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Date 2024-12-20 11:58:58+00:00

Subject One last time in 2024

Today's Need to Knows newsletter: Great places to work and great leaders in our backyard | Another win in West Newton | Butts out in Needham

Good morning friends and happy — believe it or not — [National Greg Day](#).

This is our final newsletter for 2024.

It's been my honor riding the local business news and trends rollercoaster with you. I'm grateful to all who've taken the time to read, share perspectives, argue and tolerate my rants and my typos.

I'm especially appreciative of our chamber's [1000-plus members](#), [annual partners](#), [committee members](#), volunteers and the [chamber team](#) who make our programs and advocacy possible.

If you aren't yet a member, [please join today](#). Our advocacy depends on your financial support and participation.

Here's to a joyful, peaceful and prosperous holiday season.

Great places to work and great leaders, right in our backyard

Congratulations to the Charles River Chamber members that earned a spot on the Boston Globe's [2024 Top Places to Work](#) — several appearing on the list for multiple years in a row.

Locally-based members that made this year's list are Bright Horizon Family Solutions, Benchmark Senior Living, Fairway Independent Mortgage Corp, Family Aid, The Village Bank, Boston Showcase, Clifton Larson Allen, Good Shepherd Community Care, Riverside Community Care, Needham Bank, Celtic Angels Home Health Care and Fidelity Bank

MBTA Communities keeps adding wins

Massachusetts' bipartisan MBTA Communities law is the most consequential bill designed to address the state's chronic housing shortage in a half-century.

The law requires 177 cities and towns to rezone parts of each community and make it easier to build small multi-family homes near public transit.

So far more than 115 municipalities — including all four communities served by our chamber and, just this week, Waltham — have adopted zoning to comply.

A handful are refusing to act, even at [the risk](#) of losing access to millions in [state grants](#). Others are racing to meet an end-of-year deadline. And 35 small towns have a deadline to comply by the end of 2025. ([Boston Indicators updated map here](#)).

Needham passed its compliance plan in October. But an effort is now underway to repeal that plan in a referendum on Jan. 14. (Gloucester and Shrewsbury will also hold referendums in 2025.)

A repeal would be most unfortunate because the [plan before Needham voters](#) has great economic upside for the town, its businesses and its residents.

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It stands to ease the challenges local large and small employers have in hiring and retaining workers.

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It stands to bring more foot traffic and customers to our restaurants, shops and other businesses. (Businesses in walkable communities generate 80% more in sales on average than businesses in car-dependent neighborhoods)

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It stands to create opportunities for young adults to live locally ([have you watched this video?](#)) and raise families and for seniors to downsize.

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And it stands to generate new tax revenue to supports schools (which [are not overcrowded](#)), police, fire,

roads and other local services.

But don't just take my word for it.

Please join me via Zoom on Friday Jan. 3 at 10 a.m. for a conversation with Needham business owners explaining [why they support a "Yes" vote](#) on the Jan. 14 referendum and why they believe creating small, multi-family homes in Needham's near local shops and restaurants is vital to their success

We'll explain what Needham's housing plan does and doesn't do, as well as the potential consequences of being out of compliance with state law.

But our main focus will be an opportunity to hear directly from, and ask questions to, local employers who believe the Neighborhood Housing Plan is critical to their ability to hire and retain workers and to a vibrant Needham.

We'll announce our panelists soon. But please [RSVP](#) before you unplug for the holidays. We'll be sure to send you the link and the video recording too.

And if you'd like to display a "YES for Needham" sign at your place of business [email Max Woolf](#) and he'll bring one over.

An overstuffed final grab bag of 2024

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Nail salons are often dismissed as a blight on our downtowns or village centers. You [may feel differently](#) after reading about this Needham business. (Needham Observer)

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The Wellesley Select Board voted 5-0 to co-sponsor a ["Skip-the-Stuff"](#) by-law that will head to Town Meeting this Spring. This ordinance would prohibit restaurants from including single-use items such as forks and condiments in takeout order unless a customer requests it. A similar program has been in place [in Newton since March](#).

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Seen a drone flying over Greater Boston recently? It may have been part of a futuristic healthcare delivery pilot involving Mass General Brigham, a system that includes Newton-Wellesley Hospital ([BBJ](#))

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The registered nurses of **Newton-Wellesley Hospital** say they have reached a tentative contract agreement with their employer. ([Newton Patch](#))

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The Watertown Public Arts and Culture Committee has selected artist **Brandon Marshall** to create a mural at the Grove Street underpass on the Watertown-Cambridge Greenway, honoring [Arshile Gorky](#) and the immigrant experience. The art work will be unveiled next summer

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Despite overwhelming public comment, the **Waltham City Council** passed a [less ambitious](#) MBTA compliance plan this Monday. The city just slipped in the state's end-of-year deadline after passing a non-compliant plan earlier this year.

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Needham Community Ed hosts a four-film event, "What's 'Normal' Anyway?: A Stigma-Obliterating Disability Film Series," from January to April. The series aims to raise awareness and encourage discussions around disability inclusion, with each film followed by a panel . [Details](#).

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Celebrate Chanukah on Sun. (Dec 22) from 4:30-5:30 p.m.at the Linden Square Courtyard. Enjoy the giant Menorah lighting alongside festive music, crafting, cocoa and cookies. [Details](#).

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The Healey-Driscoll administration has [drafted regulations](#) for the state's new ADU law. Comment period closes Jan. 10. [Details](#).

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Needham's Select Board unanimously approved keeping the town's split-level tax rate between commercial and residential properties this week. We're not surprised, but before the vote [we did remind the board](#) to be aware of the costs this policy imposes on businesses. ([Needham Observer](#))

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We're hiring! The chamber is seeking a part-time experienced bookkeeper/ administrative professional to join our small but dynamic team. [Learn more, spread the word or apply](#).

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Middlesex County Sheriff **Peter Koutoujian** has been appointed to the MBTA's governing board.

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Massachusetts **Veterans Hire Tax Credit** is increasing to \$2,500. Check out the [state's website](#) to see if your business could qualify.

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The UMass Boston Area [Employers Internship Fair](#) will be held on the Mount Ida Campus in Newton on Jan. 23.

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Former state treasurer **Tim Cahill**, who is currently CEO of the Quincy Chamber, is taking over from **Peter Forman** to [lead the South Shore Chamber](#). Forman, who I consider to be a mentor, is retiring after two decades in the role.

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Need a last minute gift? [Give friends this newsletter](#). We won't tell 'em it's free!

Another win in West Newton

The [folks diligently working](#) to save the West Newton Cinema from the wrecking ball and transform it into a cultural destination keep scoring wins.

This week the Newton City Council granted the [West Newton Cinema Foundation](#) \$98,500 in matching Community Preservation funds to study restoring the distressed venue.

The Massachusetts Cultural Council chipped in \$35,000 with the rest coming from individual donations.

This follows the receipt of an eye-popping [\\$5.2 million gift](#) from an anonymous donor in April to purchase the building and help with restoration.

The foundation expects the study will be completed by June.

Black plastic panic overstated

Needham joins generational tobacco ban bandwagon

Finally today, if you're not at least 21 years old by the end of this month, you'll never be allowed to purchase tobacco products anywhere in Needham.

Ever.

The town's board of health adopted the new ["age-gated" tobacco](#) ban policy, last week, making Needham the 12th Massachusetts community to adopt an "age-gated" tobacco ban policy, reports [Peter O'Neil at Needham Observer](#).

Anyone born after Jan. 1, 2004 will never be able to buy tobacco products in Needham no matter how long they live, which presumably may be longer if they never smoke, but about the same if they take their tobacco shopping elsewhere.

And that's what worries the Needham's six licensed tobacco retailers who stand to not just lose sales of tobacco products but on all the other items that customer might have bought at the same time.

Merchants will receive a warning for violating the ordinance prior to April 1 and then face escalating fines (\$1,000 for the first violation) and suspensions of their tobacco product sales permit.

And that's what you need to know for today — did I mention it's National Greg Day? — unless you need to know about the [invention that is responsible for the suburbs](#) as we know it.

Peace out. Merry Christmas. Happy Hanukah. Happy Kwanzaa. And happy new year.

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

President & CEO

Charles River Regional Chamber

617.244.1688

I enjoy [hearing from you](#)

NEW EVENT

Why businesses say ‘YES for Needham’

Local employers explain the need for more housing

Fri. Jan 3, 10 to 11 a.m.

via Zoom

Free

Join us for a conversation with Needham business owners explaining why they support a “Yes” vote on the Jan. 14 referendum and why they believe creating small, multi-family homes in Needham’s near local shops and restaurants is vital to their success

We’ll explain what Needham’s housing plan does and doesn’t do, as well as the potential consequences of being out of compliance with state law.

But our main focus will be an opportunity to hear directly from, and ask questions to, local employers who believe Neighborhood Housing Plan is critical to their ability to hire and retain workers and to a vibrant Needham.

Panelists to be announced soon. This program will be recorded.

REGISTE

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NEW EVENT

YPG Happy Hour at District 118

Wed. Jan 8, 5:30 to 7 p.m.

District 118 Kitchen + Bar, 118 Needham St, Newton Upper Falls

Free, open to members & nonmembers

Join us at Newton's District 118, a vibrant spot known for its creative cocktails and delicious bites. Connect with

other young professionals (ages 21-40) from across the region, unwind after work, and start the new year by growing your network.

Enjoy complimentary appetizers (drinks pay as you go) and great company at our first event of 2025. Don't miss this opportunity to meet new faces, share ideas, and build connections that will carry you through the year ahead.

REGISTE

R NOW

Young Professionals Group Series Sponsors

NEW EVENT

Virtual: Hiring & Supporting Visually Impaired Employees

Thurs. Jan 9, noon to 1 p.m.

via Zoom

Free for members, \$15 for nonmembers

This webinar will equip employers with the tools and resources needed to create inclusive workplaces that empower visually impaired employees to thrive.

Attend to learn about available resources and services to support recruitment and retention as well as practical steps to foster an inclusive and accessible work environment.

Presenters:

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Carol Cullins, Employment Services Supervisor, MA Commission for the Blind

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Marianne Gilmore, Workforce Development Specialist, Carroll Center for the Blind

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Karen McCormack, Job Developer, Perkins School for the Blind

REGISTE

R NOW

Small Business Seminar Series Sponsors

[Watch](#) our Regional Real Estate Forum featuring Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation President Doug Howgate on the state's competitive index, a panel of young professionals discussing housing, and a conversation with planning directors from Watertown, Newton, Needham, and Wellesley on supporting our businesses and communities.

Skip to specific parts of the recording:

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[Mass Taxpayers Foundation presentation by Doug Howgate.](#)

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[Young professionals share their housing challenges.](#)

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[Planning directors discussing housing and economic development](#)

Also...

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[Mass Taxpayers' full competitiveness report](#)

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Enjoying this newsletter? [Forward to a friend.](#)

JOIN THE CHAMBER

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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