

New Bedford's Alma del Mar charter school adding 200 more students in 2020

Nearly 100 new sixth grade scholars, along with 100 new kindergarten-aged children, will join the Alma del Mar community in August 2020. The two grades will serve as the primary entry points for New Bedford children joining the charter public school as it continues to grow its enrollment.

Alma was awarded an additional 594 seats for a second campus in New Bedford in January 2019. This second campus opened in August 2019 to 200 children in K-2 and sixth grade. This was the first year sixth grade was an entry point for new scholars, as kindergarten has previously served as the primary entry point since the school opened in 2011.

Alma prides itself in providing a rigorous yet highly supportive education to every scholar who walks through its doors. Alma middle schoolers are the highest performing middle schoolers on state MCAS tests in the city.

"We heard from a lot of families last spring who were looking for additional middle school options for their children," said Will Gardner, Executive Director at Alma. "We are happy to be able to offer our middle school program to a greater number of families as we grow our enrollment. In just a few years, we will be graduating nearly 150 well-prepared eighth graders every spring."

At full enrollment, the Douglass Campus will serve 50 children per grade in grades K-5, and 98 children per grade in grades 6-8. Alma's Ottiwell campus will continue to serve 450 scholars in grades K-8, with 50 scholars in each grade.

The Douglass Campus' larger sixth grade cohort will be

selected as part of the school's enrollment lottery on Feb. 26. Applications for New Bedford children entering grades Kindergarten through Eighth grade are due by 5 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 24, and may be completed online at Alma's website, www.almadelmar.org.

Dartmouth Police bring K9 Sig on visit to Smith Mills Pre-School

The following was shared on the Dartmouth Police's Facebook page:

"There is 'unity' in community ♥?"

Yesterday, Lieutenant Sladwesi, along with K-9 Officer Flechsig and his awesome partner Sig, visited with the students and staff at the Smith Mills Pre-School.

The highlight of the demonstration was when Sig sang "Who Let the Dogs Out".

All photos by Dartmouth Police:



Undocumented immigrants in Massachusetts a step closer to getting driver's licenses

By Matt Murphy, **State House News Service**

Sen. Diana DiZoglio is defending her decision to vote in favor of advancing a bill that would make driver's licenses available to undocumented immigrants, leaning on the support of police chiefs in her district in the face of sharp criticism from Republicans who accused her of flip-flopping from her 2014 campaign position.

DiZoglio, a moderate Democrat from Methuen, said she was asked by the Major City Chiefs of Police Association to support moving the bill forward "to allow the conversation to continue through what will still be a very lengthy committee process."

She was one of 14 Democrats on the Joint Committee on Transportation to recommend a redrafted version of the driver's license bill last week on a strictly party-line vote. It's the furthest such a bill has ever advanced on Beacon Hill, and supporters of the legislation are optimistic about its chances this year.

"I voted yes in solidarity with our major city police chiefs association because the provisions in the bill would help law enforcement officers identify criminals who are here unlawfully and get them off the streets," DiZoglio said in a statement, shared with the News Service.

The blowback on DiZoglio highlights the politically sensitive nature of trying pass any legislation on Beacon Hill related to immigration, and the hurdles advocates may have to overcome if this is to be the year for a drivers license bill to get to Gov. Charlie Baker's desk.

The explanation from the first-term senator came after the Massachusetts Republican Party singled out DiZoglio for her vote, which was kept private by Senate leadership until the House co-chairman of the committee released the full vote to the News Service.

“Senate Democrats wanted to keep the public in the dark, and Sen. DiZoglio obviously would have preferred it that way,” MassGOP Chairman Jim Lyons said in a statement. “What we have here are Democrats saying one thing and doing the other.”

Lyons, who like DiZoglio lives in the Merrimack Valley, highlighted the position DiZoglio took against licenses for undocumented immigrants during her 2014 House re-election campaign.

“I do think that we need to make sure that everybody is documented and here legally before providing state resources,” DiZoglio said at the time, according to a local newspaper The Valley Patriot.

Lyons said of Democrats: “They can’t stand transparency and this is why.”

DiZoglio pointed to a letter she received from the chiefs of police in Haverhill and Methuen supporting what they described as a “new” bill because of the changes made in committee.

The committee bill requires two forms of identification, including at least one with a photograph and one with a date-of-birth.

One form of identification that applicants would be required to provide would be either a valid foreign passport or a consular identification document. The second form of ID could be any of the following: a valid driver’s license from another state or territory, a Massachusetts identification card, an original birth certificate or a valid employment authorization document issued by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The list of documents in the bill resembles the lists in place in other states that allow undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's licenses, according to the bill's sponsor Rep. Christine Barber. It contrasts with language in previous versions of the bill that would have let the Registry of Motor Vehicles make documentation determinations.

"I did not and still do not support the previous version of the bill, as I felt the language was problematic and so did our chiefs association. I do, however, support advancing the redraft of the bill that was worked on with and endorsed by the Mass Police Chiefs Association," DiZoglio said.

When the police chiefs' association endorsed the bill, Chelsea Police Chief Brian Kyes, the president of the MMCC, said it would "promote trust between law enforcement and all the communities we serve and protect." "In order for our state's police officers to best do their jobs and remain safe while doing so, they need to be able to identify who's behind the wheel. All Massachusetts families need peace of mind knowing that the drivers on our highways and city streets have passed the same driving test and know the rules of our roads," Keyes said.

Haverhill Police Chief Allen DeNaro and Methuen Police Chief Joseph Solomon subsequently wrote in a letter to their legislators that the changes were the result of the committee's conversations with law enforcement.

"The preliminary support of this bill in no way is supportive of anyone entering our country or traveling through our communities illegally," they wrote. "The enforcement of proper immigration into the United States is regulated and policed by our federal law enforcement partners."

Both chiefs said they had received a briefing from RMV officials about how the registry would evaluate forms of identification prior to authorizing someone to take a

licensure test, and how RMV employees are “trained on how to identify proper legal documents.”

“Having the ability to properly license an individual will aid law enforcement officers in the Commonwealth in the identification of individuals they may encounter during motor vehicle interactions,” DeNaro and Solomon wrote.

The chiefs said the bill was still “not in its best form,” but insisted that it was important to keep working toward a bill that would “make the roadways of our Commonwealth safer.”

“We believe additional safe guards are necessary to insure the accuracy of the information provided for those attempting to obtain a driver’s license,” they wrote.

Baker has cited his own concerns with the state’s ability to “build the kind of safeguards into that kind of process” to ensure proper verification of an applicant’s identity. He said last week that he continues to oppose the legislation, despite the changes made.

Eversource warns greater New Bedford about current scam about your electricity; Don’t become a victim!

Scammers are always looking for new ways to deceive our customers. You may be the target of a scammer if you receive suspicious phone calls or text messages using any of the following tactics:

- Threatening to disconnect your power without immediate payment
- Demanding immediate payment using a pre-paid debit card, bitcoin or other unusual form of payment
- Offering you discounted power
- Asking for information or a copy of your energy bill

Even if a phone recording sounds convincing or the phone number appears to belong to Eversource, it's NOT. Please remember that Eversource representatives never ask for on-the-spot payment in person or over the phone, and always carry company-issued photo identification.

If you're not sure the person contacting you is an Eversource employee, call us at 800-592-2000. You can also always find our phone number on your bill or at [Eversource.com](https://www.eversource.com).

See more ways to protect yourself, and hear a recording of a real call from a scammer.

Mayor Mitchell submits seven residency waiver requests to the New Bedford City Council

Mayor Mitchell has submitted seven residency waiver requests to the New Bedford City Council. The following requests will be taken up this evening:

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting a WAIVER OF RESIDENCY for SEAN SILVA, Marketing Assistant for the Buttonwood Park Zoo, who currently resides in Acushnet, MA.

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting a WAIVER OF RESIDENCY for BRUCE HEBBEL, Environmental Project Manager for the Department of Environmental Stewardship, who currently lives in Marion, Massachusetts.

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting a WAIVER OF RESIDENCY for CATHERINE VERDADEIRO, Grants Auditor for the Department of Community Services, who currently resides in Fall River, Massachusetts.

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the WAIVER OF RESIDENCY for JOHN E. FLOR, Associate City Solicitor with the Office of the City Solicitor, who currently resides in South Easton, Massachusetts.

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting the WAIVER OF RESIDENCY for ELIZABETH TREADUP PIO, Associate City Solicitor with the Office of the City Solicitor, who currently resides in Acushnet, Massachusetts.

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting a WAIVER OF RESIDENCY for MICHELLE BORRELLO, Nursing Supervisor for the Health Department, who currently resides in Dighton, Massachusetts.

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting a WAIVER OF RESIDENCY for JULIE HOLT, Nursing Supervisor for the Health Department, who currently resides in Somerset, Massachusetts.

Mayor Mitchell submits \$5.4

million loan order for New Bedford capital improvement projects

Mayor Mitchell submitted a loan order to the New Bedford City Council appropriating \$5,478,000.00 “for the purpose of making critically needed repairs to City-owned buildings including but not limited to, projects for the repair and renovation of public safety facilities, recreational facilities, general office space, and road and infrastructure.”

The communication is the first item scheduled at tonight’s New Bedford City Council session.

The full communication can be read here:

Communication-Bond_Allocation-CIP

Dominican National Sentenced for Stealing over \$17,500 in MassHealth Benefits

A Dominican national formerly residing in Lawrence was sentenced Tuesday in federal court in Boston for Social Security and benefit fraud.

Ismael Robles Tejeda, 30, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Patti B. Saris to 18 months in prison and ordered to pay \$17,520 in restitution. Judge Saris signed a stipulated judicial order of removal thereby expediting the defendant’s

removal proceedings to the Dominican Republic following his incarceration. In October 2019, Robles Tejeda pleaded guilty to one count of false representation of a Security number and one count of false statements in matters relating to health care.

On Aug. 3, 2015, Robles Tejeda applied for a Massachusetts identification card using the name, date of birth and Social Security number of a Puerto Rican citizen. In October 2015, Robles Tejeda used that Massachusetts identification card to apply for and receive over \$17,500 worth of MassHealth benefits in the Puerto Rican citizen's name. When Robles Tejeda was arrested in April 2019, he had in his pocket a Massachusetts driver's license issued to him in the identity of the Puerto Rican citizen. Robles Tejeda was identified, among other things, from a fingerprint match with a Dominican Republic identification document issued to him and bearing his photo. The defendant obtained the Massachusetts identification card in a fraudulent identity less than one month after he provided his true identity and was arrested for selling heroin in Lawrence, posted bail, and failed to appear at his Lawrence District Court arraignment date.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling; Jason Molina, Acting Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston; Scott Antolik, Special Agent in Charge of the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations, Boston Field Division; and Phillip Coyne, Special Agent in Charge of Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations, Boston Field Division made the announcement today. Assistants U.S. Attorney Lindsey E. Weinstein and Kenneth G. Shine of Lelling's Criminal Division prosecuted the case.

Massachusetts Finalizes Rules Governing Vaping Industry, Limiting Flavored Vapes to Smoking Bars

By Katie Lannan of **State House News Service**

After a momentous 2019 from a policy perspective, regulations restricting the sale of vaping products in Massachusetts were unanimously approved by the state Public Health Council on Wednesday.

The regulations restrict the sale of flavored e-cigarettes to smoking bars and establish identification requirements for stores to verify the age of tobacco buyers. They also restrict the sale of vape products with more than 35 milligrams of nicotine per milliliter to retail tobacco stores and smoking bars.

The council approved an earlier version of the regulations in December on an emergency basis, allowing the sales of unflavored vaping products to resume after a temporary ban on all e-cigarette sales that the Baker administration had instituted amid a national outbreak of vaping-associated lung illnesses.

The regulations reflect a November 2019 law that banned retail sales of all flavored tobacco products – including flavored e-cigarettes and traditional menthol cigarettes – except for those sold for on-site consumption at smoking bars.

They lay out a fine structure for violations, from \$1,000 for

a first offense up to \$5,000 for a third offense, and allow for suspension of a retailer's ability to sell tobacco products for second and subsequent offenses.

"Through the 2019 law and our regulatory process, we will drastically reduce the availability of flavored tobacco products and vape products for sale by local retailers to reduce exposure, access and use of these dangerous products, especially by our youth," Public Health Commissioner Dr. Monica Bharel said.

Since the adoption of the emergency regulations, the Department of Public Health has held a January hearing and received feedback from six people or organizations during a public comment period. Most of the comments were supportive, and they informed "technical" and "clarifying" changes incorporated into the final regulations, said Lea Susan Ojamaa of the department's Bureau of Community Health and Prevention.

The regulatory language was also updated to reflect a new federal law raising the tobacco-buying age from 18 to 21, a change Massachusetts had approved at the state level in 2018.

Some portions of the tobacco control law – including a 75 percent excise tax on vaping products – take effect in June, and Ojamaa said bureau staff will return to the council before then to address those provisions.

Separately on Wednesday, Attorney General Maura Healey announced a lawsuit against the e-cigarette company JUUL Labs Inc., alleging it illegally marketing its products to underage buyers.

20-Year Old Mattapoisett Woman Succumbs to Injuries after Serious Crash on Route 195 in Marion

Just after 3 p.m. February 2, 2020 Troopers assigned to State Police-Bourne responded to reports of a single-vehicle crash on Route 195 Westbound at mile marker 36.6 in Marion.

Upon their arrival they discovered 2017 Nissan Murano that had been involved in a serious crash with the operator, identified as Brooke Sweet, 20, of Mattapoisett, suffering from life-threatening injuries.

Preliminary investigation shows the vehicle was traveling Westbound on Route 195 when the operator lost control and struck a guardrail to the left side of the road. Troopers are investigating whether excessive speed was a possible factor in the crash. Sweet was transported by ambulance to Tobey Hospital and later transported by MedFlight to Beth Israel Hospital. Sweet later succumbed to her injuries. No other vehicles were involved in the crash and Sweet was the sole occupant of the Nissan.

The crash remains under investigation by Troop D of the Massachusetts State Police along with the Collision Analysis Reconstruction Section and Crime Scene Services Section. Marion Fire and EMS assisted at the scene.

New Bedford man pleads guilty to possession and intent to distribute heroin, Fentanyl, and marijuana in federal court in Boston

Davaun Oswald, 23, pleaded guilty to one count of possession with intent to distribute heroin, fentanyl, and marijuana before U.S. District Court Judge Nathaniel M. Gorton, who scheduled sentencing for June 17, 2020. Oswald has been in state custody since his arrest on Jan. 31, 2019, and was recently transferred to federal custody.

On Jan. 31, 2019, after an investigation into drug distribution in and around New Bedford, law enforcement officers executed a search warrant at Oswald's apartment, where Oswald was found in possession of approximately 15 grams of a mixture of heroin and fentanyl, as well as over 450 grams of marijuana. Oswald has prior felony convictions for criminal possession of a firearm, and possession with the intent to distribute a controlled substance.

The charge of distribution of a controlled substance provides for a sentence of up to 30 years in prison, up to a lifetime of supervised release, and a fine of up to \$2 million. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling; Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Field Division; Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III; and New Bedford Police Chief

Joseph C. Cordeiro made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Nicholas Soivilien of Lelling's Organized Crime and Gang Unit is prosecuting the case.

This prosecution 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. The Department of Justice 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.