

The Boston Globe

Serving our community since 1872

FRIDAY, MARCH 29, 2024

‘Declines in commercial real estate values could significantly increase property taxes for apartment buildings and homeowners.’

MAYOR MICHELLE WU

Wu aims to boost commercial taxes

Says it would cushion blow for residents as downtown values fall

By Catherine Carlock
GLOBE STAFF

With Boston's office market in a prolonged post-pandemic slump, Mayor Michelle Wu on Thursday said she'll move to hike tax rates on commercial real estate to cushion the blow falling property values will have on the city's \$4-plus billion bud-

get — and on residents.

Wu next week will file a measure with the City Council to boost the tax rate the city can levy on commercial properties for up to five years in an effort to prevent a “sudden, dramatic, and concentrated shock to residential property owners,” she said. If approved by the council,

it would then go to the Legislature for approval.

“Declines in commercial real estate values could significantly increase property taxes for apartment buildings and homeowners, which would deepen our already serious affordability challenges,” Wu said. “We need to take proactive steps to ensure . . . that challenges with downtown and the shifting work patterns are not compounding our housing crisis for residents and

homeowners.”

Property taxes fund the vast majority of Boston's \$4.3 billion budget, much of them generated by commercial buildings, which are already taxed at more than twice the rate of residential. In municipalities such as Boston that have a split tax rate, state law limits how much higher commercial rates can be, and how much lower residential rates can go. Wu is seeking to

TAXES, Page A9

T paves way to cut fares for low-income

Tickets half price; funding pending

By Taylor Dolven
GLOBE STAFF

For low-income riders who rely on public transit, Thursday was a victory years in the making.

The MBTA board of directors voted in favor of offering a reduced fare for adults with low incomes across its entire system, moving advocates to tears and marking the most significant step toward implementing the long-awaited program. Now, the agency just needs to come up with the cash.

The new system, which could start as early as this summer, would allow adults ages 26-64 who earn no more than about \$30,000 annually to purchase half-priced tickets and passes for trips on the subway, bus, commuter rail, ferry, and paratransit service.

For some riders, it could translate into hundreds and

even thousands of dollars of annual savings.

Advocates got even more than they expected on Thursday. Originally, the T planned to keep some trips provided by the T's paratransit service, The Ride, at full price for people with low incomes.

But at the board meeting, riders urged T board members to reconsider the agency's decision to exclude “premium” trips, those that originate or finish more than three-quarters of a mile from T bus or subway service. Those trips currently cost \$5.60.

After hearing from several advocates, Secretary of Transportation Monica Tibbitts-Nutt proposed an amendment to also include the “premium” service in the low-income fare program. The board of directors voted to approve it to a standing ovation

FARES, Page A6



THE PRICE IS RIGHT FOR A (TEMPORARY) SLICE OF PARADISE

SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF

“I'd like to think that it'll be there for a while,” said Brendan Maddigan, the buyer of the Sheep Pond Road house.

A shocking increase in erosion is starting to shift the value of oceanfront property in Nantucket

By Shannon Larson
GLOBE STAFF

On an island where waterfront homes are usually reserved for the wealthy few, word that a lovely seaside retreat was on the market for just \$600,000 — a price that seemed to be missing a zero — raced across Nantucket this winter.

Perched on a grassy dune on the island's southern coast, the shingled ranch-style home featured a new mahogany deck with a perfect view of the waves.

A little too perfect, it turns out. Those waves have gotten closer, much closer, in the past year, gnawing away at the beach and leaving only a few fragile feet of backyard.

The 2,625-square-foot property on Sheep Pond Road was first listed in September for nearly \$2.3 million, still below the median sale price of \$3.2 million on Nantucket. But after the shoreline lost a stunning 70 feet to erosion in just a matter of weeks, putting the home at imminent risk, the price plunged to \$600,000 by year's end.

A longtime visitor to Nantucket, Brendan Maddigan, who lives in New York, toyed with owning a summer home there for his young family for years. He regularly scanned the market and bookmarked links to a half-dozen properties, including the house on Sheep Pond Road. When he got an alert the price had nosedived, he submitted an

NANTUCKET, Page A9

Price drop

The property on Sheep Pond Road had steadily been losing land to erosion for some time, but after a stunning 70 feet was whittled away in a matter of weeks, the seller made the decision to cut the price significantly.



SOURCE: Zillow

GLOBE STAFF



BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF/FILE 2019

Under the new deal, all the subway cars are to be delivered by the end of 2027. To date, the T has received only 130 of 404.

T to pay Chinese firm more to deliver cars

By Taylor Dolven
GLOBE STAFF

When the MBTA decided in 2014 to take a chance on a company that had never done business in the United States before to build new subway cars, it seemed like a cost-effective decision to go with the lowest bidder. A decade on, Boston subway riders are still waiting to see that deal come to fruition.

The MBTA now plans to pay CRRC another \$148 million for the hundreds of new Red and Orange Line cars that the Chinese company still owes the transit agency, T officials announced Thursday, bringing the total cost of the contract to more

than \$1 billion with a promise that all the cars will be delivered by the end of 2027.

The extra funds are needed to get the delayed project back on track, T officials told the agency's board of directors, which approved the new agreement. The T was supposed to have all 404 new cars it purchased for about \$871 million by last September. To date, the T has received only 130 cars from CRRC.

Amid severe delivery delays over the past year, the T looked at scrapping the CRRC deal and ordering cars from another company, but ultimately decided the

SUBWAY CARS, Page A6

AG plans education to curb illegal sports betting by kids

Skeptics say initiative must address barrage of ads everywhere

By Chris Serres
GLOBE STAFF

Amid growing alarm over the spread of illegal youth sports betting, the Massachusetts attorney general's office is preparing to launch a statewide initiative to educate students about the perils of gambling and its risks to public health.

The initiative, unveiled Thursday at TD Garden in the midst of March Madness, involves the rollout of an educational curriculum that will teach students from grade school to college about the addictive nature of gambling, including how quickly and easily dabbling in sports betting can lead to disaster. The curriculum will be developed with input from a new coalition that includes New England's major professional sports teams, the

NCAA, and the state Gaming Commission.

The announcement follows a yearlong explosion in online sports betting and comes amid growing fears over a looming boom in gambling addiction. Massachusetts bettors have wagered more than \$5 billion on sports betting platforms since mobile sports operators went live on March 10, 2023. It is illegal for anyone under 21 in Massachusetts to wager online. Yet increasingly, as the Globe has documented, tech-savvy adolescents are circumventing regulatory safeguards and gaining access to the new digital platforms, stoking worries that the gambling industry may be sowing the seeds of a future addiction crisis.

To attract more attention, state officials timed the announcement of the initiative within hours of the tipoff of the NCAA men's college basketball semifinals, known as the Sweet 16, being held at the Garden. Along with the Super Bowl, the

BETTING, Page A5



LINDSEY WASSON/ASSOCIATED PRESS

BACK IN BUSINESS — The Red Sox opened the season Thursday night on the West Coast with Brayan Bello on the mound, taking on the Seattle Mariners. **More on the game, C1 and BostonGlobe.com.**

Sam Bankman-Fried, founder of the FTX cryptocurrency exchange, was sentenced to 25 years in prison for stealing billions from customers. **B5.**

Harvard University library officials say they have removed human skin from the binding of a 19th-century book in the university's collection. **B1.**

To dry for

Friday: Early rain, windy. High 48-53. Low 35-40.

Saturday: Sun's back. High 51-56. Low 35-40.

Weather and Comics, G6-7. Obituaries, C10-11.

VOL. 305, NO. 89

*

Suggested retail price
\$3.50

