

Dorchester Reporter

“The News and Values Around the Neighborhood”

Volume 38 Issue 12

Thursday, March 25, 2021

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PASSING THE BATON

Walsh confirmed as US Labor chief; Janey is the mayor

By BILL FORRY, EDITOR AND MIA MCCARTHY REPORTER CORRESPONDENT

It's now Secretary Marty Walsh and Boston Mayor Kim Janey. The United States Senate voted 68-29 to confirm the nomination of the 53-year-old Dorchester native as the US Secretary of Labor on Monday, clearing the way for a transition of the mayor's responsibilities to City Council President Kim Janey that has been months in the making.

Walsh officially resigned from his position as mayor via a letter sent to City Clerk Maureen Feeney at 9 p.m. Monday, an action that immediately elevated Janey to the role of acting mayor. She was expected to be inaugurated during a ceremony on Wednesday and will serve out the remainder of Walsh's term through at least November of this year.

A longtime union leader who served as one of Dorchester's state representatives before ascending to the mayor's job in 2014, Walsh breezed through a

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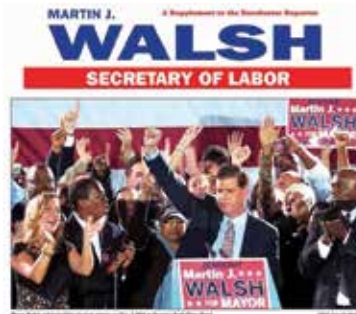


Secretary of Labor Martin J. Walsh, left, with Boston Mayor Kim Janey in the Mayor's office — before they each assumed their new jobs. Mayor's Office photo

INSIDE — A 44-page supplement looks at the roots and career of the new Secretary of Labor, Martin J. Walsh, including clips from the archives of the Reporter, which has covered his political climb over the last 25 years.

At right: Walsh's original campaign bumper sticker — circa 1997 — updated for his latest job leads the page.

Graphic by Barbara Langis



Mayor Kim Janey: 'I just want to do the work that's before me'

By WBUR AND REPORTER STAFF

Kim Janey shattered two historic barriers when she became acting mayor of Boston Monday evening after Marty Walsh resigned as mayor to take the job of US labor secretary: She is both the first woman and the first Black person to lead the city.

In a Tuesday interview on WBUR's Morning Edition, Janey discussed her policy priorities and the possibility of joining the increasingly crowded race for a four-year term, which will be decided this November.

On the significance of becoming Boston's first Black & female mayor, she told host Bob Oakes: "I ... think about my own granddaughter, who is six years old. That she's growing up in a time where the mayor will look like her and that will be normal for her. And her two older brothers were born at a time when there wasn't even a Black woman on the Boston City Council. And now here she is. She sees me as mayor, and this is not just important for Black children. This is important

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Left: John Cain, a computer teacher at the Lower Mills campus of St. John Paul II Catholic Academy, with a young student. At right: Grade 1 teacher Laura Fitzpatrick and student at the Neponset campus. Photos courtesy SJPIICA



Said the teachers: 'We wanted to open ... be safe ... and to have the kids back' Saint John Paul II Catholic Academy makes it happen

By KATIE PEDERSEN REPORTER CORRESPONDENT

During a year in which the majority of Dorchester's children have attended school through a computer screen, Saint John Paul II Catholic Academy has offered in-person learning since September. Seven months after opening, the program appears to have avoided community transmission of Covid-19 on its three campuses with close to 1,000 students in all. Students in the classrooms on Columbia Road in

Savin Hill, on Neponset Avenue, and in Lower Mills on Dorchester Avenue range in age from pre-Kinderergarten to eighth grade. With such a large spread of ages and locations, opening safely last fall took months of planning.

"In the month of June last year, we surveyed our families and asked them what they needed for this coming school year and what their concerns were," Catherine Bradley, the academy's regional

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Use federal funds to make Boston a hub of equity

By BILL WALCZAK REPORTER COLUMNIST

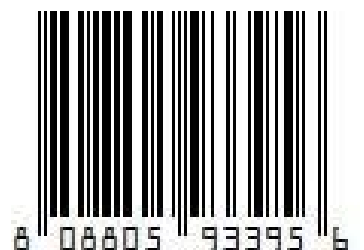
Boston ranks in the top ten cities in the United States when it comes to income inequity. The most cited example is the 2015 Federal Reserve Bank study of assets by race that showed white Bostonian households had a median net worth of \$247,500 while the median net worth for Black Bostonian households amounted to \$8. Addressing this very real wealth gap will be a central campaign issue in this year's race for mayor.

At the beginning of the first Walsh administration (FY 2014) the city's annual budget was \$2.6 billion. As Walsh leaves office near the end of his second term (FY21), the budget number is \$3.6 billion, an increase of 38 percent from 2014, a period during which inflation was 11 percent.

New construction in the city's building boom has dramatically increased the annual tax levy. In 1980,

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'We wanted to open ... be safe ... and to have the kids back'

(Continued from page 1) director, told the *Reporter*. "It came down to 50 percent who wanted to be in-person and 50 percent who wanted to be remote. Then we went through the Massachusetts Department of Education documents, and the CDC [Centers for Disease Control] stuff." After taking everything in, the administrators opted to proceed with in-school learning.

Paula Gaudet, the academy's head nurse, stepped up to help with the planning. In addition to joining a series of prep meetings throughout the summer, she used her professional experience to order the necessary PPE [personal protective equipment] before the rush in the fall.

"Everyone was on the same page," she said. "We wanted to open, we wanted to be safe, and we wanted the kids back."

At the Neponset and Lower Mills campuses, the cafeterias were turned into classrooms. On all three campuses, classes were grouped into self-contained cohorts and spacing stickers were placed on all the floors and walls. Extra custodial staff was hired. By September,



Bill McGoldrick, middle school music teacher for St. John Paul II Catholic Academy, with a student at Columbia Campus. Courtesy SJPIICA

Saint John Paul II was ready to welcome its students back.

"I have to be honest," Brandley said, "We were terrified. But we thought: 'We've done everything they asked of us.'"

For all that, Brandley's worst fears have largely failed to materialize. Al-

though the campuses did go remote for a few weeks in the fall due to rising Covid-19 rates in Boston, they have remained open otherwise. And as of this week, there has been no evidence of community transmission.

"Honest to goodness, I was waiting for the other shoe to drop," Brandley

said. "And it didn't. We got through Christmas and those horrible high weeks. We've had cases, but we've had no spread in the buildings."

She made a point of thanking the families of Saint John Paul II students. "The parents have been fabulous. We could never have done

it without the patience and support of families—because they get it. They would let us know when their child was sick."

Brandley estimated that by the end of last week, 65 percent of the academy staff had been fully or partly vaccinated. "Right now, it's getting easier," she said. "In about a week, everyone will have an appointment if they haven't gotten one already. The teachers have been great about this."

Although adjusting to the pandemic posed daily challenges, Paula Callahan and Beth Sheehan, longtime St. John Paul II teachers, are pleased with how their school has handled the crisis.

Said Callahan, an early childhood teacher at the Columbia campus: "I never questioned whether or not to go back. Instead, it was, 'How can I go back and keep my family safe and myself safe?' A lot of it came down from having a very supportive administration. They understood what we were doing every day, and they still do." She cited Friday shout-outs and Teacher Appreciation Week as morale boosters.

She, too, thanked her students' families. "The biggest thing I was

amazed at was how well [three- and four-year-old kids] keep their masks on," she said. "I think a lot of that comes from home. We're blessed in that we have great families that understand that if they send their kids back, there's a certain amount of responsibility that comes with that decision."

For her part, Sheehan, a second-grade teacher at the Lower Mills campus, said, "I think that at the beginning we had a lot of nervousness and hesitation. My father was still alive at the time, and I was worried about bringing stuff back to him. But as a Catholic teacher, I have great faith, and I knew that God would take care of me." She added: "I love seeing my children every day."

Still, both teachers had to adapt longtime classroom strategies to the constraints of hybrid learning.

"How do I teach differently than I have I have for the last 27 years, given that the little ones can't really be socially interacting?" Callahan said she wondered. "A big part of early childhood education is getting kids to be a good friend, getting them to share, and now [they're left to




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Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Anthony Clarke*, 1985. Acrylic, oil, and collage on wood.
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think], ‘We really can’t share and we can’t play with our friends.’” She described her current challenge as “trying to find a way to adapt the curriculum so we can still have them meet their developmental milestones while at the same time keeping them, their families, and ourselves safe.”

With nine students in-person and nine students online, Sheehan initially found the hybrid model difficult. “It was a challenge, because I wanted to make sure I was giving my everything to both groups of students,” she said. “It was almost like having two classrooms.”

The hard work of Saint John Paul II’s teachers has not gone unnoticed.

Said Claire Sheridan, principal of the Columbia campus, “The teachers have been non-stop since March 13, 2020, till today. They have worked overtime. They had to make sure all of their lessons were uploaded, that everything was ready to go. They worked all summer long setting it up. Right now, we’re trying to make sure that the teachers get what they need so they can keep up that momentum.”

She added that the pandemic “has made us as leaders stop and realize what is truly



Above, a second grade classroom at the Lower Mills campus. Below, Adam Cook, a St. John Paul II Catholic Academy Middle School teacher with student in a classroom at the Neponset campus. SJPIICA photos



PICK ME— An eager young student at the Neponset campus.

important.”

Despite all the stress and anxiety of the last seven months, Brandley is grateful for how the school year has gone so far.

“I never thought we’d get here,” she said. “I never thought we would’ve made it five days a week all year. I’m incredibly proud of my staff – my leaders have killed themselves. All my vendors, my custodial staff. Our lunch company has worked around our crazy schedules and protocols.

Everybody has jumped right in to be successful because our kids needed to be in school.”

As more Boston schools reopen in the coming weeks, Nurse Gaudet offers this simple advice about students learning in school: “They should do what they’re supposed to do. It’s very important to keep the masks on, to keep your hands washed, to keep your distance. Kids are kids, so you just have to do the best you can.”

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124 Elden VG LLC	124 Selden RT	124 Selden St	Dorchester	03/01/21	1,065,000
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Nguyen, Vanessa	Guerin, Kerri	217 Neponset Ave #33	Dorchester	03/03/21	279,900
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