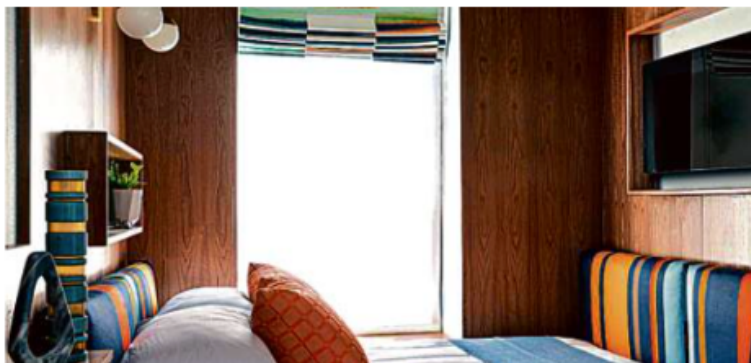


Boston Sunday Globe

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BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE NOVEMBER 19, 2017 | BOSTONGLOBE.COM/NORTH



LARK HOTELS

The microking at the Hotel Salem, which recently opened downtown.

COMMUNITY NEWS

ANDOVER

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON NEW MUNICIPAL SITE

Andover broke ground for a new municipal services facility in an industrial area at 5 Campanelli Drive on Nov. 8. The \$28.5 million project was approved by voters at Town Meeting in May. Construction costs will be mitigated by revenues from the sale or lease of the present town yard site on Lewis Street. The town will borrow the remaining funds needed over a 30-year period. The decision to build the new facility was made after officials determined that the town had outgrown the present site, designed in the 1960s. The new facility will allow town departments, such as public works, water, and sewer, to better interact with the public, consolidate divisions, and have sufficient space to store public vehicles. The goal is to have the facility completed by the winter of 2018.

LINDA GREENSTEIN

DANVERS

PROPERTY TAXES ARE GOING UP

The annual tax bill for average single-family homeowners in Danvers is rising 4.2 percent this year. The state Department of Revenue recently certified the town's residential tax rates for fiscal 2018 at \$13.54 per \$1,000 valuation, down from last year's \$14.19 per \$1,000. Under the new rates, the owner of an average single-family home valued at \$445,000 will pay \$6,025 in taxes in fiscal 2018, or \$244 more than the \$5,781 average of a home valued at \$407,400 in fiscal 2017, according to Steven Poulos, the town's chief assessor. Poulos said taxes are increasing because the town spent more money this year than last.

JOHN LAIDLER

IPSWICH

VOTERS APPROVE RESIDENCY REGULATION

As the result of a Nov. 7 Special Town Meeting vote, Ipswich residents will ask the Legislature to approve a charter change requiring residency by future town managers in their second three-year term. With Town Manager Robin Crosbie planning to retire, the town is seeking a new town manager. After a delayed start as the gathering waited for the 200-person quorum, residents dispatched 19 articles in 2½ hours at the meeting, including one to lower the speed limit to 25 miles per hour in thickly settled neighborhoods and another proposal to add a snow and ice emergency parking ban bylaw.

DAVID RATTIGAN

LOWELL

DOWNTOWN SCHOOL LOCATION WINS OUT

Lowell voters overwhelmingly voted in favor of keeping and renovating the downtown high school as opposed to building a new high school at the Cawley Stadium site during the Nov. 7 city election. The nonbinding referendum attracted 61 percent of voters supporting plans to renovate the existing school. In June, the City Council voted to support building a new five-story high school at Cawley Stadium. The current school, opened in 1826 with a 1922 addition, houses 3,318 students. Many families prefer the downtown location because about 40 percent of students are able to walk from nearby neighborhoods. The Cawley Stadium site is near the Tewksbury line, and would require more students to be bused.

LINDA GREENSTEIN

MIDDLETON

NATSUE WAY PROJECT REJECTED AGAIN

At a Special Town Meeting on Nov. 7, Middleton voters once again rejected the \$3.89 million Natsue Way recreational project. The complex was first rejected by Town Meeting last spring, but it passed at the polls during a general election in May. A citizens' petition brought it back to Town Meeting for another try. On other matters, Middleton voters approved an agreement to enter into a payment-in-lieu-of-taxes agreement with HG Solar Systems for a solar energy project behind 230 South Main St. that could pay the town \$1.2 million over 25 years. They also approved \$25,000 for repairs to Memorial Hall, and rejected an option to add two licenses for liquor stores.

LINDA GREENSTEIN

SALEM

BOUTIQUE HOTEL OPENS DOWNTOWN

A new boutique hotel recently opened its doors in downtown Salem. The Hotel Salem is in the renovated former Newmark's Department Store building on the Essex Street Pedestrian Mall. The hotel, with 44 guest rooms including microrooms, lofts, and suites, is the second to be opened in Salem by Amesbury-based Lark Hotels, following The Merchant, which opened on Washington Street in 2015. The Hotel Salem will include Counter, a modern American ground-floor restaurant set to open this winter; and The Roof, Salem's first rooftop bar, scheduled to open next spring. The building's design includes artistic details to recall its history as a high-end clothing anchor store.

JOHN LAIDLER