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W E D N E S D A Y , A P R I L 2 4 , 2 0 2 4

Wu says she's making progress with unions

Most have reached deals, with some changes she sought

By Niki Griswold
GLOBE STAFF

When Michelle Wu swept into the mayor's office in November 2021, she faced a daunting task: negotiating every single one of Boston's 44 union contracts, all of which had expired.

Further complicating the challenge were her bold campaign

promises to use the collective bargaining process to force major reforms upon the scandal-scarred Police Department, which had long resisted change.

Wu, the first woman and first Asian American elected to lead the city, also lacked the organized labor bona fides enjoyed by predecessor Martin J. Walsh, who was born and raised in the labor movement and served as the head of the Boston Building Trades Council from 2011 until 2013.

More than halfway through Wu's first term as mayor, her ad-

ministration has negotiated contracts with nearly all the unions, and — she says — won some major victories along the way.

Twenty-two have active contracts. Another 19 unions negotiated contracts with her administration that expired during the second half of 2023. Only three unions whose contracts were expired when Wu took office haven't negotiated a new contract with her administration, according to city officials.

Wu has managed to provide significant wage increases for some of the city's lowest paid employees in

a mutual win for the mayor and some unions. She also cemented what she called a "groundbreaking" contract with the largest police union, which included changes such as banning officers fired for being accused of some serious crimes from appealing their termination.

Her administration's relationship with organized labor has not been smooth sailing: at times it's been outright contentious, and has led to a lawsuit and heated protests.

UNIONS, Page A7

Brookline's tobacco rule wins converts

Ban tied to age is being adopted by other towns

By Matt Stout
GLOBE STAFF

Once unprecedented, a rule banning the sale of tobacco and e-cigarettes to most, if not all, people born this century has quickly proliferated in Massachusetts, turning the state into ground zero for a novel effort to go beyond setting a minimum age to combat tobacco use.

Officials in more than a half-dozen Greater Boston communities have either passed bans or begun considering them just weeks after the Supreme Judicial Court upheld Brookline's own groundbreaking bylaw that banned the sale of tobacco and e-cigarettes to anyone born on or after Jan. 1, 2000.

Boards of health in Wakefield, Stoneham, and Melrose have already approved their own versions of the ban. Winchester and Malden are holding public hearings in the coming days on their proposals. Reading and Medford could follow next month, local health officials said.

"This is the kind of thing that we need all municipalities to get together on, or it's just too easy to cross over and go to, say, Waltham, or Needham, or Watertown to buy your cigarettes," said Susan Albright, a city councilor in Newton who helped draft a similar proposal being considered in the city of 87,000. "We need to make it a mass

SMOKING, Page A7



CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

Jewish students and supporters of the Palestinians gathered together at MIT on Tuesday night for Passover.

As protests continue, sharing a meal and a new perspective

At MIT, Jews for Ceasefire group makes Seder 'a space for everyone'

By Tonya Alanez and Esmay Jimenez
GLOBE STAFF
and Lila Hempel-Edgers
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

CAMBRIDGE — The celebration on the second night of Passover was laid out with Seder plates on green picnic tables pushed together and topped with floral arrangements of peonies and white and light pink roses. Students passed around matzah and loaded plates with grilled carrots and asparagus, chicken, kugel, and soup.

But this was a far-from-ordinary Seder, taking place Tuesday evening at MIT as the campus and other schools around the country are riven by protest over the Israel-Hamas war. It was organized by a student group, Jews for Ceasefire, which had modified the traditional Passover ceremonies with flourishes that included strawberries to represent

Gaza, and watermelon, which has come to symbolize Palestinian solidarity.

It took place under the cover of a large black tent marked "liberated zone," within a larger demonstration on a grassy expanse at MIT where students had organized a tent encampment, one of many that sprouted on college campuses in the wake of the arrests of protesting students at Columbia University in New York last week. Organizers passed out a version of the Haggadah, the text that guides the Passover meal in celebration of Jewish liberation from Egyptian slavery, that had been adapted by Columbia students and was titled "Gaza Liberation Seder."

"Passover is a story of Jews finding liberation and freedom, so it has a lot of resonance for us here as we're thinking about what liberation looks like in a wider context," said Gabriella Martini, 32, a founding member of

Jews for Ceasefire and a second year master's student in MIT's city planning program.

Martini said that she spent Monday night in the tent encampment, and that Jewish students have been represented within the encampment population since Sunday.

"I think that this is a space for everyone. If you look around, it's an incredibly diverse group of people. It's people from all over the world and all over the country and all different religious backgrounds and all different ethnic backgrounds, and we've never been anything but welcome here."

The colorful scene around the Seder site featured Palestinian flags and protest signs and included some students wearing head

PROTESTS, Page A6

► Brown warns students about violating school policies, disruption. B3.

Downtown lunch special, with a bigger bill on the side

Restaurants struggle to make up COVID losses in a hybrid world

JON CHESTO
COMMENTARY

Remember when you could buy lunch for under \$10 in downtown Boston?

It might feel like a long time ago. It really wasn't. Something definitely felt different as people started to return to the office post-COVID. Case in point: I met a source at a sandwich place near the Freedom Trail just over two years ago, and the grilled chicken sandwich cost \$25. It may have come with a bag of chips.

So I started asking around: Where are the cheap lunches? Amid the chatter on the 505 bus into the city, one banker pointed to McDonald's in Downtown Crossing. His backup? A fast-casual joint a few blocks away, where a lunch for two cost nearly \$40. No thanks.

Even Al's, the undisputed paragon of downtown sandwich bargains, has raised its prices twice in recent years. The large sub now sells for \$13.50, up from \$11.50 — though it's still big enough to be dinner, too.

LUNCH, Page A6



JOSH REYNOLDS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Julian Herrera worked behind the counter at the Milk Street Cafe. The owners said they've tried to keep price increases to a minimum.



A sprinkle in time

Wednesday: A shower or two. High 55-60. Low 32-37.

Thursday: Sun returns. High 49-54. Low 35-40.

High tide: 12:05 a.m., 12:35 p.m. Sunrise: 5:49 Sunset: 7:36

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

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Suggested retail price
\$3.50



The Senate overwhelmingly approved the long-stalled \$95.3 billion package of aid to Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan. **A2.**

Joining Milton, Marshfield voters rejected zoning changes meant to comply with the MBTA Communities Act. **B5.**

Food writer Devra First takes a first look at Korean restaurant So-maek and Sushi@Temple Records. **G1.**