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Subject: [EXTERNAL] - A showdown in Newton

By Ella Adams & Keith Regan

A Newton City Council-heavy race for the House — for now

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Massachusetts' transportation sector contributes more to our state's air and climate pollution than any other sector. Vehicle electrification is a crucial strategy in our decarbonization efforts. What we electrify first will determine who benefits first. By prioritizing transit and school bus fleets, Massachusetts will see enormous air quality and health benefits, especially in environmental justice and low-income communities. Here's how the legislature can help<https://bit.ly/436ZzZP>

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Today's News

Voters in parts of Newton and Brookline will pick a new state representative this fall for the first time in a quarter-century, and when they head to the polls for the primary, they might be faced with a City Council-heavy ballot.

In an unusually familiar matchup, Newton City Councilors Bill Humphrey and Richard Lipof are both running for the House seat being vacated by veteran Democrat Rep. Ruth Balser, as is Greg Schwartz, who spent eight years on the panel. All three are running as Democrats.

Lipof announced his run Sunday evening, making him at least the third Newton City Council-linked person to launch a campaign for the seat. He's currently in his 23rd year on the City Council, having served as Vice President for four years and on the Land Use Committee and Public Safety & Transportation Committee, among other groups.

A few months ago, Lipof's [text to a colleague](#) about owing her a "foot massage" sparked controversy, prompting the Council to weigh creating an ethics oversight process. (Lipof reportedly apologized for the exchange.)

Humphrey, a third-term councilor who launched his campaign on Feb. 13, has served on committees including Programs & Services, Finance and the City Seal Working Group. The self-proclaimed Democrat unsuccessfully challenged for a seat on the Governor's Council in 2016.

And Schwartz, who made his own bid official [last week](#), served on the Council from 2011 to 2019, when he narrowly lost reelection.

Time will tell if all three stick in the race until the Sept. 3 primary, or if anyone else decides to wade into the fray before nomination papers are due April 30. Maybe the race will even get a Brookline-based candidate. — Ella Adams

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Happening Today

11:00 | Joint Ways and Means Committee continues its review of Gov. Healey's \$58.1 billion FY25 budget proposal, the first of two to focus on health and human services issues | Northeastern University Innovation Campus, 147 S Bedford St., Burlington | [Virtual](#)

11:00 | The House meets in an informal session | House Chamber | [Livestream](#)

11:00 | The Senate meets in an informal session | Senate Chamber | [Livestream](#)

Last week (a quick reminder)

House Democrats approved a \$245M injection into the emergency shelter system and a nine-month limit on how long families are able to stay in shelter, with longer stays for pregnant women and those with disability and veteran status. Lawmakers are quick to blame the federal government for not aiding Massachusetts in helping with the large number of new arrivals that have contributed to the strain on the shelter system.

Last Tuesday's presidential primaries saw President Joe Biden and former President Trump win in

rates where about 25 percent of Massachusetts voters participated, almost half of whom cast their votes before Election Day . A special legislative committee held the first ballot question hearing regarding the MCAS high school graduation requirement, and the Department of Revenue reported that February revenues fell short of the state's revised benchmark to create the longest run of lower-than-expected revenue numbers in over two decades.

Gov. Healey 's housing bond bill is moving on to the Joint Bonding Committee ; Worcester could be home to a pilot overdose prevention center following a unanimous Board of Health vote; and the Cannabis Control Commission is on the hunt for a new executive director.

— [State House News Service](#)

Brookline bans tobacco sales for all born in 21st century

In a first-in-the-nation move, the Supreme Judicial Court upheld a Brookline bylaw banning tobacco sales to anyone born in the 21st century. Brookline Town Meeting voters adopted the bylaw in 2020, and the rule went into effect about one year after in an effort to lessen youth tobacco use, deemed a "generational ban." The town faced a lawsuit claiming the ban was "unconstitutional" and conflicting with the statewide 21-year-old minimum age requirement to purchase tobacco, but the SJC upheld a lower court's decision to dismiss the suit, arguing state law allows municipalities to prohibit tobacco sales completely. The ruling has other Mass. towns thinking about emulating Brookline's approach. —

[Boston Globe](#)

Steward's new suitor

Local nonprofit health care provider Southcoast Health is showing interest in taking over Steward Health Care 's St. Anne's Hospital in Fall River amidst Steward's financial crisis. Southcoast, the first Mass. provider to show any public interest in taking a Steward hospital under its wing, already operates hospitals in Fall River, New Bedford and Wareham, among other southeastern Mass. and Rhode Island facilities. This announcement follows a letter sent Friday to Steward CEO Ralph de la Torre from US Sens. Warren and Markey regarding their concerns about management of the health care company.

— [WBUR](#)

Solar project pulled on Nantucket

The Nantucket Select Board voted last week to back out of a solar project more than 10 years in the making, an initiative that would have completed the island's largest solar farm utilizing Wannacomet Water Company property. The "mutual termination agreement" with Solar Star Tranquility — the company chosen in 2019 to develop the ground-mounted solar array — was born from the "restrictive nature" of the property's permitting and policy-related concerns from the Nantucket Land and Water Council, reports the Current's Jason Graziadei. — [Nantucket Current](#)

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Brookline Town Meeting to take up Gaza war resolution

Brookline Town Meeting voters will face a non-binding resolution condemning Israel for its war in Gaza and calling for an immediate ceasefire when the meeting convenes in May and Sam Mintz of the Brookline News reports the article being sponsored by the Brookline Peace Coalition and others is certain to drive fierce debate and is already drawing pushback for not calling out Hamas' role in sparking the ongoing conflict. — [Brookline News](#)

Brockton Public Schools facing deficit

Officials released an independent review of Brockton Public Schools' budget on Friday, illuminating budget projections predicting the district will bypass its general budget by at least \$19M and at most \$25M. In addition to mispending on transportation and special education, the district "failed to properly use" a budget software that tracks spending, reports the Herald's Lance Reynolds. This finding follows the nationally acknowledged issue of violence occurring at Brockton High School, and a superintendent who is now on paid administrative leave.

— [Boston Herald](#)

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Hundreds of deed restrictions found in Boston push calls to close racial wealth gap

Researchers found over 500 deed restrictions — covenants barring certain races and ethnicities from living in certain places — in suburbs north of Boston. While the language is "legally void" in this day and age, these covenants can be pointed at to explain why the state is segregated along racial lines, Milton J. Valencia reports for the Globe. That historical barring of people of color from buying homes is one of the driving forces behind why such a massive racial wealth gap exists in Boston. — [Boston Globe](#)

A "fiscal cliff" for Mass. school districts

Education advocacy groups are calling on lawmakers to rethink school funding approaches in Gov. Healey's FY25 budget, which calls for a 4 percent increase to public education aid, known as Chapter 70 funding. School districts across the state say they're facing a "fiscal cliff" that could force staff and service cuts due to major inflation that has caused increased costs in special education, transportation, building maintenance and curricula. In rural areas, enrollments have declined and much education funding has focused on urban districts, and in lower-income areas, the Chapter 70 funding formula determines districts' low-income enrollment based on the number of students in state public assistance programs, which have seen declining numbers due to stricter program eligibility. — [State House News Service](#)

Council cancels hearing as Wu insists free-museum program is locked in

The Boston City Council has canceled a planned public hearing on whether the city should expand a recently launched program offering free museum visits to public school students to all residents of the city. Notice of the cancellation came late Friday and Mayor Michelle Wu said Sunday — during a visit to the Boston Children's Museum — that the parameters of the program, which excludes charter and Metco students, were carefully negotiated and unlikely to change in the near term. — [Boston Herald](#)

A(nother) Green Line derailment

A Green Line train went off the rails Saturday morning near Kenmore Station — the first full day the Green Line has been open since February, when it was undergoing repairs. Earlier in the day Saturday, MBTA officials announced the agency was having technical issues with its countdown clocks. All riders were evacuated safely after Saturday's derailment. — [MassLive](#)

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Bad old days: 1931 Wendell election ended with three selectmen in jail

Carla Charter of the Recorder jumps into the way-back machine to recall the 1931 municipal election in Wendell, which ended with three selectmen serving jail time for election interference after they summarily removed one candidate and his entire family from the voting registry. All three later received a gubernatorial pardon. — [Greenfield Recorder](#)

Closing the books: Worcester shuts down online check register

Worcester City Manager Eric Batista says the city has taken down an online vendor check register it began posting in a bid at extreme financial transparency because of cybersecurity and fraud concerns. Brad Petrishen of the Telegram reports the check register was hailed by good government groups when it was first created in 2010 and that a number of other Bay State cities continue to keep their books online. — [Worcester Telegram & Gazette](#)

Healey on the state's top issues

In an exclusive interview with GBH News, Gov. Healey explains why the housing crisis is the top issue facing Mass., that she's open to emergency shelter system reforms — including putting some form of parameters in place so the system can stay afloat — and how Mass. is in a special position to explore AI interests, among other items addressed in her economic development bill. Healey touches on the Steward Health Care crisis, MCAS exam requirements and her campaign to end veteran homelessness. — [GBH](#)

More Headlines

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