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## Mayor Ballantyne delivers landmark contract for SMEA (now SMEU) Unit B



14%-17% average salary increases informed by Mayor's push to eliminate wage bias.  
— Photos courtesy of the City of Somerville

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne recently announced the ratification of a new contract with the Somerville Municipal Employees Union (SMEU, until recently, called SMEA) Unit B that includes unprecedented wage increases designed to address long-standing wage bias. The new contract includes average salary adjustments between 14% and 17% in fiscal year 2025.

The three-year agreement developed by the administration and union leadership covers fiscal years 2023-2025 and is based on deep analysis of more than 90 different jobs and compensation in over a dozen comparable communities in the Greater Boston Area.

The SMEU represents three bargaining units within the city. Its Unit B is the *Continued on page 4*

## The Somerville Museum reopens to the public with 'The Art of the Festival'

After months of construction, the Somerville Museum is thrilled to open its doors once again where visitors will be greeted at the entrances with murals by the Somerville Nepali artist, Imagine, and a new exhibition highlighting Nepal, "The Art of the Festival" (January 16 – March 29). A Re-opening Reception and celebration takes place Thursday, January 16, 6 – 8 p.m.

Bruce McCoy Owens spent four decades learning from celebrants and taking photographs of Kathmandu's largest festival celebrated by diverse ethnic groups in the valley, Buddhist and Hindu alike. Each of these groups calls the honored deity by a different name with a different interpretation, but all participate and people of all ages play different roles in preparation according to their skills and social position.

*Continued on page 17*



Women playing bhusya.

— Photos courtesy of the Somerville Museum



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Mayor Ballantyne, Somerville’s Department of Racial and Social Justice (RSJ), and Somerville Public Schools’ Department of Equity and Excellence invite community members to a panel discussion to honor the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on Monday, January 20, at East Somerville Community School (50 Cross St.) from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. During the event, RSJ will collect donated items to help support our unhoused neighbors which will be delivered to community partners supporting unhoused and displaced residents. Find a full list of personal products, stable foods, and baby supplies needed at somervillema.gov/rsj. City buildings are closed on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. For questions about the MLK Day event or donation drive, please contact rsj@somervillema.gov.

\*\*\*\*\*

Happy birthday this week to the following: Happy Birthday to Philip Ercolini, from East Somerville. We wish him a great day. Happy birthday to Katie Lathasha Harris, we wish her the very best of birthdays as well. To Nancy Huber Coutoumas, who is celebrating this week as well, we wish her the very best. We wish all of our Facebook friends, such as James Ribeiro, Leslie Figueira, Rachel Tonello, Rosemary Ardagna and Joseph William Schenkenfelder a very happy birthday. We hope everyone has a great day. To all the others we may have missed, we sincerely wish them the very best of birthdays.

\*\*\*\*\* Continued on page 7

## Somerville Weather Forecast

for the week of January 15 – January 21 as provided by the National Weather Service

DAY	CONDITIONS	HIGH/LOW	PRECIPITATION	HUMIDITY	WIND
<b>Wednesday</b> January 15	Sunny	30°/13°	2%	1%	NW 17 mph
<b>Thursday</b> January 16	Partly Cloudy	31°/18°	3%	2%	NW 9 mph
<b>Friday</b> January 17	Sunny	35°/24°	5%	3%	W 7 mph
<b>Saturday</b> January 18	Rain	46°/35°	29%	21%	SW 14 mph
<b>Sunday</b> January 19	Partly Cloudy	40°/24°	25%	19%	NW 11 mph
<b>Monday</b> January 20	Partly Cloudy	31°/16°	26%	20%	WNW 12 mph
<b>Tuesday</b> January 21	Partly Cloudy	23°/14°	24%	18%	W 14 mph

NOTE: Conditions subject to change. Always check a daily forecast prior to activities that can be affected by the weather.

## TheSomervilleTimes.com Comments of the Week

### Response to: New westbound cycle track entry on Washington St. concerns bicyclists

Lauren Cortesi says:

While the Union Square bike lane was did not include community feedback for the final design, there are other issues with new construction in the Spring Hill area. I have it from a direct source that the bump outs on Summer Street were built incorrectly, that they are actually illegal in dimension, too narrow according to city regulations. This should be confirmed and rectified as this road is a hazard now.

Tim K. says:

Measure once, cut thrice.

### Response to: One-way woes

MARK J. CRESSE says:

Apparently the goal is to drive the remining “old Somerville” types out. Ever heard of “7 Hills”? Ever heard of “winter”? The under 45 types apparently think, well, everyone should walk everywhere, and take the bus. Many simply CANNOT. And for what? If EVERY car in Somerville disappeared the impact on climate would be....zero.

Casimir H. Prohosky Jr. says:

@MARK J. CRESSE: Rank insubordination! It’s back to the FEMA re-education camp with you!

Log onto TheSomervilleTimes.com to leave your own comments

## The Somerville Times

news@thesomervilletimes.com

www.thesomervilletimes.com

Phone: 857-488-5138



@somervilletimes



www.facebook.com/thesomervilletimes

Publisher – Somerset Valley Publishing Inc.

Editor – Jim Clark

Assignment Editor – Bobbie Toner

Advertising Director – Bobbie Toner

Arts Editor – Doug Holder

Writers: Jim Clark, Harry Kane, Jeffrey Shwom and Cathleen Twardzik

Contributors: Jimmy Del Ponte, Dorothy Dimarzo, Bob Doherty  
Photographer: Claudia Ferro

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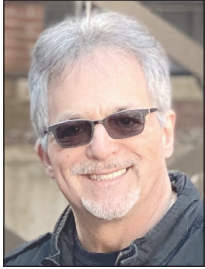
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Life in the **VILLE** by Jimmy Del Ponte

The views and opinions expressed in the commentaries and letters to the Editor of The Somerville Times do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of The Somerville Times, its publishers or staff.

# Monstrosity



They plan on putting this eyesore in Davis Square. Here are the thoughts from some when asked about it on Facebook.

“I remember reading sometime before Covid that they wanted to build up all existing structures in the square to four stories and make a pedestrian mall with retail and dormitory space. This looks like a jump off of that. Money, money, money, no real concern for living space, pollution, trash or quality of life”

“And they will just do it. Money makes the world go around. The younger folks see

nothing wrong with this. Housing shortage build upward and onward. Clarendon Hill Apt. Looked out of place years ago. I delivered for Burke’s News’ there for years.”

“Sadly, this is what some call progress. The need for housing will just keep growing. I was born in Somerville and by the late 80s I was priced out. I’ve seen the price of apartments in the area and I don’t know how people can afford them.”

“They want 15-minute cities dependent on the T, bicycles and walking.”

“Clarendon Hill is not a Sq. Highland Ave. at McGrath is not a Sq. For nearly 100 years Davis Sq. has been prized as a college community hub. Movies, bowling, dining, shopping. This monstrosity does



not belong anywhere near Davis Sq, it’s too big, blocks the sun and delineates the whole point of the Sq. between Harvard

and Tufts university?”

I hope it doesn’t happen. Davis Square will be just a memory.

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## Somerville Police Dept Crime Log December 31 – January 6

### Commercial Breaking and Entering

25000037: On 1/1/25 at approximately 3:20 a.m., Somerville Police responded to a construction site on Medford St. for an alarm call. Upon arrival, officers were informed that a male party entered the site through an opening in the gate. Officers observed a lock and chain on the ground. Nothing was reported missing.

### Assault

25000489: On 1/3/25 at approximately 5:49 p.m., Somerville Police responded to Broadway and Minnesota Ave. for report of an injured party. Upon arrival, officers observed a male bleeding from the face. He stated he was punched in the face by another male.

### Assault

25000602: On 1/4/25 at approximately 11:12 p.m., Somerville Police responded to the parking lot of 105 Middlesex Ave. for a weapons call. Upon arrival, officers spoke with the victim who stated he was being tailgated by a red crossover type vehicle. The victim exited his vehicle and a male in the other vehicle exited the from the passenger side, exchanged words with the victim then brandished what appeared to be a firearm in his waistband. The male suspect then returned to the vehicle and it fled towards Foley St.

### Residential Breaking and Entering

25000820: On 1/5/25 at approximately 5:48 p.m., Somerville Police responded to a residence on Sunset Rd. for report of a past breaking and entering. Upon arrival, officers spoke with the victim who stated she was gone for the holidays and when she returned, noticed that money was missing from her room. Officers identified the suspect.

**Other Crimes:** 3 Bike thefts • 2 MV Vandalisms • 3 MV thefts • 1 Car break • 1 Package theft

— Somerville Police Department



## Mayor Ballantyne delivers landmark contract for SMEA (now SMEU) Unit B

CONT. FROM PG 1

city's largest bargaining unit with employees in approximately 25 departments citywide, including Public Works, Water and Sewer, Library, City Clerk, Parking, and Inspectional Services. The new contract not only provides improved wages and benefits for these vital employees but builds in corrective wage adjustments (also known as market adjustments). These market adjustments are based on the city's Wage and Compensation Study, which was conducted to ensure comparable pay for comparable work for employees across all departments.

The agreement establishes wages competitive with top-paying peer communities and corrects for bias and discrepancies between departments and individual positions. In the first two years of the contract, all Unit B members' wages will increase 6%. In the third year of the contract, starting wages will go up on average 17%, and wages for existing employees will receive a market adjustment increase of an average of 14%. The new contract also includes significant enhancements to Unit B members' vacation, family medical leave, and other benefits. Mayor Ballantyne and union leadership signed the initial tentative agreement on January 6, and union membership ratified it on January 8. The contract will next go to the City Council for funding approval.

"This contract takes on so much more than inflation. We sent an arrow right at the heart of long-standing bias—that's

gender bias, class bias, and educational bias that is pervasive in our society. And we took a hard look at benefits that needed updating as well for these critical workers," said Mayor Katjana Ballantyne. "Throughout the bargaining process both the city and the union acted in good faith, and I would like to thank the SMEU leadership for partnering with us to go beyond the usual adjustments to create long-term equity for our employees. I'm honored and proud to be part of a process that once again has Somerville leading the way."

SMEU Union President Ed Halloran stated that, "as a 32-year veteran working for the city's DPW, this may be the best contract the members of this union have ever received and it's a tribute to the members of the bargaining committee, union officers, and the members who have worked on the job in person through COVID, as well as an administration and union that together bargained in good faith."

The agreement includes, among other enhancements, several important updates that will improve workers' compensation and benefits:

### Compensation:

Salary increases informed by the Wage Compensation Study:

A retroactive 3% annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for each of the first two years of the contract (FY23 and FY24) totaling 6% over the two years

In year 3 (FY25 starting July 1, 2024),

starting wages for new employees will be market adjusted between 3%-46%, with the average increase to a Unit B starting salary increasing 17%

In year 3, wages for existing Unit B employees will be market adjusted between 4% and 33%, with an average increase of 14%

### Increases to seniority bonuses:

Seniority bonuses will be increased at several levels of the Longevity Scale to establish equity with other city unions

### Other Benefits upgrades include:

**Paid Family and Medical Leave:** SMEU Unit B employees will now be eligible for the city's new Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program, which the city is in the process of implementing and will provide eight weeks of paid leave for qualifying absences, including parental leave, under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

**Increased Vacation and Earlier Access:** The agreement increases vacation by an additional week at each tier over current accruals and introduces access to paid vacation after six months of employment (previously there was a 1-year waiting period).

### Other enhancements:

Tripling of the stipend paid to employees that regularly drive personal vehicles for city business, while also significantly increasing the mileage reimbursement rate paid to employees that drive intermittently for city business

\$150 increase to the annual clothing allowance

Modernized payroll practices through the implementation of direct deposit and paperless pay stubs, which will allow the city to more efficiently administer employee compensation

The unprecedented anti-bias and market wage adjustments were based on reclassification of all Unit B positions as informed by the city's Wage and Compensation Study. Previously, employees were classified by department, which resulted in independent wage scales for each department. The study allowed the city an opportunity to establish a framework for classifying and paying employees comparably for performing similar job functions across departments. As a result, the city can now pay people equitably for doing similar work citywide.

The new three-year agreement reflects the city's commitment to supporting its essential personnel while ensuring the effective delivery of services.

"In Somerville, my goal is to be sure we're a city where every worker is compensated fairly, and this contract is a big step towards equity that is decades overdue. We must do right by our workers – all our workers. When we ensure our staff are properly valued, it's a win-win. Our workers are fairly paid, and we can attract and retain the best talent and staff to serve our community," said Mayor Ballantyne.

— City of Somerville

# Three Salvadoran immigrants - in their words

By Jeffrey Shwom

Somerville has been a Sanctuary City since 1987, and, per resolution [1], strives to “protect the safety, dignity, and rights of immigrants, migrants, asylum seekers, asylees, and refugees” by limiting its cooperation with the Federal government in enforcing immigration law.

Even as Somerville reaffirmed its commitment with a revised Sanctuary City Resolution three weeks after the November 2024 election, the day-to-day, year-to-year experience of its immigrants continues on. *The Times* was able to sit down with three Salvadoran undocumented individuals to hear their stories of why they came here, the communities they left there and built here, and their vision for a more just future.

The group discussion, held in East Somerville near the East Branch Library, began with cups of coffee, pastries, and conversations about family. All three of these women come from large families, one telling us that she has 14 aunts and uncles. Things got more real quickly, as they talked about the struggle of not being able to travel back to their country to visit aging relatives, because of their undocumented status. All three have or are taking English classes. They brought things from their birthplace, like rosary beads from the desert and a capirucho, a wooden toy that consists of a bowl with a stick attached to a string.

To protect their identity, all names have been omitted and no photos taken. Conversation was translated from Spanish through a bilingual interpreter. The discussion focused on two questions: why did folks come and what were their plans on staying, in the context of their status and other national or global factors?

The first person to speak is a natural born leader, one that the interpreter earnestly asked to run for public office someday. Her goals were to come here, earn money, and to buy her own home in El Salvador. When she came from El Salvador earlier in the 2000's, she came from a poor family and there was no opportunity for work. There too was a lot of fear. Someone could be selling vegetables on the side of the road, she told us, and folks would mug you, take everything, or charge a fee. They would chase kids in schools and hire them into gangs. She birthed her first child in the States alone, with no family at the hospital, with her husband was detained by Immigration due to work issues and the rest of her family abroad.

It is hard to be away from her “miyos,” roughly translated as community or “my people.” That being said, now that she and her kids are settled in here, it becomes harder to think of moving home, because they have created “another family” here. She discussed wanting to go back to show her children their roots, while also realizing that having children in school helped them learn about opportunities in this country.

The second person laughed at the naivety of her younger self. She came here for “a better life, a better salary.” It was only once she arrived that she truly realized the reality: her high school degree with a focus in accounting (something common there) did not mean anything here, she did not know English and she did not have papers to work. “Whatever education you had there is not valid here,” she laughed. She talked about the barriers that continue to hold her back. She has all of the Early Education and Care (EEC) credits to become a daycare teacher but she cannot get the job because she is undocumented.

According to the American Immigration Council, a Washington-DC based nonprofit that conducts “litigation, research, legislative and administrative advocacy, and communications” related to immigration issues, there is no line or clear, easy pathway for undocumented folks to gain citizenship. In their 2021 paper, *Why Don't Immigrants Apply for Citizenship* [2], “most undocumented immigrants do not have the necessary family or employment relationships and often cannot access...refugee or asylum status,” the three limited routes to be in the States on a temporary or permanent basis.



Three undocumented Salvadoran immigrants have shared stories of their journey from their former homeland to Somerville. — Photos by Jeffrey Shwom

The third participant knows how to operate a Bobcat used in construction. She did it for 15 years but could not get a license to operate. She could make \$50 or more an hour if she had the license. Also, she used to work for a recycling company in Boston in 2019, where more than 40 people lost their jobs when they asked for their papers. Since then, she has worked at a restaurant in Boston and has been learning English on the job. She had a happy life in El Salvador. There was no crime and no gangs where she lived, and she could just pick fruit and mangos from her farm. However, she came from a family of nine kids with five brothers. So, she came because she wanted to study and find an opportunity. Her daughter attends medical school in the United States as she was born here.

Other than the personal stories, they talked about four overarching themes. First, folks have to take deplorable jobs in the US, like cleaning toilets and working tough construction jobs, and there is shame. For example, one person described, “if you are cleaning a house, you may get dropped off and you do not get paid. They (bosses) violate your rights. They see you like a slave with a little bit of salary. We still pay taxes even amongst this.”

Second, the folks said that the way that they were taxed or had money taken out of their pay was different than those with status. Some described extra taxes taken out but were unsure who took the taxes: their bosses or the government. The third person relayed her situation about how her husband has a social security number but she has an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). When they

file taxes together, she cannot get federal taxes back while he gets federal taxes back. Even though she is working legitimately with her name and the proper procedure, she estimates about \$2,000 a year in lost wages.

Third, all of them see that El Salvador is getting better and safer, which could contribute to decisions about staying here longer. Since 2019, El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele's Territorial Control Plan has decreased crime and increased tourism, though wages have stayed low and the cost of living there has risen.

And last, folks are not just sitting around and not contributing. They are taking the opportunities to move up. If they are able to get their documents, they have a strong desire to do more and earn more, to grow wealth and opportunities for their families, here and at home.

In the end, even with the conversations of hardship and the realities of life here, there was a sense of community and belonging. Sharing these stories seemed to help three women connect. Though their experiences and circumstances differed to begin with, they shared the room equal in status and equal in their hope for a better future for themselves, their children and their families.

#### Links:

[1] <https://somervillema.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7033336&GUID=5C0013B5-E3D6-46B8-8752-5FF11D269B18&Options=&Search=>

[2] <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/why-don%E2%80%99t-they-just-get-line>



# Mayor Ballantyne delivers State of the City address

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne delivered her State of the City Midterm address Monday night, highlighting the city's accomplishments in 2024 and outlining an ambitious agenda for the year ahead.

Citing upcoming initiatives including a project to explore bringing clean geothermal energy to Somerville, major sewer system overhauls, free Wi-Fi access for public housing, completion of the city's first new fire station in a century – and facilitating the construction of nearly 700 affordable units currently in the pipeline – the mayor kept the focus on her administration's "guiding force," which is "progress for all."

The mayor emphasized the importance of addressing the economic and social challenges facing the city, including the rising cost of housing, ADA accessibility needs, and the potential impact of national political trends on immigrant, LGBTQIA+, and other vulnerable or targeted communities.

Addressing what she called "the elephant outside the room" in a reference to leadership changes in Washington, she urged the community to join with the administration in standing up to "hatred and division, be it racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim bigotry, transphobia, ablism, misogyny, anti-Arab sentiment, sexism, or similar attempts at othering."

"We are resilient, creative, and determined. Somerville welcomes all," she said.

City Council President Judy Pineda Neufeld and School Committee Chairwoman Ilana Krepchin also delivered Midterm remarks to the community. Video of all three speeches can be viewed on the city YouTube and Cable Channels via [youtube.com/SomervilleCityTV](https://youtube.com/SomervilleCityTV) and [somervillema.gov/CityTV](https://somervillema.gov/CityTV).

## Key progress and initiatives outlined in Mayor Ballantyne's address include:

**Expanding affordable housing:** We are "evolving housing stability supports from a small group of band-aid solutions to a robust ecosystem of initiatives," said Mayor Ballantyne.

**Recent initiatives cited include:** The administration distributed over \$9.5 million in flexible rental assistance, created the Municipal Voucher Program, introduced a Guaranteed Basic Income pilot, and established and used the Early Action Acquisition Fund to purchase units on the private market and keep them affordable. Somerville also led successful pushes for state legislation passed to seal no-fault eviction records and increase state funding for renter legal assistance.

**Coming progress cited includes:** In 2025, the administration will launch the Older Adults Bridge Program to help prevent low-income seniors from experiencing homelessness, continue to facilitate the production of 684 units in the city's affordable housing pipeline, stay on track to surpass the SomerVision 2030 goal to create over 1,200 affordable housing units, and begin preliminary steps to pursue the recently completed Brickbottom and Assembly Square Neighborhood Plans, which over time could add an additional 1,200 units.

**Addressing climate change:** "Our goal is to do our part and more – going beyond our borders to fight global warming," said Mayor Ballantyne.

**Recent initiatives include:** In 2022, the Ballantyne administration raised the city's climate goals to now aim to be Carbon Net Negative by 2050, meaning the goal is to remove more carbon from the atmosphere than the city produces. In 2024, to solidify plans to reach this target, the administration made ambitious updates to its Climate Forward plan.

**Coming progress:** 2025 will bring a range of initiatives including a new project exploring the potential for neighborhood-based networked geothermal systems and release of the city's report on strategies for moving multifamily buildings off natural gas and onto cleaner electric energy.

**Improving public safety:** Newly appointed Police Chief Shumeane Benford and the mayor share the approach that effective public safety is "focused on building trust, fostering collaboration, and preventing issues before they arise," said the mayor.

**Recent initiatives include:** Intensive, multi-year community-based work to develop multiple public safety related plans was completed in late 2024. The city's first new fire station in more than a century is under construction and expected to open its doors in Assembly Square in spring 2025.

**Coming progress:** In early 2025, the city will release and begin to implement recommendations from the Public Safety for All Task Force, the Civilian Oversight Committee, and the Anti-Violence Working Group.

**Investing in our people, building equity and inclusion:** "From our oldest residents to our youngest, Somerville supports every generation," said Mayor Ballantyne.

**Recent initiatives include:** As other communities make cuts, the Ballantyne



administration has centered schools as a top priority, adding school staff and increasing school budgets by 27% over three years, while also expanding afterschool programming and whole student supports. Communitywide, 2024 also saw advances for ADA accessibility including installing dozens of accessible pedestrian crosswalk buttons and expanded workforce development including paraprofessional training.

**Coming progress:** The city's Economic Development Division and Somerville Housing Authority secured a grant to launch free Wi-Fi for public housing tenants this coming year. The Administration will launch a citywide public interpretation line, will pilot a school-year expansion of the mayor's Summer Jobs Program, and will continue to expand job training for all ages, including launching "Let's Get Workin': a partnership between DPW and the High School's Center for Career and Technical Education to offer paid, hands-on job training in professions like HVAC, plumbing, and carpentry.

**Delivering strong fiscal management:** "We can't control national economic forces, but we can protect our community by managing our local resources wisely," said Mayor Ballantyne.

**Recent initiatives include:** For the second consecutive year, in 2024, Somerville earned a Triple-A bond rating – a first for the city – from Standard and Poors, which saves taxpayers money.

**Coming progress:** The mayor noted, "Somerville is facing the same uncertain economic outlook facing the state and our nation. And as we navigate this down cycle, next year's budget will again be tighter. But our teams are hard at work finding operational efficiencies, and we are position-

ing Somerville to outperform the market."

**Investing in workforce, taking on wage bias:** "On my watch, Somerville will not stand for unequal pay for equal work," said Mayor Ballantyne.

**Recent initiatives:** Mayor Ballantyne has been squarely focused on investing in city workers and has made it a central tenet of these efforts to eliminate long-standing wage bias – including gender bias. Four union contracts completed to date delivered wage and benefit increases and the E911 contract broke new ground by correcting for long-standing gender bias.

**Coming progress:** Ratification of a landmark new contract with the city's largest bargaining unit, SMEU Unit B (until recently SMEA) is expected this week. The contract "takes on more than inflation. We sent an arrow right at the heart of long-standing bias," said Mayor Ballantyne. "If it is ratified as it stands, it will be a step towards equity that is decades overdue."

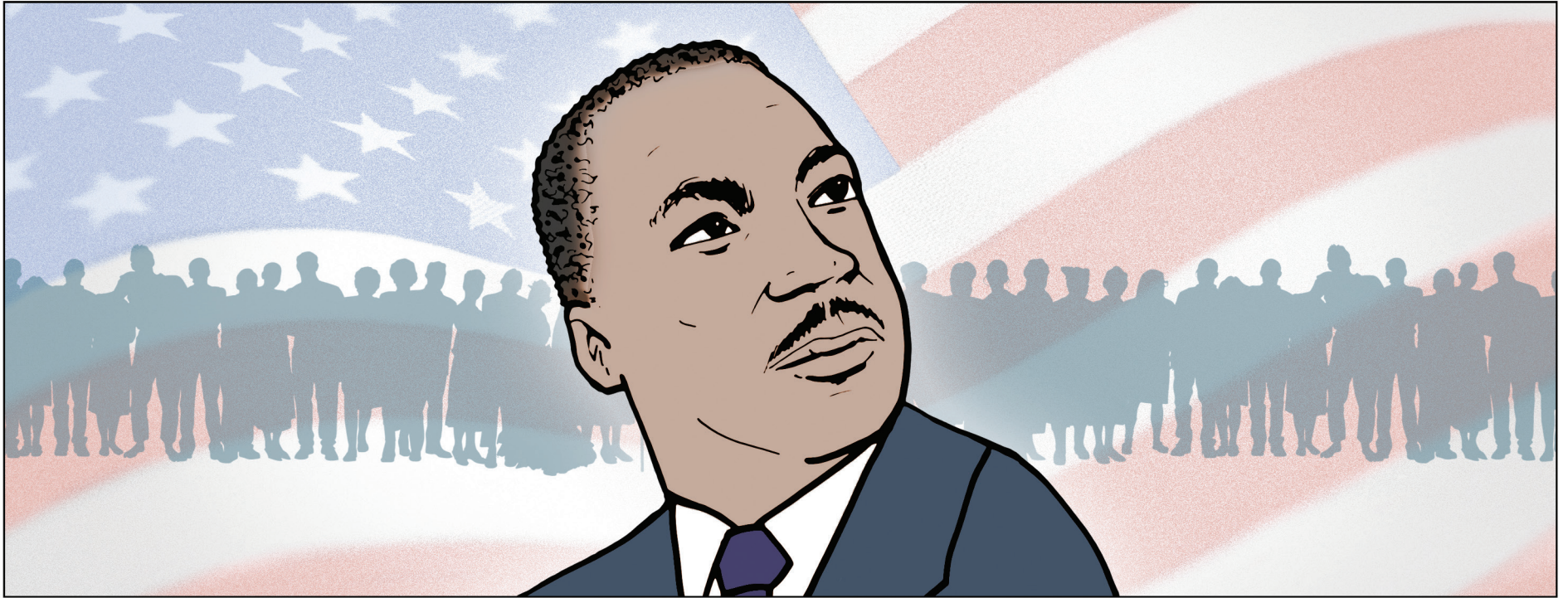
**Investing in local infrastructure:** "We are not just imagining an equitable future – we are literally building it," said Mayor Ballantyne citing work on roads, schools, parks, mobility and the "massive overhaul of sewer systems."

**Recent initiatives:** 2024 progress included advancement of the \$243 million Somerville Avenue sewer overhaul, the Spring Hill Sewer Separation Project, and the massive Poplar Street Pump Station. The city opened or expanded four public green spaces and broke ground on the Dilboy Athletic Auxiliary Fields and a new pocket park at 217 Somerville Avenue. Streetscape projects completed include Eastern Pearl Street, Powder House Boulevard, Holland Street, and more – all designed to improve traffic *Continued on page 15*

# COMMENTARY

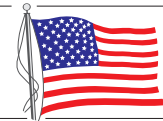
## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Illustrated by Jim Clark



Somerville honors the life and achievements of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

## Our View Of The Times



The annual celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day reminds us of the importance of tolerance and embracing diversity in this modern age, just as it was in the days when Dr. King lived among us.

The civil rights movement of the 60s may seem like a distant and detached part of American history for some, perhaps as remote as the civil war itself in the minds of the young who did not live in that

time. And yet, there was never a time in our history when the principles involved in that struggle were more relevant and meaningful than today, and even more so as we step forward into the future.

The great melting pot that is at the heart of the American dream is constantly tasked with the challenge of people of mixed racial, ethnic, and national identity blending and working together as equal

partners with a common goal: to live freely and prosper in a land still stands as the best possible hope for so many.

As we all strive to surmount the wearisome onus of turning back the economic struggles that have challenged us over the past few years, and at the same time celebrate all that is good and count our blessings each day, the great equalizer remains in effect. We recognize and embrace the

common humanity in all of us.

The tireless efforts of those like Dr. King helped to teach us the importance of knowing these things. As we acknowledge and celebrate the legacy of the man this week, let us take time to consider what has taken place in this country since he was taken from us. We are a better society now, and that should never be taken for granted.

### Newstalk CONT. FROM PG 2

Riverside Early Head Start is hosting a free community baby shower on **Wednesday, January 15**, at **474 Broadway**, from 4 to 6 p.m. Pregnant women and parents with infants up to three months old are invited to this unique event where they can form connections with other parents and community service agencies. Attendees will receive important resources, enjoy snacks, develop new parenting skills, and celebrate this transformative time in their lives. Everyone at the baby shower will leave with a goodie bag designed to support newborns. Call 781-516-2922 or text "SHOWER" to register today.

\*\*\*\*\*

Registration is open now for **The Artist's Way** writing workshop. From **January 23 to April 24**, the group will meet at **Arts at the Armory**, 191 Highland Ave. in the **Lavender Room** on **Thursdays** from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. More info and registration available visit <https://artsatthearmory.org/>.

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On **Tuesday, January 21**, at 6:30 p.m., visit the **Arts at the Armory**, 191 Highland Ave. for **The Moth: StorySLAM – Happy Accidents**. More info and tickets available here: <https://artsatthearmory.org/>. **Happy Accidents**: Five-minute stories about positive setbacks, failing

upwards, or blessings in disguise. Did you try to cure the common headache but ended up with a multi-million dollar soda company? Call it serendipity or call it a fluke. Get called up on stage and tell your story.

\*\*\*\*\*

The **Somerville High Trivia Team** is competing on **WGBH's High School Quiz Show** this year. Congratulations **Ella, Calla, Jack, Sam, Nate, Oliver, Coach** (and **SHS History Teacher**) **Theodore Blake** and the rest of the SHS Team. Only the top 17 trivia teams in the state qualified for the annual tournament. Show your support by cheering them on as part of

the studio audience during the show's recording on **January 25**, (Tickets <https://gbhevents.ticketbud.com/qualifying-match-2-somerville-vs-wild-card-winner-c9ffb18d-04cb7f409149>) The next match (if they win) will be recorded on **January 26** (Tickets: <https://gbhevents.ticketbud.com/quarterfinal-1-tbd-vs-tbd-70d3f02d-55b6b4f68a2b>). Somerville's first match will air on WGBH and Youtube on **February 22**.

\*\*\*\*\*

Are you looking for a way to get involved? The **City of Somerville** needs board and commission members. Learn more and apply for current *Continued on page 21*

# FUN & GAMES

Ms. Cam's

# Olio

Olio - (noun) A miscellaneous mixture, hodgepodge

#957

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. In which sport would you perform a slam dunk?                                 | ley's middle name?   |
| 2. What is the highest score possible in a single frame of bowling?              | 8. Which singer is known for the hit single <i>Rolling in the Deep</i> ?   |
| 3. Who was the first athlete to win seven gold medals in a single Olympic Games? | 9. What type of bread is commonly used in a Reuben sandwich?               |
| 4. Which tennis tournament is played on a grass court?                           | 10. Which cheese is known for its blue veins?                              |
| 5. Who played the Joker in <i>The Dark Knight</i> ?                              | 11. Which TV show features the characters Sheldon, Leonard, and Penny?     |
| 6. Who won the first season of <i>American Idol</i> ?                            | 12. What is the name of the high-end watch brand with a crown as its logo? |
| 7. What is Elvis Pres-   |  |

Answers on page 14

## The Somerville Times Useless Facts of the Week

1. Al Capone's business card read "Furniture Dealer."
2. Taco Bell was named after its owner, Glen Bell.

### STATEPOINT CROSSWORD

THE GRAMMYS

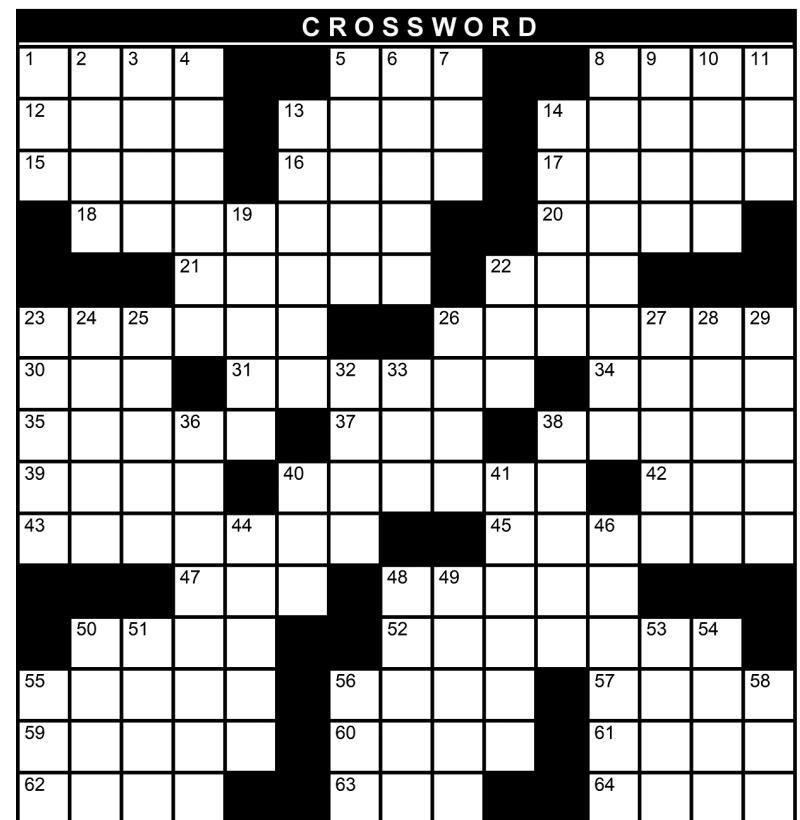
#### ACROSS

1. 43,560 square feet
5. Undergarment
8. "She \_\_\_\_ a Yellow Ribbon"
12. Ocean Spray \_\_\_\_ -Apple juice
13. #5 Across, pl.
14. Concentration of solution, in chemistry
15. CISC alternative
16. Swearing-in words
17. Goodwill branch
18. Artist with most Grammy nominations
20. ALCS counterpart
21. Winter Olympics participant
22. IX minus II
23. Drum roll sound
26. Front of building, pl.
30. Get it wrong
31. Upholstery choice
34. Reflect deeply
35. Raccoon's cousin
37. "\_\_\_\_ the fields we go"
38. Binary digits code
39. Capital on a fjord
40. Isaac of science fiction fame
42. Consumed
43. Within shortest distance
45. 100-year-old Grammy Award nominee
47. Beer faucet
48. Corpulent
50. Self-satisfied
52. 2025 Grammy nominated former band, with The

55. Twist and distort
56. Bank's provision
57. Flock's response
59. Rane's wrap
60. Elvers
61. 2003 Lifetime Achievement Award recipient \_\_\_\_ Puente
62. Like some wines
63. \_\_\_\_ it or lose it
64. Formerly, formerly

#### DOWN

1. Acronym, abbr.
2. Discarded cards in cribbage
3. Tear down
4. Enclose in a cyst
5. Orthodontic appliance
6. Motion Picture Association of America,



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### Soultion to last week's crossword puzzle:



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| e.g.  | last name                                      |
| 7. Certain tray content   | 33. Hula dancer's necklace                     |
| 8. Former multiple time Grammy host Andy ____                           | 36. Taylor Swift's "The ____ Poets Department" |
| 9. Related to ear   | 38. Nautical "Stop!"                           |
| 10. RPMs  | 40. Nile viper                                 |
| 11. Before, in verse  | 41. Grammy winners Frank and Billy             |
| 13. Predatory fish  | 44. Top scout                                  |
| 14. Gin's partner   | 46. Make a connection                          |
| 19. Giraffe's striped-leg cousin  | 48. Double-reed instruments                    |
| 22. 1995 "Have I Told Your Lately That I Love You" winner ____ Morrison | 49. Famous Memphis street                      |
| 23. Scout's mission   | 50. Unforeseen obstacle                        |
| 24. What phoenix did  | 51. Foal's mother                              |
| 25. ____-____-la  | 53. Chieftain in Arabia                        |
| 26. Non-negotiable  | 54. Tennis amount                              |
| 27. Old European coin   | 55. General Services Administration            |
| 28. Last 8 in college basketball  | 56. Romanian money                             |
| 29. More than sly   | 58. *Kendrick Lamar's "____ Like Us"           |
| 32. Nominated artist Post Malone's actual                               |  |

Soultion in the next edition of *The Somerville Times*.



# Emergency Warming Center being utilized, with higher attendance

By Jeffrey Shwom

The City of Somerville indicates an increase in utilization of the Emergency Warming Center (42 Prescott St, The Cummings Building) for adults experiencing homelessness this season. The third winter that the city has offered this cold weather help, it provides hot and cold meals, water, bathrooms, beds, and space to sleep.

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne expressed, “our Emergency Warming Center is a lifeline for some of our most vulnerable neighbors, providing a safe and warm space during the harsh winter months. Our unhoused neighbors deserve dignity and protection from the elements, and this center reflects our commitment to supporting those in need and building a more compassionate community.”

According to information gathered from Connor McCombs, Health Communications Officer in the Department of Health and Human Services, “since opening on December 9, 2024, the Emergency Warming Center has provided crucial overnight shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness in Somerville. Based on data provided by the site operator, Housing Families, nightly attendance has fluctuated between 28 and 37 individuals, with the highest attendance of 37 on a single night.” Moreover, the city found that since December 9, the Emergency Warming Center has seen higher attendance than the same period last year.

Usage was a bit slow to start during the first week, McCombs told us. “Attendance was lower during the first five nights as



The city’s Emergency Warming Center has reported a marked increase in utilization over recent months.

awareness of the center grew and trust was established, but numbers have since stabilized.” Furthermore, “the operator is currently working to establish a van shuttle service from Davis Square to the Emergency Warming Center. In the interim, the city is exploring the option of providing taxi vouchers. Anyone who needs a ride to the warming center can call (781) 658-4507.”

When asked why the space is only available to folks experiencing homelessness, McCombs stated, “Homelessness has been on the rise nationally and locally. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, homelessness increased by 18% in 2024 across the United States, and Somerville has experienced similar trends.

Emergency warming centers are designed to provide a safe, warm space for individuals without housing, addressing their unique needs with the support of trained human services profes-

sionals. Maintaining trusted relationships with this population is critical for their quality of life and access to services.”

In the Winter of 2022 into 2023, Mayor Ballantyne first launched the initiative, operating on an emergency basis at the Armory for around four nights. During the second season, the warming center operated for a fuller season at the Somerville Armory on the second floor. This winter, the Center has opened with expanded dates and operations to meet increasing demand.

Families or individuals with children seeking shelter should contact the Somerville Office of Housing Stability at 617-625-6600, Ext. 2581, for referrals to family-specific resources and shelters.

Community members interested in learning more about the Somerville Overnight Warming Center, visit [somervillema.gov/warmingcenter](http://somervillema.gov/warmingcenter) or email [warmingcenter@somervillema.gov](mailto:warmingcenter@somervillema.gov).

## MSBA building project update: Somerville Advances to next phase

On December 13, 2024, the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Board of Directors voted to move the SPS school building project to the Feasibility Study Phase. In this phase, the City of Somerville will hire an Owner’s Project Manager to oversee the project, followed by hiring a Design / Architect firm. At this time, no decision has been made about whether the Brown School and Winter Hill Community Innovation School would be combined. Ongoing updates are available at [www.somervillema.gov/msba](http://www.somervillema.gov/msba).

## The Somerville Times Historical Fact of the Week



### Eagle feathers #320

This article first appeared in the November 26, 2014, edition of The Somerville Times.

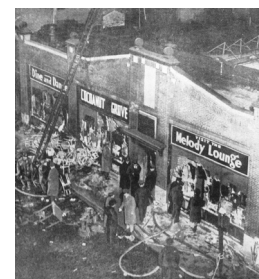
### The Thanksgiving Miracle

By Bob (Monty) Doherty

If you look at the official city symbol of Worcester, Massachusetts, you will see that it is heart shaped. This image is symbolic because the city is located in the very center of Massachusetts, or the heart of the state.



On November 28, 1942, Worcester’s College of the Holy Cross’ football team appropriately had “heart,” and their players’ hearts were beating on all cylinders. For this game, they played against the high-flying Eagles of Boston College, who had won the Cotton Bowl in 1940, the Orange Bowl in 1941 and, in 1942, were streaking toward another title. They were planning to make the mediocre Holy Cross football team their ninth straight win. Holy Cross’ record at that time was 4, 4 and 1.



The game was being played at Fenway Park to a sold-out crowd of fans from all over New England. Boston College, who was number one in the polls at that time, was considered good enough to be a professional team capable of destroying many in its path. The press considered the chance of a Holy Cross victory laughable, but by the end of the game the lowly Crusaders had humbled the mighty Eagles

Continued on page 15

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**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING  
& COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
KATJANA BALLANTYNE  
MAYOR**

**THOMAS F. GALLIGANI, JR.**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**LEGAL NOTICE - HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION (HPC)**

The Somerville Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) will hold a public meeting and public hearings on **Tuesday, February 4, 2025** at 6:45pm on the following applications, in accordance with the Historic Districts Act, Chapter 40C of the Massachusetts General Laws, as amended, and/or the City of Somerville Code of Ordinances, Pt. II, Chap. 7, Sections 7-16 – 7-28.

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, this meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission will be conducted via remote participation. An audio recording of these proceedings will be available upon request to [historic@somervillema.gov](mailto:historic@somervillema.gov).

**TO USE A COMPUTER**

Registration URL:  
[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_JNkenh06QimYGZ5raNEZtv](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_JNkenh06QimYGZ5raNEZtv)

Webinar ID: 872 1108 6854

**TO CALL IN**

An attendee must register for the meeting online in order for a call-in number to be emailed to them by Zoom.

**ALL OF THE CASES ADVERTISED BELOW HAVE A PUBLIC HEARING COMPONENT**

**Alterations to Local Historic District (LHD) Properties**

**HP24-000005 – 25 Atherton St**

Applicant: Christine Strout – IRB Real Estate  
Owner: Carr Schoolhouse Condo Trust  
The Applicant seeks a Certificate of Appropriateness to alter a LHD property by installing EV charging stations and a transformer in the parking lot.

**HP24-000055 - 170 Central Street**

Applicant: Doug White  
Owner: Baij Joshi  
The Applicant seeks a Certificate of Appropriateness to alter an LHD property by replacing the siding, roofing, window framing, and trim of the building.

Case documents reviewed by the HPC are available on the City website at <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/historic-preservation/hpc-cases>. Cases may be continued to a later date; please check the agenda (posted 48 hours in advance of the meeting) on the City website or email [historic@somervillema.gov](mailto:historic@somervillema.gov) to inquire if specific cases will be heard. Continued cases will not be re-advertised. **Note:** Written comments due to [historic@somervillema.gov](mailto:historic@somervillema.gov) **NO LATER THAN NOON** one week prior to the meeting date. Email [historic@somervillema.gov](mailto:historic@somervillema.gov) with inquiries.

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**CITY OF SOMERVILLE  
PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
INVITATION FOR BIDS  
IFB #25-38**

The City of Somerville, through the Procurement and Contracting Services Department, Invites Sealed Bids For:

**Management of Catch Basin Grit Material**

A bid package may be obtained online at <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/finance/procurement-and-contracting-services> or from the City of Somerville's BidExpress page at <http://www.somervillema.gov/BidExpress> on or after: **Friday, January 17th, 2025**. Sealed responses will be received at the PCS Department, Somerville City Hall, 93 Highland Ave., Somerville, MA, 02143 or via Bid Express until: **2PM, Monday, February 3rd, 2025**. The Chief Procurement Officer reserves the right to reject any or all proposals if, in her sole judgment, the best interest of the City of Somerville would be served by so doing.

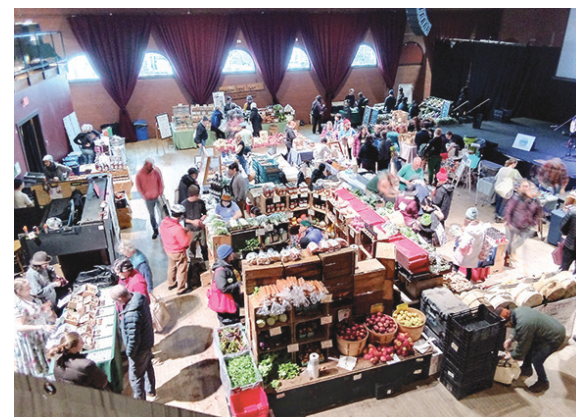
Please email Sonia Castro [scastro@somervillema.gov](mailto:scastro@somervillema.gov) for more information.

**Sonia Castro**  
Procurement Manager  
617-625-6600 x3407

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## Somerville Winter Farmers Market in full swing



Even though a few inches of snow had fallen Saturday morning, it certainly did not stop loyal and new patrons from visiting The Somerville Winter Farmers Market at The Armory (191 Highland Ave). Operating in its 15th season, the market is open Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Fresh produce, baked goods, cheese and meat products, specialty items and more. Cash, credit / debit, and SNAP/EBT and HIP benefits accepted. \$15 SNAP match to customers each week. Go to <https://www.somwintermarket.org/> to find out about weekly events. — Jeffrey Shwom



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# Oh, rats – confronting the rodent issue in Somerville

By Lillian Peck

In a virtual informational session hosted on Thursday, January 9, at 5 p.m., Somerville Inspectional Services Department Staff and the SomervilleViva Office of Immigrant Affairs introduced an important matter to public discussion – rodent control. The goals of the meeting were to help attendees learn how to identify rat activity, use control methods, develop prevention strategies, and utilize city resources.

“This year, it’s a personal goal of mine and our program to make ourselves more known to the city so that they can reach out to us a lot more,” said Alicia Privett, Somerville’s Environmental Health Coordinator with the Inspectional Services Department. “We’re trying to increase these workshop presentations so that people can see examples and be more hands-on with these practices we’re trying to educate about.”

The workshop opened by exploring rat recognition education, emphasizing that Somerville is home to various rodents, including mice, opossums, squirrels, and groundhogs.

“Somerville is a great environment for rodents because we’re a mixture of urban and suburban, in a way, so a lot of porches and backyards, but it’s so densely packed, so it kind of allows rats to live close to food sources, hide in porches and backyards, things like that,” said Privett.

The presentation highlighted key facts about rats, including their social nature, use of smells for communication, and behaviors like burrowing, nesting, and chewing to manage their rapidly growing teeth. It also covered their reproduction rates (an average of 8 pups per litter with a 24-day gestation), size (6-8 inches), droppings

(½-¾ inches long), lifespan (2-4 years), and nocturnal habits. Droppings are typically found near trash or food sources, gnaw marks near trash cans, fences, or under porches, and burrows of 2-4 inches wide and 12 inches deep near foundations of buildings, porches, or items stored outdoors, under plants. Burrows tend to contain twigs or trash and will have at least two entrances.

Privett, who authored the virtual informational session’s rodent control presentation, also detailed the phenomenon of runways, or pathways, that rats leave as they travel from one location to feed at another. These runways, typically found along straight surfaces such as fences or walls, appear as trodden grass, dirt paths with eroded plant life, or packed-down soil due to frequent use. When rats rub against surfaces, they sometimes leave dark marks due to the oil on their fur.

Privett stressed that rats and rodents can cause property damage and fire hazards, carry disease, and cause anxiety and discomfort in residents who experience sightings.

The program then turned toward prevention measures, detailing how, as a community, Somerville can try to reduce the population of rats as much as possible.

“We primarily educate people on reducing food, water, and shelter for rats, which is the most effective way of getting rid of them in the long term,” said Privett, “If they have adequate food, adequate shelter, and adequate source of water, they’ll breed and thrive. If you take those things away, they are less likely to reproduce, and they’ll likely move to other areas.”

Potential areas of food, water, and shelter include trash and recycling bins, animal waste, bird seed, standing puddles, leaking hoses and faucets, burrows, yard clutter, and overgrowth. To prevent rats from using these resources, Privett and the Inspectional Services team recommend securing and monitoring trash receptacles (and calling 311 to replace bins that have been tampered with), refraining from leaving food for other animals outside, especially at night, and composting correctly. It’s also advised to keep outdoor plants trimmed, remove large trash and yard debris, regularly inspect the home’s exterior for gaps, empty sources of standing water, repair leaks, and use hardware cloth around fence lines and porches.

Two of the biggest misconceptions that Privett has heard about rat control methods are that peppermint and cayenne pep-



SMART boxes have become an integral part of the city’s efforts to control rodent infestation.

— Photos courtesy of Anticimex

per will help and that it is the fault of individuals. In reality, no scientific research has proven that peppermint and cayenne pepper are effective. More importantly, rat control is a community-wide issue. Working with neighbors to spread information and education and report rodent activity to the 311 number (617-666-3311 if outside of Somerville) is essential.

“They will go on everyone’s properties, and we all have a part to play,” said Privett.

The Inspectional Services Department offers several services regarding rodent abatement, including education outreach and site visits for people who request them. They also offer a Residential Rodent Assistant Program, where residents can receive free rodent control services for two months, including bait boxes and burrow treatments. For more information, contact [isdrodentcontrol@somervillema.gov](mailto:isdrodentcontrol@somervillema.gov) or 311.

ISD also has a policy component to the Department, which includes issuing violations to residences and business buildings. The Inspectional Service Department enforces the State Sanitary Code (105 CMR 410) [1], which covers sanitation violations on private property. If the rodent issue is on public land, the city has a contract with a professional exterminator. If the complaint is on private property, Inspectional Services will enforce the State Sanitary Code and local ordinances when applicable and recommend calling an exterminator.

Although Privett does not have a formal list of exterminator services, she notes that she has worked with various pest control companies, which she tends to recommend to people if asked.

“As the Inspectional Services Depart-

ment, we are more so the enforcement side of the city, everything that the police doesn’t deal with basically,” said Privett. “We issue violations for rodent-related issues like overflowing trash and dumpsters or having burrows on the property, things like that.”

Beyond that, they collect data to track rodents’ activity and citizen complaints to target their approaches more. In 2024, the Department received 621 complaints, a decrease from the previous year, with the highest number logged between May and September, when rats flourish and reproduce.

“We’re still trying to monitor those complaints and ensure they’re accurate. We will try to address them as they come in,” said Privett.

To collect data and trap rodents, Somerville has launched a six-month SMART city pilot program with Modern Pest Services, which included installing 50 SMART Boxes in four city areas. SMART Boxes are non-toxic trapping units that catch rats and other rodents above ground. They humanely exterminate rodents with electrical currents, do not use toxic bait, are safe for people, other animals, and the environment, and record rodent activity around the clock, sending alerts to Modern Pest Services. To see these boxes at work in Somerville, visit the public heatmap webpage [2].

“Regarding rat abatement, there’s a high risk of secondary poisoning to birds of prey and pets. So, we have been testing different ways of trying to replace rodenticides, or at least decrease them, so we don’t have to rely on them so much. The SMART boxes were a good option. They capture a lot of rats at one time. Don’t

Continued on page 22



# Beacon Hill Roll Call



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Beacon Hill Roll Call can also be viewed on our website at [www.thesomervilletimes.com](http://www.thesomervilletimes.com)

**GOVERNOR SIGNS SEVERAL BILLS** - Gov. Maura Healey signed several bills into law last week including:

**DRUG COSTS AND INDUSTRY TRANSPARENCY** – Gov. Maura Healey signed into law legislation (S 3012) that supporters say would lower the cost of prescription drugs.

Provisions include requiring insurers to eliminate cost-sharing requirements for one generic drug and to cap co-payments on one brand-name drug at \$25 per 30-day supply for diabetes, asthma and certain heart conditions. It also ensures that consumers are not charged a co-pay if it would be cheaper for them to purchase a drug without using their insurance. Another provision requires insurers to provide continuity of coverage for new members' existing prescriptions when they switch to a new plan.

She also signed into law another bill (H 5159) that supporters say will enhance the market review process and close loopholes in the health care market regulatory process, including gaps in oversight that were exploited for years by Steward Health Care and Ralph de la Torre.

This measure expands the scope of data collection and public review of health care and health care transactions by the Health Policy Commission (HPC) and the Center for Health Analysis and Information with the goal of increasing visibility and accountability for transactions involving private owners of health care resources.

It also includes a provision establishing a primary care task force, co-chaired by Health and Human Services Secretary Kate Walsh and the Executive Director of the HPC. The task force will study primary care access, delivery and payment, develop recommendations to stabilize and strengthen the primary care system, increase recruitment and increase financial investment and patient access.

“We know that one of the biggest strains on Massachusetts family’s budgets is the high health care costs,” said Gov. Healey. “These new laws will lower out-of-pocket costs by capping copays at \$25 for lifesaving prescription medications and increasing transparency in the industry. They also close loopholes in our regulatory processes so that for-profit providers like Steward Health Care are subject to the same transparency rules as non-profit providers. As attorney general, I spent years in court trying to hold Steward to this standard, and I’m glad that our laws will no longer be exploited in this way.”

“The bills signed by Gov. Healey today represent the Legislature’s enduring commitment to protecting patients, bringing down cost growth and to fostering greater stabil-

ity and accountability within the health care system,” said House Speaker Ron Mariano (D-Quincy). “Before Steward Health Care ultimately collapsed, executives spent years hiding their financial information from state regulators, putting patients and our health care system at risk. That’s why ensuring that our institutions are equipped to monitor the health care landscape, and to guard against trends and transactions that drive up costs without improving patient outcomes, is so important.”

“These laws are an important step toward transparency and accountability for our health care system, and making medications more affordable,” said Secretary Kate Walsh. “We know primary care access is a critical component of health equity, so I’m especially looking forward to the commitment of strengthening our primary care system to help more people in Massachusetts live healthy lives.”

**ROSA PARKS DAY (H 3075)** – Gov. Healey signed into law a bill establishing February 4 as Rosa Parks in recognition of the historic civil rights leader.

Co-sponsor Rep. Mike Kushmerek (D-Fitchburg) said the measure will bring awareness and representation to the heroic actions of Rosa Parks during the Civil Rights Movement. “February 4th is the birthday of Rosa Parks, so it will be a great reminder to all those within the commonwealth to reflect on the role she played in raising international awareness of the struggles for civil rights,” said Kushmerek.

**PROHIBIT REVOCATION OF PROFESSIONAL LICENSES (H 4937)** – Gov. Healey signed into law legislation that would repeal a current state law which creates professional licensure consequences for anyone who defaults on their student loan. Under current law, a borrower’s state-issued professional or occupational certificate, registration or license can be suspended, revoked or canceled if the borrower is in default on an education loan.

“Current laws are potentially harmful to the more than one million student loan borrowers in the commonwealth,” said sponsor Rep. Natalie Higgins (D-Leominster). “With all of the uncertainty around the federal student loan forgiveness and repayment plans, now more than ever, we need to protect student loan borrowers and ensure they can continue their work and have the ability to repay their student loan debt.”

**ID FOR LIQUOR PURCHASES (H 4131)** – Gov. Healey signed into law a measure that would allow alcohol-serving establishments to accept all out-of-state motor vehicle licenses and Global Entry cards issued by the United States Customs and Border Protection.

“Massachusetts has been the only state in the entire United States that did not permit retailers of alcohol beverages to rely on a valid out-of-state ID for the purchase of alcoholic beverages,” said a spokesperson for the Massachusetts Package Stores Association (MASSPACK), a non-profit trade organization representing locally owned retailers of beer, wine and spirits headquartered in Massachusetts. “This regulation was archaic and irrational. It also impeded commerce across the state.”

“This vitally important economic measure will support our restaurants, bars and other entertainment venues as they continue to fully recover from losses experienced during the pandemic and allow our out-of-state visitors to enjoy a drink, if they choose,” said House sponsor Rep. Paul McMurtry (D-Dedham).

**DECLAWING OF CATS (S 2552)** – Gov. Healey signed into law a measure that would ban cat declawing and tendonectomy unless it is done for the medical need of the feline. The measure imposes a fine on offenders of up to \$1,000 for a first offense, \$1,500 for a second offense and \$2,500 for a third or subsequent offense.

Supporters said that declawing a cat involves amputating the last bone of each toe, which if performed on a human would be equivalent to cutting off each finger at the last knuckle. They noted that according to the American Veterinary Medical Association, the physical side effects from declawing include both acute and chronic pain, improperly healed wounds, sudden loss of blood, impaired immune response and behavioral side effects include biting.

“Declawing is an abhorrent practice that most veterinarians view as inhumane,” said sponsor Sen. Mark Montigny (D-New Bedford). “This is another step in my commitment to protect animals in the commonwealth. As a state we have done far too little to punish heartless abusers and to push back against a weak court system that has too often failed to hold them accountable.”

**PROTECT CATS AND DOGS (S 2908)** – Gov. Healey signed into law legislation that would prohibit the sale or transfer of any puppies and kittens under eight weeks old. Violators would be fined \$100 per animal.

When the animal is more than eight weeks old, the outright ban is lifted and replaced with a section that would prohibit the sale or transfer of any dogs or cats at specified outdoor locations, such as flea markets and roadsides. This prohibition would not apply to the transfer of a dog or cat by, or to, a shelter, animal control or animal rescue; or to the display of a dog or cat as part of a state or county fair exhibition, a 4-H program or *Continued on page 15*

# H Mart opens its doors in Davis Square, Somerville

H Mart, the largest Asian supermarket chain in the United States, opened its doors at 240 Elm Street, Somerville, on January 9. This highly anticipated store will provide the community with a unique shopping experience, featuring a wide selection of fresh produce, meats, seafood, and household items, all under one roof. H Mart's "one-stop-shopping" experience highlights unique food selection and entertainment for the entire family and local foodies. Operation hours are 9 a.m. – 9 p.m. daily. For more information about events, special promotions, sales and H Mart Smart Rewards Card, visit H Mart's website at [www.hmart.com](http://www.hmart.com). — Photos courtesy of H Mart



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Ms. Cam's

Olio

Answers

From page 8

- |                   |                         |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Basketball     | 7. Aaron                |
| 2. 30             | 8. Adele                |
| 3. Mark Spitz     | 9. Rye                  |
| 4. Wimbledon      | 10. Blue cheese         |
| 5. Heath Ledger   | 11. The Big Bang Theory |
| 6. Kelly Clarkson | 12. Rolex               |

# City Councilors support physician union at Mass General Brigham

By Harry Kane

A majority of the primary care physicians throughout Mass General Brigham have filed with the National Labor Relations Board to unionize in an effort to maintain the integrity of the profession and improve working conditions, but the arbitration process is taking longer than expected.

At the City Council meeting on January 9, a resolution was put forward to urge officials at Mass General Brigham to stop their delays and come to the bargaining table to recognize a PCP union.

“Mass General Brigham’s decision to fight its own overworked staff’s unionization harms its reputation and, more importantly, harms patient health,” said City Councilor-At-Large Willie Burnley, Jr., in a written statement. “We need to listen to our healthcare workers when they advocate on behalf of our most vulnerable residents and ensure that they are able to provide the best care possible.”

“Mass General Brigham has billions of dollars and is the largest employer in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. They can afford to do better for their patients, their workers, and our community by recognizing the union and negotiating in good faith.”

Some 300 primary care physicians petitioned on November 15 to join the Doctors Council, which is an affiliate of the Service Employees International Union that represents the largest union of attending physicians nationwide.

“We stand with workers, we stand with our healthcare providers, particularly against the corporatization of healthcare,” said Councilor Burnley, Jr., at the January 9 meeting.

Forming a union will allow physicians to gain leverage in the healthcare system – part of a growing national trend — and reduce bureaucracy, according to the organizers.

“When this union is recognized ... it will be the largest primary care physician union in the state,” said Councilor Burnley, Jr.

Organizers say unionization will lead to higher wages, more resources and benefits, empowering physicians to advocate for themselves and improve conditions in the workforce.

“The folks who take care of us when we are at our lowest have been struggling for many years,” said Councilor Burnley, Jr.

Councilor Burnley, Jr. says that it is a necessity for the institution to bargain in “good faith.”

“It is driving its workers into the ground, because it refuses to pay them well, to give them adequate support, and in doing so, harms the health of our constituents,” said Councilor Burnley, Jr.

Dr. Madhuri Rao, MD is a resident of East Somerville who has lived in Ward 1 since 2021. Rao addressed the city council to advance her argument for the need to unionize.

Rao says she works outside her scheduled hours, staying late to complete tasks, and says he has been pressured to see more



Members of the Somerville City Council are voicing their support of unionization efforts by Mass General Brigham primary care physicians. — Photo by Bobbie Toner

patients as a way to generate revenue for the hospital.

“My job, especially in the past years, has become essentially unsustainable,” Rao said.

Rao admits her situation isn’t unique. There’s been a “mass exodus” from primary care physician positions, largely due to “burnout,” she said.

“It’s forced a lot of my colleagues to reduce hours, rendering them part-time employees without benefits, even when they are spending well over 40 hours a week doing their job,” Rao explained.

She says the workload, dwindling providers, the pandemic backlog and the lack

of autonomy has made “really good patient care impossible to do.”

Mass General Brigham has not been engaging with the physicians in good faith and they have refused to voluntarily recognize the need for a union, Rao says.

“We feel that we have come to a point of crisis, which has been largely fueled by the corporatization of medicine,” she said.

Due to a pre-election hearing that aims to exclude a majority of the clinics in Mass General Brigham from the bargaining unit, the election has been delayed for several months before the case can be brought before the NLRB, Rao said.

## Historical Fact CONT. FROM PG 9

by a punishing score of 55 to 12.

The loss moved Boston College from number one to number eight in the standings, placing them in the Orange Bowl instead of the Cotton Bowl. Somerville’s Carl Lucas, a back-up quarterback got his chance to play in the Orange Bowl loss but shattered his leg seconds before half time. It sounds like an unlucky, tough break for Carl, but he and the Boston College team had been one fortunate football team. Had they won the Thanksgiving Day, Holy Cross game, the team would have attended a victory party at Boston’s Coconut Grove nightclub. That evening, the Grove fire took 492 lives; nine of the victims were Somerville residents.

George Graney, father of Somerville’s retired Fire Chief Tom Graney, was a five-

year Boston fire fighter at that time. He was part of the initial fire crew to work at the scene of the horrible inferno. Six years later, this incredible man would establish the famous national, “Fill the Boot” drive for Muscular Dystrophy. To date, that drive has raised over \$300 million.

Forty-two years after the Coconut Grove fire, Boston College won the 1984 “Miracle in Miami” game on November 23 against the number-one ranking University of Miami. It was won on a 48-yard, Doug Flutie pass, in cutting wind and pouring rain with zero time on the clock. Somerville’s Peter Casparriello, Boston College’s team captain and left tight end, had the best view in the house. As part of the play, he watched the “Flood Tip, Hail Mary Pass” complete itself in the crowded



right end zone.

In the history of New England sports, the real miracle was not in Miami. It was

42 years earlier, when Boston College lost to Holy Cross on that fateful Thanksgiving Day.

# Somerville honoring Martin Luther King Jr. Day with community panel discussion and donation drive

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne, the Department of Racial and Social Justice (RSJ), and Somerville Public Schools' Department of Equity and Excellence invite community members to celebrate the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by joining a community panel discussion that touches on themes from *Good Trouble*, the 2020 documentary that chronicles John Lewis' 60+ years of extraordinary activism. Following the panel discussion, the Floor Lords will perform, and light refreshments will be served.

"The work of leaders like Dr. King and John Lewis challenges us to continue pushing for a more just world, where we uplift each other and stand in solidarity, especially with our most vulnerable," said Mayor Ballantyne. "I am proud of the efforts we are making as a community to keep their legacies alive, and I look forward to engaging in meaningful conversations and acts of service on Martin Luther King Jr. Day this year alongside the people of Somerville."

## Event Details:

Date: Monday, January 20

Time: 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Location: East Somerville Community School Auditorium (50 Cross St)

The panel will include Somerville students, activists, city staff, and more. Prior viewing of the documentary is not required to participate in or attend the event

but is encouraged. RSJ has secured the rights for Somerville community members to stream *Good Trouble* online at no cost through February 6.

## To access the *Good Trouble*:

Visit: [filmplatform.net/events/somervillejohnlewis/](https://filmplatform.net/events/somervillejohnlewis/)

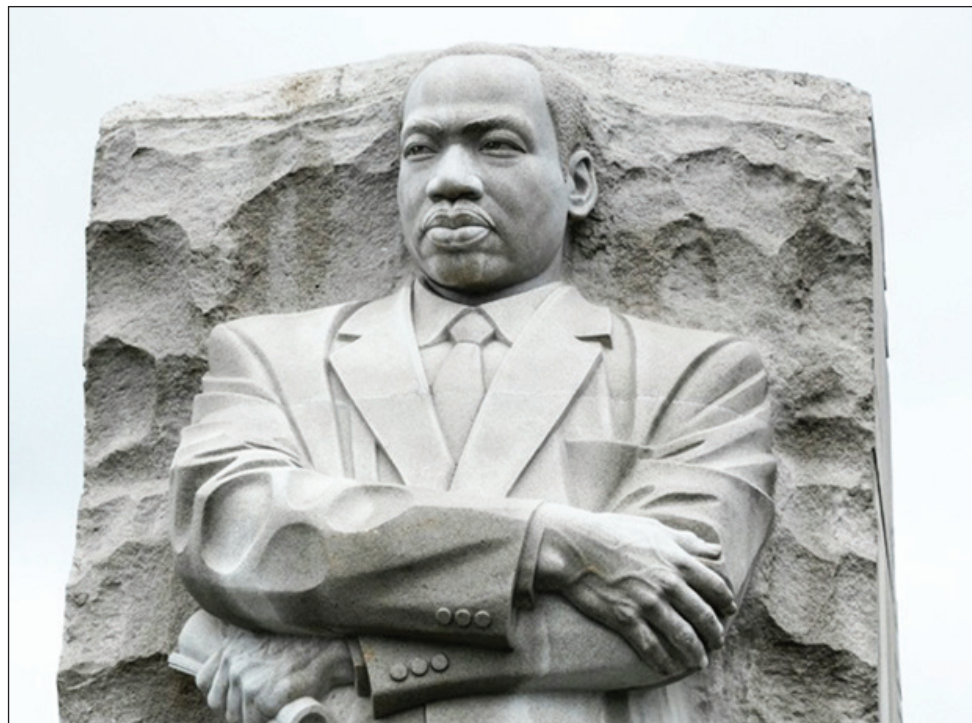
Select "Register Now" and enter your email address and the event invitation code, JLS-SOM.

Participants can return to the link using the same process if they are unable to finish viewing the film in one sitting.

## MLK Community Donation Drive Details

During the event, RSJ will collect donated items to help support our unhoused neighbors and be delivered to community partners supporting unhoused and displaced residents. For the full list of personal products, stable foods, and baby supplies needed, please visit the RSJ webpage.

"I am proud of the fact that the Department of Racial and Social Justice and the City of Somerville have committed to hosting events on MLK Day that extend beyond recognizing the holiday. MLK Day is a day of service – it is an opportunity to reflect on and carry forward the transformative legacies of Dr. King and other civil rights leaders like John Lewis," shared Amanda Nagim-Williams, Director of RSJ. "As we come to-



gether this year, we recognize that their work is far from finished. I look forward to joining people from across Somerville to talk about how we cause 'good trouble' and chart a better, more just path forward for all of us."

"As we reflect on the work of Dr. King, and the efforts of John Lewis, and their tireless endeavors towards equality, it is important that we investigate how we can continue to promote the oneness of humankind and develop cross-racial and cross-cultural collaborations and relationships," said Caeli Gallitano, Director of

Equity and Excellence for Somerville Public Schools. "It is in the work that we do together – across racial and cultural lines – that we will help create a more just and equitable community for our children, our families, and ourselves. This celebration is a wonderful way to do just that. We hope to see you there."

For questions about the MLK Day event or donation drive, please contact [rsj@somervillema.gov](mailto:rsj@somervillema.gov). Additional information about the panelists and the donation drive can be found on the <https://rsj%20webpage/RSJ> webpage.

## Mayor Ballantyne delivers State of the City address CONT. FROM PG 6

flow, pedestrian safety, and sustainability.

**Coming progress:** In December, Somerville was one of only four school projects to advance to the feasibility phase in the Massachusetts School Building Authority's state funding program – a significant step toward advancing the Winter Hill School project, which could possibly include the Brown School.

**Addressing Homelessness:** The mayor made clear her administration is committed to "addressing the root causes of homelessness with compassion while ensuring that public spaces remain safe and accessible for everyone. Public safety and human dignity are not oppositional forces. We can uphold both," she said.

**Recent initiatives:** Core actions include increased outreach and support services, compassionate policing, and the Warming Center established by the Bal-

lantyne administration in winter 22/24, which has evolved from a few days of emergency response to a center now open nightly during the five coldest months, serving meals, and connecting residents to services, including housing.

**Coming progress:** The city remains in active coordination with local partner Somerville Homeless Coalition and the Somerville Police Department on multiple initiatives including a new program to reduce senior homelessness launching in 2025: the Older Adults Bridge Program.

**Inclusive, responsive governance:** "From the moment I took office, I made it my mission to ensure that decision-making reflects the voices of our community," said Mayor Ballantyne.

**Recent initiatives:** With an emphasis on reaching voices not always heard, the Administration brought numerous

plans to completion in 2024, including among others: transformative, community-driven plans for the Brickbottom and Assembly Square neighborhoods; the Cultural Capacity and Armory Master Plans to keep and expand the arts in Somerville; Anti-Displacement plans for Residential, Small Business, and Arts and Culture; and the Public Safety for All, Civilian Oversight, and Anti-Violence plans.

**Coming progress:** Plan releases and related community events are underway and will continue in early 2025. A Public Safety for All (PSFA) Project Manager will be hired in early 2025 to ensure the advancement of steps to realize the PSFA plan as well as Civilian Oversight and Anti-Violence.

**Environmental stewardship:** "By blending private development, environ-

mental innovation, and community-driven planning, Somerville is building a sustainable future for all," said Mayor Ballantyne.

**Recent initiatives:** In 2024, the Ballantyne administration launched the city's first-ever Pollinator Action Plan to protect our native pollinators. The city also carried out leading-edge work to expand open space as less public cost through POPs, which are public spaces created through private development, including opening the Boynton Yards POPs park.

**Coming progress:** DPW just launched a new ice melting approach that came right out of the grocery aisle: beet extract, which requires less salt on roads, has fewer impacts on cars, plants, and trees, and lowers winter maintenance costs. "We're not just fighting snow – we are fighting for our environment, one winter storm at a time," said Mayor Ballantyne.



# Drivers disobey signage at high school exit

By Harry Kane

Drivers who are dropping off and picking up kids at the Somerville High School have been taking a left turn onto Highland Avenue when exiting the school, which is dangerous, says City Councilor Kristen E. Strezo.

An order was put forward during the January 9 City Council meeting requesting the chief of police, the director of parking and the director of mobility discuss the previous and ongoing strategy for implementation and public education of drivers violating the No Left Turn signage at the Somerville High School exit on Highland Avenue and Vinal Avenue.

“This is another dangerous, dangerous situation that drives me bananas,” said Councilor Strezo.

No Left Turn signs are regulatory signs that indicate that left turns are prohibited. There are two No Left Turn signs posted at the exit of the driveway of the high school.

Every school day, drivers drop off and pick up students, but motorists haven’t been obeying the No Left Turn signs when

exiting the driveway of the high school, explained Councilor Strezo.

“Every single driver, pretty much consistently, ignores this and takes a left. There is no traffic patrol ... no repercussions,” says Councilor Strezo.

When disobeying the signage and turning left, motorists are driving onto a crosswalk on Highland Avenue where kids could be crossing.

“It’s a perfect recipe for a fatality or an injury,” Councilor Strezo said.

School hours are 7:55 a.m. to 2:32 p.m. except on Wednesdays when dismissal is at 1:33 p.m.

Councilor Strezo says one solution could be a patrol officer monitoring the intersection at the time of pick up and drop off.

“We may need an officer there,” Councilor Strezo said in a phone interview. “I will leave it at the behest of the police chief and traffic control to determine that.”

When exiting the high school, drivers can go straight or take a right turn – they have options, so taking a left turn is the wrong choice, she explained.

At the current time, there are no crossing guards at the intersection during pick



City Councilor Kristen Strezo has raised the alarm over the potentially dangerous violation of the No Left Turn signage at the Somerville High School exit on Highland Ave. and Vinal Ave. — Photo by Bobbie Toner

up or drop off times at the high school, Councilor Strezo said.

“There is a massive crossing guard shortage,” Councilor Strezo said. “We are way understaffed with crossing guards.”

A crossing guard at the congested inter-

section may be another potential solution to prevent the drivers from turning left onto Highland Avenue.

“There has to be better protection of pedestrians in this region,” Councilor Strezo said.

# The Somerville Museum reopens to the public with ‘The Art of the Festival’

CONT. FROM PG 1

In addition to Owens’ photographs, items from popular culture and works by Nepalese artists show how much this festival has captured the public imagination. This unique festival does not translate to life in the United States, but Somerville’s substantial Nepali community participates in many local festivals throughout the year and have contributed their own photographs to the exhibition along with memories and reflections on the importance these occasions hold.

A free concert adds to all the festivity. “Somerville Jatra (festival)”: the Ultimate Nepalese Folk Rock Experience featuring The MUSS and Friends will take place on Sunday, February 9, at 4 p.m. at the Arts at the Armory. Museum goes can go into further depth at a Curator Talk with Bruce Owens on Saturday, March 1, at 11 a.m. Check the website at somervillemuseum.org for information about additional events.

The Somerville Museum’s mission is to be the City of Somerville’s mirror, playing a central role in preserving the past, reflecting the present, and helping to shape the future of this diverse urban community of 81,000. Through its innovative program-

ming, the Museum seeks to engage our audience in an on-going dialogue with local artists, scholars, and educators with the larger aim of fostering cultural education and understanding.

Museum admission fees apply: Members free. \$8 non-members, \$5 seniors and students. Advanced tickets available at Somervillemuseum.org upcoming events. Museum hours are Thursdays 2-7pm, Fridays 2-5pm, and Saturdays 12-5pm. The Somerville Museum is located at 1 Westwood Road (corner of Central Street) and is fully accessible. Free Parking is available for the January 16th reception at the Dormition of the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church at 29 Central Street. The museum is also accessible by the Somerville Community Bike Path or public transportation. For more information and or to schedule a group tour, contact Stephanie Marlin-Curiel stephanie@somervillemuseum.org or (617) 666-9819.

**Exhibition:**

“The Art of the Festival”

Dates: January 16 – March 29

**Location:**

Somerville Museum, 1 Westwood Road, Somerville, MA



**Re-Opening Reception:**

Thursday, January 16

Time: 6 – 8 p.m.

Location: Somerville Museum

**Free Concert:**

“Somerville Jatra (festival): The Ultimate Nepalese Folk Rock Experience”

Date: Sunday, February 9

Time: 4 p.m.

Location: Arts at the Armory, 191 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA

**Curator Talk:**

With Bruce Owens

Date: Saturday, March 1

Time: 11 a.m.

Location: Somerville Museum

**Museum Hours:**

Thursdays: 2 – 7 p.m.

Fridays: 2 – 5 p.m.

Saturdays: 12 – 5 p.m.

**Admission:**

\$8 non-members, \$5 members

For additional events and information, visit somervillemuseum.org.

## SENIOR CENTER HAPPENINGS:

**Medical Equipment Program** – Through the generosity of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and from the direction of Mayor Ballantyne, the Council on Aging can provide Durable Medical Equipment at no cost to Somerville residents. Residents with a documented need for medical equipment must be over the age of 60, or have a permanent disability, and must be otherwise unable to afford or access needed medical equipment. We currently have available: Commodes, Bath Benches, Rollator Walkers, Incontinence Supplies and Transport Wheelchairs (wheelchairs are intended for transport and are not self-propelling or self-breaking.) For additional information, or for an application, please contact Debby Higgins at 617-625-6600, ext. 2321.

**Lockboxes for Seniors** – What is the Lockboxes for Seniors program? The Lockboxes for Seniors program is intended to provide Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) access to your residence in the event of an emergency where you are unable to open the door. A key to your residence will be stored in a secure metal storage device, like a realtor's lockbox, at your residence. The access code to the lockbox will only be available to Police, Fire, or EMS personnel and used only during an emergency. Who is eligible? The program is targeted towards Somerville community members who live alone and are aged 65+, or those who are disabled and/or suffer from major medical illness at any age. Individuals living in apartment complexes or other facilities with maintenance staff are not eligible for this program. How do I know this is safe? A member of the Somerville Fire Department will install and demonstrate how the lockbox operates and answer any questions you may have. The four-digit combination on the lockbox will only be available to respond to emergency personnel in the event of an emergency. Who should I contact for more information? For more information, please contact Debby Higgins at the Council on Aging via E-mail at dhiggins@somervillema.gov or by telephone at (617) 625-6600 ext. 2321. There is no charge to participate in the program if you meet the established target criteria. The Council on Aging will verify eligibility for services. This program is designed for those who are at most significant risk for falls or have limited mobility. All participants will be required to provide a spare house key to be used in the lock box as well as a safety inspection of the property.

**Cultural Series Event featuring Music from the Anything Goes Trio** – Thursday, January 30th 11:00 a.m. at the Dilboy Post located at 351 Summer Street. \$5 per person. Lunch (stuffed chicken) will be served at noon; the cost of lunch is subsidized by the City of Somerville. Reserve your spot for the event and lunch by calling Deb-

by Higgins at 617-625-6600, ext. 2321.

**Virtual Reality Experiences Travel Experience** – Mediation Experience, Tuesday, January 27th starting at 2:00 p.m. at our Holland Street Center. Join us as we travel to different destinations and learn interesting facts about each place. Using ARPA funding directed to the Council on Aging by Mayor Ballantyne, the COA has partnered with Rendeever, a Somerville based company focusing on the benefits of virtual reality in older populations. Studies have found that virtual reality can help reduce stress, decrease isolation, reduce pain and lower fall risk. Virtual reality is a 3D, computer generated simulation that is accessed through wearing a headset. Space is limited, but you will have many opportunities to participate in this two-year pilot program. RSVP to Molly Pagliuca at 617-625-6600, ext. 2318 or email Molly at mpagliuca@somervillema.gov.

**Movie Day** – Friday, January 24th starting at 10:30 a.m. at our Holland Street Center. This month's movie is Fall into Winter starring Lori Loughlin and James Tupper. Follow Kelly, as she must work next to her nemesis Brooks, her brother's high school best friend that now owns half of Kelly's family-owned candy shop. The running time is 1 hour 25 minutes. RSVP by calling Debby Higgins at 617-625-6600, ext. 2321 or email Debby at dhiggins@somervillema.gov - \$2.00 Pizza Lunch served after the movie.

**Left, Right, Center, Game Day** – Friday, January 17th at our Holland Street Center starting at 10:30 a.m. RSVP by calling Debby Higgins at 617-625-6600, ext. 2321 or email Debby at dhiggins@somervillema.gov.

**Technology Workshops** – The Council on Aging continues to strive to close the technology gap by partnering with Somerville Cambridge Elder Services to bring technology workshops to the COA. Each Monday session will focus on different topics related to internet use and safety.

Monday, January 27th – Staying Safe on Social Media How to stay safe while having fun on social media.

If you have any questions or to RSVP contact Molly Pagliuca at 617-625-6600, ext. 2318 or email Molly at mpagliuca@somervillema.gov.

**Tech Time** – Drop-in Hours. Every Tuesday in January starting at 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at our Holland Street Center. Receive assistance with all your phone, tablet and computer questions. RSVP by contacting Molly Pagliuca at 617-625-6600, ext. 2318 or email Molly at Knitting Group Tuesday, January 14th, 21st & 28th 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at our Holland Street Center located at 167 Holland Street. Please RSVP to Natasha Naim at 617-625-6600, ext. 2317 or email Natasha at nnaim@somervillema.gov.

**Bingo** – Every Tuesday in January at our Ralph

& Jenny Center starting at 10:00 a.m. Lunch is available following Bingo. RSVP to Debby Higgins by calling 617-625-6600, ext. 2323 or email Debby at dhiggins@somervillema.gov.

**Bingo** – Every Thursday in January except for January 30th starting at 10:00 a.m. at our Holland Street Center. RSVP to Debby Higgins by calling 617-625-6600, ext. 2323 or email Debby at dhiggins@somervillema.gov.

**Veterans Group** – Tuesday, January 28th at our Holland Street Center starting at 10:30 a.m. RSVP to Debby Higgins by calling 617-625-6600, ext. 2321 or email Debby at dhiggins@somervillema.gov

**Book Club** – Meets the 3rd Friday of each month (January 17th) starting at 10:00 a.m. at our Holland Street Center. Do you love books and want to discuss your love of reading with others? Consider joining the Book Club. This month's selection is A Map of the World by Jane Hamilton. The group meets in person and concurrently via Zoom. To RSVP or to inquire about the book club selection please call Natasha Naim at 617-625-6600, ext. 2317 or email Natasha at nnaim@somervillema.gov as space is limited.

**Bowling** – Wednesdays, January 5th, 22nd & 29th at Flatbread d Company/Sacco Bowl Haven in Davis Square at 45 Day Street from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. - Free - RSVP to Debby Higgins by calling 617-625-6600, ext. 2321 or email Debby at dhiggins@somervillema.gov.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Stay connected via our Facebook page - Informative, entertaining, lots of photos and updates. Vis-it our page at <https://www.facebook.com/SomervilleCOA/>

Follow the Somerville Council on Aging on Instagram! You can find us under the Instagram handle: somervillecouncilonaging If you have any questions or need help following us, contact Debby Higgins at 617-625-6600 ext. 2321 or email her at dhiggins@somervillema.gov

### JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

If you would like to receive a virtual copy of our monthly newsletter, please contact Maureen Bastardi at 617-625-6600, ext. 2335 or email Maureen Bastardi at mbastardi@somervillema.gov.

If you would like to receive a copy of our monthly newsletter in the mail, please contact Connie Lorneti at 617-625-6600, ext. 2319 or email Connie at clorenti@somervillema.gov.

If you would like to become part of our Google Group, please contact Debby Higgins at 617-625-6600, ext. 2321 or email Debby at dhiggins@somervillema.gov

# GovTV – Xfinity 22/Astound 13/613

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15**

7:00 AM Seated Exercise w/ Michelle  
 7:30 AM SomerViva an Kreyol  
 8:00 AM First Flag Raising 2025  
 9:05 AM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness  
 9:30 AM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 11:00 AM City Council Spotlight: Kristen Strezo  
 11:34 AM SomerViva em Português  
 12:00 PM School Committee Meeting 1-13-25  
 3:30 PM School Committee Update: Ellenor Barish  
 4:01 PM First Flag Raising 2025  
 5:10 PM Henry Hansen Park Opening  
 5:30 PM SomerViva an Kreyol  
 6:00 PM City Council Meeting 1-9-25  
 8:00 PM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 9:30 PM City Council Spotlight: Kristen Strezo  
 10:04 PM First Flag Raising 2025  
 11:15 PM Checking In w/ Mayor Ballantyne: Street Safety  
 11:30 PM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 16**

12:00 AM Chamber of Commerce Awards Dinner 2024  
 1:30 AM Central Somerville Ave. Public Meeting #5  
 7:00 AM City Council Spotlight: JT Scott  
 7:30 AM Seated Exercise w/ Michelle #2  
 8:00 AM Chamber of Commerce Awards Dinner 2024  
 9:30 AM Community Mtg on Davis Sq. Area Public Safety 10-9-24  
 11:10 AM Checking In w/ Mayor Ballantyne: Street Safety  
 11:30 AM Mental Health Matters: Veterans  
 12:00 PM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness  
 12:30 PM First Flag Raising 2025  
 1:35 PM City Hall Menorah Lighting 2024  
 2:00 PM Central Somerville Ave. Public Meeting #5  
 4:00 PM School Committee Meeting 1-13-25  
 7:00 PM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness  
 7:30 PM SomerViva em Português  
 8:00 PM City Council Spotlight: Kristen Strezo  
 8:35 PM City Council Meeting 1-9-25  
 10:30 PM Mental Health Matters: Veterans  
 11:00 PM First Flag Raising 2025

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 17**

12:05 AM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness  
 12:30 AM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 2:00 AM Mental Health Matters: Veterans  
 7:00 AM School Committee Update: Ellenor Barish  
 7:31 AM Yoga with Jenn Falk - Practice III  
 8:30 AM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness  
 9:00 AM SomerViva em Português  
 9:30 AM Central Somerville Ave. Public Meeting #5  
 11:30 AM SomerViva em Português  
 12:00 PM School Committee Meeting 1-13-25  
 3:30 PM School Committee Update: Ellenor Barish  
 4:01 PM First Flag Raising 2025  
 5:10 PM Henry Hansen Park Opening  
 5:30 PM SomerViva an Kreyol  
 6:00 PM City Council Meeting 1-9-25  
 8:00 PM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 9:30 PM City Council Spotlight: Kristen Strezo  
 10:04 PM First Flag Raising 2025  
 11:15 PM Checking In w/ Mayor Ballantyne: Street Safety  
 11:30 PM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness

12:05 AM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness  
 12:30 AM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 2:00 AM Mental Health Matters: Veterans  
 7:00 AM School Committee Update: Ellenor Barish  
 7:31 AM Yoga with Jenn Falk - Practice III  
 8:30 AM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness  
 9:00 AM SomerViva em Português  
 9:30 AM Central Somerville Ave. Public Meeting #5  
 11:30 AM SomerViva em Português  
 12:00 PM School Committee Meeting 1-13-25  
 3:30 PM First Flag Raising 2025  
 4:35 PM Henry Hansen Park Opening  
 5:00 PM Community Mtg on Davis Sq. Area Public Safety 10-9-24  
 6:40 PM Checking In w/ Mayor Ballantyne: Street Safety  
 7:00 PM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 8:30 PM City Council Spotlight: JT Scott  
 9:00 PM Chamber of Commerce Awards Dinner 2024  
 10:30 PM Domestic Violence Vigil 2024  
 11:30 PM School Committee Update: Ellenor Barish

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 18**

12:01 AM Central Somerville Ave. Public Meeting #2  
 1:15 AM Henry Hansen Park Opening  
 1:31 AM First Flag Raising 2025  
 7:00 AM Seated Exercise w/ Michelle  
 7:30 AM Central Somerville Ave. Public Meeting #2  
 8:45 AM Checking In w/ Mayor Ballantyne: Street Safety  
 9:00 AM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 10:30 AM Three Kings Day Celebration  
 11:00 AM Domestic Violence Vigil 2024  
 12:00 PM Mental Health Matters: Veterans  
 12:30 PM Veterans Day Ceremony 2024  
 1:30 PM City Council Spotlight: Kristen Strezo  
 2:05 PM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness  
 2:30 PM First Flag Raising 2025  
 4:00 PM Central Somerville Ave. Public Meeting #5  
 6:00 PM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 7:30 PM Checking In w/ Mayor Ballantyne: Street Safety  
 7:40 PM Henry Hansen Park Opening  
 8:00 PM City Council Meeting 1-9-25

10:00 PM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 11:30 PM City Council Spotlight: Kristen Strezo

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 19**

12:05 AM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness  
 12:30 AM School Committee Update: Ellenor Barish  
 1:01 AM School Committee Meeting 1-13-25  
 7:00 AM Seated Exercise w/ Michelle  
 7:30 AM Domestic Violence Vigil 2024  
 8:30 AM Mental Health Matters: Veterans  
 9:00 AM School Committee Update: Superintendent Carmona  
 9:30 AM City Council Spotlight: Kristen Strezo  
 10:05 AM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness  
 10:30 AM City Council Meeting 1-9-25  
 12:20 PM Checking In w/ Mayor Ballantyne: Street Safety  
 12:30 PM SomerViva em Português  
 1:00 PM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 2:30 PM Chamber of Commerce Awards Dinner 2024  
 4:00 PM City Council Meeting 1-9-25  
 6:00 PM Central Ave. Public Meeting #4 11.18.24  
 7:00 PM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness  
 7:25 PM City Council Spotlight: Kristen Strezo  
 8:00 PM SomerViva em Português  
 8:30 PM School Committee Update: Superintendent Carmona  
 9:00 PM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 10:30 PM City Council Meeting 1-9-25

**MONDAY, JANUARY 20**

12:20 AM Checking In w/ Mayor Ballantyne: Street Safety  
 12:30 AM First Flag Raising 2025  
 2:00 AM Domestic Violence Vigil 2024  
 7:00 AM Seated Exercise w/ Michelle #2  
 7:30 AM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 9:00 AM SomerViva em Português  
 9:30 AM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness  
 10:00 AM School Committee Update: Superintendent Carmona  
 10:30 AM Seated Exercise w/ Michelle  
 11:00 AM Mental Health Matters: Veterans  
 11:30 AM Henry Hansen Park Opening

12:00 PM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 1:30 PM City Council Spotlight: Kristen Strezo  
 2:30 PM Central Somerville Ave. Public Meeting #5  
 4:30 PM City Council Meeting 1-9-25  
 6:30 PM Central Somerville Ave. Workshop #3  
 7:30 PM SomerViva em Português  
 8:00 PM School Committee Update: Superintendent Carmona  
 8:30 PM School Committee Meeting 1-13-25  
 11:30 PM City Council Spotlight: Kristen Strezo

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 21**

12:05 AM SomerViva em Português  
 12:30 AM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 2:00 AM School Committee Update: Superintendent Carmona  
 7:00 AM Yoga with Jenn Falk - Practice IV  
 8:00 AM Seated Exercise w/ Michelle  
 8:30 AM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 10:00 AM Central Somerville Ave. Public Meeting #5  
 12:00 PM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness  
 12:30 PM Domestic Violence Vigil 2024  
 1:30 PM City Council Meeting 1-9-25  
 3:30 PM City Council Spotlight: Kristen Strezo  
 4:05 PM Chamber of Commerce Awards Dinner  
 5:30 PM School Committee Update: Superintendent Carmona  
 6:00 PM First Flag Raising 2025  
 7:05 PM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness  
 7:30 PM Central Ave. Public Meeting #4 11.18.24  
 8:30 PM Henry Hansen Park Opening  
 8:50 PM Checking In w/ Mayor Ballantyne: Street Safety  
 9:00 PM 2025 Midterm Ceremonies & Mayoral Address  
 10:30 PM School Committee Update: Superintendent Carmona  
 11:00 PM First Flag Raising 2025

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22**

12:05 AM Senior Circuit: Health & Wellness  
 12:30 AM City Council Meeting 1-9-25  
 2:20 AM Checking In w/ Mayor Ballantyne: Street Safety

# EdTV - Xfinity 15/Astound 15/ 614

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15**

8:00 AM SHS Boys' Basketball vs Revere  
 10:30 AM SHS Hockey vs Plymouth S  
 12:00 PM SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English  
 1:30 PM SHS Ring of Honor - Jerry Knight  
 2:00 PM El Sistema Somerville December Concert  
 3:00 PM SHS Winter Concert & Art Showcase  
 4:30 PM SHS Hockey vs Medford  
 6:00 PM SHS Boys' Basketball vs Revere  
 8:30 PM SHS Hockey vs Plymouth S  
 10:00 PM SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English  
 11:30 PM SHS Ring of Honor - Jerry Knight

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 16**

12:00 AM El Sistema Somerville December Concert  
 1:00 AM SHS Winter Concert & Art Showcase  
 2:30 AM SHS Hockey vs Medford  
 8:00 AM SHS Girls Basketball vs Everett  
 10:00 AM SHS Boys Basketball vs Medford - Tufts  
 11:30 AM SHS Girls Basketball vs Medford 1-14  
 1:00 PM School Committee Meeting 1-13-25  
 3:30 PM SHS Ring of Honor - Jerry Knight  
 4:00 PM SHS Boys' Basketball vs Revere  
 6:30 PM SHS Coding and Robotics Family Night  
 7:00 PM SHS Girls Basketball vs Everett  
 9:00 PM SHS Boys Basketball vs Medford - Tufts  
 10:30 PM SHS Girls Basketball vs Medford 1-14

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 17**

12:00 AM School Committee Meeting 1-13-25  
 2:30 AM SHS Ring of Honor - Jerry Knight

3:00 AM SHS Boys' Basketball vs Revere  
 5:30 AM SHS Coding and Robotics Family Night  
 8:00 AM SHS Winter Concert & Art Showcase  
 9:30 AM Healey grades 3-8 Winter Concert  
 10:30 AM WHCS K-3 Winter Concert  
 11:00 AM SHS Hockey vs Lexington  
 12:30 PM Argenziano 4-8 Ensembles Winter Concert  
 1:00 PM SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English  
 2:30 PM SHS Girls Basketball vs Malden  
 4:00 PM Healey grades 3-8 Winter Concert  
 5:00 PM WHCS Grade 4-8 Winter Concert  
 5:30 PM SHS Hockey vs N Reading  
 7:00 PM SHS Winter Concert & Art Showcase  
 8:30 PM Healey grades 3-8 Winter Concert  
 9:30 PM WHCS K-3 Winter Concert  
 10:00 PM SHS Hockey vs Lexington  
 11:30 PM Argenziano 4-8 Ensembles Winter Concert

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 18**

12:00 AM SHS Boys' Basketball vs Revere  
 2:22 AM SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English  
 3:34 AM Healey grades 3-8 Winter Concert  
 8:00 AM SHS Winter Concert & Art Showcase  
 9:30 AM SHS Boys Basketball vs Chelsea  
 11:00 AM SHS Boys' Basketball vs Boston United  
 1:00 PM SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English  
 2:30 PM SHS Hockey vs Beverly  
 4:00 PM All-City Middle School Winter Concert  
 4:30 PM SHS Hockey vs Lexington  
 6:00 PM SHS Winter Concert & Art Showcase  
 7:30 PM SHS Boys Basketball vs Chelsea

9:00 PM SHS Boys' Basketball vs Boston United  
 11:00 PM SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 19**

12:30 AM SHS Hockey vs Plymouth S  
 2:00 AM All-City Middle School Winter Concert  
 2:30 AM SHS Hockey vs Lexington  
 8:00 AM SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English  
 9:30 AM SHS Winter Concert & Art Showcase  
 11:00 AM Healey grades 3-8 Winter Concert  
 12:00 PM Argenziano PreK-6 Winter Concert  
 1:00 PM SHS Hockey vs Beverly  
 2:30 PM WHCS Grade 4-8 Winter Concert  
 3:00 PM SHS Hockey vs Lexington  
 4:30 PM SHS Coding and Robotics Family Night  
 5:00 PM SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English  
 6:30 PM SHS Winter Concert & Art Showcase  
 8:00 PM Healey grades 3-8 Winter Concert  
 9:00 PM Argenziano PreK-6 Winter Concert 12-13-24  
 10:00 PM SHS Hockey vs Beverly  
 11:30 PM WHCS Grade 4-8 Winter Concert

**MONDAY, JANUARY 20**

12:00 AM SHS Hockey vs Lexington  
 1:30 AM SHS Boys' Basketball vs Boston United  
 8:00 AM SHS Winter Concert & Art Showcase  
 9:30 AM Healey grades 3-8 Winter Concert  
 10:30 AM WHCS K-3 Winter Concert  
 11:00 AM SHS Hockey vs Lexington  
 12:30 PM Argenziano 4-8 Ensembles Winter Concert  
 1:00 PM SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English  
 2:30 PM SHS Girls Basketball vs Malden

4:00 PM Healey grades 3-8 Winter Concert  
 5:00 PM WHCS Grade 4-8 Winter Concert  
 5:30 PM SHS Hockey vs N Reading  
 7:00 PM SHS Winter Concert & Art Showcase  
 8:30 PM Healey grades 3-8 Winter Concert  
 9:30 PM WHCS K-3 Winter Concert  
 10:00 PM SHS Hockey vs Lexington  
 11:30 PM Argenziano 4-8 Ensembles Winter Concert

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 21**

12:00 AM SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English  
 1:30 AM SHS Girls Basketball vs Malden  
 3:00 AM Healey grades 3-8 Winter Concert  
 8:00 AM School Committee Meeting 12-16-24  
 10:00 AM SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English  
 11:30 AM SHS Boys' Basketball vs Revere  
 1:38 PM Argenziano PreK-6 Winter Concert 12-13-24  
 2:11 PM Argenziano 4-8 Ensembles Winter Concert  
 2:41 PM SHS Coding and Robotics Family Night  
 3:00 PM SHS Hockey vs Beverly  
 5:00 PM School Committee Meeting 12-16-24  
 7:00 PM SHS Girls Basketball vs Lynn English  
 8:30 PM SHS Boys' Basketball vs Revere  
 10:38 PM Argenziano PreK-6 Winter Concert 12-13-24  
 11:11 PM Argenziano 4-8 Ensembles Winter Concert  
 11:41 PM SHS Coding and Robotics Family Night

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22**

12:00 AM SHS Hockey vs Beverly  
 1:30 AM SHS Hockey vs Medford



**Somerville Fair Housing Commission**  
*Question of the week*

**Q:** Is it against the law for the lease to require a tenant to shovel?

**A:** It is against the law. Here's what a local attorney told us: "For most properties with one common point of access, this clause is illegal. You can only do it if the unit has a separate point of access, and it does not apply to walkways or driveways which must be shoveled by the landlord. I am advising landlords not to make tenants responsible for any shoveling at all. Otherwise, it could even be a 93A violation for an illegal clause."

*Somerville Fair Housing Commission generally meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at 3 p.m. online. Call 617-625-6600 ext. 2578 for the login information.*

**Learn about music at SPS and watch a quick performance**

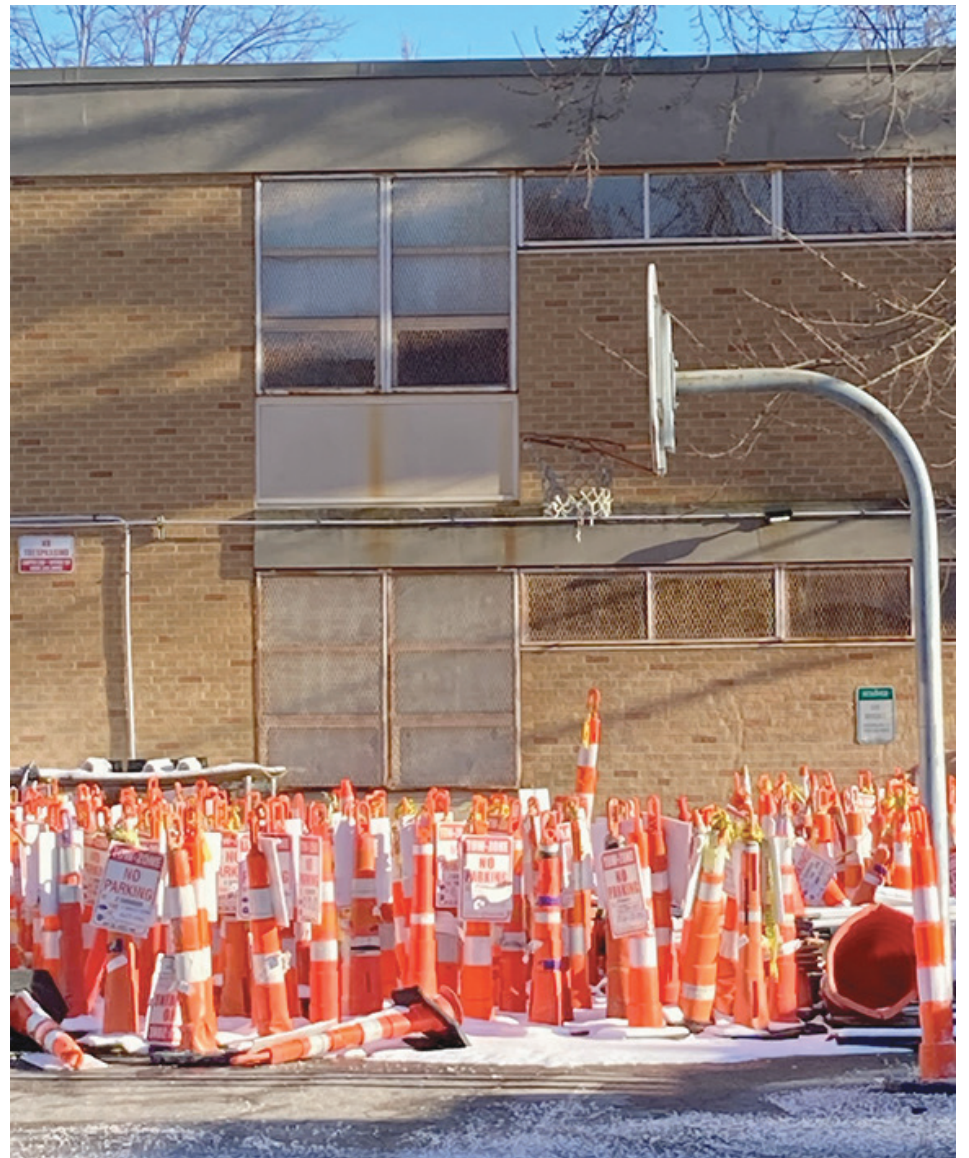
You can still watch a quick student orchestra performance and learn more about the Music Department.

Superintendent Carmona spoke with Beverly Mosby, Supervisor of Music and Theatre Arts, and Joanne Sadler, District-wide Strings Educator. Afterward, Somerville High School student musicians performed Skater's Waltz by Émile Waldteufel and Canon in D by Johann Pachelbel.



Watch on Facebook: <https://fb.watch/wyUnGxTJ0d/>.

**Somerville through the eyes of Denise**



An army of traffic control officers...

— Photo by Denise Provost

**BOBBY'S DAD JOKES CORNER**

By Bobbygeorge Potaris



What do you call a rude cow?  
Beef jerky.

*On This Day in History*

**January 15**

- 1624 – Riots flare in Mexico when it is announced that all churches are to be closed.
- 1811 – In a secret session, Congress plans to annex Spanish East Florida.
- 1913 – The first telephone line between Berlin and New York is inaugurated.
- 1920 – The Dry Law goes into effect in the United States. Selling liquor and beer becomes illegal.
- 1927 – The Dumbarton Bridge opens in San Francisco carrying the first auto traffic across the bay.
- 1930 – Amelia Earhart sets an aviation record for women at 171 mph in a Lockheed Vega.
- 1936 – In London, Japan quits all naval disarmament talks after being denied equality.
- 1967 – Some 462 Yale faculty members call for an end to the bombing in North Vietnam.
- 1991 – UN deadline for Iraq to withdraw its forces from occupied Kuwait passes, setting the stage for Operation Desert Storm.
- 2001 – Wikipedia goes online.

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Newstalk CONT. FROM PG 7

openings by visiting [somervillema.gov/besomerville](http://somervillema.gov/besomerville).

\*\*\*\*\*

On **Sunday, January 19**, from 12:00 to 3:00 p.m., cheer on the **Somerville Boys and Somerville Girls Basketball teams** at the annual **Tufts Basketball Classic**. Visit the Tufts University website for details about attending: <https://communityrelations.tufts.edu/community-programs/tufts-basketball-classic>.

\*\*\*\*\*

A reminder that **Christmas tree pickup** is underway in Somerville **through Friday, February 14**. Trees can be placed curbside on your regular trash day after removing all decorations. Do not put trees in a plastic bag. Constituents should contact 311 (617-666-3311) if their tree has been out for over two weeks.

\*\*\*\*\*

If you love art and yoga visit the **Museum of Modern Renaissance**, 115 College Ave. Join them for their upcoming **yoga classes** on **January 22**, 6 – 7:30 p.m. and **January 24**, 7 – 8:30 a.m. The artwork in the space is breathtaking and the perfect backdrop for an authentic yoga experience. To sign up, visit this page: <https://authenticpathyoga.com/renaissance-museum>.

\*\*\*\*\*

The **Somerville Public Library** will be hosting an **open mic night** in the **Central Library Auditorium**. You're welcome to bring and read your own poetry or a work by another poet! Registration is encouraged: visit <https://tinyurl.com/57xkteyt>. Poetry Open Mic Night, **January 23**, 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m., 79 Highland Ave.

\*\*\*\*\*

Join the **Somerville Community Growing Center** for their annual **Seed Swap**. Bring seeds to share and/or take some home to start dreaming up your 2025 growing plans. **Seed Swap & Tabling** at **Somerville Winter Farmers Market**, 191 Highland Ave, **Saturday, January 18**, 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. They will have some native seeds harvested at the Center or locally. Join local efforts to encourage more native pollinators in Somerville. Place an order for our **High Mowing Organic Seed Sale** (check here for online ordering). Learn about ways to get involved this year, including volunteering for the **Maple Syrup Project**. Contact: [lisa@thegrowingcenter.org](mailto:lisa@thegrowingcenter.org).

\*\*\*\*\*

You are invited to a **virtual public meeting** to discuss improving water quality in

our rivers through the development of an updated **CSO Control Plan** on **Wednesday, January 22**, at 6 p.m. This meeting is a collaboration between the **City of Somerville**, the **City of Cambridge**, and the **Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA)**. Join us for this joint public meeting to learn about the alternatives developed so far to control combined sewer overflows and how the affordability will be evaluated for each entity. Learn more about the project and sign up for the meeting by visiting [voice.somervillema.gov/joint-cso-planning/](http://voice.somervillema.gov/joint-cso-planning/).

\*\*\*\*\*

Join in for a **free Flu Vaccination Clinic** and an **Info Session** on how to obtain a **driver's license in MA**, hosted by the **Somerville Health and Human Services Department**, **SomerViva Office of Immigrant Affairs**, and the **ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) of Massachusetts**. To schedule an appointment in advance: <https://home.color.com/vaccine/register/somerville?site=soia-office-of-immigrant-affairs>. **January 16**, 4:30 – 6 p.m., SomerViva Office, 42 Cross St., Somerville.

\*\*\*\*\*

Help **Connexion** gather **winter coats** for the community. Coats can be delivered to Connexion, located at 149 Broadway in Somerville. Available drop-off times: Weekdays: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Sundays: 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Donations accepted until January 24. The **Giveaway** will be **Saturday January 25**, 2 – 5 p.m. Please consider donating New or gently used coats. You can also purchase coats on their Amazon wish list.

\*\*\*\*\*

With the **winter cold** over the coming days, here are some important tips for staying safe and warm: Dress in layers and cover as much exposed skin as possible when outdoors, minimize time outside, including for pets, check in on family and neighbors, follow all safety precautions if using space heaters. Do not use a stove or oven as a heat source. Check your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and make sure they are working and have fresh batteries. Learn more about carbon monoxide safety: [mass.gov/info-details/carbon-monoxide-co-safety](http://mass.gov/info-details/carbon-monoxide-co-safety). Prevent frozen water pipes: [somervillema.gov/frozenpipes](http://somervillema.gov/frozenpipes). For more, visit: [somervillema.gov/coldweather](http://somervillema.gov/coldweather).

\*\*\*\*\*

A painting, **Nissenbaum, midday**, was included in a show called **Visions of**

**Somerville**, set to open last weekend. Someone in a ski-mask walked into the show and cut down that painting and that of another artist, then walked out with them. This theft caused the show to be immediately taken down and the opening reception to be cancelled. If you know anything about the theft, or if you happen to see this painting out in the wild, please contact the **Somerville Police Department** at 617-625-1600.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Low-income households** may be eligible to receive help with winter heating costs through the **Fuel Assistance Program**. This program is part of the **Home Energy Assistance program (HEAP)** and serves residents of Somerville and Cambridge. Participants receive assistance with their heating costs **between November 1 and April 30**. Learn more about the program, check if you qualify, and apply for assistance today at [somerville-ma.gov/heating-assistance](http://somerville-ma.gov/heating-assistance).

\*\*\*\*\*

**Somerville High School students** are invited to bring their **SHS ID** to the **Somerville YMCA** on **Fridays** from 7 to 9 p.m. and **Sunday** from 2 to 4 p.m. for free. There are **free movie nights**. On Sundays, students will have access to the basketball and exercise areas (including the weight room). Visit their website to learn more: <https://somervilleymca.org/news/somerville-teens-after-hours/>. Somerville YMCA asks that students go to their website to register before visiting and this program is for ages 14 to 17 years.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Community members** are invited to welcome the **Year of the Snake** at the second **Lunar New Year Festival** on **Saturday, January 25**. This fun and festive celebration will be held in the **Somerville High School cafeteria** (81 Highland Ave.) from 2:30 to 5 p.m. Join in for exciting performances, food, and family-friendly activities that highlight the rich traditions of East, Southeast, and South Asia.

\*\*\*\*\*

**City Alerts** are a great way for those who live, work, or own a business in Somerville to receive important city information that affects your neighborhood. City Alerts provide information about emergencies (including snow emergencies), construction and road closures, water service interruptions, community news, and more. To sign up, visit [somerville-ma.gov/alerts](http://somerville-ma.gov/alerts) and click on the button

for your preferred language. Step-by-step sign-up instructions are available at: [somervillema.gov/alerts](http://somervillema.gov/alerts). Having trouble signing up? You can call 3-1-1 (617-666-3311) for assistance.

\*\*\*\*\*

With the days growing shorter and temperatures dipping colder, the **Somerville Homeless Coalition** is in critical need of new or lightly used jackets for their clients currently living outside. If you have any adult sized coats hanging in your closet that you don't wear, please consider dropping them off at the Somerville Homeless Coalition admin office located at **255 Elm Street, Suite 204** during the hours listed below. **Drop Off Hours:** Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., 2 – 5 p.m. Each coat donated provides warmth, dignity, and safety for our neighbors having to face the harsh New England winter conditions.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Feeling fatigued** from holiday festivities? Want a quiet activity to do with one or more of your friends and/or relatives? Why not a **puzzle**? Bring your gently used puzzles to the **West Branch library** and pick up a new to you puzzle from our supply. No puzzles to drop off? That's fine too. No registration required.

\*\*\*\*\*

If you want to **adopt-a-drain** in Somerville, perform light maintenance as needed, and give it a creative name. Sign up for the **Adopt-a-Drain program** today by visiting [Somerville.mysticdrains.org](http://Somerville.mysticdrains.org).

\*\*\*\*\*

The **Somerville Winter Farmers Market** is back at the Arts at the Armory, 191 Highland Ave. on Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. **from November 2 to April 12**, (except November 30 and December 28). The Center for the Arts at the Armory is proud to offer a weekly winter market with 71+ local food vendors with the best locally grown and regionally produced foods, including fresh produce, cheese, eggs, meats, fish, breads, tamales, pastries, chocolate, skincare products, and more. The market accepts SNAP/EBT and HIP benefits. They also offer a \$15 SNAP match to customers each week. More info available on their website: <https://www.somwintermarket.org/>.

\*\*\*\*\*

Is your **teen** looking to make some **extra money**? The city's **Snow Shoveling Program** is hiring youth to assist shoveling seniors and homeowners with disabilities out after snowstorms this winter. Teens and homeowners are

*Continued on page 22*

# Beacon Hill Roll Call CONT. FROM PG 12

similar exhibition or educational program. Violators would be fined \$50 per animal for a first offense, \$100 for a second offense and \$300 for a third and subsequent offense.

“Early separation of puppies and kittens from their mother, and the unregulated roadside sale of dogs and cats, are practices that often lead to serious health or behavioral problems for the animal and no recourse for the new owner,” said sponsor Sen. John Velis (D-Westfield). “I was proud to file this legislation in the Senate this session and am glad that it is one step closer to becoming law and establishing new protections for animals throughout the commonwealth.”

## ALSO UP ON BEACON HILL

**\$5 MILLION FOR ENHANCED SECURITY** – The Healey Administration announced nearly \$5 million in grants to support more than 100 nonprofit organizations at high risk of hate crimes or terror attacks, by enhancing their security.

The announcement follows the release of the 2023 Hate Crime Report for Massachusetts by the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security. The report documented 557 hate crime reports statewide – a 26.6 percent increase from 440 in 2022. As in previous years, the most common bias motivation in 2023 was based on race, ethnicity or national origin, accounting for 45.1 percent of all inci-

dents. Anti-Jewish offenses which rose from 70 in 2022 to 119 in 2023 saw the sharpest increase.

“These organizations offer comfort, services, community and support to those they serve. Our administration is committed to ensuring nonprofits and all who gather in these spaces are protected from hate and extremist violence,” said Gov. Healey. “Everyone deserves to safely practice their chosen faith, access health care, seek services and gather in community spaces free from the threat of harm.”

**BEWARE OF EZDRIVEMA SCAM** – The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is once again reminding customers to be mindful of text message-based scams, also known as smishing. The scammers are claiming to represent the tolling agency and requesting payment for unpaid tolls.

MassDOT urges customers to be cautious about email, text and phone scams demanding payment of outstanding toll balances. Some attempts have been made to trick customers into sharing credit card numbers and other sensitive information by directing them to a website to pay their outstanding balances. MassDOT strongly encourages customers not to click the link contained in those messages.

## HOW LONG WAS LAST WEEK’S SESSION?

*Beacon Hill Roll Call* tracks the length of time that the

House and Senate were in session each week. Many legislators say that legislative sessions are only one aspect of the Legislature’s job and that a lot of important work is done outside of the House and Senate chambers. They note that their jobs also involve committee work, research, constituent work and other matters that are important to their districts. Critics say that the Legislature does not meet regularly or long enough to debate and vote in public view on the thousands of pieces of legislation that have been filed. They note that the infrequency and brief length of sessions are misguided and lead to irresponsible late-night sessions and a mad rush to act on dozens of bills in the days immediately preceding the end of an annual session. During the week of Jan. 6-10, the House met for a total of ten minutes while the Senate met for a total of 25 minutes.

Mon. Jan. 6	House 11:02 a.m. to 11:08 a.m. Senate 11:06 a.m. to 11:29 a.m.
Tues. Jan. 7	No House session No Senate session
Wed. Jan. 8	No House session No Senate session
Thurs. Jan. 9	House 11:01 a.m. to 11:05 a.m. Senate 11:07 a.m. to 11:09 a.m.
Fri. Jan. 10	No House session No Senate session

*Bob Katzen welcomes feedback at bob@beaconhillrollcall.com*

# Oh, rats – confronting the rodent issue in Somerville CONT. FROM PG 11

use rodenticide, and they’re easy to move around,” said Privett.

According to Privett, other cities have contacted the Inspectional Services Department about the resources on their website, including the SMART boxes and other rat entrapment and extermination methods. Cambridge and Somerville have worked together on the issue, including the testing of another rodenticide alternative, rodent birth control, a non-toxic alternative that lowers the number of pups

produced in a single litter. Although primarily run by Cambridge, the rodent birth control study test sites have been extended to specific areas in Somerville.

“We are open to sharing all this information because rats don’t discriminate. They don’t know city borders,” said Privett. “We all share the same responsibilities and issues. We love working with other cities on this topic.”

Privett and Somerville’s Inspectional Services Department hopes to continue

hosting informational workshops in the future, continuing the pattern of education and outreach to a broader audience.

For more information, visit the City of Somerville’s webpage on rodent control or contact Alicia Privett at [aprivett@somervillema.gov](mailto:aprivett@somervillema.gov). To schedule official inspections or sign up for the residential assistance program, email [ISDrodent-control@somervillema.gov](mailto:ISDrodent-control@somervillema.gov). A recording of the January 9 virtual informational session will be posted on the city’s You-

Tube channel [SomervilleCityTV](https://www.youtube.com/channel/SomervilleCityTV).

Links:  
[1] <https://www.mass.gov/regulations/105-CMR-41000-minimum-standards-of-fitness-for-human-habitation-state-sanitary-code-chapter-ii>

[2] [https://app.mapline.com/map/map\\_22591cec/YT8UQ15cSC-gKPz8UP1RQJH5bPz8UP-1JVMT8UPz9EAjZuB2kUPz](https://app.mapline.com/map/map_22591cec/YT8UQ15cSC-gKPz8UP1RQJH5bPz8UP-1JVMT8UPz9EAjZuB2kUPz)

## Newstalk CONT. FROM PG 21

paired for the season. After each storm, the homeowner will contact their assigned youth to request shoveling services. Somerville teens ages 14 to 19 are welcome to apply. Looking for snow shoveling services? Apply online or contact **Debby Higgins** at [dhiggins@somervillema.gov](mailto:dhiggins@somervillema.gov).

\*\*\*\*\*

**Snow emergency parking** is on the even side of the street all winter, unless posted signage says differently. Sign

up for alerts or update your information at [somervillema.gov/alerts](https://www.somervillema.gov/alerts). You can call 311 if you need assistance. Flashing blue lights at major intersections indicate a snow emergency. Snow emergencies are announced on the city’s website, social media feeds, CityTV, and via information shared with local media. For more information on the city’s snow policies, visit [somervillema.gov/snow](https://www.somervillema.gov/snow).

\*\*\*\*\*

Through the generosity of the **American**

**Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)**, and from the direction of **Mayor Ballantyne**, the **Council on Aging** can provide **Durable Medical Equipment** at no cost to Somerville residents. Residents with a documented need for medical equipment must be over the age of 60, or have a permanent disability, and must be otherwise unable to afford or access needed medical equipment. We currently have available: Commodes, Bath Benches, Rollator Walkers, Incontinence Supplies and Transport Wheelchairs

(wheelchairs are intended for transport and are not self-propelling or self-breaking.) For additional information, or for an application, please contact **Debby Higgins** at 617-625-6600, ext. 2321.

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OFF THE SHELF

by Doug Holder

Review of Lee Varon's new poetry collection 'The Last Bed'

*The Last Bed*  
By Lee Varon  
Finishing Line Press, 2024.

Review by Off the Shelf Correspondent/ Jean Flanagan

Lee Varon's fourth poetry book, *The Last Bed*, published by Finishing Line Press is a stunning and intimate portrayal of a mother who never gives up on her child with substance use disorder.

Varon shares heart-wrenching images of every step in her courageous battle to save her child. She is thrown into an unknown world we would never choose for our children.

In Varon's poetry, we feel the extremes of hope and despair that hit a family confronting the complexities of substance use disorder. Varon proceeds with sensitivity to reveal her story with no embellishments. She never loses her focus. Her poetry embraces love in the midst of agony, and light in the middle of the darkness. The poem *The Last Bed* is gripping. The tension in this poem builds and we are alongside Varon, praying with her, the last bed will go to her son:

Through blood and splinters  
I grip the edge  
of the last bed.

The book is divided into three sections, *At the Soup Kitchen*, *The Last Bed*, and *Birds*. Varon has volunteered in a soup kitchen for many years and has become acquainted with many of the guests who come in for meals. She has certainly helped others often living unseen on the most painful edges of our society. Her poetic view is authentic and, in the poem *I Know Your Name*, dedicated to Colleen, she writes:

Your beauty is dissolving,  
into night---  
smack, snow  
taking you.

One of the most effective literary devices is Varon's use of birds to tell the story. Varon clever-



ly weaves in warblers, crows, peacocks, egrets and hummingbirds to name a few. For example, in the poem *Seagulls* she writes:

High above gulls cry  
holding to hope

By using the different birds, she is able to balance the harsh realities of substance use disorder with the life of birds. This connects us to the vulnerable in nature, as well as to our own vulnerabilities.

Lee Varon is a social worker as well as a writer. Her personal experiences are often reflected in her writing. She has shared with us both miracles and despair with a keen eye and honest emotion. Varon's book is available through Finishing Line Press ([www.finishinglinepress.com](http://www.finishinglinepress.com)). She is also the author of two children's books dealing with addiction: *My Brother is Not a Monster: A Story of Addiction and Recovery*, and *A Kids Book About Overdose*.

I proceed with facts  
the devil's jump from the belfry  
the trial and conviction of witchy women,  
flash of eyes  
hands with Napolitana gestures,  
my uncle Nick  
would be so proud of my delivery.

I live here.

I point to my garden  
heirloom tomatoes, basil, vegetables,  
they fill my migrant plate.  
I make the earth feed me.  
I make strangers  
listen to the stories  
of the people nobody wanted.

— Diana Rose Lynch

Lyrical  
SOMERVILLE  
edited by Doug Holder

Diana Rose Lynch is a language teacher who teaches writing at Boston University. *The Ekphrastic Review* published her first poem in 2020. Her poetry was recently featured at Dogtown On My Mind: Reading and Discussion Celebrating Dogtown in the *Writer's Imagination Today*. *Discover Gloucester* published two of her Dogtown poems in celebration of Gloucester 400. In addition, *400 Stories Project* published her poetry in 2023 celebrating the unique history of the city of Gloucester. When she is not teaching, she writes poetry, gardens, and hikes. She lives in Ipswich, MA and is currently working on a collection of poetry.



Unwanted Tour Guide

I have become  
a tour guide for the devil.

Strangers roam my neighborhood  
look for the devil's footprint  
stare in sorrow  
at the saltbox colonial  
that served to condemn  
the local women  
who made cows die,  
who dried up maternal milk.

I know who they are  
stand in the middle of the commons  
read brochures, check maps.

I approach with my guinea charm  
with my immigrant babble  
these aren't my stories  
but I know them.

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