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Closing over misbehavior, library leaves itself open

Somerville students, parents protest reduced hours, but librarians say they must have help

By Spencer Buell
GLOBE STAFF

SOMERVILLE — For students pouring out of the high school each day and looking for something to do, the Central Library right next door has always been a natural choice, thanks to its ample space to do homework on long tables, internet access, and a “Teen Room”

stocked with young-adult books and magazines, couches for lounging, and a Nintendo Switch.

At least, it used to be.

In response to what students and officials said was an uptick in unruly behavior earlier this year, Somerville is closing the library's doors to the public during after-school hours, keeping both students — and

everyone else — out for two hours each weekday.

The announcement came Tuesday, the night before the first day of classes. Many parents and some local officials say they were caught off guard by the closures, and expressed dismay that, no matter how bad things had gotten, it has come to this: a public library that keeps out the public in the middle of the day.

“We shouldn’t have to get to a point where the situation is so out of

control that we have to shut down, that librarians don’t feel safe, or patrons don’t feel safe, or people don’t feel heard, and teens don’t feel like they have enough resources or outlets,” said City Councilor Kristen Strezo.

The move came after a year in which library staff complained about rampant misbehavior among rowdy teenagers at the library, Strezo said, including reports of teens lighting firecrackers, getting into

LIBRARY, Page A7

Deals are reached on 4 Steward hospitals

Sale of two others to BMC still being finalized

By Robert Weisman and Alexa Gagosz
GLOBE STAFF

After months of legal wrangling and fears of more closed medical centers, Steward Health Care has reached final agreements to sell four Massachusetts hospitals to new operators.

Lifespan Health System, based in Providence, agreed to pay \$175 million for both St. Anne’s Hospital in Fall River and Morton Hospital in Taunton, according to a filing in Steward’s bankruptcy case Thursday. The package includes the operating licenses, the buildings, and the land on which the hospitals sit, giving Rhode Island’s largest hospital system a foothold in Southeastern Massachusetts.

Lawrence General Hospital, meanwhile, agreed to pay \$28 million for Holy Family Hospital, with campuses in Methuen and Haverhill, the company said in its filing. That deal will create a larger hospital system in the Merrimack Valley north of Boston. As in the Lifespan deal, Lawrence General will acquire both the hospital license and the underlying properties.

The deals mean that two-thirds of the six hospitals Governor Maura Healey sought to wrest from the for-profit Steward may soon be in the hands of new nonprofit owners that will keep them open.

Steward said Thursday that it’s still working to finalize agreements to sell St. Elizabeth’s Medical Center in Brighton and Good Samaritan Medical Center in Brockton to Boston Medical Center. Steward’s two other Massachusetts hospitals — Carney Hospital in Dorchester and Nashoba Valley Medical Center — are set to close this weekend.

In a statement Thursday, the governor said her administration will work as quickly as possible to complete agreements for BMC to take over operations at Good Samaritan and St. Elizabeth’s, which the state has promised to seize by eminent domain

STEWARD, Page A5



KAYLA BARTKOWSKI FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Erika Smith of the Massachusetts Oyster Project dumped discarded shells at Wellfleet’s landfill from restaurants.

Out of their shells, a new life

An initiative on the Cape is turning what were once tons of oyster trash into habitats for juveniles

By Annie Sherman
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Two 5-foot-tall piles of spent oyster shells sit in a corner of Wellfleet’s garbage and recycling center, baking in the hot summer sun. The approximately 25,000 pounds of bivalves have been shucked and sucked, and seemingly have no further use. But dry and sun-bleached nearly pearl, they are not at all like garbage.

The shells are part of a growing effort to divert organic matter such as food byproducts from the state’s overburdened waste stream. The shells age outside for a year to expose them to the environment and eliminate bacteria before they are returned to the waters off Cape Cod, creating ideal oyster habitats while cleaning the ocean, said Erika Smith, program manager for the Massachusetts Oyster Project, a coalition of public

and nonprofit partners on the Cape.

The Oyster Project collaborates with the town of Wellfleet to collect discarded shells from roughly 25 area restaurants each summer, and expanded to Yarmouth this year. Instead of remaining in the waste stream, the aged shells (called cultch) are eventually deposited in Wellfleet Harbor and Yarmouth’s Bass River, Smith said. This creates new habitat for juvenile oysters, which grow on hard substrate such as rock or shell.

The effort has diverted more than 92,000

OYSTERS, Page A6

Older hotel workers would have much at stake in a strike



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

“I never thought I would be in this position at my age,” Maryann Silva said.

As they battle for better benefits, many say they can’t afford to retire

By Katie Johnston
GLOBE STAFF

During Maryann Silva’s 22 years as a banquet server at the Ritz-Carlton near Boston Common, the work of setting up tables and waiting on guests has become more taxing. But with little savings to fall back on, the only way the 67-year-old can afford to retire, she said, is to sell her condo in Lynn and leave the state.

Silva is among the 4,500 workers at 35 hotels in Boston and Cambridge who could go on strike as early as Sunday, because their union and the companies can’t come to terms on working conditions, wages, and retirement benefits in a new contract. A number of the workers are in their 60s but fear they don’t have the means to retire after decades of physically demanding labor.

Negotiations are ongoing. And if a resolution isn’t reached, the work stoppage could involve all the properties at once, about two-thirds of the full-service rooms in Boston, potentially disrupting services over the busy Labor Day holiday weekend. Or the walkout could be rolled out individually, according to Unite Here Local 26, the union representing the workers.

The union is looking to address impacts from the pandemic,

HOTEL WORKERS, Page A7

Birchmore case brings more scrutiny on state’s probe

By Sean Cotter
GLOBE STAFF

The federal indictment of a former Stoughton police detective for allegedly killing a 23-year-old pregnant woman was a rare contradiction of state law enforcement that has brought new scrutiny to the initial investigation into her death by Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey and the state medical examiner’s office.

The state Office of Chief Medical Examiner ruled just three months after Sandra Birchmore’s body was found in February 2021 that she died of suicide, a determination that remained on her official death certificate as of Thursday. On Wednesday,

“The lapse of time is concerning. Information is just drip, drip, dripping.”

ROSANNA CAVALLARO, *Suffolk Law professor*

day, federal prosecutors charged former Stoughton police detective Matthew Farwell with Birchmore’s death, raising questions over whether the FBI had evidence that Norfolk prosecutors did not consider or use.

Acting US Attorney Joshua Levy said Wednesday that federal authorities will share evidence with Morrissey that could allow that office to reexamine the case; the Norfolk DA’s office said it con-

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Israel will pause military operations in a staggered schedule across the Gaza Strip to allow workers to give polio vaccinations to about 640,000 children under the age of 10. **A3.**

The SIC upheld a lower court judge’s decision to grant a new trial to Raymond Gaines, who spent 46 years in prison for a murder in Roxbury he de-

nies committing. **B1.**

Republican vice presidential nominee JD Vance spoke to the International Association of Fire Fighters convention in Boston and asked for the union’s support. **B1.**

It’s the busiest time of the year for moving in Boston and it usually means mayhem. **B5.**



BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

Jacoby Brissett (7) will be the Patriots’ starting quarterback over rookie Drake Maye (10), coach Jerod Mayo announced in a press conference that lasted just 80 seconds. **C1.**

Social media has transformed the way boys think about their hair, and how far they’re willing to go to perfect it. Barbers are trying to keep up. **G1.**

Labor party

Friday: Very nice.
High 68-73. Low 59-64.

Saturday: A bit more humid.
High 75-80. Low 65-70.

High tide: 9:29 a.m., 9:39 p.m.
Sunrise: 6:08 Sunset: 7:21

Weather and Comics, G6-7.
Obituaries, C9.