



Worcester Regional Research Bureau
30th Annual Meeting
October 8, 2015
DCU Center

Timothy J. McGourthy Remarks

In 1985, Worcester embraced change. Long-time City Manager Francis J. McGrath finished up his 34th and final year, while the City’s voters headed for the polls to adopt a Modified Plan E Form of Government. Public financial concerns loomed as Proposition 2½ constricted municipal revenues and “The Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985” (better known as Gramm-Rudman Hollings) went into effect, limiting the availability of Federal funds. Yet private growth beckoned, as the Massachusetts Miracle surged and Worcester seeded a new economy, most visibly with the Worcester Business Development Corporation’s establishment of the Massachusetts Biotechnology Research Park adjacent to UMass Medical School. Against this backdrop, The Research Bureau’s founding Board of Directors, notable business and civic leaders from across the region, identified the need for an organization to ensure that local government remained relevant and informed. The Board established the Worcester Municipal Research Bureau, appointing Dr. Roberta Schaefer as its first Executive Director.

Alexis de Tocqueville, in his seminal work *Democracy in America*, stated that “A nation may establish a system of free government, but without the spirit of municipal institutions it cannot have the spirit of liberty.” In a period where the focus is on world economies and international leadership challenges, it is easy to overlook the importance of cities and towns. Yet it is the decisions of these local governments – educating children, promoting business and jobs, improving transportation, ensuring public safety, and providing cultural and recreational opportunities – that shape American life and enable the American dream. While millions analyze events in Washington and other world capitals, The Research Bureau is one of few to focus on localities to ensure that the spirit of our municipal institutions remains strong. For 30 years, The Research Bureau has generated great discussion, and sometimes passionate debate, about the means for moving Greater Worcester and Central Massachusetts forward. As we begin our fourth decade, we continue proudly in that effort.

As the Worcester Regional Research Bureau – your Research Bureau – celebrates its 30th Anniversary, we congratulate and thank you.

Congratulations, because you have proven yourselves unique. The Research Bureau is a tangible illustration of this community's commitment to good government and sound public policy. No city of our size across the country so loyally supports such an organization and mission. The Research Bureau is the smallest member, with Worcester the smallest region, of the Governmental Research Association, a national association of organizations focused on fact-based analysis of state and local public policy. You have shown that size does not dictate excellence – it is the passion of a community of civic-minded individuals that ensures success.

We look to build upon that community. Last year, I told you that “We will be a part of the community, working with diverse stakeholders to identify critical issues and fundamental solutions.” Well – we have engaged. Working with the City, we completed our annual budget overview, and provided the factual basis for discussion during this past spring's Community Dialogues on Race, wading into the challenging topic of race and ethnicity in Worcester and beyond. Working with the Worcester Public Schools, we have looked at the efficacy of national educational standards and are currently reviewing the pathways to success for our high achieving students. Working with all of Greater Worcester's colleges and universities, we have organized the Fairman C. Cowan Collegiate Lecture Series in honor of our 30th Anniversary – exploring Worcester's intellectual capital and highlighting research that impacts not just Worcester but also the world. Working with non-profit partners like the Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Worcester Education Collaborative, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, and others we are tackling such issues as leadership development, education funding, talent retention, data sharing, municipal elections, and more. Working with business leadership, we have explored the role of local and multinational corporations in the Worcester community and the critical importance of the media – the fourth estate - in civic life. In each of these cases, we have invited the public in to be part of the conversation and the identification of solutions.

We will continue to build on these partnerships going forward, even as we identify new relationships that will help us tap Worcester's wealth of expertise to promote informed public decision-making.

I mentioned that you should be congratulated and thanked, so, thank you. Without you, The Research Bureau would not exist. For 30 years, the Worcester community has ensured that we have not only survived but thrived as a critical voice in Worcester's civic life. We have many to thank for that success.

First, our Board of Directors. With no modesty whatsoever, our Board is the best. We are honored that top names in business, education, and civic life work with us to inform our mission and facilitate our efforts. I am truly grateful for your ongoing support and commitment to The Research Bureau and the cause of informed public decision-making.

Second, our Executive Committee. Month after month, our Executive Committee highlights issues and provides wise counsel to the staff. We are lucky to have an engaged and enthusiastic group of leaders who are passionate about our work. I would like to personally thank Chair Karen Duffy for her strong leadership and support since my arrival at The

Research Bureau, and I welcome and look forward to working closely with incoming Chair John Spillane.

Third, our funders and sponsors. Presenting Sponsor Commerce Bank (led by our Vice-Chair Brian Thompson), Leadership Sponsor Rand-Whitney (led by Executive Committee Member Nick Smith, who was instrumental in securing our esteemed keynote speaker this afternoon), media sponsor *Telegram & Gazette*, and all of the more than fifty sponsors who have supported our operations and this annual event illustrate the critical importance of business engagement in civic life. A healthy community has diverse members – residents, businesses, institutions – who live and work locally and invest time and resources to its future. Worcester is fortunate for the continued deep level of corporate involvement in the city.

Worcester is also very fortunate to have a strong philanthropic community. Since our origins 30 years ago, a who's who of Worcester foundations - Alden Trust, Daniels, Ellsworth, Fletcher, Fuller, Harrington, Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts, Hoche-Schofield, McEvoy, Stoddard, Wyman-Gordon, and of course the Greater Worcester Community Foundation, have supported our efforts each and every year. We have been given incredible support, and we value the trust you have placed in our efforts and our impact.

Finally, the staff of The Research Bureau and our interns from Assumption and Holy Cross. While a small non-profit, the skills and dedication of the staff over the years has enabled The Research Bureau to do great things. While I've been forbidden to name names, you know who they are....

This year we celebrate the pearls of wisdom from three decades, pearls being the traditional 30th anniversary gift. Tomorrow, however, we begin our next 30 years, headed toward our Diamond Jubilee. One other thing happened in 1985: The Grateful Dead played this very venue, then known as the Worcester Centrum. As they no doubt sang to Worcester those 30 years ago, "Keep truckin', like the dodahman. Together, more or less in line, just keep truckin' on."

Thank You.