



Friday, February 7, 2025

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Transit leader takes helm at Conservancy board



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Bill Webster

Posted Thursday, February 6, 2025 12:00 am

by **Carla Robinson** (/browse.html?byline=Carla Robinson)

The Chestnut Hill Conservancy has named Bill Webster, SEPTA's Chief Communications Officer, as the new president of its board of directors, the organization announced today.

Webster succeeds Eileen Javers, who led the organization for eight years and will remain on the board and executive committee. The appointment comes as the conservancy works to balance historic preservation with environmental conservation in Philadelphia's Chestnut Hill neighborhood.

"Chestnut Hill is unique in that it's a walkable, engaging neighborhood where people genuinely connect," said Webster, who moved to the area in 2018 with his partner, Jeff Dugan. "The key is ensuring that people understand their role in shaping what happens next."

In his role at SEPTA, Webster oversees public engagement for one of the nation's largest transit systems. He previously helped secure State and National Historic District designations while working with the Montrose Park Historic District Association in New Jersey.

Webster emphasized that the Conservancy isn't opposed to development but advocates for growth that preserves the neighborhood's character. "What we advocate for is responsible development – that respects the character of Chestnut Hill and ensures that what makes this community special isn't lost in the process," he said.

Among Webster's priorities is expanding educational programs about preservation tools and local decision-making processes, including zoning laws and variances. He aims to help residents better understand and engage with development issues affecting their community.

"Many people care deeply about preservation and conservation, but they don't always understand the mechanisms that shape what happens in their neighborhood," Webster said. "An informed community is a more empowered community – one that knows when and how to engage to affect a meaningful impact."

The appointment comes as the conservancy works with new Executive Director David Gest to protect the built and natural environment of the Wissahickon watershed. Webster noted that balancing historic preservation with environmental sustainability presents both challenges and opportunities.



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"We don't prioritize one over the other," he said. "Instead, our goal is to strike a thoughtful balance, ensuring that our built and natural environments remain protected for future generations."

Growing up near Washington, D.C., Webster witnessed the impacts of urban renewal firsthand, seeing communities either erased or strengthened through preservation efforts. This experience shaped his commitment to community-driven preservation.

"I saw the stark contrast between areas like Southwest Washington, where everything was torn down in the name of progress, and neighborhoods like Capitol Hill and Georgetown, where engaged residents came together to protect their architectural and cultural heritage," Webster said.

OTHER ITEMS THAT MAY INTEREST YOU

Mt. Airy residents in crash: 1 dead, 2 critical (/stories/mt-airy-residents-in-crash-1-dead-2-critical,35476)

Owner to rebuild burned art space (/stories/owner-to-rebuild-burned-art-space,35477)

Arrest at local ACME (/stories/arrest-at-local-acme,35481)

Shuttered G-town Rite-Aid may be a senior care ... (/stories/shuttered-g-town-rite-aid-to-be-a-senior-care-facility,35487)

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LOCAL CALENDAR

<p>Fri, Feb 21 @5:00pm Sponsored ROTC Ball</p> <p>La Salle Union Ballroom Philadelphia, PA Fri, Feb 07</p> <p>FRIDAY NIGHT KARAOKE</p> <p>3223 W. Germantown Pike Fri, Feb 07</p> <p>Helium Presents: Adam Ferrara</p> <p>Helium Comedy Club Philadelphia Fri, Feb 07</p>	<p>Sun, Feb 16 Sponsored Word Play: Mining the Text with Krista Apple</p> <p>The Wilma Theater Philadelphia, PA</p>	<p>Tue, Feb 18 Sponsored PA CareerLink Job Search Assistance</p> <p>Greater Olney Branch Philadelphia, PA</p>	<p>Fri, Feb 21 @5:00pm Sponsored ROTC Ball</p> <p>La Salle Union Ballroom Philadelphia, PA</p>
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THE LATEST

Our water matters (/stories/our-water-matters-package,35507)

Twelve years ago, Philadelphia embarked on an innovative program to keep sewage out of its waterways.



St. Katherine's tops St. Philip Neri girls in Snowball finals (/stories/st-katherines-tops-st-philip-neri-girls-in-snowball-finals,35506)

In the girls' bracket in last week's annual Norwood Fontbonne Academy Snowball Tournament, St. Philip Neri was able to return to the championship game, but ultimately could not retain the title in 2024.

(/stories/st-katherines-tops-st-philip-neri-girls-in-snowball-finals,35506)



NFA boys finish second in 51st Snowball basketball tournament (/stories/nfa-boys-finish-second-in-51st-snowball-basketball-tournament,35505)

In the 51st edition of Norwood Fontbonne Academy's annual Snowball Tournament, home team fans saw their own beloved Bears take a serious run at the 2025 championship.

(/stories/nfa-boys-finish-second-in-51st-snowball-basketball-tournament,35505)



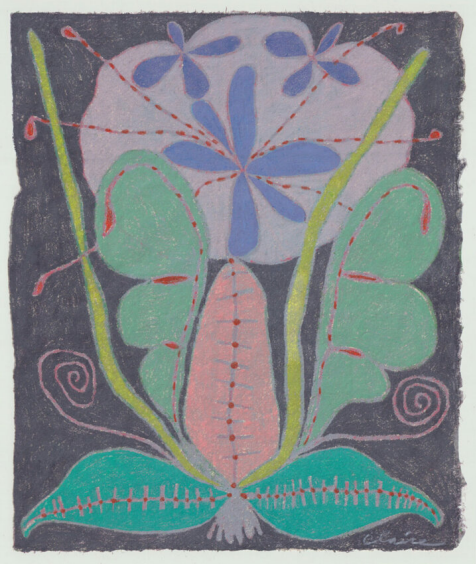
Mary Jane Shelly, longtime Local editor and reporter dies at 94 (/stories/mary-jane-shelly-longtime-local-editor-and-reporter-dies-at-94,35504)

During her decades as a journalist at the Local, Shelly not only won statewide awards for her work, but also earned the deep respect and gratitude of the community she loved and served for more than 30 years.

(/stories/mary-jane-shelly-longtime-local-editor-and-reporter-dies-at-94,35504)

Winterbloom art exhibit takes root at Schuylkill Center (/stories/winterbloom-art-exhibit-takes-root-at-schuylkill-center,35501)

The work of acclaimed artist Claire Downes Whitehurst is featured in an exhibit at the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education.



(/stories/winterbloom-art-exhibit-takes-root-at-schuylkill-center,35501)



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 **The Chestnut Hill Local**
on Thursday

Mary Jane Shelly, a longtime reporter and editor for the Chestnut Hill Local, was known for her dogged abilities as a journalist.



CHESTNUTHILLLOCAL.COM
Mary Jane Shelly, longtime ...
During her decades as a journalist...

6 Comment 1

 **The Chestnut Hill Local**



Chestnut Hill Local

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