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



The city is considering steps to rectify issues cyclists have raised concerning the bike lane entry onto Washington St. — Photo by Roberto Fischer

By Harry Kane

Bicyclists say that the bike lane entry onto Washington Street feels unsafe, following a reconstruction project of sidewalks and repaving meant to make it safer for pedestrians, motorists and bicyclists.

During the December 12 City Council meeting, Ward 2 City Councilor J.T. Scott ordered the Director of Mobility and the Director of Engineering to appear before the Council to discuss the preparation of a change order to revert the design back to the original plans for the bike lane at the entrance of Washington Street and Webster Avenue in Union Square.

“It came as a big surprise to myself and to advocates when the implementation of it, right there at its terminus in Union Square, wasn’t” *Continued on page 4*

## A new look for mural on Trum Field playground

By Lexi O’Neil

A new year brings new appreciation for The Phoenix Tree mural on Trum Field playground. Originally commissioned to bring the Somerville community together, it reminds us that art is in the eye of the beholder. In the city known for great artistic expression, Somerville renews its glow on a favorite artist who is paving the way for their passions.

Crystal Burney, known professionally as Gray Sky Designs, is an artist who for over twenty-five years, has brought her passions to life in multiple cities, including her home of Somerville, Massachusetts. Her creative process begins when a client brings forth a vision they’d like her to breathe new life into, and it is here where new projects are born.

Her craft has been a driving *Continued on page 4*



The Phoenix Tree” mural currently graces the grounds of Trum Field.

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The views and opinions expressed in Newstalk do not necessarily reflect those of The Somerville Times, its publisher or staff. The column has many contributors.

Learn about rodent control at a virtual information session. The city's **Inspectional Services Department** and the **SomerViva Office of Immigrant Affairs** invite community members to attend a virtual workshop about rodents on **Thursday, January 9**, from 5 to 6 p.m. online via Zoom. Attendees will learn about identifying if rats are on your property, rodent control methods, tips for prevention, and city resources that can help. Interpretation into Spanish will be available. Learn more and attend or get tips now at [somer-villema.gov/rodentsaway](http://somer-villema.gov/rodentsaway).

\*\*\*\*\*

Community members who could not attend the city's **Mid-Term Ceremonies and Addresses** can watch them on online on CityTV's YouTube channel at [youtube.com/SomervilleCityTV](http://youtube.com/SomervilleCityTV)

\*\*\*\*\*

Happy birthday this week to several locals: Happy birthday to **Katie McDaid**. We wish her a very happy birthday. Happy birthday to retired high school teacher **Marion Joyce**. We hope she enjoys her day. Happy birthday to **Ken Kotch**, a great photographer. We hope he has a nice day. Happy birthday to **Phil Forsyth**, we wish him the best. Happy Birthday to a great guy, **Matt Hoey**. We wish him a nice day with his family. Happy birthday to **Donna Desrescente**. We wish her the very best. We wish all our Facebook friends, such as **Linda M. Alves, Rose Amabile, Chris Walsh, Alberta Healey, Janice Burpee, Paul Nunziato** and **Suzanne Ryan Marks** a very happy birthday. We hope everyone has a *Continued on page 7*

## Somerville Weather Forecast

for the week of January 1 – January 7 as provided by the National Weather Service

DAY	CONDITIONS	HIGH/LOW	PRECIPITATION	HUMIDITY	WIND
<b>Wednesday</b> January 8	Partly Cloudy	28°/17°	1%	1%	NW 22 mph
<b>Thursday</b> January 9	Partly Cloudy	29°/25°	2%	%	NW 19 mph
<b>Friday</b> January 10	Sunny	36°/24°	1%	1%	W 15 mph
<b>Saturday</b> January 11	Partly Cloudy	34°/22°	5%	2%	NW 9 mph
<b>Sunday</b> January 12	Partly Cloudy	36°/22°	14%	9%	NW 11 mph
<b>Monday</b> January 13	Partly Cloudy	34°/20°	2%	1%	NW 9 mph
<b>Tuesday</b> January 14	Partly Cloudy	34°/17°	4%	2%	NW 11 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: *Somerville through the eyes of Denise*

Joe L says:

Appears to the rectory at St Catherines

### Response to: *Obituary: Florence E. McWatters*

Fatima DeChaves says:

My sincere condolences to the whole Family!  
Rest in Peace

### Response to: *Somerville Artist Michael Silverman: A consummate coffee-doodler*

Jason Wickham says:

Loved your article Michael. Please drop by mine and Karen's new coffee shop (Graze and Wander) in Somerville. We'd love to have you down for a coffee and a people watch.

Log onto [TheSomervilleTimes.com](http://TheSomervilleTimes.com) to leave your own comments

## The Somerville Times

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## Free food resources available in Somerville

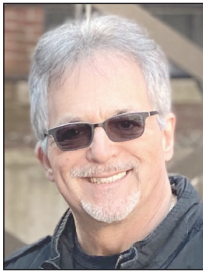
Ongoing. If you or someone you know is dealing with food insecurity, please take a look at this folder. This online folder has fliers in multiple languages about free food resources for families: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13yZQvHB-gmjghDxAvjtt07reE-WtzC\\_Ne](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13yZQvHB-gmjghDxAvjtt07reE-WtzC_Ne)





Life in the  by Jimmy Del Ponte

# One-way woes



What do you think of them making Central St. a one way from Summer St. to Highland Ave.?

They widened the bike lane and the sidewalk. They left a

small path for vehicles. This was the subject of my Facebook poll. All new readers comments are in quotes.

“They want everyone to be careless and bike or use the T. It is getting so dangerous”

“In West Somerville on a crazy rainy cloudburst morning where you couldn’t see 5 ft. in front of you. I blew out a tire on one of those curbs making a left turn”

“The whole neighborhood (and I live

right down the street) is a mess. There have been at least five major accidents at Summer, Harvard and Benton plus the bikes that have plenty of room on those wide paths still ride in the street, still go the wrong way on both ends of Central Street. Emergency vehicles avoid this area whenever possible. There are much better ways to have made these changes but the city doesn’t listen to all of its constituents only those with the loudest voices that haven’t lived here very long.”

“Well, didn’t they pretty much say they wanted to make it a ‘walking’ city. If you have a car and no driveway the parking will be a real deal breaker for tenants.”

“I am a senior citizen (75) and handicapped and there is no way I can get to

my many doctors using anything but a car. Guess this is the thanks I get for living here my whole life.”

“My husband and I have this conversation often. He asks, where did all these cars come from?”

“We grew up in the 60’s, one car – if any car – families. We grew up with families of 3, 4, 5 – even 10 kids. All those kids – ok – most of those kids worked hard to buy a car at age 16. So, in just a household of 5 siblings – 5 more vehicles need parking. I think you get the picture.

Somerville is a great walking city. We have gotten so used to driving everywhere ever since our first vehicle. And now as we age, walking can be difficult.”



Thank you to all who contributed to this story.

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

CONT. FROM PG 1

what was on those plans," said Councilor Scott.

The Washington Street redesign project is in its final stages of construction, explained Councilor Scott, but the issue for bicyclists is the curb at the corner that some cyclists believe is unsafe.

Councilor Scott said that there had been extensive input from bicyclist advocates and neighbors in the design process. Apparently, a revised final 100 percent plan, which was submitted in September of 2023, was never posted until recently, he explained.

"There was no chance for anybody in the public to catch this or provide feedback," Councilor Scott said.

Councilor Scott said that the entrance is "fairly scary," and he wants to ensure constituents that the bike lane entry will be fixed.

"I think this is a chance to rectify a mistake," said Councilor Scott.

Prior to construction there was a change to the design that affected the entrance to the westbound cycle track at Union Square, explained Nick Alakel, Public Information Officer at the Department of Communications and Community Engagement.

"This design update increases the amount of continuously available sidewalk space in an area heavily used by pedestrians," said Alakel. "In the initial design the cycle track bisected the sidewalk near the crosswalk across Washington Street."

"During construction we received feedback from community members and observed that the angle of the entrance to the cycle track was too sharp," Alakel said.

This change required that the entrance to the cycle track be modified so that cyclists enter at an angle.

"At that point, we directed our contractor to widen the cycle track entrance by adding additional asphalt, making the necessary turn more gradual," Alakel said.

The adjustment was made in late November, Alakel added. The Western Washington Street Safety and Mobility Improvements project is "substantially complete."

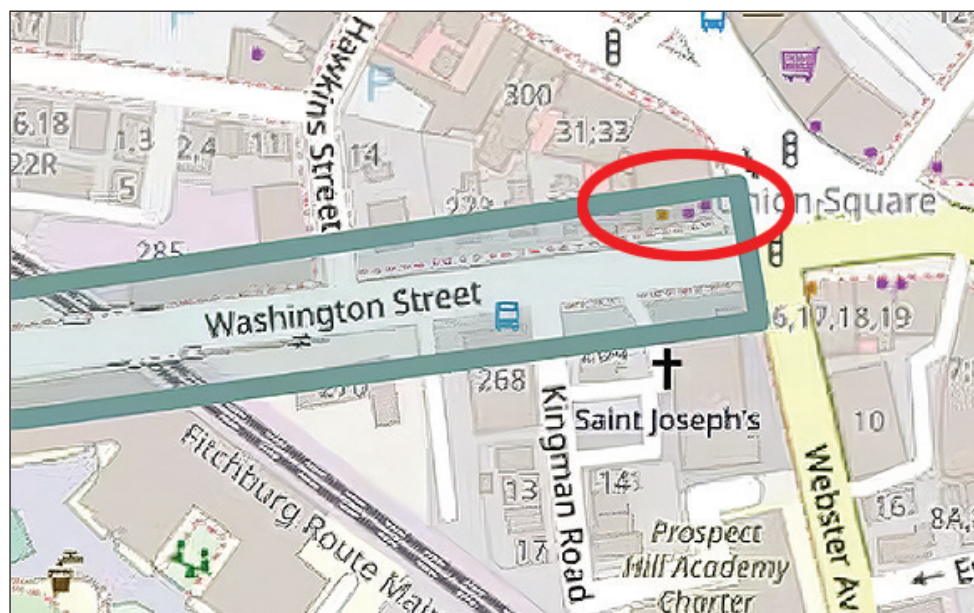
There are some minor construction items remaining such as additional signage, pedestrian signal improvements, and various pavement markings, including the previously mentioned green bike lane paint, which are expected to be completed this upcoming spring. Cold weather prohibits completing certain work during the winter season.

"At this stage, the city does not plan to reconstruct the cycle track's entrance, Alakel said. "However, as always, city staff will monitor all newly implemented streetscapes to ensure the changes are delivering a safer, more comfortable experience for everyone traveling along the street."

Roberto Fischer, a parent that helped start the Argenziano bike bus, said he and other parents are disappointed in the implementation of the bike lane.

"The entrance to the bike lane is outright dangerous," Fischer said. "It is urgently in need of rectification."

The bike bus is for kids and parents who ride their bicycles to school on Friday mornings. This was started in Somerville a couple years ago, Fischer explained. The kids and parents depart at 7:55 a.m. and



ride to school. Two of the routes, which lead to the Albert F. Argenziano School (PK-8), pass through the entry at Washington Street.

Fischer says that in its current form, there is no way to retain the separation from vehicles as bicyclists enter onto Washington Street.

"They are essentially making you exit the bike lane to be able to re-enter the bike lane, which puts you in front of a car before you are able to go back into the bike lane," he said.

Merging into the road before re-entering the bike lane is dangerous for bicyclists, which is why Fischer and others are asking for the entryway at the intersection to be changed.

"You are forced to do this nonsensical zigzag," he says.

Fischer says the sidewalk is well-sized, so there is a reasonable amount of space to spare for the bike lane.

The original Western Washington Street Mobility Improvements project 100 percent design protected bicyclists all the way to the intersection, Fisher explained. But the revision that Councilor Scott spoke about at the City Council meeting changed the entryway.

Fischer explained that in Union Square there are a mix of different design patterns for bicyclists, which can be confusing.

There is a bike box designated at the head of the traffic lane at the signalized intersection of Somerville Avenue and Washington Street, allowing for vehicular cycling.

"They are mixing different types of designs and I think that is part of the problem," Fischer said. "You have two different design principles that are in conflict with each other."

The protected bike lanes keep the bicyclists separated from the vehicles, and Fischer says that would be safer.

## A new look for mural on Trum Field playground

CONT. FROM PG 1

force during her time in Somerville, having even left her mark in cities such as Cambridge, home to her favorite ramen shop, and Marblehead, home to Marblehead High School's Magicians. When Crystal isn't commissioning a painting, you can find her busy working at or painting the walls of Davis Square Donuts and Bagels while consulting about her future visions with her close friend, George.

Crystal is forthcoming with some of the challenges with her craft. She's quick to discuss that her love for painting can cloud her judgment long enough to keep her preoccupied while constantly striving to achieve the intended goal for the client. She shares with us that her son helps to remind her of her worth and what her passion means to others, especially when it's hard to meet herself in the middle of the road when projects

pique her artful curiosity more than they're intended to. It's not easy when your income relies on your skill.

Crystal makes the life of an artist seem effortless, even when it's difficult to let the small things go. Her work ranges from interior designs, like smaller-scale home improvement projects and welcoming nurseries for expecting families, and larger-scale projects, such as exterior work alike to Marblehead's school mascot and

Trum Field's beloved tree.

A hard-working mother who strives constantly to meet customer expectations while perfecting the work/life balance in a saturated market, her humble nature and selfless acts make this artist unique among the crowd. When she isn't working, time spent with her fourteen-year-old son, Hatcher, is her favorite. You can browse more of Crystal's projects via her website: [grayskydesigns.com](http://grayskydesigns.com).

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Facebook at [www.facebook.com/somerville.times.1](http://www.facebook.com/somerville.times.1)



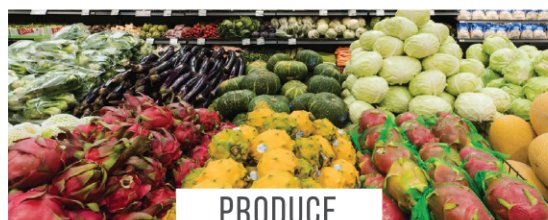
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\* Gift items may be subject to change based on inventory. Available while supplies last.



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# 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)

With today's edition, *The Somerville Times* begins coverage of the 2025-2026 Massachusetts legislative session with our weekly *Beacon Hill Roll Call* report. This feature is a clear and concise compilation of the voting records of local state representatives and senators.

*Beacon Hill Roll Call* provides an unbiased summary of bills and amendments, arguments from floor debate on both sides of the issue and each legislator's vote or lack of vote on the matter. This information gives readers an opportunity to monitor their elected officials' actions on Beacon Hill. Many bills are reported on in their early stages, giving readers the opportunity to contact their legislators and express an opinion prior to the measure being brought up for final action.

The feature "Also Up on Beacon Hill" informs readers of other important matters at the Statehouse.

*Beacon Hill Roll Call* is written and provided by Bob Katzen, a former Boston radio talk show host at WRKO, WITS and WMRE. Bob has been providing this feature to hundreds of newspapers across the Bay State since 1975.

Fun fact: Bob invented the "Bagel Route" when he was 10 years old. It's like a paper route but Bob took pre-orders from neighbors and delivered bagels every Sunday morning.

**THE HOUSE AND SENATE:** Last week was full of activity on Beacon Hill. The Legislature approved and sent to Gov. Maura Healey several bills passed on voice votes, without roll calls, prior to the end of the 2023-2024 session on Wednesday, January 1.

The Legislature also convened the 2025-2026 session that same day. Much of the day's activities were ceremonial including the swearing-in of state senators and representatives. The only roll call votes were on the election of a speaker of the House and Senate president.

## REP. RON MARIANO RE-ELECTED SPEAKER

The House re-elected Rep. Ron Mariano (D-Quincy) as speaker of the House and Rep. Brad Jones (R-North Reading) as Republican minority leader.

Mariano received the votes of all 132 Democrats who voted. Jones fended off a challenge from Rep. Marc Lombardo (R-Billerica) for the GOP top spot. Jones received 21 votes to Lombardo's four votes.

"Just as the Legislature acted to protect our residents during the first Trump administration, it will once again

be our responsibility to step up when we can in the face of federal management changes and decreased federal support," Mariano said. "It will be imperative that we rise above the infighting and partisan politics that continue to plague Congress, a goal that I know Gov. Healey and Senate President Spilka remain committed to."

"I am truly grateful for the overwhelming vote of confidence and support I received from my colleagues this morning," said Jones. "They were able to see through the divisive rhetoric and meaningless noise generated by outside special interests, extremist groups and others leading up to today's vote. As we begin a new legislative session, I am honored to have the opportunity to continue to lead the House Republican Caucus over the next two years and will continue to work alongside my colleagues to advocate for responsible policies that are in the best interests of our cities and towns and the state's taxpayers."

"Today wasn't a loss," said Lombardo. "Today was the culmination of starting a conversation within the caucus and with the voters of the commonwealth about how they want the Republican Party of Massachusetts to operate, how they want the House caucus to operate. They want transparency, they want a strong Republican voice, and we haven't had that."

Rep. Christine Barber	Voted for Mariano
Rep. Mike Connolly	Voted for Mariano
Rep. Erika Uytterhoeven	Voted for Mariano

## SEN. KAREN SPILKA RE-ELECTED SENATE PRESIDENT

The Senate re-elected Sen. Karen Spilka (D-Ashland) as Senate president and Sen. Bruce Tarr (R-Gloucester) as Republican Minority Leader.

Spilka received the votes of 34 of the Senate's 35 Democrats while all five Republicans voted for Tarr. Sen. John Keenan (D-Quincy) voted "present."

"What an exciting day to kick off 2025," posted Spilka on Facebook. "Today I had the distinct honor of being sworn in as the Senator representing Middlesex and Norfolk and re-elected President of the Massachusetts Senate. The privilege and responsibility to serve the Senate and our commonwealth is not one I take lightly. I'm so thankful for my family who was able to be here today and those supporting me from afar. I'm forever grateful to my colleagues in the Senate and look forward to all we will tackle together in this coming year as we fight like hell for the great people of our commonwealth."

Sen. Tarr posted on Facebook, "Thank you [Senate Pres-

ident Spilka] for your partnership and friendship as we continue to work together to defy the ongoing and disturbing trends of division and paralysis that are plaguing other legislative bodies, even as we face challenges, circumstances, and situations that demand the very best each of us has to offer on behalf of those we represent."

"I voted 'present' today in the roll call for the election of a Senate President because changes are needed," Keenan posted on X. "We have had significantly fewer roll calls, routinely missed deadlines, failed to adopt joint rules, waived rules, passed bills beyond the end of formal sessions with limited opportunities for members to participate fully, and have often been at odds with our partners in the House of Representatives."

Keenan continued, "We have been less transparent and less connected with what the residents of the commonwealth rightly demand and deserve from the Massachusetts State Senate."

Sen. Patricia Jehlen Voted for Spilka

## ALSO UP ON BEACON HILL

**\$8,391 PAY HIKE FOR EACH OF THE 40 SENATORS AND 160 REPRESENTATIVES** – A total of \$1.67 million per year is the annual estimated price tag for the base salary hikes given last week to each of the state's 40 senators and 160 representatives.

Gov. Maura Healey announced that the 200 members of the Legislature will receive an 11.39 percent hike in their base pay for the 2025-2026 legislative session that began January 1. The hike will increase the base salary of each senator and representative by \$8,391 per year— from the current \$73,655 to \$82,046.

Healey is required under the state constitution to determine the amount of a pay raise or cut that state legislators would receive for the 2025-2026 session. All Massachusetts governors are obligated to increase or decrease legislative salaries biennially under the terms of a constitutional amendment approved by the voters in 1998. The amendment, approved by a better than two-to-one margin, requires legislative salaries to be "increased or decreased at the same rate as increases or decreases in the median household income for the commonwealth for the preceding two-year period, as ascertained by the governor."

Healey said she used the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey to determine that median household income for Massachusetts for the 2023- *Continued on page 16*



# COMMENTARY

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Illustrated by Jim Clark



Remember, it's **EVEN** side parking this season during snow emergencies.

## Our View Of The Times



As we get into the snowy months of winter it's good for all of us to make sure we understand what the odd-even rules are and where we stand this season.

Here is a reminder of what the city's snow parking rules and guidelines are for the 24/25 winter season:

During snow emergencies this winter, residents must park on the **EVEN** side of the road only, unless otherwise posted.

Once a snow emergency has been declared, residents have four hours to move vehicles to the correct side of the street, or into a designated municipal parking lot.

Vehicles not moved during this window of time may be ticketed (\$100 fine) and towed (\$100 fine assessed by the tow company for the tow).

Vehicles parked within 20 feet of any intersection may be ticketed and towed.

For a list of designated municipal parking lots available for snow emergency parking, visit [www.somervillema.gov/snow](http://www.somervillema.gov/snow). Residents are encouraged to sign up for phone, email, and text alerts by visiting [www.somervillema.gov/alerts](http://www.somervillema.gov/alerts).

Also, parking is no longer allowed in school parking lots during snow emergencies. Four hours after a snow emergency is called, gates to school parking

lots will be closed and locked until the emergency is lifted.

More info can be found online at [www.somervillema.gov/snow](http://www.somervillema.gov/snow), or download the city's 311 app in iTunes or Google Play, by searching "311Somerville."

Be safe and be legal. If we all cooperate and keep these simple rules and guidelines in mind, we can get through the season unscathed and happy.

### Newstalk CONT. FROM PG 2

great day. To all the others we may have missed, we sincerely wish them the very best of birthdays.

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Join the Athletics Department in honoring the first inductee, **Jerry Knight**, into the **Somerville High School Athletics Ring of Honor**. He was chosen for his amazing contributions to the Somerville High School athletic community. Jerry was a standout student athlete who ran track and played basketball for Somerville High School until graduating in 1961. He coached at SHS, then served as Athletic Director until he retired in 2005. Come to the ceremony on **Friday, January 10**, at

6:30 p.m. in the **Somerville High School Brune Field House**.

\*\*\*\*\*

Join the city for an informative **Tax Preparation Seminar** designed to help individuals and small businesses navigate the complexities of tax season. Led by experienced tax professionals, this seminar will cover essential topics such as tax deductions, credits, filing requirements, and strategies to minimize your tax liability. Whether you are filing for the first time or looking to improve your tax preparation skills, this session will provide valuable insights to ensure you stay compliant and maximize your returns. **Saturday**,

**January 11**, 10 a.m. 12 p.m., 42 Cross St., Somerville.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Riverside Early Head Start** is hosting a free **community baby shower** on **Wednesday, January 15**, at 474 Broadway, Somerville, 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.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Vernon Street Studios 50th Anniversary retrospective exhibit** has opened at the **Nave Gallery**. This exhibit features over 50 artists. Celebrate artist both past and present. Exhibit open **Saturday and Sunday**, 1 – 5 p.m. Closes **January 9**, 6 – 8 p.m. Nave Gallery, 155 Powerhouse Blvd., Somerville.

\*\*\*\*\*

The community is invited to see the creativity and holiday spirit of their neighbors by embarking on a *Continued on page 21*



# FUN & GAMES

## Ms. Cam's Olio

Olio - (noun) A miscellaneous mixture, hodgepodge

#956

- Who was the first President of the U.S. to install solar panels on the roof of the White House?
- What was Jimmy Carter's nickname?
- Which award did Jimmy Carter receive for his efforts in promoting peace and human rights?
- In what year did Jimmy Carter create the Department of Education?
- Which 70s accessory changes colors based on your vibes?
- What was the name of Johnny Cash's band?
- What sport did Tim McGraw get a college scholarship for?
- Which two weather conditions are needed to form a rainbow?
- What was the first video ever uploaded to YouTube?
- Which detective TV show featured Cybill Shepherd and Bruce Willis?
- What musician wrote *Like A Rolling Stone*?
- At which festival did Bob Dylan play an electric guitar for the first time on stage?

Answers on page 14

### The Somerville Times Useless Facts of the Week

- People used to answer the phone by saying "ahoy".
- The number of dimples on a regulation golf ball is 336.

#### STATEPOINT CROSSWORD

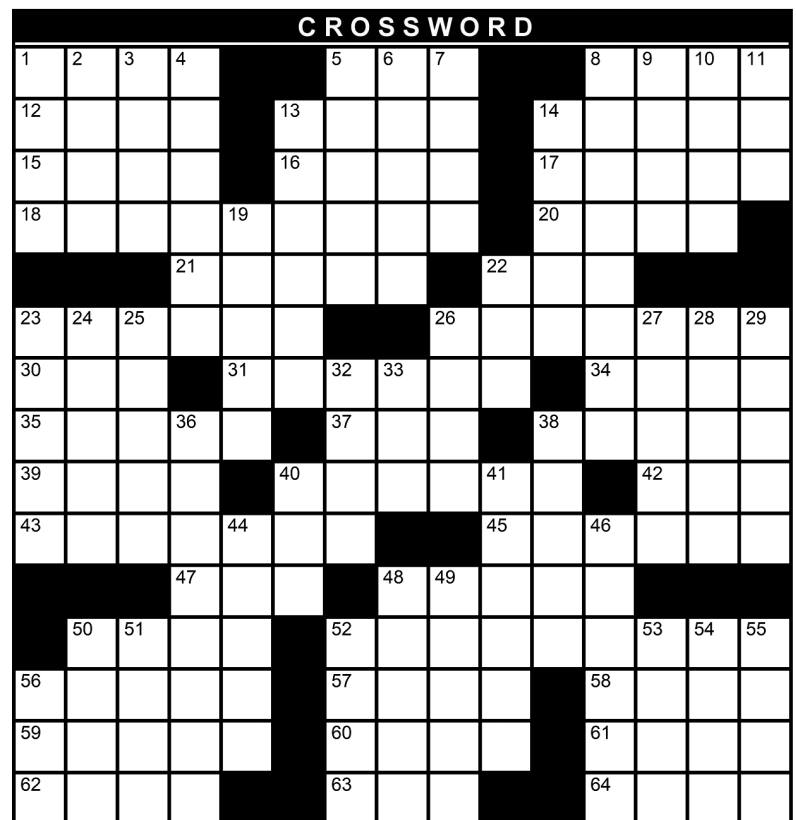
##### SYNONYMS

##### ACROSS

- Larger-than-life
- Capone's family
- Wild swine
- "You're not allowed," to a baby
- Deal with it
- Cunningly
- Shower with affection
- Allege
- City in Belgium
- Snow Day exercise?
- Poet Pound
- Ovine sign of the zodiac
- Tasseled hat
- All together (2 words)
- Military College of South Carolina, with The
- For every
- a.k.a. association football
- All-day Snow Day garb?
- Delete
- Crude fuel
- Read-only disc
- Good's counterpart
- Popular flowering shrub
- Female ancestor
- Two heads are better than one, e.g.
- Bering Strait state
- Rudolph's Clarice, e.g.
- Like thick smoke

##### DOWN

- Odds' partners
- Tubby little cubby
- "He's Just Not That \_\_\_\_ You"
- Of the same period
- \*Popular Snow Day pastime
- Some tournaments
- Zugspitze, e.g.
- Severe weather
- Deed hearing
- Algae, sing.
- Marble bread
- \_\_\_\_ Jack, English pirate
- As opposed to rain
- Irregular
- Type of conifer
- Musketeers' swords
- High-strung
- Cerebellum location
- Unit of life
- Students' dwellings
- Snow Day reading choice
- Helping theorem



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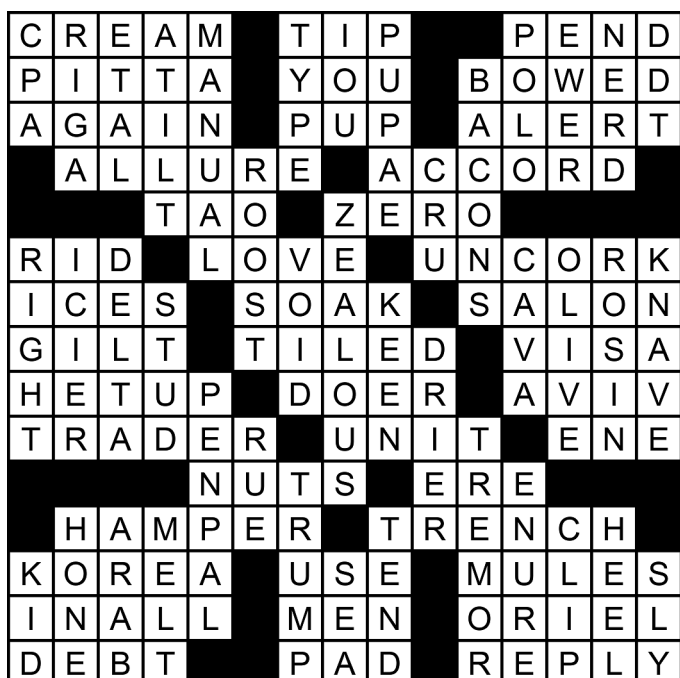
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### Soultion to last week's crossword puzzle:



- Like soft pj's
- Intelligence org.
- Slope fun
- Shorter than California
- Number of years
- No, it doesn't crawl in one's ear
- Horse of certain color, pl.
- Spontaneous additions
- Obtuse one
- Tom Cruise's "The \_\_\_\_ of Money"
- Highway hauler
- Bad sign
- Of a particular kind
- Smoothie berry
- Superman's last name
- Part of a seat
- Like chocolate on a Snow Day

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



OBITUARY

Florence E. (Kennedy) McWatters



Florence E. (Kennedy) McWatters, a lifelong resident of Somerville for over 88 years, passed away peacefully on Dec 29, 2024, in the beautiful surroundings of Boothbay Harbor, Maine. Born and raised in Somerville she was the daughter of late Florence (Graham) Kennedy and John E. Kennedy both of Somerville.

Florence was the loving mother to Robert McWatters of Somerville, Carolyn (Sissy) Ankenbauer and her husband Robert Ankenbauer of Billerica, Kevin McWatters and his wife

Karen of Somerville, Marylynn O'Malley and her husband Tim of Booth Bay, ME and lastly her loving cat named, Eve

She was the former wife of Robert (Bucky) McWatters.

Florence was the sister to the late John Kennedy of Quincy and his wife Elizabeth and Margaret (Honey) Kennedy of Medford. She was the beloved Grandma to Bobby, Shawn, Kevin, Jacqueline and Bobby and the great Grandma to Colin,

Maddie, Landon, Angelo, Gavin and Anthony. She loved her many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Florence held several occupations over her lifetime, first at New England Bell company in Boston, the Somerville Public Schools in the luncheon programs and then at Somerville Hospital as a switchboard operator and patient information desk. During her retirement days she proudly helped others

in recovery programs. Above all, Florence was devoted to her family and had a deep love for her Heavenly Father and she spread the good news anyway she could.

In keeping with Florence's wishes, funeral services and burial at Holy Cross Cemetery, Malden will be held privately.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Florence's memory can be made to Samaritan's Purse at [www.samaritanspurse.org](http://www.samaritanspurse.org).

2025 Overnight Warming Center now open

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne, together with the Somerville Office of Health and Human Services (HHS), opened the 2025 Overnight Warming Center to support adults experiencing homelessness. Clients are accessing hot meals, safe sleeping spaces, and essential services, ensuring they receive the care and support they need. The Warming Center will operate seven nights a week from 5 p.m. - 8 a.m. at the Cummings School (42 Prescott St.). The center will remain open through Sunday, April 13, 2025.

Community members interested in supporting the warming center can donate supplies. The center is currently in need of unused socks and cold-weather treats such as hot chocolate, assorted chocolates, and packaged cookies. To learn more, please email [warmingcenter@somervillema.gov](mailto:warmingcenter@somervillema.gov) The warming center is only available to adults experiencing homelessness.

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.



Dorothy's Corner

BY DOROTHY DIMARZO



Yego Coffee

How quickly a year has gone by! A truly much needed addition to the neighborhood, this family-owned coffee shop offers a variety of specialty coffee drinks like, latte's, cappuccino's, macchiato's, cold brew, and pour overs.

If you're wanting a light bite to eat with your rich, full-bodied coffee, they have a few different types of French pastries, both sweet and savory. For those who prefer tea, you can enjoy a great cup of matcha. Kids snacks and a refrigerator full of a variety of refreshments are also available.

This family-owned company by Fatuma and Francois is quite a remarkable story originating in Rwanda, stem-

ming from Francois's father's working on coffee bean farms for many years. Please visit [yegocoffee.com](http://yegocoffee.com) for the full story. Whole bean or ground coffee can be purchased to go.

Be sure to follow Yego on Facebook and Instagram for special announcements. Until then, go visit, stay a while, and enjoy the coffee.

Yego Coffee  
1212 Broadway (Teele Square)  
Somerville, MA 02144  
857-266-0977  
Open every day from 7:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Visit Dorothy's website at <http://ddimarzo2002.wix.com/thymethief>.









## LEGAL NOTICES

Legal Notices can also be viewed on our website at [www.thesomervilletimes.com](http://www.thesomervilletimes.com)



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING SERVICES DEPARTMENT**  
Request for Quotes  
RFQ 2025-14

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

**On-call repair service for Public Address Systems**

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: **Wednesday, January 8th, 2025**. Sealed responses will be received at the PCS Department, Somerville City Hall, 93 Highland Ave., Somerville, MA, 02143 or via Bid Express until: **1pm, Monday, January 27th, 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 [scastr@somervillema.gov](mailto:scastr@somervillema.gov) for more information.

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

1/8/25 The Somerville Times



**NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS OF WINTER HILL BANK, FSB**

Notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of Members of the Winter Hill Bank, FSB will be held at its office located at 337 Broadway, Somerville, Massachusetts, on the 15th day of January, 2025 at the hour of 2:00 P.M. of said day. The business to be taken up at said Annual Meeting shall be;

- (1) Considering and voting upon approval of the minutes of the last members' meeting;
- (2) Considering and voting upon reports of Officers and Committees of the Bank;
- (3) Considering and acting upon ratifications of the acts of the Directors and Officers of the Bank;
- (4) Election of Directors to fill the offices of the terms of which are then expiring; and
- (5) New business.

Dated this 31st day of December, 2024 at Somerville, Massachusetts.  
*Per Order of the Board of Directors*

Marie A. Danieli  
Corporate Secretary

1/1/25, 1/8/25 The Somerville Times

### James Earl Carter Jr.

(October 1, 1924 – December 29, 2024)  
39th U.S. President of the United States



## City of Somerville held their Mid-Term Ceremonies and Addresses

The City of Somerville held their Mid-Term Ceremonies and Addresses on Monday January 6, 2025 in the City Council Chamber featuring Mayor Katjana Ballantyne, the incoming City Council President, and the incoming Chairperson of the Somerville School Committee. Mayor Ballantyne delivered her Mayoral Mid-Term State of the City Address, reflecting on her second term, recent community initiatives, and plans for the year ahead. The incoming leaders of the City Council and School Committee also shared their priorities. This the first time in Somerville's history that the Mayor, City Council President and Chairperson of the Somerville School Committee are all women. The full ceremony can be found here <https://www.youtube.com/user/SomervilleCityTV>.

— Photos courtesy of Somerville GovTV





# Enrollment for prekindergarten and kindergarten for 2025-2026 school year now open

The Somerville Public Schools' (SPS) annual school enrollment period for prekindergarten and kindergarten students opened on January 3, 2025, and SPS staff are ready to support families through the process of enrolling their student(s). All students who will be 4 years old by August 31, 2025 are eligible for the district's PK program. All students who will be 5 years old by August 31, 2025 are eligible for kindergarten. 189 Somerville families enrolled a student on the first weekend of the enrollment period.

## SPS PK & K Enrollment Process

Parents and guardians can access the online SPS enrollment portal through the Enrollment Office website, [www.somerville.k12.ma.us/enrollment](http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/enrollment).

- ✦ Prekindergarten families who complete enrollment by February 21, 2025 will be assigned a school, based on an open lottery system.
- ✦ Kindergarten families who enroll by February 21, 2025 will be eligible for the first round of school assignments through a lottery system based on Somerville School Committee policy, which prioritizes sibling preference and proximity (school to which your address is connected).
- ✦ Families who enroll after February 21, 2025 will be assigned a school based on seat availability.



## Registration Help for Families

Families who could benefit from interpretation or technology access are encouraged to contact the multilingual Enrollment Office team. The team is available to answer questions and support families during business hours at Central Administration. Appointments are preferred.

Make an appointment with the Enrollment Office by emailing [enrollment@k12.somerville.ma.us](mailto:enrollment@k12.somerville.ma.us) or calling 617-629-5670. The Enrollment Office is located at 167 Holland Street, third floor.

## Enrollment Office hours:

- ✦ Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- ✦ Tuesdays from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- ✦ Fridays from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- ✦ The Enrollment Office is closed from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. on Tuesdays and 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Fridays

## Information about the Enrollment Process and Our Schools

Prior to the annual enrollment period, the SPS Enrollment Office hosts information sessions and Open Houses for all prospective students and families. In December, 2024 and January 2025, over 300 community members attended Open Houses. Families can find enrollment and school information on the SPS website.

- ✦ A full list of schools and locations is available at [www.somerville.k12.ma.us/schools](http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/schools).
- ✦ Find your child's neighborhood school (proximity school) by address on [www.somerville.k12.ma.us/openhouses](http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/openhouses).
- ✦ Families with questions about specific schools may contact the school's main office to speak with a staff member.

Also in Fall 2024, SPS held three information sessions to familiarize families with school enrollment. You can review information from these sessions at the links below.

- ✦ Prekindergarten Information Session Recording
- ✦ Kindergarten Information Session Recording

## Community Schools/Afterschool Registration

**IMPORTANT:** Families who are interested in enrolling their students in the Community Schools Afterschool program will need to register through a separate registration system. The Community Schools portal will be open for Somerville Public Schools students, as follows:

- ✦ Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Afterschool Registration: March 18 – 28, 2025
- ✦ Community Schools registration for returning students in grades 1 and up will also open on March 18, 2025.

Community School afterschool seats are assigned based on availability at sites and through a weighted enrollment system. For more information, visit <https://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/afterschool>.

Community Schools Afterschool is only one option available to families in Somerville. For other available afterschool programs please visit Somerville Hub Connect website, updated by the City's SomerPromise Department.



# FY2025 Property Taxes adjustment released with increases

By Jeffrey Shwom

*Further revelations include parcel counts remaining flat (especially multi-unit housing), high school bond servicing continuing, and a slow-down in new growth.*

Another year, another expected increase in property taxes for thousands of properties within Somerville. 18,893 parcels have begun receiving the new FY2025 assessment and tax rates and a joint pamphlet mailed by the City of Somerville's Board of Assessors and Mayor's Office to property owners December 31, 2024.

Residential properties will see a 3.7% increase year over year and commercial 4.0%. Property values, on average, have also gone up, with a 3.8% average increase in Residential Property valuation and 6.5% Commercial Property valuation. As an example, a condominium assessed at \$700,000 last year may be valued at \$726,600 this year and see an average of \$290 increase in property taxes. The overall city tax levy is \$265 million, an increase from \$245 million [1] in FY2024.

Somerville's Residential FY2025 tax rate is \$10.91 per thousand dollars of property value and Commercial is \$18.92, up from \$10.52 and \$18.20, respectively.

Property taxes in the city are allowed to go up by more than 2.5% for two reasons: improvements (like renovations) or inspection adjustments considered "new growth" and the Proposition 2 ½ override in place currently. In November 2016, three quarters of Somerville voters voted to allow the City "to exempt from the Proposition 2 ½ property tax limit the amounts required to pay for the bonds issues for the new state-of-the-art Somerville High School."

From the Somerville High School Building Project's website [2], "debt exclusion exempts the annual debt service to pay the \$130.3 million in bonds" between 2018 and 2054, with peak payments in 2027. Debt service in FY2025 is \$6,625,681.

Back to the new growth conversation, in FY2025, which runs from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025, the city reports only \$14.1 million in new growth citywide after FY2024's top historic tax levy growth of \$17.7 million and previous couple of years growth. "The new growth slowdown is caused by a reduction of demand for Lab space in the Greater Boston Area."

An example of this is how developer Copper Mill, which owns land from the Burren to Drago Pizza, announced during an October 30, 2024 community meeting their new plan to build hundreds of residential units instead of a four-story lab and office space. With this in mind, the Administration's long-term strategy is "to promote new commercial growth/development goals to reduce residential tax liability and bring other community benefits."

Within the Chief Assessor's FY2025 Classification Hearing Report [3], released November 26, 2024, "The FY 2026 new growth estimate has been reduced to \$9 million due to (the) falling life science market." Other notable statistics from the report:

- + Total parcel counts citywide were mostly flat year over year, seeing only a 0.97% increase in properties (from 18,711 in FY2024 to 18,893 in FY2025).

- + Of this parcel count, Somerville added 109 single-family parcels and 198 residential condo units (including 64 conversions), but showed 54 fewer two-family



properties and 12 fewer three-family properties. Buildings with four plus apartments stayed flat.

- + 81% of properties in Somerville are residential. However, in terms of the overall tax levy, 67% will be supported through the residential tax rate and 26% through commercial tax rate.

- + Of the top five FY2025 new growth projects, three of them are lab and life science spaces, with estimated \$4,084,774 (29%) in estimated taxes projected for this fiscal year.

In FY2025, the City does remind property owners of exemptions and options to either reduce or defer tax payments, including up to \$4,300 in residential tax exemption savings, the highest in Massachusetts. Residential tax exemption could positively impact folks that owned and occupied their Somerville home as their primary residence on January 1, 2024.

Other exemptions include those for the

elderly, Veterans and the Blind, as well as those experiencing hardship. The deadline to file for Residential or/and other Statutory Exemptions is Tuesday, April 1 at 4:30 p.m. Folks can visit the City of Somerville's Assessor's website [4], call 617-625-6600 ext. 3100 or email [assessing@somervillema.gov](mailto:assessing@somervillema.gov). Appeals of property tax increases must be made by Monday, February 3, 2025.

Links:

[1] <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpegglclefindmkaj/https://s3.amazonaws.com/somervillema-live/s3fs-public/FY24-classification-hearing.pdf>

[2] <https://www.shsproject.org/funding.html>

[3] <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpegglclefindmkaj/https://s3.amazonaws.com/somervillema-live/s3fs-public/fy25-classification-hearing.pdf>

[4] <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/finance/assessing>

## Rudy's Cafe to close permanently on January 19

Owners of Rudy's Cafe announced they will be closing with the following message on their facebook page:

Hey all,

It is with great sadness we announce that unfortunately Rudy's will be closing permanently on Sunday 1/19. We greatly appreciate all your smiling faces and our wonderful regulars over the 40+ years, and we hope to see many of you in the coming weeks!

Please keep in mind we are understaffed and low on inventory, please be patient with us as we are also sorry you may not be able to enjoy some of your favorites one last time!

Also, we ask to please be respectful of the "Rudy's memorabilia" (cacti, artwork, menus etc.) we are planning an auction to benefit our incredible kitchen staff as they also look to start a new chapter.

More details to come.

Rudy's Cafe

248 Holland St., Somerville





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Ms. Cam's

Olio

Answers

From page 8

- |                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. President Jimmy Carter | 7. Baseball               |
| 2. Jimmy Cardigan         | 8. Sun and rain           |
| 3. Nobel Peace Prize      | 9. Me at the zoo          |
| 4. 1979                   | 10. Moonlighting          |
| 5. The mood ring          | 11. Bob Dylan             |
| 6. The Tennessee Three    | 12. Newport Folk Festival |



# MAMAS reflects on an impactful 2024

By Jeffrey Shwom

From the “Newsletter: MAMAS 2024 Year End Review” email The Somerville Times obtained, Mutual Aid Medford and Somerville (MAMAS) impact continued to help those in need in 2024 and plans to do so in 2025.

Mutual Aid Medford and Somerville is a mutual aid organization that began during the COVID-19 pandemic. The largest program that MAMAS coordinates by far is Grocery Pairs, where volunteers deliver groceries and grocery gift cards, and may help with other small errands like prescription pickup. In 2024, MAMAS reimbursed its deliverers \$89,993 and supported 60 families, according to its website. Supermarket Sweep, a recurring program where direct grocery aid (i.e., dollars) is delivered with no means-testing or judgment, saw \$30,900 distributed into the community.

For those who do not know, a mutual aid organization is a community-based group

that connects people in need with resources and services. It is usually informal and initially responds in times of crisis. Some of the offerings MAMAS coordinates include Groceries and Deliveries, Hotline Support, Money Distribution, Gardening Collective, and Emotional and Spiritual Support.

Other 2024 highlights: The MAMAS Garden Collective, which according to their website “helps connect people who can host gardening space with folks who can help tend.” Per the newsletter, they “had 3 coordinators, around 50 active gardeners, and about 15 garden sites.” The Hotline Team that runs a support hotline (English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Portuguese support available) with 15 hotliners and 5 active coordinators “responded to approximately 720 text conversations, 420 voicemails, and 200 emails.”

The Free Store, which collects and distributes washed clothing donations, held their most recent event at The East Somerville Community School in No-



MAMAS 2024 Free Store event last November at East Somerville Community School.

vember 2024 and has an upcoming donation drop-off day on January 11 from 1 to 4 p.m. at Connexion (149 Broadway). \$1,200 in no questions asked Cash Assis-

tance was also handed out in 2024.

If you would like to donate your time, money, space for a garden, and more, visit <https://mutualaidmamas.com/welcome>.

## Winter Sauna and Cold Plunge Village open in Somerville

*Moki Sauna makes debut in Somernova running now through April*

Rafi Properties, Owner and Operator of Somernova, announced today that Moki Sauna is hosting a Winter Sauna and Cold Plunge Village at Somernova. Open now and running through April 2025, Moki Sauna’s pop-up at Somernova offers a unique, social Nordic experience featuring hot-cold therapy in the heart of the 7.4-acre innovation campus and community.

Moki’s immersive wellness experience is its first ever pop-up in Somerville and second winter season after a highly successful debut on Boston’s Rose Kennedy Greenway last year. Committed to creating a modern wellness experience and bringing sauna and cold plunge access to an urban environment, the winter village is open in Somernova’s Courtyard outside Aeronaut Brewing (14 Tyler St.) and is designed to promote relaxation, rejuvenation, and health.

The hot-cold cycle engaged by Moki Sauna encourages individuals to heat up in one of the traditional wood fired saunas, cool down in one of the single or four-person cold plunge cedar barrels, and then relax by the warmth of a fire and repeat the process. The hot-cold therapy experience has scientifically proven benefits, including muscle recovery, improved circulation, enhanced mood and stress relief. Moki Sauna adds a unique wellness amenity to Somernova’s innovation campus, allowing tenants and visitors alike to enhance their physical and mental well-being through the on-site thermaculture cycles.

The Moki Winter Sauna and Cold Plunge Village is a compliment to the many local and independent retailers and vibrant activities at Somernova, making it easy to create a full day of wellness, food and fun on campus. Visitors can enjoy an active morning climbing at the Boston Bouldering Project’s climbing gym, indulge in lunch of arepas at Carolicious Venezuelan Food and check out the newly opened Mimi’s Chuka Diner, visit neighborhood staple Aeronaut Brewing to sip on a craft beer, and grab some freshly made bean-to-bar, small-batch chocolate from Somerville Chocolate.

“The partnership between Somernova and Moki Sauna is the ideal intersection of innovation and wellness,” said Kristin Phelan, Vice President of Real Estate Development for Rafi and Somernova. “Together, we’re creating a space where entrepreneurs and visitors alike can step away from the demands of their work to recharge, reflect, and embrace mindfulness. We are thrilled to welcome Moke to the Somernova campus and community.”

“Moki is looking forward to providing a winter health and wellness destination in Somerville,” said Mark Peloquin, Founder and CEO of Moki Sauna. “Whether you are new to the process or have done something similar before, we see our Somernova location as a place to connect with yourself and others. We’re proud to bring this to the Somerville community and fortunate to have found a partner like Somernova that shares our vision and values.”

The Winter Sauna and Cold Plunge Village is now open at Somernova’s Courtyard outside Aeronaut Brewing (14 Tyler St.) through April 2025. The experience is open from Tuesdays through Sundays each week from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. each week. To book your two-hour session, visit the booking page at [mokisauna.com/booking](https://mokisauna.com/booking).





## Beacon Hill Roll Call CONT. FROM PG 6

2024 period increased by 11.39 percent.

Supporters of the hike said that this automatic system was approved by voters by a two-to-one margin in 1998 and has worked well for 26 years. They noted that there have been years when this system resulted in a pay cut for legislators. They said it is also important that this system takes away the power of the Legislature to raise its own members' salaries and eliminates any accusations of conflict of interest.

Critics were quick to respond. "Statehouse elected officials should not be receiving an automatic 11 percent pay raise," said Paul Craney, spokesperson for Massachusetts Fiscal Alliance. "Not many workers in Massachusetts get that kind of a pay bump automatically. Legislative leaders set up a system in 2017 so that they don't have to vote for any future pay raises. If lawmakers care about transparency, they should vote on their new pay raise."

Craney continued, "Before the Legislature accepts their pay raise, they should accept the results of the audit the Legislature ballot question. This legislative session should not start with lawmakers further enriching themselves and then rejecting the will of the voters. It's a broken legislative system at the Statehouse and their actions over the next week will demonstrate how corrupt it's becoming."

**AUTO AND HOME INSURANCE DISCOUNTS (H 5133)** – Gov. Maura Healey signed onto law legislation waiving, for six years, until 2030, a law that requires businesses and groups to have a 35 percent participation rate in order to qualify for group auto and home insurance discount rates. The measure permits groups with less than the 35 percent participation to take advantage of group rates, which supporters said will save members between 5 percent and 8 percent. The law has been waived since 1997. The 35 percent requirement was first included in a 1973 law.

Supporters said if the bill is not approved, insurance discounts for 322,000 vehicles and 142,000 homes in the Bay State would disappear on January 1, 2025 and consumers will pay millions of dollars more for insurance.

"This bill will preserve access to more affordable home and auto insurance for Massachusetts residents," said Gov. Healey.

Reps. Dan Cahill (D-Lynn) and Tom Walsh (D-Peabody) sponsors of the measure did not respond to repeated requests by Beacon Hill Roll Call asking them to comment on their bill.

**COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSES (S 3002)** – Gov. Healey signed into law a proposal which would prevent commercial drivers from losing their licenses due to passenger vehicle offenses they committed prior to September 30, 2005.

The Registry of Motor Vehicles recently notified hundreds of bus and truck drivers that they were ineligible for commercial licenses due to at least two past major offenses, blindsiding many motorists who for years thought their infractions were behind them.

"Over time, the relevance and predictive value of these older offenses has diminished, particularly for those drivers who have remained offense-free since," said Healey. "In most circumstances, a commercial driver who meets the safety requirements of federal law should not be disqualified from driving due solely to passenger vehicle offenses that occurred 19 or more years ago." She noted her bill would remove consideration of pre-September 30, 2005 passenger vehicle offenses from the disqualification law, except for multiple instances of operating under the influence.

"Our administration is committed to ensuring safety on our roads while also supporting the many hardworking Massachusetts residents who rely on commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) for their livelihoods," continued Healey. "The RMV will take immediate action to inform eligible drivers that their CDLs will not be disqualified and will continue updating its regulations to ensure that drivers who have served disqualifications for significant periods of time will have a pathway to reinstatement."

**VENMO, PAYPAL AND CASHAPP (H 4840)** – Gov. Healey signed into law legislation that supporters say would put consumer protections in place for consumers who use payment apps like Venmo, PayPal and CashApp, while also leveling the regulatory playing field for businesses in the banking and finance industry.

Provisions include mandating updated regulations for domestic money transmission services, including licensing and compliance requirements; prohibiting an individual from engaging in domestic money transmission without a license; requiring licensees engaged in this business to submit regular reports on their financial condition, including quarterly and annual reports; requiring all licensees to refund to a sender all money received for transmission within ten days of receipt of the sender's written request for a refund unless certain circumstances apply; and allowing the commissioner of Banks to suspend or revoke licenses for non-compliance, fraud or unsafe practices, and to impose civil penalties for violations.

"With this new law, consumers in Massachusetts will now have protection when transferring money to friends and businesses through payment apps," said Gov. Healey. "The use of apps like Venmo and PayPal has skyrocketed over the years, with billions of dollars exchanging hands, so the importance of this legislation cannot be understated."

"We are so excited to see the domestic money transmission bill become law because it will positively impact both consumers and businesses," said Secretary of Economic Development Yvonne Hao. "In addition to offering pro-

tection for those using payment apps here in Massachusetts, the bill also establishes regulatory consistencies for any business offering the same services as banking institutions."

"With the increasing use of mobile payment applications like Venmo now established as part of the financial landscape, it's time for regulatory oversight to ensure consumers will have the same protections that apply to traditional sectors of the financial industry," said Sen. Mike Rodrigues (D-Westport), chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.

**ROSA PARKS DAY (H 3075)** – The House and Senate approved and sent to the governor a bill establishing February 4 as Rosa Parks in recognition of the historic civil rights leader.

"Rosa Parks' bravery on that Montgomery bus was not just a pivotal moment in the Civil Rights Movement—it was a lesson in courage, dignity and the power of standing up for what is right," said co-sponsor Rep. Kip Diggs (D-Barnstable). "By establishing Rosa Parks Day, we honor her profound impact and inspire the commonwealth to reflect on the ongoing struggle for equality."

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)** – The House and Senate approved and sent to Gov. Healey 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.

"I have been working on this legislation for the last three legislative sessions, because the 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)** – The House and Senate approved and sent to the governor 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 *Continued on page 17*



# Somerville Police make arrest related to string of break-ins

The Somerville Police Department arrested Fabio Armelio (47) on Friday, January 3, in connection with a string of break-ins in West Somerville. At 6:35 p.m., Friday, a resident of Cherry Street in Somerville called 911 to report an unknown man in their basement. The Somerville Police Patrol Division and members of a recently created multi-agency Surveillance Team quickly located Armelio in the basement where he was arrested without incident.

Fabio Armelio is a person of interest in twelve recent breaking and entering cases in the Powderhouse neighborhood of Somerville where he targeted residents and Tufts University Community members since December 20, 2024. He has been positively identified for his involvement in three of these cases, with other cases still under active investigation. Armelio also has 20 outstanding arrest warrants in multiple jurisdictions including Somerville, Tufts University, Cambridge, MIT, Lawrence, and Boston. The crimes in these 20 warrants range from breaking and entering during day and nighttime, larceny from a building, possession of burglarious tools, receiving stolen property, assault, trespassing, and threats.

In response to the many recent breaking and entering incidents in Somerville, the Somerville Police Criminal Investigation Division created a multi-agency investigative and apprehension team with the Tufts University Police, MIT Police, Boston Police, Cambridge Police, Federal partners, and the support of the State Police. The Somerville Police are thankful for this collaborative law enforcement effort and for the many residents and community members for their partnership in helping to track and arrest the suspect.

Fabio Armelio will be held in custody until he is arraigned on Monday, January 6, at Somerville District Court.



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Customs and Border Protection.

“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).

“A constituent of mine reached out regarding Global Entry cards, and how she had been refused service in attempting to use one to purchase alcohol,” said Senate sponsor Sen. Pat Jehlen (D-Somerville). “These cards require two rounds of interviews, one with Customs and Border Protection, and another with a Global Entry Enrollment Center. You must also provide your passport and one other form of identification. Only after this extensive process can you receive the Global Entry Card, which includes the individual’s photo, full name and date of birth. Over 5 million people have gone through this process, and it feels unnecessary to bar them from utilizing this form of identification in the commonwealth for the purchase of alcohol.”

**DECLAWING OF CATS (S 2552)** – The House and Senate approved and sent to Gov. Healey a proposal that would ban cat declawing and tendonectomy unless it is done for the medical need of the feline.

“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.”

Montigny continued, “There are too many people who have committed horrendous abuses to animals that

have been unpunished and are walking free to continue to do harm.”

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 of cats does not improve the human-animal bond and often results in serious medical and behavioral problems,” said Allison Blanck, Director of Advocacy at the Animal Rescue League of Boston. “Banning this cruel practice, which is in essence amputation, will prevent animals in Massachusetts from needless pain and suffering.”

### QUOTABLE QUOTES

“People must have access to the vital health care services they need. Hospital closures in recent years, however, have left patients worried about where they can access care and resulted in job losses for invaluable nurses and healthcare workers. Our audit of the Center for Health Information and Analysis revealed a startling lack of oversight around the financial conditions of hospitals in the commonwealth. — State Auditor Diana DiZogio urging the administration swiftly implement her recommendations in the audit.

“If you believe that the description of your property is inaccurate and over-assessed, an abatement will be the only remedy available to reduce your tax bill. Homeowners in some communities, including Boston, have already received their bills. Now is the time to consider whether to apply for an abatement.” — Secretary of State Bill Galvin noting that as property taxes increase, property owners who are receiving higher than expected third quarter tax bills last

week that the deadline to file for a property tax abatement is just a few weeks away.

### 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 Dec. 30, 2024 to Jan. 3, 2025, the House met for a total of 18 hours and 33 minutes, while the Senate met for a total of 17 hours and 21 minutes.

Mon Dec. 30	House 11:01 a.m. to 1:11 a.m. Senate 11:35 a.m. to 1:25 a.m.
Tues. Dec. 31	No House session No Senate session
Wed. Jan. 1	House 11:07 a.m. to 1:55 p.m. Senate 11:20 a.m. to 2:17 p.m.
Thurs. Jan. 2	House 11:04 a.m. to 12:39 p.m. Senate 11:45 a.m. to 12:19 p.m.
Fri. Jan. 3	No House session No Senate session

Bob Katzen welcomes feedback at bob@beaconhillrollcall.com



## SENIOR CENTER HAPPENINGS:

### Upcoming Events:

**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. 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.

**Portuguese Senior Coffee Social** – The third Monday of each month (January 20th) from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at our Ralph & Jenny Center located at 9 New Washington Street. Holiday celebration. This event will be bilingual in Portuguese and English. RSVP to Juliana Bertoldo by calling 978-291-8277.

**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 'The Dog Went Over the Mountain' by Peter Zheutlin. 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.

**Asian Tea** – Mind-Body Connection – The second Monday of each month (January 13th) from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Our Ralph & Jenny Center located at 9 New Washington Street. RSVP to Maureen Bastardi by calling 617-625-6600, ext. 2335 or email Maureen at mbastardi@somervillema.gov.

**Men's Group** – Meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month (January 14th) starting at 10:30 a.m. at our Holland Street Center. RSVP to Debby Higgins at 617-625-6600 ext. 2321 or email Debby at dhiggins@somervillema.gov.

**Function Junction** – January 3rd, 10th and 17th starting at 9:00 a.m. at our Holland Street Center. Focus on functional fitness by doing exercises that help with activities of daily living and maintaining independence! In this class, we will improve coordination and cardio. We'll work on both strengthening and stretching muscles using resistance bands, dumbbells, the wall and chair to improve posture and mobility. RSVP to Michelle Deutsch at 617-625-6600, ext. 2315 or email Michelle at mdeutsch@somervillema.gov.

**Walking Club** – Every Thursday in starting at 9:00 a.m. Weather Permitting – Meets at the Holland Street Center entrance. RSVP by calling Michelle Deutsch 617-625-6600, ext. 2315 or email Michelle at mdeutsch@somervillema.gov.

**Friendly Caller Program** - We have many wonderful volunteers who are waiting to give you a call. Whether you are looking to make a new friend or would just like a friendly chat to look forward to every week, this program has you covered. Call Natasha Naim at 617-625-6600, ext. 2317 to learn more about the program and to sign up.

Looking for a location to chat with your friends? Come to the COA on Thursday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., the senior center is open, and the coffee is on as we wait for the start of Bingo.

### 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 clorneti@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

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 Facebook at [www.facebook.com/somerville.times.1](http://www.facebook.com/somerville.times.1)  
 and follow us on X/Twitter at [@somervilletimes](https://twitter.com/somervilletimes)



# The winners of The Somerville Times Reader's Choice results for THE BEST OF SOMERVILLE 2024

Congratulations to the winners! Please support their businesses and let them know you saw them in The Somerville Times

## Readers choices for 2024

### Best Idea in 2024: 🏆

Free Food Market for Somerville Public School families

### Worst Idea in 2024: 🏆

Making Central St. (Summer St. to Highland Ave a one way and expanding the sidewalk

### Best Somerville Food & Restaurants: 🏆

Best Breakfast: **Neighborhood Restaurant**, 25 Bow St.  
 Best Breakfast Sandwiches: **Vinal Bakery**, 222 Somerville Ave.  
 Best Combination Breakfast & Lunch: **Ball Sq. Cafe**, 708 Broadway  
 Best Brunch: **Josephine**, 515 Somerville Ave.  
 Best Coffee Shop: **Yego Coffee**, 1212 Broadway  
 Best Diner: **Kelly's Diner**, 674 Broadway  
 Best Italian Food: **Vinny's at Night**, 76 Broadway  
 Best Italian Specialty Store: **Capone Foods**, 14 Bow St.  
 Best Portuguese Food: **J and J Restaurant**, 157 Washington St.  
 Best Greek Food: **Zo Greek**, 355 Revolution Dr.  
 Best Brazilian Food: **Oliveira's Brazilian Steak House**, 120 Washington St.  
 Best Chinese Food: **Dumpling Garden on Broadway**, 273 Broadway  
 Best Peruvian Food: **Celeste**, 21 Bow St.  
 Best Korean Food: **Buk Kyung Korean Cuisine**, 9a Union Square  
 Best Thai Food: **Dakzen**, 195 Elm St.  
 Best Mexican Food: **Rincon Mexicano**, 99 Broadway  
 Best Mediterranean Food: **Sarma**, 249 Pearl St.  
 Best Variety and All-Around Restaurant: **Mount Vernon Restaurant**, 14 Broadway  
 Best Seafood Restaurant: **Legal Sea Foods**, 301 Great River Rd.  
 Best Seafood Boil: **Happy Crab**, 1137 Broadway  
 Best Waiter/Waitress: **Mount Vernon Waitstaff**, 14 Broadway  
 Best Hamburger: **R.F. O'Sullivan's & Son**, 282 Beacon St.  
 Best Roast Beef Sandwich: **HOTBOX**, 1 Bow Market Way  
 Best Vegan Tacos: **Taco Party**, 711 Broadway  
 Best Taco: **La Posada**, 505 Medford St.  
 Best Bar Food: **Highland Kitchen**, 150 Highland Ave.  
 Best Vegetarian Pizza: **American Flatbread Somerville**, 45 Day St.  
 Best Pizza: **june bug**, 251 Washington St.  
 Best Pan Pizza: **Leone's**, 292 Broadway  
 Best Detroit Style Pizza: **Avenue Kitchen and Bar**, 158 Boston Ave.  
 Best BBQ: **The Smoke Shop BBQ**, 325 Assembly Row  
 Best Soul Food: **FoodDy's Kitchen**, 235 Holland St.  
 Best Sub Shop: **Angelina's Pizzeria**, 230 Holland St.  
 Best Sandwiches: **Dave's Fresh Pasta**, 81 Holland St.  
 Best Chocolate: **Taza Chocolate**, 561 Windsor St.  
 Best Donuts: **Lyndell's Bakery**, 720 Broadway  
 Best Donut Holes: **Mass Hole Donuts**, 1157 Broadway  
 Best French Bakery: **Michette**, 164 Broadway  
 Best Muffins: **Magnificent Muffin & Bagel Shoppe**, 1118 Broadway  
 Best Cakes: **Juscelia's Cakes (Facebook)**  
 Best Cannoli: **Mike's Pastry**, 445 Revolution Dr.  
 Best Half Moons: **Lyndell's Bakery**, 720 Broadway  
 Best Pies: **Petsi Pies**, 285 Beacon St.  
 Best Ice Cream: **Gracie's Ice Cream**, 22 Union Sq.  
 Best Liquor Store: **Ball Square Fine Wines**, 716 Broadway  
 Best Farmers Market: **Somerville's Winter Farmer's Market**, 191 Highland Ave.

### Best of Somerville Services: 🏆

Best Optometrists: **Eye Associates of Somerville**, 174 Broadway  
 Best Medical Services: **Riverside Community Care, Inc.**, 12 Tyler St.  
 Best Wellness Clinic: **KenkoDo**, 735 Broadway  
 Best Dentist Office: **Somerville Family Dental**, 365 Somerville Ave.  
 Best Orthodontist Office: **The Braces Place at Davis Square**, 30 College Ave.  
 Best Electricians: **Bent Electrical Contractors**, 59A Inner Belt Rd.  
 Best Plumbers: **T.J. Sillari, Inc.**, 99 Albion St.  
 Best Law Firm: **Rumery & Smith**, 403 Highland Ave.  
 Best Bank: **Winter Hill Bank**, winterhillbank.com  
 Best Bank President: **Sandra L. McGoldrick**, Winter Hill Bank  
 Best Bank Employee: **Belushi Previlon**, Community Credit Union  
 Best Real Estate Broker: **John Raposo**, Encompass Property Solutions  
 Best Real Estate Rental Agent: **Denise Cosby**, Encompass Property Solutions  
 Best Florist: **Wagner Floral Designs**, 508 Somerville Ave.  
 Best Barbershop: **Alibrandi's Barber Shop**, 194 Holland St.  
 Best Barber: **Evelyn Kennedy-Jaffe**  
 Best Hair Salon: **Salon CU**, 75 Holland St.  
 Best Hair Stylist: **Lori Pino**, Amal Niccoli, 731 Broadway  
 Best Contractor: **Josue Velney**, Velney Development, 30 Woodbine St.  
 Best Exercise Program: **Parkour Generations**, 12a Tyler St.  
 Best Nature Space: **Somerville Community Growing Center**, 22 Vinal Ave.  
 Best Garden Center: **Ricky's Flower Market**, 238 Washington St.  
 Best Dry Cleaners: **Highland Dry Cleaning & Tailoring**, 237 Highland Ave.  
 Best Hotel: **Cambria Hotel**, 515 Somerville Ave.  
 Best School Program: **Somerville High School CTE**  
 Best Teacher: **May Chau**, K-12 Supervisor of Visual Arts  
 Best Politician: **Former Somerville Mayor, Gene Brune**  
 Best Police Officer: **Officer Priscilla Ribeiro**  
 Best Firefighter: **Joe Barry**

### Best of Somerville Arts/Entertainment: 🏆

Best Bowling: **Sacco's Bowl Haven**, 45 Day St.  
 Best Movie Theatre: **Somerville Theatre**, 55 Davis Square  
 Best Local Bar: **Sally O'Brien's**, 335 Somerville Ave.  
 Best Bar for Bands: **The Jungle**, 6 Sanborn Ct.  
 Best Restaurant/Entertainment: **Premiere on Broadway**, 517 Broadway  
 Best Irish Pub: **The Burren**, 247 Elm St.  
 Best Wine Bar: **Juliet Social Club**, 257 Washington St.  
 Best Brewery: **Winter Hill Brewery**, 328 Broadway  
 Best Cocktails: **backbar**, 7 Sanborn Ct.  
 Best Somerville Poet: **Doug Holder**  
 Best Photographer: **Andy Bernstein** (<https://andybernstein.me>)  
 Best Food Columnist: **Dorothy DiMarzo**, Dorothy's Corner  
 Best Somerville Stories: **Jimmy Del Ponte**  
 Best Photos of Somerville Neighborhoods: **Denise Provost**  
 Best Somerville Celebrity: **Eugene Mirman**  
 Best Somerville Historian: **Bob "Monty" Doherty**  
 Best Somerville Non-Profit Agency: **Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS)**  
 Best Somerville Charity: **Somerville Homeless Coalition**, 1 Davis Sq.  
 Best Neighborhood Charity: **Mutual Aid Medford and Somerville**  
[mutualaidmamas.com](http://mutualaidmamas.com)





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



**Q:** My landlord is trying to raise my rent as of January 1. Can they do that?

**A:** If you have a lease, the rent cannot be raised during this term unless there is a clause in the lease saying it is allowed. If you are a tenant-at-will, the landlord must give you at least 30 days notice before raising the rent.

*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.*

**New adult education opportunity for English learners**

SPS offers a robust catalog of adult education courses through SCALE (Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences). Somerville residents are invited to sign up for their new class, Early Childhood Education Training specifically for English learners. Enroll with the SCALE registration form: <https://form.jotform.com/232615165718054>.

Visit the SCALE website to learn more about adult education, including classes that lead to earning a high school degree and career training for native English speakers and learners alike: <https://somerville.k12.ma.us/adult-learning/somerville-center-adult-learning-experiences-scale>.

**Want to write local Somerville stories?**  
**Call 857-488-5138**  
and speak to the Assignment Editor

**BOBBY'S DAD JOKES CORNER**

By Bobbygeorge Potaris

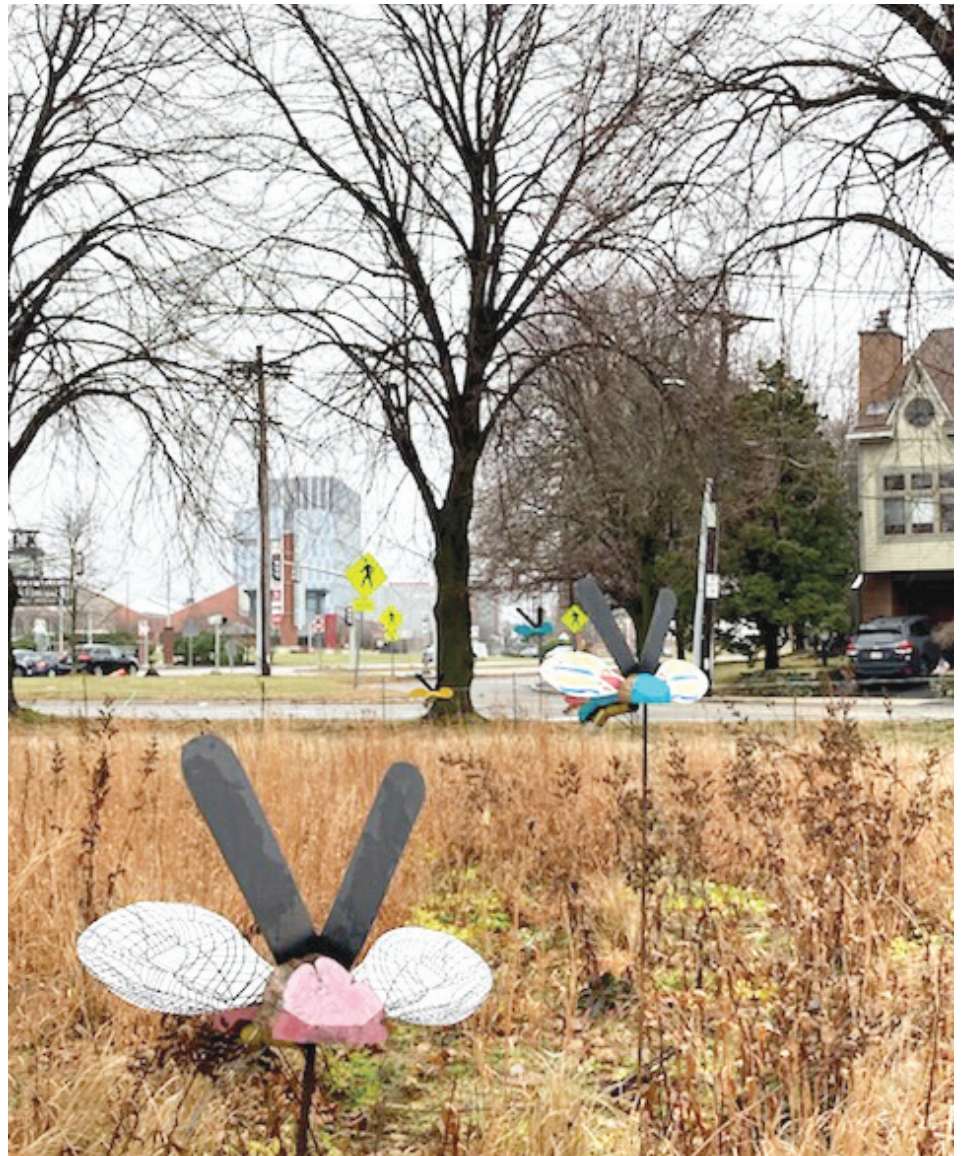


I hate it when people say age is only a number.  
Age is clearly a word.

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**Somerville through the eyes of Denise**



Bugs on steroids...

— Photo by Denise Provost

*On This Day in History*

**January 8**

- 1815 – A rag-tag army under Andrew Jackson defeats the British on the fields of Chalmette in the Battle of New Orleans.
- 1892 – A coal mine explosion kills 100 in McAlister, Oklahoma.
- 1908 – A subway line opens linking Brooklyn and Manhattan.
- 1940 – Great Britain begins rationing sugar, meat and butter.
- 1946 – President Harry S. Truman vows to stand by the Yalta accord on self-determination for the Balkans.
- 1954 – President Dwight Eisenhower proposes stripping convicted Communists of their U.S. citizenship.
- 1963 – President John F. Kennedy attends the unveiling of the Mona Lisa.
- 1979 – The United States advises the Shah to leave Iran.
- 1982 – AT&T agrees to divest 22 subdivisions as part of an antitrust agreement.
- 2011 – An attempted assassination of Arizona Representative Gabrielle Giffords is part of a shooting spree in which Jared Lee Loughner kills 6 and wounds 13.



Newstalk CONT. FROM PG 7

self-guided **Illuminations Tour through January 2025**. The **Illuminations map** is available to take a self-guided tour: <https://somervilleartscouncil.org/illuminationstour>.

\*\*\*\*\*

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.

\*\*\*\*\*

Our sincerest condolences to the family of **Florence E.(Kennedy) McWatters** who passed away peacefully on **December 29, 2024**. Our thoughts and prayers are with Bob McWatters and the entire family during this sad time. The full obituary can be found here:<https://www.dohertyfuneralservice.com/obituary/florence-mcwatters>

\*\*\*\*\*

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/](https://www.somervillema.gov/joint-cso-planning/).

\*\*\*\*\*

Both **flu and COVID-19 vaccines** are conveniently offered at multiple locations across Somerville, improving access for all residents. Both vaccines are available with no out-of-pocket costs, and we accept those without health insurance. If you do have health insurance, please bring proof of coverage. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged. Walk-in appointments are limited. **January 9, 4:30 – 6 p.m.**, **West Library**, 40 College Ave. <https://home.color.com/vaccine/register/somerville?site=somerville-public-library-west-branch>.

\*\*\*\*\*

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.

\*\*\*\*\*

Head to **Rococo** for **Winter Plant Care 101 (+ Plant Swap)** and learn the key steps to maintaining happy and thriving indoor plants, especially during the colder months. The workshop will cover the essentials of year-round houseplant care, so you can confidently keep your plants healthy and thriving. Discover helpful tips for caring for your plants during the winter months, including light, watering, humidity, and troubleshooting common issues. **Tuesday, January 14, 6:30 –**

**8:30 p.m.**, **Rococo Floral**, 1 Bow Markey Way. Post-session, there will be a plant swap raffle, where everyone will get to take home a plant.

\*\*\*\*\*

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/heatingassistance](https://www.somerville-ma.gov/heatingassistance).

\*\*\*\*\*

The **Somerville Arts Council** and the **Inside-Out Gallery** present **Vernon Street Studios 50th Anniversary Retrospective Exhibit**, curated by **Steven Cabral**. This showcase was a part of Steven's community benefit project as a **Somerville Arts Council LCC 2024 Visual Arts Fellowship Awardee**. 1 Davis Square, Somerville. Learn more about the participating artists here: <https://www.somervilleartscouncil.org/insideout/vernonstreet50>.

\*\*\*\*\*

**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://www.somervillemca.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](https://www.somerville-ma.gov/alerts) and click on the button for your preferred language. Step-by-step sign-up instructions are available at: [somerville-ma.gov/alerts](https://www.somerville-ma.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](https://www.somerville.mysticdrains.org).

\*\*\*\*\*

**City buildings** are closed on **Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Monday, January 20**.

\*\*\*\*\*

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 *Continued on page 23*





## OFF THE SHELF

by Doug Holder

## Artist Barbara Marder Brings Intense and Bold Color to the Bloc Cafe in Union Square, Somerville

I have been a patron of the Bloc 11 Cafe since its inception. And over the years, the paintings and photographs on the walls have attracted my interest. While munching on my everything bagel and updating a syllabus for classes I teach at Endicott College, I noticed a number of vibrant watercolors of scenes from Boston and just beyond. Well, I was on it like the proverbial hornet, and I decided to ask the artist for an interview.

**Doug Holder:** How has Somerville been for you as an artist?

**Barbara Marder:** Somerville was an amazing place to teach public school art and also to have a studio on Tyler Street at the former Artisans Asylum location. Somerville is an art-minded community, and expression of the arts was everywhere outside the confines of the school building. At one point in my career (1999) the city council addressed the graffiti on the wall at Dickerman playground on Craigie Street by enlisting me to bring my 6th graders to paint a mural at that location. That was a triumph for community pride.

The former Ames Paper company donated boxes of paper items appropriate for many art projects. They offered mounting board for student paintings. One year they printed a set of colorful note cards representing the artwork of my students at the John F. Kennedy School. The Davis Square Artbeat event offered me a window to display student art. A group of eighth graders met me there to arrange the display in July even though school was on summer break. A former bank in Davis Square granted my 6th grade a bus and free admission to a special Monet exhibit at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. In return the entire sixth grade painted a 17-foot mural of waterlilies for the bank. I was always an ARTIST teacher, not simply an art teacher. The Somerville Museum hosted exhibits featuring the work Somerville art educators. The above events demonstrate some of my community involvement in Somerville. During my 24 years of teaching in Somerville, I was actively involved in my own art-making and expanded my repertoire of materials and media.

**DH:** You have two canvases you work with – one on copper, and one on paper. How is your jewelry connected to your painting?

**BM:** I was always a painter! I have an MFA degree in art education and painting from Boston University. Before that I was a painting major at Skidmore College. I entered the enameling world as a painter. I self-taught enameling in 1980 in a high school teaching position. The instructor who oversaw the kilns



was on sabbatical. I was awed by the colors of glass! Color was always my primary focus in art making.

I had no metalsmithing skills. Folks admired my enameled pieces and suggested that I make wearable jewelry. This idea intrigued me. During my tenure in Somerville Public Schools, I took silver-smithing classes from colleges that had student interns doing a practicum with me. The remuneration was a free class. I had many college interns at the John F. Kennedy School in Somerville. Today I oversee the enamel studio at ArtisansAsylum.com now located in Allston.

**DH:** You have written that observing children at play is an inspiration for some of your work. Explain.

**BM:** My 24 years teaching K-8 in Somerville were truly inspirational for me regarding my own creative work. I was observing children fearlessly and spontaneously trying different approaches to color, dabbling, exploring outcomes, and combining disparate media in their creative expression. In turn I experimented with my own work. I was fortunate to create my own instructional units. Many days after school, I would engage in my own “creative play” trying new approaches with the goal of developing ideas for lesson planning. This exploration impacted my own growth as a creative artist.

**DH:** Your paintings of scenes from Boston on display at the Bloc Cafe in Union Square. Continued on page 23

# Lyrical

## SOMERVILLE

edited by Doug Holder

Olivia Darmanin (she/her) is a junior Mathematics Secondary Education major at Endicott College from Worcester, MA. Outside of academics, she is heavily involved in theater and has been a stage manager and sound designer, in addition to other roles, for ten productions on campus. She has recently begun to explore creative writing, and is honored for the opportunity to be published.



### Crushed

Once gliding through the air,  
Sailing on a breath,  
Now fallen,  
Grounded with the stamp  
Of a shiny, lacquered pump.  
Trampled by sticky sneakers  
And deserted under the corner of a dusty,  
Rotting bookshelf,  
Paint peeling and wood pulling,  
Groaning with each step that passes.

The shining white paper now dulled  
Speckled with aged mold  
Fine edges crinkled and crumbling  
Into the damp air.

Then all at once  
Swept away  
The breeze lifts me up  
And ushers me into oblivion.



— Olivia Darmanin

To have your work considered for the Lyrical send it to:  
Doug Holder, 25 School St.; Somerville, MA 02143. [dougholder@post.harvard.edu](mailto:dougholder@post.harvard.edu)



## First Flag Raising at Prospect Hill 2025

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne helped ring in the new year on Wednesday, January 1, 2025, as they raised the Grand Union Flag on Prospect Hill to commemorate the 249th anniversary of the first flag rising.

— Photos courtesy of Somerville GovTV



### Newstalk CONT. FROM PG 21

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 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](http://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](http://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.

\*\*\*\*\*

Don't forget, if you would like to subscribe to receive a **digital edition** of our paper, go directly online to our website over to the right side and fill out your email address to receive a free, full PDF copy of the paper.

### Off The Shelf CONT. FROM PG 22

Square are mainly vibrant watercolors of scenes in Boston, and just beyond. How do you choose what you paint? The paintings are realistic, do you ever dabble in the abstract?

**BM:** My current body of work is an expansion of my membership in a group called Urban Sketchers Boston. Urban Sketchers is an international Facebook group. There are no membership fees and anybody can show up for a two-hour informal sketching session at a designated location. Frankly, I was inexperienced painting architect-

ture, and I was primarily a landscape painter. I think landscapes have many abstract elements in organic forms and color relationships. For the last few years, I have worked hard to study buildings and how they relate to the urban landscape. Viewers might recognize the locations but my work remains expressionistic with my bold usage of intense color. Choosing a subject to paint is the artist's first creative decision. I spend a lot of time exploring a location, and I create thumbnail sketches before deciding on the composition I want to paint. I get a lot of satisfaction

from folks who share with me their own connections to locations of my paintings

**DH:** Why should we view your work?

**BM:** I think all artists hope for an audience.

Creating the work is a sole activity, but once I frame and display my art, I am wishful for an audience to view it. I want to share what I saw and where I was. I am hopeful others will view and appreciate it. This exhibit, **PLACES AROUND BOSTON**, will be on display until the first week of March, 2025.

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