Mayor Walsh Seeks A Balance In Tenant-Landlord Rights

Mayor Martin Walsh through his Housing Chief, Sheila Dillon, filed the Jim Brooks Community Stabilization Act, which would place restrictions on the rights that owners of large properties have to evict tenants. It would require that eviction notices be filed with the city’s Office of Housing Stability within two days of when they’re served to tenants.

City officials say the notification requirement would better enable them to inform tenants facing eviction of their rights, refer them to advocacy groups and help them obtain resources.

The process of establishing a public policy that has as broad an effect as housing preservation requires well-organized study by professionals, vetting with stakeholders, and political resolve. Presumably, the Mayor and his team have done that and are willing to pay the price of the likely fallout from this commitment. That will be a test of the administration’s resolve.

Tenants, generally, may be relieved for the time being, depending on how familiar they become either through advocates or attorneys. Landlords,
EDITORIAL

‘In God we Trust’ In The Press, not Really

The words ‘In God we Trust’ is a common phrase to Americans. It’s written on our money and carved in granite on government buildings. But while most Americans do place their trust in God, every survey out there now confirms that the trust people have in the mainstream news media to be honest and unbiased has never been lower. And never has the press been more disliked in the history of this nation.

America watched in disgust during this long election season as reporters and news anchors were so dishonest that they could not even hide the fact that they were pushing their own agendas when reporting. When you have one supposedly objective anchor crying on camera because her preferred candidate did not win and CNN was caught making jokes and laughing; hoping that the plane carrying the new President-elect crashed with him in it, all pretense of fairness goes out the window. When the failing New York Times grudgingly admits to slating their news coverage to hurt the campaign of the candidate they opposed, it’s clear the ‘integrity’ they claim to possess is a charade.

Americans view with skepticism now most everything the press reports. ‘Fake News’ is a common saying. With eye rolls, they ask themselves – What do they want us to think today? Can the media ever regain the trust it had long ago; when there actually was integrity among most of them? That would be a difficult task; especially since so many members of the media are just too out of touch with real Americans and too arrogant to even try or even care.

REFLECTIONS ON A LIFE WELL LIVED

SBT - BY SAL GIARRATANI

I don’t like sounding like one of those televangelists that I spot on TV while flipping through the channels. Many of them are gloom and doomers and others sound like used car salesmen. Most of the time, they mostly want to separate your money from your wallets. However, recently, I heard a preacher talk about always being ready to meet God. There’s a parable I heard at Sunday Mass recently about the property owner who gets robbed and

The parable says if the owner knew when the crooks were coming, he would be ready for them.

In the sudden passing of Brian Mahoney, I remembered that parable. None of us knows the day we will be called home to God. It just happens when it happens. The end came quick but in Brian’s case, he just lived his life not worrying about dying. He was involved in living and doing.

All of us live our lives differently but in the same way. Brian had a mission in life to be a good person and to be involved in life around him. Some people

live in a community. Others live their lives for the betterment of their community. Brian wasn’t just awake and walking around, he was awake and trying to make his community the best place it could be. That is the difference in residing somewhere and living somewhere.

Brian was a great community activist and there aren’t enough activists out there. These folks are special breeds. Without them a community could not grow and prosper. He had a gift for writing and used it wisely and often. He did not waste this gift. Now, he is gone. His journey among us here has ended. He completed that race that Paul spoke of in his writings. Our journey continues on without him, but not without his memory. All of us have talents and gifts. Many use them. Others waste them. We need to use them in our lives.

Time passes but the journey continues. We should never stop doing our best until they start throwing dirt on us. We get one life to live. If we use it wisely, all the bruises and losses we take will have been worth it, if we live our lives with laughter and good work. Brian did that and more. Our time is now and we need to do the right thing always. We cannot and should not live in the shadows. Stand up and be you. Make this life we have count for something good.

I have always tried to stand up and do things that count. Make my community, my city, my state, my country and my world better. If I see something wrong I stand up and take it on. Sometimes I use my feet, sometimes through writing. Isn’t that what we remember about Brian? He took his stands every day and tried to improve the life that surrounded him.

Rest in peace Brian. Your job has ended but for the rest of us, the struggle continues.
It’s always a pleasure when there is good news to report. In this column, last week, half of it was devoted to making mention of the veterans and their supporters that descended on Hampshire College in Amherst, MA. The purpose as you know was to protest the decision made to no longer fly the American Flag on campus. It seems the sight of Old Glory proudly waving in the breeze was too traumatic for a group of the delicate and hyper sensitive students there (aka – snowflakes).

The flag sent some of the snowflakes scurrying to their safe spaces and the rest to the school’s administration offices to take tantrums. The college president buckled to the sobbing and whining and decided the flag must come down. The veteran’s response: We’ll see about that. More than a thousand of them, waving large flags of their own, showed up at Hampshire College last Sunday and demanded the flag be put back and it was. It was another win for the good guys, a big loss for the snowflakes and their weak-kneed enablers at that school.

We are still trying to confirm rumors that a bus load of crisis counselors, armed with adult coloring books, crayons, safety pins and videos of puppies was immediately rushed to the campus to coddle, oops, I mean calm the fears of the fragile young scholars, who are still in a state of shock that they didn’t get their way.

One of the big stories this week, at least as far as the news media is concerned, is that President-elect Trump actually accepted a congratulatory call from the leader of Taiwan. It seems that, according to protocol, American presidents are not supposed to speak to Taiwanese officials, because it upsets the Communists in mainland China, even though we sell Taiwan billions of dollars’ worth of weapons. It apparently also upsets the American press, as well as some Democrat politicians, as they have been in meltdown all week over it.

It’s interesting how Barack Obama can speak with, cozy up to and host every dictator and terrorist organization on the planet, such as the Castros, The Muslim Brotherhood and the late Hugo Chavez to name a few and there is never a word of concern or protest. But, accepting a call from the head of state in Taiwan is a catastrophe and scandal that is lead story for a week. And then, of course, there was the horror expressed by the same and usual suspects when Trump intervened to save 1100 hundred jobs at ‘Carrier’. Finally, someone in a position of power steps in to save jobs from being sent out of the country and he gets trashed for it.

But get used to it folks because this is how it’s going to be throughout the Trump presidency. No matter what he does, even when it benefits working families, it will be criticized and condemned because of the anger and hatred harbored by the media towards anyone who they

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5
Budget forecast: Mostly cloudy, chilly, slim chance of hope

Anyone looking for good news wasn’t going to find it yesterday at a State House revenue hearing, where revenue forecasts for next fiscal year ranged from 2.65 percent (Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation) to 3.5 percent (Department of Revenue) to a not-so-modest 5.2 percent (Beacon Hill Institute). Those aren’t bad numbers, but they’re not good either, on average, considering that the state’s unemployment rate is a mere 3.3 percent and that the state hasn’t figured out yet how to dig itself out of the current fiscal budget hole. State House News Service’s Colin Young has all the details. Note: House Speaker Robert DeLeo still isn’t ruling out new taxes, but Gov. Baker is holding to his anti-tax stance.

Goldberg warns of falling Lottery profits next year, reiterates need for online games

While lawmakers grappled with disappointing revenue forecasts yesterday at the State House, Treasurer Deb Goldberg delivered more disappointing news: State Lottery profits that go to local aid are expected to continue falling next fiscal year—and she once again called on lawmakers to approve online Lottery games. “Moving onto smartphone apps and online will protect us from over-reliance on the economy, and that’s what we’re looking at,” Goldberg told lawmakers. Goldberg has been pushing for more eviction restrictions, Walsh’s action sets up for landlord-tenant negotiations.

Walsh on collision course with landlords

Mayor Marty Walsh has proposed new tenant-rights rules that would make it harder for landlords to evict people if they don’t give “good cause” and inform city officials in advance, reports Zeninjor Enwemeka at WBUR. While activists have been pushing for more eviction restrictions, Walsh’s action sets up for a major confrontation with landlords, who say the plan harms landlords and is only the first step toward reintroduction of rent control in the city.

Bag it: Mayor questions need for 5-cent fee on grocery bags

From the Herald’s Dan Atkinson: “Mayor Martin J. Walsh is proposing a 5-cent fee on all bags at grocery and convenience stores, questioning the proposed price and whether it would significantly reduce waste in the city. ‘It was a good idea years ago,’ Walsh told Boston Herald Radio yesterday, saying the proposal was similar to a fee for plastic bags in Ireland. ‘But right now I’m not supportive of it.’”

We don’t get the “good idea years ago” part, but we do get that he doesn’t want this idea right now.

Yet another school walkout

Just to make clear: Mayor Martin Walsh is a Democrat. He was and is a huge supporter of Hillary Clinton. He didn’t want to see Donald Trump elected president. Keep this in mind when thinking of the Boston students who are planning an anti-Trump walkout today in Boston, over the objections of the mayor, as reported by the Herald. It’s yet the latest student walkout—and the most politically blatant yet. The kids should be in school, period, as the pro-Clinton mayor insists.

Old Glory flies again as Hampshire mayor insists.

Gov. Charlie Baker has announced he’s backing a sweeping medical innovation bill supported by the state’s life-science industry, the BBJ reports. But the back story is that the Democratic administration urged the Republican Baker to express his support for the measure, if only to counter the opposition of U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Democrat, reports the Globe’s Michael Levenson and Victoria McGrane. Yes, politics makes strange bedfellows.

Score one for personal care attendants

From State House News Service’s Andy Metzger: “The Baker administration has acceded to demands of disability rights advocates allowing personal care attendants to work more than 40 hours a week without restriction and earn overtime pay. ‘We have listened to the concerns of the stakeholder community and have made changes: Baker drafted by Obama administration to counter Liz on Senate bill.”

One is tempted to call this a form of caving, but is it caving when someone actually listens to others’ legitimate grievances?
Lions and tigers and bears
– Oh my! Ok, so maybe there are no hungry lions roaming the streets of Southie, but there has been yet another coyote sighting this week and while it’s not yet an everyday occurrence, they are becoming more frequent. And according to some wildlife experts we spoke to, it’s not all that surprising.

There is an explosion of wildlife taking place all over the country and Massachusetts is no exception. One only has to look at the nearby Blue Hills Reservation. There are so many deer running wild in the woods there that state officials have authorized opening it up to limited deer hunting for the second year in a row. In fact, we’re told that the deer herd is now so large they are trampling gardens and crops, breaking fences of private homes on the outskirts of the reservation and running across roads at such a rate, they are endangering motorists. But back to the Southie coyote.

Some advice given to SBT to pass onto our readers is as follows: If you spot a coyote, never approach it. Though they usually will run from humans, they are still unpredictable and wild and can be dangerous. They are nocturnal animals and tend to hunt at night. If you spot one prowling during the day time, be extra cautious because that is sometimes the sign of a sick or ‘rabid’ canine.

Pet owners are advised to bring their cats inside, if there are reports of sightings and you may want to keep small dogs close to you. Both cats and smaller dogs are tempting targets for coyotes and could be a reason for a coyote to take a chance and come closer to people in search of dinner. And most important – do NOT feed or leave food out for coyotes. This will only encourage them to feel more comfortable coming into closer contact with residents and makes the possibility of a confrontation less remote.

South Boston, like every neighborhood in the city has over the years become home to quite a few raccoons, a few possums and as we all know (and smell), skunks. So it was only a matter of time before the coyotes began moving in, perhaps in search of the above mentioned critters we’ve become used to. And who can forget the visit by the deer that reportedly swam over from one of the harbor islands 2 years ago and had to be tranquilized and relocated to a rural area. It all adds a bit of adventure to city dwellers that aren’t used to all these new visitors.

But, if the day ever comes when there are moose sightings at Thomas Park and Black Bears start rummaging through people’s trash barrels it could get downright exciting around here.

JOHN CICCONE
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

opposed. But here’s the good news. It no longer matters what the mainstream media says or thinks or tries to put over on the American people. In this era of social media and up and coming alternative news organizations, the old media’s monopoly on reporting on issues is ended. Never has what the press reports been distrusted, as much as it is today. And, the more that technology and online media advances, the less relevant the old press becomes. Trump has made it crystal clear that he no longer needs the mainstream press and thankfully, neither does anyone else.

Ronald Reagan was the recipient of the news media’s hatred and wrath, when he was president as well. He was able to go directly to the American people and accomplish what was needed for the country. Trump will be doing the same but with today’s technology; it will be even easier than it was for President Reagan. And finally, for this week, most watched the news reports of the devastating wildfires in the South recently. The loss of life and property in the state of Tennessee is tragic as hundreds of families lost everything. But in every sad story there is a silver lining and this one comes with an angel in the form of Country Music Singer, Dolly Parton. Dolly Parton with her ‘Dollywood Foundation’ has stepped in and pledged to give each family that suffered the loss of their home $1000 per week; every week until they get back on their feet.

Several of you have contacted us here at SBT and asked how you can help the victims of the Tennessee fires; our fellow Americans with donations. We checked into it and found the best way to do it is log onto the Dollywood Foundation’s website at www.dollywoodfoundation.org. This will give you all the information needed to assist in this effort. I know, it’s Christmas time and for many, money is short. But for those who are able and willing to help the victims in Tennessee, this is how to go about it.
With each passing day, Christmas draws closer and the magic that comes with this wonderful time of year brings out the spirit of the season. And as we all know, South Boston is steeped in traditions that residents here hold so dear and one of those traditions that comes along is of course the lighting of South Boston’s beautiful Christmas tree. This year’s event was bigger and better than ever as the cool temperatures nicely combined with brilliant sunshine and it brought out a huge crowd to be part of this very special experience. Smiles

Annual Southie Christmas tree Lighting Brought Smiles to All
and laughter, good cheer and greetings of Merry Christmas by the happy throngs; which included people of all ages; especially families filled the air. So much to do and tons of things to delight the kids kept the entire event exciting for all.

There were live ponies, great music by famous DJ Dru Errico, balloon animal makers, Simon Says and gifts for the children. There were awesome refreshments such as cannoli’s and pizza and of course hot cocoa for everyone. Mingling among the crowd was Frosty the Snowman and Rudolph; both were more than happy to pose for pictures with everyone, including Mayor Marty Walsh and Lori Higgins. And speaking of pictures, each and every child and their families were able to have their photos taken with the jolly couple from the North Pole, Santa and Mrs. Claus.

Selected to actually throw the switch and light the Christmas tree lighting included people of all ages; especially families filled the air. So much to do and tons of things to delight the kids kept the entire event exciting for all.

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Did you know that the Port of Boston is the city’s 6th largest employer?

As Boston’s 6th largest employer, the historic Port of Boston is one of our city’s most treasured assets from the shoes we wear, to the food we eat, to the heating oil for our homes and the salt on our roads this winter. The Port of Boston is part of the rich fabric of the community – and a critical economic asset for Boston and Massachusetts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Port of Boston</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Northeastern</td>
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Every year, the Port of Boston contributes $4.6 billion to the region’s economy, generating more than $300 million in federal, state and local tax revenue, and some 50,000 total jobs.

For the past two years, Massport’s Conley Container Terminal has processed a record number of containers. This year, the *Journal of Commerce* ranked Conley Terminal #1 in North America for improved efficiency.

## Recent South Boston Real Estate Sales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property/Type</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Sale Date</th>
<th>Rooms</th>
<th>Baths</th>
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tree with Mayor Walsh was a special honored guest. It was 9 year old Collin Tarbox who came all the way down from the State of Maine to do the honors. Collin and his family will be spending the Christmas holidays at Boston Children’s Hospital where he is being treated for ‘Blau Syndrome’ which affects the immune system. Collin’s favorite things in the world are Christmas decorations so lighting this year’s Christmas tree was very special and meant a lot to him. Another one of Collin’s favorite things is to receive Christmas cards. If you’d like to send him a card while he’s at the hospital the address is as follows: Collin Tarbox, Care of Jamie Crosby – 11 South, Boston Children’s Hospital, 300 Longwood Ave, Boston, MA, 02115. He would really appreciate hearing from you. Let’s show Collin and his family some good old fashion Southie spirit and make this Christmas unbelievable for this beautiful child. Thank you for spending some time in our community and sharing your smile with us.

The event went off perfectly. In fact it could not have gone better thanks to so many dedicated helpful hands working hard to make it so. The first responders, the firefighters from Engine 39 from the D street CONTINUED ON PAGE 11
fire station, the Boston Police Department’s very own Gino Provenzano who made sure that there was ice cream for everyone, our local elected officials including District 2 Boston City Councilor Bill Linehan and of course Mayor Marty Walsh, who’s office and his own Christmas spirit makes sure that traditions like this continue each and every year. And of course the large crowd that turned out to participate and to enjoy the festivities.

Attending the annual Christmas tree lighting in South Boston signals to all that the season is now in full swing and time to get out and enjoy this ‘most wonderful time of the year’.

Let’s join together and send Collin a huge South Boston Merry Christmas! Send your Christmas cards to:

Collin Tarbox
C/O Jamie Crosby
11 South
Boston Children’s Hospital
300 Longwood Avenue
Boston, MA 02115
Mass Bay Credit Union Kicks Off Annual Coat and Warm Clothing Drive for the Homeless with a $2,000 Donation

South Boston, MA – Dec 7, 2016 – To celebrate the start of their annual Coat and Warm Clothing Drive, Mass Bay Credit Union donated $2,000 to the Friends of Boston’s Homeless. Dedicated to serving all who live in the community, Mass Bay holds the clothing drive annually as part of the “Warm Hands, Warm Hearts” campaign sponsored by this outstanding local charitable organization. Now in its sixth year, the warm clothing drive has become a vital Mass Bay Credit Union tradition, one that members and staff look forward to participating in every year.

Drop off boxes will be located at their South Boston headquarters at 147 West 4th Street, in addition to Mass Bay branches in Everett, Quincy and the Seaport. New or gently used winter coats, sweaters, hats, gloves, scarves and warm socks are being accepted. Collected items will be donated to shelters throughout the community. Last day for donations is January 31st.

Thank you for your support!
Branches with Drop-Off Boxes:
South Boston Headquarters
147 West 4th Street
South Boston, MA
Seaport Branch
409 D Street
Boston, MA
Everett Branch
183 Main Street
Everett, MA
Quincy Branch
1250 Hancock Street
Quincy, MA

About Mass Bay Credit Union

Originally chartered in 1936, Mass Bay Credit Union is a not-for-profit, full-service financial institution that provides the highest level of service and personal attention to all our members. Mass Bay Credit Union operates under the Credit Union ideal of “People Helping People” and is 100% committed to providing our members with the best banking value, products and services available, with state-of-the-art technology and unparalleled access. Continually striving to expand and refine our product and service offerings to best meet members’ needs, Mass Bay is also dedicated to offering these services at the most competitive rates and unsurpassed value.

BALANCE IN TENANT-LANDLORD RIGHTS
Continued from front page

Generally, appear to be reacting with both skepticism and dread, as they ponder the imposition of government restrictions on their investments. Lawyers can’t be far behind and are expanding their housing litigation efforts, to be sure.

The ordinance would limit property owners’ right to evict unless tenants fail to pay rent, violate the terms of their lease, refuse to renew their lease, or damage or sublet the property. Landlords also would be allowed to evict tenants in order to take possession of the unit for their own use or for that of immediate family members.

The ordinance would not apply to owner-occupied buildings and buildings with six or fewer units, so a large portion of the city’s rental housing stock would remain exempt. Owners of large, multi-unit dwellings could still increase rents to clear out tenants in advance of condo conversions, but would be required to report any evictions to the city. Dillon said the data the city obtains from evictions would enable the Office of Housing Stability to better respond to the needs of displaced tenants. “What the Office of Housing Stability really wants to do is look at that data, figure out where evictions are happening, and then we’ll beef up our interventions and look at who’s evicting and have some frank conversations with those owners as well,” she said.

The Boston Globe editorial says, “If there’s any middle ground on the contentious issue of rent regulation in Boston, Mayor Walsh seems determined to find it. His plan, released on Monday, is the closest thing yet to a compromise between tenants worried about rising rents and landlords chafing at overregulation. The most important part of Walsh’s proposed ordinance would set up a system for generating more reliable data about evictions and displacement in the city, a crucial step that could help illuminate whether additional measures are needed.”

Both dailies admit that, in the long run, the solution to housing instability is to build more housing. That’s been the overall thrust of the mayor’s housing policy, which calls for 53,000 new units in the city by 2030. The notification policy is a good step, but the best way to stop no-fault evictions would be to continue growing the housing market until landlords realize they need to think twice before throwing out a paying tenant.

This will likely be a political football that is now in the hands of the City Council. The 2016 Council has new players and this issue will be a test of political nerve.
Dear Friends and Neighbors:

On behalf of the Fiasconaro Family – Thank you for your support! Words cannot express how humbled and special we feel to be part of such an amazing community. We wish we could thank each of you personally.

For those of you that were able to join us October 21st, we hope you had a great time and were able to connect with friends and family.

We would like to extend a very special thank you to Bobby and Paula Linehan for pulling this together and making for such a memorable evening. In addition, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to the hard-working COMMITTEE, the fabulous and talented ENTERAINMENT, the many SPONSORS and LOCAL VENDORS and BUSINESS that donated gift certificates and goods for the raffle table, all our FAMILY, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS that donated silent auction and items such as vacation homes, creative baskets and handmade items to the beautiful paintings, just to name a few.

We would also like to extend a special thank you to the SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF’S DEPARTMENT.

Thank you, again! Sincerely, the Fiasconaro Family

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BCYF Tynan Happenings

Last week, some of the Tynan Community Center Council and their children met at the BCYF Tynan for an instructional wreath making course, which was open to the public. Our president of the council Mary Maiullari and council member Mary McCarthy Collins led the efforts in teaching how to make Christmas wreaths. It was an enjoyable evening with many laughable moments, but when all was said and done it was remarkable how all the wreaths were decorated and looked very professionally made!

During the Christmas tree lighting on East Broadway some of our teen membership, along with our council president, were out selling the wreaths to our neighbors and friends who were very generous and kind to buy all our wreaths. The proceeds will go directly into the council programs at the bcyf tynan. (Because of the overwhelming outpour of people wanting to buy a Christmas wreath the council has made some more and are available at the bcyf tynan on a first come first serve basis.)

We would also like to extend a special thank you to the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department. Thank you, again!

Sincerely, the Fiasconaro Family

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Holiday Sing-along at the Library December 14

Join in the spirit of the season at David Polansky’s Holiday Singalong, a concert for adults and seniors that will have our entire audience singing. Renowned pianist David performs his award-winning songs for Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa as well as holiday standards like “Winter Wonderland,” “Jingle Bell Rock,” “Let It Snow,” “I Have a Little Dreidel,” and more. Come and join in the fun!

The concert starts at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, December 14 at the South Boston Branch Library, 646 East Broadway. We hope to see you there!
Salvation Army Bell Ringers: Helping the Less Fortunate Each Christmas

SOUTH BOSTON TODAY - By Staff

There are several ways to tell that Christmas is fast approaching. Christmas Carols are being sung at Church, Christmas music is on the radio and once again it is even returning to the public square, after a few years of almost being banned. Those old familiar and beloved Yuletide movie classics on TV along with some brand new ones are being shown round the clock on some channels. Light displays, Christmas Trees and a sort of magic in the air as the date draws closer also lets us know that it’s that special time of year again. Ah, but let’s not forget that other telltale sign of the season: The Salvation Army bell ringers on street corners, at the entrance to our favorite stores and pretty much everywhere that shoppers flock.

The Salvation Army, as described by Wikipedia, is a Christian denominational Church and charitable organization structured in its primary goals is to help relieve poverty as best it can for any and all people; no matter who they are, where ever there is a need; a noble goal by any standard.

The Salvation Army was established in 1865 by William Booth and has been going and growing ever since. But its activities, as most know are not limited to raising money for the poor during the Christmas Season. Where ever and whenever there is a need, they rush to the scene of that need and swing right into action. Whether it is an earthquake, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes and any number of other natural disasters, ‘The Army’ is always one of the first to respond bringing with it whatever is required to assist. Their volunteers and staff have in every case proven to be competent, professional and above all compassionate with the will, the energy and the ability to help ease the pain and trauma of the victims. But even more than that, they help lay the foundation for long term and permanent recovery, so that the victims can get their lives back together and get back on their feet as soon as possible.

One of the most impressive aspects of the Salvation Army is the fact that much like every religious organization and church, a much larger percentage of funds raised goes directly to those people who need it. Unlike many other charities which have CEO’s and directors that draw huge salaries and pay out much to staffing and plusher office accommodations etc., The Salvation Army by comparison has very low administrative costs allowing it to give just about all the funds and donations it collects directly to those requiring it. To say the work its members do is a labor of love would seem to describe the work they do accurately. Over the years, they have often been referred to as Angels.

So, the next time you walk into Stop and Shop on E. Broadway or into a Walmart or your favorite store at the mall and hear those bells ringing and see the volunteers shivering in the cold air wishing all a Merry Christmas, it’s important to remember that the work these dedicated volunteers are doing comes from the heart. The money you might choose to drop into their festive red containers is sure to go right to someone who truly needs it this Christmas Season.

And if you think of it, why not take a little time to thank the manager of the business or store for allowing the Salvation Army to set up at their location. It will mean a lot to everyone involved and help allow a wonderful tradition to continue forever or for as long as it is needed. If you want more information about the Salvation Army or how to make a donation, you can call one of the local locations here in Boston at 617-547-3400 or go online and type Salvation Army into any search engine to learn all about it.

The Christmas wreath at Ladder 19 is beautiful and BIG

Well, there are Christmas wreaths and then there are Christmas wreaths. They come in all sizes. But the one that’s hanging on the iron fence at the fire station at K and E. Fourth Street is enormous (did they use a flatbed to bring it in?) and its shape is perfect and when its lit up and even when it’s not, it’s beautiful. No one can ever accuse the firefighters of Ladder 19 of not being in the Christmas spirit.

Each year they top the previous season with their decorations and it looks AWESOME. Good job and thank you for helping South Boston ring in the season in such a nice way as you always do. SBT
Listen up. I’ve been on an absolute roll lately. I went 4-1 last week, 4-1 in Week 12, and 3-1-1 in Week 11. Let me do the math for you. That means I’m 11-3-1 in the last three weeks. There’s no reason to slow down now, so let’s get back to work.

Here are my picks for Week 14:

**MINNESOTA VIKINGS (-3.5) over Jacksonville Jaguars**

-A common theme you’ll notice with this week’s picks is I’m NFC-heavy. That’s right, all five of my picks are NFC teams. And the Minnesota Vikings have fallen on hard times after beginning the season 5-0. The Vikings have since lost six of their last seven and are now in second place in the NFC North with a 6-6 record. They’re coming off a 17-15 loss to the Dallas Cowboys on Thursday night. So perhaps the extra rest will help them prepare for Sunday’s game in Jacksonville. But they might not need it, because the Jaguars are 2-10 and have lost seven straight. Minnesota still has a shot to make the playoffs, while the only thing Jacksonville has a shot at is the No. 1 overall pick. And with Cleveland still winless, I don’t even know if Jacksonville has that.

Minnesota still has one of the best defenses in the NFL, allowing just 17.4 points-per-game, which ranks fourth in the league. The struggling Vikings shouldn’t have a problem going to Florida and grabbing a win. Minnesota by a touchdown.

**DETROIT LIONS (-9) over Chicago Bears**

-The Detroit Lions have won four straight and are coming off an impressive 28-13 win over the Saints in New Orleans. Some are throwing Matthew Stafford’s name around in MVP discussions, mainly because, if the playoffs began today, the 8-4 first-place Lions would be the No. 3 seed in the NFC, and would be hosting a playoff game. Meanwhile, the Chicago Bears are 3-9, and even though they defeated the Lions earlier in the season, this one will be in Detroit, and the Bears are 0-6 on the road. The Lions are 5-1 at home, and at this point, they deserve a whole lot of respect for what they’ve been able to do this season without Calvin Johnson. It feels like the Lions are playing their best football. They should roll on the Bears.

**TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS (-2.5) over New Orleans Saints**

-If this game was in New Orleans, I would probably just stay away. But since it’s in Tampa Bay, I have to jump all over the home-cooking for a Buccaneers team that has won four straight and — much like Detroit — deserves a ton of respect for what they’ve been doing lately. Tampa Bay is 7-5, and if the playoffs began today, the Buccaneers would be in the playoffs as the final wild card team in the NFC. And with Atlanta also at 7-5, the division title is still in play as well. Also, you can’t overlook who the Buccaneers have beaten during this four-game win streak. They went into Kansas City and pulled out a 24-17 win over the Chiefs, and beat the Seattle Seahawks 14-5 at home. What Tampa Bay is doing is no joke. Meanwhile, New Orleans is 5-7 and has an offense that seems ready to go off every single weekend. Still, with this one being in Tampa, I’m giving the Buccaneers a serious defensive edge.

**SEATTLE SEAHAWKS (-3.5) over Green Bay Packers**

-The Seattle Seahawks just whooped the Carolina Panthers on Sunday Night Football, as I told you they would. At 8-3-1, they can clinch the NFC West on Sunday with a win and an Arizona loss. I expect the Seahawks to do their part and go into Green Bay and defeat the 6-6 Packers. I counted the Packers out weeks ago, but they’ve shown some signs of life with a two-game win streak. If the playoffs began today, Green Bay would not be in the playoffs. Seattle could very well end the Packers’ season on Sunday at Lambeau. Even with Earl Thomas’ injury, the Seahawks have enough defensive punch to shut down Aaron Rodgers. And Russell Wilson looks as good as he’s ever looked. I can’t bet against the Seahawks right now. And Green Bay is having a tough season. Seattle by a touchdown.

**NEW YORK GIANTS (+3.5) over Dallas Cowboys**

-To this point, the Dallas Cowboys are the only team in the league to have clinched a playoff spot. At 11-1, they can clinch the NFC East with a win over the 8-4 New York Giants on Sunday night at MetLife. Dallas can also clinch a first-round bye and home-field advantage throughout the playoffs with a win and several other scenarios. Problem is, I don’t think Dallas is going to win on Sunday night, which would put off all of these clinching scenarios until Week 15. The Giants have given the Cowboys their only loss of the season. That was all the way back in Week 1. If the playoffs began today, the Giants would be in, as a wild card team. They are coming off a loss to the Steelers in Pittsburgh, but their rush defense is top-five in the NFL, and that certainly helps against my MVP, Ezekiel Elliott. I think the Giants get into the playoffs, and I think another win over the Cowboys will make them an NFC contender when the playoffs begin. Jump all over the points for the home dog.

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