

# The Boston Globe

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## Expert calls woman's death a homicide

Pathologist's finding contradicts state;  
3 ex-Stoughton officers under scrutiny

By Laura Crimaldi  
GLOBE STAFF

A prominent forensic pathologist hired by the family of Sandra Birchmore, the young woman who was allegedly groomed by three former Stoughton police officers, has concluded that her death was a homicide, contradicting earlier findings by state investigators that there was no evidence of foul play, and that she died by suicide.

In a letter dated June 18 to a lawyer for Birchmore's estate, Dr. Michael Baden, a former chief medical examiner in New York City, cited the extent of Birchmore's injuries and the placement of a ligature found on her body as factors in his determination.

In May 2021, the state Office of the Chief Medical Examiner ruled that Birchmore, 23, a former participant in a Stoughton police youth



Sandra Birchmore

wrote in the letter.

"Ms. Birchmore did not die of suicidal hanging ... The cause of Ms. Birchmore's death is 'Strangulation' and the manner of death is 'Homicide,'" Baden wrote.

program who was pregnant when she died, killed herself by hanging, according to her death certificate.

"I must disagree," Baden

Baden's determination opens a new front in the controversial case that has prompted investigations by the FBI and the state attorney general's office. Stoughton police also conducted its own internal affairs investigation of the three former officers. No criminal charges have been brought.

Baden's career has spanned 50 years, and he has been involved in a series of high-profile investigations. He led a panel on a US House committee that reinvestigated the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Dr.

BIRCHMORE, Page A7

## \$5.2b housing proposal unveiled

Senate plan excludes real estate transfer fee, killing measure for at least a year

By Samantha J. Gross  
and Andrew Brinker

GLOBE STAFF

The Massachusetts Senate has effectively quashed a plan to allow cities and towns to impose a fee on the sales of high-end properties, dashing the hopes of housing advocates but pleasing the powerful real estate industry that had lobbied hard against the idea.

The local option for a transfer fee was omitted from the Senate's \$5.2 billion housing bond bill unveiled Monday, a measure that also includes billions for affordable housing, tax credits, and plans to remake statewide zoning rules. The fee proposal, championed by both Governor Maura Healey and Mayor Michelle Wu of Boston, was also left out in the House's version of the bill earlier this month.

The sweeping bill touches many other areas of housing policy, from addressing a shortage of housing in rural parts of the state to supporting a fair housing office. But Senator Lydia Edwards, who chairs the housing committee, said the goal of the bill is to act as a "course correction" instead of a salve. The intractable housing crisis in which the state is enmeshed is too big to address in one swing, she said.

The state needs at least 200,000 new housing

HOUSING BILL, Page A6

## Warren makes case for Biden on abortion

Mass. senator travels across US in campaign to protect women's access

By Lissandra Villa de Petrzelka

GLOBE STAFF

MILWAUKEE — Senator Elizabeth Warren sat in front of dozens of voters at a campaign office plastered with posters waiting for her turn to speak on a panel about abortion access. When she did, Warren at times grew so impassioned that she nearly left her seat.

But it wasn't her event, or her campaign. It wasn't even her home state. She was in the battleground of Wisconsin, to make the case for President Biden in the hopes of firing up the Democrats who had taken time out of their Monday to listen.

"I'm here because Joe Biden fights for abortion access, so I fight for Joe Biden," Warren said to applause from the crowd.

Biden, she told The Boston Globe in an interview on the second anniversary of the Supreme Court decision overturning the federal right to an abortion, has used "every tool" he can as president to preserve access to abortion, and it was vital Democrats like her amplify that record.

WARREN, Page A6



PHOTOS BY DANIELLE PARHIZKARAN/GLOBE STAFF

## 'Durgin-Park, I can't believe that'

How a Mattapan restaurant got its liquor license from the Faneuil Hall spot

*This is the third in a series of stories about the consequences of Boston's broken liquor license system.*

By Shirley Leung

GLOBE STAFF

In Mattapan, there's a place where everyone knows your name. It's called Mello Vibe.

On Friday and Saturday nights, the Jamaican spot is jammed with regulars sipping coconut rum and tipping back bottles of Guinness. In a neighborhood where you can find plenty to eat, this is the only restaurant with a bar.

rant with a bar.

"It's a gem in the city," said Jo Lesperance, who swings by Mello Vibe three times a week on her way home from the Dorchester salon where she does locs and braids. She winds down with tequila and an order of oxtail rasta pasta or curry goat. One Saturday night in March, she rented out the 26-seat restaurant to celebrate her 43rd birthday.

"It feels safe here. It feels like family," Lesperance said. "It feels like community, and I appreciate that."

From the North End to Jamaica



Plain, restaurants serve as the economic backbone of neighborhoods across Boston, where people eat a meal, enjoy a glass of wine, and stay for a while. Yet in Mattapan a place like Mello Vibe is the exception when it should be the rule, highlighting a Boston liquor license system that squashes opportunities to build both wealth and community life in underserved neighborhoods.

It's not for lack of trying. A decade ago, the Legislature — at the prodding of then-city councilor, now Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley —

MATTAPAN, Page A10

Paul Lamey and Melissa Dell-Lamey in the kitchen of their Mattapan restaurant Mello Vibe. They were finally awarded a liquor license in 2022 after an unlikely series of events that followed the closure of the historic Durgin-Park restaurant.

## Deal to set Assange free

Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, agreed to plead guilty to a single felony count in exchange for his release from a British prison, ending his standoff with the United States. **A2.**



**The Bruins have traded goalie Linus Ullmark to the Ottawa Senators for a first-round pick in Friday's draft**, along with center Mark Kastelic and goalie Joonas Korpisalo. **C1.**

## Closing arguments in Read case set for Tuesday

Final defense witnesses cast doubt on whether O'Keefe was struck by SUV

By Travis Andersen

GLOBE STAFF

The defense rested its case Monday in the murder trial of Karen Read after a pair of independent experts declared that her boyfriend's injuries were not consistent with being hit by her Lexus SUV in January 2022, capping eight weeks of testimony in the high-profile case and setting the stage for closing arguments on Tuesday.

After that, a swirling legal saga that has riveted the region, sparked a federal investigation, and placed a harsh spotlight on the case's lead investigator will, at last, be decided by a jury. Read, who has maintained her innocence and claimed she was the victim of a law enforcement conspiracy, did not take the stand.


On Monday, jurors in Norfolk Superior Court heard from two experts from ARCCA, a Pennsylvania accident reconstruction company the FBI hired as part of a federal investigation into the state law enforcement handling of the case. Refer-

READ, Page A7



PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

Karen Read in Norfolk Superior Court on Monday. Her defense has rested.



### Beach of promise

**Tuesday:** Hot, low humidity.  
High 88-93, low 71-76.

**Wednesday:** Hot, T-storms later.  
High 88-93, low 66-71.

Sunrise: 5:09. Sunset: 8:25.

Obituaries, **C9.**

Comics and Weather, **D5-6.**

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