Shedder*, Dav Pilkey
- *Martyr!*, Kaveh Akbar
- *The Wedding People*, Alison Espach
- *Dog Man: Big Jim Begins*, Dav Pilkey

Up And Down Terrace Street, Projects Hit Ups And Downs

BY ALISON PULTINAS

Development for Mission Hill’s historic Terrace Street is in flux and the Boston Transportation Department’s (BTD) long-awaited study has apparently been postponed.

In June, a scheduled in-person meeting with District 8 City Councilor Sharon Durkan’s office and BTD was canceled with no explanation. Proposed residential projects are also delayed, including some that promised contributing funding for the Terrace Street Study.

The property at 110-128R Terrace St. was advertised to be auctioned in November, the sale is now rescheduled for Feb. 24. According to auction house Saperstein, owner Matthew O’Hara is in bankruptcy court. His company Bellerose Terrace LLC had a 79-unit rental project approved in 2022 and most recently received an extension until August 2026 on the granted zoning variances. The project requires multiple demolitions including the very busy autobody shop at Cedar and Terrace and the occupied three-family buildings next door.

O’Hara’s other proposed rental project at 1-4 Terrace Place, also approved in 2022, seems to also be on hold. In December residents filed multiple 311 complaints about trash and dumping next to the two vacant houses.

The 77 Terrace St. project for 11 City-owned vacant parcels planned by ODJ development LLC (Kevin Maguire, Jonathan Garland, and Dariela Villon-Maga) also has experienced delays. However, there has



Weston & Sampson engineer Brian McCormack talks with potential contractors about City-owned stone wall.

166 Terrace in 2008 and completed the residential conversion in 2011. Forty-three out of 62 apartments are income-restricted, 16 units are condominiums, and three are artist live/workspaces.

The Planning Department has not announced a public meeting for the latest Notice of Project Change for the 154 Terrace site. However, a comment period is open until Jan. 9 and can be extended if necessary, explained Stephen Harvey, the project’s assigned project manager. The change drops the height from seven to six stories, and reconfigures the unit mix, now including 15 studios, reducing the number of one- and two-bedroom apartments. Email stephen.j.harvey@boston.gov with comments.

Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill.

been progress on the City-funded elements: remediation of the contaminated land and a Request for Proposals for the rebuilding of the City-owned stone retaining wall. Bids were due Dec. 18, however the Mayor’s Office of Housing explained that only one offer came in, from Lynn-based GVV Inc.

The developer’s designation received a second 12-month extension from the Public Facilities Commission in November. They are waiting for additional funding for both the community gardens and from the state for the homeownership units.

Winn Development has given up on condominiums and will pursue rental units instead. In December, Winn filed a Notice of Project Change for their residential project at 154 Terrace St., the surface parking lot adjacent to the Oliver Lofts, the former

Pickle/Ditson factory building. This is the fourth project change for the proposal. It was initially proposed as a nine-story building in 2005, then a seven-story condo development approved in 2021, and now a six-story rental. Winn acquired the Oliver Lofts building at

E Line Accessibility Work Starts Soon

Redesign of the street-level section of the E Line between Brigham Circle and Heath Street continues, according to Matthew Petersen of the Boston Transportation Department. Public meetings will take place later this year before plans reach the 100 percent stage.

The MBTA’s semiannual Accessibility Initiatives Report, issued in December, notes that “locating new platforms within the street will involve tradeoffs among the various street uses, including vehicular travel, bicycle travel, and parking in addition to Green Line and key bus routes [39 & 66] operations.”

Mission Park and The Riverway stations will get raised platforms that make them fully accessible for inbound and outbound service. The reconstruction will eliminate trolley service for Fenwood Road and Back of the Hill, but the 39 bus may continue to serve those stops.

Further along the line, the long-gestating transformation of Symphony Station will begin in earnest, the most dramatic change being the addition of four elevators. With the completion of extensive utility relocation, work inside the station can begin. The Accessibility Report projects a March start for work on the station, with substantial completion expected by fall 2029. Trains will not stop at Symphony during the work. Suffolk Construction is the contractor.

Meanwhile, design work for the renovation of Hynes Station, down Mass. Ave., has been put on hold until the MBTA can identify a new funding strategy. A developer withdrew the proposal for development of Mass Pike Air Rights Parcel 13 that would have funded accessibility improvements at the station.

—ALISON PULTINAS

Reconstruction Begins on Comm. Ave. Mall at Kenmore

BY ALISON PULTINAS

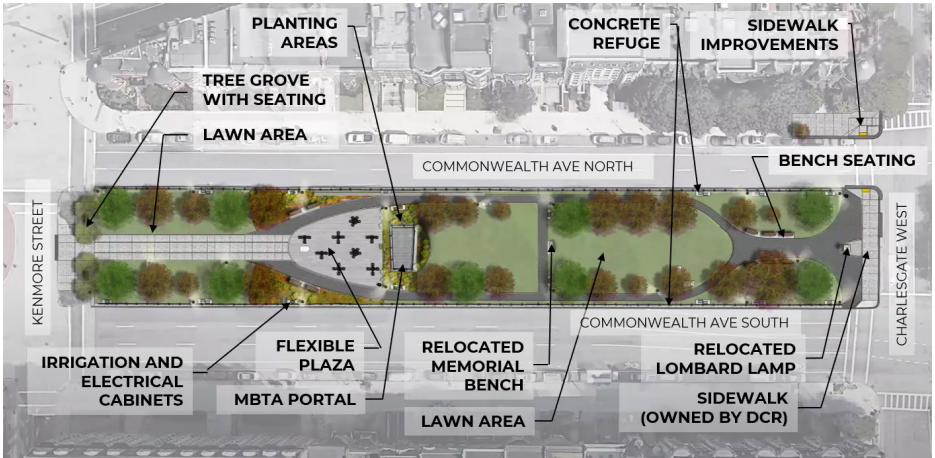
A Boston Parks and Recreation Department spokesperson has confirmed that Metro Equipment Corp. won the bidding for the job of reconstruction of the Kenmore block of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall. A \$2.18 million bid clinched the section, and the project will start this winter.

At a meeting of the Boston Art Commission Karen Goodfellow announced that the park’s statuesque Lombard Lamp (right) has received a grant from the Henderson Fund to underwrite restoration and rewiring as part of the project. It will glow again when reinstalled.

The ornate lamppost arrived in Boston as a gift from the city of Hamburg, Germany, in 1980. It is modeled after posts on Hamburg’s historic bridge. The German city sent similar lamps to New York and Chicago. The Art Commission previously approved relocating the lamp to the other end of the park.

Amy Linne, the project manager for the Parks Department, has had responsibility for shepherding the plan through multiple agency reviews since 2019. A legacy elm tree will be retained. Yew shrubs and two other trees will be removed, but the final design will included 11 additional trees. The department expects the project to wrap up next December.

Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill.



This diagram shows planned improvements and new plantings in the final block of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall on the east end of Kenmore Square. The ornate Lombard Lamp will move to the far east edge of the park, facing Charlesgate.



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bosplans.org/GetInvolved



The Arts

Head to the Top for Bubbly Fun

BY MARY ANN BROGAN

Bubble Bath Back Bay—located atop the Citizen M Hotel at the juncture of Mass. Ave. and Boylston Street—is Tiffani Faison’s latest gastronomic adventure.

As you enter the Bar, you are greeted by bubbles and balls floating high above the long bar. As you gaze toward the window in the evening light, you see a beautiful reflection of the city looking westward, reflecting the lights of the bar interspersed with the lights of the city and river below. It is a romantic and fun atmosphere.

Bubble Bath offers a variety of guilty pleasures, from unusual and flavorful cocktails and small plates to extravagant and pricey caviar dishes. Fontina and prosciutto fondue, with a selection of veggies and bread for dipping, is light and flavorful. Caviar biscuits allowed

you to sample caviar without breaking the bank. From the “Lil Sammies” section, pastrami, smoked salmon, and smoked prosciutto provided perfect little bites for two. Word has it that the lobster rolls are delicious and the salt-and-vinegar fries irresistible.

For that special occasion, or when you just want a little more atmosphere than your local establishment down the street, Bubble Bath Back Bay at 408 Newbury Street might just fit the bill and is worth checking out. Hours are Sunday to Thursday, 5pm to midnight; and Friday to Saturday 5pm–1am. Bubble Bath takes no reservations for parties of less than six and welcomes guests on a first-come, first-served basis.

Mary Ann Brogan lives in the East Fens. Faison also operates Sweet Cheeks in the West Fens and the Bubble Bath mother ship in downtown’s High Street food Hall.



PHOTO: MARY ANN BROGAN

LAST CALL

Ends Mon, 1/19
Of Light And Air: Winslow Homer In Watercolor
The MFA showcases Homer’s skillful use of watercolors to achieve remarkably subtle visual effects, with a particular focus on trees, landscapes and ponds. mfa.org.

Ends Mon, 1/19
Allan Rohan Crite: Urban Glory
The undersung Roxbury native found the divine in everyday scenes as this show’s mix of precise drawings, exuberant paintings, and vibrant prints demonstrates. gardnermuseum.org.

Children’s Book By Mission Hill Native Honors The Old ‘Hood

Stephen Harris—born and bred Mission Hiller, MassArt graduate, owner of harriscustomdesign.com, and longtime arts teacher at Boston Latin School—is now a children’s book author and illustrator.

He opens his book, “A Treehouse in the City,” with a touching tribute to his childhood world: “[T]his story is dedicated to the neighborhood of Mission Hill.... Growing up in the city during the mid-70s and 80s, it was always my dream to have a treehouse. Our neighborhood, despite being in the city, was quite unique. We had open spaces and abandoned lots that nature had reclaimed. As

children, these places were treasure troves of discarded materials, just waiting to be repurposed. With our imaginations, group effort, and occasional adult assistance, these spaces came alive with creativity and exploration....

The illustrations are created from my memories of our adventures.... Here’s to the old gang of neighborhood friends, and family—Robert, Timothy, Michael, Brian, Brendon, Elton, Leon, Zen, Ariam, Abner, Elizabeth, John, Nivi, Omar—and the many others who showed up to lend a hand.”

—ALISON PULTINAS

CALL FOR ARTISTS

STUDIO WITHOUT WALLS
Proposals are due Jan. 11 for the 2026 edition of Studios Without Walls, “Urban Symphony.” The collaborative of artists works “to expand and educate audiences to appreciate, participate in, and become enriched by site-responsive sculpture, installation, and conceptual art.” The summer installation will mark the 27th iteration of the project. Selected artists receive an honorarium and the opportunity to create installations for Riverway Park on the Brookline/Boston line. Apply online at studioswithoutwalls.org.

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MFA SHOWCASES PURYEAR’S BEAUTIFUL, MYSTERIOUS WORK

BY STEVE WOLF

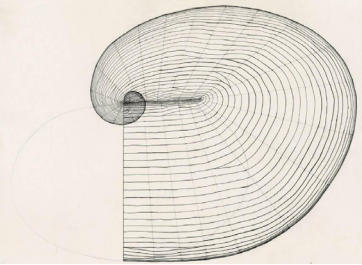
Artist Martin Puryear gives the lie to the old expression “jack of all trades, master of none.” Over a 50-year career he has turned out masterfully finished pieces in wood, stone, glass, leather, and metal—never mind works on paper.

Puryear isn’t simply a master of materials. A retrospective on view at the MFA through Feb. 8 hints at his interest in cultural traditions and artistic practices and turn out works that intrigue, move, mystify, and delight. “Martin Puryear: Nexus, the MFA notes in a statement, “illuminates the ways in which the artist’s unique vocabulary has been shaped by his enduring interests in global traditions of material culture, African American history, and the natural world.”

One recurring theme echoing among through the show is the red phrygian cap worn in ancient Rome by enslaved people who’d won their freedom. The French and American revolutions adopted it as a symbol of freedom from repression. A massively scaled version (bottom right) recalls the hat but assumes a life of its own—simultaneously droopy, stiff, and very red.

Puryear has represented the U.S. at the Venice Biennale and is a recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship and the National Medal of the Arts.

Steve Wolf lives in the West Fens.



PHOTOS: MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS



PHOTO: ALISON PULTINAS

Flour Bakery Opens Brigham Circle Branch This Month

After 20 years in Mission Hill, J.P. Licks closed its Brigham Circle location last July. Fans of sweet treats despaired, but the rending of garments didn’t last long. This month, chef Joanne Chang’s Flour Bakery moves into the old ice cream space with its 11th location in Boston and Cambridge. Last spring, Flour reopened the old Earl of Sandwich kiosk on Boston Common. In addition to baked goods, Flour sells soups, sandwiches, coffee, granola, branded merch, and Chang’s award-winning cookbooks.

The Arts

Arts Academy Presents Dazzling Winterfest



Last month the Boston Arts Academy again came through with a spectacular Winterfest performance in the main stage theater. The program takes off from “The Little Dancer’s Big Move,” a short video made when the Museum of Fine Arts moved Edgar

Degas’s bronze statue from one room to another. In the BAA performance, the Little Dancer comes alive, dances, and watches others (BAA students) perform ballet, tap, hip hop, and jazz. Directed by Dance Department Chair William



PHOTOS: ALISON PULTINAS

McLaughlin, with choreography by faculty members, the performance included 75 student dancers from the Academy’s 9th through 12th grades, plus a student production crew.

January CALENDAR

Now ➔ Thu, 2/29

THE DYE IS CAST: INTERESTS & IDEALS THAT MOTIVATED THE BOSTON TEA PARTY. The Massachusetts Historical Society commemorates the 250th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party and showcases historical artifacts. The exhibit features individuals—such as Paul Revere, Phillis Wheatley, and more—whose stories give insight as to why the Boston Tea Party happened. masshist.org/exhibitions. 10am to 4:45pm, every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Massachusetts Historical Society, 1154 Boylston St.

Fri, 1/5 ➔ Sun, 1/14

IN SARGENT’S TIME: EDWARDIAN DRAMAS (January 5–14) features cinema set during the dawn of the 20th century. This series at the Museum of Fine Arts, inspired by the exhibition “Fashioned by Sargent,” offers visitors a unique and immersive experience of Edwardian elegance through four carefully curated dramas. “A Room With a View,” “Howards End,” “Daughters of the Dust” and “Picnic at Hanging Rock” capture the timeless fashion of the Edwardian era. Tickets and screening information is at mfa.org/programs/film. They are \$12 for members and \$15 for nonmembers. Museum of Fine Arts, 465 Huntington Ave.

Sun, 1/7 ➔ 1/28

The Boston Parks Department offers **FREE ULTIMATE DISC YOUTH CLINICS** at the Carter Playground Bubble. The clinics are open to youth ages 7 to 14. Ultimate Disc, originally known as Ultimate Frisbee, is a non-contact team sport played with a disc flung by hand. Points are scored by passing the disc to a teammate in the opposing end zone. For more information and to sign up, visit boston.gov/sports. 9am, 709 Columbus Ave.

Mon, 1/15

- The Gardner Museum’s **DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE** honors the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King with storytelling, conversation, art-making, and music. Advance registration encouraged for free timed-entry tickets. 11am to 4pm. gardnermuseum.org/calendar/dr-martin-luther-king-jr-day-service-01152024.
- The Museum of Fine Arts holds its 22nd annual **MLK DAY OPEN HOUSE**, including guided tours, music by Boston City Singers and DJ WhySham, and more. Free admission for Massachusetts residents. Tickets available in person on a first-come, first-served basis. 10am to 5pm. mfa.org/event/open-house/mlk-day.

Fri, 1/19

The Leventhal Map & Education Center

presents a **FROM THE VAULT COLLECTION** showing on Native American Heritage. They will explore items that document Native life and land in New England and beyond. Guest curated by Amira Madison, the Supporting Indigenous Communities Fellow at the Mayor’s Office of New Urban Mechanics, and Raquel Halsey from the North American Indian Center of Boston. Drop in any time between 2pm and 4pm. leventhalmap.org/event/ftv-native-american-heritage.

Sat, 1/20

- Join the Massachusetts Environmental Justice Table for **“ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND BUILDING OUR NEW GRID - WHERE SHOULD IT ALL GO?”** At this hybrid forum, they will discuss how to build the renewable distributed electric grid we need fast, while not repeating the mistakes of the past. Learn more about the Massachusetts Environmental Justice Table’s vision for infrastructure, energy democracy, and centering frontline communities in the process and their current policy proposal. 2pm to 3:30pm. Register at actionnetwork.org/events/where-does-it-all-go-environmental-justice-and-building-our-new-grid-forum.
- Do you have an unwanted book taking up space on your shelf? Were you gifted a book you don’t want? Join the Boston Public Library for a **BOOK SWAP AFTERNOON!** Bring in your unwanted, gently used book and swap it for something new! The Library will have a selection of books from a wide variety of genres for all ages including fiction and nonfiction. 2:30pm to 4:30pm. Central Library in Copley Square, 700 Boylston St.

Sat, 1/20 ➔ Sun, 2/4

STEVE MCQUEEN: LYNCHING TREE at the Gardner Museum shows one photo that McQueen took while directing his film “12 Years a Slave” (2013) and offers an opportunity to connect the past with contemporary issues and what may lie hidden in the beauty of nature. Information and tickets at gardnermuseum.org/calendar/steve-mcqueen-lynching-tree. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 25 Evans Way.

Sat, 1/20 ➔ Sun, 3/3

The Huntington presents **STAND UP IF YOU’RE HERE TONIGHT**, an interactive play written and directed by John Kolvenbach. Jim Ortlieb plays a man desperate for connection, bent by isolation, and deeply in love with the audience itself. This underground experience in the renovated,

150-seat Maso Studio blurs the line between audience and performer. Maso Studio, 264 Huntington Ave. The performance runs for approximately 65 minutes and is followed by a social hour where audiences can interact with members of the cast and creative team and with each other. A beverage during the social hour is included in the price of the ticket. Visit huntingtontheatre.org for showtimes and tickets.

Wed, 1/24

A HISTORY OF BOSTON. Join Daniel Dain as he acts as your tour guide from the arrival of First Peoples up to the election of Boston’s first woman and person of color as mayor. At this Massachusetts Historical Society event, Dain will explore the policies and practices that took Boston from its highest heights to its lowest lows and back again, and examine the central role that density, diversity, and good urban design play in the success of cities like Boston. Register at masshist.org/events/history-boston. In-person reception begins at 5:30pm, program begins at 6pm. Massachusetts Historical Society, 1154 Boylston St.

Thu, 1/25

- The panel discussion **RECKONING WITH HISTORY: ART, LANDSCAPE, AND MEMORY WITH STEVE LOCKE, KARILYN CROCKETT, SARA ZEWDE, MARGARET BURNHAM AND LEE PELTON**, a companion event to “Steve McQueen: Lynching Tree,” explores questions of memory, history, and the role of art as a tool in reckoning with America’s legacy of racial violence. 7pm to 8:30pm. gardnermuseum.org/calendar/reckoning-history-art-landscape-and-memory. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 25 Evans Way.
- THINK LIKE A FACT CHECKER: EVALUATING DIGITAL INFORMATION WITH LATERAL READING.** Have you ever come across an unfamiliar website and wondered if it was credible? Or seen information on social media and were unsure if it was true or not? This Boston Public Library workshop will focus on Lateral Reading, a method used by professional fact checkers to verify information. 6pm. This is a virtual event, register online at bpl.bibliocommons.com/events/65732f96817cb6bf4e9ae4cd.

Fri, 1/26

- Join Stacey Beuttell, senior director of Mass Audubon’s Nature in the City program, for GBH’s **ASK THE EXPERT: GROWING OUR GREENSPACES**. At this virtual, free event, ask questions about expanding greenspaces in urban areas and creating access to nature that is

inclusive and equitable for all. 12pm to 1pm. Register at wgbh.org/events/ask-the-expert-growing-our-greenspaces.

- Boston Symphony Orchestra hosts a **COMMUNITY CHAMBER CONCERT**. Fenway Center, 77 St. Stephen St. 1:30pm. For free tickets, visit bso.org/events?view=byDate&brands=12057.

Sat, 1/27 & Sun, 1/28

ART DOCS is an ongoing film series at the Museum of Fine Arts bringing new perspectives on the creative processes of curators and beloved artists. “Klimt and the Kiss” (January 27) explores an iconic painting’s intricate details and “Art for Everybody” (January 28) looks into the dark side beneath Thomas Kinkadee’s public persona. Tickets and screening information is at mfa.org/programs/film. They are \$12 for members and \$15 for nonmembers. Museum of Fine Arts, 465 Huntington Ave.

Tue, 1/30

Join the Boston Library for **AUTHOR TALK: RACHEL L. SWARNS - THE 272: THE FAMILIES WHO WERE ENSLAVED AND SOLD TO BUILD THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**. Journalist, author, and professor Rachel L. Swarns will be in conversation with moderator Stephanie McCurry, a historian, author, and professor, about “The 272,” which Annette Gordon-Reed, Pulitzer Prize–winning author of “The Hemingses of Monticello” and “On Juneteenth,” describes as “an absolutely essential addition to the history of the Catholic Church, whose involvement in New World slavery sustained the Church and, thereby, helped to entrench enslavement in American society.” Following the discussion, there will be time for an audience Q&A. During the

@ THE CENTER

The Fenway Community Center is open six days a week. Visit fenwaycommunitycenter.org for details.

- Friday, Jan. 9 & 23, 3:30pm to 5:30pm: CREATIVITY CORNER WITH SEMAJ.** Drop into the FCC to make, mingle, and unwind with fun, hands-on art projects.
- Tuesdays, 10am to 12pm: OPEN PLAY FOR TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS** with Viking Sports
- Thursdays, 3pm to 5pm: HOMEWORK HELP AND AFTERSCHOOL SPACE.** Join FCC and Operation PEACE for help with homework and after school activities. Drop-off is for ages 7 and up. Form must be completed prior to start. Email ciara@fenwaycommunitycenter.org for more details!