

Meetings and Hearings

As of press time on April 6, a subset of meetings that might be scheduled had been posted. To see what meetings are actually posted, go to www.harvard.ma.us. To comply with Massachusetts General Laws Open Meeting Law, agendas must be posted at least 48 hours in advance. Until further notice, meetings may be either on Zoom or in person, per the posted agenda. To obtain Zoom conferencing info, go to www.harvard-ma.gov.

Monday, April 11

School Committee, 6:15 p.m.
Municipal Affordable Housing Trust, 8 p.m.

Tuesday, April 12

Select Board, 7 p.m.



Local professional provides art direction for winner of 2022 best picture Oscar

by Amanda LaRiviere

As a streaming service subscriber, Harvard resident Paul Richards missed last week's live broadcast of the 2022 Academy Awards ceremony where "CODA," the Massachusetts-based film he worked on, won three Oscars. Through text messages, his family and friends told him the exciting news. But Richards, an experienced art director of about 12 years, was not surprised.

"The nature of the story, a sort of positive, coming-of-age challenge for a young person, for me was refreshing, given the news of the world at this point," said Richards. A private screening of "CODA" for cast and crew left him feeling immensely happy, he said, with a sense of pride and enjoyment for a project he has worked on that is rare.

"CODA" was nominated for three Oscars and took them all home—best picture, best adapted screenplay for director Sian Heder, and best supporting actor for Troy Kotsur, who became the first deaf actor to win this award.

Set in the coastal town of Gloucester, "CODA" features a predominantly deaf cast in leading roles. Ruby Rossi, played by Emilia Jones, is the hearing child of deaf adults, otherwise known as a CODA. While she serves as an interpreter for her family as they work at the local harbor catching and selling fish, Rossi decides to enroll in her high school choir to pursue her passion for singing. Rossi's choir teacher soon recognizes her undeniable talent, which her family will never hear, and urges her to apply to Berklee College of Music. She then finds her life to be a balancing act as she takes singing lessons and works as an interpreter for her family's struggling fish business.

Art director Richards helped realize the vision for the film's design and set work, while ensuring other departments, such as construction, paint, and decorating, completed their work as planned.

"I really enjoyed getting ready for the boat and harbor stuff since I love the ocean in general," said Richards, adding that as a low-budget film of about \$10 million, more locations were needed for shots since sets could not be built for every scene. Richards said another highlight for him was shooting scenes at an unused school in Beverly. "A number of school sets were done there. That was fun pulling that together, back from vacant, filthy rooms."

Richards began his career in the arts using the skills he learned as a carpenter in the '80s. His first venture was on the pilot episode of the '90s television show "Against the Law," where he later moved into the set decorating department. He was leadman—the set decoration department member responsible for the props and set dressing on a film set—for about ten years on such films as "Good Will Hunting," "8 Mile," and "The Departed."

Now he works predominantly as an art director.

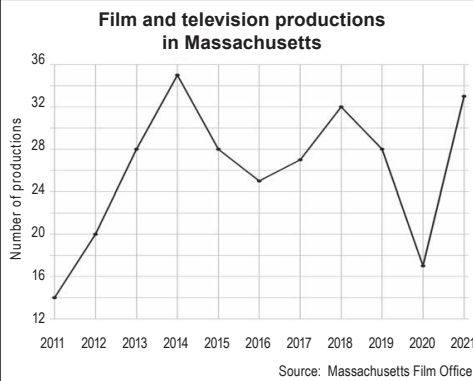
Richards said he looks forward to working on movies that are made locally in Massachusetts because the state has a variety of different looks. "You can get to the ocean, the mountains, and the country's not too far away," said Richards. "I've even shot some fairly contained stuff that is supposed to be the exteriors and interiors of Paris, France."

Another draw for filmmakers to work in Massachusetts is the tax incentives. According to the Massachusetts Film Office, any production that spends more than \$50,000 in the state qualifies for a 25% payroll credit. In addition, if more than 75% of the total budget or principal photography days are completed in state, filmmakers also qualify for a 25% production credit and sales tax exemption.

"One of the things I think is great about the tax credit is that it is spread throughout the state, as opposed to some tax credits, which might be concentrated a lot of times in Boston," said Richards.

Despite these incentives, Richards said there is still a shortage of local people working in the film industry. He would like to see a mentorship program created for people coming out of skilled trades, which could involve taking people that build houses and teaching them how to build scenery. "There's a learning curve because it has to look how it has to look, but it doesn't have to function or last."

Richards attributed the success of "CODA" to the director, who grew up in Cambridge but spent her childhood summers visiting Gloucester. To him, that made a huge difference in how the film was approached—from a localized perspective. "I could tell from the beginning that she had her finger on the pulse of Gloucester and had high hopes," said Richards. "But often the end result doesn't end up, certainly, with an Oscar."



POLICE LOG

In the past week, police made eight motor vehicle stops, five resulting in verbal warnings and three in written warnings or citations. They also helped one person who was locked out of a car and responded to two false burglar alarms. The Ambulance Service was called to four medical emergencies and took four people to the hospital, three with Advanced Life Support services in attendance.

Tuesday, March 29: At 9:12 p.m. a 911 caller reported an ex-friend had broken into a house on Finn Road and was stealing items; but police checked the premises and found the building secure and no theft in progress.

Wednesday, March 30: At 10:05 p.m. an off-duty Shirley police officer called to report seeing a car swerve and nearly crash on Stow Road; the car drove on to Bolton and then Stow, with the calls being transferred to those departments. At 11:29 p.m. an East Bare Hill Road resident called 911 because a family member had run out of the house in severe mental distress; the ambulance squad took the person to a hospital.

Thursday, March 31: At 1:24 p.m. a driver reported a branch on the utility lines on Poor Farm Road; an officer was able to remove the branch. At 6:29 p.m. an officer found a trash barrel had blown into the road and moved it out of the way.

Friday, April 1: At 4:48 a.m. an Old Littleton Road resident called 911 asking to speak to an officer about a person violating a probation warrant. The person—a 28-year-old man—turned himself in at the police station, was arrested, and was later transported to Clinton District Court. At 10:08 a.m. an officer saw a vehicle blocking the Ayer rotary and told the driver to move. At 6:24 p.m. an officer helped a West Bare Hill resident catch a loose dog.

Saturday, April 2: Nothing significant to report.

Sunday, April 3: At 8:15 a.m. an Old Shirley Road resident called police to say a van had driven up and down their driveway at 4:30 a.m.

Monday, April 4: At 7:08 a.m. someone called 911 with suspicions about a car parked overnight at a conservation area on South Shaker Road; police found the car was unoccupied, and nothing seemed amiss. At 4:01 p.m. an Old Littleton Road resident called to report a sign on his property had been vandalized. At 4:21 p.m. someone reported a dog in the road near the General Store, and the animal control officer was called. At 4:47 p.m. a caller reported a paving truck causing traffic problems on Still River Road, and an officer went to direct traffic around the paving work. At 6:24 p.m. a 911 caller reported gunshots in the area of West Bare Hill Road; police checked the area but did not find the source of the sounds.

FIRE LOG

The Fire Department received no emergency calls this week.

The police and fire logs are written by a Harvard Press reporter based on information gleaned from daily dispatch logs and interviews with police and fire staff. Decisions to publish or withhold the names of people arrested will be based on our need to balance the privacy of individuals with our responsibility to report news of significance.

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