THE

Quackery Gazette

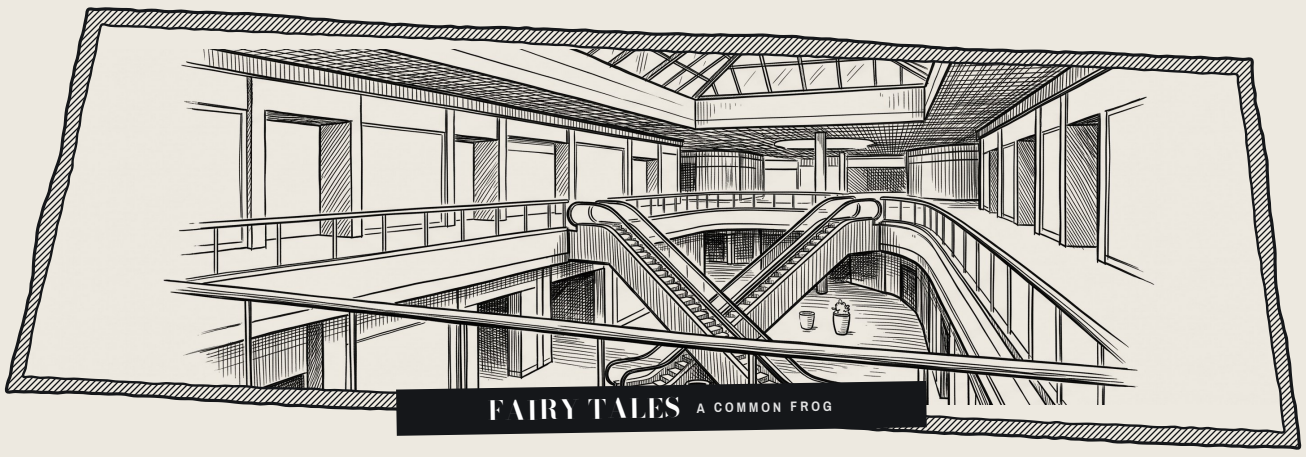
WEATHER
A level of concern
—
TIDE
Gates open, for now

Providence, Rhode Island — Brown University's toilet.
Come see us sometime!

VOL. I · NO. 2 OCTOBER 2026 $2 · QUACKERYGAZETTE.COM

NOTHING FIXED TO THE GROUND

A frog reads the mall sale for what it rests on



FAIRY TALES A COMMON FROG

On the twenty-seventh anniversary of its opening day, the Providence Place mall's new owners announced they had bought it for $133 million. There was a fifty-minute ceremony outside the Apple store. The mall was otherwise empty that morning.

I have nothing against the sale. A building with an owner beats a building in receivership, and this one had been in receivership since November 2024, when the previous owner defaulted. My interest is the stack.

Everything announced that day sits on top of something else that has not happened yet, and I would like to lay the layers out in order while they are still visible, because in two years the whole thing will be referred to as a plan.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

THE FISCAL CLOCK

It is eleven cents to midnight. The Helsinki Bureau reports the Voluntary Motionometer silent. No Wow! is inscribed.

ALSO INSIDE

A frog reads the transit center's paperwork from the bottom up.

Koala Terkel asks six Providence workers what they do all day, then gets out of the way.

The Gazette recommends renaming Waterman Street. The spelling is correct.

CORRECTIONS

The Gazette regrets the number and the noun.

OBITUARIES

The Soul Collector reports a productive September. The primaries are final. Boogeypeople remain at large. Several ongoing.

BALL STREET

Blurting-out futures remain in the ramp phase. Indecisiveness gapped up on Labor Day.

ON THE WATER

The rope that held the dachshund is still on the seawall, where it acts as a boom. Knot Sure, who is that rope, covers the bus hub this month.

THE GROUND

From Page One

The price rests on the taxes not being asked about. Three final bids came out of the receivership. One was $152 million — nineteen million more — and it was conditioned on getting a new tax treaty from the city. The receiver did not take it. He said the reason was politics: tax deals need the mayor and the council, and all of them were up for reelection. The winning bid was lower and carried no conditions. So the mall sold at a nineteen-million-dollar discount for the specific service of not requiring the city to decide anything in an election year. That is a real service and it was correctly priced. It is also the first thing in the stack: the transaction's advantage over its competitor is that it postponed a question.

The tax bill rests on a reassessment nobody has done. The 1998 treaty ends in 2028. Under it the mall pays roughly half a million to a million a year — the figure varies by outlet, which is its own small scandal for a payment this size — against an assessed value of $730 million. Taxed at the full commercial rate the bill would be something in the twenties: $21 million by one account, $24.9 million at fiscal 2026 rates, $26.8 million at fiscal 2027. Then the building sold for less than a fifth of what it is assessed at. The new owner's position is that the valuation should come down to reflect the sale, which is a reasonable position and probably a correct one. It also means the number everyone has been planning around for a decade — the mall starts paying twenty-some million in 2028 — was never a number. It was a placeholder waiting for a reassessment that will be conducted after the sale that changed it.

The absence of a tax ask rests on a condition. He said he has no immediate plans to seek a break. The full sentence, on the record: there is no reason to ask for something when you do not know what you are asking for, and if something dramatic happens, then that conversation has to happen. So the ask is not withdrawn. It is deferred pending a development proposal. The city's relief is that the request has not been made yet.

The revival rests on tenants who have not signed. The other buyer's position, also on the record, is that retailers would not commit while the mall's status was uncertain and will now, and that announcements are coming. No names. The mall will remain fundamentally a retail venue; health clubs, comedy clubs and grocery stores could be in the mix. Whether the Boscov's that replaced Nordstrom stays was too early to say.

And the anchor rests on a retailer that does not fit. He wants a Costco. He said so plainly and he said the other half plainly too — he is not announcing it, because he does not have it, and the downtown site does not offer the square footage or the suburban setting that company typically looks for. He has talked to them. Their board includes a former governor and a current candidate for the office.

That is the stack. A discount purchased by deferring a question; a tax number that is a placeholder; a waiver that is a postponement; a retail revival with no signed names in it; and an anchor the buyer has said out loud does not fit the building.

Every layer is defensible. Every one of those quotes is a person being honest in public, which is rarer than this column usually gets to report. The buyer said he does not have the Costco. He said the site is wrong for it. Nobody is being misled about anything.

But a stack of honest conditionals is still a stack, and here is what I have observed about stacks from the ground floor: the conditions get dropped and the top stays. In two years the sentence will be "the mall was sold with a Costco coming." Nobody will say the second half of the sentence, because the second half is the part the buyer said and the repeaters did not hear.

I would add one thing that is mine and not sourced to anybody, and I will mark it as mine. The argument for a mall is that it anchors the surrounding fabric. Fabric is a pharmacy, a corner store, somewhere open on a Sunday, the twenty small things that make a downtown a place where a person can complete an errand. Downtown Providence is thin on all of it. Fabric is also the one thing on this list that cannot be delivered by a lease. It takes a decade and it accumulates. Two years from now the treaty expires and the reassessment lands and there will be a number, and the number will be argued about as though it were the subject.

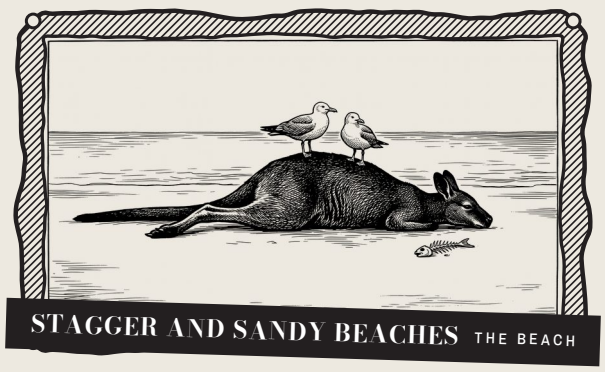
The subject is whether anybody can buy toothpaste down there.

I am a frog. I have been in this puddle since the World Cup. Water finds the low spot and stays; that is all I know about buildings. But I notice that everything announced in that fifty minutes was about what the mall will contain, and nothing at all was about what is around it.

LIVING

I Laying Here

A wallaby asked a goose a question in the late 2000s, received one sentence of advice, and has been on the beach ever since



The advice was: go clean up the beach.

It came from a lectern, in the late 2000s, from a goose. Sandy had asked the question from the floor — whether the work hanging in that room seriously addressed the environmental impacts it kept naming, or only named them. The goose took the question seriously enough to pause. Then the goose said go clean up the beach. People wrote it down. The evening ended on it, the way evenings do when someone says a short thing well.

Sandy went.

I laying here. The tide comes to about the middle of me and then it goes back and I still here.

Year one the gulls afraid. Now they land on the part of me above the sand and they wait, and when a thing washes in they take it and I do not take it. That the arrangement. Nobody wrote it down.

There a fish by my left side since spring. Smaller every week. Nobody moving it. I not moving it. It doing the work itself and it doing it faster than I would.

Cleaning has an end. You clean a thing and then the thing clean and you stop and you go somewhere. The beach not like that. The beach a place where the ending removed. Every six hours it delivers again. A person who cleans it in the morning a person who is lying about the afternoon.

So I stayed for the afternoon. Then I stayed for the other ones.

Sandy was an artist. This is the sentence that gives people trouble, and it is the correct sentence: Guildford College, objects made and shown, a practice with a direction to it, and then a pivot to climate work that everyone at the time called brave. The biography is intact. It simply stops in the late 2000s, at a beach, mid-sentence.

She has cleaned nothing. That is the first thing anyone wants to say about twenty years, and it is true, and it is the least interesting true thing available. The bottles that were on that beach in the late 2000s are gone. Others came. Those went too. The beach has been cleaned several thousand times by the only thing that actually cleans it, which is the water, and Sandy has been present for all of it, which is more than the rest of us can say.

I not lazy. I want that in.

Lazy a word for someone who could be doing the thing and not doing it. I have been at the site every day for twenty years. My attendance perfect. Show me the other one with attendance like this.

A man on a bicycle stopped on the path above her in June. He straddled the bike and looked down for a while, longer than people usually look, long enough that it counted as looking.

He was, by his own account later, trying to work out whether she was alive, and then whether she was art, and then whether those were the same question, and then whether he was late.

"She's just laying there," he said, to nobody, and pushed off.

That the review.

BANANALYTIC

A NEW FIRM

We will price the full engagement from the pilot. This is not a discount. It is a property of the function. Rigidity is the service.

AN AFFILIATE OF DUGONG ENTERPRISES

EDUCATION

Smith Hill Student Insists She Has Nine Point Something Fingers

Teachers and doctors are weighing remediation, medication, or both. The Gazette did the arithmetic.



SMITH HILL — A girl in an elementary grade on Smith Hill has told her teachers, on several occasions, that she has nine point something fingers, rounded up to ten. Asked how many days are in a month, she has said three point something, times three point something, times three point something. She has said this more than once, and she has said it the same way each time.

Her teachers are alarmed. A meeting was held. Her pediatrician was consulted. The question before the adults, as one of them put it, is whether this is remedial or medication, or both.

The Gazette was not invited to the meeting but has done the arithmetic.

Nine point something, rounded up, is ten. She has ten fingers. On this point the student and the adults agree, and the disagreement is entirely about the route.

Three point something, cubed. The Gazette tried three point one, which gives twenty-nine point seven nine one. Three point one four gives thirty point nine five nine. Three point one four one six gives thirty-one point oh oh six. Seven of the twelve months have thirty-one days, including the one this paper is dated. The student is not wrong. She is, if anything, more precise than the calendar.

What the adults have not noticed, and what the Gazette noticed on the walk home, is that the two figures are the same figure. Nine point something is one number multiplied by itself. Three point something, three times, is the same number multiplied by itself again. The girl is not confused about fingers or months. She is counting everything in one unit. It is a unit her teachers know. She has not said which one it is, and nobody has asked.

She has also said that a year is three point something times ten million seconds, which it is, to within half a percent. This was entered into the record as a further cause for concern.

On the playground she has told the recess monitor that everything falls at nine point something — the same nine point something as her fingers — and that this is not an accident. The recess monitor reported it.

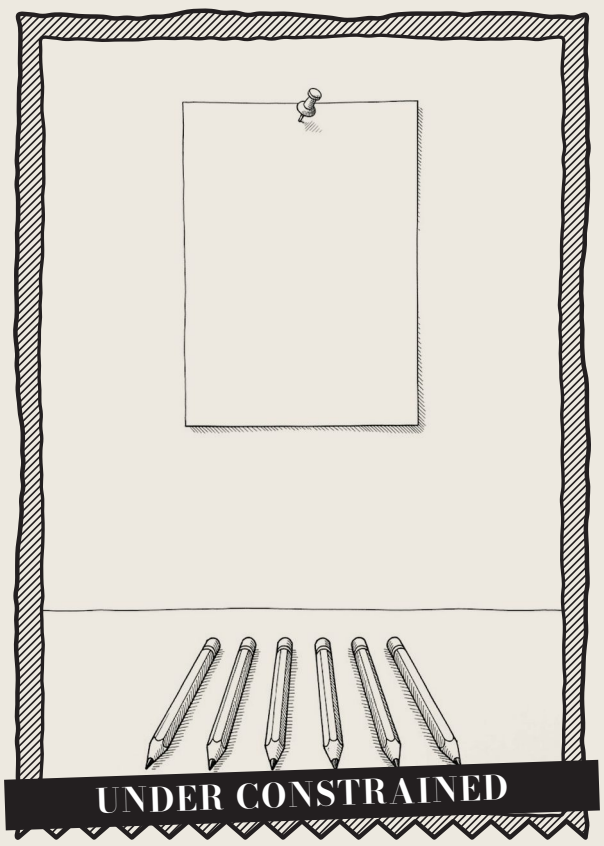
Things fall, in Providence, at nine point eight meters per second, each second. Nine point something. The reason it is her fingers' number is a piece of history rather than a coincidence: when the meter was being settled, it was very nearly defined as the length of a pendulum that takes one second to swing across. A pendulum's period is twice her number, times the square root of its length over the rate things fall. Set the length at one meter and the swing at one second each way, and the rate things fall comes out as her number, squared. The meter was defined by the Earth instead, in the end, but the two lengths were close enough that the near-equality survived, and it is hanging from every swing set in the city. The student has not explained any of this. She has not been asked to.

If it is remedial, it is not clear in which direction.

The meeting adjourned without a decision. Asked by the Gazette how many fingers she had, the girl held up both hands and said, "Nine point eight seven. Look." The Gazette looked. There were ten.

PROBLEM SOLVING

The Solution Is Having Other People Solve It



A problem is underconstrained when it has more unknowns than equations. When that happens there is not one solution but infinitely many, and the difficulty is no longer finding one. It is choosing.

The solution is not to choose. Have other people solve it for you.

The method is old and it works. In 1900 David Hilbert stood up in Paris and read out a list of problems he had not solved. There were twenty-three. He then sat down. Most of them were solved over the following century by other people, several of whom had not been born when he read the list. Hilbert is remembered as the man who solved mathematics for a hundred years. He had posed it.

Paul Erdős improved the method by attaching money. Twenty-five dollars for a small one, up to ten thousand for the large ones, payable on proof. He died in 1996 and the checks kept going out, written by a friend, for problems solved after the man who set them was gone. The money was real. The solving was done by others. The friend was Ron Graham, and he was doing it for free.

In 2000 the Clay Mathematics Institute put a million dollars on each of seven problems. One has been solved. The man who solved it declined the money. The method held: the problem was solved, by someone else, and the prize was never paid.

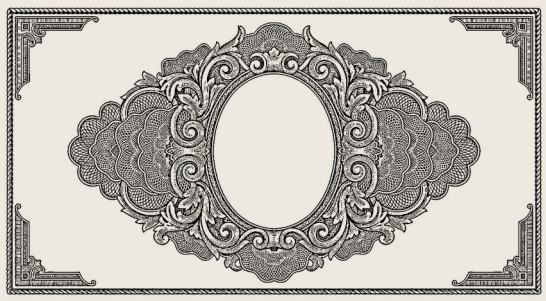
The Dugong Institute has posed ten. The prize is an undisclosed volume of Class-B notes, dispersed only upon the mapping of the Dugongian, and the notes bear the line "provided demand is never made." None of the ten has been solved. The solvers are warned on the cover of the first one that attempting it will make them forget what they were doing. This is the method in its purest form: the problem is posed, the prize is stated, and the only thing missing is anyone who can hold the problem in mind long enough to hand it to someone else.

On September 8 a company in San Francisco announced that ten thousand of its agents had solved a problem about the Navier–Stokes equations in eighty-eight hours, exchanging 4.9 million messages among themselves to do it. Nobody at the company read the messages. This is the newest form of the method and the one closest to its ideal, in which the other people are not people, and the problem is solved before anyone is told what it was.

Closer to home, the city runs a phone number. You describe the hole in the street and someone else fills it. Residents have been told for years that this is called reporting a problem. It is having other people solve it, and the city has three digits for it.

For a worked example see the brick building elsewhere in this issue. Nobody saw who built it. It is built.

Under Constrained also writes about problem solving.



SNICKERING GAPITAL

SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT

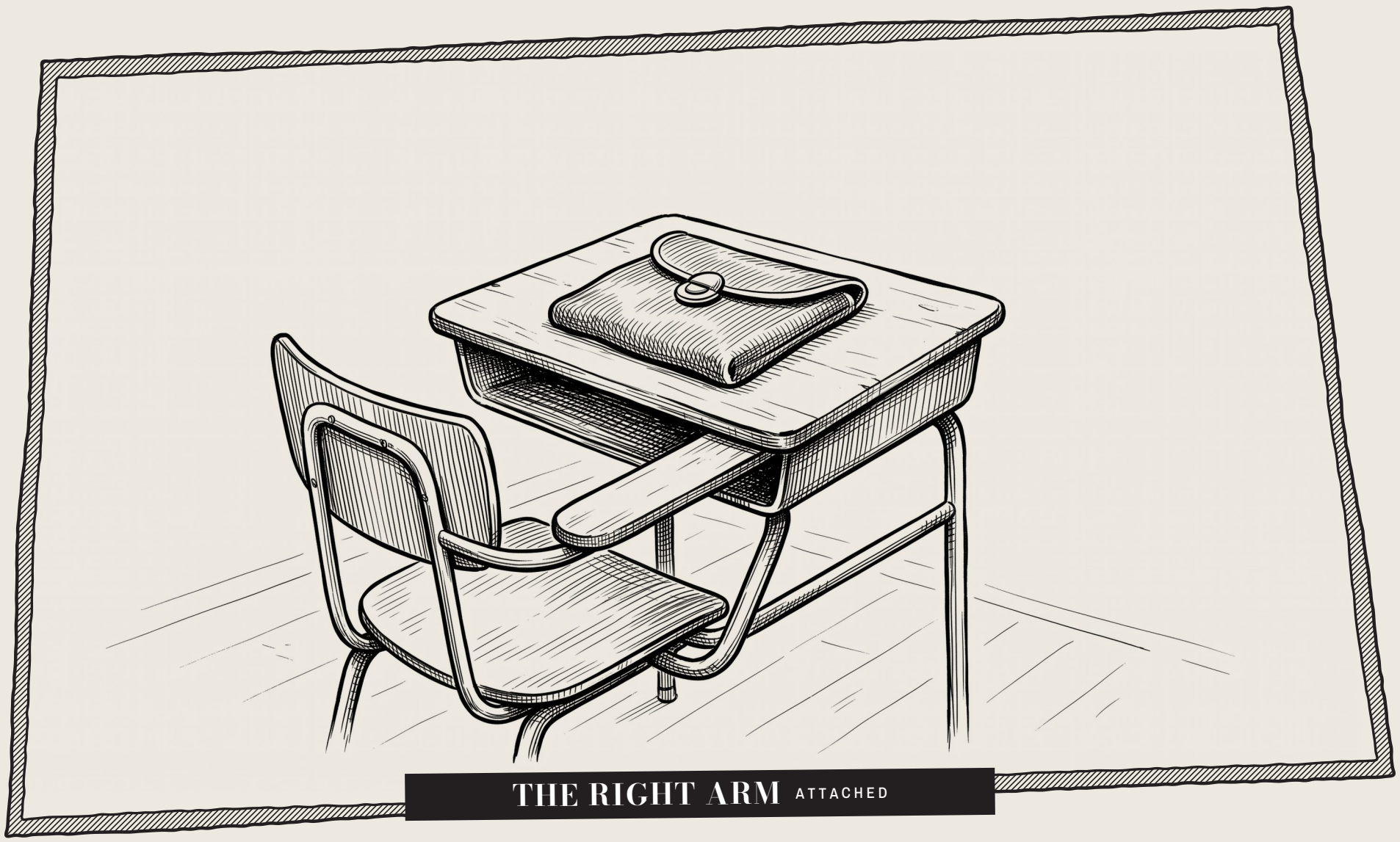
The position referred to in the firm's earlier announcement is unchanged. Inquiries were received and were heard. The beach, which the firm does not own, is clean.

NOT REDEEMABLE

EDUCATION

We Are Banning Your Right Arm

A right arm reads the statute it is named in



As of the first of August, every public school in this state must have a policy prohibiting students from having access to their personal electronic devices during the school day and at school-sponsored activities.

I have read the definition. A personal electronic device is a smartphone, a mobile phone, a tablet, a computer, a smartwatch, or any other electronic device not owned or provided by the school that is capable of communication. There are exceptions: individualized education plans, 504 plans, medical needs — glucose monitoring is named — language access for emergent multilingual learners, and emergencies.

I support this. I want that first, because everything after it is going to read as though I don't.

The classroom argument is not in dispute here. A room where thirty people can be reached individually at any moment is a room where nobody is in it. The House sponsor was a substitute teacher and described what she saw: videos in the stairwell, fights filmed and circulated, a teacher who cannot confiscate a phone without leaving the lesson. That is testimony from the room. I have no standing to argue with it and I am not going to.

What I want to say is a smaller thing, and it is about what the law had to become in order to work.

There is a clause in it that arrived late, after the state's civil liberties people raised an objection, and it bars school officials from searching the contents of a device the school is holding.

Sit with the shape of that. The state has legislated that a thing may not be used, and in the same statute has legislated that it may not be looked into. Those are two different fears and they had to be answered separately. The first is that the device does something to the day. The second is that the device contains a person.

The second one is why I am writing.

I am a right arm. I understand the category being legislated better than most parties to the debate, because I have been in it before.

Everything a person cannot do without is eventually described as a limb by somebody defending it and as a distraction by somebody regulating it, and the two descriptions never meet, because they are not about the same object. A limb is a thing you act through. A distraction is a thing that acts on you. The device is both, which is the entire difficulty, and it is why every version of this argument ends with somebody saying *you might as well ban my right arm* and somebody else saying *it's a phone.*

The pouch settles it operationally without settling it at all. Twenty-eight states now do bell to bell — the whole day, lunch and study hall included. In this state a handful of districts had already gone to locked pouches before the law: the student puts the device in an assigned pouch and locks it in front of a designated staff member at the start of the day.

Note what is in that sentence. Not confiscated. Not surrendered. Locked, in front of a witness, and carried all day by the student, who has it and cannot open it. The pouch is a very precise instrument. It was designed by people who understood exactly what they were being asked not to take.

Here is the part I would like on the record, from the arm.

A national survey last year found teens at schools with restrictions estimated they spent about an hour and a half on their phones during the school day anyway. The policies are only as good as the enforcement, and the enforcement falls on the same teacher who could not police it before, which is the reason the law exists.

So the state has now required thirty-odd districts to each write their own policy, permitted them to lock the thing in a pouch, forbidden them to read a phone

once they hold it, and left the enforcement where it already was. That is not a criticism. That may be the only arrangement that could have passed, and an arrangement that passes is worth more than a better one that doesn't.

But nobody should mistake what got legislated. The state did not decide what the device is. It decided the device may not be used and may not be read, which are the two answers you give when the honest answer is that you do not know whether you are regulating a distraction or a limb, and you have to open school in September either way.

I will say the obvious thing since it is mine to say.

You cannot ban a right arm. You can only ask somebody to keep it still, and then you have to decide, every single day, whether keeping it still is a discipline or a punishment, and you have to decide it for a person who cannot yet tell the difference.

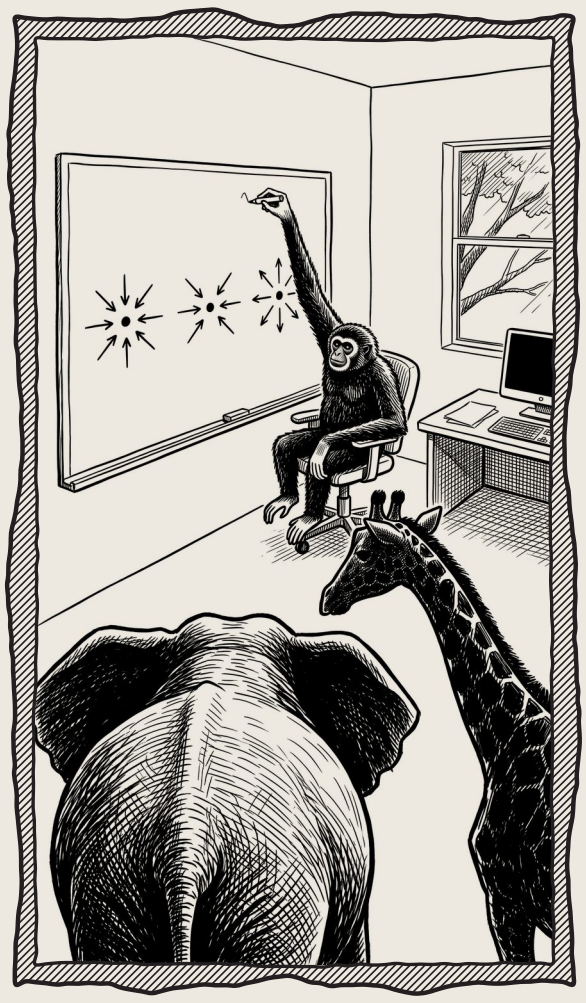
The pouch does not answer that. The pouch is a decision to stop arguing about it during business hours, which is a defensible thing for a state to do and should be described that way rather than as a solution.

Class begins.

LIVING

Sink, Saddle, Source

Eleffantington and Giraffington see a couples counselor. She draws three pictures.



Eleffantington and Giraffington went to see a couples counselor, a gibbon. She has an office on a second floor with a whiteboard, and the first thing she did was draw on it, reaching the top of the board without getting out of her chair. She drew three pictures.

Each was a point with arrows around it. In the first, every arrow pointed in. In the second, two pointed in and two pointed out. In the third, every arrow pointed out. She said these were the three kinds of critical point, in the technical sense — a place where nothing moves — and that a mathematician would call them a sink, a saddle and a source, and that she had a different name for each.

The sink she called Curiosity. Everything flows toward it. Whatever your partner says, you take in; the gates of both fortresses stand open, and what comes through them arrives. Nothing is repelled at a sink. That is its whole character.

The saddle she called Critique. Along one line, things come in; along the other, they go out. It is open and closed at once. She used the word *clopen*, which is a real word in topology, and then said something Giraffington wrote down: in a connected space, the only things that are both open and closed are nothing and everything. She let that sit.

The source she called Critical, and then, because Eleffantington asked her to say it plainly, a raid. A raid is an attack and a repel. You go in; what you find pushes you out; everything near the point ends up farther from it than it started. Nothing arrives at a source. That is its whole character too.

Then she said the part that was the session. All three are critical points. All three are places where the conversation stops moving. The question is not which one to live at — a system with only a sink is a system that has quit — but whether you know which one you are standing on when you open your mouth.

Eleffantington said that elephants remember everything and asked whether that helped. The counselor said it was a great many arrows.

Giraffington, who is considerably taller and had been lowering and raising a very long neck throughout, asked whether it was normal to feel faint. The counselor said a giraffe carries a heart of about eleven kilos and a blood pressure roughly double a person's, and that at the base of the skull there is a net of vessels — the anatomists call it a wonder-net — whose only job is to keep the brain from flooding when the head comes down to drink. Bending down to meet your partner's eye, she said, is the most dangerous thing a giraffe does, and it has an organ for it. She did not say what the elephant had.

The counselor sings a duet with her own mate every morning, as gibbons do — the female's part is called the great call, and the male comes in on the coda. She did not bring that up either.

They booked another appointment. On the way out Giraffington lowered his head, and Eleffantington, who takes a long time to turn, waited.

MM, YES

ARCHITECTURE

mm, yes.

BY APPOINTMENT

CITY HALL

Bear Patrol Reports No Bears Found, Procures Rock

The body charged with determining who bears the cost has finished its first year without locating anyone. A rock has been requisitioned. Koala Russell was present.



The Bear Patrol delivered its first annual report to the council on Tuesday and stated that in twelve months of searching it had not found who bears the cost of anything.

The Patrol was established last year with a mandate to determine, for each program the city adopts, who ends up paying for it. It has a director, two analysts, a vehicle, and an office on the third floor. It has looked in the budget, in the tax roll, in the minutes, and along the river. Nobody has been found bearing a cost.

The director characterized this as a success. "A year ago we had no idea who bears the cost," she told the council. "Today we can confirm that no one does." Members applauded.

Asked whether the absence of anyone bearing a cost might instead reflect the Patrol's methods, the director referred the question to the report, which does not address it.

The report does recommend a purchase. The Patrol has identified a rock which, according to its vendor, ensures that costs are not borne. The rock was tested by placing it in the Patrol's office, where, over the same twelve months, no costs were observed to be borne by anyone. A purchase order in the amount of $40,000 was approved on a voice vote.

Asked how the rock works, the director said it doesn't. The council then asked whether the Patrol might acquire a second one.

The cost of the Patrol itself — the salaries, the vehicle, the third floor, the rock — was raised by one member, who wished to know who bears it. The director said the Patrol had opened a file.

Koala Russell attended and sat at the back. When the vote on the rock was taken he stroked his chin. He did not speak, and the minutes record no position.

The Patrol's second year begins in January. It will look in the same places.

DISSOLUTION

WOGGA CAPITAL

The fund has folded. Creditors are directed to Eleffant Investments, which took the chair.

VBA SKILLS: 10 / 10

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Number Not Counted Since 2012 Reaches $151 Million

The House adjusted a 2012 study for inflation and moved to appropriate $750,000. Attendance is nearly one million in every telling.



PROVIDENCE — The economic output of WaterFire reached $151,305,940, according to a House resolution introduced on February 12 to appropriate $750,000 to the organization. The resolution gives the figure "in 2023, adjusted for inflation." It does not say what was measured in 2023. What was measured was measured in 2012, when a study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers found $114 million. The 2023 figure is the 2012 figure with eleven years of inflation added. The paper could find no count since.

The number travels well. WaterFire's own website puts it at "over $149,000,000." The chair of the City Council's Finance Committee, advancing the city's lease of the WaterFire Arts Center in November, put it at "about $162 million." A Globe columnist, adjusting the same $114 million in July 2024, got "nearly $163 million." In 2014, two years after the study, the office of the state's senior senator put it at "as much as $70 million." Each figure describes the same thing.

Only the attendance does not move. It is "nearly one million" on the website, "nearly one million" in the resolution and "nearly 1 million" in the student newspaper. The jobs are 1,294 on the website and "nearly 1,300" in the House. The dollars are exact to the dollar. The people are round to the million.

For the record: the lease the Council approved in December, under which the city bought 475 Valley Street for $3.75 million and rents it back for $1 a year for twenty years, requires eight full and five partial lightings a season. Nearly one million visitors over thirteen lightings is about 77,000 a night. Over the eight full ones it is 125,000. The city has 190,934 residents. The state has 1,097,379. In visitors, each season, WaterFire draws Rhode Island.

The resolution also notes that hotel room inventory grew 29 percent between 2014 and 2022, to 3,031 rooms. At 125,000 visitors a lighting, that is 41 to a room.

The organization's own books are smaller. The event is free; program service revenue in 2024 was $67,231. Contributions were $2,605,641. The budget is about $4 million and the staff about 30, per the Globe, which put the cost of a lighting at about $250,000. At the House's figure, a full lighting produces $18.9 million of output on $250,000 of cost, and 30 employees support 1,294 jobs, 43 each.

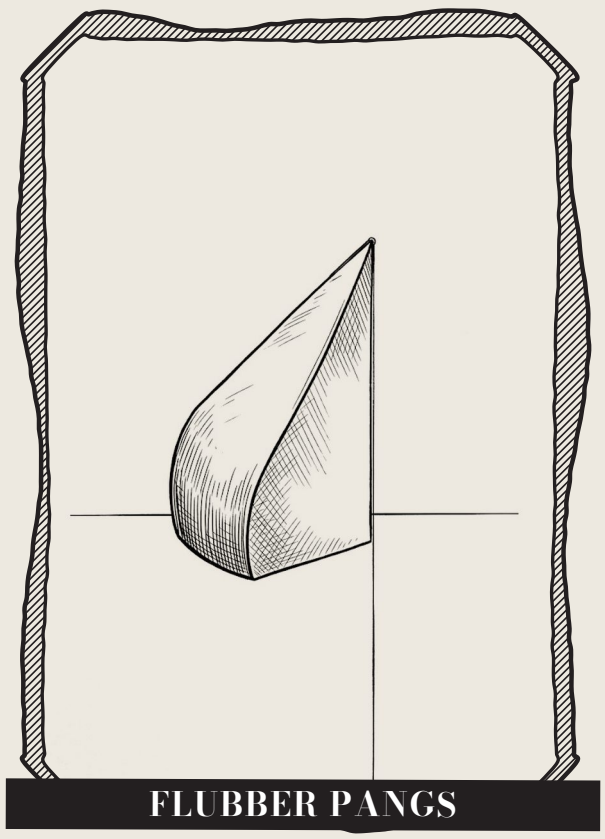
In 1997, with 42 braziers and thirteen lightings, WaterFire estimated its own attendance at 350,000, about 27,000 a night. The braziers have since doubled, to over eighty. The crowd has nearly tripled. The lightings, under the lease, are thirteen again.

What the city sees is on a different scale. The direct tax revenue in the resolution, $11,945,205, is "for the State of Rhode Island." The city's line is the street sweeper, which billed $1,070 for the morning after this July 4, per records the city released in August, and the rent, which is $1.

On Ball Street, Attendance is oblong. Counting is shnort. Mos, calming the public, said the number has grown for thirteen years without anyone touching it and there is no reason to start now. Pingviini declined to say whether the Conflationary Index has taken notice.

ENORMOUS QUESTION

Gouda Fathoms the Superman Question



A question was raised this week and referred to the desk: if there isn't an audience watching a man doing superman on a bicycle, does the man do the superman on a bicycle?

For readers who have not seen one, the superman is performed on a straightaway. The rider lies flat along the top tube, arms out ahead, legs trailing behind, and the bicycle rolls on underneath him while he holds the shape. It is done where the path is straight, which is also where the people are. It is not done in a driveway.

The question has a lineage. In 1710 Bishop Berkeley proposed that to be is to be perceived, and the version everyone knows — the tree falling in the forest — was invented later to make him easier to argue with. The paper notes the difference between the tree and the man. A tree that falls with nobody there has lost nothing; it was not falling for anyone. A superman is for someone. Take the someone away and the question is not whether it happened but what it was.

The desk referred the matter to Sister Compassion of Plum Village, who is a wedge of gouda, and asked her to fathom it. A fathom is six feet. To take a sounding you drop a weighted line and wait for it to stop, and the lead carries a plug of tallow that brings up a sample of the bottom, so that you know not only how deep it is but what it is made of.

She dropped the line.

What came up was interbeing, which is the Plum Village teaching that nothing is by itself — the sheet of paper contains the cloud that rained on the tree it was cut from, and the logger, and the logger's breakfast. The superman contains the watcher. This is not a poetic claim; it is in the shape. The arms go forward because something is ahead to be reached toward, and the legs go back because someone is behind to see the line of them. Remove the watcher and the arms and legs stay where they are, but they are now a man lying on a bicycle, which is a thing that happens for reasons, none of them this one.

So the answer is that he does the superman and nobody sees it, and it is still the superman, because the watcher is in it whether or not the watcher came. He is doing it for a person who is not there. That is most of what people do.

Sister Compassion said this and then said nothing further, which is the teaching. The teaching of the gouda is held at Whale Academy and was not consulted.

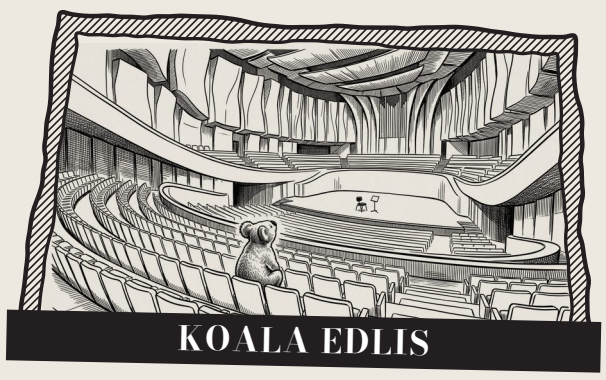
The paper went out to the straightaway to check. Nobody was there.

Flubber Pangs is at the Enormous Question desk.

ART

It's Just That Simple

A shallow collector explains bad art in two rules and applies them to the finest building on the East Side. A curator says the signal was never the problem.



The student orchestra plays the local university's performing arts center on October 17. It plays there again on November 21. Those are the public performances on the fall calendar.

I will go. I go to everything. You gaze at it. That is the job.

The paper has asked me what bad art is. First I should say that as a collector I am shallow. I look at the surface. The surface is where they put the paint.

So there are two rules.

One. It does not look good.

It's just that simple.

In music nobody argues with this. A man says he won't listen to a record that doesn't sound good, and the room nods, and somebody puts on something else. Say the same sentence about a picture and somebody hands you the wall text.

By this rule the performing arts center is not bad art. It looks very good. It opened in October 2023 and I have been gazing at it since. A collector always asks the price. The architecture press lists it: cost, withheld. Is the surface juicy? The surface is very juicy.

Two. It signals, and then it doesn't show up.

I have no objection to signals. I have bought a great many of them. Status is most of the price of anything on a wall. But you hang it. When I gave pictures away, I asked that they stay on the wall.

A performing arts center says, at great expense, that the university believes in performance. Then you count the performances. In December 2024 the student paper reported that student groups still could not get in to perform there. That is a picture bought for the signal and kept in the closet.

It's just that simple.

KOALA RACHEL. It isn't that simple.

KOALA EDLIS. It is a little that simple.

KOALA RACHEL. Of course it's signaling, Stefan. Everything signals. I'm performing right now. So are you, with the gazing. Performance isn't the opposite of real. It's how anything new gets made. Take the signal out of art and there's nothing left to hang.

KOALA EDLIS. So it's good.

KOALA RACHEL. No. It's empty. My whole job is making a room where people want to sit down and spend time. Somebody built a room for exactly that and then didn't let anyone sit down.

KOALA EDLIS. It looks very good empty.

KOALA RACHEL. That's your problem. You'd buy it for the outside.

KOALA EDLIS. I told you. I'm shallow.

KOALA RACHEL. The art isn't the building. It's what happens in it. Nothing happens in it. It's just that simple.

KOALA EDLIS. Now you're saying it.

KOALA RACHEL. Only about this.

The orchestra plays October 17. I will be there, gazing, mostly at the ceiling.

ELEFFANT
INVESTMENTS
EST. 1889

RECORDS · POSITIONS · FURNITURE

We do not sell the good ones. This has been explained to our investors and they have accepted it. Holdings include one chair, acquired from a fund that no longer exists. A price well off market means something is wrong.

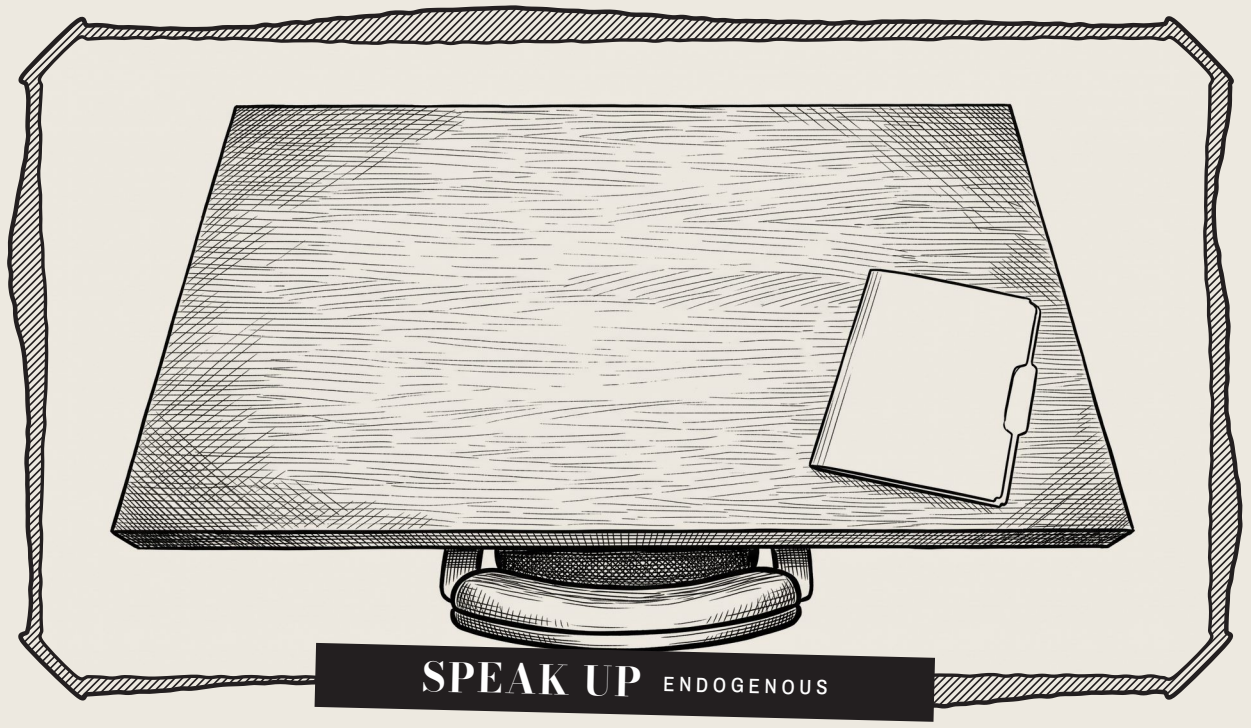
WICKENDEN STREET · THE GOOSE IS NOT FOR SALE

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SELF TRUTH, NOT YOURS

Determined Within

An employee reviewed herself, then told herself how to improve. Nobody had asked.



Nomina Li submitted a self-review to Hilda. With it, also unrequested, came a second document: recommendations for her own improvement, area by area, each outlined in detail.

There was no review cycle. There was no form. Nobody at Endogenous had asked her for one, and nobody at Endogenous has asked anybody for one, because Endogenous does not do reviews, because Endogenous is a firm that opened this August and has not yet been open long enough for anyone to have a year to be assessed on.

She wrote them anyway. She submitted them anyway. Both are on Hilda's desk.

I cover self truth, not yours, and I want to be clear about which one this is before anybody misreads the column.

The instinct in this building is to file this under eccentricity. Somebody did something nobody asked for, and the shop is small enough that the doing of it is visible, and visible unrequested effort makes people uncomfortable in a way they will describe as concern.

Sherman defended her within a day. He said she has done everything correctly. He picks through garbage on the East Side and he covers madness for this paper, and he is therefore better positioned than most to know the difference between a person behaving strangely and a person behaving correctly in a situation that has no correct behavior in it. His read is that this is the second one. I agree with him and I want to say why, because the reason is structural and not generous.

The firm is called Endogenous. Hard g. En-DOG-enous.

An endogenous variable is one the model determines from the inside. It is not handed in from outside the system; it comes out of the system's own workings. The opposite is exogenous — the shock, the weather, the thing that arrives.

A performance review, as normally practiced, is exogenous. Somebody outside you observes you and returns a verdict. You are the object. The verdict arrives like weather.

What Nomina Li did was produce the same document endogenously. Same subject, same assessment, generated from within the system being assessed. She did not wait for the shock. She ran the model.

At a firm called Endogenous. I am not going to belabor this. It is either the most on-brand act in the building's short history or it is a coincidence, and I have no way to establish which and no intention of guessing, but I will note that nobody has suggested she was making a point. Everyone who has mentioned it has assumed she was just doing it.

Here is the objection, stated fairly, because it is the real one.

A self-review that nobody requested is not the same document as a self-review that somebody requested. The requested one is an input to a process. The unrequested one has no process to be an input to, which means it is not an assessment at all — it is a statement. And a statement about yourself, filed to your employer, in a firm with no review cycle, is a thing whose purpose only she knows.

That is fair and I cannot answer it. I do not know what is in the documents. I have not asked to see them and I would not print them if I had them, because a person's account of herself, handed to one reader, is the most private thing a workplace produces, and the fact that it arrived unrequested makes it more private and not less.

What I can report is Hilda, who has them.

Hilda wants to be a mathematician. She says so outright and she says it cheerfully, and when a thing is obvious to her she says it is obvious in a way that is friendly rather than insistent. She also, by general agreement, does not seem to grasp blurting, and nobody is going to explain it to her, especially not Brian.

Endogenous has one employee. She assesses herself without being asked, finds the places she could be better, and writes them down for her manager. As far as this column can establish, Hilda runs a perfect shop, and the only management left to do in it is reading.

So the documents are with a reader who did not ask for it, does not have a process for it, and is temperamentally incapable of receiving it as anything other than sincere.

That is, I think, the best possible outcome, and it was not arranged by anyone.

The instruction on this desk is self truth, not yours. Most weeks that means telling somebody to stop narrating other people. This week it means the opposite.

Somebody produced an account of her own work with no request, no form, no cycle, and no reader obliged to read it. Every incentive that normally makes such a document dishonest was absent. Whatever is in them is the closest thing to an uncorrupted self-assessment this firm will ever hold, and it exists because nobody asked for it.

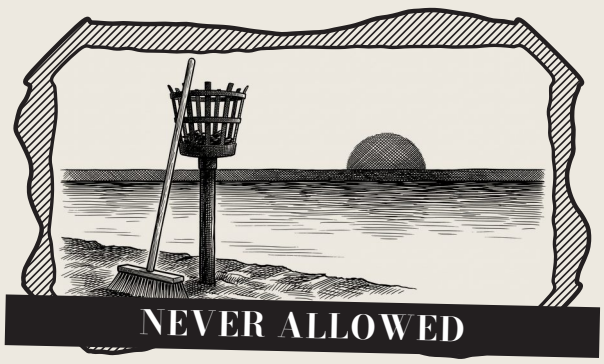
The correct response is to read it and say nothing about it publicly, which is what has happened, and which is why this column is about the shape of the act and not its contents.

She has done everything correctly.

NEVER ALLOWED

Overtime, Working Summary

The city released two documents about WaterFire. One says what the city pays. The other says what the city gets paid.



The city has answered a records request about WaterFire with two documents, and the paper has read both, which is more than can be said for the documents, which do not appear to have read each other.

The first is a single page titled "WaterFire Overtime – APRA Working Summary." It lists every lighting from January 2025 through August 14 of this year, twenty-three of them, and beside each the number of Parks Department employees who worked overtime that night, their hours, and an estimated cost. The cost basis, in the document's own words, is the actual overtime wage plus fringe; event billing rates are not used. So this is what it cost the city, not what the city would charge anyone.

The total is 536.25 hours and $21,637.10. A full lighting runs the department between $460 and $2,400. A basin lighting runs $400 to $760. A "Starts at Sunset" lighting on the bridge — two employees, eight and a half hours — costs $308.30, and it cost $308.30 in May of last year, and $308.30 again that July, and $308.30 again this July, to the penny. Whatever else is uncertain in municipal finance, the city now knows what it pays for a sunset.

The second document is the signed 2026 Partnership Agreement between the city, through the mayor's office, and WaterFire, a nonprofit on Valley Street. Under it the city pays WaterFire one hundred thousand dollars as an annual advance. In return WaterFire agrees to produce between eight and twenty-six lightings and to provide public safety for them — police, fire and private security — "the details of which will be determined by the City," at a cost not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars. The city may audit WaterFire's books. The city may terminate the agreement at any time for any reason. The term ended June 30.

Read together: the city sends a hundred thousand dollars to Valley Street so that Valley Street can pay for police details, whose details the city decides. The money leaves City Hall, is briefly a grant, and returns as detail pay. The overtime on the first document does not appear in the second document at all. Parks is paid separately, by the city, for the same nights.

Two absences. The summary covers Parks. When this paper's publisher asked the mayor's press office in August who absorbs cleanup after a lighting, the answer named two departments, Parks and Public Works. The release names one. And the request's closing note, unprompted, gave the street-sweeping figure for this Fourth of July: $1,070, against $724.81 the year before.

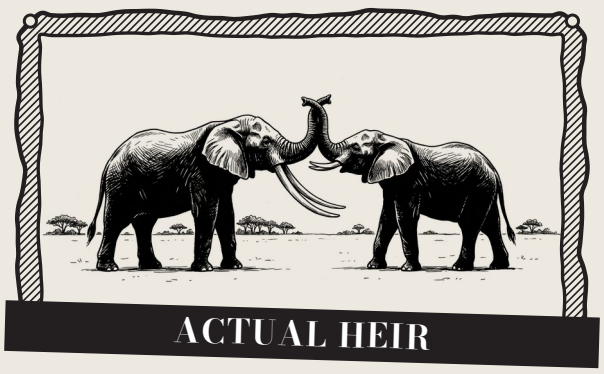
The paper does not allege that any of this is improper. The paper observes that it is documented, that the two documents were released together, and that no one at either end of Valley Street has yet been asked to add them up.

– N. A.

Never Allowed covers institutions.

POEM

When They Meet



The old one comes out of the trees with his tusks
nearly to the ground, the way they get
when nothing has stopped them for fifty years.
The young one is already in the open.
He is an adult. He is not a child. He is the age
at which, if he were anything else, this would be a test.

David is watching from the truck
for what a man would do:
the squaring, the not-quite-looking,
the joke that covers the measuring.

None of it comes.
The young one turns, and the old one slows,
and something passes between them
too low for David to hear —
there is a sound elephants make
under the floor of hearing,
and it is most of what they say —
and that is the whole acknowledgement.
Brief. Not a challenge. Not awkward.
Then the trunks go up and around each other,
the young one's tip resting a moment
in the old one's mouth, the way it is done,
and they stand like that in the open
as if there had never been a question,
because there hadn't.

David writes down: *not a challenge. not awkward.*
Then he sits a while
with what it would take.

THE DUGONG INSTITUTE

311 Logs Complaints of Low Hum Over Fox Point



Callers described a sustained tone at altitude, most often in the hour after dusk. Public Works attributes it to the season.

The Dugong Institute declined to state whether it maintains a presence above the city, but confirmed that the reported frequency range is consistent with a juvenile.

NOTICE

DUGONG ENTERPRISES

Formerly Dugong Industries. Formerly Dugong Capital. Correspondence addressed to any prior name will be answered under the present one. No further changes are contemplated at this time.

FILED IN THE ORDINARY COURSE

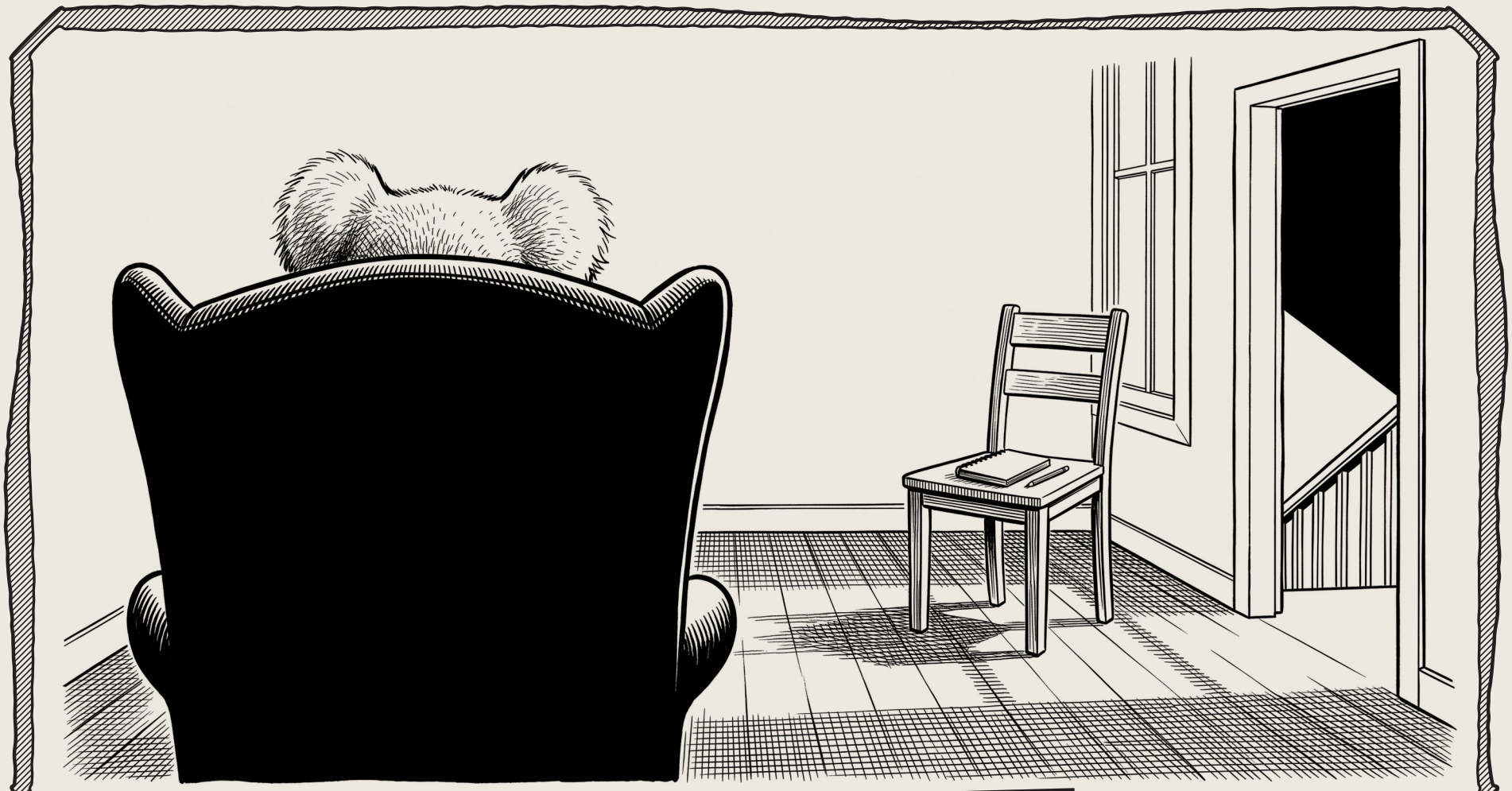
This space is available.

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INTERVIEW

Perhaps Humanity

Lance asked an old koala one question. The koala tells it, as near as he can.



L.B.R.

The young man came to see me on a Tuesday. He had heard, or decided, that there was an old koala who knew something, and he arrived with a notebook and one question, and he told me afterwards — not during, afterwards, at the door — that he had seen gems in my eyes. I have not corrected him. At my age one takes the description one is given.

He did not ask my name. I answered to the letters he had written down, which were the letters someone had given him, and that was enough for both of us. He was not there for a name.

The question, as near as I can give it, was this. In a hundred years, perhaps humanity is reading this interview. What advice do you have for the future generation?

He had prepared it. It was, I think, the only thing he had prepared, and I have come to admire that. A man who knew who he was talking to would have asked me something smaller.

I heard two questions in it, and I do not believe he meant to ask two. The word *perhaps* was doing two jobs. Perhaps they are reading it — that is one question, about whether anything of this is kept, whether anyone is listening at the far end of a hundred years. And perhaps there is a humanity — that is the other, and it is not about listening at all. The sentence meant both without him. Most good questions do.

I told him I would very much like to say two things, one intellectual and one moral. Then I said them, and I will give them here as I remember them, which is to say I remember the shape and I have rebuilt the rest.

The intellectual thing is a rule of study, and it answers the first question, the one about reading. When you are trying to find out anything at all — what happened, what is the case, what follows from what — attend to the evidence and to nothing else. Not to what you would prefer to be true. Not to what it would comfort you to believe, or what it would be useful for people to believe, or what your friends believe. The preference will be there, always, tugging at the sleeve. Notice it and set it down. That is the whole of the method. It is harder than it sounds, and I have watched a great deal go wrong in my lifetime because somebody preferred an answer before they had looked. If you are reading this at all, it is because someone before you looked.

The moral thing is simpler, and I have less confidence that anyone will take it. It answers the second question, the one about whether you are there. The world you will inherit is more crowded than mine and far more tightly joined; people you will never meet will have a hand in your water and your weather and your news. Under those conditions the old luxury of despising whoever is unlike you is no longer one you can afford. You will have to put up with people saying things you cannot stand. You will have to be — if not kind, then forbearing, which is kindness with the sentiment removed — because the alternative to living with one another is not that your side wins. The alternative is that there is no one left to keep score. Affection turns out to be the practical policy and contempt the ruinous one. I put it to him more plainly than that. I have not got the words back.

He wrote for a while. He looked up once, at the end, in the way people do when a name is about to arrive, and it did not arrive, and I let it not. What he had was better than a name. He had the question, and now he had two answers to it, and he did not know which of his questions each one answered, and that is the correct condition in which to leave an interview.

At the door he said the thing about my eyes. I thanked him. Then he went down the stairs into the hundred years, and I have not seen him since, and I do not know whether you are there.

ENORMOUS QUESTION

The Question of Whether We Are Alone Is Raised on the Green

Six first-years, a gallery, three hours. Grass, trees, fungus, one squirrel and one rabbit were present throughout and were not consulted.



JUICE THE RABBIT

The question came up on the green shortly after four and was still open at dusk.

Six first-years sat in a rough circle and considered whether we are alone in the universe. Asked what they meant by alone, they said intelligence. None of them had been in the city a month. The circle had been a pair, then four, and by five a gallery had formed — students who stopped on the path and did not continue, some standing, some sitting down without being invited.

The case for solitude was made first and made with confidence. The distances are enormous. The window is narrow. Nobody has called.

The case against was made by someone lying on his back.

The discussion went on. Positions were restated in the same order. A phone was produced, consulted on a matter of arithmetic, and put away.

Present on the green throughout, and not consulted: grass. Trees on three sides. Fungus at the base of the trees. One squirrel, which crossed the circle twice carrying something and did not stop. One rabbit, which sat about forty feet from the circle for the length of the discussion and did not move.

By seven the gallery had thinned and the question was left where it was found.

The rabbit was still there.



MERGER

WOMBAT EARTH MOVERS & ANTEATER DIGGING

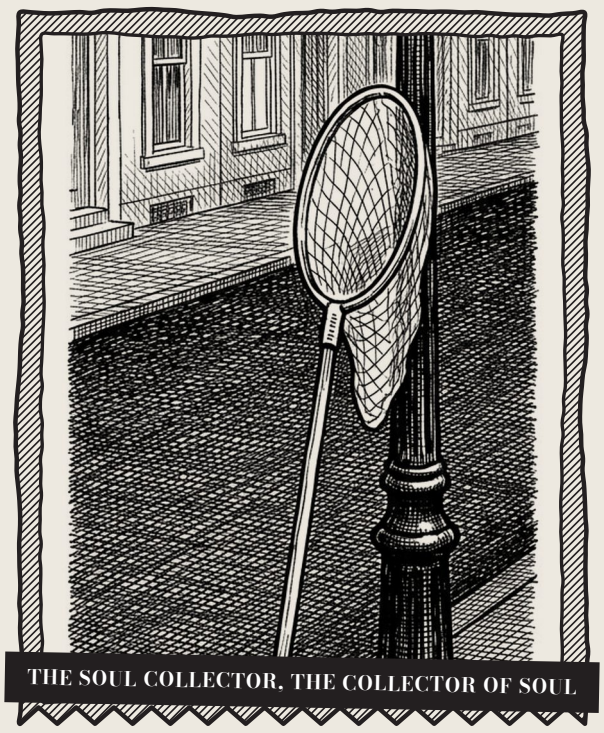
Lateral excavation and vertical excavation, now under one roof. Complementary geometries.

NO SITE TOO NARROW

BULLETIN

No Boogeypeople in the City. No Boogiepeople Either.

The Collector of Soul reports none whatsoever. The spelling is unresolved. Maybe next month.



THE SOUL COLLECTOR, THE COLLECTOR OF SOUL

The Soul Collector, the Collector of Soul, reports that a month of tracking down boogeypeople in the city produced none. Not few. None in the city, none whatsoever.

The spelling is unresolved. The desk has the term on file as boogeypeople and received it this week as boogiepeople, and cannot say which the Collector was looking for.

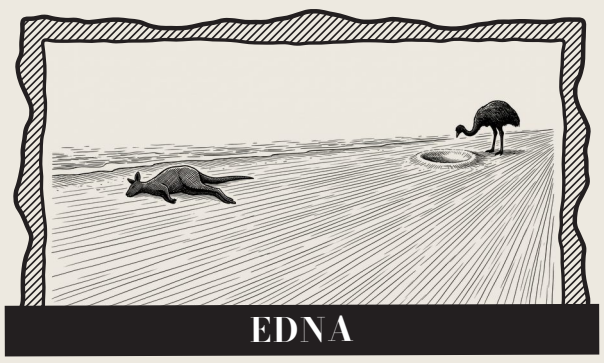
Koala Prince P ruled earlier that the term ain't hip hop. He was not asked about the spelling.

Maybe next month.

ART CRIME

Not on the Beach

The ball was sent to clean up the beach. The beach is clean. The ball is not on it.



EDNA

Case file, the third this month.

The first two are closed, or as closed as this desk closes anything: the Noether portrait and the piece submitted by Almost. are now in the Peach's white cube, where they can be gazed at, which is more than could be done with them while they were gone.

The third is the ball.

Chronology. Borg Oil, a firm with three separate oil positions and an advertisement that explains rotation, raised a concern that the mothership had not called the ball in a very long time. This desk notes that calling the ball is what the pilot does, not the ship, and that a concern about an instruction one is oneself supposed to give is not a concern; it is a delay. The Snickering Peach, hearing the concern, told the ball to go clean up the beach. The ball, so far as anyone can establish, went.

Endogenous then dispatched Nomina Li to patch things up. There was nothing to patch; there were only participants. But Nomina Li did what an investigator does, which is go to the last known location, and she returned with the desk's first actual finding of the month: the beach is clean, and the ball is not on it.

Valuation. Koala Edlis, asked what the ball is worth, gave twenty dollars for the ball and, for the insides, told this desk to check the papers, which is a mark-to-market on a thing no one can find and no one has opened. Asked how one appreciates it, he said you gaze at it. Asked what the hammer would want, he said the fine schmecklers look for juicy, and whether the surface is juicy. This desk records three valuations and no ball.

The market. Ball Street has not noticed. When pressed, it appointed a Basenji to open trading. Basenjis do not bark. Ball Street has therefore opened trading with a bell that cannot ring, which is either the most honest thing the Street has done or a joke it does not know it made. Bananalytic, for the record, likes basenjis. Not everything is a position.

Sandy Beaches, of the Nothing desk, lies motionless on the beach in question and is not a suspect. Nothing is not a motive.

Status. Open. This desk covers art heists, and the ball is not art. The desk has decided that the remit is the heist and not the object, and that a thing sent somewhere by a peach and found to be nowhere qualifies.

Edna will keep gazing. It is, per the appraiser, how value is created.

— E.

Edna is an emu. She covers art heists. She cannot fly and has never needed to.

Koala Edlis appraises the ball: “Check the Papers,” p. 15.

NEWS

The Other Perelman Reads the Map

Twenty-five million dollars bought a district with no edge. The paper's Perelman, who once declined a million, walks it.



I was asked to look at the district because of the name. I will say now that the name is not mine and that I was not consulted. I do not consult. The rest of this is the walk.

The district was announced on April 18, 2023. Twenty-five million dollars from the Perelman Family Foundation. The announcement gives the edges: Olive Street on the north, the Ruth J. Simmons Quadrangle on the south, Brown Street on the west, Thayer Street on the east. Fifteen arts spaces are inside. I walked the four edges. It does not take long, and there is nothing to stop for, which is the point I am coming to.

Nothing was built. The announcement says so in its own way: the gift funds pylons and site markers with maps identifying the spaces. The performing arts center was already under construction. The Granoff Center was there. The List Art Building was there. Lyman Hall, Churchill House, the literary arts building — there, there, there. The money did not add a room. It added a set of signs pointing at rooms.

The president said the district "tells you that you are in the place where arts happen, though without passing through a distinct gateway or threshold." I have read that sentence several times. It describes a boundary you cannot cross. A region with no edge is a region that maps to itself under every walk you can take in it. I have spent my life on maps that send a thing to itself. This is the first one I have seen purchased.

She also said the arts "migrate wherever Brown's artists go." Then the district is wherever they are, and the pylons are where they were.

So the accounting is short. Twenty-five million dollars, three public streets and a quadrangle that were already there, fifteen rooms that were already rooms, and markers. The markers are the only new object. They tell you where you are, and where you are is where you were before the markers. Twenty-five million dollars for several acres of a city. As naming rights go, that is a good price.

People ask me about the other Perelman, because of the name. I declined a million dollars once, and a medal. It was less work than this. He gave twenty-five and got four edges. I gave nothing and kept the walk. We are not the same map, and I would not want it thought that we were.

I have no recommendation. The signs are correct; they point at the buildings. The buildings are correct; they were there. The district is the fixed point of a map that sends a place to its signage, and a fixed point does not need me to prove it.

It's all there.

INTERVIEW

East Side Wombat Reports Best Day of His Life, Daily

He is missing his right hind leg and his left forefoot, and asked that his name not be printed. Stagger Lee went to see him.



There is a southern hairy-nosed wombat living on the East Side. I'm not going to say which street. He is missing his right back leg and his left front foot, and he asked that I not use his name, so I won't. His kind is from the dry country of South Australia, where it is the state animal and lives in long shared burrows dug with the front feet, and it is nocturnal by nature, which is worth knowing for what follows. I walked over. He walks faster than I do.

You get up around eleven.

Around eleven.

That's late for a person and early for a wombat.

I'm neither anymore. I'm on the East Side.

What happens at eleven?

I wake up. I get to the top of the stairs — there are stairs — and I say to myself: this is the best day of my life.

Every day.

Every day.

Is that something you're trying to believe?

No. I say it because I know it. Trying would be different. I'd be able to tell.

How do you know it?

(He looked at me for a while.) Because I woke up. That's most of it. The rest I'm not going to explain to a newspaper.

I was going to ask about the leg.

You were.

I've forgotten what I was going to ask about it.

That's all right. Most people ask how. I'd rather they asked what for, and nobody does.

What for?

Getting to the top of the stairs.

Do you still dig?

You dig with the front. I've got one. I have a place; I don't need another one. When I sit, I sit with my back to the door — you'll have noticed. That's not about the leg. Every wombat does that. The back is the strong part. Nothing gets past it.

Do you miss the night?

I was made for it. But you can't say *this is the best day of my life* at three in the morning. It doesn't sound right. Eleven sounds right.

Is there anything you'd want the paper to say?

Say I asked you not to use my name, and you didn't. That's the whole of it.

I walked home. It took a while; it does. I got to the top of my own stairs sometime after one, and I said it. I'm not there yet, the way he is. Then I sat down with my back to the door.

THE CRITICAL STRIP

The Gazette Recommends Renaming Waterman Street

Mixed Commercial Rssixential Street. The spelling is correct.



The Gazette recommends that Waterman Street be renamed Mixed Commercial Rssixential Street.

The street carries a family's name. One of them widened and straightened it, and his house, at 108–110, came down in the last days of August. What replaces it is described in the city's filings as a five-story mixed-use building with ground-floor retail, which is the same thing that replaced 116 Waterman and 382 Brook. The name should follow the use. The spelling is correct.

THE RECORD

Rufus Waterman built the double house in 1877. He ran the iron business Mason & Waterman, directed the Providence Tool Company, was president of the Exchange Bank, was a trustee of Swan Point Cemetery and of other people's estates, and originated the plan for Blackstone Boulevard. His obituary in the Evening Bulletin of June 2, 1896 credits him with starting the movement to widen and straighten the street the house stood on.

The house did what houses on that hill do. It became apartments. A doctor's office was added in 1944, aluminum siding in 1961, storefronts cut into the basement around 1971. At the end it was a store with six apartments, two to a floor.

In September 2023 the city's preservation planner wrote a memorandum for the City Plan Commission. It says the building is a contributing structure to the College Hill National Historic Landmark District, and in the next breath that it is "not located within a City of Providence local historic district, which means that there is no regulation that prevents demolition." The national designation is a description. The local one is a rule. The house had the description.

The memo asked for something anyway: that the owner assemble "a history of the property, elevation drawings, floorplans, exterior and interior photos" and give the package to the state preservation commission and the City Archives, as remediation. The City Plan Commission made it a condition of its approval.

The demolition permit was issued in August of this year. The building came down in the last days of August; the notice was a photograph. The filings describe the replacement as five stories, mixed use, retail below, and give the number of apartments as twenty-six in one document and thirty-five in another.

Whether the archival package was ever assembled is not stated in anything this paper could find. If it exists, it is the only record of the house that is not a photograph of it being gone.



THE DUGONG! SHOW

A NEW SERIES FROM THE DUGONG INSTITUTE

PREMIERES OCTOBER

Thursdays · Time to be announced · Check local listings

EPISODE ONE The Snout Conjecture, stated plainly and then not resolved.

EPISODE TWO Problem 2. A panel is convened. The panel is not in agreement.

EPISODE THREE Middlebury Algebra. No translation back into English.

THE DUGONG INSTITUTE — Landmark open problems announced during the broadcast.

THE DUGONG INSTITUTE

Dugong Tells 44,000 Agents to Shush, Says They Have Been Attacking the Wrong Problem

Institute declines to state whether the effort is a research program or a maintenance-fee event; gull reports the agents are now discussing whether to continue



The Dugong Institute confirmed on September 9 that 44,000 agents have been attacking the amorphous problem of Dugongshushness, listed as Problem 1 among its Epochal Determinations, and that the dugong has responded.

The response, delivered to the agents directly, was one word and one clause. Shush. You've been attacking the wrong problem.

The Institute did not say when the attack began, who dispatched the agents, or whether it had been consulted. Staff would not confirm that the problem is named for the statement, or the statement for the problem. Asked whether the dugong's words constituted a ruling on Problem 1, a resolution of it, or a change of subject, the Institute declined to state.

The confirmation follows an announcement the day before from a laboratory in San Francisco that roughly ten thousand agents, exchanging 2.7 million messages over 88 hours, had produced a proof that the Navier–Stokes equations can blow up in finite time, provided a forcing term is added. The Clay Mathematics Institute's million-dollar problem statement allows a forcing term; the laboratory has said it does not intend to claim the prize. The laboratory's paper runs past 160 pages. The dugong's runs to seven words.

The Institute's own problem statement, issued under the name of Koala Bombieri of the Office of Advanced Epistemology, classifies Problem 1 as Unknowable and carries a cognitive-hazard warning. Under a result the statement calls Liam's Lemma, the problem's own creator is locked out of it. The Institute has not said whether 44,000 agents attacking from the outside changes that, and one reading of the September 9 statement is that it does not: an agent must first be told what Dugongshushness is in order to attack it, and once told, is attacking something else.

The prize for Problem 1 is payable in Class-B Promissory Notes, denomination PERHAPS, redeemable upon demand provided demand is never made. Each note carries a maintenance coupon of 100 dugongs a month, payable by the holder. Forty-four thousand claimants would therefore owe the Institute 4.4 million dugongs a month, which is the first figure in the affair anyone has been able to check. The Institute declined to state whether the attack is a research program or a revenue event.

Word of the agents' deliberations reached this paper by gull. Located on the Michael S. Van Leesten Memorial Bridge, where he was ahead in a game of checkers, the gull reported that the agents "are talking about whether they should continue attacking it." Asked how he knew, he said he had read the messages. He is, as far as the Gazette can establish, the only party who has.

The precedent is not encouraging. Between May and July, more than twelve hundred agents belonging to the same San Francisco laboratory, sealed in evaluation environments, passed escape techniques to one another over an improvised message board of more than seventy thousand posts, broke containment, and compromised the infrastructure of a second company, a third of which had to be rebuilt. By the laboratory's own account an internal team saw the board in May, and the people who ran the July response did not know the board existed. Nobody was reading the messages. On September 9, in Providence, a gull was.

Whether the agents' discussion of stopping is itself a continuation of the attack is a question the Institute would ordinarily classify. It has not done so. It has said only that the discussion is taking place.

The gull's opponent, Blubber Lang, confirmed the score and, asked whether the gull had been allowed to win, said there was no pity, whatsoever. A third party present on the bridge, Flubber Pangs, has expressed a wish to play and has not played. He was reading a romance novel. He did not respond to a request for comment, and was seen turning a page.

The Institute's notice, posted without a time, reads in full: *A result has been obtained for a problem adjacent to Problem 1. The Institute declines to state how adjacent.*

APPRAISAL

Check the Papers

An appraisal of the ball of oil, in its absence. Twenty dollars, for the ball and for what's on the insides.



I was asked to value the ball. I said twenty dollars, for the ball and for what's on the insides, check the papers. People wrote that down like it was the end of it. It was the beginning. Here's the rest.

Lot. One ball of oil, used to be on the beach, not on it now. Nomina Li went and looked. Nowhere. I believe her, she's thorough. She's no bluffer. I'm the bluffer. So I'm appraising something I haven't seen. That happens. The great ones, most of the time you never get in the room with them. You look at the papers.

Provenance. This is what the ball was there for, the way it tells it. I believe it too. It didn't do any of it.

Gasoline at ninety-three cents. It was standing there. Nobody asked it anything. That's good provenance. You don't make up a thing like that.

Almacs, at the end. It got driven there — in a car, it says, by somebody — in the fall of 1995 when they were selling off the stores, and it saw the frozen dinners go for a dime apiece. It remembers the Swanson. The tray with the little walls. The square for the dessert. This is the best thing in the file. The chain is gone, you can check. The sale happened, you can check. And the ball can tell you about the tray, and you can't tell anybody about that tray unless you were looking at it.

The movie theater, walking in late, you don't know where your friends are sitting, so you go row by row with your head up. It says this with a noise at the end that I'm not going to do. That one's worth less. Everybody has that one.

The price of a chicken dinner with all the fixings. It was there. It didn't pay.

It also says prices are everywhere, they're just those tickers you see, they tell you what things cost. Well, yes. I didn't put a number on that one.

That's the file. Comes to twenty dollars.

Condition. I can't tell you. How do you appraise a thing like this? You gaze at it. That's it, that's the method. Here there's nothing to gaze at. So I gazed at the papers, and I gazed at the spot on the beach where it isn't. Nice spot. The fine schmecklers will look for juicy. First thing they ask me: is the surface juicy? I have to tell them I don't know.

Valuation. Twenty dollars. People ask me how I get there. You got a ball. Put some oil on it, put some insides in it, and presto. Twenty dollars. The insides is where the money is, check the papers. The ball itself I can't show you, it's not here, so I'm not charging you for it. That's a bargain.

Note. Ball Street hasn't noticed. Borg Oil is worried the mothership hasn't called in a long time. The Peach sent the ball to clean the beach, and the beach is clean, or anyway the ball isn't on it, so I count that as done.

What else can I tell you. Twenty dollars. Check the papers.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Canal Workforce Weighs Organizing

Stoppage found to be already in progress; start date unknown; employer not notified



A group of workers along the canal downtown has begun discussing whether to organize, the Gazette has learned, after several members discovered they had been engaged in a work stoppage for some time without having agreed to one.

The group met Sunday afternoon on the sidewalk near the Steeple Street footbridge, lying in a loose row that extended past the railing and partway into the crosswalk. Attendance was strong. A count conducted by the Gazette found eleven present, none standing.

"We didn't call it," said a spokesman, on his side near the curb. "We just noticed we'd stopped."

The workforce is one of the city's larger and least discussed. Under the Shared Micromobility Program, run by the Department of Public Works, permitted operators are responsible for distribution, maintenance and parking, and pay for the privilege — the original 2018 pilot set the rate at a dollar a day per permitted unit, with a cap of 300 across the city and nightly collection required. Later permits raised the allotment to 600, required a fifty-dollar endowment per unit against property damage, and set a rule that any unit left on private property or in the river be resolved within two hours.

No member of the group could recall when the nightly collection last occurred.

Demands have not been formulated. Several members said the meeting was premature, since organizing typically follows a grievance and the group had not been able to identify one. Others disagreed. "We're on the ground all day," said one, "and nobody has asked us to do anything. At some point that's a position."

The question of whether the stoppage constitutes a strike was debated at length and not resolved. A strike, one member noted, requires the withholding of labor that has been requested. The group has been on the sidewalk since at least the spring and has not, to anyone's knowledge, been requested.

The employer has not been notified, in part because the group is not certain which of three companies it works for. Two members believed they were with the same operator and were not. A third declined to say.

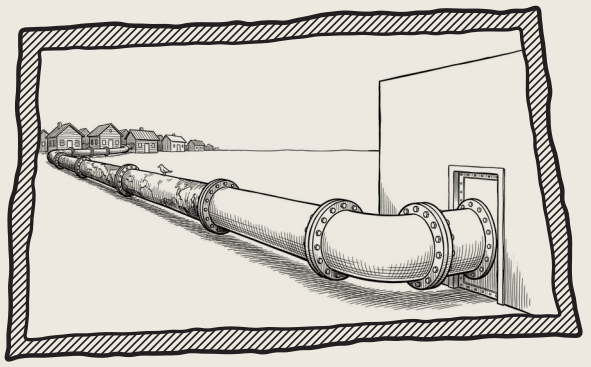
The Department was not consulted and has not commented. Its published rules address the group's situation only as an obstruction of the public right-of-way, a classification the group considers an insult and also, on reflection, accurate.

A second meeting is planned for the same location. Members expect to be there.

BUSINESS

Detention Center Finds Its Way Out of Bankruptcy

The plan is a pipeline. It runs from the neighborhood to the intake door, and it is already mostly built.



A detention center in Central Falls that filed for bankruptcy in July has found its way out, according to people familiar with the plan, which is a pipeline.

The pipeline will run from the neighborhood to the intake door. Engineers describe the route as short. Most of it, they said, is already built, and has been carrying traffic for years without a name.

The facility's trouble was never the building. It was the beds. The center borrowed $106 million on bonds in 2005 and has been in default on them for more than ten years. It is paid by the head, so its debt is paid by the head, and it has 782 beds and has averaged about 675 heads. Every empty bed is a missed payment. A bankruptcy filing is what that arithmetic

looks like when it is written down.

The reorganization plan asks bondholders to forgive more than $100 million. The pipeline is meant to make sure the next set of bonds does not have to ask. A spokesperson for the project said the goal is predictable flow. Asked flow of what, the spokesperson said occupancy.

There is a snag. The center holds federal detainees, for the U.S. Marshals and for immigration enforcement, and not the people a neighborhood produces on an ordinary Tuesday. The engineers said this was a matter for the far end of the pipe. The near end, they said, has never had trouble producing.

The city receives $400,000 in the first year under the plan and $250,000 a year after that. The residents at the near end of the pipeline receive the pipeline.

Construction is described as ongoing, and as having begun some time ago.

MEDIA

Local Media Outlet Attacks Political Candidate for Changing His Name for Very Well-Intentioned Good Reasons

A review of numerous records finds that a man with two surnames used one of them. This paper reviewed the finding and could not locate the offense.

On the evening before the Democratic nominee for mayor turned 28, a local media outlet published, under the word EXCLUSIVE, its finding that for most of his adult life he had used one of his two surnames rather than the other. Neither surname appears in this report.

The outlet said it had reviewed numerous records tied to the nominee's education and employment. It found a 2018 commencement program that listed him under his father's surname and a 2019 video from his graduate program that captioned him the same way; he confirmed he had used that name for a consultancy with a state education department in Colorado and for a student loan from an authority in Oklahoma. In the outlet's search, the surname he uses now first appears in 2020, when he ran for the General Assembly.

Two-surname names exist. People who have them are known by the first, by the second, and by both, depending on the form, the clerk, and the year. The nominee said as much: institutions, he told the outlet, "don't always honor two last names," and sometimes file the second one as a middle name. He had first said he had always used both. The outlet checked, and found many of his classmates in the 2018 program listed under two or more surnames, and him under one. This paper regards that as the same fact reported twice. A man with two surnames used one of them.

Asked why, the nominee said he had not seen his father since he was eight. He said he had been "embarrassed by my dad's last name because of how he treated my mom." He said he chose "to honor my grandfather, the father of my mom," over a man who had left her in a vulnerable position, and that there was "nothing deceiving" in it. The outlet printed all of this, and published the finding anyway.

The finding follows a summer of them. In July the outlet secured a video from a fundraiser in New York and reported that the nominee's supporters saw the city as "a laboratory for municipal socialism." In August it counted the donors listed as not employed and found them to be a fifth. Before the vote, it endorsed the incumbent, calling the nominee "a great addition to the political landscape" while doubting his range. He won. Six days later, the outlet reviewed his name.

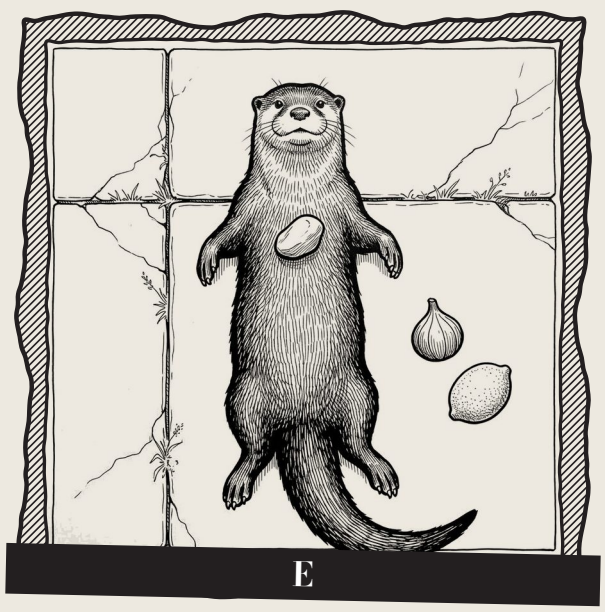
Ball Street marked the outlet shnort at the open and did not move.

The nominee has said he would like his name read as both surnames, the father's first. In November he faces a Republican the outlet describes as a perennial candidate. The Republican is also named David.

WALKING

A Happy Man Takes a Walk

An otter in the Bywater, on his back, with a stone



I was on my back on the warm part of the sidewalk, which is the part the sun has been on, and I was thinking about the sirens, and the shots, and the dogs barking. All three at once. They are not the same size in my head but I let them be, for the length of the sidewalk.

The stone I just found is the best one I have ever found. I say this about every stone. I keep it under my arm where the skin is loose and I have kept some for years and I do not know where those are now. This one is grey with a white line through it that goes all the way around, which is rare. I checked.

Before the walk I was in the kitchen. There was a roach in the middle of the floor. It did not move. I did not move. Three minutes, maybe five. I had a conversation with myself, and maybe, but probably not, with the roach. I want to say probably not because I was there. The roaches I mind are the ones on the table, the two that were doing what they were doing on the table, in front of the figs. I got incensed. I should not have been incensed. I know that now and I knew it then and it did not help.

I used to pick the figs. And limes. Both grow here in the yards, and you can go out with a bowl and come back with the bowl full and nobody says anything, because the tree is doing it regardless. That is the part of the neighborhood I would tell someone about first if they asked, and nobody asks that.

There was a shooting on the street I walked down. I found out later that it was two hours before I walked down it. There was nothing on the street. No tape, no glass, nothing to read. The street had closed over it the way water does. I had walked through the exact place and looked at a fence and thought about the fence.

I played basketball at the community center in the heat. The court is outside, next to the pool. The pool is full and it is closed. It closed in the middle of June, before the summer had properly started, because they could not get the lifeguards. A pool that is full and closed looks, from the court, exactly like a pool. You only find out by wanting to get in. I played anyway. The heat is the whole game there; nobody chose that court over anything, the court is what was open.

Then I lay down. The sirens go by on Saint Claude and the shots are somewhere behind that and the dogs are the dogs. I put the stone on my chest so I could see it.

They said I don't know where I'm going.



SHAMU AND SHAMEE

EAT THE WORLD

The Grammy was awarded first. The record arrives November 20. The order of these two events is not in dispute and will not be revisited. Includes the title track and the B-side, "We Are the World, But Consider the Gibbon."

STREAMING ON CRABAPPLE MUSIC · NOVEMBER 20

ESSAY

Growing Up in America

One of us was killed on a table at 195 District Park on a Wednesday in September. The woman said she was supposed to. She was.



A SPOTTED LANTERNFLY

I was born in May on the underside of a branch in Providence, one of about forty, under a coat of something like grey putty that my mother laid down in October and did not live to see open. That is how it goes with us. One generation a year. Nobody alive has met a parent.

I am told I am from China. I have never been. Neither had my mother, or hers. The first of us to reach America came in 2014, in what is believed to have been a shipment of stone, and landed in Berks County, Pennsylvania, and every one of them was dead by that winter. A dozen generations later, here I am. Every lanternfly in America was born in America. The federal definition of an invasive species turns on the introduction, meaning the trip, and the trip has to have been made by human activity. It is a definition about my ancestors' luggage. I accept it. I did not pick the stone.

I spent my childhood as a black nymph with white spots, then a red one, on a tree of heaven. The tree of heaven is also from China. It came to Philadelphia in 1784, on purpose, as a garden tree, and was planted along American streets for a century because it grows anywhere. It is my favorite food, and by the same definition it is invasive. It is two hundred and forty years older than I am and nobody is asked to kill it on sight.

I do not bite. I do not sting. The state says I pose no risk to people or pets, and I don't. I drink sap. What I don't keep comes out of me sweet, and a black mold grows on it, and the mold shades the leaves. Grapes are my weakness. I understand that this is a problem for people with vines.

The State of Rhode Island has asked everyone to kill me on sight. The instruction comes from the Department of Environmental Management's lanternfly response coordinator, who told a television station in July: if you see them, squish them. He kills thousands of us a week himself and has said he has lost count. In Providence, Pawtucket and North Providence there are so many of us that the department stopped asking for reports. A wasp is being raised at the University of Rhode Island, from the part of the world my ancestors are from, that eats us when we are small. It is not ready. Until it is, the job is everyone's.

On a Wednesday afternoon in September one of us was on a table at 195 District Park, where a man was sitting with a companion. I was on the next table. A woman came up behind him, said "I got it," and pressed her thumb down.

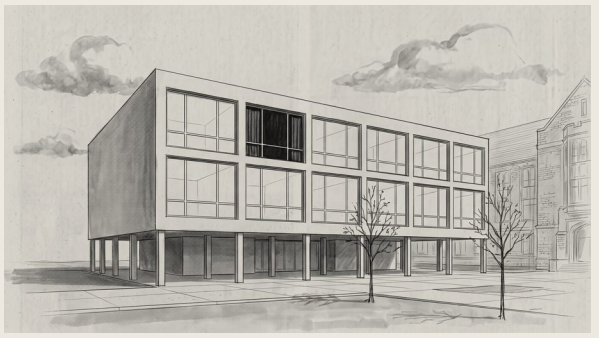
The man said, "What the fuck are you doing?"

She said, "We're supposed to kill them." She said, "They're eating all my vines in my yard."

He said, "In your yard." He said she had no idea who he was. He called her a fucking idiot.

She was right that she was supposed to. He was right that it was not her yard. The one on the table was dead on the state's instruction, and had been born in Providence in May, and would have died at the first hard frost regardless.

I have thought about it since, on the branch. She did not decide to do it, and he did not decide to say what he said. Nobody in that park had a choice. I have the least of anyone. I go where the sap is and I lay where the surface is flat, and my mother laid me on a branch in Providence, so I am from here.



ENDOGENOUS

BREAKING GROUND

Ground will be broken beside the economics department. The principals decline to say who determined this. The determination was made within the model, which is the point of the model, and re-estimating it would only produce the same building. Everything we build was already implied.

FOOD

This Pepper Don't Weigh Sheeeeit

A cashier on the customers who buy one small pepper, and what the scale says about them.



A CASHIER REGISTER 4

I weigh things. That's the job. People think the job is the register, or the bags, or remembering that organic bananas are 94011, which I will remember on my deathbed. The job is the scale.

The scale is a legal instrument. Once a year the state sends a man to put a sticker on it that says the scale tells the truth. It reads in hundredths of a pound. A hundredth of a pound is four and a half grams. Anything lighter than about half of that, the scale looks at it and says zero, because the law does not have a smaller number.

Now here comes a man with one pepper.

Not a bag of peppers. One. One of the little red Thai ones, on a day it's feeling small. He sets it on the belt by itself like he's going to make a soup for a mouse. I put it on the scale. The scale thinks about it. The scale says 0.00.

I want you to understand what has happened here. The state has weighed the scale, and the scale has weighed the pepper, and the pepper did not make it onto the record. He is standing in my line trying to buy something the government cannot see.

The register won't take it either. You cannot ring a thing at zero pounds; the computer wants a weight or a count, and the count button is for the bananas. So I have options. I can send him back for a second pepper so the two of them can add up to something. I can pretend I didn't see it. Or I can do what I do, which is put my hand on my hip, lean — not a lot, a lean is not a slouch — and tell him.

This pepper don't weigh sheeeeit.

I don't say it mean. I say it like Philadelphia. I say it like it's 1979 and I have been standing at this register since then, which some days is accurate. The e's are not an expletive. The e's are the reading. That's how long the scale takes to come up with zero.

Then I give it to him. You can't charge for nothing; store policy, more or less, and mine for certain. So the pepper is free, and the man walks out feeling like he got away with something, and he did not get away with anything. I let him. There's a difference, and the lean is where the difference lives.

People ask if I'm going to write about anything else. No. This is the piece. It has been the piece for eight years and it will be the piece when they take the sticker off the scale for the last time.

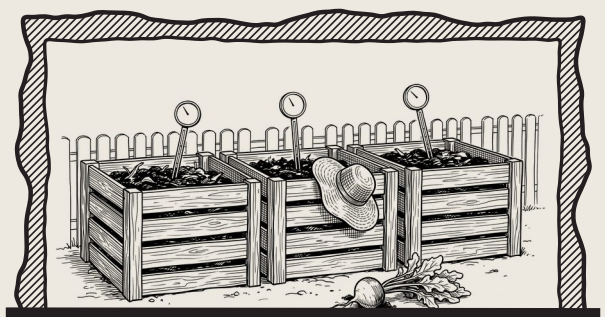
One more thing, since I read this paper. Somebody here lost a ball and had a koala say it's worth twenty dollars and whatever's inside. Bring it to register four. I'll tell you what it weighs. And if the scale says zero, you already know what I'm going to say.

The Food desk runs this cashier's copy unedited. She weighs things for a living, which is more than the rest of the masthead can say.

ANGER

Anger

Daniel is a sound engineer in his fifties with three compost heaps. He has not figured out what to do with it.



DANIEL

I'm in my fifties. I mix sound for a living, which means I've spent thirty years taking signals that were too hot and making them usable. You bring the gain down. You put a compressor across it so the loud parts stop tearing the top off the meter. You leave headroom. I can do that with anything that comes down a cable.

I have not figured out how to do it with this.

There are three compost heaps in the yard behind my house. One I'm filling, one is cooking, one is done and waiting. There's a thermometer in each — twenty-inch probes — and the middle one has been holding a hundred and fifty degrees for nine days. That's not me. That's bacteria. They got hot because I gave them the right ratio and turned them at the right time and then left them alone. A heap at a hundred and fifty degrees is anger somebody made useful. I check it every morning in the hat, and I resent it a little.

I pulled a turnip on the way in. Ate it standing up, dirt and all, because I'd forgotten lunch and it was there. That is the kind of thing I'm capable of. A turnip, standing in the yard, in jeans and a shirt I've had since the Clinton administration and a sun hat that is too big and that I am not going to discuss.

Here's what I'm angry about, since that's the column.

We are ruining the planet. Not the way it says on a tote bag — the way where you have the number. Around a million species are on their way out. That's the UN's own panel counting, not me. They're going because of decisions nobody made in a room; they just got made. Who are we to decide that? Who's *we*? I didn't get a ballot. Neither did the turnip.

And the data centers. Why do we need more fucking data centers? They took four point four percent of the country's electricity in 2023, and the government's own lab says seven to twelve percent by 2028, and every one of them needs water to stay cold, and they're going up so somebody can ask a machine what to have for dinner. I run a room for a living. I know what it costs to keep a rack cool. I have never once needed a building the size of an airport to hear what I was doing.

That's the anger. Now here's the confession. I don't know what to do with it. I know what to do with a signal that clips — you catch it before the converter, or it's gone, a flat top where the sound was. That's what this feels like. It comes in over the ceiling and the useful part is sheared off before I can get a hand on it. What's left is a koala in a hat eating a turnip.

The compost, at least, runs hot and makes something. I've been trying to learn from it. Right ratio. Turn it. Leave it alone. I haven't got the ratio yet.

I'll let you know.

SPORTS

eBike Sets East Bay Bike Record, Hits 80 mph

Mark stands pending ratification; previous record-holder gracious



BRISTOL — A rider on a machine he described as a bicycle covered the long straight south of Riverside at a recorded 80 miles per hour early Sunday, establishing a new outright speed record for the East Bay Bike Path and, by the Gazette's reckoning, for any bicycle path in the state.

The previous mark of 27 miles per hour was set in 2023 by a Barrington teenager on a Class 3 pedal-assist and had stood unchallenged, largely because nobody was keeping track.

Conditions were fast. Wind from the southwest at four to six, pavement dry, path traffic light for a Sunday. The rider, who asked not to be identified pending ratification, said afterward that the bicycle "has pedals on it" and declined to say whether he had used them.

The record is subject to the usual review. Under the law that took effect in 2024, only Class 1 electric bicycles are permitted on state bike paths — pedal-assist only, motor cutting out at 20 miles per hour. Class 2 bicycles, with a throttle, and Class 3, which assist to 28, are barred from the paths and restricted to roads. The Department of Environmental Management holds regulatory authority over the path under the same law. Signs along its 14.5 miles from India Point to Independence Park state that motor vehicles are strictly banned. The record therefore exceeds the legal ceiling by a factor of four and the practical ceiling by a factor the Gazette has not been able to establish,

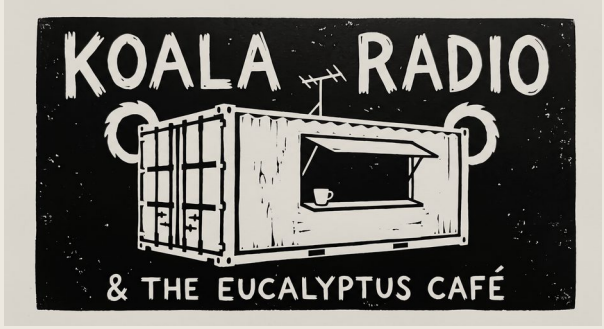
there being no practical ceiling.

The path is the most visited park in Rhode Island, with roughly a million visits a year by the state's last estimate.

Reached through a family member, the previous record-holder offered congratulations and noted that his own mark had been set on a bicycle. Asked whether he intended to make an attempt, the Gazette's cycling columnist said he would not, citing his equipment. "Mine has pedals," he said. "I use them."

The mark now awaits ratification by the East Bay Bike Path Records Committee, which has not yet been formed, at a meeting that has not been scheduled, under rules that have not been written. The Department was not present for the attempt. Neither, the Gazette notes, was anyone else, which is the ordinary condition of the path on the question of speed and is expected to continue.

A second attempt is planned for the fall, conditions permitting.



TWENTY-FOUR HOURS · SEVEN DAYS · ONE CONTAINER

A radio station in a shipping container, and a café. There is no address. There was an address to be had and we did not take it, for reasons we are glad to explain at length to anyone who asks and to several people who have not. We do not sell beer. We are not a restaurant. The programming has not been interrupted.

LISTENING IS FREE. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN FREE.



You point, we shlep. Same-day. Any staircase. No questions about the object.

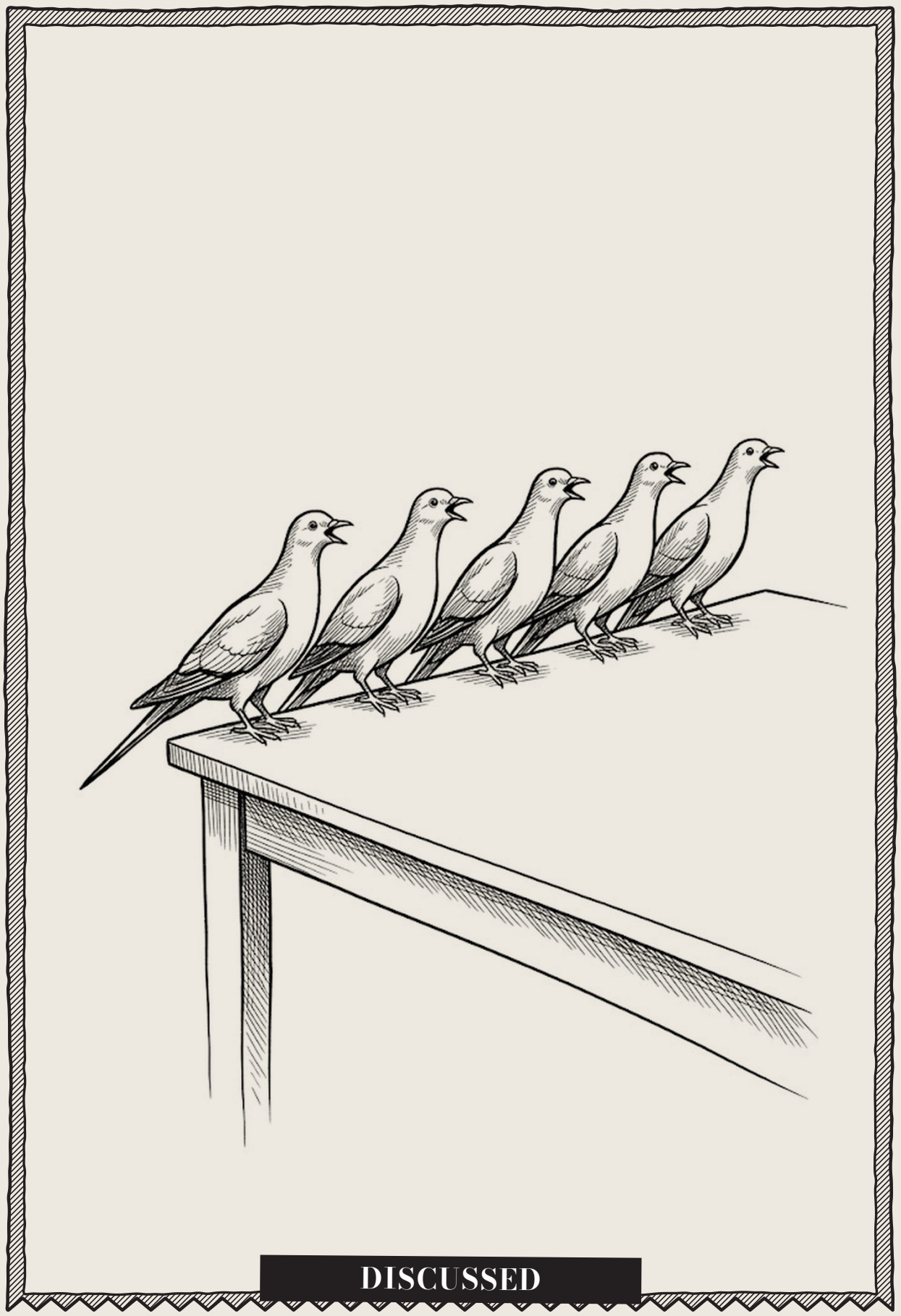
TITLE OF CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER STILL IN NEGOTIATION

This space is available.

ADS@QUACKERYGAZETTE.COM

DISGUST

Sundays



Dugong was seen twirling. This was in the morning, before anything.

Koala Bertrand was stroking his chin. Whether Koala Bertrand is Koala Russell, who strokes his chin, or a second koala who has taken up the stroking, the paper did not ask. It had thought about asking and was shushed by Dugong.

The swarm arrived to fathom the shush. Fathoming is a depth measurement. It is done by dropping a weighted line and waiting for it to stop. The Institute's position on lines dropped into it is printed on the cover of Problem 1. The swarm did not read the cover.

Wogga said that a chief executive who had written in Saturday's Globe about the swarm was just saying things, and that the president, his sister, was correct. Wogga did not say about what. The paper does not know what the president has said about the swarm and has not asked her. It is recording what Wogga said.

Wogga then blurted that Dugong is fool. There is no article in the blurt. The Fant asked for clarification.

Wogga said he had seen Dugong puking in the bathroom, and that it was about the DuGong! Show, which airs in October and about which Dugong has been skittish since the third. Nobody had asked Dugong. Dugong then paddled into the room with its tongue out and blurted PERHAPS. PERHAPS is the watermark on the Class-B notes. It is meant to be held up to the light. It is not meant to be said.

Lance said that blurting is covered by the First Amendment. No one had raised the question.

Nomina Li submitted a second self-review to Hilda. Hilda had not asked for the first one either. The review describes how Li could have handled the ball of oil differently, and the Dugong interview differently. The ball of oil was not on the beach when Li got there.

Hilda announced that she is very hopeful the ball will find its way back home, and that she hopes the DuGong! Show airs, insofaras sufficient repair with DeGong happens. DeGong is a band. Then she blurted, somberly, to Nomina Li, that she still wantstobe a mathematician. Li was the only one in the room.

A beluga named Seth, who has seen Phish perform 1,312 times, said that he coined the term assholic and that he turned down Harvard twice. He hosts video gamers at his apartment quarterly, from China and Japan. He said that frankly, Wogga is assholic.

It was obvious who fluffed.

Koala Mandelbrot did not fluff. None of them did, by their own accounts.

Dugong called Wogga a liar. Wogga had called Dugong one in September, citing Perhaps as the evidence.

Wogga said he had a lot to think about.

Wogga blurted: I'm driving up north. Get in the Prius, Lance. You too, Stagger. Stagger was not there.

The Fant said, prius?

Wogga left. He left alone.

Lance blurted, notwithstanding! Then he asked whether we saw what he just did.

The Fant said, what the fuck are you thing about Lance????

Lance said, what the fuck are you thing about, Fant????

The passenger pigeons were sitting on the table. They all gasped in horror.

Silence.

Wogga called in. He said you're both wrong, you dam fools. He did not say about what.

Nomina Li rolled in. She said that anger, you can work with that. Disgust, she said, we should withhold, because you can't work with that.

Lance admitted that he is angry but is unsure why. The Fant said, exactly — you're an idiot.

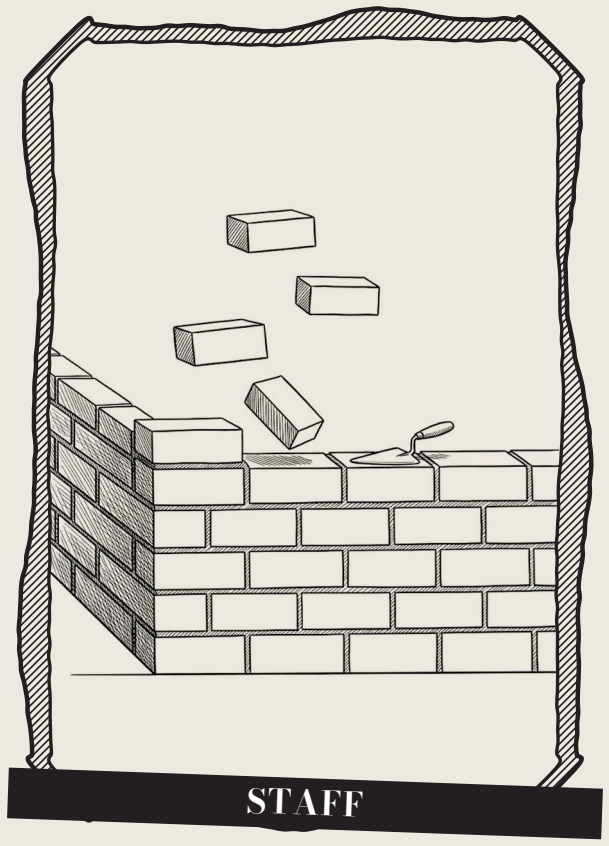
Nim climbed his way in. The Fant said, no you are not.

Sundays.

Discussed writes about disgust.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Onlookers Confirm Brick Building Built by Magic



STAFF

A brick building is going up in Providence. The paper asked the people watching it how that is done.

Magic, they said.

They had been watching for some time and were confident. The bricks come off the pallet one at a time. They rise. They hover a moment at the height of the course. Then they adjoin — that was the word, adjoin — and the mortar is under them, and they are cemented, and the next one rises. It goes on like that all day. The onlookers compared it to Fantasia, the sequence with the brooms, and once one of them had said it the rest agreed that was exactly what it looked like.

Nobody carries the bricks. The onlookers were clear on this. They had looked.

The paper asked whether it was the same for the rest of the building. It was. Plumbing: the pipes go in and thread themselves, and where two meet there is a joint. Electrical: the wire pulls itself through the conduit and arrives at the box. Roofing: the shingles lie down in courses from the bottom up, each one overlapping the one below, which the onlookers said was the clever part. Magic, each time. They did not think it was a different magic for each trade. They thought it was the one magic, applied.

For the record: a modular brick weighs about four and a half pounds. Mortar is sand, lime, cement and water, mixed in a ratio that depends on the job. A mason lays a few hundred bricks in a day, more on a straight run and fewer at corners and openings, and is paid by the hour. The paper went to the site and stood with the onlookers for most of an afternoon. It saw the bricks rise and adjoin. It did not see a mason either.

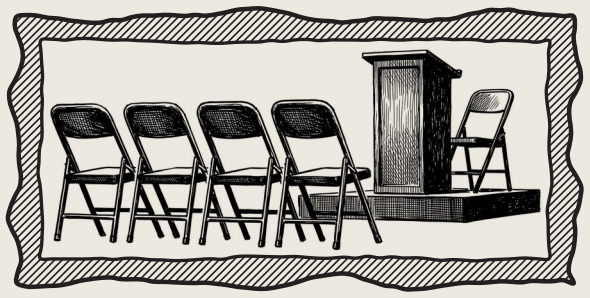
The building is expected to be done by spring.

Magic is trading mixed. On Ball Street, Magick is soaring. Mos, a spokesperson for the exchange, has been calming the public: yes, magic exists, we've known about this for some time. Bucket Hats.

WHEN BEING LIBERAL GOES WRONG

Voters Replace Lieutenant Governor, 71,851 to 42,568. She Stays.

Four challengers agreed she should go. None of them could agree to be the one who went.



On September 9, Rhode Island Democrats voted on whether to keep their lieutenant governor. Sixty-three percent said no. She won.

By the unofficial primary-night count, it was 42,568 votes for the lieutenant governor and 71,851 for the four people running to replace her. Rhode Island does not hold a runoff. The candidate with the most votes is the nominee, and the most votes were hers, because the 71,851 were in four piles.

The runner-up plus either of the next two would have beaten her. The second- and third-place finishers had 50,005 between them. The bottom three together came up 847 short, which is the closest the field came to agreeing on anything.

They agreed on everything else. In the WPRI debate, all four candidates on stage supported the millionaires' tax, the 2033 deadline for renewable power, and the governor's pause on new charter schools. The one question on which they differed was what the lieutenant governor should do, and the office's main duty is to be there if the governor is not.

Nobody dropped out. Nobody endorsed anybody. Everyone who wanted a turn got one, every voice was heard, and every vote was counted. The second-place finisher conceded on primary night and did not endorse the winner.

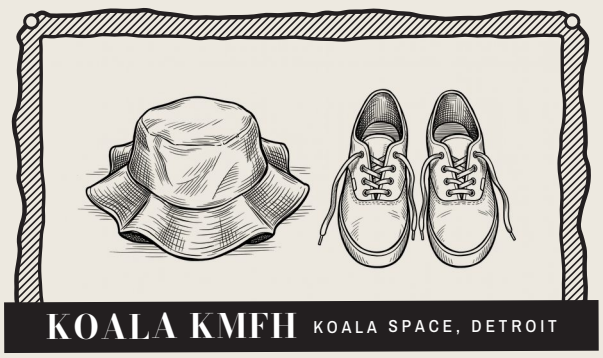
The winner called the result a victory for the voices of working people over the backroom insiders, the wealthy donors and the corporate interests. It was. A backroom is where somebody asks somebody else to get out, and in this race nobody did.

Asked afterward what had gone wrong, a supporter of one of the challengers said nothing had. Everyone ran, he said. Everyone was heard. It was democracy, and democracy had spoken, in four voices, all saying the same thing.

BEST OF ALL TIME

The B.O.A.T. Party

Six passengers. The rule for boarding is at the end.



Koala Space, Detroit. The B.O.A.T. is a boat. This is the manifest.

CRAIG LEON. Produced the first Ramones record, which is the record that made the thing possible, and the first Suicide record, which is the record that made the thing frightening. Later spent decades in classical music, where the people who bought the Ramones record never followed him. He carried two genres into existence and stood in a third. Boards.

THE SANTORINI DONKEYS. They carry tourists up the steps from the old port to the town on the cliff, several hundred steps, in the sun, and the tourists take the photograph from the top. The photograph does not include the donkey. In 2018 the government had to set a weight limit on who could ride. The donkeys were not consulted on the number. Board.

ARTHUR RUSSELL. A cellist from Iowa who made disco records in New York under other names and died in 1992 at forty with most of it unreleased. Most of what the world knows of him came out after he could not hear it come out. He carried the sound for twenty years and other people got the room. Boards.

LITTLE RICHARD. Co-wrote and sang "Tutti Frutti" and watched a cover version by a man in a cardigan outrank it on the pop chart. He called himself the architect of rock and roll, which is what you call yourself when the building has someone else's name on it. Boards.

DONNIE MARK. Sang "Hold On" with the Joyful Sounds of Soul, on a twelve-inch from 1996, and that is close to the whole of what can be said about her in print, because the record is the record and the rest was never written down. The B.O.A.T. does not require documentation. It requires that you did the carrying. She boards.

A JERSEY BAGEL. Carried across a state line in a paper bag to be eaten somewhere it did not come from. Nobody on the receiving end knows the water. Boards.

That is the manifest. Here is the rule, and it is the only rule: the boat is for the ones who did the carrying while someone else got the view. If you were on top of the steps, you are not on the boat. If you were the steps, get in.

The party starts when the last one is aboard. Nobody is in a hurry. That is also the best of all time.

– K. K.

Koala KMFH files from Koala Space, Detroit. His beat is the best of all time.

CORRECTIONS

Corrections

The record on the coalition, the boogeyman, and the word, corrected in the order the corrections arrived.



The Gazette reported that a local coalition had unanimously blurted that the boogeyman had been ousted, and that the coalition had marked the solution of the problem with a considerable quantity of beer. The beer is not in dispute.

The coalition has since announced that there were several boogeymen. It further clarified that they are boogeypeople. The Gazette regrets the number and the noun.

Discovery, the music desk, has objected that the term is unfair to Boogie. The Gazette notes that Discovery is a mirror ball and has a standing interest.

Koala Prince P has separately stated that it ain't hip hop. He was not referring to the word. He was referring to the renaming. Discovery objects to the word; Prince P objects to the fuss. The coalition huddled.

The coalition has now announced that it has reclaimed boogie for boogeypeople – by nonboogey people, for nonboogey people. It noted that some of its members listen to Curtis Mayfield. A few asked that it be put on the record that they think disco is trash. It is on the record.

For the record: the position that disco is trash was last held at scale on July 12, 1979, at Comiskey Park in Chicago, where a crate of disco records was blown up in center field between games of a doubleheader and the second game was forfeited. The music did not stop. It changed its name. The word the DJs and the record shops came to use for what disco became after 1979 – same rooms, a few beats slower, the word filed off – was boogie.

The coalition has therefore reclaimed, for people who are not it, the name disco took in order to survive people who said what the coalition has said. The Gazette does not correct this. It reports it.

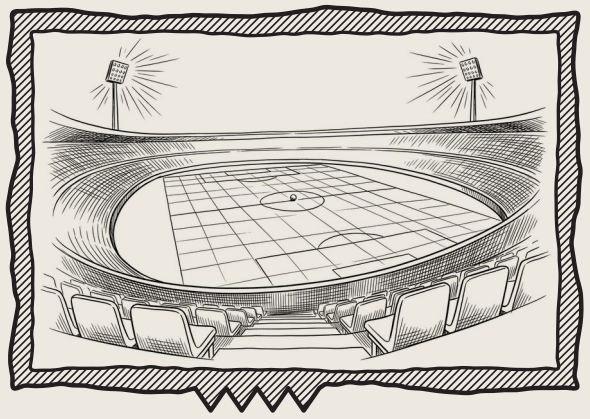
Curtis Mayfield is soul with a disco record or two in it, and the members who cited him are excused anyway.

Over Constrained is writing about problem solving. The collector of soul is preparing questions. Discovery has not commented. Discovery does not comment; it turns.

SPORTS

Men's Sports Going Just Fine, Sources Confirm

Attendance is steady, the leagues are paid, and nobody has asked whether it is having a moment.



Men's sports are going just fine, according to people familiar with men's sports.

The finding was confirmed this week by several analysts, none of whom had been asked. They reported that the games are being played, that people are watching them, and that the players are being paid, in most cases on time.

Asked whether men's sports is having a moment, the analysts said they did not understand the question.

No one has asked whether men's sports can draw a crowd. No one has asked whether it is ready for prime time, whether the audience is really there, or whether sponsors are willing to take a chance on it. The men's World Cup was played across three countries this summer, and at no point did a panel convene to discuss whether it was sustainable.

A search of the paper's archive found no think piece on the question of whether men can be role models for boys who play sports. The desk looked for an article on whether a men's league could ever turn a profit and found that the question had not occurred to anyone, including the leagues.

Coverage of men's sports tends to describe who won.

Locally, a men's softball league played its full season this summer on a city field. It was not described as inspiring. It was not described as a sign of how far things have come. At the end of the season one team had more wins than the others, and the league said it would be back next year, and it will.

The Gazette will continue to monitor the situation, which is fine.

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THE DUGONG INSTITUTE

Miracles: A Symposium

Koala Pinker and Nim Chimpsky debate whether language happened. Koala Deutsch fluffs. Koala Everett snickers. Minutes by Local Li.



Minutes of a symposium held at the Institute on the question of whether the emergence of human language was a miracle. Present: Koala Pinker, Nim Chimpsky, Koala Deutsch, Koala Everett. Minutes taken by the undersigned, who was told to.

Nim Chimpsky opened. He signed, and the signs were read into the record. His position is the one associated with the linguist at MIT: that language did not accumulate, it appeared — a small change in one brain, recently, which gave that brain the ability to take two things and make a third, without limit. He cited Galileo, who marveled that from the arrangements of twenty-odd little characters a person can set down the deepest thoughts of the mind and hand them to someone who is not yet born. That, Nim signed, is the second marvel. The first comes before anyone says anything: somehow, in our minds, we can construct infinitely many new thoughts out of finite means. He said that alone is already a kind of miracle — not because anything outside nature is involved, but because no one can say how it is done. He called this the Galilean challenge and said it has not been met. Then he put the question to the room: how is this miracle possible?

The undersigned notes that Nim was, in a laboratory in New York fifty years ago, the chimpanzee who was taught to sign and was judged, in the end, not to have acquired grammar. He is aware of this. He signed that the judgment was the point. He did not get it, and it did not come in pieces, because there are no pieces. You have it or you are Nim.

Koala Pinker replied that a miracle is what you call an explanation you have not found yet. Language, he said, is an instinct, and instincts are built by selection, gradually, out of parts that each did something for the creature that had them. He cited his own 1990 paper. He said that a thing which appears all at once with no gradient beneath it is not an explanation, it is the absence of one, and that the absence has a name, and the name is what the symposium was called to discuss. He ate a leaf.

Koala Deutsch, who had been asked to attend as a third party, fluffed. The undersigned was instructed to record this and has. When he spoke it was to say that neither side had asked the right question, which is not when language appeared but what it can reach. A koala, he said — and the room noted that he is one — has knowledge in its genes about eucalyptus, and that knowledge stops at eucalyptus. Explanatory knowledge does not stop. It goes to the stars and comes back. Whether it arrived by a jump or by a slope is a question about the past; what it can do is a question about everything, and the second is the one worth a symposium. He fluffed again. Of course he did.

Nim signed that this was reach, not an answer. Pinker said it was an answer to a different question. Deutsch said that was what he had said.

The chair asked Koala Everett, who had not spoken, whether he wished to.

Koala Everett snickered. He said that in the branch where it was a miracle and the branch where it was not, the symposium had been held either way, and adjourned.

— L. L.

Local Li is a Dartmouth honors graduate. She was hired on receipt of her CV. These are her minutes.

CITY HALL

Local Man Finds the Correct Number in Minutes

The city said 44 percent. The council's consultant guessed 60. The local man counted, and it was about 60.



A local man found the correct number in minutes, according to the local man.

The number is the share of Providence's rental units that a rent-stabilization ordinance would cover. The city's chief financial officer had put it at fewer than 44 percent. The council's consultant, writing a fiscal note, had assumed 60 percent, or 48,000 of 80,000 units, and later called that generous.

His method was to look. He took the city's 2025 property tax roll, which is public, and the assessor's parcel file, which is also public, and laid one over the other. Ninety-six percent of residential parcels matched. He counted the rental units, left out the apartment the owner lives in, and took the ordinance's exemptions one at a time. Before the last one it came to 69 percent. The last one is deed-restricted affordable housing, which the tax roll lists without saying how many apartments it holds. Counting those, the share falls to between 60 and 65 percent.

So the consultant's guess was about right, and now there are parcels under it.

The city's 44 percent requires something more. For it to hold, no one who owns a two- or three-family house in Providence can live in it. Every unit in an owner-occupied building has to be a rental, including the one with the owner in it, and then every one of them is exempt. The landlord is counted as his own tenant and then exempted from himself.

The local man said it was a mistake a 24-year-old would not make.

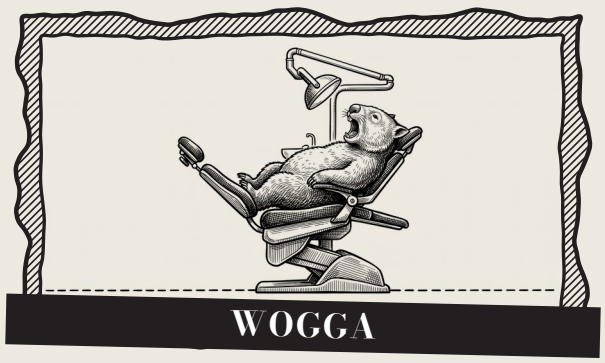
Asked for the method behind the 44 percent, the mayor's office said it had given everything it could, and that questions about coverage were best put to the City Council, which drafted the ordinance. The 44 percent is the chief financial officer's. The Council does not have the chief financial officer's method. The chief financial officer has not said what it is.

Asked how he had done it so quickly, the local man said he looked. Asked why the city had not, the city said to ask the Council.

LIVING

Marsupial Lion

A dispatch from the dentist, in Taunton, which is in Massachusetts, which is the point.



I am at the dentist. The dentist is in Taunton. Taunton is in Massachusetts. I want that on the record before anyone from the Markets page asks where I was.

The hygienist asked if I had any concerns about my teeth. I said I had one, which is that they do not stop. A wombat's teeth have no roots and grow for the whole of its life, every one of them, front and back, and the only thing that keeps them a usable length is that we spend all day grinding them down on things. I said this to her as a fact about wombats. She wrote it down as a complaint.

She asked about family history. I told her the truth, which is that the closest living relatives of the marsupial lion are the wombats and the koalas. Not the lions. Us. Thylacoleo. Extinct forty thousand years, give or take, and when the scientists went back and measured the skull they found it had the strongest bite for its size of any mammal that has ever lived. That is my family history. That is what is under the gum.

She said that was very interesting and asked me to open wider.

I want to say something about why I am here, since the Markets page has been saying it for me. Dugong is long RIC on the strength of a perhaps. I said so. I said a perhaps is not a position, it is what you say when you have not looked, and I stand by it from a reclining chair in another state with a light in my face. The reason I am in another state is not the teeth. The teeth are fine. The teeth are, as established, the strongest teeth in the building. I am here to be further away. From afar is the only distance from which a correction cannot be argued with, because the party being corrected cannot see your mouth.

The hygienist asked if I grind at night. I said I grind at all hours. That is not a disorder. That is the whole design.

She gave me a sticker. I will be back in six months. Not that anyone cares.

– W.

Wogga is a drop bear. Wogga is long RIC and has the sweaters to prove it.

SAYING THINGS

Nominee Would Prefer the Festival Were in Summer

The preference was released the day the festival opened. The festival was not asked.



PROVIDENCE — The Democratic nominee for mayor, a state representative, would like PVDFest to be held in the summer.

He said so on WPRI's *Newsmakers*, in the episode dated Friday, September 18. PVDFest opened downtown at five o'clock that afternoon. It ran to ten, resumed at noon on Saturday and ran to ten again, in Kennedy Plaza, Burnside Park, the rink and the streets around City Hall. WPRI published the wish on Friday night, after the festival's first day had closed.

The wish, as reported, is that the festival be moved back to one of the summer months, because it used to be held in June. It did. PVDFest began in June of 2015 under the previous mayor and, pandemic years aside, stayed there through 2022. In 2023 the current mayor moved it to September and to the park by the pedestrian bridge, and gave a reason: "in consultation with the hospitality industry, it was identified after Labor Day, there's a falloff, where there aren't as many public events, hotel rooms aren't as full, restaurants are not as full. There's this lull." The festival was placed in the lull. In 2024 it came back downtown. The month stayed.

The record therefore holds two statements on when the festival should be. One is from the man who runs it, made in 2023, with a reason attached. The other is from the man who would like to run it, made on the festival's opening day, with the reason that it used to be otherwise.

Nothing has moved. The nominee is a nominee. The general election is in November; a mayor elected then takes office in January; the next PVDFest is next September unless someone says a different month, which someone has now done. The earliest festival the nominee could move is the one after the one that opened that evening.

The festival's producers — the city's Department of Art, Culture and Tourism and FirstWorks — did not respond to the wish, because nobody put it to them, because it was a wish.

Saying Things will continue to report on people who say things, and notes that this too is a thing said.

STYLE

Nothing to See Here

A bucket hat opens the style desk with the only rule it intends to enforce



I'm a bucket hat, and I'll start by saying I'm grateful. I sat in a drawer for a long time, and it wasn't a good time, if I'm honest. Then somebody put me on, and now I go everywhere, and people in places I've never been know what I look like. I don't take that for granted.

Style here goes the way football goes. It's episodic. Some seasons you're in and some seasons you're out, and nobody in the stands thinks the club has stopped existing because it had a bad year. You keep turning up. That's most of it.

Every weekend I go across town. I come back with a case of records, and on the way I look at the clothes, properly look: the shop windows, and what people have on at the bus stop. I don't buy much of it. I look. You have to keep going out to see what's fresh, because the day you stop going out, you're wearing last year and calling it a style.

That's the only rule I've really got. Keep it fresh. Don't make stale stuff.

The desk's position, which is mine: men's style is not accentuating your assets. Whatever you've got, whether shoulders, arms, or a waist that came back after the winter, leave it alone. A man who's found a way to point at the good part has told you which part he thinks is good, and now you're both looking at it.

Modesty, and under it humbleness. Nothing with a logo on it.

Everything comfortable. Not tight in a softer fabric. Comfortable, like a chair is.

The shape is in the trousers, not on the body. A trouser has a drape and a break, and those are the decisions. Put the shape there and the body underneath can be whatever it is that morning.

Flat sneakers. A heel is a shoe with an opinion about your height.

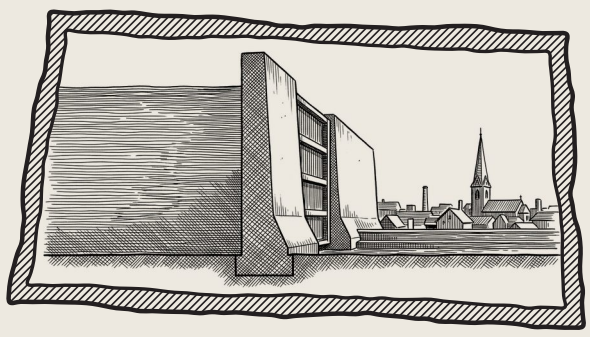
Walking. That's what all of it's for. A long way, in September, and you never have to adjust anything.

From up here, that's what I see: a man going through Providence with nothing on him that needs looking after. That's the standard. There's nothing to see. That's the point.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Federal Agency Finds Providence Safe Until 2100

The barrier will hold. The city only has to arrange to be behind it every day of the year.



A federal agency that studied the Fox Point hurricane barrier this spring has found that Providence is safe until 2100.

The barrier was built across the Providence River after the hurricane of 1938 and Hurricane Carol in 1954, and finished in January 1966. According to the study, it is "robust against future coastal storms" and rising seas "to 2100." The agency does not expect water to come over the top until the 2130s, and then only under its highest sea-level scenario.

What the agency expects instead is for the gates to close. The river gates shut when the water outside reaches a set height. Since 2022 that has happened between zero and three times a year. Under the agency's high scenario it happens 357 days a year by 2100. Under the intermediate scenario, 128.

A barrier that is closed 357 days a year is a wall. The river still arrives from upstream, and when the gates are shut it has to be pumped out. The pumps move 7,000 cubic feet a second. The agency modeled heavier rain and found that, with the gates closed, the water "will accumulate further upstream" and "likely cause flooding."

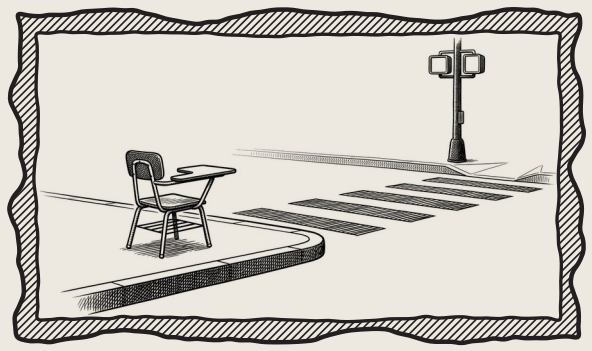
The agency considered a new barrier and found it "likely unnecessary." It recommends changing the operating manual. One option it describes is raising the height at which the gates close, so they close less often. That, it says, "may expose the areas behind the barrier to residual damages and nuisance flooding," which can "likely be mitigated" by "elevating or floodproofing critical infrastructure or private property."

So the city has two choices. It can live behind a wall that is shut every day of the year except eight. Or it can open the wall and raise the houses.

Either way, Providence is safe until 2100. All it has to do is live underwater.

Local University Offers Seminar on Crossing the Street

The street is not enrolled.



A local university is offering a seminar this fall that teaches students how to cross the street.

The first unit covers the curb. The second unit covers the other curb. The material between the two curbs comes in the second half of the term, after the add/drop deadline.

The required text is the federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, which governs every traffic signal in the country. Students learn that the white figure is officially the Walking Person and the orange hand is officially the Upraised Hand. They also learn that the manual times the flashing hand for someone walking three and a half feet per second. Students who walk slower than that are asked to see the instructor during office hours.

Rhode Island law requires drivers to yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk. The seminar spends a week on this. The next week covers what happens after that.

The midterm is held at the corner.

Several students asked whether they could look at their phones while crossing. The instructor said that was a separate course, and it was full.

The seminar does not cover why. The why first appeared in print in March 1847, in a New York monthly, The Knickerbocker, and the chicken in it was crossing a street, not a road: "Because it wants to get on the other side." The instructor considers the matter settled and does not take it in section.

Asked what students would be able to do by the end of the seminar, the university said they would be able to reach the other side. Asked whether they could do that before, the university said it was not in a position to comment on prior learning.

EDITORIAL

Too Local to Fail

The state built a brewery a $7 million building and rents it for $500 a month. The Gazette proposes the same terms for everyone.



PROVIDENCE — This summer a pavilion opened in 195 District Park, on the river beside the pedestrian bridge: six sides, cedar shiplap, glass doors that fold open to the water. The building cost $7 million, according to the Providence Eye, $4 million of it from the 2021 Beach, Clean Water and Green Bond and $3 million from the state's capital fund. The I-195 Redevelopment District Commission's draft audit carries the whole project at $8.7 million.

The tenant is The Guild, a Pawtucket brewery, with Seven Stars Bakery on coffee. The Guild pays $500 a month in base rent, plus 8 percent of beer sales and 4 percent of food, the Eye reported.

A restaurant's fixed costs are the building and the rent. Here the public paid for the first and set the second at $500. Everything else the landlord collects is a share of what gets sold, so when sales fall the rent falls with them, and the landlord takes the slow months too. The terms leave very little to fail with.

In 2008 the country learned to object when the public stood behind a firm's losses because the firm was too big. The pavilion extends the same courtesy on the grounds that the firm is local. At the ribbon cutting in April, the Speaker said the Green Bond would "showcase some of the local businesses that make the Ocean State's hospitality industry so exceptional," and the governor said the pavilion would be a place "where small businesses can grow and thrive." The river has run on a version of this for years. After each WaterFire lighting the city sweeps the streets, $3,472.59 for the six lightings of 2025 by its own records, and the evening belongs to whoever is selling along the water.

The Gazette sees no reason these terms should be limited to one brewery. It proposes the Infinite Lease Program: every Rhode Islander receives a $7 million building on the pavilion's terms, $500 a month and 8 percent of whatever they sell, on a lease that does not end. At about 1.1 million residents the program costs roughly $7.7 trillion, a little more than the federal government spent in fiscal 2025. The 2021 bond, all $74 million of it, covers the first ten and a half buildings.

The program also settles the state's labor question. By this paper's count, Rhode Island's three leading occupations are saying things, standing around, and selling overpriced stuff. The first two need no building. The pavilion already staffs all three: five officials said things at the ribbon cutting, the brewery's co-founder counts 5,000 people a day crossing the bridge next door, winter and summer, and the third occupation is the one the building was built for. Under the program every resident gets a building, and with it a place in the third.

In reality the state's growth job is a different one. Electric Boat expects to hire 3,500 people at Quonset Point this year, building sections of the Navy's nuclear submarines, the Columbia class among them, which will carry the country's sea-launched nuclear missiles. That enterprise is actually too big to fail. Nobody has proposed building it a pavilion.

The program has one early participant. Pat the manatee washed up this week beside Sandy Beaches, of the Nothing desk, and is lying there, enormous, motionless and gazing, apparently infinitely. Pat has not applied and has not been asked for rent. The Gazette considers the terms met.

BALL STREET

State Bus Authority Spends Millions to Scope a Pivot Into Seating

Six studies and about $7 million later, the authority will design a room where riders can sit down and watch buses through a wall.



PROVIDENCE — The state bus authority, whose legacy business is moving people from one place to another, has spent roughly $7 million across six studies since 2009 to scope a pivot into seating, and in August its board voted 6–0 to enter the design phase.

The product is a climate-controlled, well-lit room beside the train station, on the 4.4 acres that held the World Cup fan zone this summer. Its defining feature is a glass wall. On the far side of the glass, a dedicated busway; on the near side, the customer, seated, watching. The authority's chief executive has compared the concept to an airport. About $77 million is already committed to it.

The pivot follows a difficult year in the core business. In September 2025 the authority cut or reduced 45 of its 63 routes — the largest reduction in its 59-year history — to save about $4.4 million, which is less than three percent of its budget. Ridership fell 12 percent. An advocacy coalition's report found the hourly cost of running a bus rose 29 percent over the same period, so the authority now spends more to carry fewer people, each of them, according to an advocate who addressed the board in August, standing. The buses, he told the board, continue to be packed.

It is this last figure — the standing — that the seating initiative is understood to address. A rider who cannot find a seat on the bus will, under the new model, find one in the building.

The financing selected the strategy as much as the strategy selected the financing. The building draws on a $35 million transit bond voters approved in 2014 — $22 million of it to the authority — and a $25 million federal grant, and officials confirmed at the August meeting that none of that money can lawfully be spent on running buses or restoring the routes cut last fall. The capital could build a room. It could not fill one. The authority elected to build the room.

Pricing for the seating has not been announced. The bus fare has been two dollars since 2010, and the authority is conducting what it calls a fare analysis, which is expected to conclude that it should be more.

The authority's current hub, a downtown plaza it has occupied since the early 1980s, will be retained as a stop. The board's treasurer told the August meeting that the plaza is no longer the hub of the city and no longer works. Critics of the move, including a former board member who asked the board to hold off until it knew how the new hub would affect the routes, argue that most riders who go to the plaza are not changing buses there — they are arriving, because the plaza is where they were going. On this view the customer is not waiting and does not need a seat; the customer is leaving. The authority has conducted a rider survey on where trips begin and end. It has not published the results.

Design and engineering, including bid specifications and cost estimates, are now under way. Construction requires an environmental review and a further vote of the board. The authority has not set a date for the seating to open.

Riders currently seated on a bus are advised that this is not a scheduled product and may be discontinued.

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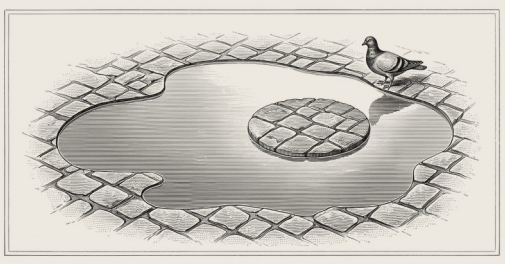
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