



## WILD THINGS

Studying leafhoppers may help humans develop thermal cloaking devices, just like these insects use to hide from predators.

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# THE WEEK

MAY 23-30, 2024

FREE | by CAMBRIDGE DAY

## Armory plan feels to some like ‘deja vu’ of no choices

*Second attempt for arts facility*

By CLAIRES OGDEN

A fourth and final meeting to gather feedback about the future of Somerville’s Armory arts building ended in confusion and anger May 15 about the vague options the city was presenting, and how those options were even selected in the first place.

It felt to some participants exactly like the end of the last Somerville Armory Master Plan Advisory Committee process, when nine months ago the confusion and anger convinced city staff to start over.

The city has lacked a plan for the 27,000-square-foot building at 191 Highland Ave., which houses an art gallery, creative businesses and event spaces run by the nonprofit Arts at the Armory, since taking the building from the Sater brothers in 2021. In the meantime, the Somerville Arts Council has been met with accusations of mismanagement from tenants, and at the meeting, Rachel Nadkarni, the city’s director of economic development, emphasized that management of the Armory is not part of city staff’s official job description.

See ARMORY, Page 10

## Firehouse upgrading cost rises to \$77M

By MARC LEVY

The \$77 million expense of modernizing Cambridge’s Fire Station Headquarters Building – up from \$25 million secured in 2019 and an increase in 2022 – was defended Monday by city staff as it asked for \$15 million to address “challenges related to the complexity of this project.” The extremely tight urban site, they said, was forcing work to go in phases.

The request drew overall support as well as concern from some city councillors that preventable overruns would sap money from other projects or if there’s a better, more predictable way to budget.

“This project is really important to communications not only within the department, but within the region. So having it move forward is very important,” councillor Joan Pickett said. “The issue to me is three bites at the apple – for a substantial increase, some of which is beyond our control.”

The upgrades are for the brick building at 491 Broadway, built in 1932 with a basement and two aboveground stories at a peculiar junction with Cambridge Street, which means traffic whips past on each side as cars leave Harvard Square or head to North Cambridge. Its 24,670 square feet houses the fire department’s Engine 1, Ladder 1 and Rescue 1, as well as administrative offices, the city’s fire prevention bureau and technical services division. (During construction, fire staff have relocated to temporary structures nearby at Cambridge Street and Hovey Avenue.)

See FIRE, Page 10



Marc Levy

Fire Station Headquarters Building in Mid-Cambridge near Harvard Square on Tuesday.

## Basement mold is no risk to kids, CHA reassures

By SUE REINERT

Three programs for young people ranging in age from toddlers to teenagers operate in one part of the basement of a Windsor Street building where mold and other hazards forced out city health department workers.

A Cambridge Day article about the exodus of the Cambridge Public Health Department from its basement offices at 119 Windsor St., The Port, alarmed the mother of a 5-year-old who attends the Windsor Preschool, operated by the city’s Department of Human Service Programs in the basement of the same building.

“I love the school, I love the teachers, I love the administrator,” Clare Selden Rager said. “I would like to know that my kid is safe.”

David Cecere, spokesperson for the Cambridge Health Alliance, which leases the building from the city, said Monday that the basement space housing the young people’s programs is not connected to the section where the health department operated and that the two areas have separate climate control and air conditioning systems. Jeremy Warnick, spokesperson for the city, confirmed that the two basement sections are separate.

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## INSIDE

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## FILM AHEAD

We have “Kind Hearts and Coronets” paving the way for “Saltburn”; J-horror classics; and the uproarious “Female Trouble” by John Waters.

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## EVENTS AHEAD

Campfire fest is back, Lemony Snicket reads, Kelly McCaughan presents “Catholic Guilt” and we learn powder house history.



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## MEETINGS AHEAD

**Cambridge:** An Italian consulate, cameras and other safety surveillance, Central Square rezoning and diversifying City Hall business.

**Somerville:** Post Office troubles, policies on animal testing, school risk assessments and water and sewer rate hikes.

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# MEETINGS MAY 23-30

## CAMBRIDGE

### Neville, a consulate and Memorial Day

By MARC LEVY

#### The city and ‘Neville Manor’

**Health & Environment Committee, 3 to 5 p.m. Thursday.** This committee run by city councillor Patty Nolan wants to discuss Cambridge’s partnership with “Neville Manor” – the former city-owned senior home that is now Neville Place assisted living and Neville Center nursing. The committee meets at City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Ave., Central Square. Televised and watchable by Zoom videoconferencing.

#### Italian consulate in Kendall

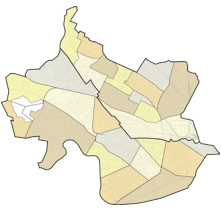
**Board of Zoning Appeal, 6 to 11:30 p.m. Thursday.** The Italian government wants consulate offices at the 41 Hampshire St., Kendall Square, home of the nonprofit Dante Alighieri Society Center. This is a continued case for a special permit and a variance for which the applicants want a six-month delay on the variance request. Watchable by Zoom videoconferencing.

#### Three Memorial Day events

**Memorial Day Observance Events at 10 and 11 a.m. Saturday and 10:30 a.m. Monday.** Saturday events are in West Cambridge: a decoration of veterans’ graves with flags at Cambridge Cemetery, 76 Coolidge Ave., followed by an observance for maritime military members at the American Legion Marsh Post, 5 Greenough Blvd. On Monday the ceremonies are at Cambridge Common, near Harvard Square, with public officials and music by the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School Marching Band. Afterward comes free food and family-friendly entertainment including a petting zoo and pony rides, face painting, caricatures and a balloon artist.

#### Cameras and other surveillance

**Public Safety Committee, 3 to 5 p.m. Tuesday.** This committee run by city councillors Paul Toner and Ayesha Wilson considers closed-circuit cameras and other surveillance technologies as police officer body cameras inch closer and there are more community calls for cameras that might help prevent or solve crimes. The committee meets at City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Ave., Central Square. Televised and watchable by Zoom videoconferencing.



◀ **Cambridge’s City Council** meets at 5:30 p.m. Mondays from January through June and from the second Monday in September through December at City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Ave., Central Square; televised and online.

**Somerville’s School Committee** meets at 7 p.m. on the first and third Monday of every month September through June at Somerville City Hall, 93 Highland Ave., Central Hill; televised and online. ▶

◀ **Cambridge’s School Committee** meets at 6 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday from September through June and at 5 p.m. the first Tuesday in August at the Dr. Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Mid-Cambridge; televised and online.

**Somerville’s City Council** meets at 7 p.m. on the second and fourth Thursday of each month at Somerville City Hall, 93 Highland Ave., Central Hill; televised and online. ▶

## SOMERVILLE

### Memorial Day events and Post Office woes

By MARC LEVY

#### Policies on animal testing

**Biosafety Committee, 6 to 7 p.m. Thursday.** The group reviews animal testing and research policies in a city where innovation-industry labs are increasingly common, and considers a Tufts University application. Watchable by Zoom videoconferencing.

#### Post Office troubles tackled

**City Council, 7 p.m. Thursday.** Among various agenda items: Mail delivery has become inconsistent, affecting municipal bill collection and leading to reports of bills not received and accounts marked delinquent, councilor at large Kristen Strezo says, asking that postal officials explain their efforts to staff carrier routes and address Post Office staff shortages. The council meets at 93 Highland Ave., Winter Hill. Televised and watchable by Zoom videoconferencing.

#### Memorial Day events

**Memorial Day parade, 11 a.m. Sunday, and Memorial Day ceremony, 10 a.m. Monday.** The parade steps off at the Davis Square Rotary and heads up Holland Street to Teele Square, ending at Broadway and North Street. It will be livestreamed at facebook.com/SomervilleCityTV and broadcast afterward on GovTV for cable subscribers and at youtube.com/SomervilleCityTV. The ceremony the next day is at Somerville Veterans Cemetery, 1330 Broadway, West Somerville.

#### School risk assessments asked

**City Council and School Committee Finance and Facilities Subcommittee, 6 p.m. Wednesday.** There’s a resolution that the school district give regular updates on a state funding process for the Winter Hill and Brown schools – one closed by safety concerns and the other nearing the need for upgrades, and possibly to be combined in a new structure and location. Orders include a call for a risk assessment on Infrastructure and Asset Management projects and on reopening a lab after a gas leak at the West Somerville Neighborhood School. Watchable by Zoom videoconferencing.

# THE WEEK

by CAMBRIDGE DAY

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**Cambridgeday.com**

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#### Editor

Marc Levy  
editor@cambridgeday.com

#### For coverage of films, cinema events and repertory series:

Film editor Tom Meek at Thom3@aol.com

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Cambridge is mainly politically progressive; embracing of science and reason; and welcoming – and protective – of the diversity of humanity, and Cambridge Day tends to reflect the mores of its community. Its reporting is fact-based, with a separate section for expression of opinions, and all voices are welcome in its pages.

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## Star Jelly Comics

See more at instagram.com/starjellycomics/



“MY LOVE! LET ME SEE YOUR BEAUTIFUL FACE IN THE MOONLIGHT!”

# After a decade waiting, Homans Site fills for the summer

By EMILY PAULS

Somerville’s Homans Site, empty acreage that has long frustrated its neighbors, will have a temporary makeover this summer as the organization CultureHouse creates a three-month “outdoor community space” called Gilman Park on the land.

“Gilman Park will be a gathering space for local organizations, a hangout space for residents, a center for civic services and an opportunity for development for local businesses, artists and creatives,” CultureHouse’s website said.

The goal of Gilman Park is to connect the area with the rest of the city as well as test out future uses of the Homans Site, according to the CultureHouse website.

In a tweet about the project, CultureHouse said it will host events in the space such as dances and have food trucks and “maybe a beer garden.”

The Homans Site sits directly next to the Gilman Square MBTA Green Line stop and is currently an empty plot of land.

Residents in the area said they had been waiting for around 10 years to see development there, but in November the city said its Economic Development Division would be “taking a pause” on the work.

They continue to wait as the city conducts a disposition study that director of economic development Rachel Nadkarni said would take eight months to a year to complete.

“This new land disposition is just yet another moving of the goalposts,” said Christine Carlino at the time, speaking as board president of the Gilman Square Neighborhood Council. “We’ve been talking about this for over



CultureHouse

**The empty land known as the Homans site in Somerville’s Gilman Square will become a community gathering space this summer, the CultureHouse group says.**

a year now, and it still hasn’t even started, which I just think is unacceptable.”

In the meantime, starting in June, Gilman Park will be temporarily available for residents.

Carlino said she is “cautiously excited” – the project has only a tight budget – and “hopeful for something great.”

The neighborhood council has been advocating for the project to use natural materials that don’t have to be thrown out after the summer is over, she said.

“Mayor [Katjana] Ballantyne has been really supportive in advocating for natural solutions, so that’s really promising. And I think that’s really where city planning and CultureHouse would prefer to go. It’s just really difficult to do this on a limited budget and limited time,” Carlino said.

Gilman Park is a good thing for a neighborhood that she said has felt ignored and forgotten over the years.

“All in all we’re really excited about the potential of this and hoping that

we can help push this all in the right direction,” Carlino said.

Ward 4 city councilor Jesse Clingan, who sits on the Housing and Community Development Committee, said this project is a positive and provides a sense of community. It gives residents a place to come together regularly and build community, he said.

In response to Cambridge Day’s request for comment, CultureHouse representatives said they are still in the process of finalizing details with

the city and more information will be available later.

“We are working closely with residents, local business owners, institutions, artists and creatives in and around Gilman Square. Keep a lookout for updates on ways that you can be involved!” CultureHouse’s website said.

Those with questions, ideas, or thoughts on the project can contact Rishika Dhawan, identified as CultureHouse’s community manager, at [rishika@culturehouse.cc](mailto:rishika@culturehouse.cc).

## Programs for kids didn’t get notified of ‘localized’ mold

From Page 1

Cecere also said testing “conducted by CHA following its discovery of the issue did not detect mold in other parts of the building, indicating the problem was localized to CHA’s space. Tests conducted by the city as recently as December confirmed this conclusion.”

The Alliance did not test the area where the programs for children and teens operate because “it was determined the issue was localized,” Cecere said. The city also did not test in that area because “there were no such issues identified” there, Warnick said, referring to mold. He did say that a city consultant performed “a full assessment” of the building and that “there were, and at this time, are, no known hazards” in the basement section housing the kids’ programs.

The Alliance subleased that section of the basement to the Cambridge Housing Authority. In turn, the authority rented spaces to the Windsor Preschool and the Community Art Center, a program for school-age kids, and used some of the area for its own workforce program, which helps high school students who live in its public housing developments graduate from high school and go on to college.

Michael Johnston, executive director of the housing authority, said the agency had been in the dark about mold contamination in the other section of the basement. “Your article is the first that we have heard of this



Cambridge Arts via social media

**Stairs to the Windsor Preschool at 119 Windsor St. in Cambridge’s Port neighborhood.**

## An assessment found health hazards only in CHA space.

issue, and we have reached out to the Cambridge Health Alliance for more information to determine our next steps,” Johnston said.

Cecere said the Alliance didn’t notify the housing authority for the same reason it didn’t test in the area occupied by the programs for kids: It

had determined that the problem “was localized.”

Mayor E. Denise Simmons brought the situation affecting the Cambridge Public Health Department to light at a City Council meeting on May 13, calling the conditions in the basement at 119 Windsor St. “appalling.”

She pressed the city to renovate the building so employees of the city health department had enough space to work. The staff was moved to a much smaller area on the second floor of 119 Windsor St. Most of them must come into the office on alternate

days and work from home or another location every other day.

Simmons did not mention the other section of the basement housing the preschool and other programs for children and youths.

City Manager Yi-An Huang and deputy city manager Owen O’Riordan didn’t make promises. The city hired a consultant to assess the building and estimate a cost to renovate it; the report will be completed in the next several months, O’Riordan said.

The building also houses an Alliance primary care clinic and dental services, neither in the basement.

## Security patrol encountered sexual assault of late worker

By MARC LEVY

Cambridge police are investigating a reported sexual assault that occurred Friday at around 9:18 p.m. in a Cambridgepark Drive office building. The alert was put out Saturday afternoon.

Police responded to reports of an assault in progress from a security guard doing a regular patrol of the building. He said he heard screams from a floor that is under construction and is supposed to be empty, according to scanner reports. The victim may have worked on a nearby floor, where detectives later processed a restroom crime scene and began working with Massachusetts State Police to identify and search for a suspect.

The victim told officers the assailant was a masked man with a knife.

The Middlesex District Attorneys Office was notified, police said, and later assigned resources to the incident as officers gathered evidence.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call (617) 349-3300 or make contact anonymously online.

Residents should call 911 immediately if they ever feel threatened or see suspicious activity, police said. A previous attack in the area took place June 24, when a woman fought off a so-called blitz rape at approximately 3:30 a.m. while walking her dog on CambridgePark Drive, police said.

# BUSINESS & MONEY

■ Do you know of a business opening or closing in Cambridge or Somerville? Send news to [business@cambridgeday.com](mailto:business@cambridgeday.com).

## CanalSide: Food court to food hall

By MADELEINE AITKEN

When the mall gets a makeover, so does the food court.

Renovating and rebranding its food court into CanalSide Food + Drink, a food hall with a bar, is the latest in a series of re-development changes for CambridgeSide, the East Cambridge mall opened in 1990 that is being rebuilt into more of a mixed-use neighborhood that deemphasizes its retail roots.

Designed by Rode Architects, CanalSide is slated to open in late October with eateries arranged around a central C-Side Bar – with the selection of local eateries, the difference between a food hall and a food court, said Melissa LaVita, regional marketing director for CambridgeSide. (The modern food mall is considered only 17 years old, dating back to the opening of the first Eatly. “Many celebrate quirkiness versus uniformity,” as The New York Times once drew the distinction, while Slate offered a more cynical take on the food hall but at least acknowledged the species “no-nonsense emphasis on food.”)

“We have some of these new office and lab buildings, and as part of a reimagined destination, we wanted to do something a little different with the food court,” LaVita said.



DalMoros

**DalMoros Fresh Pasta To Go is another food hall tenant.**

The mall’s food court was closed during redevelopment and has been replaced with a pop-up dining experience from Fooda, which has rotating lunch and dinner options from local restaurants. Open daily since February, it will remain open until the CanalSide project is complete.

Eleven of the eateries that will fill CanalSide were announced May 9, spanning bubble tea to Mexican street food, including a few that have stalls at TimeOut Market, another food hall in Boston: anoush’el-

la, which serves Eastern Mediterranean street food; InChu, an Asian fusion bowl spot; and Lala’s Neapolitan-ish Pizza, which makes naturally leavened pizza.

“We knew we wanted it to be a diverse mix, and we wanted the vendors to be local eateries as opposed to the chains that were here before,” LaVita said.

The other eateries cover beverages (Caff  Nero, which has locations in Cambridge’s Central and Porter squares, and Teazzi Tea Shop), Mexican food (Chilacates, also in Central Square), pasta (DalMoros Fresh Pasta To Go), burgers (Nu Burger), ramen (Sapporo Ramen, relocating from Lesley University’s University Hall near Porter Square) and a deli (Fresh). There are still three eateries to be announced in the coming months, LaVita said.

The 50-seat C-Side Bar is a collaboration from a new hospitality group founded by Ran Duan of Baldwin Bar and Blossom Bar, Jon Rosse of Birds of Paradise and Brahm Callahan of Grill 23 & Bar. The beer, wine and cocktail menu for C-Side isn’t finalized, LaVita said.

As part of the CanalSide redevelopment, CambridgeSide is adding an entrance that will enable pedestrians to walk from First Street directly into the food hall, “a nice addition and a nice connection to the neighborhood,” LaVita said.



Rode Architects

**A rendering of the CanalSide food hall expected to open at CambridgeSide in East Cambridge in October.**

## Smoot Standard, Luxor will fill old Darwin’s spaces

By MARC LEVY

The last of four sites that made up the old Darwin’s Ltd. coffeeshop chain is set to be filled, and with a name that’s familiar to the MIT community, or to anyone who’s walked across the Harvard Bridge since 1958: Smoot.

The Smoot Standard won its licensing Tuesday for 313 Massachusetts Ave. in The Port between Central Square and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where Oliver Smoot attended until graduating in 1962. As a first-year frat pledge, he was laid down repeatedly along the length of the bridge, with paint being used along the way to mark off every 5-foot-7 of his height. (The bridge is roughly 364.4 smoots.) The measurements are repainted twice yearly; the term made it into the American Heritage Dictionary in 2011.

Behind the business is Alex Tannenbaum, who also has the nearby Naco Taco and chicken restaurant Lily P’s in Kendall Square. All are in Cambridge

Meanwhile, a new coffee shop called the Luxor Cafe is expected to take over the onetime flagship location of Darwin’s, transitioning from the current Roust Coffee with an expanded menu and hours.



Marc Levy

**A customer enters Roust Coffee in Cambridge’s Harvard Square on Feb. 7, 2023.**

The chain had four locations that grew over time since starting in 1993 at 148 Mount Auburn St. in Harvard Square, but all closed in late 2022. Three of the four locations are already new coffee shops, with Roust the first to open in early 2023 under Valentin Terteliu Hefco.

“Valentin has done amazing at Roust. I’m just trying to extend it out a little bit ... to kind of return back to what Darwin was” with more pastry items and sandwiches, and maybe bubble tea, Abdelrahman Hassan told licensing commissioners May 8. “I don’t drink alcohol, and a lot of my friends and people that I know don’t drink alcohol, but they still want somewhere to come and play card games in a peaceful environment.”

Still, the proposed hours as late as 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday worried some neighbors in the residential area who are used to Roust closing at 3 p.m. and didn’t want either the noise of revelry or mechanical equipment reaching their ears, either venting from the kitchen or from heat or air conditioning.

Hassan said he planned to keep the Luxor open only until 4 or 5 p.m. at the start, adding hours later if there was customer demand. He would tweak the menu and try to muffle mechanical noise as needed if the hours expanded, he told neighbors.

The commissioners approved his licensing for a total occupancy of 32 people in the site’s 2,170 square feet.



Marc Levy

**The Sheraton Commander in Cambridge’s Harvard Square.**

## Commencement hotel costs can see a giant price gap

By LAYLA CHAARAOUI

For graduates, commencement season in Cambridge is an exciting moment marking the culmination of years of hard work and personal growth. For families, it’s a very big hotel bill.

Graduation dates fall closely together: Harvard University’s commencement ceremony is Wednesday; MIT has commencement ceremonies scheduled for May 29-31. The influx of visitors converging upon Cambridge to celebrate thousands of graduates means a crush of demand for lodging, leading to increased rates and limited availability. (Lesley University ceremonies took place first, Saturday, but across the river in Boston, which widens the scope of available rooms.)

We looked at costs and availability at hotels in the Cambridge area as of May 14 for a one-night stay Wednesday or May 30, and list our findings below, with a gap of \$570 between lowest and highest. (Prices and availability subject to change, of course.) We list them from cheapest to most expensive by looking at the lowest rate on either day.

**Harvard Square Hotel, Cambridge**  
Wednesday: Sold out  
May 30: Sold out

**Studio Allston Hotel, Boston**  
Wednesday: \$458  
May 30: \$309

**AC Hotel by Marriott Boston-Cambridge, North Cambridge near Alewife**  
Wednesday: \$399  
May 30: \$343

**The Royal Sonesta Boston, East Cambridge**  
Wednesday: \$639  
May 30: \$407

**Hampton Inn Boston-Cambridge, East Cambridge**  
Wednesday: \$664  
May 30: \$509

**Le M ridien Boston-Cambridge, University Park in Cambridgeport**  
Wednesday: \$699  
May 30: \$518

**Hyatt Regency Boston-Cambridge, Area II, Cambridge**  
Wednesday: \$699  
May 30: \$594

**DoubleTree Suites Bos-**



Marc Levy

**A room at the Sonder 907 Main hotel in Central Square, Cambridge.**

**ton-Cambridge, Boston**  
Wednesday: \$654  
May 30: \$652

**Sonder 907 Main, Central Square, Cambridge**  
Wednesday: \$861  
May 30: \$692

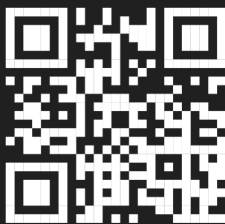
**Sheraton Commander, Harvard Square, Cambridge**  
Wednesday: Unavailable  
May 30: \$824

**The Charles Hotel, Harvard Square, Cambridge**  
Wednesday: Sold out  
May 30: \$879

**Courtyard by Marriott Boston-Cambridge, Area II, Cambridge**  
Wednesday: Unavailable  
May 30: Unavailable



32 Quincy Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
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# Harvard Art Museums @Night

**Last Thursday of the month, 5–9pm**

Gather with friends on the last Thursday evening of each month (holidays permitting). Enjoy free admission, music inside our Italian-inspired courtyard, and exciting ways to engage with art across our spaces—over 50 galleries on 3 floors! Food and drink from local vendors available to purchase.

**May 30  
June 27**

# EVENTS AHEAD MAY 23–30

**7 p.m. May 26**  
The Burren, 247 Elm St., Davis Square, Somerville

**Annie and Fur Trappers and The Wolverine Jazz Band**

\$16 to \$21. Annie & The Fur Trappers preserve and perform traditional jazz, delta blues, ragtime and swing music of the 1920s and 1930s. The Wolverine Jazz Band has performed vintage jazz around New England since 1995.

**11 a.m. to 4 p.m. May 26**  
Summer Shack, 149 Alewife Brook Parkway, Alewife, Cambridge

**Dolly Parton drag brunch**

\$20. Enjoy a meal and sing along to “Jolene” during this tribute to all things Dolly hosted by Neon Calypso. Costumes encouraged.

**10:30 a.m. May 27**  
Cambridge Common, near Harvard Square

**Memorial Day observance and family-friendly events**

Free. Department of Veterans’ Services acting director Cynthia Harris emcees a commemoration of the lives of military members assisted by city officials. Keynote by Joseph Reynolds of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Veterans Services and music by the Cambridge Rindge & Latin School marching band. Family entertainment follows, including petting zoo, pony rides, face painting, balloon arts and music by Monkeys with Crayons and The Dave Macklin Band. Food and refreshments provided.

**6 to 11 p.m. May 24-27**  
Club Passim, 47 Palmer St., Harvard Square

**Campfire Festival**

\$15 by day, or \$30 for a weekend pass. Passim’s twice-a-year homegrown festival of Americana, bluegrass, blues, Celtic, country, folk and related musical styles with more than 60 artists performing over 30 hours. Originally just a way to fill a bad booking weekend in 1998, the festival now competes with the rock- and pop-focused Boston Calling across the river. Campfire aims to develop talent and celebrate the local music scene, with organizers saying shows can blur the line between performer and audience member – just like might happen sitting around an actual campfire, strumming a guitar or two.

**7 p.m. May 23**  
Patagonia, 39 Brattle St., Harvard Square, Cambridge

**“Open Space: Life at Cambridge’s Danehy Park” film screening**

Free and all ages, but register. One theme from Federico Muchnik’s documentary, which focuses on the varied mix of people and activities that take place in the 50-acre park, is that being in nature helps us become a better version of ourselves.

**10 a.m. to 6 p.m. May 30**  
The Ethelbert Cooper Gallery of African & African American Art, 102 Mount Auburn St., Harvard Square

**Day One DNA: 50 Years in Hip-Hop Culture exhibition final day**

Free. Ending today, this multimedia exhibition curated by Laylah Amatullah Barrayn celebrates 50 years of hip-hop culture with more than 200 objects from the archives of icons and longtime collaborators Ice T and DJ Afrika Islam.

**7 to 8 p.m. May 29**  
Grolier Poetry Book Shop, 6 Plympton St., Harvard Square, Cambridge

**Poets Katie Peterson and Rosa Alcalá**

\$5 to \$10, but register. With an introduction by Sandra Lim.

**7 p.m. May 26**  
Harvard Book Store, 1256 Massachusetts Ave., Harvard Square, Cambridge

**Daniel Handler (aka Lemony Snicket) reads from “And Then? And Then? What Else?”**

Free. The bestselling author of “The Series of Unfortunate Events” series discusses his inspirations and his sometimes challenging and often amusing path toward a writing career. Isaac Fitzgerald, author of the bestselling “Dirtbag, Massachusetts,” joins.

**11:59 p.m. May 25**  
Somerville Theatre, 55 Davis Square

**“Ringu” (4K restoration) midnight movie**

\$15. The 1998 Japanese horror classic about a TV journalist who investigates an urban legend about a cursed VHS tape that murders the viewer seven days after they watch it is restored to terrify theatergoers once again.

**9 p.m. May 25**  
The Rockwell, 255 Elm St., Davis Square, Somerville

**Haitian comedian TJ presents “Coming to America”**

\$25 to \$30 and 21-plus. Haitian-born and New York City-based stand-up Taneal Joachim jokes about race, society’s idiosyncrasies and the inherent contrast between life in Haiti and America.

**7:30 p.m. May 29**

**Comedian Kelly McCaughan presents “Catholic Guilt”**

\$15 to \$20. This “clowny performance” that “fearlessly challenges the deep-rooted sensibilities surrounding religion” comes with some partial nudity and a content warning. And audience participation (you are warned).

**10 a.m. to noon May 25 (and various dates through October)**  
Nathan Tufts/Powderhouse Park, College Avenue and Broadway, Somerville

**Powder House tours**

Free. A docent opens and gives tours of the old stone building which the British removed gunpowder 250 years ago this year, resulting in the Powder Alarm.

■ List your cultural happenings  
at [events@cambridgeday.com](mailto:events@cambridgeday.com).



Arts at the Armory, 191 Highland Ave.,  
Somerville

8 to 10:30 p.m. May 25-26

“Slut Trek: Assimilation”

\$25 to \$45. A live-action love letter to “Star Trek” featuring burlesque, drag, pole, comedy and live music.

3 to 4:30 p.m. May 27

Boston Orchestra Book Club concert

Free to \$20. A volunteer orchestra performs the North American premiere of an example of the Polish avant-garde: Grażyna Bacewicz’s “Symphonic Variations.” Following, internationally renowned pianist Tony Yike Yang joins for Sergei Rachmaninoff’s “Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini,” a devilishly difficult musing on Niccolò Paganini’s most famous violin caprice. Reuben Stern directs.

7 to 8 p.m. May 23

Somerville Museum, 1 Westwood Road,  
in the Spring Hill neighborhood

“How to Lose an Empire: The Road to the Powder Alarm” lecture

Free. Commemorate the 250th anniversary of Gen. Thomas Gage’s fateful arrival in Boston by learning some local history from with Brandeis’ Dan Green, including why Gage felt compelled to send British regulars up the Mystic River to seize the contents of the Powder house.

5:30 to 6:30 p.m. May 29

The Growing Center, 22 Vinal Ave.,  
near Union Square, Somerville

Medicinal plant walk

Free. Stroll the neighborhood with clinical herbalist Mo Katz-Christy to discover local plants, botany and medicinal uses.

7:30 p.m. May 25

Warehouse XI, 11 Sanborn Court,  
Union Square, Somerville

Boston Spring Reggae Fest

\$15 to \$20. A celebration of the rich cultural heritage and infectious rhythms of Jamaica and the greater Caribbean region. Performers include Dion Knibb, Livalect, Dis-N-Dat Band, Ajahni and King Rhymez. Musical juggling by DJ World Beat and Brave Prince.

Harvard Art Museums,  
32 Quincy St., near Harvard  
Square, Cambridge

12:30 to 1 p.m. May 26

Gallery Talk: “A Sea of Tulips” lecture

Free, but check in at Visitor Services to join the talk. In conjunction with the new exhibition “Imagine Me and You: Dutch and Flemish Encounters with the Islamic World, 1450-1750,” curator Talitha Maria G. Schepers discusses the tulip trade, the Dutch tulip craze of the 1630s and the role tulips played in Habsburg-Ottoman diplomacy.

5 to 9 p.m. May 30

Harvard Art Museums at Night

Free. During this recurring event wander exhibits, catch Spotlight Tours, make art in the Materials Lab, browse the shop, enjoy sounds from DJ C-Zone and purchase snacks from Comfort Kitchen and drinks from

7 to 8 p.m. May 23

The Foundry, 101 Rogers St., East Cambridge

“Frequency Coherence” dance theater performance

\$10. Developed by Mary Teuscher and collaborators, this show features an installation, choreography and improv scores to follow four characters with portals of light, sound and texture.

Noon to 6 p.m. May 23

1 Broad Canal Way, Kendall Square, Cambridge

Kendall Square Farmers Market opening day

Free. Shop from local farmers and food purveyors who focus on Massachusetts agricultural products as well as value-added products that promote local agriculture.

Noon to 6 p.m. May 27

76 Bishop Allen Drive, Central Square, Cambridge

Central Square Farmers Market

Free. This market during summer Monday holidays is where you can encounter chefs on a rare day off, old friends like you who’ve stayed in town and the ecosystem that is peak New England harvest crossed with Cambridge’s vibrant population diversity.

6:30 p.m. May 28

Pandemonium Books & Games,  
4 Pleasant St., Central Square, Cambridge

“Have You Read This? Classic “Book Moot” discussion

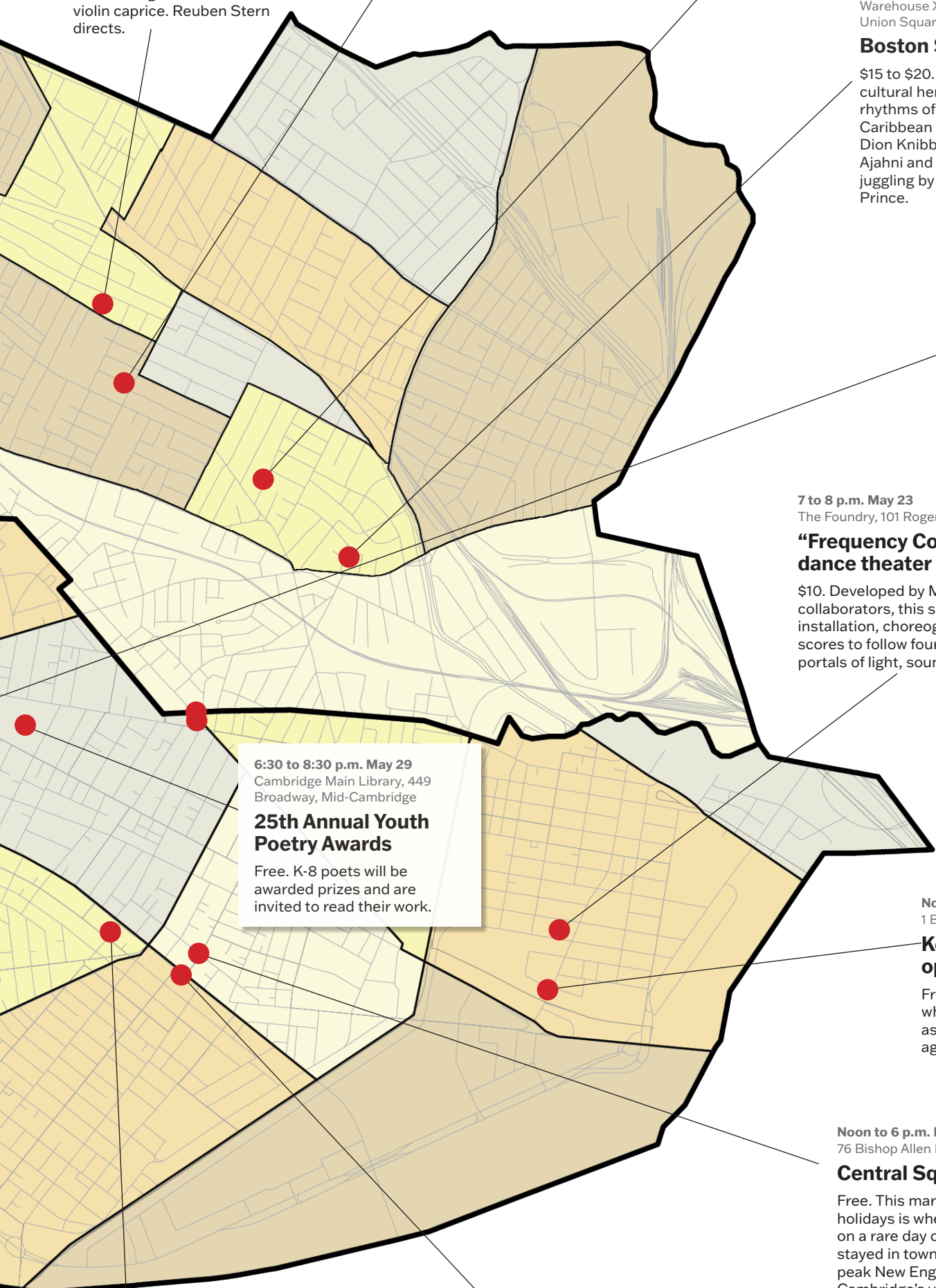
\$12 with the book and registration required. This time, discuss J.M. Barrie’s “Peter Pan” with a foreword by fairy tale scholar Jack Zipes, who argues that the book is a work not for children but for adults seeking to reconnect with their own imagination.

7 to 8:15 and 8:45 to 10 p.m. May 25

The Mad Monkfish, 524 Massachusetts Ave.,  
Central Square, Cambridge

Donna Byrne Quartet performs

Free, but \$25 food-and-drink minimum. The heralded jazz singer performs with Tim Ray (piano), Marshall Wood (double bass) and Les Harris Jr. (drums).



# FILM AHEAD

## LOCAL FOCUS



Alec Guinness performs eight roles in “Kind Hearts and Coronets.”

# J-horror, John Waters and the fatally funny ‘Kind Hearts’ screen

By OSCAR GOFF

Long before “Saltburn,” British director Robert Hamer took aim at the aristocracy with “Kind Hearts and Coronets,” the deliciously sordid comedy classic that screens Saturday and again Monday at **The Brattle Theatre**. Dennis Price plays Louis Mazzini, the impoverished scion to a disowned branch of the noble D’Ascoyne family. Upon his mother’s death, he vows revenge by murdering all eight D’Ascoynes ahead of him in the line of succession and reclaiming the title of Duke of Chalfont.

The plot of “Kind Hearts” is ingenious enough that it would make for a perfectly gripping drama, but its brilliance lies in its outrageous black humor. Key to its success is the great Alec Guinness. It’s easy to forget that, before he picked up the light saber, Guinness was a keen comic actor and inspiration for Peter Sellers.

Here, Guinness plays all eight of the daffy D’Ascoynes in Mazzini’s cross-hairs: the drunken Rev. Lord Henry, the blustery Admiral Lord Horatio, even the suffragette Lady Agatha. Seventy-five years after its release, “Kind Hearts and Coronets” is as savage as any eat-the-rich comedy that’s come in its wake. The D’Ascoyne family walked so that Oliver Quick could dance naked through Saltburn Manor.

The late ’90s may have been a fallow period for American horror movies, but Japan saw a renaissance of bone-chilling ghost stories and squirm-inducing body horror. This weekend sees the opportunity to catch two landmarks of the decade’s J-horror boom. On Saturday, the **Somerville Theatre** brings Hideo Nakata’s original 1998 version of “Ringu” to its Midnight Specials series.

Anyone who’s seen the hit 2002 American remake “The Ring” knows the story – a cursed videotape of a ghostly girl dooms anyone who spools it through their VCR to die in seven days – but there is an extra level of dread to Nakata’s sparse original.

The following night, The Brattle holds a 25th-anniversary screening of Takashi Miike’s grisly classic “Audition.” A lonely TV producer holds try-outs for a fictional reality show as a ploy to find his perfect wife. I won’t spoil the twist that comes at the halfway point (if you have the stomach for it, it’s a great film to experience blind), but suffice to say that pretty young Asami

isn’t quite the manic pixie dream girl he takes her for. Both films make clear why the horror mavens of Hollywood spent much of the following decade trying to catch up with their Japanese counterparts.

Films don’t come much more New York than “The Taking of Pelham One Two Three” (1974), which screens at The Brattle on Sunday. Walter Matthau plays a gruff New York transit cop who picks an inopportune day to stop by the office on his day off. A band of mercenaries (led by Robert Shaw, later Quint from “Jaws”) unhitch a subway car in the middle of a midtown tunnel and threaten to start shooting hostages if they don’t get a million dollars.

The ticking-clock suspense is complemented by the film’s cockeyed sense of humor: With the exception of Shaw, every character just wants to get the whole ordeal over with, and the cast is loaded with great character actors (including Martin Balsam, Doris Roberts and a sprightly young Jerry Stiller). It’s a film about a daring rescue, but it’s also a film in which the mayor gets booed wherever he shows his face, and that’s what I love about it.

Also on Monday, The Brattle presents a double feature from two titans of queer cinema. John Waters’ “Female Trouble,” which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, is arguably the apogee of the Baltimore director’s early underground cycle: Drag legend Divine plays teenage delinquent Dawn Davenport, whose Christmas wish for “cha-cha heels” leads to a spiral of murder, depravity and all-around bad taste.

The film is here paired with a film from Spanish auteur Pedro Almodóvar, whom Waters has often called his “international counterpart.”

In “All About My Mother,” Almodóvar adds a layer of depth to the kitschy melodrama of his earlier films, dealing with grief, motherhood, gender identity and AIDS. The film marked a major breakthrough for star Penélope Cruz and earned Almodóvar the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. Though very different in tone, it’s safe to say both directors would thoroughly enjoy the study in contrasts.

*Oscar Goff is a writer and film critic based in Somerville. He is film editor and senior critic for the Boston Hassle, and a member of the Boston Society of Film Critics, Boston Online Film Critics Association and the Online Film Critics Society.*

Cambridge-Somerville is a film mecca, with a half-dozen sites with a total 36 screens open daily:

**The Brattle Theatre, 40 Brattle St., Harvard Square, Cambridge.** Founded in 1953 and a nonprofit since 2001. One 250-seat theater with 7.1 surround sound and 35mm capabilities with a specialty in themed repertory programs and classic, cutting-edge, foreign and art-house films as well as some first-runs and new releases of classics. **(617) 876-6837 and brattlefilm.org**

**Harvard Film Archive at The Carpenter Center, 24 Quincy St., Harvard Square, Cambridge.** Founded in 1979 at Harvard University. One 188-seat theater with DCP, 35mm, 16mm and Super 8 capabilities and a repertory archive of more than 40,000 pieces of cinema history from around the world. **(617) 495-7578 and harvardfilmarchive.org**

**Somerville Theatre, 55 Davis Square.** Founded in 1914. Three screens with 1,566 seats, including one with Dolby Digital Sound and 24 surround speakers and 70mm capabilities for a mix of first-run and repertory fare and classics. **(617) 625-5700 and somervilletheatre.com**

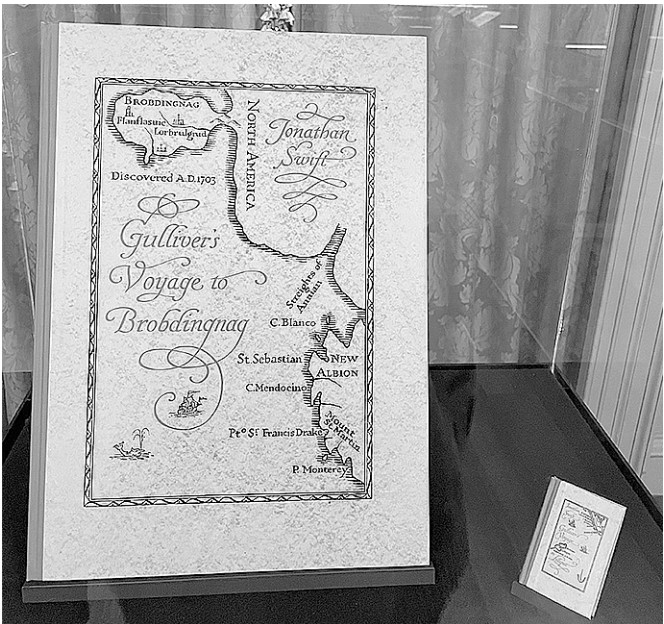
**Landmark Kendall Square Cinema, 355 Binney St., Cambridge.** Opened in 1995. Nine screens with 682 seats with DLP digital projection and sound showcasing independent film, foreign-language cinema, restored classics and documentaries with some first-run and even blockbuster films mixed in. **(617) 621-1202**

**Apple Cinemas Cambridge, 168 Alewife Brook Parkway, Cambridge Highlands near Alewife and Fresh Pond.** First opened in 1965, reopened in 1990 with 10 screens. A specialty in screening South Asian cinema along with first-run films. **(617) 229-6555**

**AMC Assembly Row 12, 395 Artisan Way, Assembly Square, Somerville.** Opened in 2014 with a dozen screens for first-run films with IMAX capabilities and Dolby sound. **(617) 440-4192**

# BOOKS

## READ



Madeleine Aitken

Books from a 1950 set of Swift’s “Gulliver’s Travels” cover visits to the lands of giants and miniature people.

# ‘Big Books, Tiny Tomes’ digs up unlikely pairs, surprise parallels

By MADELEINE AITKEN

The Houghton Library, one of a few on Harvard’s campus, has more than 600,000 books in its collection. In a recently opened exhibition, co-curators Peter Accardo and Molly Schwartzburg have brought together some of its biggest books with some of its smallest.

“Big Books, Tiny Tomes” aims to explore the impact the size of a book has on its reader by juxtaposing massive books with tiny ones from throughout history. Everything selected comes from Houghton’s collection, which is home to Harvard’s rare books and manuscripts as well as literary and performing arts archives.

The original concept was to feature a selection of large books, said Accardo, the scholarly and public programs librarian at Houghton. He combed through the stacks with Keren Tran, its communications and program coordinator, to select some initial titles.

“When my colleague Molly Schwartzburg heard about our plans, she suggested pairing the big books with ‘tiny tomes’ and volunteered to co-curate,” Accardo said.

Schwartzburg, the Philip Hofer curator of printing and graphic arts, was inspired by a 1950 Limited Editions Club set of Jonathan Swift’s “Gulliver’s Travels” conceived by book designer Bruce Rogers. He reprinted the book section about miniature people as “Gulliver’s Voyage to Lilliput,” a miniature volume (3 inches high) set in six-point type, and the section about the land of giants as “Gulliver’s Voyage to Brobdingnag,” a large companion book (more than 18 inches high) set in 40-point type.

A book of etchings of baroque Rome and its ancient monuments by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, “Le Magnificenze di Roma” from 1751 (some 21 inches in height), is paired with a tiny version of John Keats’ “Sonnets,” published posthumously in 1906 (less than 3 inches in height). One of the etchings in the book is of the Fontana della Barcaccia, the fountain Keats could hear as he lay dying of tuberculosis in a room overlooking the Spanish Steps. Connections such as these are throughout the exhibit.

Another pairing is devoted to the 19th century inventions that “most transformed the traditions of the illustrated book”: lithography and photography. A giant chromolithograph plate book by Antonio García Cubas, “Album del Ferrocarril Mexicano” (around 14 inches high and 19.5 wide) is juxtaposed with the earliest known miniature book to include photographs, “Gallerie Dantesca Microscopica: Fotografia dei Disegni di Scaramuzza” (around 2 inches tall). The miniature book includes tiny reproductions of selected images from the “Divine Comedy” cycle by Francesco Scaramuzza, while the big book documents the spread of railroads across Mexico.

There’s a boxed and bound folio edition of the Magna Carta with a portable 14th-century copy of the Magna Carta in miniature; Houghton Mifflin’s 1884 edition of “Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám” with a 1934 miniature edition of the same book, which was, at the time, considered to be the smallest book ever printed; and the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, the first printed polyglot of the entire Bible, side-by-side with a miniature version of the New Testament, the earliest wholly engraved English text, from about 1659.

The books span disciplines – law, medicine, astronomy, the graphic arts – and were produced over eight centuries by countries and cultures from around the world.

“Visitors will gain an appreciation of the great technical skill and the challenges involved in creating texts large and small,” Accardo said.

■ The exhibition is open to the public through Aug. 9 at the Houghton Library, at Quincy and Harvard streets in Harvard Yard, Cambridge. Ongoing Harvard Yard closings may affect Houghton Library; Accardo recommends checking Houghton’s website before planning a visit.

# MUSIC

## ATTEND

### Boston Calling calls, Campfire counters

By MICHAEL GUTIERREZ

Nothing against Tuesdays With Morrie, but if you can swing a PR luncheon invite for a Friday With Maurin, it’s a decidedly more upbeat and better-catered affair.

That’s Maurin Auxéméry, program director for the Montreal Jazz Fest, who’s been booking the jazz giant north of the border for 13 years, taking lead on the programming committee the past two years.

With a jean jacket, mop of salt-and-pepper and a true believer’s wild eyes, he cuts a figure that looks more at home in a club than Event Space 1 at the Catalyst Restaurant in the MIT neighborhood.

But when duty calls, Auxéméry responds. The Cambridge luncheon last Friday was just one of many pitches he’ll make to the music press in advance of the 44th edition of the festival, running from the end of June through the start of July.

The press was happy to be pitched, and the three-course meal didn’t hurt. Representatives from GBH, The Boston Globe, Hump Day News and more decided between white or red, pea soup or salad, baked chicken or cod, cheesecake or crumble, with coffee to close.

After a mercifully short canned promo reel, Auxéméry spoke from the heart, exuding the kind of enthusiasm you’d expect from a young hand in an old organization who, after years of working in the background, gets his chance to take the spotlight and make his mark.

What to expect? A lot. Ten days of jazz music, thousands of artists from tentpole headliners to niche cult favorites, hundreds of shows, with two-thirds of all performances free for the roughly 2 million music lovers expected to attend.

Can you imagine our fair city hosting anything remotely as ambitious? Imagine the Somerville Porchfest running 10 days, with 100 times the guests, a Guster on every block and the musicians get paid instead of footing the bill themselves ...

Actually, that sounds great. Let’s do it!

#### Hit this

**Thursday to Monday:** *Campfire Festival (Club Passim, Cambridge)*

School’s out for the summer and the festival season has begun. Not all festivals are cut from the same Ticketmaster, port-a-potty and metal-detector cloth. If you’re a folkie at heart, head to the cool and comfortable depths of Club Passim for a gathering of new and established acts at Campfire. At 25 years, the local tradition stays true to its founding spirit, providing an intimate space for folk musicians to trade their wares while you watch the music unfold without the coordinated chaos of the Big Corporate Fests.

**Thursday to Sunday:** *Boston Calling (Harvard Athletic Complex, Boston)*

Welcome to the Big Corporate Fest! If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em. And where else are you going to find four stages of top tier international, national and local talent, the White

Claw Shore Club and a goddamn Ferris wheel rolled into three beautiful days on the Charles? Names such as Ed Sheeran, Megan Thee Stallion and The Killers will draw crowds, but this lineup boasts a strong middle class with indie darlings of all shades and stripes, including Khruangbin, Blondshell, Alvays and more. Plus, Chase credit cardholders will unlock benefits all weekend long. Let’s get unlocking ...

**May 30:** *Liturgy, Body Void (Middle East, Cambridge)*

Liturgy is more than a decade removed from its transcendent and buzzy breakthrough LP “Aesthetica.” The black metal outfit, authored by Hunter Ravenna Hunt-Hendrix (who added the ‘Ravenna’ in recent years, spoiling all potential “Triple H” puns), clearly has staying power. Expect riffs that come at you like a fleet of leaf blowers and a melodic scream-sing like no other. Vermont’s Body Void will whet your appetite with noise doom in the opening slot.

**Live:** Joe Hunt Group at The Lilypad

It was a jazz twofer, maybe a threefer, late Sunday at the performance space in Inman Square. The David Haas Group blended into the Joe Hunt Group, and the Joe Hunt Group reconstituted itself midway through the set as a quintet with Jon Wheatley.

Wheatley, guitarist, associate professor at Berklee and enthusiastic proponent of “logical fingering systems,” was just passing by when the spritely and stately rhythms of Joe Hunt’s percussion reeled him in like an alley cat to a discarded tin of sardines. Did Hunt invite Wheatley to sit in, or did Wheatley invite himself? Details lost to the sands of time.

The guitarist ran back home (just around the corner) to grab his six string.

When all was said and done the hybrid ensemble delivered a couple of sambas, a Thelonious Monk tune, the jazz standard “Wonder Why” and two versions of Irving Berlin’s “Change Partners,” one with Wheatley and one without. With more musicians on stage than butts in the seats, the night was less about banking cover charges and more about friends in music enjoying each other’s company. It’s a vibe.

Lilypad founder, owner and musician Gill Aharon knows the vibe well. He was in and out during the set, tinkering with everything from soundboards to beer taps, while the sounds of horns, keys, strings and snares filled the mural-painted interior.

When a regular customer asked him if the mural that had been whitened-out at stage right was going to be replaced by another, Gil said yes. When asked about the subject of the new mural, Gil replied, with an air of mystery, that it was going to be whatever the artist wanted.

What else would you expect in a house of improvisation?

*Michael Gutierrez is an author, educator, activist and editor-in-chief at Hump Day News.*

# FOOD

## WHAT WE’RE HAVING



Sakurako K. via Yelp

The catfish po’boy at Somerville’s Highland Kitchen.

### Catfish Po’Boy at Highland Kitchen

By TOM MEEK

With so many restaurants coming and going, the notion of down-home comfort isn’t as much a thing. Many of the longer-ensconced bastions tend to be in and around Union Square, which has become home to the most eclectic melting pot of food cultures and social vibes. On that comfy side, J and J Restaurant near the McGrath and O’Brien underpass and The Neighborhood Restaurant & Bakery on Bow Street come to mind. They both have Portuguese influences and are family-run, so homey is baked in. I also lean in on Highland Kitchen, though it isn’t old-school per se, as it’s got that B-Side/Delux Cafe tragically hip thing going on – and I say that in the most flattering sense.

The B-Side sadly is a thing of the past (now Lord Hobo), but the Delux in Boston is still kicking it, serving carrot tacos these days. The Highland, despite its popularity and sometimes long lines to get a seat (true at Delux too) is an inviting come-in-and chill-and-relax spot, a place to imbibe and leave the world behind, something the Highland’s been doing consistently since 2007.

The menu at Highland has always had a pronounced bayou/Southern twang to it. Spicy jambalaya, goat stew (we will serve no Brady before his time!), gumbo and fried chicken are the bones. It reminds me some of the long-gone Tim’s Tavern in Back Bay that served the best hush puppies this human ever tasted, a gumbo chock full of crawdads that was incomparable and an alligator stew. Green Street Grill in Central Square in early incarnations offered similar cuisine, but it too has shuttered. The Highland treats on those legacies, the distinctively something different done exceptionally well, and by focusing on that creates a destination dining experience, without the pomp and punch of landing a hard-to-score table at the hot culinary rave du jour.

The food is simple in ingredient, yet complex in the blending. My go-

■ **Highland Kitchen, 150 Highland Ave., Spring Hill, Somerville**

tos here are the reliable andouille and chicken gumbo with the requisite okra in a belly-warming gravy surrounding a mound of jasmine rice. It’s satiating, not spicy and, as an appetizer not too filling for your next indulgence. The spicy jambalaya is great, as it it comes with duck confit to go with the andou-

### Highland Kitchen has this Nola staple down to a science.

ille, shrimp and jamon but also comes in a veggie variation with Beyond meat and blackened carrots.

I’m a fanatic about the Highland’s blackened catfish po’boy, though, which comes on an uber fresh baguette with a remoulade sauce and relish. The blackening spices add plenty of bite that’s offset nicely by the sauce and relish, and it all comes together nicely on that soft French bread. The fish is always tender and moist and never overcooked. They have it down to a science in the kitchen.

There are fun sides such as sweet potato mashed, and you can get fried plantains off the appetizer menu. Another great thing about the Highland experience is its personable bartenders and waitstaff, who add to that homey comfort. The Highland has that neighborhood-haunt aura while offering a night-out dining experience.

*Tom Meek is a writer living in Cambridge. His reviews, essays, short stories and articles have appeared in the WBUR ARTery, The Boston Phoenix, The Boston Globe, The Rumpus, The Charleston City Paper and SLAB literary journal. Tom is also a member of the Boston Society of Film Critics and rides his bike everywhere.*

## SNACK



### Boston Halal spicy falafel wrap

**Price:** \$10  
Moving into the storefront Grainmaker vacated when it closed in March, Boston Halal is an Indian and Mediterranean fusion restaurant with a menu of rice bowls and pita wraps. It sounded promising, but I was disappointed. The falafel wrap was mediocre at best: The pita was fine, the hummus was okay, the falafel were decent. Nothing was bad, but nothing was particularly good. The fresh toppings and sauces were a nice touch that helped to bulk up the wrap a bit, but the wrap still felt sparse, with just four small falafel, a few veggie toppings such as cucumbers and pickled onions, and a light drizzle of sauce. That amount of food felt grossly overpriced at \$10, although a rice bowl, also priced at \$10, might have been a better choice in terms of value. It’s not bad for a quick lunch, but it’s not worth going out of your way.

MADELEINE AITKEN

■ **Boston Halal, 248 Elm St., Davis Square, Somerville**

# DID YOU KNOW?



## An LGBTQ+ landmark is celebrated

By BETH FOLSOM

Cambridge celebrates the 20th anniversary of marriage equality this month. On May 17, 2004, City Hall opened at 12:01 a.m. and began issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Marcia Hams and Susan Shepherd were the first to apply for and get a marriage license, and later exchanged vows in the first legalized same-sex marriage in the United States.

In November 2003, the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts ruled in a 4-3 decision that it is unconstitutional under the Massachusetts constitution to allow only heterosexual couples to marry. In its decision in the case of *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, the court ruled “the right to marry means little if it does not include the right to marry the person of one’s choice.” In her opinion, Chief Justice Margaret Marshall wrote that the “Massachusetts constitution affirms the dignity of all individuals” and “forbids the creation of second-class citizens.” This ruling made Massachusetts the first state in the United States to legalize same-sex marriage and the sixth jurisdiction in the world (after Belgium; British Columbia, Canada; the Netherlands; Ontario, Canada; and Quebec, Canada) to legalize same-sex marriage.

The court’s ruling in the *Goodridge* case left it unclear whether the Massa-

chusetts decision deemed civil unions as a far enough step toward marriage equality. On Jan. 4, 2004, a majority of the justices explained that their ruling meant that only marriage could ensure equality. Civil unions would be an “unconstitutional, inferior and discriminatory status for same-sex couples. Separate is seldom, if ever, equal,” the court explained.

The original November ruling had allowed for a stayed judgment for 180 days, providing for the Massachusetts Legislature to take any action that it deemed necessary. After those days had passed, Gov. Mitt Romney ordered town clerks to begin issuing marriage licenses on May 17, 2004. At midnight, with the typical three-day waiting period voided for the occasion, same-sex couples entered Cambridge City Hall. About a half-hour later, every two or three minutes, cheers erupted as each couple emerged from the building, marched down an impromptu aisle between a cheering crowd of 5,000 Cantabrigians, and same-sex marriage became a reality. Residents threw roses, rice, and even handed out cupcakes to the happy couples.

Cambridge is a well-known leader in LGBTQ+ rights. The city was the first in Massachusetts to perform gender-affirming surgery in 1972. City government has also seen many “firsts,” from the first openly gay Black mayor (Kenneth Reeves) in 1992, to the first

openly lesbian city councillor (Katherine Triantafyllou) in 1993 to the first openly lesbian Black mayor (E. Denise Simmons) in 2008. Since the mid-20th century, many of its residents and organizations have been vocal advocates for queer and trans rights alongside those of women, people of color and immigrants.

But, while Cambridge has a reputation for progressive politics, the mood in the nation as a whole 20 years ago leaned much more toward conservatism. In February 2004, President George W. Bush called on Congress “to pass, and to send to the states for ratification, an amendment to the U.S. Constitution defining and protecting marriage as a union of a man and a woman as husband and wife.” There was opposition to the idea of “non-traditional” unions from both sides of the aisle, even in Massachusetts. Despite these reservations on the national and state levels, Cambridge decided



The Advocate

**Marcia Kadish and Tanya McCloskey are married at Cambridge City Hall on May 17, 2004.**

to forge ahead in carrying out the Supreme Judicial Court’s decision.

Cambridge saw 227 couples apply for marriage licenses that first night in 2004. Another 10,000 same-sex couples were married throughout Massachusetts over the next four years, with an estimated 32,000 marriages taking place between 2004 and 2019. In the decade after the *Goodridge* decision, 36 states and the District of Columbia followed Massachusetts in legalizing

same-sex marriage. In June 2015, the Supreme Court ruled remaining state bans on same-sex marriage unconstitutional.

As we approach Pride Month in June, many organizations in Cambridge will be commemorating the anniversary of marriage equality and celebrating the many contributions of LGBTQ+ individuals to the city’s history and development. A series of Pride events at the Cambridge Public Library, the Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site and the Mass Audubon Nature Center at Magazine Beach are just a few of the many local celebrations.

History Cambridge leaders are excited to partner with The History Project on a Queer History of Cambridge Oral History Project, which will be included in a forthcoming Queer History Hub on the organization’s website. experience.

**About History Cambridge:** History Cambridge started in 1905 as the Cambridge Historical Society. Today we have a new name and a new mission. We engage with our city to explore how the past influences the present to shape a better future. We recognize that every person in our city knows something about Cambridge’s history, and their knowledge matters. We listen to our community and we live by the ideal that history belongs to everyone. Throughout 2023, we are focusing on the history of Cambridgeport. Make history with us at [historycambridge.org](http://historycambridge.org). ■ History Cambridge is a nonprofit organization. Our activities rely on your financial support. If you value articles like this one, give today at [historycambridge.org](http://historycambridge.org).

## Armory planning process feels like ‘deja vu’ to artists

From Page 1

Despite being billed as a “community meeting,” the gathering held by Somerville Arts Council gave the vast majority of the allotted time to a staff presentation of a slide deck, leaving a small amount of time for discussion.

Staff presented three options that arose from a research process with the New York consultancy Create Today: that a nonprofit govern the space; that a quasi-municipal trust be in charge; or that a city department be explicitly and solely tasked with governance of the Armory.

The nonprofit option could be a new organization started by the city, or an existing one, council director Gregory Jenkins clarified. This option would operate similarly to Cambridge’s Foundry, staff said, describing it as a nonprofit that starts with governmental support that phases out.

Like the process nine months ago, which presented two unpopular options with Create Today itself seeming to reject one – because the city running the Armory was not a municipal “core competency” – this meeting proposed three options that seemed to be really two: Nadkarni clarified partway through the meeting that, in the short term, the nonprofit and city department options were the only two options that were really on the table.

Based on a council-designed chart with at-times vague ratings of the pros and cons of each option, with the distinction between short-term and long-term futures for the Armory not made clear, Nadkarni also said that the nonprofit option “has the least durability of mission.”

What remained was the quasi-municipal trust option, which would require a yearslong process of legislative creation – something Jenkins said has

### A timeline calls for a decision by the fall ready to be enacted.

not been done. Jenkins compared the legislative mechanism of operating similarly to a stadium or convention center, which operates independently and can take donations, but still has some state oversight.

Partway through the meeting, one community member shared concerns about weighing in on the three options when there are no examples of the quasi-municipal community trust.

“I would like to have a lawyer in the room,” one community member said. The quasi-municipal trust “is a chimera or a unicorn. It just doesn’t exist yet. And we don’t have an idea of the timeline.”

#### Nonprofits take exception

Arts at the Armory co-director Stephanie Scherpf told staff: “You’ve predetermined the options that we’re talking about tonight. This is written from a city government point of view and you’ve made a lot of assumptions about nonprofits and what they can or cannot do.”

Worse, according to comments by Out of the Blue gallery owner Paroma Chattopadhyay after the meeting, the presenters were “making insulting comments about nonprofits” despite the presence of herself and Scherpf.

Several Armory tenants spoke, complaining about the frustration and lack of transparency they have experienced with city governance the past two years. Chattopadhyay said that “Every single one of the artists is in jeopardy ... because no one has any sense of what is going on.” One

community member expressed the desire for a cooperative, tenant-led model of governance.

Ultimately, meeting attendees’ concerns were quieted so staff could get through their slide deck.

Scherpf wrote later in a post-meeting statement on the Arts at the Armory’s website that “We, along with most in attendance, were under the impression that this was to be a meeting for the city to listen to the community and collect feedback on ideas. Instead, in a kind of *deja vu* harkening back to the city-led community meetings in July-August 2023, city staff presented three city-controlled options ... created by the city to keep the city in charge of ownership, management and operations.”

This was essentially confirmed by Jenkins, who emphasized that a goal has been to create a form of governance that is “independent from the tenants, I think,” he said.

With the community portion of the process apparently over, the next step in a project timeline is identified as drafting a master plan for review in the summer. The master plan is to be finalized and submitted to Mayor Katjana Ballantyne in the fall.

“Once the master plan is finished, the Economic Development Division and the Arts Council will quickly pivot to implementation,” the timeline says.

Scherpf wrote in her post-meeting statement that the meeting was “a charade for the city to steamroll their own agenda to attempt to control the Armory,” she said. “If the mayor follows the plan that comes out of this process she will be ill-advised and going against what 95 percent of the broader community wants.”

“This could have been a highly collaborative process that would have resulted in finding a place for everyone seeking arts use space at the Armory,” Scherpf wrote. “This opportunity still exists if the property owner wants to finally engage in it.”

## Fire headquarters upgrades catch up on century of needs

From Page 1

The planned “alteration” approved May 20, 2019, didn’t just hit a patch of Covid complications. When the fire station emerged in June 6, 2022, another \$37 million was asked to cover the “significant construction escalation and schedule delays” but also the cost of the temporary station, a new data center for emergency communications and going net-zero on carbon emissions, Energy-producing solar panels and 17 geothermal wells and a power substation would support an all-electric building including charging stations for all-electric vehicles. The new appropriations will add a system to decontaminate gear from hazardous materials at a fire.

“I’m not minimizing how the costs have escalated, but it is such a unique project,” acting fire chief Thomas Cahill said. “It’s such an old building that really hasn’t been touched in literally 100 years,” he noted, while it also serves as “where everything happens – this is where the other firehouses report to. It’s somewhat of the brains of the operation.”

#### “Every single project”

The most critical councillor was Patty Nolan, who co-chairs the Finance Committee with Pickett and has talked frequently over the years about the high cost of projects in Cambridge compared with similar ones in other communities. Nolan referred to a “massive redo” of a 1926 fire headquarters in Newton that opened in 2017, completed for around \$24 million.

If the unique properties of 491 Broadway added to the costs of getting firefighters the headquarters they need, she said, maybe the site itself wasn’t practical, and a station should be relocated permanently. But it was “really, really, really not good manage-

ment in practice to have a project that goes from \$25 million to \$75 million,” Nolan said. “We run up against this on every single project we do, it seems.”

As the city spends \$299 million on the combined Tobin and Darby Vassall school campus and \$77 million on fire headquarters, “What else does our city need to do?” councillor Ayesha Wilson asked. “There’s a lot of projects before us and a lot of things happening that are costing multimillions of dollars. We want to make sure that this doesn’t stop us from being able to do other projects.”

#### Even simple jobs

Despite the concerns, there was also a council understanding of the kind of ballooning costs encountered by anyone calling in contractors. Even simple home construction work can soar in cost, some said, and often does.

That’s especially true of older facilities, even as the city relies on assessments by its hired architects and engineers that might try to take that into account, deputy city manager Owen O’Riordan said. He sounded notes similar to Cahill’s about 491 Broadway being a unique site, and a structure in which issues have built up over a century.

“Our ability to better estimate the costs of aspects of these projects is improving, but obviously not adequate at this point in time to be able to be exact,” O’Riordan said. As work progresses, “things come to light.”

Also, the first look was about rehab of an existing facility, he said. “We came back once we realized that there was a lot more involved,” he said, and the \$15 million asked now should be considered against the 2022 total, not the original estimate from 2019.

“It was a very different project when we’re looking at \$25 million rehab of the existing facility,” O’Riordan said.

■ Send letters to [forpublication@cambridgeday.com](mailto:forpublication@cambridgeday.com) with the name, address, phone number and relevant affiliations of the writer or writers

# Marriage equality in Year 20 is joyous

By the Rev. IRENE MONROE

Massachusetts celebrated 20 years of marriage equality on Friday, thanks to the landmark decision in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*. This decision preceded the historic U.S. Supreme Court ruling by 11 years, with the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision that legalized same-sex marriage in all 50 states.

In 2004, at 12:01 a.m. May 17, Cambridge was the first city in the nation to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. At 9:15 a.m., the first couple was married.

Cambridge takes pride in being the first, and over the course of three days over the past week, the city and the office of Mayor E. Denise Simmons – who became the first African American lesbian mayor in the country in 2008 – hosted several events with guest speakers such as LGBTQ+ ally U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley.

“It is an honor to call the Commonwealth of Massachusetts my home because of groundbreaking, humanity-centered and justice-actualizing decisions like this one” to be the first City Hall to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples, Pressley told the audience in Sullivan Chamber. “I often use Cambridge as a way to get my colleagues to do things.”

Also at the events were guest speakers including former state representative Byron Rushing, who played a critical role in legalizing same-sex marriage, and Marcia Hams and Susan Shepherd, who were the first couple to get a same-sex marriage license in Cambridge.

“I want to give a big shout-out to all the lawyers, organizations and activists, particularly the plaintiff couples who brought the case of marriage equality to our courts in Massachusetts,” Hams told the audience at City Hall. “I especially want to thank Chief Justice Margaret Marshall of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, who ruled in our favor for equality and liberty for us all, including marriage.”

Since 2004, I’ve officiated more than 250 LGBTQ+ couples, including Simmons’ nuptials. When interviewed for this 20th anniversary, I



Curbed Boston

A couple emerges from Cambridge City Hall in the early morning of 2004 after getting a marriage license.

was asked to show photos. I had to sort them into three piles, as I’ve done with heterosexual couples, highlighting that we are like everyone else: deceased, divorced and still together.

Looking back at advances since 2004, such as passage of hate crime laws; the repeal of the military Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy and federal Defense of Marriage Act; the legalization of marriage equality and same-sex adoption; and anti-homophobic bullying becoming a national concern, among a few, the LGBTQ+ community has come a long way since the first Pride marches.

When you live at the intersections of multiple identities, as I do, the 20th anniversary of marriage equality in Massachusetts is also the 70th anniversary of the historic U.S. Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education*. This ruling upended this country’s “separate but equal” doctrine, adopted in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896.

Victory comes with backlash, however.

As of this year’s anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, African American and Latinx American students continue to attend not only segregated schools, whether here in Boston or across the nation, but overwhelmingly high-poverty urban schools with metal detectors. Sadly, not only has policing while schooling doubled since 2001 to the present day, but so has the school-to-prison pipeline.

As for us LGBTQ+ Americans, bigotry works in this political climate. Discrimination in the United States has taken a hard-right political turn since Trump. And with a Trumped-up Supreme Court, of which five

members are pro-lifers, the uber-conservatives have eroded decadeslong civil rights gains and the Constitutional mandate of separation between church and state. With *Roe v. Wade* overturned in 2022, many of us are worried about what will happen to the goals of reproductive justice, marriage equality, our right to same-gender intimacy and the fight to combat hundreds of anti-LGBTQ+ bills. The majority of them target our transgender population – to date, 552 bills in 42 states. These bills ban trans people from bathrooms, pronouns, sports, gender-affirming surgery and drag queen story hours, to name a few. Restricting transgender rights works for Trump’s evangelical base, hoping it’ll help the Republicans in this coming presidential election. The Human Rights Campaign has declared a state of emergency for LGBTQ+ Americans.

Marriage equality celebrations throughout Massachusetts were joyous and worrisome. The joy of 20 years is an important milestone, but many wonder if same-sex marriage will still exist 20 years from now.

“We must continue to fight,” Rushing told his audience at the Kendall Center public lobby in Cambridge. “It might appear that we cannot win in this polarized climate, but we can, and we must. I imagine a world in 20 years where gay marriage is incredibly ordinary.”

*The Rev. Irene Monroe is a speaker, theologian and syndicated columnist. She does a segment called “All Revved Up!” on WGBH (89.7 FM) on Boston Public Radio and a segment called “What’s Up?” Fridays on New England Channel News.*

# Local business looks for guidance on AI

By MOHAMMED AL-TAL

Small businesses are at the forefront of the global artificial intelligence revolution, embracing AI not just as a tool but as a partner. In recent weeks, we at Cambridge Local First have explored the ways local businesses leverage AI, transforming everyday tasks into opportunities and reshaping the economic and social landscape of our city.

AI’s journey began in the mid-20th century, evolving from theoretical computer science to a suite of practical tools reshaping industries. Today, it encompasses machine learning, natural language processing and image generation, as seen in popular applications including OpenAI’s ChatGPT, Google’s Bard and Dall-E. These tools demonstrate a capacity for enhancing communication and sparking creativity. In Cambridge’s small-business sector, the versatility of AI is becoming increasingly clear. From bakeries employing it for efficient inventory forecasting to retail shops using chatbots to elevate customer service, AI is proving to be a pivotal tool for business growth and community engagement. Based on conversations we have had with business owners across Cambridge, applications within the small-business community include:

**Content marketing** Clay Fernald at The Middle East Nightclub uses AI to craft eye-catching headlines for events that he integrates into marketing. “I use AI as a starting or endpoint for our promotions and marketing projects, enhancing our workflow and bringing a fresh perspective,” Fernald said. At Albertine Press, Shelley Barandes uses AI to draft initial designs for unique greeting cards and to spark creativity. “While AI helps in generating initial ideas, the final touch always needs our personal editing to reflect our unique artistic voice,” she noted. A blend of computer and human creativity is becoming a model for many businesses, with technology enhancing rather than replacing the human touch.

**Customer insights and engagement** AI is revolutionizing the way small enterprises understand and connect with customers. Erika Salloux of Living Harmony uses it to analyze customer feedback, “tailoring my approach to those interested in our work” and enabling her to personalize her wellness workshops based on client interests, she said. Mark E. Harrington Jr. at Healthworks Fitness leverages AI for member

engagement: Analyzing gym attendance data through AI helps identify members who might benefit from additional motivation or tailored fitness programs. “We use AI to track gym attendance and engage members who might need encouragement,” Harrington Jr. said. Understanding customer behavior and enhancing customer experience can lead to stronger and more meaningful business-client relationships.

Adopting the technology presents challenges. The journey is marked by concerns that encompass ethical dilemmas and practical obstacles. Barandes of Albertine Press points out a significant concern of creative fields: “When we use

## Being mindful of ethics, especially in creative fields.

AI to generate initial artwork concepts, we often find that these pieces inadvertently mimic existing copyright-protected works, which poses a real issue for us as original content creators,” she said. Salloux of Living Harmony also faces challenges in AI material being “not only effective but also original, steering clear of any plagiarism.”

As AI is increasingly integrated into business, support and guidance from local and state governments becomes crucial. Andy Pyman of Breathe Cambridge pointed to the necessity of government-led educational initiatives, “A deep understanding of AI’s capabilities and limitations is essential. We rely on government programs for this kind of knowledge,” he said. Aelen Unan from Ninawa Zero Waste Clothes advocated for more resources too. “Workshops or seminars would be invaluable for us, helping to explore AI’s business potential while being mindful of ethical considerations,” she said.

Local business owners increasingly recognize that effective implementation needs robust support structures, extending well beyond basic tech solutions to strategic, government-led initiatives that ensure AI’s use is matched by a commitment to responsible and ethical application.

*This essay was written in partnership with Cambridge Local First, where Mohammed Al-Tal is a research intern.*

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### Legal Notice Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

Notice is hereby given that the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission will hold a Public Hearing on **Monday, June 3, 2024 at 6:00PM** to consider the following applications under Ch. 2.78, Article III of the City Code and the Order establishing the District.

The meeting will be held online with remote participation. The public can participate online via the Zoom platform (<https://zoom.us/>) from a phone, tablet, or computer. To join the meeting, register at <https://tinyurl.com/MCJune2024> or call (301)715-8592 Webinar ID: 860 5778 1264.

**MC-7015: 17R Ellsworth Avenue, Larch Properties LLC.** Roof solar panels.

Tony Hsiao, Chair  
*Cambridge Day, The Week, 05/23/24, 05/30/24*

### LEGAL NOTICE CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Notice is hereby given that a public meeting will be held on **Thursday, June 6, 2024, at 6:00 PM** to consider the following matters under M.G.L. Ch. 40C and Ch. 2.78 of the Code of the City of Cambridge:

This meeting will be held online with remote participation. The public may participate via Zoom webinar (<https://zoom.us/>) from a phone, tablet, or computer. To join the meeting, register at: <https://tinyurl.com/CHCJune6-2024> or call (301)715-8592. Webinar ID#: 830 4039 4143 Confirm

meeting details and materials at <https://tinyurl.com/CHistComm>. Written comment is welcome up to 24 hours before the meeting at [histcomm@cambridgema.gov](mailto:histcomm@cambridgema.gov).

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties  
**Case 5116: 14 JFK St., by 1834 Realty Inc., owner for Patrick Lee, tenant.** Construct attached pergola in courtyard for outdoor dining.

**Case 5117: 18 Farwell Pl., by C. Rieder & Gary Chafetz.** Construct new covered entrance landing with columns.

**Case 5118: 23 Church St., by First Church of Christ, Scientist, Cambridge.** Restore the original architectural lighting on the building façade.

**Case 5119: 125 Brattle St., by Ellen Williams & Lawrence**

**Miller.** Construct a second-floor addition above the garage and alter east elevation.

**Case 5120: 27 Craigie St., by 27 Craigie Street Nominee Trust, Karl Iagnemma, Tr.** Restore iron fence and install new wood fences to replace existing.

Bruce A. Irving, Chair  
*Cambridge Week, 5/23/24, 5/30/24*

Cases may be taken out of order and approved at the beginning of the meeting. Persons who wish to have a hearing on a case should notify the Commission in advance or be present at the beginning of the meeting when the Consent Agenda will be discussed.

WILD THINGS

■ Send your high-resolution images of urban wild things with location, date, photographer's name and other useful information for possible use online to [photography@cambridgeday.com](mailto:photography@cambridgeday.com).

A red-banded leafhopper has red-and-blue bands across its wings, a black line across the head and is yellow underneath.

Robert Gessing



# Nature’s candy stripers

## Red-banded leafhoppers produce nanoparticles that could aid humans in medicine and science

By JEANINE FARLEY

Worldwide, there are at least 20,000 species of leafhoppers, including 2,500 species right here in North America. Leafhoppers are one of the largest families of plant-feeding insects. There are more species of leafhoppers than all species of mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles combined. Each leafhopper species is different and sucks sap from specific grasses, shrubs or trees.

The hind legs of these insects are elongated for jumping (hence the name). They can jump great distances searching for food or to escape predators. The red-banded leafhopper (*Graphocephala coccinea*), also called the candy-striped leafhopper, has eye-catching red and blue horizontal bands on its wings, which it folds like a roof above its body.

Red-banded leafhoppers feed on sap from the leaves of fruit bushes, such as raspberry and blackberry bushes. They also feed on ornamental plants such as rhododendrons and roses. Their mouthparts pierce the leaves of a host plant. Then they use their tubelike proboscis to suck out sap. After they have digested, leafhoppers expel sweet sticky droplets called honeydew that attract flies and wasps.

Adult leafhoppers emerge in spring, feed on the leaves of new plants and soon mate. The female leafhopper uses her needlelike ovipositor to poke a hole in a leaf or stem where she insert eggs in the inner tissue of a plant. In about 10 days, the eggs hatch into nymphs that feed on the underside of the plant leaves. Nymphs look like adults, except smaller and without wings. Over time, the nymphs grow and cast off their old exoskeleton. Altogether, they molt five times. After their last molt, wings appear and the insects are now adults (at only one month old!). You can spot leafhoppers until the first hard frost in the fall.

In the scientific name of the red-banded leafhopper, *graph*, as you probably remember from elementary school, has to do with writing; cephal

means “head.” *Graphocephala*, therefore, refers to the black mark that looks like it was drawn with a Sharpie on the head of many species of leafhoppers. *Coccinea* means “scarlet,” a reference to its red stripes.

Leafhoppers are quite unusual in one interesting way. They produce in their Malpighian tubules (similar to human kidneys) tiny nanoparticles called brochosomes. The particles are super water-repellent and anti-reflective, acting as a protective coating. A leafhopper excretes the nanoparticles in milky droplets, which it spreads over its legs, body and wings. Similar to waxing a car, the nanoparticles protect the insect from water and from sugary excretions from fellow sap-drinking insects. Leafhopper legs have special bristles for manipulating these hollow, soccer-ball shaped nanoparticles.

Leafhopper brochosomes have several functions. First, leafhopper excrete sticky sap waste. The nanoparticle coating prevents this waste from sticking to their bodies. Second, the particles protect leafhoppers from rain, dew and spiderwebs. Third, the nanoparticles scatter light, including ultraviolet light, which reduces their reflection. Therefore, they are less visible to bird and reptile predators who see visible or ultraviolet light.

The unique optical properties of brochosomes may have many useful applications in the human world, including developing drug coatings that protect against moisture, better sunscreens, coatings to harvest solar energy and thermal cloaking devices.

Reproducing these complex structures in the lab is not easy, but researchers at Penn State University have tried using 3D printers. Their humanmade brochosomes reduce light reflection by up to 94 percent. They’re much larger than the leafhoppers’, though: 20,000 nanometers in diameter (about one-fifth the diameter of a human hair) compare with leafhopper brochosomes that are 30 times smaller – only 600 nanometers!

There are many insects that can solve medical and engineering problems. People do not always have to reinvent the wheel; they can borrow knowledge from insects. Multiple studies have shown that insect populations are declining by 1 percent to 2 percent per year. In 20 years, one-fifth or more of all insects on the planet could be extinct – an insect apocalypse.

Long ago (in 1987), biologist Edward O. Wilson argued that humans cannot survive without invertebrates such as worms, insects and spiders that make up 97 percent of all animals. He wrote:

*The truth is that we need invertebrates but they don’t need us. If human beings were to disappear tomorrow, the world would go on with little change. But if invertebrates were to disappear, I doubt that the human species could last more than a few months. Most of the fishes, amphibians, birds, and mammals would crash to extinction ... Next would go the bulk of the flowering plants and with them ... the majority of the forests and other terrestrial habitats of the world. The earth would rot. As dead vegetation piled up and dried out ... other complex forms of vegetation would die off ... The remaining fungi, would also perish. Within a few decades the world would return to the state of a billion years ago, composed primarily of bacteria, algae, and a few other very simple multicellular plants.*

The next time you are near a berry bush or a rhododendron, look on its leaves for this remarkable quarter-inch jumping insect and ponder how such an insignificant-looking insect can contribute to complex engineering features of the modern world.

Jeanine Farley is an educational writer who has lived in the Boston area for more than 30 years. She enjoys taking photos of our urban wild things.

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A red-banded leafhopper at Fresh Pond on Aug. 21.

Joanne Mullan