

# SOUTHCOAST

Jennifer Driscoll, News editor  
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## IN BRIEF

### Cellphone driving ban to be considered again by lawmakers

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Among the bills scheduled for a public hearing before the Legislature's Transportation Committee on Thursday are several that would ban motorists from holding their cellphones while they drive. The measures would allow drivers to talk on their phones with hands-free devices.

Massachusetts already bans texting while driving. Bills that would have Massachusetts join several neighboring states in prohibiting all hand-held cellphone use have cleared the state Senate in recent years but stalled in the House. A measure filed by Republican Gov. Charlie Baker and being heard by the committee this week would also give police greater power to enforce existing state laws requiring seatbelt use.

### Man charged with filming in bathrooms detained pending trial

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Magistrate Judge M. Page Kelley wrote in an order issued Saturday that 36-year-old Eric Tran Thai poses a risk of flight and danger to the community if released.

Thai is charged with videotaping students at Boston Latin School while as they used stalls or urinals. Thai also faces state charges for allegedly filming in men's restrooms at Boston College.

Prosecutors have said a search of devices taken from Thai's home also turned up folders with labels including MIT and Harvard. The forensic analysis of those files is ongoing.

Thai's attorney has told The Boston Herald that he will appeal the detention order.

### Speaker pledges to offset cuts under abortion "gag rule"

**BOSTON (AP)** — Massachusetts House Speaker Robert DeLeo is pledging to offset the loss of federal funding to women's reproductive health organizations due to a new Trump administration rule covering the federal family planning program known as Title X.

The rule would prohibit family planning clinics funded by the program from making abortion referrals. Critics denounce that as a "gag rule."

DeLeo, a Democrat, said the House is "deeply troubled" by what he called the Trump administration's irresponsible decision to withhold funding from health centers that provide reproductive, family planning and women's health services.

DeLeo said a supplemental budget the House is expected to debate this week will "hold family planning centers harmless, should the so-called gag rule go into effect."

DeLeo's proposal has won the backing of abortion rights advocates.

### State trooper convicted of rape faces sentencing

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He was arrested after the victim, who is also a state police employee, reported she was attacked at his Boxborough home in April 2016. Prosecutors said the assault was the culmination of a long history of abuse by Sundberg directed at the victim. Sundberg was suspended without pay after his arrest and state police say they have started termination proceedings.



Instructor Joey Machado conducts a chair yoga session with seniors at the Hazelwood Senior Center in New Bedford.



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# Aging gracefully

Helping the older population helps the community

By Aimee Chiavarelli  
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**NEW BEDFORD** — Per the 2010 U.S. Census, the city had 18,765 residents over 60, the fifth highest among cities in Massachusetts.

It's no surprise that that number is only growing which is why community partners have been putting their heads together since at least 2015 when New Bedford started working toward the Age-Friendly Community designation.

At Coastline's legislative breakfast held at Buttonwood Park Zoo Friday morning, Nora Moreno Cargie, president of the Tufts Health Plan Foundation, got to the mic and said she realized how old she is, noting "that's a good thing."

"When communities work for older people, they work for younger people," she said.

A turnout including city councilors, state representatives Antonio F.D. Cabral, Paul Schmid, and Chris Hendricks, District Attorney Thomas Quinn III, Police Chief Joseph Cordeiro and other community members heard some of the progress and highlights of the Age-Friendly initiative in New Bedford.

## HEALTH

Cheryl Bartlett, chief executive officer of the Greater New Bedford Community Health Center said the center serves about 25 percent of the population in New Bedford and about 10 percent of those people are over the age of 65.

After a quick look through the center's electronic health records, Bartlett found the top three diagnoses for people over 65 are hypertension, high cholesterol and vitamin D deficiency, she said.

The majority of that aging population the center serves has hypertension — high blood pressure — Bartlett said, a "silent disease" often, causing a lot of damage to the heart and kidneys that can have long term consequences to someone's health. She recommends people get their blood pressure checked as often as they can.

Joyce Dupont, wellness director said the health center has held dementia trainings for first responders, nurses, local businesses



Doty Temple, left, and Enid Silva work on their paintings during the Painting with Friends session at the Buttonwood Senior Center in New Bedford. (PHOTOS BY PETER PEREIRA/THE STANDARD-TIMES)



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and community health workers. The center is also working on expanding availability of evidence-based programs to help seniors live at home along as long as possible.

"They're also holding oral cancer screenings now because it's been the number one topic consistently among their senior population."

## PARKS

Mary Rapoza, director of Parks, Recreation and Beaches in the city said her team, along with other partners, completed a pilot project this past year called Safe Routes to Parks, focused on the Ashley Park in the South End. They created a template, Rapoza said, that will overlay ongoing and future park improvements that not only looks at accessibility in the park, but accessibility getting to the park.

The department also engaged a motivated group of local residents, she said.

"They really are the key to all of this because they live here, they know where the obstructions and barriers are, they know where the concerns are," she said.

Additionally, they're working on a number of improvements at Hazelwood Park, many specifically

around accessibility into the park such as walkways, she said.

Plus, this spring, the city will offer bowling on the green which was very popular at one time, she said, and was a gentleman's sport. It can be played by all ages and abilities, she said.

## TRANSPORTATION

Angela Constantino, senior transportation planner at SRPEDD, or Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District, said they're working closely with Southeastern Regional Transit Authority.

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With proper documentation, seniors can get half off of a bus trip. Constantino said they're creating a web-based interactive map showing senior housing locations, public and private, and SRTA bus routes and stops. They're working on templates for individualized and location-based schedules with specific times in large print. They're also working on real-time information on where the bus is.

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Follow Aimee Chiavarelli on Twitter @AimeeC\_SCT



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