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Subject: [EXTERNAL] - Battle lines drawn in Boston

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By Ella Adams and Eric Convey

Keller: Kraft and Wu just getting started in Boston mayoral race



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Keller at Large

It's been 37 years since then-Gov. Michael Dukakis accepted the Democratic presidential nomination by claiming his contest with George H.W. Bush "isn't about ideology, it's about competence."

This has become a go-to strategy for candidates who want to keep the incumbent's warts front and center while deflecting the inevitable counterattack that the challenger is some sort of alien extremist bent on undermining the electorate's core beliefs; remember how Dukakis — a thoroughly patriotic American who volunteered for active military service — allegedly hated the Pledge of Allegiance?

Fast forward to the newly-minted Boston mayoral race, already following the familiar script. In an interview last week, mild-mannered philanthropist Josh Kraft repeated a pledge that is already a staple of his nascent campaign: "we're not going to focus on ideology. We're going to focus on getting results for the people of Boston." To which Mayor Michelle Wu replied: "I'm a little surprised that someone who hasn't even voted for mayor or city council in the city thinks that he's ready to lead the city."

Not exactly Lee Atwater-grade TNT. But this initial volley hints at the potential for an upset -- or another Wu blowout.

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Happening Today

10:30 | National Grid Foundation distributes \$1.3M in fuel assistance to United Way of Massachusetts Bay, United Way of Central Mass., and Cape and Island United Way. The funds are designed to help families cover winter heating costs | The Neighborhood Developer, 4 Gerrish Ave., Chelsea

11:00 | His Majesty King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan plans to visit the State House with a Jordanian delegation, welcomed by Gov. Healey and First Lady Lydgate | Bulfinch Entrance, State House

7:00 | Massachusetts Democratic Party holds virtual listening session with residents of U.S. Rep. Lynch's Congressional district | [Register](#)

Healey plans to seek reelection in 2026

Gov. Maura Healey said Friday that she plans to run for reelection in 2026 because "there's a lot more to do." Healey was elected to her first term as governor in 2022, and before then served two terms as Massachusetts attorney general. Following Healey's announcement on Boston Public Radio MassGOP Chair Amy Carnevale said Healey has "disappointed residents time and time again, steering Massachusetts into an era of secrecy, mismanagement, and financial irresponsibility." There have been a number of Republican names thrown in the ring as potential gubernatorial candidates, including Sen. Peter Durant and former Gov. Charlie Baker deputies Brian Shortsleeve and Mike Kennealy. — [GBH](#)

South Coast Rail has a new launch date

Sen. Mark Montigny said Friday during a meeting with transportation officials on Friday that South Coast Rail will begin carrying passengers on March 24 — two months before its expected launch in May. Montigny made the announcement ahead of a public MBTA meeting planned for today, Monday, Feb. 10. The MBTA confirmed the new start date in a press release Friday afternoon, and officials have said in recent days that testing for the commuter rail extension is in its final stage, which involves the monitoring of the line's "simulated service" by the Federal Railroad Administration. — [New Bedford Light](#)

House speaker talks shelter decisions, transparency, federal funding

House Speaker Ron Mariano went "On the Record" on Sunday, where he talked about the House's recent action on the emergency assistance shelter system and why there was no public input on the shelter supp passed. Mariano said the House "didn't have time to have a hearing" because the chamber received the budget and shelter reform requests before the committees were formed, right after representatives were sworn in.

When asked how the state could prepare for parts of its budget to be impacted by federal funding changes, Mariano said, "There's not much you can do." He added that when Trump's funding cuts during his first term eliminated programs the state thought was worthwhile, state lawmakers "dug into our revenue stream" and funded them. Mariano "absolutely" wants to see more Democrats stand up and push back in Washington, D.C., because he said state officials "can patchwork and backstop some of the changes, but we cannot make the commitment to replace everything the feds take away."

Mariano said the House is "prepared to make changes" to House rules related to the deadlines for bill action. On transparency questions swirling around Beacon Hill, Mariano said, "We're not tone deaf, we know the transparency question got 70 percent of the vote and that there's a huge cry for being able to look inside the system to see what's happening." But he and the auditor have "different opinions on what the Constitution allows," and Mariano said the auditor's push attempts to "evaluate opinion making," which "is not an auditable data point." Mariano said he expects to see issues surrounding separation of powers to be "tested more on the federal level now."

Mariano, who has been speaker of the House since 2020, said he is not retiring. — [On the Record](#)

Climate change experiment no longer planned for Vineyard waters

Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution scientists are revising their permit request that would enable an experiment to study ways to slow climate change through dumping sodium hydroxide into waters off of Martha's Vineyard. Initially, scientists applied for two ocean dumping permits to test the effectiveness and environmental impact of a climate solution technique — which involves using lye to increase the ocean's natural ability to remove carbon from the atmosphere — but following an already-pushed-back timeline, WHOI announced the project plans to pursue a revised permit to dump up to around 17,000 gallons instead of the originally-proposed 66,000 gallons in the Gulf of Maine this summer. MVTimes's Hayley Duffy reports that the revised plan would take place farther north at a location that minimizes the environmental impact to marine life and fishing activities. — [MVTimes](#)

Revised Amherst generational tobacco ban receiving criticism and praise

At a virtual public hearing on Thursday on the amended policies the Board of Health is considering for adoption, Amherst officials heard from supporters and opponents of "nicotine-free generation" policy, which would prohibit anyone born on or after Jan. 1, 2004 from buying tobacco products. Belchertown adopted the policy in December, and a Belchertown Board of Health member suggested Amherst adopt it to create "consistent policy" between the two neighboring towns. The Gazette's Scott Merzbach reports that the Pelham Board of Health also recently voted unanimously to advocate that all neighboring communities enact nicotine-free generation tactics. The Amherst Board of Health doesn't yet have the policy included in any proposed amendments to its tobacco and vape regulations, and opponents, many a part of the business community, say that restrictions would harm communities and retailers. — [Daily Hampshire Gazette](#)

Berkshire County housing developers fear federal cuts

Berkshire County developers of housing with affordable components fear federal cuts could make building less financially viable, the Eagle's Claire O'Callahan reports. One non-profit developer told the paper between 100 and 200 units of below-market housing are in jeopardy if funding sources aren't stabilized. — [Berkshire Eagle](#)

Josh Kraft talks BPS, bike lanes

Boston mayoral candidate Josh Kraft appeared on Sunday's Keller at Large to talk about what he's bringing to the race and why he believes he can listen to Bostonians better than incumbent Mayor Michelle Wu. Asked about how he'd address Boston Public Schools, Kraft said he's thought about an alternate plan to help fix operations, which would involve hiring a second superintendent. Kraft reiterated that he wants to put a "pause" on bike lane construction because he thinks the plan is laid out in a "haphazard way" and "is not benefiting the everyday people" in Boston, like families, seniors, people with disabilities and businesses. Kraft said he's been speaking with people in Boston's communities who are "hurting financially," especially when it comes to housing — one of his major campaign focuses thus far. — [WBZ-TV](#)

UMass Athletics steps up with \$10K after half-court shot controversy

A UMass Amherst senior who completed a four-shot challenge — a layup, free throw, 3-pointer and half-court shot — during a half-time promotion last week at the Mullins Center will get the \$10,000 prize he thought he had won, even though the insurance company involved in the affair disqualified his shot, the Gazette's Garrett Cote reports. Insurance group Odds On Promotions, a UMass official said, balked at paying out the \$10,000 because UMass senior Noah Lee's leading foot was on the half-court line when he made the final basket. The news went viral on social media, and UMass Athletics initially

offered Lee a number of packages to attempt to make up for the insurer's refusal to pay. Come Friday, UMass's athletics director said the department will pay Lee the full prize amount. — [Daily Hampshire Gazette](#)

Worcester restaurant site likely becoming housing

A local developer has won preliminary approval to build two dozen units of housing over retail space at the site of the former Suney's Pub, which closed recently after more than 50 years in business, the Telegram's Tony Caushi reports. The city's Planning Board embraced the proposal, which also includes plans to put a parking lot across the street from any new building. — [Telegram & Gazette](#)

Taking some of the "mixed" out of mixed-used development

Newton developer Northland Development Corp. wants to proceed with a major project on 23 acres, but with mostly residential space and fewer offices than originally approved, the BBJs Greg Ryan reports. A Northland executive said the office vacancy rate within three miles of the proposed project exceeds 30 percent. The proposal would still include a retail component. The Newton City Council must approve the project before it can proceed. — [Boston Business Journal](#)

ICYMI... Former Massachusetts Sen. Dean Tran was [sentenced](#) Friday to 18 months in prison after being convicted of 23 felony counts. How are activists in Massachusetts [strategizing](#) to fight back against a second Trump era? Five people were taken to the hospital after a Green Line train collision in Somerville on Sunday, an incident that has [renewed](#) some T safety concerns. And as the Trump administration moves to end Temporary Protected Status, Venezuelans in Massachusetts are [increasingly anxious](#) and concerned about how their futures could be dismantled.

More Headlines

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