

Promoting Informed

Debate Through

2008 - 2009 Annual Report

Public Policy Research



The Research Bureau

" At Commerce Bank, we've been helping people and businesses prosper for over half a century. From investing in our neighborhoods to volunteering our time, our commitment remains unchanged: to deliver products, services and capabilities our customers and communities want, need and deserve.

We're proud to support The Research Bureau in its efforts to research public policy issues. Our long-standing support for local organizations is a key factor in our commitment to stimulate economic growth and well-being in the communities we serve throughout Massachusetts. As this year's Presenting Sponsor, Commerce Bank further underscores this commitment and salutes The Research Bureau for its tireless efforts."

Brian W. Thompson
President and CEO
Commerce Bank



Commerce Bank



A Message from the Chairman of the Board



Photograph by David Fox

Isaiah Berlin's essay about Tolstoy distinguished between the fox and the hedgehog: "the fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." The Research Bureau often appears to possess the characteristics of both when dealing with our customary topics of interest as well as new ones that events and circumstances thrust upon us. Annual benchmarking reports and panel discussions about state and municipal budgets earn our attention along with special forums such as "Life Sciences in the Worcester Community: A Vision for the Future," which focused on a Worcester success story hiding in plain view, and "closing the achievement gap in public education," a topic which has long vexed experts ranging from Daniel Patrick Moynihan to William Julius Wilson. Like the hedgehog, we view the world through the lens of a single defining idea, what best promotes good public policy, while drawing freely from a wide variety of experiences, sources of information and concepts like the fox.

The secret of The Research Bureau's success is its ability to forge relationships with diverse constituencies and to collaborate with others who share common goals of revitalizing and restoring prosperity to the Worcester region. Working with city and town officials at all levels, neighborhood associations, public and private agencies, associations and institutes, The Research Bureau is a respected resource for financially-challenged local governments seeking public policy guidance.

Each year, every year for the past twenty-four years, The Research Bureau has enlivened our local marketplace of ideas. Forums have been presented that are meant to educate, illuminate or provoke. Thanks to Lt. Governor Tim Murray and his Administration's transportation team, "Getting from Here to There: The Central Mass Transportation Network" forum did all that and more before a large audience at the CMRPC Union Hall. Reports have been researched and drafted that aim to cogently explain issues which are or should be on the radar screens of our reigning Zeitgeist. The Research Bureau satisfies its mission when controversy is sparked, debate follows, and public policy is examined or re-examined by those who govern. The Research Bureau seeks to help and doesn't aim to please. Would you want it any other way?

The Research Bureau has long been fortunate in attracting concerned, committed citizens to serve on its board of directors and its executive committee. I wish to thank the present executive committee members for their thoughtfulness, collegiality and diligence. They are: Sandra Dunn, James Paulhus, Agnes Kull, D. M. Moschos, Dennis Berkey, James Curran, David Forsberg, Bruce Gaultney, Philip Morgan, Kevin O'Sullivan, Eric Schultz, and George Tetler.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian J. Buckley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brian J. Buckley, Esq.
Chairman of the Board

Notes from the President

The current recession has triggered a crisis in public finance across the nation and at all levels of government. But nowhere is the impact more apparent than in cities and towns, which are required to balance their budgets and, in the Commonwealth, where they are so dependent on local aid allocations. (About 50% of Worcester's revenue comes from the state.) Worcester's ability, as well as that of many other municipalities, to maintain the core services of public safety, public education and public infrastructure is at stake. This threat, however, is not new; it has just been exacerbated by current circumstances.

For more than two decades, The Research Bureau has been analyzing the delivery of municipal services and identifying cost structures which are unsustainable over the long term. For example, we identified the cost of municipal employee health insurance as a growing problem as far back as the early 1990's and pointed out for many years that the generous benefits afforded employees could not be sustained as health insurance costs continued to rise. Three years ago the City Manager began negotiating changes in contribution rates and co-pays which have resulted in at least \$45 million in savings thus far.

As a second instance, for the last few years The Research Bureau has been recommending the sale or lease of municipal assets that are unrelated to the City's core mission. We have made this recommendation in the context of our annual analyses of the City's finances, which indicate that the City cannot continue to subsidize facilities like Union Station, Hope Cemetery, and Worcester Regional Airport without jeopardizing core municipal services.

In October 2008, the City Manager asked the City Council to endorse his plans to explore long-term leases for some of the City's assets. The Manager has hired a company to assist in determining which assets would be attractive to private investors and to seek out those investors. Municipally-owned parking garages and parking lots have been added to the list of public facilities for potential lease. Preliminary discussions indicate that the City may be able to lease these garages for about \$50 million. The City Manager wants to use the proceeds to repair the City's streets and sidewalks (the number one problem identified in our ComNET surveys) and to repair public school buildings.

Third, our recent analysis of the public employee pension system in the Commonwealth indicates that the defined-benefit plan currently offered cannot be sustained indefinitely, even if all the loopholes for abuse were closed. The problem with such plans has been widely recognized by the private sector, where only 10% of companies continue to offer them exclusively compared to 60% twenty-five years ago. Moreover, 50% of Worcester's public-safety employees retire on accidental disability pensions which cost 70% more than superannuation pensions. Once the employees are hired, they are never required to meet physical fitness requirements to continue employment. The Research Bureau suggested that public safety employees meet fitness standards on a regular basis and that the current retirement system be closed to new employees and some form of defined-contribution

system be substituted. Addressing these reforms will require enabling legislation from the state.

Although the impact of the recession is serious, it also provides the opportunity to engage in extensive reform of government operations of the kind we have suggested. We hope that the Commonwealth and its cities and towns will take advantage of this opportunity.

The Research Bureau's ability to continue conducting the kind of independent research and analysis of public policy issues described above depends on the support of numerous individuals and institutions. One of those individuals, Fairman Cowan, passed away last fall. He was a prime mover behind the founding and success of The Research Bureau, as well as a dear friend and mentor. I have included in this report a tribute to Fair adapted from the eulogy I was privileged to give at the Mechanics Hall memorial service in his honor. Fair was a community treasure who cannot be replaced.

Natural treasures that cannot be replaced are our municipal parks, pictures of which are featured throughout this report. Unfortunately, parks are among the first to experience budget cuts during a fiscal crisis. These wonderful photos by Carolyn Baltas, who has been designing The Research Bureau's annual report for many years, are intended to serve as a reminder that residents and government must form partnerships and agreements to maintain these assets and ensure that they do not deteriorate during this recession.

I also want to extend special thanks to The Research Bureau's Executive Committee for spending countless hours setting our agenda and promoting our work. We are also deeply indebted to the Board of Directors, the corporate and foundation communities, and individuals from all walks of life for their support. These contributors as well as those who have provided in-kind services and financial sponsorship of forums and other events are listed at the end of this report. We are extremely grateful to all of them for their generosity. The media coverage, especially from the Telegram & Gazette and WCRN radio, is extremely valuable in extending our reach and educating the public about the issues we research. And it goes without saying that an organization is only as good as its staff, and The Research Bureau's small staff, Jean Deleso, Laura Swanson and Stephen Eide, has boundless enthusiasm and capacity for hard work, for which I thank and commend them heartily.

My sincerest thanks to all.



Roberta Rubel Schaefer



Research



Raising Student Achievement

During the last two years, The Research Bureau has published five studies and organized three public forums on the Worcester Public Schools. This focus is very intentional:

- The Worcester Public Schools is considered a low-performing district by the Commonwealth's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- The majority of graduates will continue their post-secondary education in this region and they must be prepared for college-level work.
- The majority of graduates will seek employment in this region, and our economy requires a well-educated workforce. In other words, there is a direct connection between public education and economic development.
- A new superintendent has been appointed to the Worcester Public Schools and The Research Bureau hopes to provide her with data and support.
- The Worcester Public Schools is the single largest municipal department with a staff of more than 3,000 and an FY09 budget of \$279 million, more than the rest of all other municipal departments combined. It deserves careful scrutiny of revenues, expenditures, and outcomes.

In one report, The Research Bureau examined some of the school district's challenges, how similar school districts are addressing these challenges, and the implications of these findings for a superintendent managing an urban school district consisting of some 23,000 socio-economically diverse students.

Findings

- Improving academic performance is a function of the dynamics at each individual school since school performance can vary widely within the same district.
- The factors that contribute to differences in schools include school leadership, authority over selecting and assigning staff, control over the school's budget and schedule, the "school culture," and the relationships of staff with community organizations and businesses that may provide resources for enhancing school programs.
- Higher performing urban schools have missions and programs that have been established by a collaborative process involving teachers and administrators.

Bottom Line

- Heterogeneous urban school districts require various kinds of schools to fit particular circumstances and populations. For example, some students may require a longer school day and school year, others may need programs designed for academically-talented students, and others may need to be in single-sex classrooms to fulfill their academic potential.
- Meeting the variety of challenges facing the Worcester Public Schools will require a superintendent who is willing to reform the system to meet the potential of all students, who is willing to experiment with approaches that have been shown to raise the level of academic achievement in urban schools, and who is prepared to shift priorities to finance such approaches.

"For over 20 years, The Research Bureau has been this community's single organization that all citizens and public officials can rely on to produce clear non-partisan independent research on important public policy matters. As a community, we are better informed because of the work by The Research Bureau. Sovereign Bank is proud to be a supporter of The Research Bureau."

James T. Curran

Sovereign/Santander, Senior Vice President, Regional Executive, Corporate Banking Group



"The Research Bureau provides the intellectual firepower to frame the debate on pressing questions in the Greater Worcester region making discussion compelling and unavoidable"

Brian Bullock, Town Manager, Holden, MA

Promoting Economic Development

In addition to our yearly benchmarking economic development reports which track trends in the tax rate, tax base, new investment, employment, and downtown office occupancy in Worcester, The Research Bureau published a study followed by a forum on downtown Worcester's revitalization prospects. We also conducted a Computerized Environmental Neighborhood Tracking (ComNET) survey, a block-by-block survey using handheld computers and digital cameras to record street-level conditions of the entire area. The premise of these projects is that a vibrant downtown is a key factor in a city's overall



economic growth. At present, downtown properties provide 30% of the City's commercial tax revenues. Downtown has immense potential for investment and job creation which will expand the tax base for providing municipal services. Downtown revitalization is also important for attracting and retaining residents.

Findings

- At its peak in the 1950's, Worcester's downtown was a vital, bustling center of commercial and civic life.
- It declined because of urban renewal policy which razed old buildings without specific plans to replace them, the construction of an urban mall which sucked the life out of pedestrian traffic for stores on Main Street, large businesses vacating downtown for suburban-type campuses, and a decline in manufacturing which reduced the need for professional services, such as banks and law firms in downtown.

- During the past two decades, \$2.2 billion has been invested in projects planned, underway, and recently completed.
- Those completed include Union Station, Worcester Trial Court, Hilton Garden Inn, Route 146 Connector, Mass College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Hanover Theater, Gateway Park, Worcester Public Library, and Worcester Common. (CitySquare construction is expected to begin shortly)
- Worcester's excessively high commercial/industrial tax rate (\$28.72 compared to Shrewsbury's of \$9.68 in FY09) and lack of "curb appeal" are two of several obstacles to downtown revitalization.

Bottom Line

- The City Manager should develop a plan for phasing out Worcester's dual tax rate.
- The state Legislature should approve a set of incentives to redevelop the downtowns of the Commonwealth's older industrial cities. The City Manager working with his counterparts in the state has developed incentives related to residential property development, commercial and industrial property development, and business and job growth.
- The City Manager should improve the "curb appeal" of downtown by enforcing ordinances with respect to the removal of obsolete signs, and providing incentives (via state legislative approval) to enhance retail property.
- The City Manager should authorize an increase in police foot patrols to overcome an inaccurate perception that downtown is unsafe.



"The Research Bureau is a unique and valuable contributor to quality of life and economic development in Worcester and Central Massachusetts. Through its research reports and public forums it educates all of us about what we do well, what we must improve, and what issues we will have to face in making our future."

John Bassett, President, Clark University

Strengthening Municipal Finance

The Research Bureau again published our annual analyses of Worcester's budget and the factors affecting its bond rating. We issued a special report on the public employee pension system because of revelations of numerous abuses and the impact of the recession on retirement investment portfolios. The Worcester Retirement System (WRS) lost about 30% of its value during the past year which must be compensated by taxpayers in order to meet unfunded liability obligations.

Findings

- The total employer (taxpayer) cost of the WRS in FY09 was \$41.6 million, more than the budget of the Worcester Fire Department, the Department of Public Works and Parks, and almost as much as the Worcester Police Department.
- Public employees enjoy considerably more retirement security than workers in the private sector because a defined-benefit plan generates a retirement annuity regardless of market conditions.
- While the private sector has seen a massive shift from defined-benefit to defined-contribution retirement plans over the past 30 years (about 10% of private-sector workers are now under a defined-benefit plan only), defined-benefit plans remain the norm in public employment.
- The retirement benefits of public safety personnel are more expensive than most other public employees because they are allowed to retire and collect full benefits ten years earlier than other employees (age 45 for retirement and 55 for full benefits).
- Public safety employees have much higher rates of accidental disability retirements than other employees.

About 50% of retired Worcester police and fire personnel are receiving accidental disability pensions, which are, on average, 70% higher than superannuation pensions.

Bottom Line

- The state Legislature should establish fitness standards that public safety personnel must meet annually so as to reduce the number of applicants for accidental disability pensions.
- The state should establish a separate, statewide retirement system for employees in hazardous occupations so that the costs are fully transparent.
- The state Legislature should reform the cancer presumption law, removing many of the current job-related cancer presumptions which are not based in medical evidence. (There are no cancer presumption laws in 23 other states.)
- The state Legislature should adopt a more transparent and deliberate process for granting increases in benefits, such as the "cooling off" period in Georgia. This process enables legislators to understand the long-term liabilities of this increase in benefits and to locate a source of revenue for funding them.
- The Governor should appoint a commission to design a plan to close the current defined-benefit system to all new employees, and enroll them in a defined-contribution system. A defined-contribution retirement plan offers more certainty to public budgeting, less opportunity for abuse, equity with taxpayers in the private sector, and ultimately, the end of taxpayer liability for generations to come.

Improving Municipal and Neighborhood Services

Each year, The Research Bureau tracks government performance in providing core services to Worcester's residents. These include public safety, public works, public education, public library, and parks and recreation. This year, we issued a special report on Worcester's parks and recreational facilities which are an essential component of physical and psychological well-being in dense, urban areas. Under fiscal pressure, however, parks are among the first areas to experience budget cuts. The findings presented here were developed prior to the FY10 budget which will reflect the impact of the recession.

Findings

- The total number of positions in the Division of Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery decreased from 67 to 56, or 16%, between FY98 and FY07.
- Total spending for this division as a percentage of the City's total budget decreased by more than 7% between FY00 and FY08.
- During the same time period, the City added seven parks and six playgrounds resulting in a 27% increase in mowing and other maintenance duties.
- Worcester spends less per capita on parks and recreation than any of the other eight cities that were surveyed.

Bottom Line

Based on our analysis of parks maintenance in Worcester and other cities, The Research Bureau found that there are two major methods for generating revenues outside of using tax levy funds for that purpose:

- Developing partnerships with other non-profit institutions, businesses, and residents.
- Changing the fee structure for use of facilities depending on type, user, day, and length of use.

The Research Bureau recommends that the City pursue both options.

Partnerships can be formed for a variety of purposes:

- Maintenance of the park such as the agreement among the City of Philadelphia, the Friends of Clark Park, and the University City District.
- Revenue raising through park facilities and concessions such as Roger Williams Park where the Zoological Society and Friends of the (Natural History) Museum generate revenues from concessions which are then used for park operations and capital expenditures.
- Joint-use agreements between a city and a school district which share the same facilities thereby eliminating duplication of facilities and programs.
- Management agreements where a city enters into a formal agreement with another entity detailing the responsibilities of each group. The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and the Central Park Conservancy are examples of this kind of arrangement.

The current fiscal crisis heightens the need for developing the kinds of public-private partnerships described above so we do not let our parks deteriorate during this recession.

The full text of all Research Bureau reports is available online at www.wrrb.org.

"The Research Bureau continues to provide our region with comprehensive reports, interesting forums, and straightforward recommendations to improve public policy. As a business operating in the private sector, the Bureau's work helps us to stay current on the issues that have a direct effect on our ability to remain competitive in Central Massachusetts"

Francis W. Madigan III
F.W. Madigan Company, Inc.



Events



Meetings & Receptions

Board of Directors Meeting: September 16, 2008

Featured speaker Dr. Mitchell Chester, the new Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Board of Directors Meeting: January 30, 2009

Featured speaker Attorney Michael Angelini, Research Bureau Board member and member of the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority

The Board of Directors sponsored a reception for Dr. Melinda Boone, incoming Superintendent of the Worcester Public Schools, March 31, 2009. This event was generously sponsored by the DCU Center.



"The Fuller Foundation, in keeping with its philanthropic mission of supporting the educational, cultural and healthcare institutions of the Greater Worcester region, also supports The Research Bureau for its insightful analysis of public policy issues that promote an environment in which the institutions of civil society can thrive and prosper."

Mark W. Fuller

Chairman & Treasurer, George F. & Sybil H. Fuller Foundation



Forums

In addition to its thought-provoking, often ground-breaking research, The Research Bureau organizes a number of public forums on a variety of topics that bring together diverse points of view to educate citizens and decision-makers. These events are part of The Research Bureau's Francis A. Harrington Forums.

During the past 12 months, the Bureau sponsored the following forums:

- November 13, 2008 The Housing Crisis in Massachusetts: Keeping the Roof from Caving In, co-sponsored by Commerce Bank & Trust, held at the College of the Holy Cross.
- December 12, 2008 What's Up With Downtown Worcester?: Prospects for Revitalization, co-sponsored by Davis Advertising, held at Hilton Garden Inn Worcester.
- March 11, 2009 Municipal Budgets in Limbo: How Low Can They Go?, co-sponsored by Bank of America, held in the Levi Lincoln Chamber in Worcester City Hall.
- April 27, 2009 Getting from Here to There: The Central Mass Transportation Network, co-sponsored by Providence & Worcester Railroad and Central Mass Regional Planning Commission, held at CMRPC's Union Hall in Worcester's Union Station.
- May 14, 2009 Closing the Education Achievement Gap: The Last Civil Rights Issue, co-sponsored by Clark University, held at Worcester Technical High School.

Through the generosity of the City Manager's Office, these events are videotaped and rebroadcast on the Worcester government channel. Copies are made available to other municipal government channels throughout the region, making the information presented available to thousands of citizens at no charge.



Other Projects

New England States Performance Measurement Project – (NESPMP)

Because of The Research Bureau's success in conducting government performance measurement in Worcester, the New England States Government Finance Officers Association (NESGFOA) contracted with us to implement and manage the New England States Performance Measurement Project, a 3-year pilot program. We are now in the second year working with several communities in each of the six New England states to expand the adoption of performance measurement practices at the local level by regularly collecting and reporting timely, accurate, and reliable data on selected government services that will assist policymakers, managers, and citizens in determining whether a particular service is efficient and effective. The project aims to improve service delivery and make government more responsive to its citizens by providing managers with data to inform their decision-making as well as a forum in which the identification and implementation of effective practices is fostered. The regional nature of the project allows municipal leaders to network and provides them with an opportunity to assess what is working well in other communities and identify what could enhance service delivery in their own community.



Middle Cities Project – Again, as a result of The Research Bureau's government performance measurement project in Worcester, The Pioneer Institute contracted with us to work with ten older industrial cities in Massachusetts to develop performance measures for improving local governance. Pioneer's premise is similar to The Research Bureau's: for cities like Worcester, Springfield, and Brockton to revitalize themselves and establish a healthier business climate to attract new businesses and retain older ones, they must improve service delivery and orient themselves toward better customer service. The Research Bureau's role is to work with citizen advisory committees in each of the cities to develop measures for each of the four service areas which the cities will benchmark: education, fiscal management, economic development,



and public safety. The CEO's of the cities involved and the service area professionals meet on a regular basis to assess data, learn what works and what does not, and adopt best practices.

Governmental Research Association (GRA) Annual Meeting

In July 2008, The Research Bureau, along with the Boston Municipal Research Bureau and the Mass Taxpayers Foundation, organized and hosted the GRA meeting, an annual gathering of state and local research bureaus. The meeting, which took place at Boston's Langham Hotel, consisted of three days of presentations and discussions on local and state issues, such as health care, public education and higher education, and government performance measurement. It was attended by forty-five members representing about twenty states who were able to share information on common public policy problems, learn from one another, and in their spare time, partake in the delights of Boston.



Through the generosity of our members and sponsors, all of our reports and forums continue to be available at no cost to the general public. To read more, go to www.wrrb.org and to receive our e-notices, send your email address to info@wrrb.org.

"The Research Bureau stays true to its mission by producing high quality reports that focus on the issues most important to our taxpayers."

— Michael V. O'Brien, Worcester City Manager



Thomas S. Green²⁰⁰⁸

Thomas S. Green Public Service Awards

Each year, The Research Bureau recognizes the "unsung heroes" in municipal government who work day in and day out to make Worcester and nearby communities better places to live and work. The 2008 Thomas S. Green Public Service Awards recipients, who were honored at a ceremony and reception at Assumption College, are as follows:

Maureen Binienda – Worcester Public Schools

Donna Haran – Worcester Public Schools

Cindy Ide – Administration: Town of Grafton

Edmund T. Kochling – Department of Public Works and Parks, Worcester



"I can always count on the Worcester Regional Research Bureau to conduct a thorough investigation and produce unbiased facts. They manage to avoid simply choosing results that agree with the 'popular opinion' and instead supply accurate and crucial information that businesses need to make informed decisions."

Mark Waxler, General Manager, Beechwood Hotel

Reports

May 7, 2009	Worcester's FY10 Budget: Challenges and Opportunities for Reform
May 4, 2009	Benchmarking Public Safety in Worcester: 2009
March 30, 2009	Public Employee Pensions: Is it Time to Retire the System?
December 12, 2008	Measuring Downtown Worcester's "Curb Appeal:" ComNET Results
December 11, 2008	What's Up With Downtown Worcester?: Prospects for Revitalization
November 24, 2008	Benchmarking Economic Development in Worcester: 2008
October, 2008	Downtown Worcester Office Occupancy: 2008 Survey
September 25, 2008	Benchmarking Municipal Finance in Worcester 2008: Factors Affecting the City's Bond Rating
August 8, 2008	Maintaining Municipal Parks: Thinking Outside the Picnic Basket
June 30, 2008	Choosing a New School Superintendent to Address Worcester's Challenges



Annual Meeting 2008

Each year The Research Bureau invites a prominent public official or an expert on a particular policy to be the featured speaker at its annual meeting. The 2008 guest speaker was John W. Rowe, President, Chairman and CEO of Exelon Corporation. Mr. Rowe spoke about the future of energy and the current challenges facing power producers and consumers. Mr. Rowe favors the building of more nuclear power plants because they provide clean, reliable, and efficient energy. They are the major source of energy in France and new technologies have improved the safety of those power plants. He also spoke about public education in America today and his personal involvement in starting a math and science charter school for inner-city students in Chicago. Mr. Rowe donated \$1 million to enable the school to begin operations. Mr. Rowe, who formerly served as the Chairman of The Research Bureau and as the CEO of New England Electric Systems, the predecessor to National Grid, received a warm welcome from many friends and acquaintances in the Central Mass Region.



The annual meeting was attended by approximately 350 community, business and academic leaders from the region, as well as interested citizens. The Board of Directors elected the following officers for 2008-2009:

- Brian Buckley, Director, Fletcher, Tilton & Whipple - Chairman
- Sandra Dunn, General Manager, DCU Center - Vice Chairman
- James Paulhus, President, UniBank - Vice President for Finance
- Agnes Kull, Chairman of the Board, Greenberg, Rosenblatt, Kull & Bitsoli - Treasurer
- D. M. Moschos, Partner, Mirick O'Connell - Clerk.



Photographs thanks to the Telegram and Gazette.

2009 Amity Shlaes

Financial Depression Expert, Bloomberg News Columnist, Political Economist

- 2008 **John W. Rowe**, Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer, Exelon Corporation
- 2007 **Dr. Thomas Payzant**, former Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools and Senior Lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education
- 2006 **Dr. David Driscoll**, Commissioner of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- 2005 **Tamar Jacoby**, Author and Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute
- 2004 **John Gannon**, Staff Director, U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on Homeland Security
- 2003 **Governor Mitt Romney**, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- 2002 **Fred Siegel**, Professor of History, The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, New York City, and Senior Fellow, Progressive Policy Institute
- 2001 **Heather MacDonald**, Senior Fellow, The Manhattan Institute
- 2000 **Rev. Dr. Floyd H. Flake**, Senior Pastor, Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church and former U.S. Representative to Congress
- 1999 **Howard Husock**, Director of Case Studies in Public Policy and Management, Kennedy School, Harvard University
- 1998 **Myron Magnet**, Editor, City Journal
- 1997 **Thomas Birmingham**, Senate President, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- 1996 **Glenn C. Loury**, Professor of Economics, Boston University
- 1995 **Peter Harkness**, Editor and Publisher of Governing
- 1994 **James Q. Wilson**, Author and Professor of Political Science, UCLA
- 1993 **Robert Poole**, President, Reason Foundation
- 1992 **William Hudnut**, former Mayor of Indianapolis
- 1991 **David P. Forsberg**, Secretary, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- 1990 **Bruce Carnes**, Director of Planning and Budget, Office of National Drug Control Policy
- 1989 **Edward J. Logue**, CEO, Logue Boston, former Director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority
- 1988 **Raymond Flynn**, Mayor of Boston
- 1987 **William Bulger**, Senate President, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- 1986 **Ira Jackson**, Commissioner, Department of Revenue, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

"The recipe for problem solving requires confidence in relevant facts. The Research Bureau provides not only that ingredient but also the guidance that empowers our communities to make better informed and more effective choices. That it does so with excellence is a welcome bonus."

Michael P. Angelini, Esq.
Chairman, Bowditch & Dewey

Fairman C. Cowan



Alexis deTocqueville Meets Fairman C. Cowan *A Tribute to a Treasured Friend and Wise Counselor*

In 1830, when Alexis deTocqueville visited America one of the features he found most remarkable about our nation was the vast array of civic associations. "Americans of all ages, all conditions, all minds constantly unite," he observed. "Americans use associations to give fêtes, to found seminaries, to build inns, to raise churches, to distribute books, to send missionaries to the antipodes; in this manner they create hospitals, prisons, schools ... In America I often admired the infinite art with which the inhabitants of the United States managed to fix a common goal to the efforts of many men and to get them to advance to it freely."

Tocqueville would have admired Fairman C. Cowan, a true gentleman with the demeanor of an aristocrat and the instincts of a democrat, who helped organize, shaped, and led some of our most important local civic associations over the past fifty years. When Fair passed away on October 14, 2008, Worcester lost one of its finest leaders and best friends, and a worthy model for us all to emulate.

The Research Bureau was a project tailor-made for what Fair cared about – good government, non-partisan research, and sound public policy. And when he believed in a cause, there was no stopping him.

In the early 1980's, a number of Worcester's civic leaders concluded that there was a need for a new organization to conduct independent, non-partisan research on public policy issues to replace municipal staff that had been eliminated under Proposition 2 ½; to assist the new City Manager by suggesting ways of running municipal government more effectively and efficiently; and to monitor the impact of Charter changes on public policies and electoral politics. Fairman was prominent among those leaders. A long-time supporter and advocate of Council-Manager government since moving to his adopted city from Boston in 1955, Fair suggested that we replicate the very successful Boston Municipal Research Bureau, which had been established by Boston's civic leaders in 1932. He traveled to Boston to learn about all facets of the Bureau – its organization, operations, publications, relationships with public officials, and fundraising. As a lawyer, Fair was well-positioned to draft by-laws and convince his comrades of the need for a research bureau in Worcester. And he did so very successfully.

Fair was a member of The Research Bureau's first Executive Committee and served as the first clerk of the organization. His hand-written, completed minutes were always hand-delivered, generally by moped, to The Research Bureau office the day after each Executive Committee meeting. After five years as clerk, Fair then voluntarily retired to make way for "younger" people – as if the younger people could actually keep up with him!



Fair was always full of great suggestions – which usually meant more work for everyone, especially himself. He suggested that to build trust with public officials, we offer to share drafts of reports for their comments prior to publication. This has been the Bureau's policy ever since. He also wanted the Bureau's Executive Committee to review all drafts, which he did religiously. When Fair left the Executive Committee eighteen years ago, he asked to continue to receive drafts. He had the distinction of having read and commented on every single draft report the Bureau produced until earlier this year, when he was no longer able to. He would regularly show up on our doorstep no more than two days after receiving a draft with comments and suggested changes, including grammatical ones!



In 1987, Fair's close friend, distinguished civic leader, and former vice president of the Norton Company, Tom Green, passed away. Fair suggested that to honor his memory, The Research Bureau establish the Thomas S. Green Public Service Awards for outstanding public service by municipal employees. The first awards were bestowed in 1988. Fair served on the selection committee from its inception, often participating at the event by introducing one of the recipients. Fair described his service on the Committee as an "opportunity to make new friends." This year's event was held on September 24th and it was the first one he ever missed.

The Research Bureau's public forums on urban and regional policy issues were another project of Fair's. In 1989, Fair suggested that the Bureau establish an endowment to support our public forums. He secured a \$25,000 commitment, contingent on the Bureau raising a matching amount from other sources. Using his famous powers of persuasion, he secured the matching funds from other local foundations. The yearly interest continues to provide support for The Research Bureau's forums. Fair attended nearly every one of the over 140 forums held during the past twenty-three years, actively participating in the discussions. On several occasions, he wrote letters to the editor (for which he was notorious) chastising his fellow citizens for not attending and getting involved. A few years ago, we held a forum on the morning of an ice storm. Fair was the first to arrive, while I didn't make it until the end because of the icy conditions on the hill on which I live.

Modest and self effacing, Fair always gave credit to others. On only one occasion that I know of did he let his guard down. In a letter he wrote after the Bureau's 20th anniversary celebration at which he was honored, he said the following:

"Despite protestations to the contrary, flattery is always welcome, and I enjoyed hearing all the hype and exaggerated statements which were said about me."

Of course, none of it was exaggerated. Fair was a man who lived life to its fullest. His optimistic and joyful outlook was infectious. While he was born with certain advantages, he never rested on those. I knew him only in his retirement years, and when most folks start taking it easy, Fair kicked it up more than a notch. I have visions of him standing on street corners and near polling stations holding signs for his favorite candidate. For this Amherst and Harvard alum, former Naval Intelligence officer involved in planning the invasion of Normandy, and general counsel of Norton Company, no job was too small. Yes, Fair was a founder of The Research Bureau. But he was so much more – a mentor, a nurturer and a visionary, an example for us all. I believe that Fair would be pleased with his legacy. Tocqueville would still find it remarkable.

Roberta R. Schaefer



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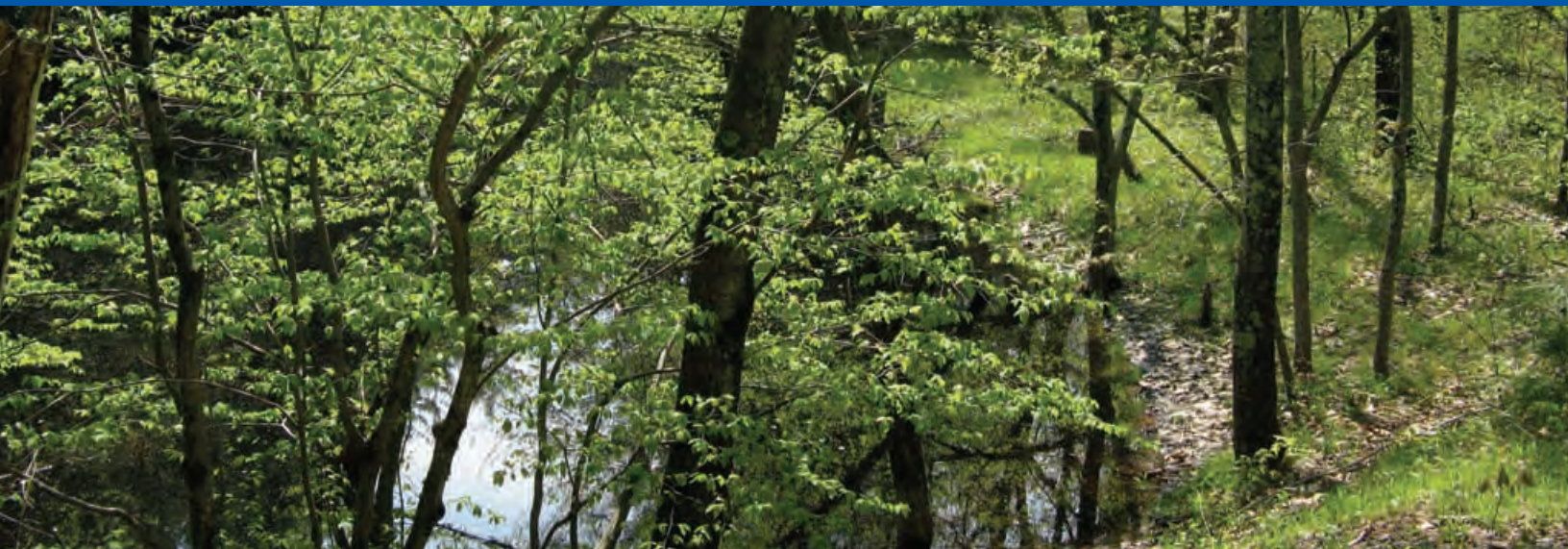
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