

THE BOSTON GUARDIAN

November 6, 2020

Vol. 5 Issue 13

Covid Disrupts Charles Cleanup



By Justin Roshak

Covid has stymied efforts to monitor and improve the health of the Charles River.

For twenty-five years the Environmental Protection Agency

(EPA) and Charles River Watershed Association have released an annual report card on the river's health, usually between May and July.

This year the 2019 report card was delayed until October and then put off indefinitely. As of

November 2, an EPA spokesman said it was still not finished. The EPA spokesperson said that Covid had not disrupted all monitoring efforts, such as a buoy deployed near the Museum of Science.

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Eversource Upgrades City's Electrical Grid

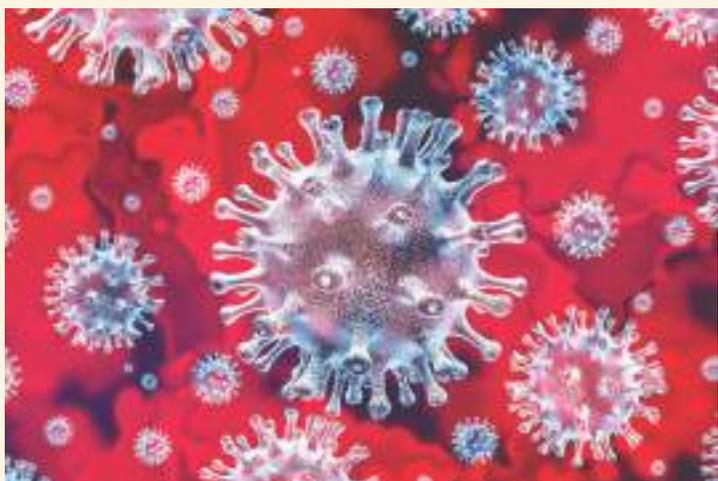
By Ian Stevenson

As South Enders have struggled with unreliable electric service in recent weeks, Eversource has continued to upgrade its grid in neighborhoods across the city.

In October, Eversource began upgrading South End

switches, that turn power on and off to customers. To install the new switches, which can be operated remotely, Eversource must temporarily cut off a building's electric power. Once in place, the new switches allow for easier maintenance and

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Covid Hitting Downtown Less than Other Places

By Ian Stevenson

While Covid case rates continue to rise precipitously citywide, downtown neighborhoods have fewer cases than Boston's other neighborhoods. As of October 29, Fenway has had 1,117 cases

per 100,000 residents while the cumulative rate in Back Bay, Beacon Hill, North End, West End and Downtown was 1,400. By comparison, the rate in Roxbury was 3,624.

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Boston Helping Make America Sane Again



Although ward and precinct results were not available at press time, Bostonians have done their part to MASA (Make America Sane Again) with over 82 percent of the city's electorate voting for Joe Biden.

Charles Cleanup

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The bouy monitors a variety of variables, such as temperature and pH, but not bacteria levels, which are the key concern for swimmers and boaters.

Today, the EPA considers the Charles “almost always safe for boating”. During dry spells, it is safe to swim most of the time. But

water quality is still unpredictable. It only takes a half-inch of rain to send bacteria to unsafe levels for 48 hours.

In 2019, the Charles River Swimming Club canceled its One-Mile Swim after two wet weekends in a row. This year, the Swimming Club and Charles River Conservancy canceled their joint swim due to Covid.

Volunteer cleanup efforts also stalled in the spring, as case

numbers began to rise.

The Esplanade Association normally organizes about 2,000 volunteers per year, in teams of 30 to 50. They clear out phragmites, an invasive grass that must be hand-cut, or it grows back. That stopped after Covid hit, and only restarted in October with much smaller teams.

The Charles River Cleanup Boat usually runs 80 days a year from May to September. In past

years volunteers have pulled out everything from bottles to traffic lights to human remains. This year the boats simply didn't run. That leaves an estimated 240 bags of trash in the river.

At the same time, park use soared over the summer as Bostonians looked for ways to escape self-isolation. Charles River Esplanade Director Michael Nichols said usership was up by 48 percent over last year.

That meant more trash on the shore, with nowhere to go. In the first phase of Covid, the Esplanade removed garbage bins to prevent the spread of the virus, compounding the problem.

The full impact of the pandemic on the river will have to wait until the 2020 water quality report card is released, presumably sometime next year.

Electrical Grid

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troubleshooting. While Eversource claims to have notified customers before installing new switches, *The Boston Guardian* has heard from several South End residents since late September about repeated outages, often without prior notification.

“These outages were not related to the planned reliability upgrades we are making,” Reid Lamberty, an Eversource spokesperson, wrote in an email. He claims Eversource is aware of three recent unplanned outages. “We are making investments in smart technology to improve reliability for our customers so that they experience fewer outages and the outages they may experience are shorter in duration.”

Though Eversource claims the outages are

unrelated to their upgrades, residents who spoke with *The Guardian* all noticed there were Eversource crews working in the area at the time of the outages.

Charles Denison, a South End resident, lost power twice over two days in October. The second outage, on October 19, began when a transformer failed under the street. The outage went on for nine hours before Eversource installed a generator to provide service until the problem could be fixed, he said.

When the transformer on his street failed, Denison called Eversource who informed him that the utility company had his building listed under the incorrect circuit, meaning that he wasn't receiving notifications about outages that affected him.

“Talking to other people on our street, this seems like a really big problem where their records don't match how [people] are

connected to the grid, so the notifications they are sending aren't getting to the right people,” Denison said.

Lamberty denied that any of Eversource's customers are registered incorrectly. “We do know what buildings and customers are connected to our system. In the event of a planned outage, we notify every customer who is associated with the account.”

This fall, Eversource is also at work on the final steps of two upgrade projects in the Seaport neighborhood, according to Eversource's website. On Northern Avenue in South Boston, Eversource is relocating an existing transmission line to accommodate for the realignment of the street. WS Development, a major developer working in the Seaport, is contributing to the cost of the new line construction, according to Yanni Tsipis, WS Development's senior vice president. The second South Boston project

this fall is to add underground cables to the substation Eversource built in the Seaport in 2017, which was designed to service the swath of new apartment buildings, hotels, and restaurants popping up along the city's southeastern flank.

Substations are built to convert electricity from transmission lines into voltage usable in buildings. Though the enlarged capacity was needed in the flashy Seaport neighborhood, the upgrades come as South Enders continue to be frustrated by unreliable electricity.

Last Wednesday, Eversource held a meeting with the neighborhood to discuss the recent equipment failures.

Denison, who attended the meeting, said that “my impression from the community is that the level of confidence that [Eversource is] ahead of this issue is very low. A lot of stuff is failing that they're not expecting to fail.”

Covid Cases

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The citywide positive test rate was 7.8% as of October 26, but it is lower downtown. In the cluster of neighborhoods that stretches from Back Bay to the North End, the positive test rate is 2.7%, or a quarter of the rate in Dorchester, which is 10.8%. Fenway has a positive test rate of 1.5%, which is nine times less than the 13.5% rate in East Boston.

Testing rates, which help control viral spread, are also higher downtown. In Back Bay, Beacon Hill, the West End and Downtown, 50,538 per 100,000 residents have been tested so far, compared to 30,486 in Mattapan.

“Covid is being experienced unequally in our neighborhoods,” said Rita Nieves, the Boston Public Health Commission's Executive Director, at a press conference on October 30.

“Our Black and Latinx residents have consistently accounted for above 30% of our cases,” Marty Martinez, the city's chief of Health and Human Services, added.

Amidst this rapid rise in cases, officials are considering “pausing” indoor dining for two to three weeks, while Governor Charlie Baker reduced the statewide indoor gathering limit to 10 people on Monday.

As the city continues to track how infections spread, officials say small indoor gatherings of only a few people are part of the problem. The problematic meetups can be so small that many people don't consider them gatherings.

“They're not even gatherings but can be small groups of people watching a game,” said Martinez. “Not super-spreader events but [rather] a lot of small scenarios are happening that is really increasing the spread.”

As of Tuesday, there have been 21,275 cases in Boston and 871 deaths. Close to 50% of Bostonians have been tested and city hospitals are seeing an increase in patients for the first time since May.

“Right now all these metrics are moving in the wrong direction,” Martinez said. “If the data tells us that we need to pull back on something, we will do that.”

How Things Change



Remember this undeveloped space back in 1962? It's now the Prudential Center.

THE BOSTON GUARDIAN

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PRESIDENT
ROBERT WHITCOMB

EDITOR/PUBLISHER
DAVID JACOBS
ASSOCIATE EDITOR
GEN TRACY

REPORTERS
MANNIE LEWIS
IAN STEVENSON

CONTRIBUTORS
TREA LAVERY
JUSTIN ROSHAK
AMY SOKOLOV

P.O. Box 171558, BOSTON, MA 02117 TELEPHONE: (857) 265-3022 FAX: (857) 990-3128
EMAIL: news@thebostonguardian.com

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Going to the Dogs

Every Halloween season, the Downtown Business Improvement District holds a costume contest for our most cherished locals. This year's event required nominees to send in photos.



Photos: Courtesy of Downtown BID



Cannabis Dispensary Proposed on West St.

By Trea Lavery

An adult-use marijuana dispensary has been proposed at 13-15 West St., the former location of Papagayo Restaurant. The location would be the second store owned by Rooted In LLC, the owner of another potential dispensary in Nubian Square, Roxbury.

In an informal Zoom call between downtown residents and the owner of Rooted in Roxbury, co-owner Brian Keith explained that he and one of his partners, Solmon Chowdhury, were approached in 2018 to be the face of a Boston cannabis business owned by an out-of-state company. Instead, they, along with Keith's wife Joanne and Chowdhury's wife Rokeya, decided to open their own business.

"We wanted it to be something that's truly community conscious, and truly representative of this city," Keith said. "We want to make sure that when people benefit from it, it's not just the four of us benefiting."

He explained that all of the owners, along with the majority of investors, are people of color and live in Boston.

While some residents on the call expressed support for the company, others shared concerns about traffic issues in the busy

area and the proximity to both Suffolk and Emerson Universities. The street is also home to Bridge Over Troubled Waters, a program that offers services to high-risk youth.

"You've got to deal with the elephant in the room, which is that the location is dead smack in the middle of both residences as well as students who are living here and learning here," said Rishi Shukla, one of the co-founders of the Downtown Boston Residents' Association. "It's a tough thing for residents to say that this is going to help quality of life here and get behind it."

Keith said that because of the higher cost of legal marijuana, as opposed to prices offered by street dealers, as well as the obstacles to purchasing it for underage students, he does not believe that the store will be an issue for university students. However, the company has reached out to Emerson and Suffolk, as well as Bridge Over Troubled Waters, to gain their input.

To deal with traffic issues, Keith said that the store would run by appointment only to eliminate lines. They would also seek to establish drop-off points for Lyft and Uber to prevent rideshare services from stopping right in front of the store and blocking traffic.

Continued on Page 8



Virtual Public Meeting

Parcel R-1 Chinatown Disposition Planning

Tuesday, November 17
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Zoom Link: bit.ly/2GIESgM

Toll Free: (833) 568 - 8864

Meeting ID: 160 337 7531

Project Proponent:

Parcel R-1 Chinatown Disposition Planning

Project Description:

The Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA) invites you to a virtual community meeting via Zoom, to discuss the potential redevelopment of BPDA-owned Parcel R-1 in Chinatown.

The parcel is located at 48-58 Tyler Street and 49-63 Hudson Street and is currently used as a parking lot.

mail to: **Reay Pannesi**
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201
phone: 617.918.6239
email: reay.l.pannesi@boston.gov

Close of Comment Period:
12/2/2020

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

District 4: 650 Harrison Avenue, 617-343-4457
 District A-1: 40 New Sudbury Street, 617-343-4627

We know that warm weather is definitely over given how the number of bike thefts have plummeted and how few peddlers are actually using downtown's new dedicated bike lanes.

Given how few of us own snowmobiles, we expect the numbers stolen will be minimal come snow.

Shoplifting, however, is one of those universal constants almost on par with the laws of gravity.

Stealing the Perfect Mouthwash

At about 8:25pm on October 26, police responded to a man with a knife at Target on Boylston Street in the Fenway. Seems a "shopper" objected when the store's loss prevention officer asked him to pay for some items after leaving. Guess he has issues

controlling his aggression.

The guy fled the scene but, given what he took, must be respected for outstanding dental hygiene: two electric toothbrushes and a bottle of Don Julio. We thought only journalists used

Don Julio to brush their teeth.

A Color Coordinated Thief

On October 28, a D4 officer responded to a shoplifting complaint at the Champion Store at 333 Newbury Street. A guy in his late 20s or early 30s wearing a red hat, black jacket, red shirt, black pants and red sneakers entered the store and removed five red Champion t-shirts (valued at \$30 each), two black sweatpants (\$65 each), and two black hooded sweatshirts (\$70 each).

Stealing two basic, primary colors makes your heist so much easier and ensures that your outfit is properly color coordinated, even if slightly boring.

Stealing "Mouthwash" Is In

Is stealing booze a new fad? On October 29, police responded to Shaw's at 53 Huntington Avenue. A male and a female liberated three bottles of vodka during their "lunch hour". The suspects threatened the store security officer and proceeded to Copley Square. Both were known to police as heavy alcoholics and homeless who can be quite belligerent. May they in the near future find a 12-Step recovery program.

Classic Thieves

Nothing symbolizes classic, traditional dress than Brooks Brothers. At about 4:30 on October 29, two men and a woman entered the store at 46 Newbury Street. One had an empty TJ Maxx. bag. How totally unpreppy.

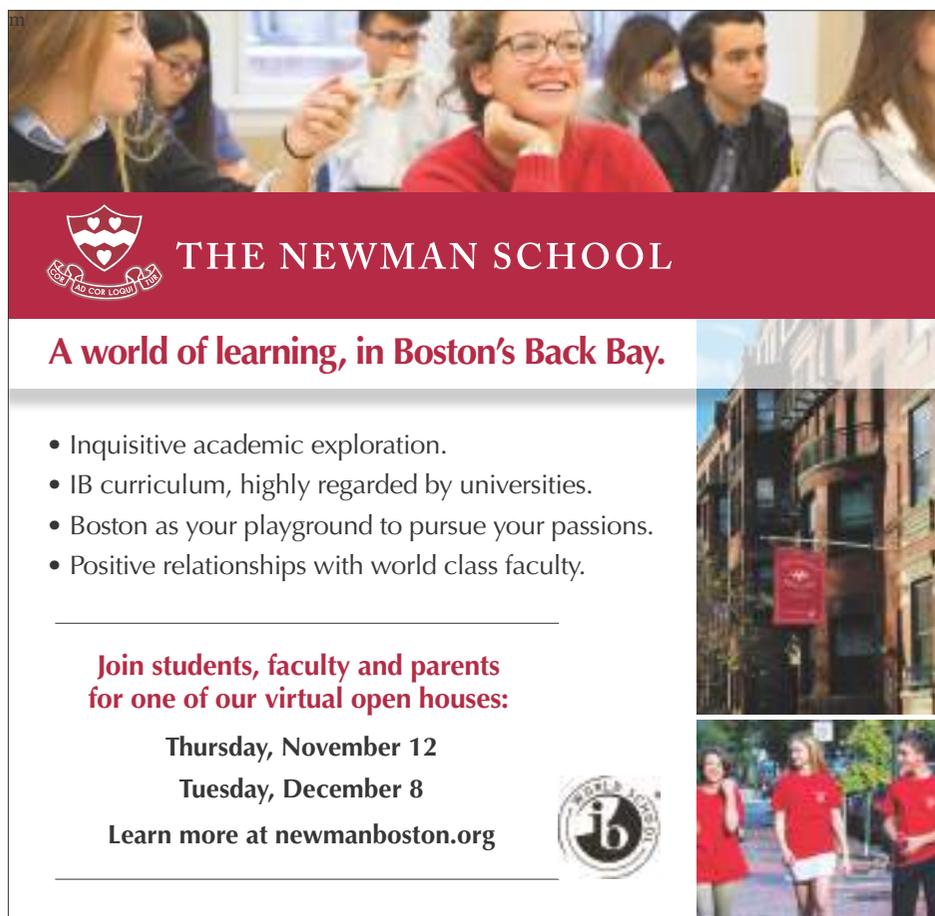
When they departed, the bag possessed five navy blue jeans and three sweaters. We'll probably next see them rooting for Harvard at the Head of the Charles Regatta.

A Successful Scammer

On October 30, a man walked into D4 headquarters to report a scam from earlier in the day. Seems our guy got an email from his boss requesting that he buy \$1,500 worth of Google Play, iTunes or Amazon gift cards, take a photo of each card with the security code and email the photos back to his "employer."

Our diligent employee then got yet another email requesting he get another 20 gift cards with \$100 each. This time he actually contacted his boss. You can guess the rest of the story. The guy's job evaluation will give him high grades for following instructions without hesitation but a somewhat lower score for common sense and intelligence.

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Feeding the Monster



The city's Parks Department helped Beacon Hill residents recycle their Halloween pumpkins by sending out a special truck call 'The Monster.' Candy and other treats for the crew were also accepted.
Photo: Courtesy of Parks Department

Pandemic hits Charles St. Hard as Vacancies Mount

By Amy Sokolow

As the pandemic stretches on for another month, businesses are continuing to close along Charles Street, the commercial area once teeming with mom-and-pop boutiques.

"In a normal decade, so few spaces turn over on Charles Street that I don't know that anyone even knows how many there are," Ivy A. Turner, a realtor at The Ivy Team/KW,

said. "I would just say it's an unprecedented level of vacancies."

Realtors in the area estimate that the hardest-hit businesses are in the fashion, beauty and restaurant industries, especially because social distancing requirements are difficult to meet on the narrow street for restaurants. Those that have online businesses have been able to make up for some lost revenue.

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Beacon Hill 36 Myrtle Street #3

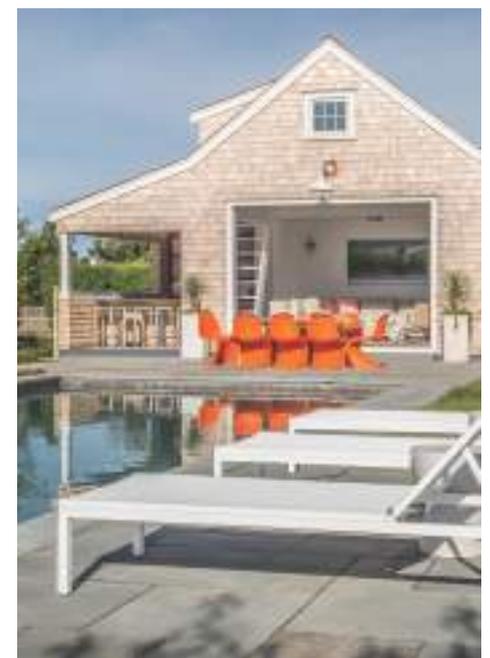
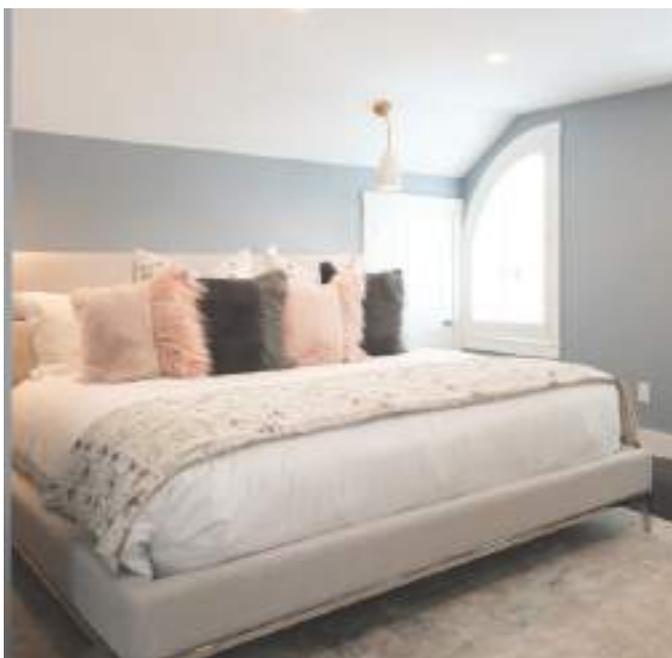


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Near Unanimous NOs To Proposed Pot Shop

By Trea Lavery

Residents of the West Fenway voiced almost unanimous opposition to a proposed marijuana dispensary on Queensberry Street at a community meeting last Wednesday.

The online meeting was part of the licensing process for Queensberry Pure, LLC., a minority-owned equity applicant seeking to establish an adult-use marijuana store at 112-114 Queensberry St. in a residential area.

“It’s supposed to be redeveloped for housing. That’s what this area of the Fenway is about,” said Tim Horn, president of Fenway Civic Association, during the meeting. “We need middle class housing for real people that have normal jobs and that are not extremely wealthy. We don’t need another commercial development.”

One of the most common concerns from attendees was about congestion on the small, one-way street, which has only residential parking. Attendees also expressed fears that having too many customers would create lines of people stretching down the sidewalk.

The owners, however, did not expect this to be a problem for the store. Damond Hughes, cofounder of Queensberry Pure, explained that they planned to have a

mobile order ahead system so that customers could come in and out quickly, or shop around at other businesses nearby while waiting for their order to be ready. They would also encourage customers to use public transit.

“It is a city, and we do feel that we will have a lot of people that will be taking public transit or walking to and from our facility,” said Rebecca Adams, a compliance consultant with the company. “If for any reason there is a line, we would obviously make sure they are not lingering outside on the sidewalk, but we do not feel that we will have a long line based on number of dispensaries in the state of Massachusetts.”

Some residents asked how the store would prevent customers from using marijuana in the surrounding area, including nearby Ramler Park and at Red Sox games and concerts. The owners did not foresee this as an issue.

They plan to have all customers sign a consumer pledge acknowledging that it is illegal to use marijuana outside of their home, and that they will not be allowed back to the store and could be reported to law enforcement if they do so.

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A SCARY HALLOWEEN



Photo credit: Courtesy of Fenway CDC

 **Virtual Public Meeting**

St. Botolph Apartments Renovation

Monday, November 9
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Register: bit.ly/2HH7h7e
Call-in: 833-568-8864
Webinar ID: 161 651 1787

Project Proponent:
Boston Housing Authority

Project Description:
The Boston Housing Authority will be conducting a total renovation of the existing 7-story building located at 70 St. Botolph Street in the Back Bay. The scope of work includes miscellaneous site revisions, exterior envelope repairs, and replacements, renovations to common areas and individual units and upgrades to fire protections, HVAC and MEP systems. We encourage the community to join us to discuss the merits of this proposed total building renovation project.

mail to: **Lance Campbell**
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201
phone: 617.918.4311
email: Lance.Campbell@Boston.gov

 **Virtual Public Meeting**

135 Dudley Street

Thursday, November 19
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Zoom Link: bit.ly/2HudrHL
Toll Free: (833) 568 - 8864
Meeting ID: 161 407 1875

Project Proponent:
Cruz Development Corporation

Project Description:
The 135 Dudley Street mixed-use residential/commercial project is adjacent to the B-2 Police Station, the Roxbury Municipal Court and the Dudley Literacy Center, with a total of 282,382 gross square feet (gsf) of floor area in two buildings of nine and four floors including 160 multi-family units (108 condos and 52 rentals); 8,703 gsf of commercial space; and 146 garage parking spaces including 25 spaces open to the public.

mail to: **Michael Sinatra**
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201
phone: 617.918.4280
email: michael.a.sinatra@boston.gov

Close of Comment Period:
11/27/2020



Community Still Waiting For Methadone Mile Help

By Trea Lavery

Every Thursday evening since September, members of the South End-Roxbury Community Partnership (SERCP) have stood on Massachusetts Avenue between Washington Street and Melnea Cass Boulevard to ask the city and state for help addressing the substance abuse problems in their neighborhood.

The group formed in August when Yahaira

Lopez, who grew up in the South End, connected with Roxbury activists Domingos DaRosa and Leon Rivera, after posting an email on Facebook that she sent to elected officials about the unsafe conditions that her mother experienced every day around her home while living in the area.

While their weekly demonstrations haven't shown any concrete changes yet, the group plans to continue holding them until they see results.

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Developer's Design Is Double Height Limits



By Justin Roshak

Developer Related Beal hit resistance to its proposal to redevelop the Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology (BFIT) because it's twice the allowable height limit.

The core of the plan is a 210,000 square foot, 204-unit senior care facility on the intersection of Berkeley and Tremont. The new building would include street level retail, eight floors of brick residences, three floors of glass-clad service facilities, and a mechanical penthouse. After feedback from the South End Landmark District

Commission, the design was lowered to the level of Atelier apartments, the tallest around at 145 feet. That wasn't nearly enough for members of the Commission.

"This building is pushing it. It's too tall," said John Freeman, a member of the commission. "We're always told by developers, 'we need the height to make the numbers work.' Well, maybe not," commented Catherine Hunt, who added, "It is astonishing to me that developers know what the limits are, but they come in with a proposal that is twice that."

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NOTICE OF MEETING NOVEMBER 17, 2020

National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories (NEIDL) of Boston University will hold its annual meeting on Tuesday, November 17, 2020, 6:00–7:00 pm.

This meeting will be held virtually using Zoom. The public is invited to attend.

Please email gca@bu.edu or call 617-358-9180 for the Zoom information.

Additional information on NEIDL can be found at bu.edu/neidl or by contacting BU MED Campus Community Relations at 617-358-9180.

Boston University National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories

Charles St. Vacancies

Continued from Page 5

Tom Brennan, a local agent said nail salons have been hit the hardest in the area. “No one wants to go there because everybody’s so worried about getting sick,” he said. “All these hard working mostly immigrants who have started nail salons are really

taking a pounding.” Brennan also said men’s clothing stores have been adversely affected by the pandemic.

Kevin Ahearn at Douglass Elliman Real Estate, said Congress is partially to blame for the closures for not passing another stimulus round. “These small business owners, a lot of them are not going to be able to recover from this. Some will that are strong and have the wherewithal, but it’s really

unfortunate to see, especially the restaurant scene,” he said.

However, all three agents said landlords have gotten creative to entice new tenants to rent in the area. Brennan and Turner both said they have brokered deals where landlords reduce rent for the first few years, with the goal of eventually returning to pre-pandemic rates. Ahearn suggested the city might get creative with temporary tax cuts in the area to help struggling

businesses stay afloat. Even though the street looks more empty than usual, Turner sees this as an opportunity for new businesses to get their foot in the door in an area that normally has little turnover. “In a sense, it’s an opportunity for some people to get into really prime blocks of space that normally they’d have to wait years and years to get into,” she said. “If the landlord is willing to lower the rent during shutdowns and if they

have an online business, it’s a chance to get a great location for the future.”

These agents also expressed optimism that the area will recover when the government widely distributes a vaccine. “I still walk Charles Street almost every night and it’s still a beautiful street,” Brennan said. “Everybody who knows Boston, it’s one of their favorite spots. And I do think it’s going to come back.”

Fenway Pot Shop

Continued from Page 6

If approved by the Boston Cannabis Board, Queensberry Pure must then go to the Zoning Board of Appeals to receive a variance for the buffer zone, which normally does not allow multiple cannabis stores within a half-mile of each other. They would then go to the state Cannabis Control Commission for approval.

While a date has not been set for the vote from the city’s cannabis board, the owners of Queensberry Pure estimated that the store

would be ready to open in 8 to 9 months.

Khari Milner, director of community relations for the company, said that the company is more likely to receive a variance from the ZBA because it is black-owned.

“It’s well-documented that the War on Drugs has really been a war on black and brown communities,” he said. “This is the reason why a program such as economic empowerment zones has been put together. It is trying to create more equitable conditions, but it doesn’t guarantee anything in terms of whether an establishment will be successful.”

If allowed to open, the store would be open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and accommodate up

to 42 customers at a time, or 21 according to COVID-19 safety measures.

“There are also other businesses in that area, so we want to be treated like those other businesses,” Hughes said at the meeting. “There is a lot of hysteria around cannabis. By the time we open, it will be more normalized.”

In addition to Queensberry Pure, two other recreational marijuana dispensaries have been approved within a half-mile. New Dia LLC. was granted a host community agreement by the city at the BCB’s October 21 voting meeting for a store at 48-62 Brookline Ave., below the Cask n Flagon

restaurant. The company is another equity applicant.

The vote on New Dia’s license was deferred from the board’s previous meeting in September in order to give the company a chance to submit a more robust security plan for Red Sox game days and days on which there are large concerts at Fenway Park.

The granted license is conditional on the company also applying this security plan on busy Friday and Saturday nights, as well as on their receiving a variance from the ZBA.

MedMen Boston LLC has also received a host community agreement from the city to open a store at 120 Brookline Ave.

Methadone Mile

Continued from Page 7

“We are common folks who care deeply about our neighborhood. We care deeply about our children, our elders and our families,” said DaRosa in an interview. “This is something that has gone on for way too long. The elected officials know the issue. You can’t put a band-aid on this. There’s no excuse.”

The area commonly known as “Mass/Cass” or “Methadone Mile” got its name from the methadone clinics located in the area for drug addicts seeking treatment. The area is famous for its many homeless individuals, a large portion of whom suffer from drug

addiction. Lopez calls the area an “open-air drug market.”

The city of Boston released its Mass/Cass Strategic Plan in October 2019, with an updated version released in September 2020. Lopez and DaRosa said that the plan does not go far enough or give enough information to the community about what the city is doing.

From its beginning the SERCP has been searching for solutions to the problem, which are also affecting the whole community.

In between meetings with city officials and committees, the group staged a demonstration at Governor Charlie Baker’s Swampscott residence, where they asked the governor to act. DaRosa even placed syringes collected from the ground on Methadone Mile on Baker’s walkway resulting in a

stay-away order against DaRosa.

“Boston has been burdened the most with this situation,” Lopez said. “It truly defines the whole ‘not in my backyard’ philosophy and the political hypocrisy.”

From speaking with homeless and addicted individuals living in the area, Lopez and DaRosa have learned that for many, this is the only place they can come to find treatment, as well as the easiest place to purchase drugs.

Other, wealthier communities around the state don’t have methadone clinics, DaRosa explained.

“Part of the objective is to have the government and other cities and towns pick up their fair share,” he said. “We need [a treatment center] for the Boston metro area, the South Shore, the Berkshires, the Merrimack Valley, the Worcester valley.

We’re not saying we don’t want to see more. We want to decentralize what’s there.”

The group also wants more communication from the government on its plan to fix the problem, as well as more data on what is happening now.

The city of Boston currently hosts a data dashboard on the Mass/Cass page of its website, but it does not include information on overdose deaths, Narcan use or demographics, all of which DaRosa said would be incredibly helpful for activists in the community. He also wants more transparency on where the money devoted to this issue is going. Lopez in wants the community to have more of a say in how the issue is being addressed. “What we’re asking for is to live in a community that is comfortable for all,” Lopez said.

BFIT Design

Continued from Page 7

“I think we’re way off,” said John Amodeo, “I’m still wondering if we can entertain 90 or 95.”

The normal height limit in the area is 70 feet; the Atelier received special permission to exceed that. Alex Provost of Related Beal said his company will seek a similar exception.

*The Commission was more open to adding two new floors to the historic Franklin Union building, which would become 80,000 square feet of street-level retail and commercial offices. The existing Georgian Revival facade and interior floors would be preserved.

The last piece of the campus, a 17,500 square foot building at 4 Appleton street would be converted to 18 units of affordable housing. It would include 4,550 square feet of “affordable cultural space.” An existing auditorium would be removed.

Project Impact Advisory Group member Stephen Fox called the affordable units a “throwaway piece” and said the proposal “Does not reflect the diversity of the South End in any way.”

“They’re doing the bare minimum,” said Karen Chen, Executive Director of the Chinese Progressive Association, who didn’t think local seniors would be able to afford the full market-rate units.

But for the BFIT the project is a chance at a new future. The community technical college has operated at 41

Berkeley since 1908. Related Beal agreed to purchase the campus, but only if its project is approved. BFIT leadership said the sale is key to plans for a new campus, which would serve the school’s modern curriculum better than the current 112-year old building.

“It’s no longer really serving our needs,” said President Emeritus Anthony Benoit.

On September 25 the New England Commission of Higher Education issued BFIT an official notification that it could lose its accreditation if its financial position does not improve within two years.

At Thursday’s design hearing, Benoit said a successful sale to Related Beal would “completely eliminate” those concerns.

Cannabis Dispensary

Continued from Page 3

The store has also proposed a partnership with existing businesses in the area, giving patrons who have shopped at other local stores a discount on their purchase at the dispensary, which would be covered by the company itself, in order to drive more customers to local businesses. The proposed store is approximately a quarter mile from Patriot Care, a medical marijuana dispensary on Milk Street which has been approved to begin selling products for recreational use. The city has established a buffer zone of half a mile between cannabis stores, so Rooted In would need to seek a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals to open in this location. If the store is approved by the city and the ZBA, it would then have to go to the state’s Cannabis Control Commission for approval and if approved would be able to open within 12-18 months.

CLEANING-UP THE MUDDY

Just about every weekend, the Muddy Water Initiative assembles volunteers to do what was once considered impossible: cleaning-up the Muddy River.



Photo credit: Courtesy of Muddy Water Initiative



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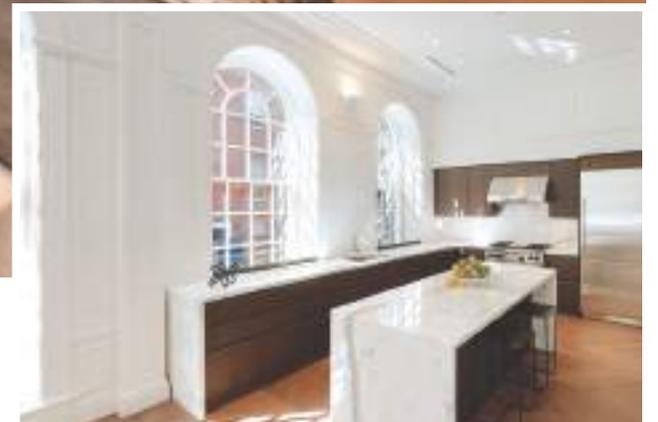
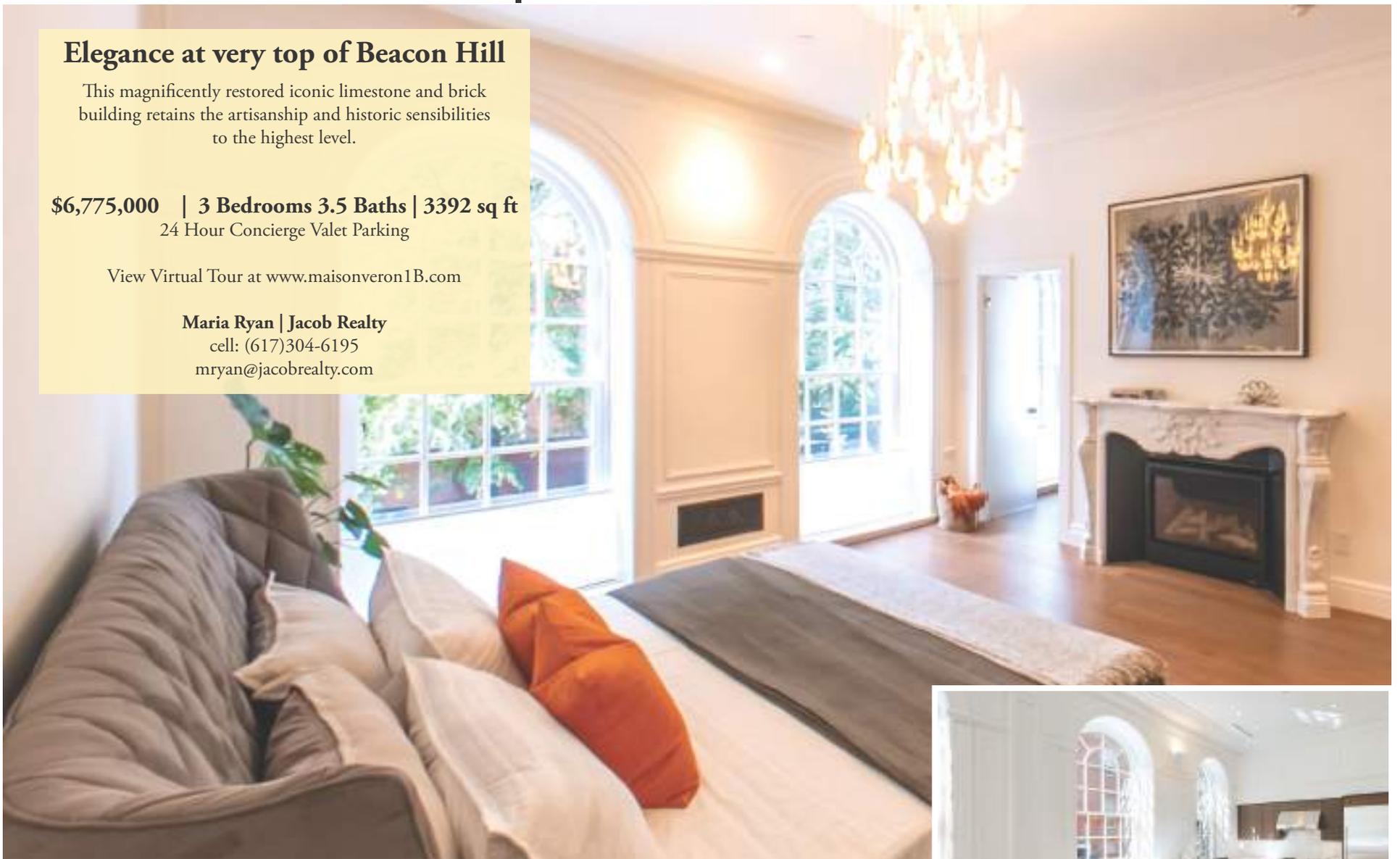
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