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THE BOSTON GLOBE MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2016 | BOSTONGLOBE.COM/METRO

ADRIAN WALKER

Call an end to insider game



It was maybe 15 years ago that an editor who was new both to Boston and the Globe swung by my desk with a question. “What on earth is ‘mitigation?’” he wondered, after seeing the term in a few stories.

I explained that it was basically legalized extortion, in which developers pledged money for community projects in exchange for officials’ approval of the developers’ projects. Community inconvenience caused by development was “mitigated” by contributions to a new park, say, or maybe a donation to a senior center. Welcome to Boston!

In the years since that conversation, the system of trading community support in exchange for political approval has gotten only more pernicious.

A story in Sunday’s Globe by Mark Arsenault and Andrew Ryan exposed a series of dubious payments to neighborhood organizations, often in exchange for supportive testimony before the city’s Zoning Board of Appeal, or ZBA. It described a system of support-for-sale.

In one case, a developer simply offered a community group \$10,000 a year for 20 years in exchange for support at the ZBA. In another, a group withdrew opposition to a project after a developer paid it \$50,000. Then there is the St. Vincent Lower End Neighborhood Association, whose leader has been accused, in court testimony, of routinely selling support for cash.

The ZBA is not a court of law, and this practice does not appear to be illegal. Nevertheless, the perception that the community supports a project can make it or break its chances of approval. And as any developer will tell you, Boston has institutionalized a process in which nearly every significant project needs city approval.

While the goal of giving residents a strong voice is admirable, in practice the system is a train wreck. The public is led to believe that decisions are based on the merits of a project, when in fact, a well-timed donation to the right cause can make all the difference.

If city councilors determined what they support this way, they would get indicted. Just how different is that from a civic group “withdrawing its opposition” once it gets paid?

Community groups operate with virtually no transparency. They don’t have to disclose to the ZBA that they got money from the developers of the project they are supporting. They don’t have to tell the public that cash changed hands as they were formulating their position. Crucially, they don’t have to account for what they do with the money. This would be the definition of bad government — but they get away with it because they aren’t part of government. They just influence it, routinely.

Two decades of covering city government have left me with deep qualms about neighborhood associations and the clout they wield. Typically, a neighborhood group is composed of 30 or 40 people who will attend a monthly meeting. Whether they really represent the views of hundreds of their neighbors, as they claim to, is questionable. Their default position is opposition, because change makes them jittery. It’s a uniquely Boston way of doing business that mostly serves entrenched interests.

Fortunately, Mayor Marty Walsh is looking for other ways of gauging community support, such as online town halls in which people who can’t make meetings can express their views. His office called for greater transparency in mitigation deals Sunday, and for ensuring that any benefits reach the entire community.

I’d like to see him go even further. Civic groups should not be able to take money from developers looking to buy support, much less solicit payment. It’s one thing to donate money to a public project, like a park. Giving cash to a completely unaccountable group of neighbors is a totally different matter. At a bare minimum, all such payments should require prompt public disclosure.

There is nothing wrong with developers helping to fund community improvements — in fact, it’s often laudable. But support-for-dollar isn’t community support. It’s just another insider game whose time has passed.

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LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

Kevin Yang, walking along Brattle Street on his way to a Harvard University library, benefited from the Harvard Ed Portal mentorship program for students in Allston and Brighton.

PORTAL OFFERS PATH TO HARVARD

‘It was a place where I could decompress and figure things out.’

KEVIN YANG, *the first student from Harvard’s Ed Portal in Allston to be accepted at the university*

By James Sullivan
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

After high school most days, Kevin Yang would cross town to spend his afternoons at the Harvard Ed Portal in Allston. The one-story building, in the shadow of Harvard Stadium, housed the university’s collaboration with the Allston-Brighton community.

Meeting with a mentor, a volunteer Harvard student, Yang got help with school projects, and together they explored career options available to an aspiring med student.

It was time well-spent. This month, Yang is settling into a dormitory just a mile or so from the old Ed Portal building — in Harvard Yard.

Eight years since the university opened the Ed Portal as a conduit to its Allston neighbors, Yang has become the first student to be accepted into Harvard after going through its program.

“It was definitely an important support mechanism for me,” said Yang, toting his skateboard on a recent day as he walked around the old Ed Portal building, which now houses offices for the Silk Road Project and Harvard’s golf and ski teams. “It was a place where I could decompress and figure things out.”

Yang, a high achiever who had lived in Allston and is considering a major in either biomedical engineering or neurobiology,

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Mourners gather at scene of triple shooting

One dead, two hurt in Saturday gunfire

By Jan Ransom
GLOBE STAFF

Dozens of congregants singing “This Little Light of Mine” marched from the Greater Love Tabernacle Church to the corner of Nightingale and Wales streets, the scene of a triple shooting Saturday morning that left one man dead and another

fighting for his life.

A third victim suffered injuries that were not life threatening.

“This is a tragedy for the community when this happens,” the Rev. William E. Dickerson II bellowed to crowd that had gathered around him Sunday afternoon at the scene. “We have to show some response when things like this happen. We have to show some reaction, some concern when something like this happens because if we don’t, we

send a message that stuff like this is normal and that it’s OK, when it’s not OK.”

Police have not officially identified the victim, but according to friends, Dickerson, and a person with knowledge of the investigation, the slain man was 21-year-old Phillip Woods.

A 28-year-old man was shot in the chest and a 24-year-old was struck on his upper leg.

The person with knowledge of

the investigation said Woods and the two surviving victims had attended an event at the Carver Den, a function hall on the corner of Talbot Avenue and Wales Street. After they left the event, the three men and a group of others continued along Wales Street.

At 2:18 a.m. gunfire erupted. Woods was pronounced dead at the scene.

“We’re really trying to find out

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Headwinds buffet Mayflower II project



JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF FILE

The Mayflower II has been a centerpiece of Plymouth’s tourism industry since arriving in 1957.

Fund-raising bid foundering, imperiling future of vessel

By Brian MacQuarrie
GLOBE STAFF

The Mayflower II might not be safe for visitors in several years unless an ambitious fund-raising campaign reaches its goal to restore the 60-year-old replica of the ship that carried the Pilgrims to Plymouth, according to the vessel’s owner.

That campaign is \$3 million short of the \$7.5 million goal it has set for Nov. 15, according to Kate Sheehan, spokeswoman for Plimoth Plantation, the nonprofit organization that operates the ship.

Plimoth Plantation officials said they are confident the goal will be reached. However, they added that the money is critical if Mayflower II, which has

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Proposal to limit pet sales in stores

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“Responsible breeders do not sell to pet stores,” said Stephanie Harris, Massachusetts state director of the Humane Society of the United States, who spoke in support of the ordinance and showed photos of dead and suffering animals at breeding operations in the Midwest.

Animals purchased on a whim at pet stores routinely turn up in area shelters once they prove difficult to care for or their novelty wears off, said Laura Hagen, deputy director of advocacy for the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Hagen said she had a guinea pig as a child, and only later developed a sense of “what the pet industry trade costs animals.”

The ordinance under consideration in Cambridge would also rein in the practice of selling animals at roadside stands and putting up signs advertising, say, the family cat’s new litter of kittens.

“This is your neighbor who has kittens. This is your kindergarten class selling turtles at the end of the year,” cautioned City Councilor Craig Kelley, who asked for clearer definitions of who exactly would be affected by the ordinance.

The potential for unintended consequences echoed a controversial bill in the state Senate that targeted irresponsible dog breeders by requiring a license for any size breeding operation, but also appeared to criminalize even the simple act of giving away a household pet’s litter of kittens or puppies.

Under the bill New Bedford Democrat Mark Montigny introduced in the state Senate in May, giving someone a cat without obtaining the proper permit would be punishable by a \$500 fine or 90 days behind bars.

That bill, which was referred to a committee for study, attracted strong opposition from breeding groups.

Bird and reptile breeders from around the state, some of whose feathers were ruffled by the state proposal, appeared in Cambridge on Thursday.

Linda Rubin, a Dedham parrot enthusiast and the author of “The Ultimate Parrot Guide,” which she described as a book to help with “selecting the right bird for your lifestyle,” said that pet stores were her gateway into agriculture, and helped cultivate her passion for exotic birds.

Denise Cabral, president of the Massachusetts Caged Bird Association, submitted a letter in which she described the ordinance as “exactly the sort of thing my father fought in World War II to prevent.”

And a former president of the ASPCA, Ed Sayres, spoke on behalf of the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, calling the pet store industry a “vital partner” in animal welfare and the proposal a punishment for the entire industry because of “a few bad actors.”

But while councilors took no action on the proposal Thursday, several in attendance expressed support.

Vice Mayor Marc McGovern, who has championed the proposal, said the ordinance would hardly put Petco and PetSmart out of business.

Rather, McGovern said, they would be forced to obtain animals from rescue organizations and shelters that are now inundated with the unwanted animals the stores bring into the city.

“We are a city that often sets the standard when it comes to protecting things that are vulnerable,” he said.

City Councilor Jan Devereux agreed.

“I had birds,” Devereux said. “They were miserable.”

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KEITH BEDFORD/GLOBE STAFF

TWO WHEELS, NOT FOUR — Bicyclists took part in the Hub on Wheels ride on Sunday in Boston along the westbound side of Storrow Drive, which was closed to vehicular traffic for the event.

Mayflower II restoration faces challenges

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attracted 25 million visitors since its arrival in 1957, is to continue its educational mission — let alone sail again for the 400th anniversary in 2020 of the Pilgrims’ landing.

“The ship would, at some point, very quickly become beyond saving,” said Whit Perry, director of maritime preservation and operations for Plimoth Plantation. “It’s not an option not to complete the preservation effort on this national icon.”

The needs of the ship are daunting, and not only because Mayflower II sits in the mud of Plymouth Harbor about four to six hours a day

during low tide.

A land-based insect — the wharf-boring beetle — has invaded the wood and much of the hull is rotting. About 60 percent of the planking below the waterline must be replaced, Sheehan said. New framing also is needed, as well as a sizable chunk of the deck.

The ship currently remains open for visitors.

However, a leading marine surveyor has told Plimoth Plantation that “if we do not embark on this restoration, its days are numbered,” said Perry, who also is captain and master of the Mayflower II.

“The greatest risk is that she would not be able to remain at her berth and be

boarded by hundreds of thousands of visitors a year,” Sheehan said.

That assessment comes three months after the ship returned from extensive repairs at the Henry B. DuPont Preservation Shipyard in Mystic, Conn. Workers replaced the half-deck and topmast rigging while restoring the space where the Mayflower’s passengers would have been confined, called a “tween deck.”

The plan is to send the ship back to Mystic for another round of extensive repairs, with the expectation that the Mayflower II could sail again before 2020. The 106-foot vessel has not sailed since spring 2014, when the excursion was

filmed for a Ric Burns documentary.

Sheehan said that reaching the fund-raising goal of \$7.5 million would trigger an additional \$1.5 million from an anonymous donor. That gift would help close the gap toward an overall \$12 million target that Sheehan said would help pay for future operating costs and maintenance.

“There’s a tremendous amount that goes into this,” Sheehan said.

That includes searching the world for timber needed as replacements. There is “defect-free oak,” some of which has been purchased from the Danish Royal Forest, Sheehan said. There is white oak needed for

joints. And then there is Douglas fir, which will come primarily from the Pacific Northwest.

Despite the current shortfall, Plimoth Plantation officials said they expect Mayflower II will be towed to Mystic in November. “We are working with the assumption that we are going to close the gap somehow,” Sheehan said.

The ship has become a centerpiece of Plymouth Harbor since it sailed from England 59 years ago. The vessel was built with donations from the British people and sent overseas to acknowledge the historic ties between the countries.

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Allston Portal provides path to Harvard

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might have had the opportunity to choose between Harvard and “the engineering school down the street” in Cambridge whether or not he was mentored at the Ed Portal. But the experience added to the 18-year-old’s emerging skill set.

“We got some homework help, but we also worked on public speaking and writing,” he recalled.

In its first academic year, the Ed Portal served 164 public school students from Allston-Brighton. By last year, when the program unveiled its innovative new building across Western Avenue, enrollment had grown to nearly 300. More than 100 Harvard undergraduates have served as mentors since the program began.

For Rob Lue, the Ed Portal’s faculty director, Yang represents a prime example of the type of student the program hopes to nurture. Even more than improving study habits, they want to help young men and women from the neighborhood embrace their own self-

awareness.

“He’s articulate and passionate,” Lue, a biology professor who teaches Life Sciences 1a, the university’s introductory biology-chemistry course, said of Yang. “He speaks to exactly what we are trying to achieve — the process of self-discovery.”

The new Ed Portal building was designed to welcome all members of the Allston-Brighton community, the university says. In addition to the after-school program, it offers continuing education classes for residents, wellness and professional development resources, and art events and exhibits.

In recent years, the university and a community task force have negotiated changes in Harvard’s long-planned expansion across the Charles River into Allston, where it owns more land than it does in Cambridge.

Harvard’s 10-year master plan, submitted to the Boston Redevelopment Authority in 2013, includes nearly 1.5 million square feet of new development and renovation in Allston.

One of Yang’s mentors, Tri Huynh, who earned his master’s degree from Harvard’s teacher education program in 2014, inspired Yang to consider teaching as a career. Yang’s parents — a nurse and a researcher, both born in China — would like him to go to medical school.

Reached on the phone from San Francisco, where he is now a middle school teacher, Huynh recalled conversations with Yang about the joys of passing along his passion for science.

“I might not be the person who finds the cure for cancer,” said Huynh, “but I hope maybe someone I teach will.”

Some students at the Ed Portal needed help with basic study habits, he recalled, such as organizing their backpacks and binders. Others needed homework tutoring. With Yang, who graduated from Boston Latin School, their work together was more high-minded.

Yang figures he may be ready to volunteer as a mentor himself by the second semester of his freshman year. For now, however, he’s mostly busy

ROLE REVERSE
Kevin Yang figures he may be ready to volunteer as a mentor himself by next semester.



learning his new classmates’ names. At the Ed Portal, the woman at the front desk made a point to remember the names of everyone who came through the door, he remembers.

“It was very personalized,” he said. “That’s a good skill in general.”

Standing outside his dormitory, he picked out various new acquaintances in the endless cross-streams of students and tourists traversing Harvard Yard. Some of them he met during this summer’s traditional outdoor preorientation program, a camping trip in the woods of New Hampshire,

where incoming freshmen bonded over a vexing rainstorm and a moose sighting.

Once arriving on campus, he quickly made more friends in the dorms and classrooms. As some of them passed, he called out their names, making sure they spotted him.

His suite mates hail from all over, Yang said — Atlanta, Toronto, Ohio, California. (Like Yang, the roommate from California gets around on a longboard.) As the resident Bostonian, he already has assumed the role of concierge, organizing a trip to Boda Borg, a real-life gaming experience in Malden, and helping his roommates find the best places to buy clothes or get a haircut.

“For me, the transition may be a little bit easier,” Yang said.

Lue, the Ed Portal director, agreed.

“More than most incoming freshmen, he knows that Harvard is family for him,” he said.

In a way, this kid from Allston-Brighton is already home.

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Chess notes

Carlsen consistently finds ways of posing new problems for the Black until he cracks, leading to a rather easy 29-move victory.

2016 42nd Olympiad, Baku, Azberjian Magnus Carlsen (2857) — Ehsan Ghaem Maghami (2566)

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bf4 Carlsen eschews theory almost all the time. Here he plays a simple London system, hoping to lull his opponent into a very false sense of security. **3...e6 4.e3 Bd6 5.Bg3 c5** This is bit of a sideline. The vastly more popular move is **5.0-0 6.c3 Nc6 7.Nbd2 Bxg3?** This is too committal. **7...0-0** is for choice. **8.hxg3 Qd6** White’s plan is very simple, exchange off Black’s knight on c6, leaving him with a somewhat bad bishop and then to anchor his knight on e5. **9.Bb5 Bd7 10.Bxc6 Bxc6 11.Ne5 Qc7**

Puzzled by this. Black may think that he has endless time as there is not much going on but he would be wrong. **11...0-0** or **11...Nd7** are better choices **12.Qf3** Now **12...Nd7** to challenge White’s knight is not possible. **12...h6 13.Qf4** Threatening to win a pawn with **14.dxc5**. **13...Qe7** Yet another queen move. Even in the quietest of positions tempos add up. **13...cxd4** is better. **14.g4 Nh7 15.Qg3 Rg8?** Really? Now his king has no good home. For better or worse **15...0-0** had to be played: **15...0-0 16.f4 cxd4 17.g5 Be8 18.gxh6 f6 19.Ng4 dxc3 20.bxc3 Rf7 21.Nf3 Qc5** is about equal. **16.0-0 Nf6 17.Rac1!** White’s planned c4 and the resulting opening of the center is very dangerous for Black, especially with his king stuck in the middle. **17...Rc8** **17...c4** **18.b3** is strong **18.c4** **19.dxc5 Qxc5** **20. cxd5**



Qxd5 **21.N2c4**, **22 Rfd1** and **23 Nd6+** is the idea. **18...dxc4 19.dxc5 Qxc5 20.Ndxc4** d6 is now the focus of White’s attention. It should be mentioned that by the simplest of measures, White has achieved a nearly winning position. **20...Ke7** Oh woe! **21.b4!** **21.Nxf7!** is better but this should still win. **21...Qxb4** Or **21...Qb5** **22.Ng6+ fxc6** **23.Qd6+ Ke8** **24.Qxe6+ Kd8** **25.Nd6 Qd5** **26.Qxd5 Nxd5**

27.Nxc8 Kxc8 **28.b5** winning. **22.Nd3Ne4** **22...Qa4** **23.Qd6+ Ke8** **24.Nc5 Qb5** **25.Qd4** and **26.Nd6** is hard to stop. **23.Nxb4** **23.Qf4** is better when after **23...Qb5** **24.Nde5 Nf6** **25.Nd6 Qd5** **26.Nxc8+ Rxc8** **27.Qb4+ Ke8** **28.Rxc6 bxc6** **29.Qb7** the win is a lot simpler. **23...Nxc3 24.fxc3** White is up a piece for just a pawn but White’s triple g-pawns pose some technical problems. But luckily for White, Black now “decides” to blunder. **24...Bb5?** Losing immediately. **24...Bd7** holds for a while. **25.Rxf7+! Kxf7 26.Nd6+ Ke7 27.Nxc8+ Kd7 28.Nxa7 Ba4 29.Nd3** Down a piece, a pawn, and facing the hard to meet threat of Nc5+, Black gave up; **1-0**

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