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Subject The DEI economy

Today's Need To Knows Newsletter: Not again, Needham | Chestnut Hill project shrinks | Local campuses could help fill housing gap

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Good morning,

Many employers are anxiously watching to see if, or how, they will need to comply with new Trump administration orders to eliminate DEI practices in the private sector.

“...in case after tragic case,” [the executive order reads](#), “the American people have witnessed first-hand the disastrous consequences of illegal, pernicious discrimination that has prioritized how people were born instead of what they were capable of doing.”

The Wall Street Journal has an overview of what these [policies could mean for employers](#) (free link).

Meanwhile, Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell's office [tells the Globe](#) it is working on guidance clarifying that DEI efforts are, in fact, “both legal and essential.”

But why?

The whole thing has Globe columnist Shirley Leung wondering: Just what problem is the new administration trying to fix?

“Women and people of color [aren’t taking over America](#),” Leung writes, while providing data to prove it.

The Globe also has a [must-read op-ed](#) by Colette Phillips.

“DEI isn’t going away,” Phillips writes. “Not because of the moral imperative but out of economic necessity.

“The buying power of people of color in America represents the fifth-largest economic market in the world — greater than the gross domestic product of Canada, Mexico, and Sweden combined.

“[McKinsey & Company](#) has found that companies with diversity in the workplace are 36 percent more profitable than businesses that are homogenous. And 75 percent of organizations with inclusive strategies and diverse talent exceed financial targets, according to research from the [Gartner consulting firm](#),” Phillips adds.

I’d be [interested in learning](#) how your company is thinking about this.

Rt. 9 project shrinks, and so does town’s revenue hopes

City Realty Group is shrinking its [proposed](#) mixed-use redevelopment of a Chestnut Hill office park by 41 percent, [reports Greg Ryan at the BBJ](#).

The largely vacant four-building office park, at [1280-1330 Boylston St.](#), is part of a [larger area](#) that Brookline wants to rezone to grow the town’s commercial taxes.

But following feedback from nearby residents and others, City Realty's proposed 20-story hotel and condo tower is now 12 stories. A 12-story apartment building is now six stories. Also removed are planned senior housing and medical offices and some of the retail, Ryan notes.

And that slashes Brookline's hoped for property tax windfall by nearly half.

Local campus projects could help address housing gap

As we told you [here last week](#), UMass/Amherst is accepting proposals from developers to build housing and/or mixed-use projects on its main campus in Amherst as well as on its [Mount Ida Campus](#) in Newton.

Mount Ida [is 66 acres](#), with potential areas for redevelopment outlined on [this map](#). Importantly, since the property is owned by the state the development will not require a special permit from Newton. So maybe this will happen in our lifetime.

UMass isn't the only area campus looking to open up more residential opportunities:

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Regis College is selling off a 62-acre parcel across from its campus on Wellesley Street in Weston, reports Steve Adams [at Banker & Tradesman](#). One conceptual plan would create an 18-lot single-family subdivision and a cottage-style continuing care community, including 28 cottage-style homes. (And it's ruffling some feathers at the [Weston Owl](#).)

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Over in the Longwood area, Simmons University has entered into an agreement with Swedish building giant Skanska to redevelop its residential campus to include a multi-building lab, residential, and retail project on 5.8 acres, writes [Catherine Carlock at the Globe](#).

Lasell offers students a new learning lab

Lasell University has opened an augmented reality/virtual reality lab on its Auburndale campus.

It's reportedly the state's only small college with this technology, although Harvard, MIT, and UMass Amherst have similar setups. It's funded by \$750,000 grant from the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, reports the [Globe's Jon Chesto](#).

The lab will help chemistry and biology classes simulate experiments; help the fashion department teach clothing design; and enable the criminal justice students to explore crime scene reenactments.

Tuesday grab bag

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Is there anyone in your orbit who still refuses to believe that supply doesn't lower housing costs? [Here's yet another study](#).

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"Someday, it's possible a 50-year-old smoker will be too young to buy cigarettes in Newton and will ask a 60-year-old to buy them," writes Brian McGonicle in his Newton Beacon story about the city's [generational tobacco ban](#).

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[Watertown BINGO](#) anyone?

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Los Seminariosde Valor y Dinero offers free virtual financial education workshops in Spanish, designed to help participants enhance their money management skills. The workshops also provide access to one-on-one financial coaching in Spanish. [Details](#)

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Here's the Swellesley Report's photos from Friday's "[very cool Wellesley Ice Sculpture Stroll](#)."

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When Brookline and Berkshire banks [merge](#) later this year, they'll be opening under a new yet to be announced name. ([BBJ](#))

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Newton's Health and Human Services Department is seeking local employers to host interns for its 2025 Newton Youth Works Summer Internship Program. Interns aged 16 to 18 work part-time and are hired and paid through the program at no cost to the employers. [Job submissions](#) for summer 2025 due Feb 2.

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[Pathways for Immigrant Workers](#) offers pro-bono legal services to employers who are providing jobs but cannot afford green card sponsorship.

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Here are [answers to Frequently Asked Questions](#) for employers related to the state's Unemployment Insurance settlement with the US Dept. of Labor. And here's [Mass Opportunity Alliance's take](#)

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Massachusetts experienced the same 4.1 percent unemployment rate in December as the country as a whole, ending a nearly two-year streak of comparatively lower joblessness in the Bay State. ([State House News](#))

Arts advocate calls for diversifying the region's museums

Last Thursday, at our first annual Watertown Night at Donohue's Bar and Grill one of our four honorees, [Archy LaSalle](#), (of "[Where are all the Black People At](#)") was unavailable to be present to receive his Community Leadership Award.

So we presented it virtually instead and [he recorded](#) his thanks but also a call to action:

Not again, Needham!

Less than a year after Needham's independent restaurateurs and retailers successfully held back a proposed ordinance [banning the sale](#) of single use plastic water bottles, the bottle ban appears headed back to Town Meeting.

Citizen petitioners actually hope to return to Spring Town Meeting with five new bylaws, each aiming to ban different kinds of plastic waste:

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[Plastic water bottle ban](#): Prohibits the sale of single-use plastic bottles containing non-carbonated, unflavored water with a volume of one liter or less.

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[Plastic beverage bottle ban](#): This ban applies to single-use plastic bottles with less than 32 ounces, such as soda, carbonated and flavored water, tea, lemonade, juice, and sports drinks.

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[Black plastic ban](#): This ban prohibits the distribution of black plastic containers, cutlery, and other items, as they are non-recyclable and pose health concerns.

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[Miniature single-use alcohol bottle ban](#): Bans the sale of miniature single-use alcohol containers (aka nips) with a volume of 100 ml or less.

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[Skip-the-stuff](#): This final bylaw actually helps restaurants and the planet. It prohibits including single-use items—such as cutlery, chopsticks, condiment packages, and napkins—with takeout orders unless the customer requests them.

Skip-the-stuff is already in effect in [Newton](#) and under consideration in Wellesley and Watertown. We see that as a win-win. [It prevents waste](#) and saves restaurants from purchasing unnecessary materials.

The others we have mixed feelings about.

We don't dispute the harm plastic creates. But independent merchants in any given municipality shouldn't be asked to solve this when the problem originates with large corporations — bottlers and manufacturers — at the beginning of the supply chain.

That's why we've [argued](#) that these ideas would be more effective (and fairer to small businesses) if they were regulated on the state level.

And that's what you need to know for today — Chinese New Year starts tomorrow — unless you need to know [why penguins don't technically exist anymore](#) (although you can still watch the cute things on the NE Aquarium's [penguin webcam](#).)

[Greg Reibman \(he, him\)](#)

President & CEO

Charles River Regional Chamber

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THURSDAY

2025 Young Professionals Group Open House

Thurs Jan 30, noon to 1 p.m.

Hybrid (via Zoom or in-person at Workbar Needham, 117 Kendrick St, Ste 300, Needham)

Free for members & future members, ages 21-40

Come learn how to get involved with the chamber's Young Professionals Group in 2025. This kickoff meeting (in person with virtual option) will be an opportunity to meet current committee members, learn about ways to get involved, preview event plans for 2025 and provide input on initiatives/programs you'd like to see from the chamber's young professionals group this coming year.

Can't attend but interested in learning more? Reach out to Katherine Herer (kherer@charlesriverchamber.com) or Caroline Cueva (ccueva@gscommunitycare.org)

REGISTE

R NOW

Young Professionals Group Series Sponsors

LOW TICKET ALERT

Winter Celebration at William James College

Wed Feb 5, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

1 Wells Ave, Newton

Limited tickets on sale

Our annual Winter Celebration is always a can't miss event. Connect with business, nonprofit, and civic leaders, celebrate our community, and support the work of the chamber in a lively and festive atmosphere.

This year, we'll gather at William James College, a renowned Newton-based institution dedicated to mental health education and leadership development.

Explore this modern, space, mingle with old friends, and make new connections while enjoying delicious food and drink provided by chamber-member [Better Life Food](#).

Register early and save! Additional discounts available for group ticket purchases – this is the perfect event to bring your friends, colleagues and clients to celebrate our business community and kick off 2025!

REGISTE

R NOW

PRESENTING SPONSOR

[Watch](#) Archy LaSalle's video acceptance of the Community Leadership Award at Watertown Night, celebrating his dedication to creativity, inclusion, and representation in the arts!

[Watch](#) our latest webinar on how to support your colleagues and create a supportive workplace environment against domestic violence.

[Watch](#) our latest webinar featuring a panel of experts sharing how employers can retain and assist visually impaired employees.

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Support our community, strengthen our advocacy
& access resources to grow your business.

OUR MISSION

is to champion our communities' economic
and cultural vitality through education, advocacy and networking.

OUR TEAM

[Greg Reibman](#), President & CEO

[Lise Ann Q. Elcock](#), VP, Membership & Development

[Katherine Herer](#), VP, Operations

[Tracey Aldrich Antaya](#), Membership Engagement Director

[Maxime Isaac](#), Member Services Manager

[Max Woolf](#), Public Policy Manager

EVENTS REFUND POLICY

Unless otherwise noted, event registrations are transferrable but not refundable.

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