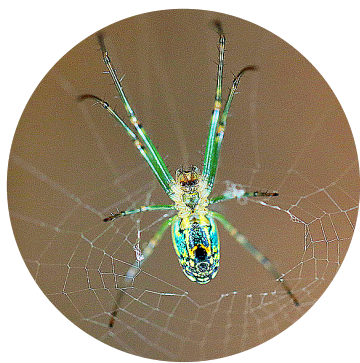




WILD THINGS

Every fact about orchard orbweavers seem designed to make the human head spin, including what happens to these spiders in space.

Page 12

THE WEEK

JULY 18-25, 2024

FREE | by CAMBRIDGE DAY



WinnDevelopment

A rendering of proposed buildings in a project called Walden Square II in North Cambridge.

Walden Square approval shows limits of a law

By SUE REINERT

The Planning Board reluctantly took the final step to allow 95 affordable apartments to be added to a development for lower-income families in North Cambridge despite serious concerns with the design of bicycle and pedestrian routes and tree removal and replacement.

The decision on July 2 exposed the advantages and drawbacks of the city's Affordable Housing Overlay zoning, which eliminates most zoning restrictions for developers of 100 percent affordable housing projects.

Board members' discomfort with the Walden Square II project near Daneyh Park was obvious. "I think we're better off than we were," said chair Mary Flynn, referring to design changes made after a first hearing on the project March 12. "But there's still serious issues around circulation [of bicycles and pedestrians]. I'm concerned about the trees, too."

See AFFORDABLE, Page 10

Licensing issues fixed, popular Sound Bites can go at full volume feeding Somerville

By JACOB POSNER

Things have returned to normal at the Sound Bites Cafe in Somerville's Ball Square, where old and new management drew reprimands from the U.S. Department of Labor and the city's Licensing Commission.

For its workers, things may be even better than they were.

Sound Bites, opened in 1996 by Yasser Mirza, is known for controversies as well as for brunch: When the Ball Square Cafe opened next door in 2007, a feud broke out with its Mike Moccia that in 2010 exploded into a physical fight landing the men in court.

In 2022, employees complaints about inadequate pay led to reports of retaliation and even threats of deadly violence. Mirza sold the restaurant in mid-December to Kelard Zera, but a change in ownership didn't end the managerial missteps.

The most recent problems got hashed out – and Zera got chewed out – at a May 21 hearing of the Licensing Commission.

See LICENSING, Page 4

From Catholic to charter



Marc Levy

Cambridge Matignon in North Cambridge, seen Wednesday. The Catholic school closed a little over a year ago.

Banneker looks to buy from church, keeping 75-year use of land

By MARC LEVY

The Benjamin Banneker Charter School is under contract to buy the Cambridge Matignon high school building and fields in North Cambridge, providing a path for growth for the nearby school of around 350 students in grades pre-K to 6 from Cambridge, Boston and beyond.

Banneker leaders plan a community meeting at 10 a.m. Thurs-

day to discuss plans. The school is now based at the Reservoir Church, 15 Notre Dame Ave.

The archdiocese will keep control of the former Matignon convent and administration buildings, which are under long-term rental agreements with the International School of Boston, city councillor Paul Toner said in a Tuesday email.

That school, a bilingual private school at 45 Matignon Road,

has 560 students from more than 43 countries.

The matter of separating the properties is on the agenda of a July 25 meeting of the Board of Zoning Appeal.

It's required for the sale to go through, said attorney James Rafferty, who is bringing it to the board for the archdiocese, "to allow for that building to remain under the ownership of the archdiocese in this cur-

rent lease with the [International] school. We had to do a subdivision to sell off less than an entire lot."

In addition, "because the lot being subdivided is the small lot, we'll have some nonconforming setbacks as a result of these new lot lines that are created. That's why we need to get a variance for the subdivision," Rafferty said Wednesday.

See ONCE, Page 3

INSIDE

News: Where to ride micromobility devices such as an e-bike or scooter, and how fast, isn't clear even to the lawmakers.

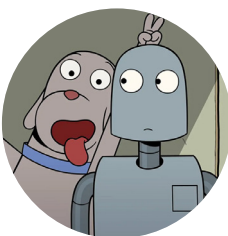
Page 3

Business: Even a smaller Somernova expansion worries Somerville artists.

Page 5

Attend: The logistics of booking puts some 300 musicians in 70 bands on 20 bills on a half-dozen stages in any given month.

Page 9



FILM AHEAD

A doc about one of the oldest comic shops in the country and a visit from Sara Vachon with her Oscar-nominated "Robot Dreams."

Page 8

EVENTS AHEAD

Nice, A Fest starts rocking with ComixCon and the NorthBeastPoetry Slam, there's "Butterfly Effect" dance and Crave at ManRay.



Pages 6-7

MEETINGS AHEAD

Cambridge: Harvard Square salivates for Chip City cookies, and get a glimpse at the future of Massachusetts Avenue.

Somerville: A low-income housing swap will put a property on the market; an "entrepreneurial hub" includes biomedical and the creative.

Page 2

MEETINGS JULY 18-25

CAMBRIDGE

Matignon land needs, Chip City cookie shop

By MARC LEVY

Invitation to the Moth Ball

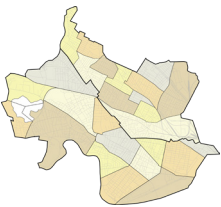
Cambridge Moth Ball, 7 to 9:30 p.m. Wednesday. As part of National Moth Week, residents are invited to learn how to attract, photograph and identify moths, explore them up close and share the data and photos with researchers. Bring a picnic. (Long sleeves and long pants are recommended). By the Water Department facility at 250 Fresh Pond Parkway, in West Cambridge at Fresh Pond Reservation.

Matignon land, Chip City opening

Board of Zoning Appeal, 6 to 11:30 p.m. July 25. The board hears a request from the Archdiocese of Boston to subdivide property in North Cambridge where the 75-year-old Matignon School closed in June 2023. The change allows some land to be sold to the Benjamin Banneker Charter School and the rest to stay with the church and continue to be leased to the International School of Boston. The subdivision will create nonconforming setbacks that need a variance. (Some of the property is landfill, and much of the property also crosses over into Somerville.) Something a little more fun is lower on the agenda: Permission to open a Chip City cookie shop in 1 Brattle Square as a “formula” business in a Harvard Square Overlay District meant to favor small, locally owned businesses. This store will be a kind of dessert twin to the Van Leeuwen Ice Cream shop that came before the board in March for the same reason and won its exemption. The 715-square-foot shop could open this month, said the New York chain’s co-founder and chief executive, Peter Phillips, in May. Watchable by Zoom videoconferencing.

Envisioning Mass. Ave. of 2040

Massachusetts Avenue Planning Study community meeting, 6 to 8 p.m. July 25. The study working group holds its third and final community meeting, this time hearing Community Development Department recommendations for the planning area south of Porter Square – though ultimately work will shape what the avenue will look like in 2040 between Alewife Brook Parkway and Cambridge Common. The goals are to make the avenue more inviting, allow for more housing, provide more neighborhood amenities, support small businesses and improve the sidewalks and walkability. Watchable by Zoom videoconferencing.



◀ **Cambridge’s City Council** next meets in a special session at 5:30 p.m. Aug. 5, being on a break for regular meetings until September 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

Biotech and artists in Assembly project

By MATTHEW SAGE

Low-income housing swap

Somerville Housing Authority, 4 p.m. Thursday. The authority takes the first step to market for sale the eight bedrooms of congregate low-income housing at 17 Monmouth St., Spring Hill, with the proceeds paying back the state for helping fund affordable housing elsewhere in the city – in this case, 21 units at Capen Court in West Somerville. The property has been with the city since 1975 but spent the past several years empty, in need of a rehab with historical restrictions that would be inefficient for the SHA to take on, said Adam Garvey, deputy director of an agency responsible for a portfolio of more than 1,400 affordable housing units citywide. The meeting will also review housing authority policies on parking and travel. Held at the Mystic Activity Center, 530 Mystic Ave., Ten Hills.

Somerville green initiatives

Urban Forestry Committee, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Thursday. Officials will provide updates on initiatives such as the Pollinator Action Plan and “Adopt-a-Tree” and review expected tree plantings and removals. Watchable by videoconference.

Future ‘entrepreneurial hub’

Planning Board, 6 p.m. Thursday. The board hears a proposal for a dual lab-studio space in Assembly Square. The Mystic 45 Development Group first presented plans almost a year ago and now continues one from June in hopes of a special permit. Freed in June from green and civic space requirements, the building would combine incubator space for biomedical startups with studio space for artists to “set a precedent for how community-oriented development is conducted.” Watchable by videoconference.

Tufts Street reconstruction

Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday. View updated plans for the rejuvenation of Tufts street that will introduce several pedestrian-oriented safety measures and landscaping features to the previously underdeveloped street. City officials will take questions and comments at Tufts and Knowlton streets, offering additional insight into the project’s background.

THE WEEK

by CAMBRIDGE DAY

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Star Jelly Comics

See more at [instagram.com/starjellycomics/](https://www.instagram.com/starjellycomics/)



“SO, WHAT, YOU’RE TOO GOOD FOR TWO-WEEK-OLD BUNS?”

Where and how fast to ride an e-bike or scooter isn’t clear

By GRETA GAFFIN

Setting the rules of the road gets more complicated the more things share that road, Cambridge leaders are finding. The complications were made abundantly clear at a June 25 meeting of a City Council committee to discuss regulating micro-mobility devices such as e-scooters and e-bikes, particularly as they have an impact on pedestrians and people riding non-electric bicycles.

“There is some lack of clarity,” said Joan Pickett, chair of the council’s Transportation and Public Utilities Committee. The most likely course for the members, she said, is to fill “deficiencies in the regulations” about which modes of transportation belong where – in the streets, along a path or on a sidewalk – and at what speeds.

Other cities have become concerned by overly fast e-bikes, and e-scooters have been banned on some college campuses, though not at Harvard or MIT. In Massachusetts, laws limit e-bikes to 20 mph, and the rental system Bluebikes caps its devices at 18 mph.

But Brooke McKenna, Cambridge’s transportation commissioner, noted that speed restrictions elsewhere have led to more sidewalk riding. “There’s a fine balance between making sure you’re keeping the speeds low enough to be safe, but not so artificially low that you’re forcing people onto the sidewalk,” she said.

She later said she doesn’t yet know precisely how enforcement policies for speeding would work for these devices.

Another issue is defining what, precisely, an e-bike is. In 2022, the state separated out “electric bicycles” from “motorized bicycles.” Motorized bicycles are considered motor vehicles that must be registered and are not permitted on paths and sidewalks; e-bikes are not. E-bikes must have



Marc Levy

Motorized scooter meets SUV on the Cambridge-Somerville line June 21.

functional pedals, and there is a 2004 law banning “motorized scooters” – which lack them – from being ridden at night, yet it’s not clear if current e-scooters fall under that law. Assistant city solicitor Evan Bjorklund said it can be hard to know what laws the city is and is not permitted to set for micromobility devices.

Even the city’s presentation had conflicting messages, saying in one place that motorized

bikes are allowed in bike lanes and on another page citing a state law that a city is “likely preempted from permitting motorized bicycles on bike paths or bike lanes.”

“I learned a lot, and I’m also confused,” councillor Patty Nolan said. “And I recognize why – because the state definitions and the laws have not really kept up with the scene we’re seeing on the ground in the city.”

Residents expressed their support for the devices. “Micro-mobility is an extremely equitable, sustainable and accessible way to get around the city,” said Cambridge resident Clyve Lawrence, who said he has begun biking significantly more after e-bikes became available to rent from Bluebikes.

McKenna said “There are a lot of people who only feel comfortable on an off-street path, and we want to make cycling or micromobility accessible to them as well.” Those paths make regional long-distance connections safe, assistant city manager for community development Iram Farooq added, suggesting it’s important that e-mobility be allowed in them.

City councillor Burhan Azeem pointed out that some paths are extremely narrow, such as the community path that goes through Somerville, and there’s no safe way for a pedestrian walking at 3 mph to share it safely with an e-bike going 20 mph.

Widening bike lanes to allow for passing, so e-bike riders “and regular bike riders can coexist peacefully,” is part of having “a less car-dependent town,” resident Cari Cesarotti said. The deaths last month of bicyclists Minh-Thi Nguyen – a 24-year-old in Cesarotti’s department at MIT – and Kim Staley, 55, meant the question of “how do we regulate e-bikes and scooters is a little bit tangential to the main issue,” which is one of safety for those choosing not to use cars.

Resident Carolyn Fuller said, “It is not the electric bikes or scooters that I fear when I walk,” as she did to get to work in Cambridge every day for 35 years. “It is distracted car drivers and our increasingly dangerous intersections that I fear. If you’re concerned for my safety, you should start talking about how to enforce the traffic rules that are already on the books.”

Once Matignon, property is likely to become home to two schools

From Page 1

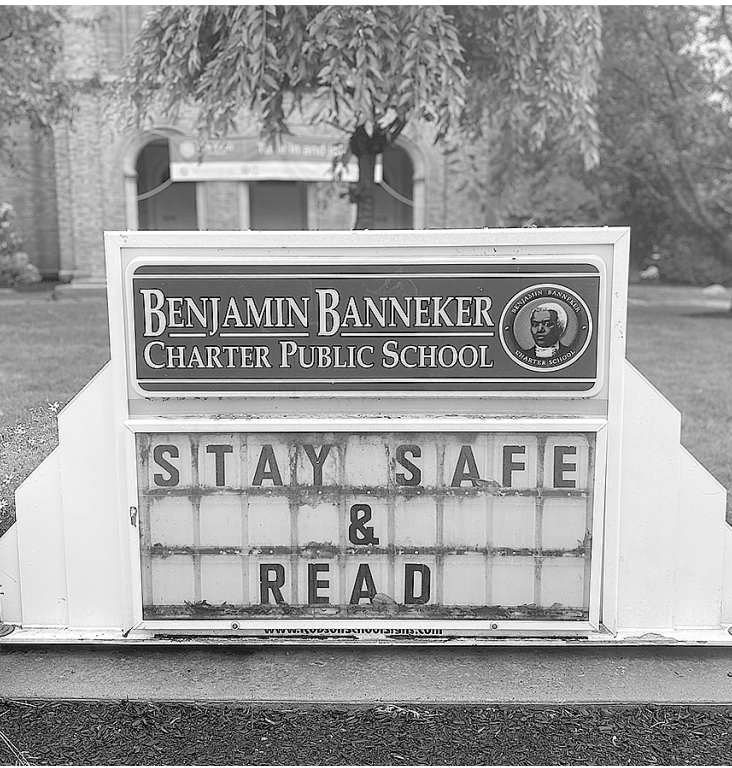
Banneker officials said Wednesday that they were under embargo with the diocese and could not comment.

The 95,532-square-foot property at 1 Matignon Road was assessed this year at a value of \$43.2 million, according to city records. It holds three main buildings, including the three-story brick high school.

The 75-year-old Matignon School – in Catholic Church-owned buildings dating back to 1887 – closed in June 2023, with financial challenges cited as the cause of the closing in the letter signed by Marc-Anthony Hourihan, president of the school’s board of trustees and an alum from 1989.

Decreases in attendance were cited. The Archdiocese of Boston gave Matignon’s enrollment at just 300 in its final academic year, despite students coming from as far as Woburn and Stoneham. The closing is part of a wave affecting Catholic institutions; there have been similar closings of schools in Brighton, Newton and Fall River, and news reports over recent years of the archdioceses making various kinds of properties available for sale.

The sale, handled by Colliers, includes the high school building, administration building and the 7 acres of land on which the buildings sit for a reported \$32 million. (The actual price won’t be known until after the sale goes through, which relies on the subdivision ruling by the BZA, Rafferty said Wednesday. “It is under contract, but it very much has not closed,” Rafferty said.) Believed to go through in February, the sale



Marc Levy

A sign at the Banneker Charter School in North Cambridge in 2021.

drew multiple bids, including from the International School and City of Somerville. The majority of the lot, including the parking lot and field – which, like Cambridge’s Danehy Park, is capped landfill – is over the Somerville line.

“A lot of people had concerns that the field was going to be turned into something,” Toner said. But there’s only around 3 feet of topsoil atop the landfill that would make development difficult, and “the powers that be in Somerville were weighing in to make sure it stays a field too.”

Neighbors that Toner have heard from so far “are very happy it’s staying an educational complex and not going to be a huge housing development of some sort. It’s been a school for 75 years, and a very quiet area. They’re very happy it’s staying that way.”

Banneker, founded in 1996, is tuition-free and public and is considered

Greater Boston’s only K-6 science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics school.

The school hosted a party in October celebrating being named a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.

“This move to the Matignon campus represents a significant milestone in our journey, and we are eager to share the exciting plans that will come with this transition,” said the school, run by executive director Sherley Bretous. The Zoom session will discuss the reasons behind the move and its benefits, provide an overview of the new campus and answer questions about the move, according to a school email.

Layla Kennington contributed to this report.

Seventh gunfire incident injures man playing cards

By MARC LEVY

A man was rushed to a hospital Tuesday from Cambridge’s The Port neighborhood with life-threatening injuries from gunfire, police said.

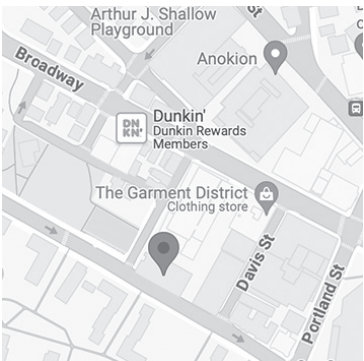
Gunfire was heard shortly before 9:13 p.m. Tuesday at 131 Harvard St., bringing police to the scene, said Cambridge Police Department superintendent of operations Pauline Wells in an email. Witnesses said they heard three to five shots and that they may have come from a vehicle that afterward sped to Portland Street.

Though scanner reports as the event was unfolding said ShotSpotter gunshot-detecting technology was not triggered, Wells said Thursday that ShotSpotter did activate.

“Arriving units located a male suffering from a gunshot wound in front of the tennis courts,” Wells said in a Thursday email. “Initial witness statements indicate that older males were playing cards in front of the tennis courts and several youths were also in the area when shots were fired. At this time, it is unknown who the intended target was. It is believed that all youths fled the area.”

The victim was a 48-year-old man from Cambridge with a gunshot wound to the left hip, police said. He was taken to Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, according to scanner reports, and Wells said Thursday that the man survived the surgery and remains hospitalized. Two cars and a building were also hit by gunfire.

A crime scene was established at the location, known as the Port Landing apartments, and a loaded .9 mm Glock pistol, as well as 10 shell casings, were found, police said. Detectives stayed on the scene for hours “in what is a very



Google

active investigation,” Wells said. More possible gunfire was heard at 10:29 p.m. on Washington Street, based on a call from a tip line, but it could not be confirmed and officers conjectured it could have been fireworks.

It was Cambridge’s seventh gunfire incident of the year – not including an accidental discharge by a police officer – and the third since June 26 taking place in The Port neighborhood, police said. In two of the incidents this year people were struck by gunfire, for a total of three people injured.

In the most recent previous gunfire incident, which was July 4, police responded at 10:05 p.m. and found shell casings in “multiple areas” around Greene-Rose Heritage Park – one block west from Tuesday’s incident. A witness saw a man with a handgun run toward Broadway that day, according to scanner reports.

Massachusetts State Police investigators assigned to the District Attorney’s office are working with Cambridge Police with the investigation. Anyone with information about Tuesday’s gunfire is encouraged to contact the police department’s Special Investigations Unit anonymously, either at cambridgepolice.org/TIPS or by calling a tip line at (617) 349-9151.

METRO

‘Explain Boston to Me’ podcast goes A to WBZ

Pennsylvania transplant just wants to know why we are the way we are

By MOLLY FARRAR

Locals know how the Big Dig, the Boston Marathon and the rise of Tom Brady defined the fabric of Boston. Maybe transplants understand Allston Christmas, the North Shore beaches and the history of counterculture and punk in New England.

Journalist, writer and podcaster Lee Stabert, a Philadelphia native and Cambridge transplant, is trying to “learn to speak the language” of Boston.

In her podcast, “Explain Boston to Me,” now around a year old, a Boston expert takes Stabert and the listener through a casual conversation about the quirks of a neighborhood or more serious cultural customs of the largest metro area in New England.

“I’ve always prided myself on being the type of person who knows all of the hyperlocal minutiae,” Stabert says in the podcast’s intro. In her pod, local experts and journalists explain a topic chosen from her long list of local idiosyncrasies. Stabert still runs her Pennsylvania publication Keystone Edge, but the podcast allows to flex her creative muscles in Boston while exploring iconic institutions of the city.

“In Philly, and in Pennsylvania, like, I knew everything,” Stabert said in an interview. “It was literally my job to know everything.”

Getting the pod started, Stabert always hoped to tackle quintessential Cambridge and Somerville lore from the delayed green line extension, the history of Central Square, the advent of The Lemonheads and Honk! festival of activist street bands in Somerville’s Davis Square.

“I liked the idea that it could be everything from Hilaria Baldwin to the



Explain Boston to Me

Lee Stabert is a newcomer podcasting from – and about – Greater Boston, including Cambridge (her adopted home) and Somerville.

Big Dig, so everything from pop culture to history,” Stabert said. “I want to talk about the busing crisis. I’m open to talking about tough subjects.”

The podcast premiered in mid-July 2023, with Stabert’s guest WBZ reporter and TikTok star Matt Shearer explaining what he called “magical” Allston Christmas – happening in Cambridge and Somerville as well as Boston but named for when students move out of the Boston University-adjacent neighborhood and deposit what seems like all of their belongings on the curb. “It’s all free, it’s Allston Christmas,” Shearer said. “There are so many students and it’s become this sort of thing that the city, I wouldn’t say embraces it, but they just allow it to happen.”

This first episode was lighthearted and nostalgic for Shearer, a former Rat City resident who hosted punk rock basement house shows for which the Allston neighborhood is famous.

Stabert questioned Shearer like a new resident, asking why the Sept. 1 move-in date is law around Boston and how to make the most of Allston Christmas findings.

The pod isn’t just for new residents. Lifelong Bostonians can learn something from the in-depth look into the microcosms of culture, such as an episode about the ’70s band The Modern Lovers. Students can get a new appreciation for the city that hosts so many colleges and universities.

Stabert said even former Bostonians could appreciate the show, which she relates to since leaving her hometown of Philly. “Getting that taste of home is really appealing,” she said.

More episodes have aired every Wednesday, and it wasn’t long before Stabert discovered the Harvard Square Pit – a famous meeting place for punks and outcasts, artists and performers in its countercultural history.

“I just am obsessed with the ten-

sion between this space that was the hangout for punk kids and rebellious teenagers right outside the walls of Harvard,” Stabert said.

The Pit is closed now, as construction broke ground in 2022 to make the amphitheaterlike structure compliant with access laws for people with disabilities. If the Allston episode touched briefly on the inequity in neighborhoods due to soaring housing prices, the Harvard Pit episode tackles gentrification head-on.

“Harvard Square used to be where we would go where it was like vintage shops and tattoo parlors and very cool counterculture, whereas my own experience of Harvard Square is chain stores,” Stabert said. “That’s a story that is repeated not only all over Cambridge, but all over Boston.”

Boston is considered one of the most expensive cities in the country. A 2020 report from the National Community Reinvestment Coalition called Boston the third-most gentrified city after Denver and San Francisco.

“One person’s treasured memory is probably another person’s change that they don’t like,” Stabert said. “The cost of living here changing so much and making it much more difficult for independent businesses to survive, I think that’s more generally a negative.”

Stabert said she’s learned a lot about Boston, and what’s surprised her most is how small Boston proper actually is – so her podcast wouldn’t be complete without looking into the eccentricities of municipalities such as Cambridge, Somerville and Brookline for more ideas.

Listeners should reach out on Instagram with local tips as she learns more about Cambridge, Stabert said.

“What this project is doing that’s really fun is it’s making me like where I live more,” Stabert said. “It’s making me really understand this place, and that makes life richer.”



Marc Levy

The suddenly closed Feast & Fettle in Cambridge seen July 5.

Feast & Fettle shuts doors after a month

By ANGELINA NG XIU QI

Feast & Fettle, a fresh-food delivery service and heat-and-eat storefront, closed its location on Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge in June – barely a month after opening.

Sarah MacDougall, director of brand at Feast & Fettle, pointed to operational limitations and poor timing for the store’s closing.

“Early in the summer is the worst possible time because that’s when people typically have more time and want to go out to dinner,” MacDougall said during an interview July 8 by phone. “It might have been a different story if we had opened it in the fall, when people were returning to school.”

Founded in 2016, Feast & Fettle was an e-commerce business for six years before it opened its first bricks-and-mortar store in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, in April 2023. After success there, the company began looking into expanding into Massachusetts, first opening a location in Newton in October.

The location “wasn’t getting the same traction” as the Rhode Island location, MacDougall said.

The company then moved to testing in Cambridge, opening its store at 1699 Massachusetts Ave. in the Baldwin neighborhood on May 16. The store opened later than expected: A representative said in September, after the company got License Commission approvals, that it expected to be open by 2024, but in February that was explained to be the timeline for Newton – and that Cambridge was expected to get its store in the spring.

The city’s core Feast & Fettle member base of more than 200 was not enough to keep the physical store profitable, and it shuttered its doors June 20.

The company remains unfazed. “We have this nature to just try things and see how they go, and don’t be afraid to pull the plug,” MacDougall said. “And that’s just what happened with Cambridge. We just chose to stop the bleeding.”

For now, Feast & Fettle is content to remain an e-commerce business, at least for Cambridge. MacDougall said the company would focus its energies on delivery rather than physical retail, though it was open to testing “smaller-scale retail applications” such as corporate partnerships with businesses, cafes, hospitals or campuses.

With its closing, Feast & Fettle joins a slew of other food and beverage businesses that have closed Cambridge locations this year – including restaurants Evoo and Za in Kendall Square and Mōge Tee in Harvard Square.

Licensing lashing, and then Sound Bites can go full volume

From Page 1

He was called before the commission for operating without proper permits from December to March, when commissioners found out and forced the restaurant to sell food for takeaway only.

Representing Zera, attorney Carolyn Conway told commissioners that the three months the restaurant operated without proper licensing resulted from “confusion” and “misunderstanding.”

“Counselor, no offense, I know you’re just representing your clients – I’m not buying it that it was a mistake,” commission chair Joe Lynch said. “If you’re purchasing a building and a restaurant for over a million dollars, that’s an investment of your money. You should know that you need licenses and permits.”

The effect of that mistake on Sound Bites’ workers, and concern about new and potentially discriminatory practices by Zera, drew employee advocates to the hearing too.

Francisca Sepulveda of the Massachusetts Coalition of Occupational Safety and Health and Somerville Workers Center director Juan Williams alleged “deeply harmful working conditions” over the past 20 years, as they wrote in a letter submitted to the board.

In two investigations concluded in 2021, the federal Department of

Labor found 30 violations – mostly charging unfair compensation – affecting at least 17 employees. The department of labor sued Mirza and in 2022, the U.S. District Court of Massachusetts fined him \$15,000. The government argued that he leveled death threats against Fabian Zuleta, a worker seeking proper overtime pay.

Then came the loss of in-person dining for three months because of Zera’s paperwork problems, but that was just one obstacle facing Sound Bites workers, Sepulveda and Williams wrote: “Since December, employees have had their hours dramatically cut, continue to have differential payment based on ethnicity and have not had their vacation time restored.”

Marcy Goldstein-Gelb, a neighbor of the restaurant, started a GoFundMe to support workers who had to leave Sound Bites or faced reduced hours that cut their pay, forcing them to find additional, supplementary work. “They went for several months without being licensed, without knowing who their employer was – in limbo. And as a result of, frankly, the negligence of not following through, these workers lost their livelihoods,” Goldstein-Gelb said.

The commission reinstated Sound Bites’ permits in May, but denied the restaurant’s request for dining on a patio behind the restaurant, deeming the area inaccessible for people with physical disabilities.



Explain Boston to Me

Sound Bites in Ball Square, Somerville, is closed Friday afternoon during hours it’s listed as being open.

Lynch also left Zera with a warning, saying the commission was aware of the government’s previous investigation into the restaurant.

“It does not bode well for the current owners for their first appearance in front of this commission to plead ignorance of the fact that they should have had valid licenses,” Lynch said. “That’s why you can hear the tone of my voice.”

The Sound Bites owner’s lawyer, Conway, assured commissioners that Zera would be “more than willing” to meet with employees or their representative for productive discussion.

“Things can move forward so that everyone is satisfied,” Conway said.

In the weeks since, things have improved, according to the workers’ advocates. “It seems like it’s back to normal,” Sepulveda said of the Sound Bites staff. “At the moment, we’re just being cautious. We’ve just been trying to monitor the situation.” There are times employers wait “until the waters are more calm and they feel there’s no more attention on the case, and they go back to how it used to be,” Sepulveda said.

Zera and Conway were contacted for comment but did not reply.

■ Do you know of a business opening or closing in Cambridge or Somerville? Send news to business@cambridgeday.com.

BUSINESS & MONEY

Loss of art space is still a fear at a smaller Somernova expansion

By GRETA GAFFIN

Artists worried about Somerville’s disappearing creative space were the strongest voices at a July 9 hearing about a 10-year, 1.6 million-square-foot expansion of the Somernova tech and business campus, a project with a last known price tag of \$3.3 billion.

The project, in Ward 2 along Somerville Avenue between Porter and Union squares, is in a public comment period until Aug. 30, so no votes were taken at the joint hearing of the Planning Board and City Council’s Land Use Committee.

Owner Rafi Properties wants to add an overlay zoning district allowing more kinds of tenants than are permitted by the land’s current fabrication-district zoning – a category put in place just five years ago.

Many artists are not happy about this, especially those at Milk Row Studios, a former industrial site next to Somernova. It is filled with culture-focused businesses “thanks to the fact that it is affordable and the zoning since 2019 has so far kept us relatively safe from displacement,” said Ethan Dussault, a New Alliance Audio producer, volunteer with the Art Stays Here group and member of the the Union Square Neighborhood Council’s Somernova community-benefits negotiating team.

“We are now seeing a true test of our city’s dedication to an independent, from-the-streets arts and creative economy,” Dussault said.

The current Somernova proposal, taking feedback on a previous version into account, is smaller overall and does not cut out as much art space. The new proposal asks less height on construction and has less parking, while adding 100 housing units, of which 20 will be kept as affordable. It will also include a music rehearsal space, something many community members asked for, as well as civic space and two parks.



Marc Levy

Ethan Dussault of New Alliance Audio talks July 11 about an expansion of the nearby Somernova campus.

“We know how challenging it is to create art space and keep art space in the city,” said Russell Preston, representing Rafi.

At the same time, the project includes tech space, which is what requires the new zoning overlay.

Rafi hopes to attract climate and “tough tech” firms, which need bigger floor plates than exists in bio and life science labs being built in Somerville. The existing buildings on the Somernova parcel are former factory buildings that already have high ceilings and are more suitable for this kind of manufacturing and research, and new buildings will be designed to cater to this industry.

Artist Jenn Harrington listed the many creative spaces in Somerville that have closed in recent years and said. “It’s massively disappointing to see Somernova’s proposal and to know that they think 25,000 square feet of affordable art space is even close to enough.”

“We understand we will be displaced by the current plan,” said artist Charles Martin, who works out of Milk Row Studios, to officials. “Please do not make this choice without acknowledging the effect on our community. It’s a choice between two futures for someone, please offer the dignity to tell us the truth about what is actually happening. Please discuss the impact with these developers, and not intent. They discussed a campus that’s not an integrated part of Somerville, that is a separate way for them to make money. They discussed making it beneficial to the City of Somerville – it’s beneficial to them, and that’s their primary interest.”

“We love our building. It may be old and crusty, but we are there and we want to stay,” said Audrey Ryan, who has been at Milk Row Studios for 20 years. She also expressed concern about a decade of construction noise and dust.

Ronn Friedlander, the owner of Aeronaut Brewing, spoke about being displaced during construction. “Without concrete binding agreements that guarantee our tenancy under viable economic terms, our future here remains uncertain,” he said, asking the committee to consider current tenants.

Some abutters aren’t happy either. Camille Stubbe, who lives on Tyler Street, said the project is still too tall. “This is not one building. It surrounds an entire neighborhood and encapsulates this entire neighborhood in shadow,” she said.

The session also heard voices in favor of the project. Brian Doherty, general agent of

the Greater Boston Building Trades Union, supports it as providing good jobs to workers, and he sees the developer as willing to work with labor. Ryan Colon of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades also expressed support.

David Tatarakis, who lives on Gilman Street, said he supports the proposal, particularly due to the reduced number of parking spaces and the addition of housing.

Kelsey Lamp agreed. “I love living here, but I’m worried about my ability to stay in Somerville. It will add incredibly needed housing stock to the city,” Lamp said. “Given how tightly packed Somerville is, the only place to go is up.”

Peter Kim-Santos said he thinks the buildings should be taller, which would allow for more housing and for more artist space.

Tracey Stearns, executive director of the Mystic Learning Center, said the project would be good for Somerville’s youth, as it would add significant additional room for them.

“The lack of space for kids to have safe space – they have nothing left, it’s nothing like when I was in my teens,” she said.

Michael Chu, a Somerville parent with three kids, also expressed his support and noted financial support Somernova has already given to youth programming.

After the meeting, Dussault talked about how New Alliance had relocated twice after losing spaces in Boston’s Fenway and Cambridge’s Central Square area, when a developer bought the iconic EMF building.

“In 2005, 2006, there was always another building,” Dussault said, pausing a Thursday recording session with Peter Trainor of The Ghouls – winner of the year’s Rock N Roll Rumble. If Milk Row is lost, it’s no longer clear where New Alliance would go. “Now we’re pushed out to the edge,” Dussault

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EVENTS AHEAD JULY 18–25

Somerville Theatre's Crystal Ballroom, 55 Davis Square

8 p.m. July 18

The Ergs perform

\$20 to \$24. For the 20th anniversary of their LP “DorkRockCorkRod,” the New Jersey cult pop punk trio celebrates with an expanded reissue and a series of shows.

7:30 p.m. July 24

Korean band The Volunteers perform

\$40 to \$50. Powerhouse vocalist and guitarist Yerin Baek leads this alt rock band from Seoul.

6 p.m. July 25

(and continuing through July 28 also at the Rockwell and on a new outdoor main stage)

Nice, A Fest

\$16.25 or \$106.61 for a four-day pass. A local music and art festival held in Davis Square for the fourth year. Thursdays lineup includes Dutch Tulips, Sweet Petunia, Haasan Barclay, Pink Navel and Rusty Mullet.

7 p.m. July 23

The Rockwell, 255 Elm St., Davis Square, Somerville

“Heck Yeah,” the Heckle Mic

Free and all ages. A comedy show where you should heckle. It’s free. That’s all we know.

Porter Square Books, 25 White St., Porter Square, Cambridge

7 p.m. July 19

Writers of Porter Square Books

Free. The bookstore celebrates its 20th anniversary with a group reading by 10 published and publishing PSB booksellers and Café Zing baristas, as well as current and past writers-in-residence.

7 p.m. July 25

Lawrence Millman reads from “Outsider, My Boyhood with Thoreau”

Free. The Cambridge author of 20 books, countless magazine articles, researcher on more than 40 trips and expeditions to the Arctic and Subarctic and esteemed mycologist recounts with awe and humor how nature and animals shaped his “quirky, abundant life.”

6 to 7 p.m. July 24

Cambridge Public Library Boudreau Branch, 245 Concord Ave., Observatory Hill in Neighborhood 9

Cookbook book group: curry

Free, but register. All cooking levels are welcome at this potluck; bring a dish (or your thoughts) to share with other cooks. This month choose any recipe from “On the Curry Trail” by Raghavan Iyer.

7 to 9:30 p.m. July 24

Kingsley Park near the Water Department facility at 250 Fresh Pond Parkway, in West Cambridge at Fresh Pond Reservation

The Cambridge Moth Ball for National Moth Week

Free and all ages, but register. Learn how to attract, photograph and ID moths, exploring them up close and sharing the data and photos with researchers. No previous mothning experience required. Bring a picnic (and take your trash with you) and dress like a moth if you’d like (though long sleeves and long pants are recommended).

The Brattle Theatre, 40 Brattle St., Harvard Square, Cambridge

6:30 p.m. July 20

Boston Comic Arts Foundation co-presents “Robot Dreams” film screening with author Sara Varon in person

\$15, or \$31 with choice of book (“Robot Dreams” or Varon’s latest “Detective Sweet Pea”). This hand-drawn animated film from 2023 based on Varon’s 2007 graphic novel is “joyous, beautiful, heartbreaking and hopeful in equal measure.” Part of the Brattle’s “Celebrate 50 Years of Million Year Picnic” Festival running Friday through Sunday with a documentary about the Harvard Square comics shop.

6 p.m. July 23

Taffy Brodesser-Akner reads from “Long Island Compromise”

\$10, or \$38 with book. During this Harvard Book Store event, the author of “Fleishman Is in Trouble” who executive produced its television adaptation discusses her latest, a novel “whose brew of hilarity, heartbreak and smarts recalls the best of Philip Roth” (says Kirkus Reviews). She’s joined by Tom Perrotta, whose books “Election,” “Little Children,” “Mrs. Fletcher” and “The Leftovers” also found a second life on the screen.

Club Passim, 47 Palmer St., Harvard Square, Cambridge

8 p.m. July 18

Cecilia Zabala performs

\$23 to \$25. The guitarist, composer and singer-songwriter with 11 albums combines Argentine folklore, contemporary language, jazz, tango and Brazilian music.

8 p.m. July 25

Mass Spiritz collaborative hip-hop project album release

\$20 to \$25. Paul Willis and Terry Borderline headline this celebration of Mass Spiritz Vol. 2, executive produced by Borderline and Sassy D’estany in collaboration with Voice of Liberation.

Harvard Book Store, 1256 Massachusetts Ave., Harvard Square, Cambridge

7 p.m. July 18

Paolo Bacigalupi reads from “Navola”

Free. The author of “The Water Knife” and “The Windup Girl” has written a novel about powerful rivaling families in a fantastical world inspired by 15th century Florence with echoes of “The Godfather” and “Game of Thrones.” “Get in Trouble” author Kelly Link joins.

11 a.m. to 2 p.m. July 21

Summer Shack, 149 Alewife Brook Parkway, Alewife, Cambridge

Whitney and Tina drag brunch

\$20. Enjoy a meal and sing along in tribute to these two fabulous icons. Hosted by Neon Calypso.

4 to 6 p.m. July 25

Harvard’s Science Center Plaza between Harvard Yard at Kirkland and Oxford streets, near Harvard Square, Cambridge

Harvard Celebrates Disability Pride

Free. Accessible games, disability trivia, “try your hands” at ASL with a Harvard ASL interpreter, pet therapy, snacks, music, resources information and more.

6 p.m. July 21
ManRay, 40 Prospect St., Central Square, Cambridge

Crave

\$5 to \$7 and 21-plus. An all-new Sunday event combining a traditional tea dance with a deeper, more soulful and Afro House sound. Hosted by SoundGroove Records with Boston DJs/producers Curtis Atchison, Susan Esthera, Leo Alarcon and Reginald Johnson.

7 p.m. July 25

Olivia Gatwood reads from “Whoever You Are, Honey”

Free. The author of “New American Best Friend” and “Life of the Party” discusses her Santa Cruz-set debut novel that’s “kind of ‘Stepford Wives’ meets ‘Grey Gardens’ for the age of artificial intelligence.” Maggie Doherty, author of “The Equivalents: A Story of Art, Female Friendship and Liberation in the 1960s,” joins.

7 p.m. July 22

Juliet Grames reads from “The Lost Boy of Santa Chionia”

Free. Bestselling author of “The Seven or Eight Deaths of Stella Fortuna” discusses her new novel about a 27-year-old American woman in 1960 Catalonia who discovers human remains that police won’t investigate. “The Stationary Shop” author Marjan Kamali joins.

■ List your cultural happenings at events@cambridgeday.com.



Arts at the Armory, 191 Highland Ave., Somerville

7:30 to 9 p.m. July 19

Wyrd presents “The New Faces in Hell”

\$12. Local comedians play characters who’ve died and face judgment by two bored bureaucrats at the gates of Hell.

Noon to 6 p.m. July 21

Wicked Good Aht Mahket

Free. More than 25 local artists showcase and sell their creations.

7:30 p.m. July 23

The Moth story slam

\$15. This monthly open-mic storytelling competition is open to anyone who can share a five-minute tale on the night’s theme – this time, “Achilles heel,” about “weaknesses and soft spots, your personal kryptonite,” whether it’s “that look your dog gives you, your fear of clowns ... recklessly falling in love ... your need to have the last word.”

All day July 20

Somerville Public Library, 79 Highland Ave., Central Hill

ComixCon 2024

Free. A fan-themed day with programming from your favorite fandoms, stalls with local artists and vendors, cosplay and more. Sponsored by the Friends of the Somerville Public Library.

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

10 a.m. to noon July 20 (rain date: July 21)

The Hidden Colors of Nature: Solar dyeing with plants

Free and all ages. Learn how to create dye colors with flowers, onion skins and avocado pits and skins – using the power of the sun! Bring a glass jar to see yarn change color over time. (At the Aug. 3 session you’ll weave with the materials.)

4 to 5:30 p.m. July 20 (rain date: July 21)

Celebrating Amy Lowell’s Poetry

Free. A read-aloud of poems by Lowell (1874-1925) who embraced the Imagist movement, “poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.”

8 to 9:30 p.m. July 23

Moth survey night

Free, but register. Join participatory scientists from Earthwise Aware to learn how to identify and document arthropods encountered in the dark (such as moths). No expertise required, but prepare by downloading the Anecdata app and joining the EwA Buggy project.

6:20 to 8 p.m. July 21

Lilypad, 1353 Cambridge St., Inman Square, Cambridge

Allan Chase Trio

\$10. The jazz saxophonist, composer and chair of the Ear Training department at Berklee brings his Standards Project, a set of rarely heard songs, to this intimate setting, along with Nate Radley on guitar and Andres Schiller on bass.

8 p.m. July 19-20

Multicultural Arts Center, 41 Second St., East Cambridge

Art Unearths premieres “Butterfly Effect”

\$35, or pay what you can. Performance and video provoke thoughts about the fast-paced life in a work by a Boston dance company led by Jeryl Palana Pilapil-Brown.

Noon to 8 p.m. July 20-21

The Foundry, 101 Rogers St., East Cambridge

Second Annual NorthBeast Regional Poetry Slam

Free to \$25. Twice the size as last year, 16 teams of poets from across New England and beyond compete in spoken word competitions. Includes workshops, readings and literary-themed community tables.

6 to 8 p.m. July 25

Urban Park Roof Garden atop the Kendall Center Green Garage at 90 Broadway, Kendall Square

Urban Park Paint & Sip series: figure painting

Free, but register and valid ID required for alcoholic beverages. Community Art Center instructors guide you while your paintbrush captures the proportions, musculature, subtle fabric folds and more from a strategically draped live model presenting a Greco-Roman physique. Wine samples too.

5 to 9 p.m. July 25

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

Harvard Art Museums at Night

Free. During this recurring event wander exhibits, catch spotlight tours, browse the shop, enjoy sounds from DJ C-Zone and buy snacks from local vendors.

5:30 to 6:30 p.m. July 24

Meeting at the plaza on the Franklin Street side of the Cambridge Public Library Central Square Branch, 45 Pearl St.

Summer Art Tour: Central Square

Free, but register. Get a guided tour of the public artwork in Central Square and learn how it’s maintained.

6 to 8 p.m. July 24

Nature Center at Magazine Beach, 668 Memorial Drive, Cambridgeport

Evening Family Kayaking

Free and families with children ages zero and up, but register. This guided ecotour by kayak welcomes paddlers of all abilities. Gear is provided, and the program begins with beginner paddler instruction.

11 a.m. to midnight July 20

Dante Alighieri Society Center, 41 Hampshire St., Kendall Square, Cambridge

Bachatamania, Volume II

\$55 to \$120 and 18-plus (21-plus for the evening). A full day of bachata workshops and dancing with a Dominican buffet; in the evening, the fourth annual white-summer-themed party followed by a live concert with bachata superstar Johnny Sky.

FILM AHEAD JULY 18–25

LOCAL FOCUS



Thora Birch in “Ghost World,” based on comics by Daniel Clowes.

Million Year Picnic shop celebrates 50 with a doc and comic film festival

By OSCAR GOFF

Harvard Square is filled with cultural institutions, from Club Passim and the Grolier Poetry Book Shop to (of course) our beloved **Brattle Theatre**. But one of the square’s unsung crown jewels lies in its very heart, its windows at ankle level: The Million Year Picnic, one of the oldest comic book shops in the country. To celebrate the Picnic’s 50th anniversary, The Brattle has programmed a slate of some of the finest comic book films ever made. The series kicks off Friday with a double feature of very different works by comic-publisher-turned-director Terry Zwigoff – the award-winning documentary “Crumb” (1994), about the controversial king of underground comix, and “Ghost World” (2000), Zwigoff’s adaptation of Daniel Clowes’ beloved coming-of-age graphic novel.

The centerpiece of the program, appropriately enough, will be Saturday’s Boston premiere of animator Vincent-louis Apruzzese’s brand-new documentary “The Picnic,” detailing the full story of the shop’s storied existence. Following that, cartoonist Sara Vachon will be on hand to introduce a screening of last year’s Oscar-nominated “Robot Dreams” (2023), director Pablo Berger’s adaptation of her own graphic novel. Other highlights include Edgar Wright’s hyperkinetic cult classic “Scott Pilgrim vs. the World” (2010, based on the series by Bryan Lee O’Malley) on Saturday; “Persepolis” (2007), Marjane Satrapi’s animated adaptation of her own autobiographical graphic novel about growing up in Iran, screening Sunday; and even “Black Panther” (2017), easily the best and most enduring entry in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, also on Sunday. The best part? Million Year Picnic is only a block from The Brattle, so you can walk straight from the movies and dive into the original source material.

Those looking for a different definition of “comic action” can head to the **Somerville Theatre** on Saturday and Sunday for a brand-new 4K restoration of the British comedy classic “The Lavender Hill Mob” (1951). Produced by the legendary Ealing Studios and directed by Charles Crichton (who would go on to an Oscar nomination for “A Fish Called Wanda” in 1989), “Lavender Hill” stars the great Sir Alec Guinness as Henry “Dutch” Holland, the straight-laced watchman for

a gold bullion refinery. Dutch breaks bad when he meets tchotchke maven Alfred Pendlebury (Stanley Holloway) and the pair hatch a scheme to pilfer a truckload of gold bars and reconstitute them as innocent Eiffel Tower souvenirs. It is, of course, always a treat to watch Guinness flex his considerable comedy chops, particularly for those familiar only with his work with George Lucas or David Lean. But “Lavender Hill” is a comedic gem in its own right, with a wild climactic car chase to rival “The Blues Brothers.” If all that’s not enough, watch for a cameo from a pre-stardom Audrey Hepburn!

The Brattle’s celebration of the musicals of Columbia Pictures enters the rock ’n’ roll ’50s on Monday. “Rock Around the Clock” (1956) is a perfect snapshot of rock at its infancy: It’s a vehicle for Bill Haley and the Comets (whose rendition of the title song has a reasonable claim at being the first rock ’n’ roll single) and features a significant supporting role by pioneering DJ Alan Freed (who played a major role in popularizing both the genre and the term itself). The plot is incidental, of course, but who cares when you’ve got prime performance footage of the Comets, the Platters and Freddie Bell and his Bellboys?

On Tuesday, you can jump to rock’s (arguable) demise by heading to the **Landmark Kendall Square Cinema** for the notorious musical boondoggle “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band” (1978). Contrary to its title, this is not a vehicle for the Beatles; it stars the Bee Gees (as the title band) and Peter Frampton (as Billy Shears) performing the songs of the Fab Four, along with such oh-so-’70s mainstays as Alice Cooper (crooning “Because”), Steve Martin (hamming his way through “Maxwell’s Silver Hammer”), and Aerosmith (whose cover of “Come Together” remains the film’s most lasting legacy). The “Sgt. Pepper” movie isn’t “good” in any conventional sense (and certainly should not be mentioned in the same sentence as the eponymous album), but it’s an irresistible guilty pleasure for connoisseurs of ’70s cheese.

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 35 mm 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 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**

FILM CLIPS



Kôki and Pálmi Kormákur in one timeline of “Touch.”

‘Touch’: Pain, hope and promise

By TOM MEEK

Based on Ólafur Jóhann Ólafsson’s novel of the same name, Baltasar Kormákur’s pine-across-time-and-continents is book-ended in two globally defining fates: the bombing of Hiroshima and the onset of Covid. Told in two timelines, “Touch” revolves around a 70-something Finnish gentleman by the name of Kristofer (Egill Ólafsson), a widower with a daughter, passing the time singing in a choir. He’s also recently diagnosed with early stage Alzheimer’s, and from his long, reflective face it’s clear he’s unsettled, memories a-flutter, unfulfilled; before the disease or virus can take hold, to London he goes, just as hotels and airlines are starting to mask up and shut down. The “why” we get in the other timeline – the 1960s – as a young Kristofer (played by the director’s son, Pálmi) drops out of school and takes up a job as a dishwasher in a Japanese restaurant. Kristofer bonds with the owner, Takahashi (Masahiro Motoki), who came to London to escape the pain and scars of the bombing, and with Takahashi’s daughter, Miko (Kôki). How events pan out in both timeframes take some painful and surprising turns. The ambient tenor orchestrated by Ólafsson is subtle and quietly moving, coming more from the soul and setting than from the flying of romantic sparks. It’s a reflective, internal story that plumbs tragedy and pain as much as it wells with hope and promise. The action takes place primarily in London with scenes in Finland and Japan; in this journey of the yearning heart, though, location is largely ancillary. And though “Touch” takes place in the kitchen of a Japanese restaurant, Ólafsson doesn’t quite get it into the culinary company of “The Taste of Things” (2023) or “Babette’s Feast” (1987).

At Kendall and Assembly squares.

★★★★☆

Maika Monroe as FBI agent Lee Harker in “Longlegs.”

‘Longlegs’: Cage makes a killing

By TOM MEEK

All the hype about this serial killer chiller from Oz Perkins being the next “Silence of the Lambs” (1991) has been well chummed by releasing company Neon, though Nicolas Cage, also a producer on the film, does make for an unforgettable Hannibal Lecter-Buffalo Bill hybrid as the sadistic psycho of the title. Maika Monroe as green FBI agent Lee Harker is less impressive – she pops out of the microwave like something of a reheated Clarice Starling, except for the audience learning early on that Harker has innate instincts that go beyond profiling and may be tied to a childhood trauma. They get her put on the Longlegs case with senior agent Carter (a dutiful and on-point Blair Underwood). To say more about the plot would be to ruin this moody piece, which is propelled by deftly heightened atmospheric dread and some great performances but blows its credibility in the final act: Set in Oregon in the 1990s, there’s been a series of families killed over a 20-year period. The crimes look usually like murder-suicide by the dads, except for a series of cryptic notes left at the scenes. Much of what’s thrown onscreen from a crime investigation standpoint makes little sense. Cage is unquestionably the reason to see the film., His well-meted appearances as the pasty, androgynous and indelibly ghoulish Longlegs make the film, though the upping of the ante ultimately gets to be a little much. Cliches and a soulless finale hobble it from reaching its full stride.

At Kendall and Assembly squares and Fresh Pond.

★★★★☆

MUSIC

ATTEND

Booking: Easier as ‘We’

By MICHAEL GUTIERREZ

When Cody Rico last appeared in this column, we highlighted a DIY musical showcase at Tasty Burger in Harvard Square, organized by his booking outfit Ibookthings.

Alas alack, the burger joint didn't stick as a regular spot in the stable of music venues, which has included Faces, Deep Cuts, The 4th Wall, Silhouette Lounge, Notch Brighton, O'Brien's Pub and more. Things come, things go. In the reported words of the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus, "Everything changes and nothing remains still."

Change is afoot within the booking outfit as well. It recently rebranded from Ibookthings to Webookthings.

I reached out to Rico about the transition, and what it means for operations. The first and most immediate impetus for the change is a health issue that will prevent him from dedicating the long hours necessary to pilot the booking outfit.

Reflect, for a moment, on the harrowing logistics required to book a show calendar, which, in any given month, will place around 300 musicians in 70 bands on 20 bills performing on a half-dozen stages around town. The email jockeying alone is mind-boggling. Rico will be pulling back incrementally from his current workload, eyeing September as his "cut bait" date.

The silver lining is that a team is in place to take the reins. Rico said he "couldn't be happier about the ever-growing team of brilliant individuals who will be keeping things going. The word 'we' really drives home the fact that this has always been a community booking agency that thrives off the awesome music scene the Boston area has to offer."

When it comes to the good things in life, such as music, "community" means picking up where others leave off, because the good things are too good to let go. Shout out to Webookthings team members Hunter, Brian, Xavier and Gabby for keeping the train rolling. Send positive vibes to Cody Rico, who has done a lot to make that community feel, you know, "communal." A new chapter of a local booking outfit is waiting to be written.

Hit this

July 25 *Kickoff show at Nice, A Fest (Crystal Ballroom, Somerville)*

The local or local-ish acts you love hearing all year long, finally gathered under one roof! Or rather three or four roofs, depending on what you consider a roof. The Nice Fest returns July 25-28 with a new color scheme, an outdoor stage and more music than you can shake a stick at. A sage once said, "Once you hit the five-band threshold, a 'show' becomes a 'festival.'" Maybe so. Compared with the other days, though, the Thursday night kickoff party at Crystal Ballroom is a modest affair. Five acts, including a few Nice veterans hopping back on the merry-go-round. A relative calm before the storm of the 70-plus band blitzkrieg that's taking the weekend by force.

July 26 *Scam Likely, Condition Baker, Amulette (The Jungle, Somerville)*

"That's how the cookie crumbles." What else could you say when Condition Baker arrived at the 2024

Rock N Roll Rumble missing a band member? A sudden emergency, family, medical or otherwise, reduced the alt-punk quartet out of Holbrook to a trio. They soldiered on bravely, delivering a gutsy performance. But if that was the first time you heard them live, you were probably left wondering what the fully conditioned Condition Baker sounds like. Now's your chance. Neo-proggers Amulette and alt-rockers Scam Likely join the party, along with a mystery guest.

July 26 *Animal Piss, It's Everywhere; Bong Wish; Stella Kola; Willie Lane (The Lilypad, Cambridge)*

Do you really need to be sold on a show with a headliner named Animal Piss, It's Everywhere? Like alcohol, Girl Scout cookies and Internet service, it's a product that sells itself. But to add some gloss, this quadruple-stack lineup at the Lilypad is an indie rock polycule of music. A member of Animal Piss, It's Everywhere is married to a member of Stella Kola. A member of Stella Kola is playing with Willie Lane. And it seems like everyone is a former or current contributor to Sunburned Hand of Man. Bong Wish is the cherry on top.

Live: Jim E. Brown, Pew Pew and Scaffolding at The 4th Wall

I covered The 4th Wall, a pop-up music venue staging shows at the Capitol Theatre in Arlington, way back in 2023. It was the very first column I wrote for Cambridge Day. At the time, the operation was getting ready to launch its first show.

With the first anniversary on the horizon, The 4th Wall is a reliable gem.

The venue hosted an eclectic bill Friday featuring Jim E. Brown, Pew Pew and Scaffolding. Pew Pew (who didn't have merch but collected donations for the rear window of their hatchback that got smashed on the way to the gig) and Providence's Scaffolding served up some lively, art-damaged indie rock. The true star of the evening was Brown, poet and artist-activist out of Manchester, U.K.

He's a musician too. But he's a musician in the way that William Burroughs, Adam Sandler and Tiny Tim were musicians, using rhythm and melody as props to showcase their other gifts or general preposterousness. Brown's musical genre of choice is a kind of rote, prerecorded, synth-driven New Wave blather. A convenient hook on which to hang any sort of absurdist lyrical theme, from "Someone Left 4 Chicken Fillets in Marie Louise Gardens," to "I Texted You a Photo of the Sunset and You Never Responded," to "I'm An Obese Alcoholic."

Brown's electric guitar and electric flute featured lightly in a set devoted largely to spoken word, stage banter and pitches for the artist's merch table, which included all three volumes of his autobiography, a steamy potboiler about a romantic weekend with the elderly Mrs. Higgins and a heartbreaking tale of not being able to reclaim his son Tanner from the orphanage (after he gave him up for adoption to take a vacation).

Is The 4th Wall venturing into comedy? If Jim E. Brown is a comedian, that's a yes.

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

FOOD

WHAT WE'RE HAVING



Tom Meek

The "Not So Classic" at Asaro Bakery & Cafe has omelet topped with a beet spread, goat cheese and arugula on challah.

Challah sandwich and foamy latte on tap at Asaro Bakery & Cafe

By TOM MEEK

SNACK



Cambridge Pizzeria chicken Caesar wraps

Price: \$9.95

On a residential street in Cambridgeport sits Cambridge Pizzeria, an old-timey, no-frills spot that serves the obvious pizza alongside a surprisingly long menu of hot subs, triple-decker clubs, paninis and wraps. The pizza for which it's named is good, but those other offerings are not to be overlooked. The chicken Caesar wrap, which you can get with either grilled or breaded chicken, is delicious. My breaded chicken was crispy and well-seasoned, and the lettuce was well-coated in a Caesar dressing that was creamy and rich but also tangy and bright. With a wrap such as this one that includes dressed greens, there's a narrow sweet spot between underdressed (dry) and overdressed (soggy) that Cambridge Pizzeria hit perfectly. It's the kind of place where everything is pretty affordable, and at \$9.95, this wrap is a great sub-\$10 offering that actually works as a full meal—a rarity these days.

MADELEINE AITKEN

■ Cambridge Pizzeria, 263 Brookline St., Cambridgeport, Cambridge

■ Asaro Bakery & Cafe, 1629 Cambridge St., Mid-Cambridge

The Darwin's Ltd. chain of cafes shuttered at the end of 2022, ending a 30-year area institution. But in the old Darwin's locales we have Circus City Cafe on Putnam Avenue, Luxor Cafe (formerly Roust) on Mount Auburn Street in Harvard Square and now the recently opened Asaro Cafe on Cambridge Street across from Cambridge Rindge and Latin School. (Coming soon: The Smoot Standard in the final emptied slot in The Port.)

Asaro is a Jewish-styled bakery that offers something new along with the familiar. The redo to the interior is impressive, framed by enticing display cases full of housemade pastries, cookies and sandwiches of the day. The big table is still there and the stately stacked stone slate walls, but the rest feels refurbished, buffed up and new.

Asaro is all about the challah, though they bake some pretty killer croissants too. The breakfast sandwiches are all-dayers, including a "Not So Classic" offering that is a neat change-up: a perfect omelet topped with a beet spread, goat cheese and arugula. Given that combo, there's a lot of flavor, texture and zest packed into a super fresh and moist challah.

Lunchtime tuna and egg salad offerings are pleasing too, with low use of creamy dairy and puckering additions of pickled onions and more of that fresh arugula.

Also on the menu is a crispy chicken schnitzel, and a dried-fruit and slow-cooked chicken thigh sandwich, as well as a turkey meatball sub that's got some spicy zing to it and a lighter, zesty marinara; each is packed into puffy challah.

Other things to have are the Jerusalem bagel platter with some of that tuna salad, labneh (yogurt) and hard-boiled egg slices, as well as premade salads, risotto and other pasta dishes in a grab-and-go refrigerator and, always, that sandwich concoction of the day.

Being a cafe, Asaro has a rich coffee menu. One cool thing to try during these hot days of summer is the black and tan, a mix of cold brew and a

foamed latte on tap. It's a sweet (but not too sweet) reprieve from the heat.

The staff at Asaro has to be one of the friendliest and energetic I've encountered recently. It's a great place to hang, chat and work while noshing and imbibing. If I had two minor nits, they would be that there are not enough outlets to plug in (though free Wi-Fi, yes!) and, maybe, that the challah rolls are a tad too large. I don't need a bigger sandwich, but I could perhaps use a little less bread. That all said, Asaro is a great reboot.

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.

FOODSTUFFS

■ Bonchon Korean fried chicken has reopened at 57 John F. Kennedy St., Harvard Square, Cambridge, after building renovations. (A grand opening is 6 to 8 p.m. Aug. 11.) Franchise owner Mimi Tran has changed the restaurant to being permanently for delivery and carryout only "to accommodate the foot traffic and nearby campus most efficiently." The new menu highlights cinnamon-and-sugar Korean doughnuts served with a sweet cream dipping sauce.

■ Puritan & Co., 1166 Cambridge St., Harvard Square, Cambridge, has another \$100 clambake coming at 6 p.m. Aug. 25, with lobsters, shrimp, mussels, clams, corn, potatoes, linguica (and drawn butter) as well as appetizers and a peach cobbler for dessert. It comes served at a communal table on the patio. (There are \$50 clambakes for one every Sunday.)

ARTS

LAUGH

Laugh Giraffe lopes into Davis Square

Does this all-star billed show have any connection to the week of the MLB All-Star Game? Honestly, probably not. But like the Home Run Derby, its lineup feature some heavy hitters. Ordinarily, Laugh Giraffe is a weekly comedy showcase that Tricia Thomson and Maddie Kelly curate for Tuesday night audiences at Union Square Tavern. This special edition moves to Davis Square’s The Rockwell to give a larger stage to 2015 Boston Comedy Festival winner Peter Martin, Danya Trommer (Don’t Tell Comedy), Sean Rosa (Mendoza Line Comedy) and El Kennedy. For “extra innings,” stick around for the summer edition of Union Comedy’s Kerfuffle, featuring the “undefinable comedy” that’s become a trademark of Jackie Arko and Tess Varney’s long-running variety show. This month features Nate Lopez, Ben Scurria, Deby Xiadani and many more.

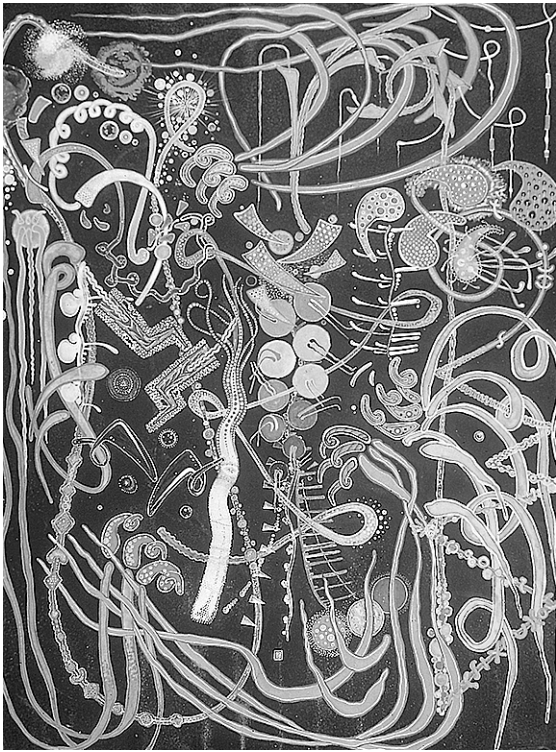
AMMA MARFO

■ **Laugh Giraffe All-Stars, 7 to 8:30 p.m. Saturday (\$15) and The Kerfuffle, 9:30 p.m. Saturday (\$20). The Rockwell, 255 Elm St., Davis Square, Somerville.**

BEHOLD

Folk music’s Harry Smith created art as varied as a songbook

By CLAIRE OGDEN



Harry Smith art on exhibit at Harvard’s Carpenter Center includes “Manteca [Jazz Painting]” from around 1948 or 19449.

The beautiful and unexpected “Fragments of a Faith Forgotten” opened Friday at Harvard’s Carpenter Center, a wide-ranging ode to artist-ethnographer Harry Smith – the scrappy and endlessly eccentric man best known for “The Anthology of American Folk Music” released by Smithsonian Folkways in 1952.

The exhibition is in a multitude of mediums, and that’s intentional: It’s a celebration of the artist’s idiosyncratic research practices and divergent thinking. Experimental films are shown alongside light boxes displaying ethnographic picture slides; in one room, there are drawings best viewed through 3D glasses.

Smith’s films are weird, wacky and mesmerizing: Some are abstract, others have image cut-outs and are very “Fantastic Planet”-esque. In stills from “Film No. 9,” there’s a series of shapes in a vivid and eccentric color palette. Concentric circles overlap. Beset with image noise, they seem almost to be buzzing with life.

In “Ko Ko [Jazz Painting],” a mess of endlessly complex loops, dots and curlicues spans the image in a calming blue-green. It’s an illustration of Charlie Parker’s “Ri Bop Boys” – specifically the B-side. The piece is a lightbox

transparency of a 35 mm slide of the original painting, which was lost.

The eclectic range of materials on view is all the more impressive given the facts of Smith’s life. He led a precarious existence, staying in hotels and often living off the generosity of friends. Since he rarely had a stable place to call home, the safety of his objects was precarious, too: In Oklahoma, he got in trouble for not paying his hotel bill. The manager threw his stuff in the dumpster, including a lot of his art. Smith went to the landfill to try and retrieve it, but with limited success.

In these circumstances, Harvard curators had to get creative: Many of the paintings on view were lost, so 35 mm slide versions of them are projected next to album covers and other paraphernalia. Paintings and films are typically not shown together, since they require vastly different lighting.

But “there’s something about showing still images of films,” curator Dan Byer said. The act of retrieval “opened up an opportunity to look at the films with more care.”

■ **“Fragments of a Faith Forgotten: The Art of Harry Smith” at The Carpenter Center, 24 Quincy St., Harvard Square, Cambridge, through Dec. 1.**

Affordable housing add-ons at Walden Square move forward with Planning Board misgivings

From Page 1

“Every additional amount of effort that you’ve put into this project has improved it. But there are still concerns,” Flynn told project proponents. Under the AHO, the board has no power to approve or reject the project, only to comment on the design and whether it adhered to the zoning ordinance’s guidelines, she and other members pointed out.

The \$80.4 million project by national for-profit housing developer WinnCompanies’ WinnDevelopment unit will add 95 apartments to the 240-unit Walden Square site near Daneyh Park. Winn will construct two new buildings, nine stories and six stories, on the property. Sixty-two of the new units will be two bedrooms or more, filling a need for low-income family housing.

Ed Cafasso, a spokesperson for WinnDevelopment, said the company “has used constructive feedback to consistently adjust its plans for more than three years” and will continue to work on improvement in line with Planning Board comments “where possible.” Cafasso said the design plan includes “a commitment to plant more than 150 trees, improve open space for Walden Square residents and install a sustainable solar energy array.”

The board voted to send its comments to the city – the last step in approval of a 100 percent affordable housing project under the overlay – although some members said they didn’t believe the latest design for the project complied with Affordable Housing Overlay goals that housing fit in with the neighborhood and promotes cycling and pedestrians. “Candidly, I think that’s something we should talk about as a board, how this project meets or does not meet the Affordable Housing Overlay design guidelines. And I think we were not maybe as clear about that last time as we should have been,” said member Mary Lydecker, referring to the first board hearing in March.

Member Ashley Tan questioned the AHO process. “Are there any changes that need to be made to this process? Is there enough community process involved right now?” Tan said. She called

for a discussion that involved Community Development Department staff and the public.

Funding approval already

In another example of the board’s powerlessness, members said they were surprised that the city’s Affordable Housing Trust had voted to help fund the expansion without waiting for a report from the Planning Board. The trust approved a \$18.8 million loan to WinnDevelopment on June 27.

Iram Farooq, assistant city manager for community development, said the loan was “contingent” on the report from the Planning Board, and senior manager for housing development Cassie Arnaud said the trust had acted before a Planning Board vote on at least one previous occasion. The actual language of the trust’s approval of the WinnDevelopment loan says one of the conditions for granting the loan is “the Trust’s review and consideration of Planning Board final AHO advisory design review report.”

The trust isn’t scheduled to meet again until September, which was one reason not to wait until the Planning Board acted, Arnaud said. State agencies that will help fund the project have deadlines for developers to demonstrate they have local financial support. “There’s a lot of things that are tied to having a commitment of local funding in order to be able to queue up all of the other funding sources that a project needs. You need the local funding commitment to be able to begin that process,” Arnaud said.

But is the loan from the city housing agency a commitment of local funds if it’s “contingent” on the report from the Planning Board? No one asked, and neither Farooq nor Arnaud addressed that issue.

City spokesperson Jeremy Warnick said it’s “common” for developers to “pursue financing and permitting concurrently.” Walden Square II is the fourth of seven AHO projects that won funding commitments from the Affordable Housing Trust before a board review was completed, he said.

In those cases, “funding commitments are conditioned on the Trust’s



Marc Levy

Walden Square housing in North Cambridge seen on May 15, 2021.

review of the advisory design review final report from the Planning Board,” Warnick said. When the Planning Board reports are completed, “those reports are transmitted as a new item to the Trust so that the Trust can review, discuss and accept the report in a later meeting pursuant to that condition in each funding commitment,” Warnick said. “If the review is not satisfactory, the commitments could be altered,” Warnick said.

Incremental improvement

The time pressure dismayed Planning Board chair Flynn. “Why don’t we just slow down a little?” she said. “I mean, I know that it’s important to

get affordable housing. I totally understand that, I understand that [there is a] very long waiting list, but it just seems to me that we’re kind of throwing caution to the wind here.”

Other board members said WinnDevelopment’s design changes didn’t significantly improve the project’s bicycle and pedestrian routing and tree canopy, two issues the Planning Board had identified in its first review of the project in March. “I see you have one more tree removed, and you have three more shade trees. So there really hasn’t been much of a shift in that tree balance,” Lydecker said. In March, the board had urged WinnDevelopment to plant more large shade trees and

fewer small “ornamental trees.” Project development consultant Matthew Robayna said the newest plan replaced “100 percent of the tree caliper inches” of the trees that would be removed, a claim that didn’t address the board’s request.

As for bicycle and pedestrian routes, Lydecker said: “The project team has made changes they can here and there. I think the circulation is still confusing.” Member H Theodore Cohen said he had walked in the development the day before the meeting and “I will point out that the circulation is really horrible right now. And anything that’s done to improve it will be a great improvement.” But Cohen also said of the new design that he was “perfectly comfortable with saying that this is not yet where it should be.”

A green light during a process

As board members continued to criticize Winn’s design and call for the company to spend more time to improve it, the company’s lawyer, James Rafferty, said the approval process had been “underway for three years.” He reviewed the history, saying Winn’s initial proposal for one new building was “roundly criticized by the staff, neighbors and others.”

There was no hearing on that idea, and the company returned in March with its current plan for two buildings, Rafferty said. Trying to fix bike and pedestrian circulation on a “tight site” with few separated bike lanes and crosswalks “has consumed a tremendous amount of time,” Rafferty said.

Nevertheless, “at the end of the day, what we’re doing at this point is following the report that we received from the first meeting,” he said. “This is not something that has not been given proper attention, it’s been given considerable attention,” he said. With a second Planning Board meeting, “there was every reason to believe that this meeting will conclude with comments as the process calls for but it will allow the project to go forward,” Rafferty said.

A longer version of this story is at bit.ly/3XWF1Tn.

■ Send letters to forpublication@cambridgeday.com with the name, address, phone number and relevant affiliations of the writer or writers

Sharing the road like our lives depend on it

Two traffic accidents in Cambridge claimed the lives of a bicyclists in June. This shakes me, as my bicycle has been my main mode of transportation since October 2021. At the time, I lived in Germany, where the network of cycle paths matches – if not exceeds – its more-famous highway and train system. I wasn't a cyclist before I moved to Germany, but the cycle paths gave me safety and freedom and inspired exploration of my surroundings.

I've maintained my car-free life since moving back to the United States last summer and settled in East Cambridge, less than a three-minute ride from the latest cycling fatality. I've discovered how much nicer it is to take the bus to visit my parents in New Hampshire. I never worry about parking. And certainly, the cycling networks around Boston and Cambridge have improved since I left in 2015.

I ride cautiously: Cars are bigger, heavier and more powerful than me. Plus, I have fresh memories of "One Day," the book and Netflix series in which – spoiler alert – the protagonist dies the same way my husband's first wife did, in a cycling accident after a swim. I'm terrified that someday my husband might have to mourn a second wife lost to a bicycle accident.

Yet I still love and rely on cycling, though sometimes it's a bumpy road.

A few weeks ago, I nearly T-boned a car that sped up and turned right at Hampshire and Union streets. I've come to expect cars and trucks to ignore bike lanes and people using them.

I've memorized the locations of potholes and maintenance hole covers to avoid being jostled off my bike and into traffic. I've adopted different approaches to cross traffic at tricky intersections, like when cycling west on Memorial drive to the Boston University Bridge.

And I've learned to keep my eyes up and my head down. Recently, while I was cycling in the right lane, a driver passed me in a right-turn lane, called me an obscenity and informed me I was not a car before cutting me off.

I understand why cyclists and bike lanes are fraught topics. In Massachusetts, we are subject to many of the same laws as motorists, yet I sometimes ride through stop signs and red lights. I'm grateful for separated bike lanes, but I understand the fears and frustrations they provoke for small-business owners, delivery services and drivers.

Still, cycling remains my favorite way to move around Cambridge. At rush hour, I flow past traffic lined up on the Longfellow and the Charles River Dam bridges. I'm more present in the environment, observing people, spying flowers and listening to orchestras of birds, even in the midst of city traffic. I get exercise and fresh air, and it's faster than walking while economically accessible for many.

I remember the feeling when I first passed my driver's exam. I find that same feeling cycling.

Germany may be known for its autos, but America seems to have a stronger car culture. Cars provide the freedom we love. When we drive, we're unfettered by train schedules, unburdened by inclement weather and able to multitask with phone calls, podcasts or other distractions.

I remember that feeling from when I first passed my driver's exam. If I could use a car, I could go where I wanted, when I wanted, without having to rely on my parents, my friends or my feet. Today, I find that same feeling when I'm cycling.

I don't know if we'll break this dependence on cars, or even if we should. I don't expect everyone to trade their cars for bicycles, nor do I want cars to be prohibited in cities. I just don't want to get killed while I'm riding my bike.

While we navigate this issue, I hope we navigate it safely, with consideration and with our eyes open to those who choose different paths than we do.

Kerry Summers
Bent Street, Cambridge

A Democracy Center is needed as a physical, noncommercial space to meet and share ideas

I have been going to events at the Democracy Center since the mid-2000s – almost the entire lifetime of the space. I've been to thought-provoking discussion events; I've been to left-of-center book fairs; I've been to experimental arts events; I've been to drag story times with my kid; I've been to a variety of music shows; and when the zine library was in the building, I went there to read zines. I've even used the space to host a number of my own cultural and discussion events.

So with that said, I hope you'll understand that I really mean that I've seen the space up close, and experienced it fully. And I'd like to just point out a couple things that seem particularly important, to me at least.

Due to rising costs, community and creative spaces are dropping like flies in the Boston area. But we as a city need physical and noncommercial space to meet, mingle and share ideas. If the Covid pandemic taught us anything, it's that being separated by screens will only lead to more anger, resentment and misunderstanding. The Democracy Center has always provided this kind of beneficial community space to meet and share ideas.



Matthew Sage

A protester's sign at Cambridge's Democracy Center on July 3.

In a city where rents for event spaces, offices and creative spaces are going through the stratosphere, the Democracy Center has always been a welcoming, affordable space. This is important because we need noncommercial space to be inclusive – for attendees and organizers. The Democracy Center has always been a place that people could scrape a small amount of cash together and rent for a few hours or for a weekend for an amazing event geared toward their own community group.

As you know, the sudden closing announcement has left the community bewildered and frantically trying to understand what to do next. My hope is that the organization that owns the Democracy Center doesn't really understand how unique the space is, or how important it's become to the Boston area.

Tim Devin
Summer Street, Somerville

Legal ads

■ Send legal ads and public notices at least six business days ahead of the intended publication date to advertising@cambridgeday.com with contact information that includes a contact name, phone number and address.

City of Cambridge Massachusetts BOARD OF ZONING APPEAL 831 Mass Avenue, Cambridge, MA. 617) 349-6100

The Board of Zoning Appeal will hold a Virtual Public Meeting, **THURSDAY – JULY 25, 2024**. Members of the public can participate or view the meeting remotely using the **Zoom Webinar link: <https://cambridgema.zoom.us/j/85299551558>**
Or join by phone: Dial +1 929 436 2866 or +1 301 715 8592 - Webinar ID: 852 9955 1558

6:00 P.M. CASE NO. BZA-273148 47 GRANITE STREET #47 Residence C Zone
LUKE & JULIE MITCHELL
Special Permit: To add square footage to the already existing interior space of a building. New square footage will add to already non-conforming floor area ratio. Art. 5.000, Sec. 5.31 (Table of Dimensional Requirements). Art. 8.000, Sec. 8.22.2.d (Non-Conforming Structure). Art. 10.000, Sec. 10.40 (Special Permit).

6:15 P.M. CASE NO. BZA-273676 39 MATIGNON ROAD Residence B Zone
ARCHDIOCESE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL, INC. – C/O JAMES J. RAFFERTY, ESQ.
Variance: Petitioner seeks to subdivide existing lot into two separate lots. Art. 5.000, Sec. 5.31 (Table of Dimensional

Requirements). Sec. 5.15 (Subdivision). & Art. 10.000, Sec. 10.30 (Variance).

6:30 P.M. CASE NO. BZA-265116 76 RESERVOIR STREET – UNIT 2 Residence B Zone
GWENDOLYN M. STEWART-KIBBE & DAVID P. KIBBE
Special Permit: To add a dormer within setbacks and further violate gross floor area. Art. 5.000, Sec. 5.31 (Table of Dimensional Requirements). Art. 8.000, Sec. 8.22.2.d (Non-Conforming Structure). Art. 10.000, Sec. 10.40 (Special Permit).

6:45 P.M. CASE NO. BZA-265414 264 SIDNEY STREET Residence C-1 Zone
JENNIFER MATHIEU & HENRY MARCUCELLA – C/O NOREEN O'TOOLE
Special Permit: To allow for the construction of a proposed 2nd floor rear deck within rear yard setback. Art. 5.000, Sec. 5.31 (Table of Dimensional Requirements). Art. 8.000, Sec. 8.22.2.d (Non-Conforming Structure). Art. 10.000, Sec. 10.40 (Special Permit).

7:00 P.M. CASE NO. BZA-274540 257 CHARLES STREET Residence C-1 Zone
YING ZHANG – C/O JAMES J. RAFFERTY, ESQ.
Variance: Petitioner seeks to reauthorize lapsed subdivision variance (BZA Case No. 017051-2018) to subdivide single lot currently containing two single family homes into two lots, each containing one single family home. Art. 5.000, Sec. 5.31 (Table of Dimensional Requirements) & Sec. 5.15 (Subdivision). Art.

10.000, Sec. 10.30 (Variance).

7:15 P.M. CASE NO. BZA-273812 888 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE Residence C-2B Zone
JEMTAK REALTY LLC – C/O THEO A. PAPAS
Variance: To add an additional dwelling unit to a non-conforming building which violates dimensional standards. Art. 5.000, Sec. 5.31 (Table of Dimensional Requirements) Sec. 5.26 (Conversion). Art. 8.000, Sec. 8.22.3 (Non-Conforming Structure). Art. 10.000, Sec. 10.30 (Variance).

7:30 P.M. CASE NO. BZA-276002 179 APPLETON STREET Residence B Zone
179 APPLETON STREET LLC – ERIC M. HOAGLAND- C/O SISIA DAGLIAN, ARCHITECT
Special Permit: Modification of openings inside (right) yard setback. Art. 5.000, Sec. 5.31 (Table of Dimensional Requirements). Art. 8.000, Sec. 8.22.2.c (Non-Conforming Structure). Art. 10.000, Sec. 10.40 (Special Permit).

7:45 P.M. CASE NO. BZA-261307 1 BRATTLE SQUARE Business B Zone/HSOC
BCSP 9 OBS PROPERTY LLC, MATTHEW STEGALL, MANAGING DIRECTOR/ C/O DAVE TINNERY – C/O NICHOLAOS MOSHOPOULOS
Special Permit: To operate a formula business quick food service establishment at 1 Brattle Square. Art. 4.000, Sec. 4.35.o & Sec. 11.30 (Fast Order Food Establishment). Art. 10.000, Sec. 10.40 (Special Permit).

8:00 P.M. CASE NO. BZA-271436 17 PERRY STREET Residence C Zone
PAVAN BENDAPUDI
ON BEHALF OF PRANOT BENDAPUDI, TEM BENDAPUDI

– C/O CHRISTOPHER F. BROWN, ARCHITECT
Special Permit: To enlarge window within side yard setback. Art. 5.000, Sec. 5.31 (Table of Dimensional Requirements). Art. 8.000, Sec. 8.22.2.c (Non-Conforming Structure). Art. 10.000, Sec. 10.40 (Special Permit).

TO VIEW BZA CASE APPLICATIONS, PLANS & SUBMISSIONS, GO TO: <https://www.cambridgema.gov/inspection/zoning.aspx> at top of page, click "Calendar" > Click hearing date > Click "Board of Zoning Appeal Agenda." Any information filed after the agenda has been posted can be viewed at the Inspectional Services Department located at 831 Mass Avenue, Cambridge by appointment only. Copies of this petition are also on file in the office of the City Clerk, City Hall, Cambridge, MA. Interested persons may provide comments to the Board of Zoning Appeal by participating during the hearing and/or may provide written comments for the Board's consideration by mailing or delivering them to the attention of the Secretary, Board of Zoning Appeal, 831 Mass Avenue, 02139 or by emailing them to mpacheco@cambridgema.gov. Comments must be submitted prior to the Hearing and include the Case Number. Continued cases are not re-advertised but are posted on the office board at the City Clerk's Office in City Hall & on the same BZA Web Page 48 hours prior to hearing.

LEGAL NOTICE Community Preservation Act Committee

Public Hearing Regarding FY25 Funding Allocation Wednesday, July 31, 2024 – 5:30 PM Virtual Meeting

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) Committee hereby gives notice of its public hearing scheduled for Wednesday, July 31, 2024. The hearing will be conducted virtually through Zoom.

The purpose of the hearing will be to receive public comment on the funding allocation percentages for Affordable Housing, Open Space/Recreation, and Historic Preservation projects eligible for Community Preservation Act funding in FY25. Each year, the City is required to spend at least 10% of its annual CPA allocation on each category. The remaining percentage can be used towards any of the three funding categories.

Members of the public may watch and participate in the hearing through Zoom at:
https://cambridgema.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_1iH_dHMgQE2VC56XEQKneA

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Additional information is available on the CPA Committee website: <https://www.cambridgema.gov/cpa>.

For more information, contact Daniel Liss at (617) 349-4265 or dliss@cambridgema.gov.

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.



Tom Murray

Every fact about orchard orbweavers seems to make the human head spin

By JEANINE FARLEY

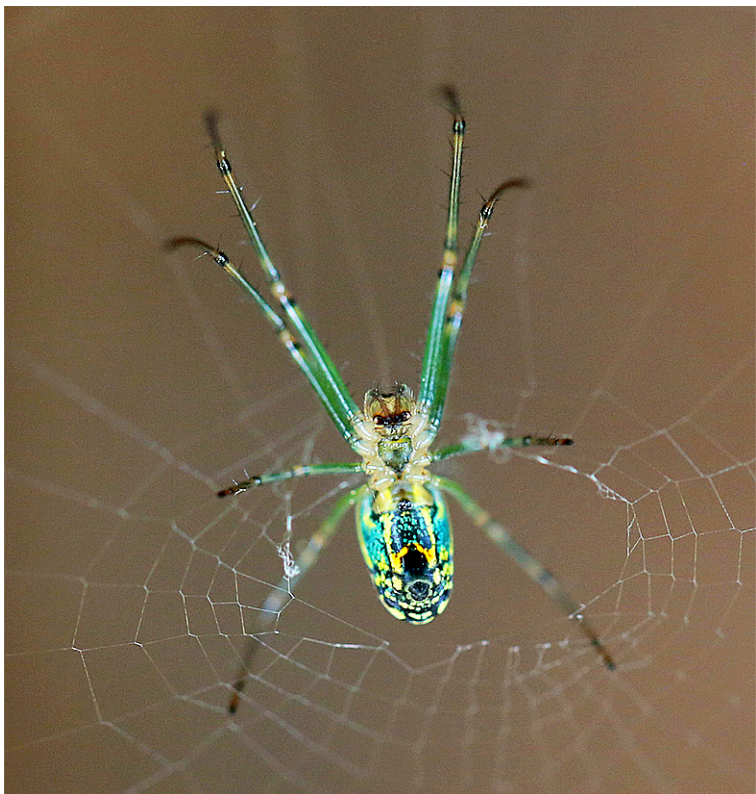
Although orchard orbweaver spiders (*Leucauge venusta*) are one of the most common spiders in Massachusetts, they are small and easy to miss. You might spot one in the center of a wagon-wheel shaped web. If you look closely, you may notice it has green legs and orange, yellow or red markings.

Orchard orbweavers emerge in the spring. They spend the summer eating, growing, molting and mating. The females spin webs (the males do not) that look similar to a Halloween decoration – with a central hub and 30 or more “spokes” radiating out from the center. The outermost part contains more than 60 sticky spirals. The female rests upside down in the center and waits for vibrations that indicate something has been trapped. When it detects the right vibrations, the spider rushes out to grab the prey. It ignores, for example, the flailing of an angry bee, but responds immediately to the vibrations of a fly’s wings.

Orchard orbweavers eat their own web each evening. After they digest the web, they store the silk as liquid in internal silk glands. They use structures outside the body, called spinnerets, to make new threads. Each day, in the darkness of early morning, they construct a new web. Despite the intricacy of the web, it takes only about an hour to build! Although similar, each spider’s web is unique, and scientists who study these spiders can tell which spider built which web just by looking.

Hummingbirds, vireos and warblers may steal webs to use for nesting material. But the spider knows how much silk it has. If the web has been damaged, providing it with a smaller web to eat in the evening, it constructs a smaller web the next day. Spider silk starts out as a water-soluble liquid stored inside a spider’s body, but it transforms into a non-water-soluble thread outside the spider’s body. Scientists

Web savvy



Robert Gessing

Only female orchard orbweavers spin webs.

entists think that pulling on the thread as it leaves the body realigns the molecules into a solid.

Orchard webs with the most silk strands in the center attract the most prey. Some strands reflect ultraviolet light, even in the dark. This is helpful, since these spiders are mostly nocturnal. Many insects see ultraviolet light, and many flowers reflect ultraviolet light. Some insects may be attract-

ed to the ultraviolet light of the web. When these colorful spiders sit in the center of their web, they entice insects to visit. Some scientists speculate that the brightly colored spider resembles flowers the insects visit for nectar.

Male spiders interested in mating with a female must be careful as they approach her web – or they might end up as her dinner! The male approaches the outer part of the web. He an-

nounces his intentions by plucking or tapping on the threads of the web. Eventually, the female may allow the male to enter the web. The male transfers sperm to leglike appendages called pedipalps near his mouth. He makes his way across the web and inserts his pedipalps into the female’s reproductive plate on the underside of her abdomen.

Males die soon after mating while females construct egg sacs of fluffy orangish silk on protected leaves or twigs near the web. Each sac contains several hundred dark orange eggs. As long as the weather is warm, the female produces egg sacs. When the temperature cools, the spider’s metabolism slows and it dies. But spiderlings hatch in the egg sacs, and emerge in the spring to repeat the cycle. Most spiderlings do not survive long.

Orchard orbweavers catch and eat small insects such as mosquitoes, flies and gnats. Once an insect gets stuck in the web, the orbweaver uses her fangs to bite the insect, delivering neurotoxins to halt struggling and digestive enzymes that cause the insect’s tissues to liquefy. After the digestive enzymes have done their work, the spider contracts her stomach muscles to slurp up the liquified remains like a milkshake. Hairs at the spider’s mouth strain out particles that have not liquified. The spider repeats this process until all that is left of the insect is a small undigestible ball.

Although orchard orbweavers are helpful to humans, ridding us of insect pests, they have many enemies. They

are easy prey for birds and reptiles, bats and rodents. Even other spiders eat them. Parasitic wasps sting and paralyze these spiders, then lay an egg on the spider’s abdomen. The spider recovers and continues its daily routine as the wasp larva sucks fluids from the spider’s body. When the larva gets large enough, it injects the spider with a hormone that causes the spider to stop hunting. It soon dies. The larva sucks up the remaining abdominal fluid until only the spider’s exoskeleton remains.

In 1973, scientists took two orchard orbweavers into space aboard Skylab 3 and studied their ability to build webs in zero gravity. At first, the usually oval webs were rounded because the spiders could not use the pull of gravity on their bodies to guide construction. But after only three days, the spiders adapted to their weightlessness and built excellent oval webs.

How come orchard orbweavers do not get stuck in their sticky webs? Scientists are not certain, but they know some things: These spiders make many different kinds of silk. The strands that radiate out are not sticky, so the spider may know which threads to avoid. In addition, orchard orbweavers have three claws on their feet. They provide traction and help them move along the threads.

Charles Darwin named these spiders *Leucauge venusta*. *Leucauge* means “with a bright gleam.” *Venusta* refers to “beauty,” since Venus is the Roman goddess of love and beauty. Whether you think these spiders are beautiful may depend on how you feel about spiders in general. Three things are certain, though: These docile spiders flee when threatened, they are harmless to humans and they rid us of many annoying insect pests.

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.