

# Host city agreement would net New Bedford \$25 per pound of recreational marijuana

If the host city agreement with ARL Healthcare comes to fruition, the City of New Bedford would make \$25 per pound of recreation marijuana sold or up to \$300,000 maximum per year. The following is a copy of the draft host city agreement being submitted by Mayor Jon Mitchell to the New Bedford City Council for review.

052418-Agreement-ARL\_Healthcare

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## ISIS Supporter Pleads Guilty to Terrorism Charges in Massachusetts

An Adams man pleaded guilty on Monday, May 21 in federal court in Springfield in connection with a plot to engage in terrorist activity inspired by, and in the name of, ISIS.

Alexander Ciccolo, a/k/a Ali Al Amriki, 25, pleaded guilty to one count of attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization, one count of attempting to use weapons of mass destruction, one count of being a convicted person in possession of firearms, and one count of assaulting a nurse during a jail intake process by use of a deadly weapon causing bodily injury. U.S. District Court Judge Mark G. Mastroianni accepted the plea and scheduled sentencing for

Sept. 5, 2018. Ciccolo has been detained since his arrest in July 2015.

“Even though he was born and raised in Massachusetts, Alexander Ciccolo swore allegiance to ISIS and planned to kill innocent civilians in the United States on ISIS’s behalf,” said United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling. “Fortunately, someone who knew Ciccolo alerted law enforcement, and we were able to stop Ciccolo before he tried to kill anyone. There are a few lessons here: the threat of “homegrown” radicalization and terror continues, and we are safest when we work together to spot and contain these threats. I applaud the outstanding work of the Joint Terrorism Task Force and other law enforcement agencies that investigated and ultimately stopped Ciccolo, and the prosecutors who brought this case to conviction.”

“Homegrown violent extremists pose a serious danger to innocent Americans,” said Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers. “Not only did Ciccolo admit to supporting ISIS, but he also collected weapons and explosives in order to further its goal: the murder of Americans. Thanks to the hard work and collaboration of all involved, his plans were thwarted. Today’s successful outcome is proof that we will not waver in our commitment to hold accountable those who break our laws and put American lives at risk.”

“Mr. Ciccolo is finally accepting responsibility for concocting an elaborate and frightening plot to engage in terrorism on behalf of ISIS,” said Harold H. Shaw, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Field Office.” Any material support of a terrorist organization threatens our national security, and had Mr. Ciccolo’s efforts to advance his agenda not been thwarted by the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force, countless lives could have been lost in a lethal terrorist attack. This case is a testament to the tireless efforts of the FBI’s Joint Terrorism

Task Force which remains committed to detecting, thwarting, and bringing to justice individuals like Mr. Ciccolo who seek to provide material support to and fight on behalf of designated foreign terrorist organizations.”

On July 4, 2015, Ciccolo received four firearms which he had ordered from a person who was cooperating with law enforcement, and who had been communicating with Ciccolo about his plans to engage in a terrorist act. Ciccolo was arrested immediately after receiving the firearms, which included a Colt AR-15 .223 caliber rifle, a SigArms Model SG550-1 556 rifle, a Glock 17-9 mm pistol, and a Glock 20-10 mm pistol. Ciccolo had previously been convicted of a crime punishable by more than a year in jail and therefore was prohibited from possessing firearms.

Ciccolo, a supporter of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or ISIS), a designated foreign terrorist organization, had spoken with a cooperating witness in recorded conversations about his plans to commit acts of terrorism inspired by ISIS, including setting off improvised explosive devices, such as pressure cookers filled with black powder, nails, ball bearings and glass, in places where large numbers of people congregate, like college cafeterias. Prior to his arrest, agents had observed Ciccolo purchase a pressure cooker similar to that used in the Boston Marathon bombings.

During a search of Ciccolo’s apartment after he was arrested, several partially constructed “Molotov cocktails” were recovered. These incendiary devices contained what appeared to be shredded Styrofoam soaking in motor oil. Ciccolo had previously stated that this mixture would cause the fire from the exploded devices to stick to people’s skin and make it harder to put the fire out.

Shortly after his arrest, while he was being processed at the Franklin County Correctional Center, Ciccolo stabbed a nurse with a pen more than 10 times, leaving a bloody gash on the

top of the nurse's head.

The charge of attempted provision of material support to a foreign terrorist organization provides for a sentence of no greater than 20 years in prison, up to a lifetime of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. The charge of attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction provides for a sentence of up to life in prison, up to a lifetime of supervised release, and a fine of \$250,000. The charge of being a prohibited person in possession of firearms provides a sentence of no greater than 10 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. The charge of assault with a dangerous weapon causing bodily injury provides a sentence of no greater than 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Ciccolo and the United States have agreed to a sentence of 20 year in prison followed by a lifetime of supervised release.

U.S. Attorney Lelling; Assistant Attorney General Demers; and FBI SAC Shaw made the announcement today. The investigation was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the Springfield, Ludlow, Holyoke, West Springfield, Easthampton, and Pittsfield Police Departments; the Massachusetts State Police, and Homeland Security Investigations, with critical assistance from the Adams Police Department and the Massachusetts State Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Deepika Bains Shukla and Kevin O'Regan of Lelling's Springfield Branch Office and Trial Attorney Andrew Sigler of the Justice Department's National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section are prosecuting the case.

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# **MS-13 Member, Known as “Animal,” Sentenced to 40 Years in Prison for RICO Conspiracy Involving Murder**

An MS-13 member was sentenced yesterday in federal court in Boston for racketeering conspiracy involving the murder of a 15-year-old boy in East Boston.

Joel Martinez, a/k/a “Animal,” 23, a Salvadoran national formerly residing in East Boston, was sentenced to 40 years in prison and two years of supervised release. Martinez will be subject to deportation upon completion of his sentence. In December 2017, Martinez pleaded guilty to conspiracy to conduct enterprise affairs through a pattern of racketeering activity, more commonly referred to as RICO conspiracy.

Martinez admitted that on Sept. 20, 2015, he murdered a 15-year-old boy on Trenton Street in East Boston. During recorded conversations between Martinez and a cooperating witness, Martinez acknowledged being a member of MS-13 and admitted that he stabbed the victim to death. Specifically, Martinez said, “I stabbed the culero three times,” and stated, “He stared at me and he asked me if I was going to, if I was going to stab him. I told him, ‘Yes, the Mara rules you.’” After the murder, Martinez was “jumped in” and made a “homeboy,” or full member of MS-13’s Eastside Loco Salvatrucha (ESLS) clique during a ceremony that was surreptitiously recorded by agents. When a prospective member is “jumped in,” members of the MS-13 clique beat the new member with their hands and feet while one of the leaders of the clique counts aloud slowly to thirteen.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling; Harold H. Shaw, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Field Division; Peter Fitzhugh, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston; Colonel Kerry A. Gilpin, Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police; Commissioner Thomas Turco of the Massachusetts Department of Corrections; Essex County Sheriff Kevin F. Coppinger; Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Thompkins; Suffolk County District Attorney Daniel F. Conley; Middlesex County District Attorney Marian T. Ryan; Essex County District Attorney Jonathan Blodgett; Boston Police Commissioner William Evans; Chelsea Police Chief Brian A. Kyes; Everett Police Chief Steven A. Mazzie; Lynn Police Chief Michael Mageary; Revere Police Chief James Guido; and Somerville Police Chief David Fallon made the announcement.

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## **OPINION: New Bedford Public Schools shouldn't display art that disrespects our President**

Should New Bedford Public Schools be displaying art from students disparaging President Trump? A reader shared his concern about a student's art titled 'Big man, Big pig' being displayed at New Bedford High School. The following was shared in the **New Bedford Politics** Facebook group:

"Recently I attended the Art Display put on by New Bedford Public Schools and found this disgusting piece of junk work on display!! Why was this on display, it was not art but rather a

piece of scrap that belongs in the trash. Since when did it become ok for schools to allow students to disrespect the President of the United States??? Would this art teacher have allowed a student to make a similar project illustrating Obama and Monkeys?? I think not because it would have been considered racist, right!! So how is this any different?? Why is politics playing a part in art class? Is this what NB Public Schools is proud of, obviously because they allowed it to be displayed.” – Chris Soares

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## **Massachusetts Troopers Charge Man with Assault, OUI after Road Rage Incident, Crash**

The Massachusetts State Police early this morning arrested a Beverly man who was operating under the influence and pointed a gun at another motorist on Route 95 in Woburn.

At approximately 2:30 a.m., Trooper Patrick Shea responded to a report of a motor vehicle crash on the southbound side of 95, prior to Exit 36. Trooper Shea located an SUV that had been struck by a black 2014 Jeep Cherokee, which was stopped about 100 yards further down the highway.

The operator of the Jeep, identified as JASON ROOT, 37, was standing outside the Jeep. ROOT told Trooper Shea that he had a firearm on the seat of his vehicle and that the was licensed to carry. Trooper Shea recovered the firearm from the Cherokee and secured it in his cruiser.

Trooper Shea and Trooper David Hanafin, who arrived as backup, made observations of ROOT consistent with impairment by

alcohol. Troopers also administer several field sobriety tests. As a result of their observations and the tests, Troopers formed the opinion that R00T had been driving while intoxicated.

Troopers placed R00T into custody, despite his initial attempts to resist being put into the cruiser. The suspect was transported to the Danvers Barracks to be booked.

A short time prior to the crash, just before 2 a.m., an adult male called State Police to report a road rage incident that carried from Route 93 southbound to Route 95 in Reading.

That motorist said his car was rear-ended by a black Jeep Cherokee that was being operated in a very aggressive manner. The motorist said the Cherokee tried to run him off the road several times. In fear for his safety, that motorist exited Route 93 and entered Route 95 southbound. The black Cherokee followed him onto Route 95.

Just prior to Exit 36, the black Cherokee pulled in front of the victim's car and forced the vehicle to come to a full stop in the middle lane.

The suspect exited the Cherokee and approached the victim's vehicle. According to the victim, the suspect screamed at the victim and pointed a handgun at him. Fearing he was about to get shot, the victim ducked for cover and then accelerated away and subsequently reported the incident.

The road rage victim provided the license plate number of the suspect's black Cherokee to Troopers. The plate matched that is the black Cherokee involved in the crash on Route 95 a short time later.

Troopers determined that R00T, the OUI suspect arrested in the Woburn crash, was the same motorist who struck the road rage victim's car and pointed a gun at him. Troopers Louis Williams, David Nicastro, and Peter Cherry also assisted in



the investigation.

R00T was charged with the following offenses:

- 1.) Operating under the influence of liquor;
- 2.) Assault with a dangerous weapon;
- 3.) Carrying a firearm while intoxicated;
- 4.) Reckless operation of a motor vehicle; and
- 5.) Resisting arrest.

R00T was expected to be arraigned today in the Woburn District Court.

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# **The Westport tough kids challenge inspires and motivates for a great cause**

**CALLING ALL KIDS & FAMILIES to the TOUGH KIDS CHALLENGE!**

On SUNDAY June 10th, 2018 you can encourage your kids to come play in the mud, have fun as a team and help raise money for a great cause.

Check them out on Facebook: [facebook.com/toughkidschallenge](https://facebook.com/toughkidschallenge)

*Waves starting at 10am*

*400 Old County Rd.*

*Westport Middle School field, Westport, MA*

**\$15 EARLY REGISTRATION ENDS JUNE 9th. Get tickets [HERE](#)**

**YOU MAY REGISTER DAY OF EVENT \$20 per person.**

Join us for a 1/2 mile obstacle course designed for ages 4 and

up. We are adding two new obstacles as well as designated viewing areas. This will keep long time runners challenged as well as allowing family and friends to better see their runners in action!

Work your way through 15 fun obstacles such as climbing walls, swinging over water, running through the tire pit, crawling through the mud and much, much more! Sign up as an individual or create a team with family and friends and get ready for an exciting outdoor challenge! We encourage parents to register and run alongside their children. Choose a team name, design your own team shirts and wear them with pride!

**Teams are encouraged to decorate their own T-Shirts!**

There will be a basic wash up facility provided for those getting muddy, so we encourage participants to bring towels and a change of clothes. Food & Drinks will be available to purchase from Foodzilla & Kona Ice.



<https://www.facebook.com/JoshSouzaPhotos/>

Proceeds benefit the WES/MAC PT0! We encourage kids to form teams on their own and create/decorate their Team T-Shirts. Teams can now simply sign up for the same wave start time and run together.

**This event is limited to those age 4 and up**

Transport/parking options getting to the event

There will be no public transportation to the event. Parking will be limited to the Elementary – Middle School & Library parking lots. Due to the popularity of this event and limited parking we encourage teams to car pool if possible.

Where can I contact the organizer with any questions?

Westporttoughkids@gmail.com



Photos courtesy of: <https://www.facebook.com/JoshSouzaPhotos/>

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## **MassDOT offers free coffee at 18 service plazas on Memorial Day**

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) advises Memorial Day holiday travelers to plan ahead, utilize MassDOT's many travel "real time" tools to plan trips and use

public transportation if possible to travel between destinations.

On Memorial Day, May 28, Registry of Motor Vehicle customer service locations will be closed, as are all Commonwealth of Massachusetts offices, the HOV lane on I-93 will not be deployed, and all MBTA subway, trolleys, commuter rail and buses will operate on Sunday schedules.

“We traditionally see a high number of drivers on roads Memorial Day weekend,” said MassDOT Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver. “Many drivers begin to travel the Thursday before Memorial Day and the actual holiday is when many drivers choose to return home. Anyone planning to drive should try to travel in off-peak hours, should build extra time into their trips and may want to check the MassDOT Go Time app or other apps to help with decisions on which roads to take.”

MassDOT will be shutting down scheduled roadway construction activities effective at noon, Friday, May 25; scheduled road work will then resume after 11 p.m., on Monday, May 28.

The High Occupancy Vehicle Lane (HOV) will be deployed as follows:

- *May 21-May 25, regular morning deployment on I-93 northbound from Quincy to Boston from 5 a.m. and until 10 a.m.*
- *May 24, the HOV lane opens on I-93 southbound from Boston to Quincy at 2 p.m. and closes at 8 p.m.*
- *May 25, the HOV lane opens on I-93 southbound from Boston to Quincy at 1 p.m. and closes at 8 p.m.*
- *On Monday, May 28, Memorial Day, the HOV lane will not be deployed.*

Free coffee will be served at the 18 MassDOT service plazas on Memorial Day, May 28, from 10 p.m. Monday night through 5 a.m. Tuesday morning.

The CapeFLYER will once again run trains from Boston to Cape

Cod starting on Memorial Day weekend. Service will begin on Friday, May 25th and operate on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays throughout until Labor Day.

During the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend, the CapeFLYER will provide free service for active service members and veterans in partnership with the 14th Annual Troops in the Spotlight event led by Cape Cod Cares for the Troops. The full schedule and more information is available at [www.capeflyer.com](http://www.capeflyer.com).

The MBTA has also released the following information regarding travel on Memorial Day, Monday, May 28:

- *All subway and commuter rail lines, buses, and trackless trolley will operate on a Sunday schedule.*
- *All ferries and boats will operate on a Sunday schedule.*
- *The RIDE will operate on a Sunday schedule.*
- *The CharlieCard store at Downtown Crossing in Boston will be closed.*
- *For full MBTA schedule details, please visit: <http://www.mbta.com/holidays/>.*

Additionally, several bus routes will be detoured due to Memorial Day festivities on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, and detour information is posted on T-Alerts.

Customers are also advised that the Registry of Motor Vehicles offices are closed for the designated state holiday of Memorial Day on Monday, May 28. Please visit at any hour of the day the RMV online at [www.massrmv.com](http://www.massrmv.com) to skip the line and perform many transactions. In addition, AAA members now have the opportunity to conduct many RMV services at numerous AAA branch office locations in Massachusetts during AAA normal business hours.

For traffic and road conditions, drivers may use the following options to make decisions:

Download MassDOT's GoTime mobile app and view real-time

traffic conditions before setting out on the road.

- Dial 511 and select a route to hear real-time conditions on I-90 and other roads.
- Visit [www.mass511.com](http://www.mass511.com), a website which provides real-time traffic and incident advisory information, and allows users to subscribe to text and email alerts for traffic conditions.
- Download Waze, the real-time traffic navigation app that provides motorists with real-time traffic conditions across Massachusetts.
- Follow MassDOT on Twitter @MassDOT because motor vehicle incidents which impact traffic flow are generally mentioned in tweets if they occur on the state's major highways.
- Drivers are reminded to avoid littering on roadways. Violators are subject to a fine of up to \$5,500 for the first offense.

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation wishes all members of the public a safe and enjoyable holiday.

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## **Veteran's movie "Almost Sunrise." FREE screening at Zeiterion Theater, June 1**

*By Sean McCarthy for The Zeiterion Performing Arts Center*

**Description:** *The film follows two Iraq veterans, Tom Voss and Anthony Anderson, who struggle with depression upon returning home from service. Fearful of succumbing to the epidemic of veteran suicide, they seek a lifeline and embark on a 2,700-mile walk across America as a way to confront their inner pain. The film captures an intimate portrait of two friends*

*suffering from the unseen wounds of war as they discover an unlikely treatment: the restorative power of silence and meditation.*

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It began as a quest to resolve their inner demons, but what also transpired was a greater faith in humanity and a significant perpetuation of a movement that is becoming part of a national conversation – “Moral Injury.”

“Moral Injury” is the main idea being highlighted in the documentary, “Almost Sunrise,” the story of two Iraq War veterans who walked 2,700 miles from their homes in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to Santa Monica, California – a trip that took 155 days. The trek featured Tom Voss and Anthony Anderson, a pair of veterans sensing that they were perilously close to ending their lives because of their combat experiences. The journey was a “last ditch effort” to help themselves, and it became a testament to the healing and restorative power of silence and meditation.

“Almost Sunrise” will be shown at the Zeiterion Performing Arts Center on Friday, June 1<sup>st</sup> at 7 p.m. It will be followed by a panel discussion and will culminate with a walking meditation. All of the events are free of charge.

1. <https://zeiterion.org/almost-sunrise-tickets/>

The event is one part of the Zeiterion’s Veterans Experience series which uses the arts to highlight the veterans’ experience. The aim is communicating to citizens what it means to serve our country in war, instill a sense of empathy and appreciation throughout our community and provide pathways for both healing and understanding.

Through the power of the performing arts, the Zeiterion aims to convey the veterans’ experience to an audience of civilians and to demonstrate how the arts can help trauma for an audience of veterans.

“Moral Injury” is an affliction that affects people from all elements of society. Although it is foremostly associated with military veterans, “MI” has come to be recognized by many other social communities, affecting an array of victims who must deal with their personal behavior that has gone against their moral code, regardless of their position in society.

Largely because of social media, the two were welcomed and assisted throughout their trip by numerous strangers who offered emotional support as well as a roof over their heads, a warm meal and a warm shower. The trip also served as a fundraiser for a veterans service organization in Milwaukee, raising more than \$100,000. Dry Hootch of America is devoted to creating safe and sober social situations for veterans to be together such as coffee houses.

“The walk was done out of necessity,” Voss says. “We were really in a position where we hadn’t dealt with what we experienced in war in over 10 years. The veterans’ experience is usually that you get out of the service and then you try to carry on with your life, get back into school and get a job – do all those things that you’re supposed to do but you don’t have the time to reflect and really process ‘What did I just experience?’

“Over 10 years I just got to the point where I was seriously considering taking my life. I didn’t know how to manage it or get back into my community – I didn’t have someone to connect with and share these experiences with. It was all on my shoulders. This was a last ditch effort – I had to give it a shot before I go down that path of taking my life.”

The documentary was filmed by Michael Collins.

“I didn’t want to perpetuate the stereotypes of the wounded soldier or even the homecoming hero,” Collins says. “Those portrayals aren’t doing anyone any favors. I wanted people to hear from the soldiers themselves and their families to



understand the complexities. We need to see them as humans when they come back. What I wanted to portray was that these are complex human beings like the rest of us and you can't describe them by one dimension of their character and that's where the healing takes place.

"This film is not just a focus on PTSD – there are already many films about that. I wanted to take the conversation a little further and talk about "Moral Injury" and how it is associated with guilt and shame as opposed to trauma and shock to the nervous system."

"This is the first film that really tackles the subject of "MI," Voss says. "It's getting the concept out there. All sorts of people are drawing connections from the concept of having a wounded soul participating in something that goes against their moral code. This is really starting to resonate in a bunch of different communities giving depth to trauma. This film shows that vets are not the only ones going through this thing – a lot of vets isolate themselves because they don't have anyone to share their experience with. I think it shows that there are men and women going through the same thing they are."

Collins talks about making human connections with others.

"When you feel a connection to someone from a different community there's suddenly a feeling that they become part of your community, that there isn't a separation anymore, there's a feeling that we're all from the same community. As much as they're taking care of us it's our responsibility to do the same for them when they get home. That's why I love making character-driven films because it gives us a very human perspective of an experience we might not normally have access to in your daily lives."

Collins says that the film proves that we have more bonds than barriers.

“For me the opportunity to go across the country and connect with people from different ends of the political spectrum and realizing that we all have so much in common – especially these days when the common narrative is that there’s such distinct camps that people fit into – I experienced meeting people from all different walks of life from this country and that we have a lot more in common than we do differences. I saw all of these people come out and open their homes and communities to Tom and Anthony to help them was further proof that when people are given the opportunity to do something good we’ll all come together to do it.”

A large lesson that Voss experienced from the walk was that nature can help in ways that chemical medications cannot.

“This film shows that there are ways other than pharmaceutical medications to treat trauma. Focusing on meditation, yoga and other holistic practices and nature-based therapies can have a positive impact in life without having to be on a cocktail of prescription medications and just end up numbing and keeping all of these things down. There’s a lot of value immersing yourself in nature that most people don’t put too much stock into. Being out in nature and being exposed to the elements, slowing down and taking your time being in the environment has a really positive effect on your mental health.

“This walk allowed me the space to process a lot of the things that I had experienced while deployed. It was invaluable,” Voss says.

“This has been one of the richest experiences of my life,” Collins says. “I was able to witness two men who were really seeking to take responsibility for their lives and for their healing who were not willing to give up even when they were running into what felt like dead ends with the Veterans Association and other groups.

“I knew that I wanted this film to be hopeful,” Collins says.

"I wanted it to end in a place that would inspire progress – to move towards solutions. It was such a blessing that we saw such a transformation take place. I think it's important to highlight problems in society – something that would inspire action, not only for vets and their families but there were other paths for healing that maybe people weren't aware of before, that there is always hope."

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The final installment of The Zeiterion Performing Arts Center's

## **VETERANS EXPERIENCE PROGRAM**

### **Almost Sunrise**

*Friday, June 1, 7:00 p.m.*

FREE but tickets encouraged – [Click Here](#)

Funded by Mass Humanities

Post-show panel discussion with Dr. Bob Meagher featuring Tom Voss, the documentary subject, and Michael Collins, the film's director.

### **Contemplative Walk and Guided Meditation**

*Saturday, June 2, 10:00 a.m.*

FREE

Location: Friends Academy (1088 Tucker Road, North Dartmouth, MA 02747)

All are invited on a contemplative walk and guided meditation led by Tom Voss and Michael Collins of Almost Sunrise. Experience the restorative, soul-nourishing benefits of expending time in nature, concluding with a guided meditation and breath work. All ages welcome.

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# Good New Bedford police work leads to arrest of man w/ lengthy cocaine trafficking record

Observant police work by patrol officers led to the arrest of a man with a lengthy criminal record after he was found in possession of more than 25 grams of cocaine.

Police responded to the 100-block of Division Street on a 911 hang-up call at about 5:41 a.m. Sunday, May 20, when they observed a male in the driver's seat of a vehicle parked in the area with the ignition, turned on.

He was found in possession of more than 25 grams of cocaine, a scale and more than \$2,500.00 in cash.

Russell S. Andrews, 36, of 15 Bonney St. Apt. 3, New Bedford, was charged with cocaine trafficking, distribution of cocaine, subsequent offense, and OUI drugs.

Andrews has a lengthy criminal record, with 34 adult arraignments, including an open case for possession of cocaine and 12 default warrants for failing to show up to court. He was sentenced to three to five years in prison in 2002 for assault with a dangerous weapon and firearms possession.

He was held without bail on his probation violation. Bail was set at \$2,000.00 on the current charge.

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# Accused New Bedford Arsonist Released on Low Bail, Defaults and Flees

A 25-year-old New Bedford man with extensive ties to Puerto Rico, who was released on just \$500 cash bail after being arrested for setting a multi-family dwelling on fire this past February, did not show up for his recent Superior Court arraignment is now a fugitive from justice.

On February 28th at 1:54 PM New Bedford Fire responded to an active blaze at 330 North Front Street, a multifamily dwelling with several occupied apartments, including one rented by the defendant, Xavier Betancourt Echevarria. During the ensuing investigation into the fire, investigators located a Sunny Delight container with gasoline in it inside the defendant's bathroom. The Arson K-9 on scene alerted on the rear hallway as the fire's point of origin and also alerted on the Sunny Delight container.

The defendant, who resided at the apartment with his wife and children, was interviewed by police. During that first interview, the defendant told investigators the container was used by his wife to clean. However, upon speaking with the wife, investigators learned his story was fabricated. During a second interview with police, the defendant admitted he set the building on fire because he was mad at the landlord, who had begun eviction proceedings against the defendant. He told police he bought the gas at a gas station that day, and put it in the Sunny Delight container. He then brought it back to 330 North Front, poured it in the hallway, and started the fire with a lighter he had on his person, he told police. Video surveillance obtained by investigators shows the defendant leave his house, get the gas at the gas station and return to his house.

As a result of the arson, all apartment units had to be evacuated, and the damage from the fire caused 13 people to be displaced at least for that day. It was further learned during the investigation that the defendant recently came from Puerto Rico to live in New Bedford. And, during his district court bail hearing, his defense counsel informed the court that the defendant suffered from various mental health issues which required medication.

Despite prosecutors' efforts to have the defendant held without bail for up to 120 days as a danger to the community in New Bedford District Court, Judge Franco Gobourne ruled the defendant was not a danger to the public and also refused to set appropriate bail. Instead, the judge released the defendant on \$500 cash bail.

The defendant was subsequently indicted for arson of a dwelling and was to appear for his arraignment on the indictment in Fall River Superior Court earlier this month.

A default warrant for the defendant's arrest was issued in Fall River Superior Court, and it is believed he may have fled back to Puerto Rico.

"This is an example of a case where the low bail set by the court was totally inadequate and an abuse of judicial discretion. The defendant set fire to an occupied multi-family home, has no strong ties to our area, has mental health issues and confessed to the crime. It is clear that this defendant should've been held as a danger to community. Not many crimes are more dangerous than setting fire to an occupied building. At the very least, much higher bail should have been set because of his strong ties to Puerto Rico. It is no surprise that he did not appear for his Superior Court arraignment," Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III said. "This is clearly an individual who doesn't belong out on the streets. Based on the facts of this case, there is a strong likelihood this defendant would have been facing a prison

sentence. Bail decisions like the one in this case undermines confidence in the administration of justice, and serves no one's interest but the defendant's."