

Editorial

Looking Up Longfellow Street

A green dream for Gallivan is now a travesty

*"I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;
A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree."
TREES, a poem by Joyce Kilmer*

Just what are those twisted sticks sprouting along the center island of Gallivan Boulevard, roughly between the Granite Ave. McDonald's and the Neponset turnaround? They appear every 30 feet or so, clusters of mostly dead wood surrounded by weeds and crabgrass.

If memory serves, the administration of Michael Dukakis decided to beautify the roadway by planting several dozen saplings along the center islands in the hope of beautifying the neighborhood with a grove of shade trees to rival the toniest of suburban parkways.

That all happened in the mid-1980s, back in the day when Gallivan and other parkway roads were managed by the MDC (the Metropolitan District Commission), a state agency then headed by a Dorchester native, Commissioner Bill Geary.

For generations, the MDC managed hundreds of public amenities in Boston and the nearby "metropolitan" region, according to a 2003 study, "Enhancing Regional Greeninfrastructure," published by Harvard's Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston.

The MDC "for more than a century managed hundreds of parks, riverways, parkways, and reservations in thirty-seven cities and towns in the core of Greater Boston," the study noted.

"The MDC system also provided an essential web of complex ecologies. The network of parks along the area's three major rivers (the Charles, the Mystic, and the Neponset) help keep the waterways clean and mitigate the pollutions of the area's watersheds. Trees and plant life in the metropolitan park system remove carbon dioxide and other contaminants from the air. The parks serve as an urban sanctuary for birds and other wildlife."

But that was another time, another century, and after four successive Republican governors – Bill Weld, Paul Cellucci, Jane Swift, and Mitt Romney – sought to scuttle the agency, the MDC was ultimately dismantled, its mission passed along to the state's Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) which now is responsible for the state parks and roadways once managed by the MDC.

Most of the Gallivan trees that were planted more than 30 years ago are now either dead or dying, relics of a long-ago attempt to maintain some beauty in our community's public spaces. Alas, not long after the extensive tree-planting was installed, the topiary was choked by auto emissions and winter weather, and now the onetime saplings stand as forlorn, leafless branches. Why doesn't someone tear them out and replant them?

I'm talking to you, Gov. Baker. cc: DCR Commissioner Jim Montgomery. – Ed Forry



A vision of Hell in our city

BY LEW FINFER
SPECIAL TO THE REPORTER

Last Friday at about 1 p.m., I was driving along Southamptton Street between Atkinson and Bradston streets just before it links up with Mass Ave. at its intersection with Melnea Cass Boulevard near both the Boston Medical Center and the Suffolk County House of Correction. This area is referred to, variously, as "Mass and Cass", the "Methadone Mile," and the "Recovery Mile."

There were about 200 people sitting and standing on the narrow sidewalk with several feet of trash in the street in front of them down the length of the block. They looked like they were suffering a lot. Surely, no one would ever want to be there. Additionally, some squalid tents had been pitched on the side streets.

When I went by again at 3:15 p.m. after a meeting at the House of Correction, I saw that many of the people had left for the day – the city has some mobile trailers nearby which give people some help. The city had done some cleaning up, but some people remained along with the sad-looking tents.

This activity reportedly repeats itself almost every day with pimps and traffickers and drug dealers mixing among those who are addicted, homeless, or suffering

I've lived in Dorchester for more than 50 years. As an organizer, I've been on many of my neighbor-

hood's streets over those years, walking along them and knocking on doors, not just driving around. So, I've seen my share of problems, especially in the 1970s when we had more than 1,000 abandoned homes. I was also a victim of street crime at night in Dorchester five times in the 1970s and 1980s when I didn't have a car.

I haven't seen Third World poverty in person, but what I saw on that city block in Boston last week was vision of Hell in the middle of what is overall a very prosperous city.

There is some attention being paid to "Mass and Cass." The city has convened a task force to deal with the situation, and the Globe had a recent article about what the mayoral candidates propose to do about it. But much more needs to be done. We have to ask Mayor Janey and Gov. Baker to do more. We need state Rep. Jon Santiago's help as he represents this area and has a special view of things as an Emergency Room doctor at Boston Medical Center treating some of the desolate. More food, clean needles, drug treatment, mental health therapy, emergency and permanent housing, job training and placement all have to be part of the solution.

Of course, the situation is complicated: You can't force people to accept help. But those who have seen "Mass and Cass" at its worst up close know that more can and must be done.

Lew Finfer is a Dorchester resident.

Time to legalize 'safe consumption' sites

To the Editor:

The War on Drugs has ultimately been a failure that has created a harmful stigma with particular repercussions toward black and brown communities. From its beginning in 2013, the opioid epidemic has further unraveled families across generations as well as socioeconomic status. According to data from Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), Suffolk County has seen a 45 percent increase in opioid-related deaths between 2015 and 2020, with a 32 percent increase between 2019 and 2020. Similarly, the city of Boston has seen a 58 percent increase of opioid-related deaths during the same time period, with a 42 percent increase between 2019 and 2020.

While there is no easy solution to be found, we must do what we can to both combat the stigma of addiction and save lives.

Safe consumption sites (SCS) are legally sanctioned harm-reduction facilities where intravenous drug users can safely inject pre-obtained drugs under medical supervision. They provide on-site emergency response to overdoses, injection-related first aid,

access to counseling, medical and behavioral health services, as well as substance use treatment, and disposal of needles.

An Act Relative to Preventing Overdose Deaths & Increasing Access to Treatment (S.1272/H. 2088) would create a 10-year pilot program of two or more SCS across the state in which DPH would create operational regulations, and establish a process to apply for licensure. Furthermore, local boards of health must approve each site, which will decriminalize the use of drugs within. Finally, DPH would have to submit a report to the Legislature on the progress of the sites 18 months after the program is implemented, and annually. Over 100 SCS around the world have been opened with zero overdose deaths at these facilities.

Please contact your state senator and state representative in support of this important legislation. Safe places to access emergency care are much better than back alleys, playgrounds, or street corners. We can save lives and protect our children.

Matthew J Shochat
Dorchester

Reporter missed an opportunity to educate its readers about key sustainability issues

To the Editor:

In response to your recent article "Foes of Hyde Park 'apartment community' put their focus on the environment," I posit the following as points of reference to the reporter's perspective of the recent virtual public meeting hosted by the Boston Planning and Development Agency:

- Describing "990 American Legion Highway in Hyde Park as currently a vacant site" is somewhat misleading, especially when the City of Boston stated the following in their Neighborhood Strategic Plan for Hyde Park 2015 - 2021:

"The third general set of recommendations in the BRA Neighborhood Strategic Plan calls for acquisition of city and privately owned parcels to expand open space in this community... One set of parcels, known as the Oak Lawn Driving Range and Crane Ledge, offers a significant opportunity of open space expansion on the northeastern edge of Hyde Park. These private parcels are presently zoned for Neighborhood Shopping and single-family residential. They are of a size, when taken together, which could help address the park equity deficit in this area of Hyde Park, enabling active recreation features to be developed in selected sections. This same site could also help with the development of a natural area reserve/forest for the maintenance and growth of the existing tree canopy to sequester carbon and provide other benefits of urban forests".

- This unique circumstance and opportunity are not things that should be dismissed as business as usual by the Dorchester Reporter. On the contrary, they offer a unique opportunity for you to educate your readers and advocate for the future and sustainability of our children's children by being on the right side of history when it comes to the environment, climate change, climate equity, and environmental justice.

Most people think of sustainability exclusively as an environmental issue. It is part of a macro-complex

system made up of three important sub-systems: Environmental Sustainability, Human Sustainability, and Institutional Sustainability. Each one of these sub-systems supports the existence of the other two, which makes all three sub-systems mutually interdependent.

We human beings are now the stewards and caretakers of our systems. This is a big responsibility and the sooner we understand it and confront this challenge, the better our chances are as a species not only to survive, but also to build a just, sustainable, and flourishing city.

The overwhelming majority of the 170 plus diverse members of our communities who participated in the aforementioned virtual public meeting support the City's stated strategy of acquiring the 24 acres of this urban forest and wildlife and are against the development proposed by Lincoln Property. The 170 in opposition include my wife and me, immediate abutters, owning our home of 43 years on the base of the Crane Ledge Woods cliff on the westside. We would suffer heavy flooding and possible collapse of the rocks in our backyard due to blasting and disruption of the current natural state of the woods and cliff if development were to occur.

We ask and expect from our elected officials and policy makers bold leadership that provides a creative 21st century solution that is respectful, inclusive, and solves a present-day challenge that saves the environment, mitigates climate change, and provides climate equity and environmental justice to the residents of Hyde Park, Mattapan and Roslindale that surround Crane Ledge Woods with health and sustainable benefits for all of us, including our fellow citizens throughout the neighborhoods of Boston.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

José C. Massó III is a Hyde Park homeowner and abutter at the base of Crane Ledge Woods rock cliff.

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