

# **New Bedford member of the Latin Kings charged with being a felon in possession**

A member of the New Bedford Chapter of the Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation was charged Tuesday with being a felon in possession of a firearm as a result of a federal investigation into a shooting on April 19, 2020, in New Bedford.

Alexander Pizarro, a/k/a "King Tego," 28, was charged yesterday in a criminal complaint with one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm. Pizarro, who is currently in custody in Rhode Island, will make his initial appearance in federal court at a later date.

According to the charging documents, on April 19, 2020, police responded to a report of seven shots fired near a residence on Clark Street in New Bedford. During the response, police located a tan and black Taurus 9mm firearm in an alleyway near the residence. Based on information received from a 911 caller, police were directed to an apartment and located Pizarro, who was known to be a member of the Latin Kings. After searching his cell phone, investigators located a photograph of Pizarro in the apartment holding what appears to be the same firearm that was recovered from Clark Street. This photograph was allegedly taken approximately two hours before the shots-fired incident. Through ballistics comparison, the seized firearm was matched to the recovered shell casings from the shooting that evening.

Due to multiple prior convictions, Pizarro is prohibited from possessing firearms. According to court documents, Pizarro was known to investigators to be a member of the New Bedford Chapter of the Latin Kings, and had recently posted multiple pictures holding firearms to his SnapChat account. At the time

of the shooting incident, Pizarro was on probation for a 2017 firearms case in Rhode Island.

The charge of being a felon in possession of a firearm provides for a sentence of up to 10 years in prison, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based on the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling; Kelly D. Brady, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, New England Field Division; and New Bedford Police Chief Joseph C. Cordeiro made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Philip A. Mallard of Lelling's Organized Crime and Gang Unit is prosecuting the case.

This case is part of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), a program bringing together all levels of law enforcement and the communities they serve to reduce violent crime and make our neighborhoods safer for everyone. Former Attorney General Jeff Sessions reinvigorated PSN in 2017 as part of the Department's renewed focus on targeting violent criminals, directing all U.S. Attorney's Offices to work in partnership with federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement and the local community to develop effective, locally-based strategies to reduce violent crime.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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# Will the rise in New Bedford home prices result in higher taxes and rents?

With home values in New Bedford rising nearly 16% from a year ago, expect a significant increase in property taxes and rents in New Bedford in 2021.

Home sales in New Bedford during April were down 27% pushing home prices nearly 16% higher to \$257,500, up from \$223,000 in April 2019. As the supply of homes for sale in Massachusetts during the coronavirus shrinks, home values will continue to rise putting pressure on municipal budgets. Overall, **home sales in Massachusetts during April were down nearly 14% with the median home sale price rising nearly 12% compared to April of 2019.** Based on this data, New Bedford home prices increased nearly twice as much as the rest of the state.

Without the City of New Bedford significantly cutting spending or receiving large amounts of state/federal funding, property taxes will rise significantly over the next few years. Spending cuts are difficult as the vast majority of New Bedford's budget is non-discretionary, or required spending. From **New Bedford's FY 2020 budget:**

"86.9% of the General Fund budget is predetermined by state mandates and regional agreements, and nearly 60% of the city government's General Fund payroll consists of unionized public safety positions that are subject to binding arbitration. As a result, only a relatively small portion of the budget can be considered truly discretionary, and we remain challenged to support current service levels and maintain the City's infrastructure."



A simple translation: The State requires New Bedford to spend 87% of its budget on specific items like education, most of the leftover 13% goes to the unions and we are already struggling to balance the budget. And this was before coronavirus. Without federal money coming to the rescue, higher property taxes or cuts will follow and there is very little left to cut. Higher property taxes will mean increased rents for residents and businesses.

In the past two years, residential property taxes went up on average **\$220 in 2019** and **\$114 in 2020**. With **Massachusetts tax collections falling in April by more than \$2.3 billion compared to last April**, the state will not be coming to the rescue without the federal government stepping in.

If state and municipal bailouts by the federal government don't come this year, expect much higher than \$220 increases in your residential property tax in 2021. Another solution could be the state easing up on non-discretionary spending rules, but it's political suicide in Massachusetts to cut spending on education, pensions, health insurance, police, and fire which makes up the bulk of New Bedford's budget. It's either the federal government or the residential/commercial property taxpayer to the rescue, or more likely both.

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## **New Bedford officials report three more COVID-19 related deaths on Wednesday**

New Bedford officials reported three additional COVID-19 related deaths since Tuesday bringing the total to 64.

Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported one additional confirmed COVID-19 cases in New Bedford on Wednesday, bringing the total positive cases in the city to 1,758, **up from 1,758 on Tuesday**. The City of New Bedford reports there is a delay in coronavirus cases today.

15 additional cases of COVID-19 have been identified in Fall River, according to Mayor Coogan. This brings the total in Fall River to 1,196. Full details **here**.

State education officials intend to provide school districts with guidance on summer programming early next week, followed by a mid-June distribution of draft fall guidance to help schools plan to reopen in the new academic year. Full details **here**.

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## **New Bedford police arrest six, seize 220 grams of fentanyl on Tuesday**

New Bedford police detectives arrested six people and seized more than 220 grams of fentanyl during two separate incidents on May 26. Fentanyl is responsible for 93% of all overdose deaths in Massachusetts.

As a result of an ongoing investigation, detectives seized 208 grams of fentanyl with a street value of \$20,000 (more than eight grams of marijuana) \$1,200, and a variety of drug paraphernalia during a search of 15 Viall St., Apt. 1S. Paula Calisto and Abraham Castro—both of 41, 15 Viall St., Apt. 1S—were both charged with trafficking fentanyl over 200 grams, possession and conspiracy. Detective Timothy Soares led the

investigation.



OLYMPUS DIGITAL CAMERA

Also on May 26, while targeting street-level sales of narcotics in the south end of New Bedford, detectives observed what appeared to be a narcotics transaction involving two vehicles on Frank Street off Padanaram Ave. After stopping the vehicles, detectives located more than 15 grams of fentanyl and \$905.

As a result of that stop, Nathan Stork, 29, 113 Middleboro Rd., E. Freetown, who is known to narcotics detectives for fentanyl activity was charged with distribution and conspiracy. Rodney Quintal, 29, 95 Fir Ave., Tiverton, RI, was charged with trafficking, possession to distribute, and conspiracy. Ryan Carvalho, 34, 30 Watson Way, Fall River, was charged with trafficking and conspiracy. Crystal Botelho, 54 Brown St., Apt. 2, Fall River, was charged with trafficking

and conspiracy.

If you have any information on criminal activity in your community, the New Bedford Police Dept. wants to hear from you. You can leave an anonymous tip on our voicemail at (508) 991-6300 Ext. 1.

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## **Massachusetts home sales down almost 14% in April**

Michael P. Norton  
State House News Service

Home sales in Massachusetts during April were down nearly 14%, although buyers and sellers wrapped up 3,706 sales agreements while the state grappled with a surge in COVID-19 cases and deaths and as residents largely stayed home and away from shuttered workplaces.

According to The Warren Group, single-family home sales fell 13.7 percent in April, compared to April 2019, but the median home sale price jumped nearly 12 percent to \$428,000, up from \$383,000 in April 2019. That was the highest median sale price ever recorded for April.

It was the biggest drop in home sales since April 2011, when sales slid 26.8 percent and the median home sale price was \$271,000.

Sales drops were most pronounced last month in Hampden and Suffolk counties, where the volume was off by 30 percent, and in Barnstable and Berkshire counties, which were down more than 20 percent.

“The number of single-family home sales took a significant hit in April as the effects of COVID-19 started to impact the local housing market and economy,” said Tim Warren, CEO of The Warren Group. “This comes as no surprise. I fully expected transactions to stall as the stay-at-home order continues to keep both buyers and sellers on the sidelines.”

The state’s plan for phased business reopenings might lead to a “return of confidence” and more in-person home shopping this summer, Warren said, noting the “strong demand” for homes as evidenced by the median sale price increase.

Condo sales fell 19 percent in April, The Warren Group said, with the median condo sale price rising 13.8 percent to \$421,000, another record for April.

Home and condo sales are both up for the year through April, with the median home sale price at \$400,000 and the median condo sale price at \$415,000.

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## **Warren requests U.S. Commission on Civil Rights examine Federal Government’s response to COVID-19 impact in Indian Country**

United States Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Congresswoman Deb Haaland (D-N.M.), Co-Chair of the Congressional Native American Caucus and the first Native woman to preside over the House floor during the 116th



Congress, wrote to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (USCCR) requesting an update to the findings and recommendations of its report, Broken Promises: Continuing Federal Funding Shortfall for Native Americans, in light of the ongoing impacts the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) is having on Native Nations across the United States.

The Broken Promises report, issued in December 2018, concluded that federal programs designed to support the social and economic wellbeing of tribal nations and Native peoples remain chronically underfunded and often inefficiently structured. That was before the pandemic; federal action to empower the United States' 574 federally recognized Native Nations and uphold trust and treaty responsibilities is more important than ever.

"The Administration's failure to uphold the trust responsibility to provide adequate relief, health services, and public safety resources to tribal communities has exacerbated the pandemic's impact. This failure requires the Commission's voice," wrote Warren and Haaland in their letter.

The White House reportedly opposed the provision of direct aid to tribal governments in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act aid that is crucial for tribal nations to provide needed government services to their citizens. After a push by Senate Democrats and the Congressional Native American Caucus, the CARES Act provided this aid under the Coronavirus Relief Fund. However, after the enactment of the law, the Department of the Treasury delayed disbursement of the funds for weeks and the Administration initially excluded important tribal businesses from the CARES Act's Paycheck Protection Program.

The federal response to the health care aspects of the crisis—particularly a lack of funding for the Indian Health Service (IHS)—has also fallen short of what Indian Country needs. The Broken Promises report noted that per capita IHS

health care expenditures in 2017 were \$3,332, compared to \$9,207 per person for federal health care spending nationally. Since the pandemic, the situation has only gotten worse. Tribal nations and urban Indian organizations have had to navigate red tape in order to receive desperately needed supplies and relief funds. The pandemic, coupled with inadequate federal funding, has contributed to the devastation of Nation Nations' economies, and has prevented tribal citizens from accessing healthcare, education, and employment.

Warren and Haaland asked the USCCR to examine in particular how the problems identified in the Broken Promises report have been exacerbated by the pandemic, if the Congressional and Executive Branch responses have done enough to help Native people, and the impact of the lack of wireless networks on tribal land and other inequities in health care, education, voting rights, economic development and more.

In response to the Broken Promises report, Haaland and Warren released a legislative proposal last year to address chronic underfunding and barriers to sovereignty in Indian Country and hold the federal government accountable for honoring America's legal promises to Native peoples. They coauthored an op-ed in Indian Country Today about the significance of the Broken Promises report, and the need for bold action in response. This week, they coauthored an op-ed in the Washington Post about COVID-19's impact in Indian Country and how it underscores the need for the federal government to take decisive action to empower Native Nations.

2020.05.26 Letter to U.S. Commission on Civil Rights re. COVID-19 impacts on Indian Country

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# The goal is to have Massachusetts schools “up and running” in Fall

Katie Lannan

State House News Service

State education officials intend to provide school districts with guidance on summer programming early next week, followed by a mid-June distribution of draft fall guidance to help schools plan to reopen in the new academic year.

“I want to be clear, we are working to have schools up and running in the fall, with appropriate safety protocols,” commissioner Jeff Riley said during a Board of Elementary and Secondary Education meeting Tuesday. “Moreover, we hope to have some summer programming as well, but as with all, we will await the guidance from the administration on the timeline and the phases and when things are available.”

Schools across Massachusetts were shuttered in mid-March as the state prepared for a surge in COVID-19 cases, forcing teachers, students and their families to abruptly transition into a new, at-home learning model.

Under an order from Gov. Charlie Baker, K-12 schools will remain closed for the rest of this academic year. Education Secretary James Peyser told lawmakers earlier this month that there is “no question” remote learning will be a large part of planning for the new school year and said that even if students return to classrooms in a “quasi-normal fashion,” officials need to “be better prepared for the possibility that in-person education will be interrupted again.”

With the state now in the first phase of the Baker administration’s four-stage reopening plan, Riley has convened

his own working group to help develop a reentry plan for Massachusetts schools.

The group held its first meeting on May 7, Riley wrote in a message to school districts, and its initial focus will be on what summer programming might be possible.

The members come from organizations representing school counselors, police and fire chiefs, charter schools, educational collaboratives, school committee members, school administrators, school nurses and facilities administrators, as well as from the Department of Public Health, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, the School Building Authority, the state's two main teachers unions, the Massachusetts Parent Teachers Association, and the Student Advisory Council.

Riley said the group feels "a sense of urgency" in its work, aware that districts need to know what to plan for, but wants to balance that with "making sure that stakeholders have a chance to weigh in on our plan."

"We recognize that maybe not everyone's going to be happy, but we think we'll do better by making sure that everyone is involved in the process," he said.

According to Riley's May 14 message to school leaders, the working group "will help develop a K-12 summer and fall restart and recovery plan" that will include guidance on teaching and learning; physical and virtual learning environments; operations and business services; and behavioral health and social and emotional learning.

Board member Matt Hills said that in his hometown of Newton, there is great interest in the work the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is doing around reopening. He said the department suddenly "gets mentioned all the time."

"I can't imagine not having a plan to reopen the schools, and the governor will ultimately make the decision, but I think it's terrific you're doing it, and it's hitting in places that don't normally say, 'We can't wait to hear what DESE says' on something," Hills said.

In addition to uncertainty around what a fall term will look like, local school districts and municipal governments are still facing an unknown budget picture. The pandemic upended the traditional Beacon Hill budget cycle, and economists have projected that state revenue collections for the fiscal year that begins July 1 will be billions of dollars below original projections.

Without knowing what they are likely to receive in state aid, it's difficult for municipalities to set their own budgets, said Bill Bell, the education department's senior associate commissioner for administration and finance. Bell said he did not have any "magic answers" for the board on the state budget picture.

Riley said budget writers on Beacon Hill are still trying to figure out how much revenue will be coming in.

"Obviously we'd like to see some directionality about local aid sooner rather than later to help schools plan, and to prevent major disruption over the summer, but I think people are still trying to make the picture a little less fuzzy," he said.

Hills said his view is that it's "probably beyond crazy for individual districts to think there's going to be any increase in Chapter 70 and circuit breaker funding over last year."

"I don't know what level, but realistically, when the state's expenses are ballooning and revenue's sort of dramatically declining, it probably means that large budget accounts are likely to go down, unless money just falls from heaven or from the federal government," he said. "Is that a pessimistic view

or a realistic view, understanding we just don't know?"

Bell said it was hard to say, and that additional federal relief funding is "one of the big things that might be able to soften some of the revenue loss" at the state and local level.

The budget Baker filed in January included a \$304 million increase in Chapter 70 state aid to local schools, reflecting a November 2019 law that called for a \$1.5 billion in new K-12 education funding over seven years.

Bell said he does not know if that level of aid will end up being "sustainable" in the fiscal 2021 budget, but that he believes "it's everyone's desire to try to get to that level."

Vice Chair James Morton asked if there is a role for the board to play in advocating for education funding.

"K-12 education specifically, education broadly, is at the top of everybody's priority list, so I don't think anyone is missing the importance of education to this year's budget and to the future of the commonwealth as a whole," Peyser said.

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## **Massachusetts State Police seize over \$130,000 in alleged drug money at Logan Airport**

This past weekend, a male booked a flight at Logan Airport, missed the flight, then booked a second flight the same day.

The destination to which he was attempting to fly is known as

a source area for illegal narcotics. As the passenger went through a TSA checkpoint he was questioned about a large quantity of US currency he was carrying, and stated that the amount was \$1,500.

When Massachusetts State Police Troopers from Troop F questioned the passenger subsequently, he claimed he was carrying \$40,000 to \$50,000 cash. The passenger was then questioned by MSP detectives and reported the amount he was carrying to be \$80,000-\$85,000. MSP K9 Duke, who is trained to detect the odor of narcotics, showed a strong alert to the man's belongings. A subsequent final count of the cash the man was carrying was \$138,980.

Based on the totality of the circumstances, the money was held pending further investigation. The would-be passenger refused to sign a receipt for the secured currency and left the building, walking away from the money. The money will be subject to forfeiture proceedings.



# Massachusetts Environmental Police seizes fishing gear and issues nearly \$1,900 in citations in incident

"On the evening of Saturday, May 23, 2020, Massachusetts Environmental Police Officers conducted a marked patrol along the Mystic River in Everett.

Officers encountered numerous violations by individuals fishing from shore and by kayak, to include over the limit possession and minimum size violations.

Additionally, an individual threw his catch into the water after an Officer approached and instructed him not to do so. The individual was given a criminal summons to appear in Malden District Court for failure to display catch, possession of river herring, and use of other than circle hook.

All others were issued nearly \$1,900 in citations. The fishing gear utilized in the violations and the catch was seized. The seized catch was properly stored overnight and donated to the Pine Street Inn, a homeless service shelter in Boston.



# **fraudulent unemployment claims exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic for employees**

Multiple federal agencies are reporting an increase in fraudulent unemployment claims exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically of state and federal government employees.

Within the UMass system, there have been several cases reported where claim requests have been submitted to the Department of Unemployment Assistance allegedly by our employees. Some of you may assume that the University filed this on your behalf due to an upcoming unpaid furlough or layoff. However, the University is not able to file on your behalf and therefore we suspect that an unknown party or parties is filing these fraudulent claims in an attempt to divert unemployment benefits.

Some of the information submitted on behalf of the employees may contain accurate information about the person reporting to be unemployed, including full name, address, previous unemployment, Social Security Number, Date of Birth, and possibly Driver's License number. However, other information is false such as the email address, direct deposit for payments and the number of dependents.

If you receive a letter or other notice from the Department of Unemployment Assistance, via U.S mail or online, and you did not file a claim please contact the following as soon as possible:

Nancy Holsworth, [nholsworth@umassd.edu](mailto:nholsworth@umassd.edu),  
Office of Human Resources

Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance by email at [DUA-verify@mass.gov](mailto:DUA-verify@mass.gov) and by phone (877) 626-6800

Lastly, if you receive a letter which contains your social security number, please also visit the Federal Trade Commission website, on how to protect your personal information, including a review of different monitoring options.