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In house deeds, a story of Mass. bias that still resonates

Special programs aim to right past wrongs against people of color

By Milton J. Valencia
GLOBE STAFF

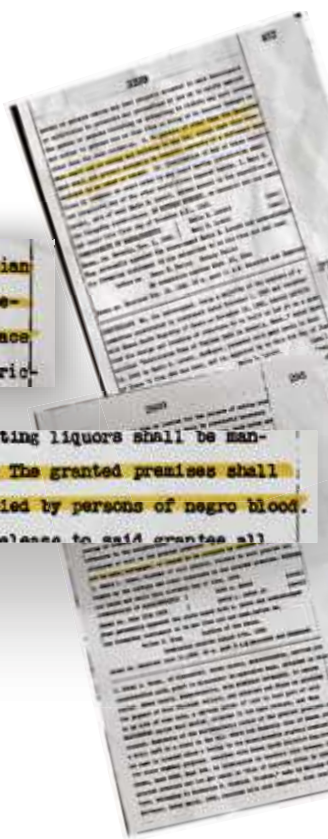
The modest Cape-style homes on a side street in Beverly are the kind of starter homes with manicured lawns that could accommodate young families looking to settle down in a seaside community rich with New England history. But deep in their foundation, there remains a chilling vestige of the

country's racist past that, if not legal today, still lives on in government property records.

They are deed restrictions, racial covenants that for decades were used to keep Black and Hispanic households, and sometimes Jewish or other ethnicities such as Armenians, from living there. A recent research project found hundreds

of examples of them in the Southern Essex Registry of Deeds in Salem. They contain language that, for example, prohibited the properties from being sold or conveyed to, or even occupied by, "no person of other

DEEDS, Page A8



Too young for treatment but old enough to die



JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

Deb Schmill lost her daughter Becca to an overdose in 2020. The girl was never prescribed buprenorphine.

Even with a powerful drug at their disposal to help addicts, pediatricians rarely prescribe it to desperate youths

By Chris Serres
GLOBE STAFF

The summer before Becca Schmill entered her junior year of high school in 2018, she admitted to her parents that she was self-medicating with opioids and cocaine to cope with the trauma of being raped by a boy she met on social media.

Her mother, Deb Schmill of Needham, said she immediately notified the teen's pediatrician and checked her into an outpatient treatment program for adolescents with substance use problems.

Yet despite dozens of visits to medical providers and therapists over the next two years, Becca Schmill never received a prescription for buprenorphine — a standard medication for treating opioid addictions. Multiple studies have shown that the synthetic opioid, which

goes by the brand name Suboxone, reduces the risk of overdoses by satisfying a person's cravings and reducing painful withdrawal.

Then, on Sept. 16, 2020, Deb Schmill became alarmed when she knocked on her daughter's locked bedroom door and didn't get an answer. She called 911 and emergency workers discovered Becca's lifeless body. Her official cause of death was fentanyl toxicity.

"The doctors kept telling her to stop using drugs, but the first priority should have been to keep her alive," Schmill said. "The medication was a critical missing piece."

Her experience highlights a longstanding and troubling gap in the addiction treatment system. Despite overdoses hovering near record highs, the most effective medications for treating opioid addictions are still

ADDICTION, Page A6

Mattapan open to Blue Hill Ave. redo, but still wary



ERIN CLARK/GLOBE STAFF

The biggest change will be dedicated bus lanes down the middle of the street, opening up sidewalk space.

By Taylor Dolven
GLOBE STAFF

On any given day on Blue Hill Avenue in Mattapan, dozens of drivers double park at a time, blocking the cars and buses behind them. Pedestrians daringly traverse multiple lanes, darting to avoid cars whizzing by at high speeds. And buses often don't pull all the way to the curb, forcing passengers to bridge the gap on foot.

Come 2026, that chaotic commuting dance could look very different when construction is scheduled to begin on a \$44 million redesign of the notoriously jammed and crash-prone 3-mile thoroughfare from Mattapan Square to Grove Hall in Dorchester. The city says it

will speed up bus trips, prevent car crashes, provide more shade, and make the street safer for pedestrians.

Even though plans are far from set, owners and managers of small businesses in Mattapan along Blue Hill Avenue say they're bracing for change with nervousness, suspicion, and, yes, even hope about what it will all mean for the long-neglected business district through the heart of Boston's Black community.

Central to the most significant city investment to the street in decades are dedicated lanes down the center of the avenue that will allow buses to bypass car traffic. Center dedicat-

BLUE HILL AVENUE, Page A8

Inflation takes an unexpected toll on schools

Districts say state's funding formula isn't keeping up, leaving them short

By James Vaznis
GLOBE STAFF

Nearly five years after Massachusetts lawmakers overhauled the state's school funding formula, districts are struggling to balance their budgets for the upcoming school year, prompting many to consider cutting programs and staff or asking taxpayers to dig deeper.

The chief culprit, district leaders and advocates say, is the high rate of inflation that hit the US economy in recent years, much higher than the adjustments used in the new funding formula that was revamped to reflect modern-day costs.

The failure of the new formula to accurately capture inflation could be collectively costing districts hundreds of millions of dollars in aid, according to Colin Jones, deputy policy director at the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, a nonpartisan research institute.

Voters in Belmont, Harvard, and Westford will be considering hefty property tax hikes at the polls this spring, which, if they fail to pass, could result in significant cuts to school and

SCHOOL FUNDING, Page A7

Mass. education officials used an inflation rate of **4.5%** in the state's new school aid program when actual inflation for school districts was **8%** for this fiscal year and **7%** for the previous.

'In the future, lawyers who do not use generative AI are the incompetent ones.'

ANDREW M. PERLMAN, Suffolk University Law School dean

Lawyers see power and perils of AI

'Hallucination' draws a fine in Stoughton case

By Sean Cotter
GLOBE STAFF

It looked like a standard legal brief: an attorney representing the family of Sandra Birchmore, Steven J. Marullo, cited multiple precedents for why the Town of Stoughton and its Police Department should be held accountable for officers who allegedly groomed and abused the young woman since she was a teenager. Among its references were three previous rulings, with all the attendant case numbers, letters, and punctuation.

Except those three cases do not exist, but rather were the "hallucinations" of an artificial intelligence program used to compose the legal filing, Nor-

folk Superior Judge Brian A. Davis wrote in February in a stern order chastising Marullo and ordering him to pay \$2,000.

The twist in an already high-profile case highlights a pressing tension in the legal industry around the role of artificial intelligence, which attorneys are approaching with a mix of caution and excitement. On one hand, there are similar instances across the country in which lawyers relied too heavily on the programs and filed briefs with incorrect information. But several Massachusetts lawyers told the Globe they envision AI becoming a helpful tool, a force multiplier that could enable attorneys to handle more clients at lower costs, benefiting the poor who often can't afford representation.

AI leaped from science-fiction, **AI, Page A7**

The Healey administration has landed \$335 million in federal funds for the proposed realignment of the Massachusetts Turnpike in Allston, a key piece of financing for the huge project. **B5.**

Lawyers for Karen Read said experts hired by federal au-

thorities determined that John O'Keefe's injuries were "inconsistent" with being struck by an SUV. **B1.**

Special counsel Robert K. Hur fiercely defended the disparaging assessment of President Biden's mental state included in his final report **A2.**

Cabbage's big moment



Often underappreciated, it's rarely the star of the produce department. Until March 17, that is. **G1.**

Grow all the day

Wednesday: Sunny, nice. High 48-53. Low 36-41.

Thursday: Even warmer. High 54-59. Low 39-44.

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

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