

ED ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ FLYNN



Dear neighbors,

I hope you and your family are staying safe and healthy in 2021. We're all too familiar with how difficult a time this has been in our city and country with the COVID-19 pandemic, for those impacted by the virus and their families, for the brave medical professionals, first responders, and frontline workers putting themselves at risk to keep us moving forward. It has also been a very trying time for our small businesses, restaurants, and local establishments that are not only the lifeblood of our economy, but part of the soul of our city.

But the light at the end of the tunnel we have been waiting for is now beginning to come into focus. Our city and state must continue to work through the logistical challenges of vaccine distribution to all of our communities. It will take time, but over the next several months, more and more neighbors will begin to get vaccinated and our country will eventually reach the threshold necessary to get life as we know it back to normal later this year.

It has been nothing short of a miracle that world-renowned scientists, federal, state, and local public health officials have all concluded that COVID-19 vaccines to be both highly effective and safe. I urge all my neighbors to listen to our experts, avoid disinformation, and please take the vaccine when it is available. These vaccines have undergone rigorous standards and testing to ensure their safety, and many people have already received them without any issues. Vaccines are one of the most critical tools in our fight against the virus, with protection not only for yourself, but also for your family, friends, and

neighbors. I urge everyone to get vaccinated as soon as possible. Together, we can end this pandemic.

In the meantime, it is critical to continue to adhere to public health guidelines, especially in light of the new COVID-19 variants that could potentially be more contagious and lethal. So let's be smart and look out for one another by wearing a mask, or even double-masking for extra protection, maintaining physical distance, and avoiding indoor house parties so that we all can make it through this crisis together. We owe it to those same brave healthcare workers, who have pushed themselves to the brink for all of us, to do so. Let's all do our part to help avoid overwhelming our medical system.

Let's not lose sight of the big picture, continue to put ourselves in each other's shoes, and treat all of our neighbors with respect and empathy.

Thank you,

Ed

City and District Updates

BPDA Virtual Public Meetings

- [69 A Street Virtual Public Meeting](#)
 - Tuesday, February 16, 6 pm
- [125 Lincoln Street Cantonese Language Public Meeting](#)
 - Thursday, February 25, 6 pm

Abutters Meeting

- 4 Ward Ct, South Boston
 - Monday, February 1, 5:30 pm

Volunteer to provide COVID-19 vaccine

Many nurses and neighbors have expressed interest in volunteering to help provide vaccines. They are being asked to register with the **Boston Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)**, a community-based volunteer program that prepares for and may respond to emergencies to support the public health infrastructure of the City of Boston.

The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) has been recruiting volunteers from this pool as needed. More information can be found [here](#) at the BPHC website, along with [registration requirements to join Boston MRC](#). The process to join takes a few weeks, and once a volunteer is registered, they will be alerted for opportunities to volunteer, including those for COVID-19 vaccination efforts. For questions or additional information, those interested can email volunteer@bphc.org.

Veterans Town Hall

Boston Veterans and the COVID Response: Where Do We Go From Here?

Commissioner Robert Santiago of the Boston Office of Veterans Services and I will be working in partnership with the Boston VA to present a webinar on the current status of COVID-19 responses and programs that affect our Veterans on Thursday, February 4, 6 pm. Register [here](#) for the event.

Boston Public Schools (BPS) Money Talk Tuesdays

Boston Public Schools is hosting virtual information sessions to help high school seniors and their families navigate the college financial aid process. Families and students who attend the sessions will learn about the FAFSA application process, available resources and the benefits of completing the FAFSA. There will also be an opportunity for participants to ask questions. Additional information on applying to college can be found on the BPS website [here](#). Register for the event [here](#).

- Tuesday, February 2, 2021, 6pm
 - Tuesday, February 9, 2021, 6pm
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BPS Registration Info Session

Registration for the 2021-22 school year has begun! Learn more about the BPS registration process during virtual info sessions. The next meeting is Saturday, February 27, at 10 am. Interpretation services will be available in Spanish and Haitian Creole. Find meeting details and more info at: bostonpublicschools.org/register.

Affordable Housing Opportunities

Income-restricted, affordable homeownership opportunities are available at 340 West 2nd St in South Boston. The deadline to request an application is next Wednesday, February 3, and the deadline to return the application is Wednesday, February 10. [Please follow the link here to request the application online or call 781-992-5303.](#)

Council Hearings and Resolutions



Order for a hearing to discuss property taxes and assistance

programs for seniors and long term residents facing difficulties during COVID-19

Property taxes are a heavy financial burden for many families, particularly seniors on fixed incomes, who may have brought their homes years ago before housing prices and property values skyrocketed in the city. With the COVID-19 pandemic, many are facing additional financial difficulties, and may not be able to afford paying their property taxes. As many seniors and long time residents are facing financial hardship because of COVID-19, the City of Boston should also consider financial assistance programs for those who may be unable to pay their property taxes, including potentially doubling the exemption for seniors over a certain age while considering their income and evaluation. [You can read more on Caught in Southie here.](#)

Order for a hearing to discuss internet access and digital equity in the City of Boston

Education, businesses, work, and other services are now increasingly reliant on the internet, and with the COVID-19 pandemic, having internet access and knowing how to use digital resources is now a necessity for many. Our working class families, our immigrant communities, our communities of color, and our seniors are the most likely to have issues with lack of internet access and knowledge in digital skills, and we need to ensure these residents have the resources they need to use the internet to participate in work, education, and civic life. This hearing order is co-sponsored by Councilors Julia Mejia and Kenzie Bok. [You can read more at the Boston Globe here.](#)

Order for a hearing to discuss the proliferation of electronic billboards

There has been an increase of electronic billboards in the city over the years, but studies have linked electronic billboards to distracted driving and increased crash rates, and found a negative correlation between property values and electronic billboards. Electronic billboards' energy consumption is contrary to the City's energy reduction goals, and oftentimes do not fit in with the historic character of our neighborhoods. The hearing order aims to discuss how the city can strengthen existing restrictions on the usage of electronic billboards. The hearing is co-sponsored by Councilor Kenzie Bok.

Order for a hearing on establishing a First Responders and Frontline Workers COVID-19 Health Registry

With the long-term health impacts currently unknown to both health professionals and the general public alike, Councilor Flynn conveyed that a health registry would allow for city public health officials to track the data and monitor long term effects of COVID-19 for our first responders and frontline workers, as well as providing appropriate resources for those affected by the virus. This hearing is co-sponsored by Councilor Michael Flaherty.

Order for a hearing to discuss the creation of a South Boston Traffic

Master Plan

With South Boston being at the center of Boston's development boom, transportation and traffic are critical issues that greatly impact both long-time and new South Boston residents alike. The hearing order calls for discussion on the establishment of a traffic master plan for South Boston to assess the neighborhood's short-term and long-term transportation needs and capacity, so that the city and residents can better understand the potential impact of upcoming developments on traffic and congestion for the neighborhood. This hearing is co-sponsored by Councilor Michael Flaherty.

Order for a hearing to discuss ways for the City to prevent and investigate incidents of hate crimes and discrimination

When someone experiences a racist or discriminatory incident, it can be difficult for them to find the avenue to report the incident or seek an investigation, and the victim of a hate crime or a racist incident might also be too fearful to come forward and report to authorities. In the city, we have different departments that interact with constituents who experienced discriminatory incidents, including the Human Rights Commission. It's important for the city to have a way for residents to report hate crime and discriminatory incidents, and have measures in place for the City to formally investigate and review these incidents, as well as providing resources to victims and anti-discrimination education to the public. This hearing is co-sponsored by Councilors Andrea Campbell and Lydia Edwards.

Order for a hearing to discuss water rescue infrastructure in the City of Boston

This hearing order is to discuss safety around our piers, marinas, docks, and other areas of access to water, and to discuss how we can have water rescue measures in place for accidents and other incidents. We are a city surrounded by water, and over the years with the increase of visitors and tourists to our city, we unfortunately see incidents of people falling into the water. It's important that we work with our first responders, water rescue units, and state agencies to ensure water safety at our piers, marinas, and docks, so that we can quickly rescue those who fall into the water and prevent tragedies. This hearing is co-sponsored by Councilor Lydia Edwards.

Order for a hearing to discuss public health disparities in Boston's communities of color

Health disparities in our communities of color has unfortunately been a long persistent problem that has also been exacerbated by COVID-19, where we see our Black and Latinx neighbors being disproportionately impacted by this virus in terms of infection rate, hospitalization rate, and mortality rate. With this pandemic, it's especially important that we continue to talk more about what we can do to close the public health disparities that exist in our communities of color. This hearing order is co-sponsored by Councilors Kim Janey and Ricardo Arroyo.

Order for a hearing to discuss renewal fees for restaurants and food establishments during the COVID-19 pandemic

Our restaurants and food establishments have been severely impacted by this pandemic, and the Massachusetts Restaurant Association estimated, that more than 20% of restaurants in the state will close for good due to the pandemic. There are various licenses and permits that restaurants need in order to conduct business in Boston, many of which need renewals, such as Common Victualler license, alcohol license, business certificate, and others. These fees can add up to a significant amount, and looking at renewal fee waivers or something similar can also be something that we consider.

Order for a hearing to discuss ways for the City to be more proactive in providing services, educating the public, and raising awareness for those infected with HIV/AIDS

This hearing is to start a conversation about how the city can be more proactive in providing services, educating the public, and raising awareness for those infected with HIV/AIDS. With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, there are growing concerns in a surge in HIV infections in Boston, particularly among the most vulnerable and homeless population from increased needle sharing and decreased availability of HIV preventative drugs such as PrEP during the period of lockdown. It is therefore critical that we are proactive in providing programs and services to those who are infected and those who have high risks of infection, especially with a pandemic that has already worsened the public health of our most vulnerable. This hearing is co-sponsored by Councilor Michael Flaherty.

In the Community



I was honored to join St. Stephen's Youth Programs, South End residents, concerned students, teachers, and parents at the Blackstone Elementary School in support of "High Quality Education for High Need Students" on Martin Luther King Day earlier this month. Let's support and advocate for all students, especially high need students.



Recently, I joined State Representative David Biele, members of West Broadway Neighborhood Association, and the MBTA/MassDOT team for a

walkthrough of the West Broadway neighborhood. We discussed pedestrian and public safety challenges as well as other neighborhood issues. Thank you for the cooperation of WBNA and state officials. Let's continue to work together!



I was proud to join Boston Vets Commissioner Robert Santiago, Boston Police Department, Boston Fire Department, and veterans throughout Boston at this weekend's drive by parade for WWII and U.S. Navy Veteran, Richard Cooke. It was great to see neighbors of Mr. Cooke recognize him for his service and sacrifice for our nation.



Thank you Chinatown Main Street, Mayor's Office of Food Access, and St. James The Greater Church for sponsoring Saturday's food drive for families in need. I was proud to attend and thank the sponsors and volunteers, including students from Boston Public Schools.

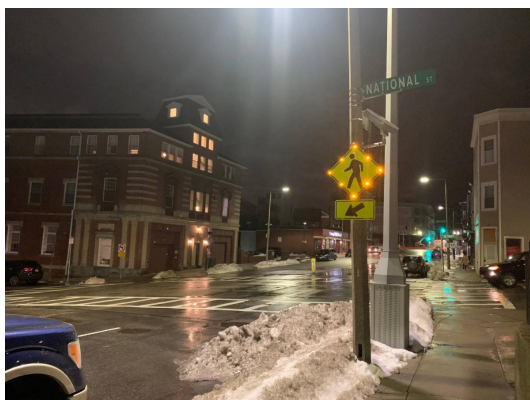
It was an honor to speak with Tom

from Age Strong Commission at the VA Boston Medical Center in Jamaica Plain this week. Tom helps drive disabled veterans to their medical appointments. I'm so proud of our dedicated and professional City of Boston employees.



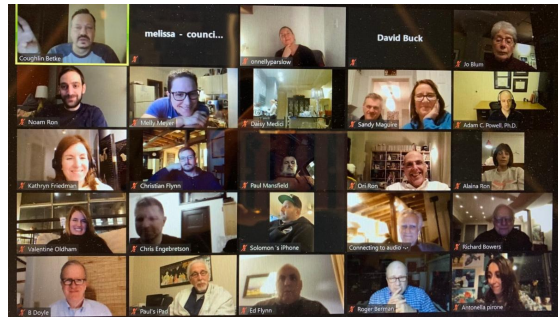
Thank you Harper Mills and members of the Boston Ward 4 Democratic Committee for organizing last week's Day of Service food drive to benefit the Preventive Food Pantry at the Boston Medical Center. Let's work together to increase access to healthy food for those in need!

Thank you to the Boston Transportation Department for working with neighbors, Principal Gant, and I on the "Dead End" signs on Fourth Street, and the "Do Not Enter" sign on Emerson Street during pick up and drop off hours at the Tynan Joseph P Elementary School. City Councilor Michael Flaherty and I also met with BPS officials recently to request a formal study on the redesign of the entire school plaza to improve pedestrian safety, the loading dock, trash removal issues, and congestion.



Thank you to Boston Transportation Department for the recent installation of blinking LED pedestrian crossing sign at the intersection of Dorchester and West 4th Street, one of most dangerous intersections in South Boston. Thank you also to neighbors and Walk Boston for your feedback. I will continue to advocate for infrastructure improvements to our built environment, slower speeds, and enforcement.

In January, I attended civic and neighborhood meetings via zoom with Alliance of Downtown Civic Organizations (ADCO), Chinatown Residents Association, Chinatown Neighborhood Council, City Point Neighborhood Association, East Berkeley Neighborhood Association, Fort Point Neighborhood Association, Leather District Neighborhood Association, Wharf District Council and the West Broadway Neighborhood Association.



If I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact my office at 617-635-3203 or ed.flynn@boston.gov.