

**Campaign Finance in Municipal Elections:  
The 2009 Worcester City Council Candidates**

Authors:

Hannah Atkins  
Robert Boatright  
Baran Cansever  
Noreena Chaudari  
Stefan Cohen  
Sasha Gerhardson  
Amanda Gregoire  
Joelle Kahale  
Jarett Monterio  
Colin Oldenburg  
Emily Schofield  
Connor Smith  
Charles Tripp

Contact Author: Robert Boatright, Department of Political Science, Clark University, 950 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01610; [rboatright@clarku.edu](mailto:rboatright@clarku.edu)

## Campaign Finance in Municipal Elections: The 2009 Worcester City Council Candidates

For the most part, our understanding of the role of money in elections is drawn from studies of candidates for high-profile offices – candidates for the United States House of Representatives, the United States Senate, the presidency, or for state office. Data on the fundraising practices of these candidates have been available for more than three decades, and there is a substantial body of literature on how money is raised and spent in campaigns for these offices. Yet the human element is often missing from such studies. This is an important omission for two reasons. First, candidates for these offices tend to be seasoned campaigners, and they tend to use veteran campaign operatives in their campaigns. We can know what money buys in part because these candidates make few mistakes. They know how to raise and spend money efficiently; there is less room for a good but underfunded candidate to triumph, or for a well-funded candidate to stumble. In these studies, we may know how important money is in general, but we have less insight into how a good campaign can overcome the lack of money. Second, while we can know a lot about these campaigns in the aggregate, we cannot necessarily speak to the candidates themselves about their fundraising in any systematic way. It would be futile, for instance, for a researcher to expect to talk to all members of Congress about their fundraising, or even to expect a representative sample of candidates to speak frankly about how they ran their campaigns.

It is our contention that looking at local candidates can add the human element to studies of campaign finance. This paper represents our second foray into looking at the financing of elections for city council seats in Worcester, Massachusetts. We present data on Worcester elections, drawn from the Massachusetts database of contributions and expenditures of candidates in city-wide elections for the state's five largest cities. We also present case studies of city-wide and district candidates. These case studies show substantial variation in fundraising practices and in the relationship between fundraising and electoral success. By looking at local campaign finance, we are also able to address the human element – to incorporate the views of most of the candidates and to draw conclusions not only from the raw dollar amounts, but from the comments of the candidates on how they raised their money and how important money was to them in their campaigns.

Our earlier paper on this subject (Boatright et al 2008) summarized research on municipal campaign finance and sought to place our study of Worcester within that body of research. Here, we dispense with that context and instead seek to present a comparison of trends in the financing of Worcester elections across the past three election cycles. We move directly to consideration of the aggregate campaign finance data for Worcester's 2009 city council elections and place them in the context of Worcester's electoral system and the politics of its council elections. We then explore the comments *OF NUMBER OF eleven* candidates for citywide council seats. We also provide a separate section on district-level races, and we compare campaign finance in Worcester to the financing of municipal elections in other large Massachusetts cities. We close by drawing some conclusions about the role money plays in Worcester's elections. It is our hope that these conclusions can be generalized to cover elections in similar locales.

## The 2009 Election

### *Worcester*

Worcester has a population of 175,000; whites constitute 77 percent of this population, African-Americans make up about six percent, Asians make up five percent, and Latinos make up fifteen percent. Although it is within fifty miles of Boston, Worcester has always been a city in its own right. Although Worcester County is currently growing in population much faster than the rest of Massachusetts, Worcester is not a particularly wealthy city and it is surrounded by several more prosperous suburbs. Worcester elections are held in odd-numbered years, and tend to feature a voter turnout of roughly 25 percent.

Worcester elections, like those in many American cities, are nonpartisan. They do, however, feature a process that resembles party primaries and serves to winnow the number of candidates to two competitors for each position. For the five city council districts, the preliminary election narrows the field to the two top vote-getters. In the case of at-large elections, the field is winnowed in the preliminary election to twelve candidates for the six at-large council slots. The preliminary election, held on the second Tuesday of September, thus produces twelve at-large candidates. The 2009 Worcester elections, however, featured fewer candidates than has been the norm, and the city was able to dispense with preliminary elections. All candidate fundraising was thus geared towards the general election, which is held on the first Tuesday in November.

In addition, the mayoral candidate must win one of the six at-large council slots. Voters choose their council members, and then vote separately for mayor. Any one of the twelve at-large candidates may run for mayor. In practice, some at-large council candidates declare their candidacy for mayor before the preliminary election, but may reconsider their decision after the preliminary election. The mayor's responsibilities include collaboration with the rest of Council to create meeting agendas, and then to oversee the weekly council meetings. One of the mayor's most significant powers is the ability to veto legislation brought forth by Council. The mayor's job is part-time, and is viewed by some as largely a ceremonial position. Yet the city's previous mayor, Timothy Murray, was widely viewed as having expanded the prestige of the job, and in 2006 Murray became the first Worcester mayor in decades to use the job as a springboard for higher office, running successfully for Lieutenant Governor. In part as a consequence of Murray's success, the mayoral election has been far more contentious than council elections.

The outcomes of council races depend largely on turnout. Voter registration forms are offered in a variety of languages. In the event that a voter misses the registration deadline for one phase of the election, they are still encouraged to register to vote in the next phase of the election. City Clerk David Rushford, whom we interviewed for our paper on the 2007 elections, describes two ways in which the city encourages voters to vote: formal and informal techniques. Formal techniques include advertising elections on talk radio, in newspapers, and paid advertisements sponsored by the candidates. Informal techniques include strategically placing polling locations around the city. Mr. Rushford commented on the fact that Worcester is an

extremely “neighborhood oriented city. People identify themselves with their neighborhood and are loyal to it.” As a result, polling locations are placed in each unique neighborhood, near places of worship, in community centers, and near schools. Candidates tend to think about their campaigns with reference to the city’s neighborhoods or to particular ethnic groups.

### *The 2009 Election*

In order to understand the 2009 election, some background on the 2005 and 2007 elections is in order. In 2005, incumbent mayor Tim Murray was re-elected by a wide margin. Murray, however, resigned his position as mayor when he won the Lieutenant Governorship in 2006. Konstantina Lukes, a frequent critic of Murray, was his only opponent for mayor in 2005. According to the rules of the city charter, Lukes became mayor when Murray resigned. Although council races are officially nonpartisan, and although Lukes is nominally a Democrat, Worcester County Democratic leaders sought to coalesce behind a candidate who could defeat Lukes in 2007. Because any candidate for an at-large council seat can also run for mayor, there was some concern that there would be multiple mayoral candidates, and Lukes could win in a mult-candidate race. Because Worcester had a larger-than-usual number of at-large council candidates in 2007, there was a preliminary election. Candidates in the preliminary election do not have to formally announce that they are running for mayor, but three candidates (besides Lukes) announced their intention to run for mayor before the preliminary election. Of these three, the two with the fewest votes in the preliminary election subsequently dropped out of the mayoral race; this was, according to many observers, evidence of an agreement among the candidates to clear the field. The top vote-getter among these three, Rick Rushton, went on to garner the endorsements of most of the major Democratic politicians in the area and to raise over \$80,000 in his campaign. Unfortunately for Rushton, however, a third candidate, incumbent councilor Gary Rosen entered the mayoral race after the preliminary election. Although Rosen ran a distant third, he may have siphoned off enough votes to deny Rushton the head-to-head race he had wanted. In a bitterly fought race, one that ended in a recount, Rushton ultimately lost to Lukes by 116 votes, a 36.1 percent to 35.5 percent margin. Rushton did, however, win an at-large seat on the council. The two other incumbent councilors who had filed to run for mayor in the preliminary election wound up losing their council seats.

2009 featured far less intrigue than did 2007. Like 2007, however, the mayoral race centered more around the personality and leadership style of Mayor Lukes. Again, two strong candidates ran against her. Joe O’Brien, the former district director for U.S. Representative Jim McGovern, garnered the endorsements of Murray, McGovern, and many other area Democrats, while veteran council member Kate Toomey was endorsed by the Worcester County Sheriff and one of the city’s State Senators. Both O’Brien and Toomey argued that Lukes was not an active enough mayor, was unable to effectively advocate for the city at the state or federal level, and was not able to bring about consensus among council members (Sutner 2009). O’Brien, in addition, called attention to his commitment to inner-city neighborhoods and his residence in the less affluent Main South region of the city. O’Brien sought to run a movement-style campaign, soliciting small donations on the internet and using the internet to organize campaign events. Lukes responded by touting her independence from the Murray/McGovern “machine” and her conviction that her model of leadership was appropriate – that the job of mayor was not a full-

time job and Worcester residents did not want an activist mayor of the sort O'Brien and Toomey were proposing. Lukes also drew comparisons between O'Brien and Murray, alleging that the 42-year-old O'Brien saw the job of mayor as a step towards seeking higher office, while Lukes had no such aspirations. A fourth candidate, Emmanuel Tsitsilianos, appeared at the candidate debates but appears not to have raised money at all and received little attention (Horn 2009). Although Toomey's decision not to drop out in deference to O'Brien (or vice versa) raised the possibility that the vote again would be split, O'Brien ultimately won 51 percent of the vote to Lukes' 28 percent and Toomey's 18 percent. Both Lukes and Toomey were re-elected to the council.

As the above discussion shows, Worcester mayoral races have generally revolved more around personality than around policy issues. This is a well-established feature of nonpartisan races. The remaining at-large council candidates did raise several issues, including the closure of city swimming pools, salaries for council members and other city employees, downtown development plans, and the tax payments of area colleges and universities. At-large council candidates, because they had no incentive to target individual incumbents, tended to run more issue-oriented campaigns; this was particularly the case for nonincumbents. Among the nonincumbent candidates, community activist Mary Keefe ran on a platform calling for increased investment in some of the poorer areas of the city, William McCarthy established an anti-tax message, area businessman Stephen Buchalter touted efforts to make Worcester more business-friendly, and Kola Akindele ran a campaign that sought to organize minorities, students, and immigrant groups. Some news accounts assumed that the three mayoral candidates, former mayoral candidate Rushton, and long-time council member Joe Petty would have no difficulty winning seats, so that the competition was really for the sixth at-large seat (Nicodemus 2009). Although first-term council member Michael Germaine finished sixth, the race was close enough that many of the nonincumbent candidates speculated that they would run again in 2011.

To the extent that there was a dominant issue apart from personalities, it was the treatment by the city of retired city employees. The city had sought to limit the pension fund payouts of retired members of municipal workers' unions. This catalyzed a campaign by Workers United, a coalition of three different public employees' unions, to support three at-large council members, two nonincumbents (including O'Brien), and to oppose two incumbent district councilors. Workers' United's efforts included direct mail and print advertising, and was the major foray by outside groups into the election. District seat races, again because they tend to be focused on the personality of the incumbent, often revolve around personality, and the involvement of Workers United became a major issue. In the city's first district, comprising the wealthiest neighborhoods in the city, incumbent Joff Smith sought to cast himself as someone unfairly targeted by "special interests," and in the fourth district, the poorest district in the city, both the incumbent and the challenger attacked each other for being out of touch with the needs of workers. Both incumbents won, but the first district race, in particular, was hard-fought, with the union advertisements providing additional ammunition to a challenger who criticized the incumbent Smith for using his seat as a platform to run for higher office. Two of the other district councilors ran unopposed, and the other district councilor won easily.

O'Brien, then, was the only nonincumbent to win, and in many ways O'Brien was more of an "establishment" candidate than many of the incumbents. O'Brien's campaign did likely drive turnout. 22.9 percent of the electorate voted – a low percentage, perhaps, but higher than the rate in many other cities and comparable to the 2007 race which, as we shall see, was by many measures more competitive and involved far more candidate spending. Worcester is not an expensive city in which to run – in the recent past, candidates who have spent scarcely more than \$10,000 have won city-wide office. To the average city resident, the most visible campaign events are the "stand outs" held by candidates and their supporters at major traffic intersections during rush hour. Apart from the cost of signs to wave, these events cost virtually nothing for candidates. Worcester has no network television stations, and few candidates advertise on the radio. According to one candidate, the major expense for candidates is their signs, and repeat candidates can drive around on election night, picking up their yard signs and reusing them in the next cycle. Nonetheless, as we shall see below, at least a threshold amount of money is essential for all serious candidates.

### *Massachusetts Campaign Finance Law*

In Massachusetts, the Office of Campaign and Political Finance (OCPF) regulates political contributions to state and municipal candidates. Guidelines for all candidate types are distributed through the OCPF website. Candidates running for mayoral and at-large council seats in cities of more than 100,000 residents (Boston, Cambridge, Lowell, Springfield and Worcester) are considered "depository" candidates, and are subject to a set of regulations detailed below (Commonwealth of Massachusetts OCPF n.d.). This means that they must designate a bank in Massachusetts to be the depository for their campaign funds and they must appoint a chairman and a treasurer for their committee. The same person can be the chair and the treasurer, as long as the Treasurer is not the candidate. All receipts must be deposited into this account and all expenditures must be made from it, using a special check provided by the OCPF. Periodic reports are filed by the campaign with the bank, which forwards the information to the OCPF. During non-election years and the first six months of an election year in which that candidate's name is on the ballot, the bank forwards these reports to the OCPF once a month, during the last six months of the election year the reports are submitted every two weeks. Regardless of whether a depository candidate intends to raise money in the course of their campaign, he or she must still appoint a bank.

Contributions may not exceed \$500 and must be deposited into the candidate's depository account in the same form in which they were received. For example, if a \$200 check is received, that check must be deposited, if \$200 in cash is received, that cash must be deposited. Additionally, when the candidate deposits a contribution, he or she also files the contributor's name and address with the OCPF. Contributions under \$50 do not need to be itemized in this way and may be combined into a single deposit unless a contributor's aggregate, non-itemized contributions to a candidate or committee exceed the \$50 threshold in a calendar year. Massachusetts also prohibits public employees from soliciting political contributions as well as banning the solicitation or receiving of political contributions in any building occupied for government use. This means that public employees running as depository candidates must form a

candidate committee to handle their fundraising in addition to appointing a bank as the location of their depository account.

In contrast to many other states, which allow virtually unregulated money to be spent on political campaigns, Massachusetts has strict limits on a contribution's size and origin, restrictions which apply to municipal races as well as state races. As discussed, an individual over 18 may contribute a maximum of \$500 to depository candidate in a calendar year, up to a limit of \$12,500 in aggregate contributions per year; individuals under 18 are limited to an aggregate of \$25 in contributions per year. Political action committees (PACs) are also held to a \$500 per year limit on contributions to a depository candidate or their committee. Registered lobbyists are limited to a smaller total of \$200 per year to a candidate or candidate committee. Local party committees, such as ward or town party committees are limited to \$1,000 per year in contributions per candidate while state party committees may contribute up to \$3,000 per year per to a candidate. There are no limits on in-kind contributions from local or state party committees to a candidate or their candidate committee. All contributions from business or professional corporations are prohibited, whether cash, in kind, or any other form, although unincorporated businesses may be used to make contributions, provided they are attributable to an individual proprietor of that business (e.g. John Smith D.B.A. Smith's Auto Shop) and are applied to their individual contribution limit. Candidates may, however, contribute unlimited funds to their own campaigns. Beyond this, municipal depository candidates may also make unlimited loans to their campaigns. Finally, candidates or their committees must ask any contributor who has given more than \$200 in a calendar year for their employment information twice, once when the contribution was solicited and in at least one written follow up.

The city of Worcester also requires district-level candidates and school board candidates to file campaign finance reports with the city, and the city makes these reports available on its website. In contrast to the city-wide candidates, however, candidates who file with the city but not the state are not required to file their data electronically. While state-level filings can easily be sorted or converted into spreadsheet format, those who file with the city submit reports on paper, which are then scanned by the city and made available as pdf files. While we have total fundraising amounts for these candidates, then, we have not analyzed data on individual contributions.

### **City-Wide Candidates**

Table 1 shows the relationship between receipts and vote share for the eleven at-large council candidates. Overall, as the table shows, there were relatively predictable gaps between the candidates. Three of the four mayoral candidates each raised over \$30,000; the one mayoral candidate who did not reach this threshold was not regarded as a serious candidate. All but one of the successful council candidates raised over \$20,000 while only one of the unsuccessful candidates (Buchalter) passed this threshold. The one victorious candidate who raised less than \$20,000, Rick Rushton, had been the runner up in the 2007 mayoral race, and may have expected that he had enough visibility from that race to relax a bit, or perhaps he was simply tired of

raising money. Three of the four other unsuccessful candidates ran substantially behind in the money race, and a fourth (McCarthy) raised approximately \$15,000. The differences in vote totals do not appear dramatic – the sixth-place finisher, Germaine, received 8.6 percent of the votes cast while the four unsuccessful candidates (excluding Tsitsilianos, who, again, did not report raising any money) all received between 7.2 and 7.7 percent of the votes. Two of the nonincumbents, Akindele and Keefe, actually did quite well given their low fundraising numbers, leading one to question whether they might have succeeded had they had larger campaign budgets.

[Table 1 about here]

Table 2 provides further details on the sources of funds for the at-large candidates. The fundraising categories presented here are our effort to replicate the standard categories of analysis that tend to be provided for state and federal races. Two of these, average contribution size and number of “maxed out” donors, show no clear pattern. The data in other categories, however, show the importance of incumbency – or, perhaps, the uncompetitiveness of the council races from the financial angle. O’Brien and the incumbent council members all took in substantially more PAC money than did the remaining nonincumbents, and all of these candidates also made substantial personal contributions, loans, or transfers of funds to their own campaigns. Two nonincumbents – O’Brien and Buchalter – led the pack in money raised from outside of Worcester. Although O’Brien led in contributions from outside the city and in PAC contributions, this hardly means that he was reliant on such contributions to win – he led all candidates in individual contributions and in contributions from within Worcester as well. The data demonstrate the ability of O’Brien to garner broad-based support for his campaign.

[Table 2 about here]

While we do not provide data on all of the 2007 candidates in this paper, Table 3 does show fundraising for candidates who ran more than once in the 2005, 2007, and 2009 races. This table shows, first of all, that the O’Brien victory is not simply a matter of money; Rick Rushton, who narrowly lost the mayoral race to Konnie Lukes in 2007, spent far more than did O’Brien. Table 3 shows that the pattern of increased fundraising for mayoral candidates is hardly unique; other candidates who have run for mayor have generally spent at least \$5,000 or so more in their mayoral bids than in council races. Beyond this, however, there is little evidence that 2009 was a more expensive election year; although mayoral races complicate efforts to compare across election cycles, none of the three candidates whose status was the same (Germaine and Petty ran for council both years, Lukes ran for mayor both years) raised significantly more in 2009 than in 2007.

[Table 3 about here]

### *City-Wide Candidate Profiles*

*Konnie Lukes:* Incumbent mayor Konnie Lukes’s 2009 mayoral campaign resembled her 2007 campaign in its financing, if not its outcome. Lukes raised \$33,895 in 2009 and \$31,381 in 2007. Although she held on to her council seat, Lukes lost the mayoral race, finishing with 28 percent



of the vote. She claims to have begun her fundraising later than did her challengers, returning to her “traditional” sources. As in 2007, her fundraising effort consisted primarily of direct mail and letters to previous donors. She does not like asking for money; in our interview with her she said that that one of the greatest problems that women politicians have is not having the willingness men have to solicit donations.

The majority of the contributions that Lukes collected were small, and she reported that the median age of her donors was approximately forty-five. Most of her contributors were other lawyers who she knew professionally and socially. She was frugal with her money, using her law office as her campaign office. She had no paid staff and she said roughly seventy percent of donations went to direct voter contact, with the other thirty percent going to buy supplies, postage stamps, and food for parties and fundraisers. Lukes said that that fifteen percent of her total raised was through loans she took out of her business towards the end of the race when she needed a final push. She estimates that it costs \$30,000 to \$50,000 to run in the mayoral race, and she estimated that council races can cost just as much, depending on how competitive the races are. Lukes supports restricting spending in Worcester elections; she argues that there should be a spending cap based on the number of registered voters who *actually* vote. She believes that knowing in advance how much money one would have to work with would be beneficial. She also believes that there should be a limited time period for elections and fundraising and a limit on in-kind services for each candidate.

*Joe O'Brien:* To begin fundraising for his first bid at Worcester City Council and the mayor post, Joe O'Brien, a former School Committee member and former District Director for U.S. Representative Jim McGovern, first looked to the people he knew. Utilizing donations from friends and family, O'Brien was able to raise roughly \$3,000 to set the stage for his eventual victory over Lukes. Over the course of his campaign, O'Brien hosted three major events: a kick-off party, a rally, and a breakfast. Each of these events was advertised by a mailing to about 500-600 people. These mailings not only advertised the event but served to solicit donations from those who could not attend. Of these events and mailings, the most successful was his kick-off event which garnered about \$8,000 in donations; roughly half of this money was donated at the event while the other half came in as a result of the mailing. In addition to mailings for events, O'Brien also sent out two other mailings to a targeted audience of close supporters. Finally, the O'Brien campaign also utilized the internet and PayPal, resulting in about \$4,000 in additional donations.

Though O'Brien, a first time candidate for city council, outraised his closest competitors (Lukes, the incumbent mayor, and Kate Toomey, an incumbent city council member), by over \$10,000, he said that he did not find the amount of time he spent fundraising to be overwhelming. However, O'Brien believes that his superior fundraising undoubtedly aided in his victory and allowed him the ability to reach out to more constituents. Due to help from a grassroots group called Neighbor to Neighbor, which funded a \$6,000 mailing on behalf of the campaign, O'Brien believes his fundraising burden was less troublesome compared to other candidates, although he does admit that fundraising was always on his mind. Furthermore, O'Brien notes that he had a lot of help from organized labor, including endorsements from the Worcester-Fitchburg Building and Construction Trade Council and the local Carpenters' Union.

Finally, O'Brien was able to utilize contacts made while previously involved in other campaigns in order to aid in fundraising and campaign activity and as a result was able to avoid making very many "hard asks." Of the \$43,300 raised by the O'Brien campaign, \$18,365 was donated by sources outside of the city. O'Brien contended that the contributions from outside of Worcester mostly came from the Boston area, a result of endorsements received from McGovern and Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray. O'Brien was also the only candidate in the council races to benefit from independent expenditures made on his behalf; he reported over \$8,000 in independent spending by Neighbor to Neighbor, a Boston-based community organizing group.

O'Brien states that about 15 percent of his money was invested in voter follow-up and palm cards to contact voters following initial contact via door knocking or phone banking. O'Brien's campaign invested 30 percent of its budget for mailings, radio spots and television time, and the rest of the budget was used for operations and overhead including maintaining his campaign office, phone lines, and so forth. Based on his experience, he projects that a candidate would need to raise about \$50,000 to run a strong mayoral race and \$40,000 for a strong council race if the candidate has a strong field organization. If the candidate lacks a strong field organization and name recognition he projects those costs to be even higher.

As it stands, Mayor O'Brien is satisfied with the status of campaign finance laws in Worcester City Council elections. When asked about his personal views, O'Brien did not hesitate to note that Massachusetts is home to some of the better laws on campaign finance but also volunteered that in order to cultivate more participation it is necessary to provide public funding in all levels of elections, or to impose more restrictions on campaign expenditures. O'Brien previously served as the director of Mass Voters for Clean Elections, a pro-reform organization; like that organization, Mayor O'Brien truly believes that public financing of elections would be ideal.

O'Brien is not shy about voicing his hatred of fundraising and unabashedly proclaimed that he would "rather have a root canal than raise money." This strong dislike of fundraising and his difficulty adjusting to constantly raising money is reflected in his campaign account, which as of this writing stands at about \$1,500. O'Brien does not hesitate to note the advantages he had as candidate in this past election. Noting his middle class status, education, and connections to important players in Massachusetts and Worcester politics, he argues that such advantages are unfair because they keep those without such access from financing a healthy campaign, which is reflected in his stance on public financing.

In the end, Joe O'Brien believes that while money matters, in local elections "doing the work" is far more important. Providing an anecdote of a school committee competitor who raised \$40,000 (compared to his school committee campaign total of \$12,000) and lost, O'Brien believes that it's the hard work and personal contact that make the difference in local elections. He conjectures that while his dominant fundraising propelled him to the top, it was the hard work that allowed him to place in the council race at all.

*Kate Toomey:* Kate Toomey ran against Lukes in the mayoral race but finished third, receiving only 18 percent of the mayoral vote. However, she did win a city council seat. She had served

previously as a city councilor for two terms, and is now beginning her third term. Currently the chair of the Education Committee, she also serves on the University Relations, Arts and Culture, and Library Committees. However, Toomey states that her committee assignments did not have an effect on how she raised money.

Toomey raised the bulk of her money in February of 2009, and she received some money from PACs and interest groups. In total, Toomey received \$16,925 in individual contributions. Toomey employed many different solicitation methods, including direct mail, “dialing for dollars” (personal phone calls to prominent people), e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, and a PayPal donation link on her campaign website. She asserts that the direct mail was the most effective solicitation method; however, she continues to use her website, Facebook, and Twitter to communicate with her constituency.

Toomey mainly asked her family members, family friends, and her friends for donations. She also used other candidates’ lists to see people who were most likely to donate. Toomey received donations from some college students, and members of organizations in which she was involved. She also asserts that she had a close relationship with many of her donors, including her family members and friends whose children went to school with her children. Toomey states that she has a circle of about twenty close people who would help her any time she needed it. The rest of her donors were casual relations.

In total, Kate Toomey raised \$33,633 for her mayoral bid. She also contributed \$6,000 of her own money to the campaign. When asked why she chose to self-finance, Toomey responded that it would have been a waste of time if she didn’t. She also stated that her circle of people is not generally wealthy, and “I didn’t have any influential people other than my own state senator endorse me, unlike one of my mayoral campaign opponents.”

*Joseph Petty:* In 2009, Joseph Petty was elected to his seventh term on the Worcester city council. He currently serves as the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Service & Transportation. He raised almost \$27,000, the vast majority of which came from individual contributors residing in Worcester. Over the years, however, Petty has developed a distaste for fundraising and the increasing importance of money in politics.

Petty claims that he raised more money during his first run for office than he has in any other election of his career. Petty raises most of his funds during the campaign year itself, often having to cut himself a check as the race comes to a close to push his message through to the end. Very little PAC money found its way into Petty’s campaign fund, a total of \$1,475, exhibiting his general aversion to these types of funds. In the past the Red and Yellow Taxicab companies of Worcester have donated some money to his campaign, but Petty stressed the idea that he does not like the idea of depending on PACs to fund his campaign. When asked if he felt any political pressure by PAC contributors, Petty said, “Not at all. I make my decisions based on what is right, and that’s it.” He also notes that on the local level, there really isn’t that kind of pressure from organized groups: “They give because they want to.”

Most of Petty’s contributions from outside of Worcester, which totaled \$8,444, came from relatives and friends who live elsewhere or individuals from neighboring towns such as

Auburn. He said not much candidate-to-candidate contributing occurs. “If someone is really in a pinch we will cut them a check,” but this rarely occurs. When it comes to endorsements from certain organizations within Worcester, Petty comments that the longer you are in politics the more likelihood there is of upsetting one group of people, or making others happy. In the past, teachers unions endorsed him, but they did not do so in 2009. Public safety endorsements played a large role in his 2009 campaign, especially the endorsement by firefighters, which was the first of its kind in eight years.

Petty is very critical of the rising costs of campaigns. “Last year was the first campaign that I cut out radio advertisements.” In addition, Petty used to put ads in the *Telegram and Gazette* and *Worcester Magazine*, but due to increased costs he no longer does so: “Every year I raise about the same amount, but the costs keep going up.” One form of advertisement that Petty has not dropped is direct mailing. He feels this is relatively successful and continues to use it. He finds that a good strategy is to use a catchy and somewhat sarcastic slogan early on in the race to grab attention, and then as election time approaches, draw on a serious issue to capture peoples vote. When asked if incumbency matters when raising campaign funds, Mr. Petty said, “building a good reputation and being a good representative of the people” matters the most.

When asked about his thoughts regarding campaign finance in general Mr. Petty stated, “Some people are really good at this stuff, I just don’t have it.” He finds it very awkward to ask for money and does not enjoy the process, but understands that it is a necessary evil. Petty argues that what is most necessary for a good campaign is not money, but hard work, good people skills, and the support of one’s family.

*William McCarthy:* William McCarthy was raised in Worcester and grew up in the Main South community. McCarthy was once a Democrat, but during his graduate studies McCarthy’s views changed, and after receiving his Ph.D. McCarthy registered as a Republican. In his campaign, McCarthy stressed fiscal conservatism and presented himself as a fiscal watchdog. McCarthy emphasized the importance of jobs and the local economy, and he argued that deregulation was the key to keeping businesses in Worcester. He also argued that small business incentives would attract further business to the city. Furthermore, McCarthy made it an objective to roll back the substantial pay raises that incumbent City Council members had given themselves. McCarthy strongly believed that part time civil service did not merit an 84 percent increase in wages.

According to McCarthy, his 2009 campaign was severely handicapped by two factors, his Republican status and his position as a state employee. As a state employee, McCarthy was barred from personally asking individuals for donations to support his campaign. In order to raise money McCarthy had to create a campaign committee. McCarthy believes that there was a substantial disconnect between his efforts and the money raised by his campaign committee. McCarthy believes that his ability to engage and communicate at an individual level was hindered by this process. McCarthy also believes that being a registered Republican presented difficulties. Although Worcester elections are nonpartisan, McCarthy argued that the well-established Democratic presence in Worcester placed constraints on his campaign. McCarthy was particularly upset about the frosty reception he received from unions. McCarthy hails from

a family with over 130 years of union membership, himself included, but he received no political or campaign support from local unions.

McCarthy identified potential contributors using the state's Office of Campaign and Political Finance database. McCarthy compiled a list of individuals who had donated to Republican candidates in the past. His first method of outreach came from direct mail. McCarthy subsequently also made telephone calls to some of these donors, and his campaign hosted various fund raising events, such as wine tastings, featuring current and former Republican officeholders. The money he raised outside of Worcester came primarily from family, friends, and close contacts that he had established over the years. In total McCarthy raised \$15,373 for his 2009 campaign. Apart from the difficulty caused by his state employee status McCarthy had no further issues with campaign finance laws in Worcester. He recognizes the importance of raising money and believes that in order to get his message out there money has to be spent.

*Steve Buchalter:* Steve Buchalter was a first-time candidate for Worcester City Council, and as the table shows, he narrowly failed to win the sixth seat on the council. Buchalter raised the most money of any unsuccessful candidate. As a nonincumbent, Buchalter's three most important tasks were to raise money, make his name known, and get signs. Buchalter ran on a platform of reviving Worcester by bringing back all the businesses to Worcester and have it be a more viable place for college students to settle. He favors lowering commercial tax rates by bringing in more businesses, and argues that this would help lower homeowners' taxes as well.

Buchalter received many donations from both individuals and large business owners, including several law firms and accounting firms. In order to receive contributions from businesses he or his cousin would go to a meeting and give an introduction about who Steve Buchalter is and what his ideas were for the city of Worcester. The fact that Buchalter is the president of Enterprise Cleaning Corporation helped the campaign because his name was already known in Worcester business circles. Roughly half of the contributions Buchalter received were large donations of \$250 or more; according to Buchalter, these were mainly from business owners. Buchalter also raised a substantial number of small (less than \$50) contributions, however. Buchalter spent all the money he raised, although he did use his campaign funds to make contributions to other candidates, including district councilor Joff Smith.

Buchalter did much of the fundraising and campaigning himself. Like many other candidates, he spent a lot of time doing "standouts" in different spots around Worcester each morning and afternoon. Buchalter also introduced himself at several local restaurants, bars, and hotels. His contributors were a diverse group of people of all ages, but he stated that many of them were older and could sympathize with Buchalter's claims that he wanted to bring back the sort of prosperity Worcester has had in the past. In this election, Buchalter knew he had to focus on getting his name out there. In addition to in-person campaigning, Buchalter also sent targeted mailings to those who voted in 2007. He also promoted his campaign in Facebook, but he did not establish a website where online contributions could be made until the last week of the campaign. During that last week alone he says he raised \$1,200 on line. The internet was a very useful tool for soliciting contributions, and in the next election Buchalter hopes to have it set up

much sooner. In 2009 Buchalter started fundraising about six months ahead of the elections, but he has already started raising money for his 2011 campaign.

## District Races

Tables 4 and 5 show fundraising data for district-level candidates in 2007 and 2009. Because this is our first foray into studying the district races, we present the 2007 data largely as a source of comparison. The 2007 data show two relatively entrenched incumbents, Palmieri and Clancy, neither of whom needed to raise a substantial amount of money. The open seat race in District 5 was very competitive in 2007, but the victor in that race, William Eddy, did not have an opponent in 2009. With the exception of District 5, the 2009 races look similar, but with less overall spending. Only two districts, Districts 1 and 4, had competitive races, and in both races the incumbents spent less in 2009 than they had in 2007. All five incumbents were able to draw upon either personal funds or unspent campaign funds from prior races to establish substantial war chests; in the case of the incumbents without strong challengers, these transfers may well have scared off strong competitors, while for the other two, these transfers provided the incumbents with the ability to significantly outspend their opponents, although in both cases the incumbents ultimately did not spend all of the money they had available.

[Tables 4 and 5 about here]

### *District Candidate Profiles*

*District 3 (Paul Clancy and Frank Beshai):*<sup>1</sup> The third district of Worcester consists of the neighborhoods of Quinsigamond Village, as well as portions of Vernon, College and Grafton hills. Among them main issues of concern in this district were mainly street and sidewalk repair, and both candidates pledged to improve the quality of life in the district. Frank A. Beshai, a two time candidate for Worcester County sheriff, ran against incumbent Paul P. Clancy who is the council's longest serving member (11 terms) and the Chairman of its powerful Public Works Committee.

Paul Clancy, who has represented District 3 for the past 11 terms (22 years) did not need to raise or spend a lot of money. His name is already out there and everyone knows who he is and how he stands on the issues. His expenditures totaled \$8,458 while \$2,720 of that was spent on lawn signs and \$1,771.29 was spent on first and second mailings. The rest of the money that he spent was on website design (\$595.19), Election Day catering, and stamps. His totally receipts in excess of \$50 was \$4,050 he had 31 donations of \$75 or more, most of which were \$100. He was able to raise \$2,577 total from donations that were under \$50. His total receipts for the 2009 election was \$6,627.

---

<sup>1</sup> This section is drawn from analysis of the campaign disclosure forms for Clancy and Beshai; neither candidate could be reached for an interview.

Frank Beshai, an independent management consultant, decided to challenge the longest serving member on the council after attending numerous council meetings and coming to the conclusion that the councilors “couldn’t properly read a budget.” He was able to raise \$4,835 and spent \$4,787. However, he spent \$1,270 of his own money. Beshai spent about a thousand dollars less than Clancy on lawn signs. Beshai spent \$1,693.84 while Clancy spent \$2,720. He spent a little bit less on his website as well; \$450 compared with Clancy who spent \$595.19. Clancy also out spent Beshai on mailings, Beshai spent \$1,056.80 compared to Clancy who spent \$1,771.29.

Even though Clancy raised only \$1,782 more than Beshai and spent \$3,671 more than Beshai; Clancy was able to receive 65.7 percent of the vote compared to 33.8 percent that Beshai received. The day after the election Frank Beshai was quoted in the *Telegam & Gazette* stating “It’s unbelievable. I did everything right. I knocked on doors. I had signs out on the lawns and I talked about the issues. But it looks like it was same old bunch of voters that came out.” (CITE) The most important campaign aspect that this specific election demonstrates is the difficulty in challenging an incumbent, especially one that has held the seat for eleven terms (22 years) and is now on his twelfth.

*District 4 (Barbara Haller and Grace Ross):*<sup>2</sup> Barbara Haller was first elected as Councilor for District 4 in 2001 and was seeking her fifth term in 2009. As a last-minute candidate in the 2001 election, Haller fought hard to earn her seat as a Councilor. This experience proved useful in Haller’s campaign for reelection against Grace Ross. When Ross received the backing of Worcester United, a union that includes police enforcement officers, Haller believed there was a good chance that her competitor could unseat her. Not only did the union announce their support of Ross, but they also worked on her behalf to send out mailings and fliers. This support for Ross worked to garner more support for Haller as the business community did not wish to see Ross win the election. As it got closer to the election many local business interests contributed to Haller to assist her in winning reelection over Ross. These business interests had not played a role in Haller’s past campaigns, but contributed to Haller as the lesser of two evils.

Representing a district that is not financially well-off, Haller chooses not to solicit contributions unless she believes it is needed. This limit on financial contributions has also encouraged Haller to maintain a baseline in her account in the event that she is unable to raise money for her campaign. When Haller seeks contributions they are most often from those with whom she has a personal relationship through the work she does in the neighborhood as well as from contributions they have made to her in the past. Going through the records of contributions, Haller is able to state why almost every contribution was made and whether or not the contributor has supported her campaign in the past. It is also clear to Haller those who were hoping to gain something from contributing to her campaign. Even those that may be regular contributors were politically inclined to contribute more so during this campaign than others. A contentious battle between taxi companies and delivery companies played a part in the contributions made by the owners of both Red Cab and Yellow Cab. The owners of both companies have contributed in the past due to their location within the district, but this year the contributions had a greater political significance than in the past.

---

<sup>2</sup> This section is drawn from an interview with Barbara Haller; Grace Ross could not be reached for an interview.

In order to be competitive and to run a viable campaign, Haller believes that in the District 4 race a candidate must be able to raise at least \$10,000. This \$10,000 is needed to buy name recognition through lawn signs, mailings, and advertisements. Of these name recognition tools, mailings that are specific to each neighborhood have proved to be the most effective method for Haller. These mailings act as a tool for name recognition as well as working to garner contributions to her campaign. Even with this money spent on name recognition and contributions solicitations, nothing is worth more than truly understanding the district and the people within it. Haller's landslide defeat of Ross helped to display that in the District 4 race money is not everything, if one does not know the district it will be hard for them to unseat a strong incumbent.

### **Comparing Worcester to Other Massachusetts Cities**

In many ways, campaign finance in Worcester is typical of the financing patterns of similarly sized cities. Adams (2010) presents data on many larger American cities; Worcester campaigns track closely to those of Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky, and Tampa Bay, Florida. In each of the cities Adams considers, there is a clear threshold for competitiveness in council races, as is the case in Worcester; beyond this threshold, there is little correlation between excess fundraising and electoral success. In these cities, as in Worcester, at large races are not necessarily proportionately more expensive than council races. Worcester is also typical in terms of the percentage of money from the city, as opposed to suburbs and other out-of-city contributions, in median contribution size (despite wide variation in contribution limits), in PAC contributions, and in the number of maxed out contributors.

Perhaps a better comparison, however, can be made when comparing Worcester to other Massachusetts cities. Table 6 shows patterns in campaign finance across the past three election cycles in the five Massachusetts cities where at-large candidates are required to file with the state. The data here are important for measuring trends over time and for discerning the ways in which Massachusetts cities differ from each other. Let us first take 2007 as a baseline. If we take the gap between average receipts for winners and losers, or between incumbents and nonincumbents, as a measure of competitiveness, Worcester's elections were the most competitive in 2007, closely followed by Lowell. Springfield was by far the least competitive city. Leaving out the anomalous Tim Murray 2005 mayoral campaign (in which Murray appears to have raised money for his impending Lieutenant Governor bid as well as for his mayoral reelection), there also appears to be a general increase in receipts for most categories of candidates in the five cities from 2005 to 2007.

[Table 6 about here]

2009, on the other hand, showed a decrease in receipts for most types of candidates in most cities as compared with 2007. This accords with assessments of local races in general in Massachusetts in 2009; a post-election retrospective on Worcester County municipal elections



reported a general trend for incumbents to win (Sutner 2009a). As we have established above, competitiveness in fundraising is not necessarily the same thing as competitiveness at the polls, but (as we show below) the trends in fundraising across the five cities roughly correspond to competitiveness at the polls, so it stands to reason that an overall decline in spending, and a growing gap between incumbents and challengers, is also indicative of a statewide trend. It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the reasons why the 2009 elections were, across the board, less competitive than those of 2007, but one might hypothesize many reasons, from idiosyncrasies of these cities to the more systematic – perhaps candidates and voters were simply not in the mood to invest their energy in local politics in 2009.

Before moving on to analyses of the five largest Massachusetts cities, however, a bit of context is in order. Table 7 provides descriptive data on the cities where city-wide candidates must file with the state. The cost of the average campaign corresponds somewhat with city size – Boston, by far the largest Massachusetts city, is easily the most expensive in which to mount a city-wide campaign. Cambridge, although the smallest of the five, is within the Boston media market and is the most affluent of the five cities, which may drive up spending (although the disparities in incumbent spending there are substantial enough that we thought seriously about bracketing off the highest spending incumbent in the way we separated out Mayor Murray’s 2005 spending in Worcester). Springfield has the lowest per capita income of the five cities, which may have something to do with the low campaign costs there. The election systems of each city are also not the same, however – the value of a council seat may be lower if there are more of them, or if the mayor is not simultaneously elected to the council as in Worcester’s case. It is difficult to systematize the value of a council seat, but it does seem that, given the permutations of Plan E rule described in Table 7, council seats in Worcester should be of more value to candidates than in other cities of comparable size.

[Table 7 about here]

Many of the factors that determine overall spending are, however, idiosyncratic to the cities, as the case studies below show. In the case of Worcester, the above discussion makes it clear that the dynamics of Worcester elections are largely determined by short-term forces. The increased value of the mayoralty over the past several years, the drive within the political establishment in 2007 and 2009 to support a candidate more in tune with the rest of the Worcester Democratic leadership than was incumbent Mayor Konnie Lukes, and coordination failures in both years to clear the field for a single alternative to Lukes may have contributed to higher spending than would otherwise be the case. The other Massachusetts cities also, however, have unique political stories that explain fundraising efforts by city candidates.

*Springfield:* In terms of its government structure and campaign finance practices, Springfield is not that different from Worcester. For years, the city of Springfield has used a system where the entire city voted for nine at large council members. In 2007, residents of Springfield voted on a ballot measure that created ward elections in City Council. This measure passed overwhelmingly. In the 2009 elections, Springfield voted for city council by ward for the first time in over half a century. The citizens would now elect five at-large councilmen and one councilman for each of the city’s eight wards.

The 2009 elections resulted in four of the five incumbent councilors being reelected. These elections also saw the largest gap between incumbents and non-incumbents in campaign fundraising of any city considered here. Practically all of the donations to candidates that were over \$1,000 were to incumbents. Most local unions and corporations backed incumbents. This was not much of a change from previous elections in Springfield because incumbents have always well outraised non-incumbents.

Of particular note is Councilor Jose F. Tosado, who raised large amounts of money from both Springfield residents and other people in Massachusetts. Tosado also made some of the largest campaign expenditures in the final weeks of the elections. This surely has something to do with why he won the most at-large votes in the city. It is difficult to analyze campaign finance trends in the ward elections because Springfield just began these elections in 2009. In future elections it will be interesting to see what wards create fundraising powerhouses.

*Lowell:* Lowell, which has a population of 105,167, also resembles Worcester in regards to campaign financing for municipal elections. In 2009, Lowell had nine city council positions available, each serving 2 year terms, and there were 21 candidates participating in the elections. After their election, the councilors select one councilor to be mayor of Lowell which differs from Worcester's method of electing a mayor by having candidates run for both offices simultaneously. Typically, there have been only 18 candidates allowed in the general election, however, Lowell city councilors had previously voted to waive the primary elections which also meant that incumbent councilors were allowed to have their names placed first on the ballot due to the larger number of challengers present.

Six of the nine victorious municipal candidates were incumbents: Rita Mercier, Edward Caulfield, Vice Mayor Kevin Broderick, Mayor James Milinazzo, William Martin and Rodney Elliot in addition to Franky Descoteaux, Joseph Mendonca and Patrick Murphy all of whom were non-incumbents. Incumbents Rita Mercier and Edward Caulfield secured the largest percentage of the votes with 8.2 percent and 7.54 percent, respectively. Mercier and Caulfield both had several donors giving \$500 or more in contributions, and Mercier took out substantial loans as well. Rita Mercier spent \$7,771 for the race, spending \$1.12 per vote and Caulfield spent \$8,881 or \$1.41 per vote, both of which were relatively efficient in comparison to other candidates.

The candidate who spent the most for the election was Alan Kazanjian who expenditures totaled \$28,330 or \$7.88 per vote (Kazanjian was also the top fundraiser for 2009). For the 2009 race, several of the candidates had large amounts of cash-on-hand at the end of the election despite minimal starting amounts; for instance, Rodney Elliot claimed the largest ending balance with \$11,023 followed by Rita Mercier who had \$7,772, which may aid in her possible re-election for 2011. For the 2009 elections, the average receipt for incumbents was \$17,339 and \$4,474 for non-incumbents as well as \$14,625 for the winning candidates and \$5,733 for the losing. Between 2005 and 2009, there was a considerable drop in candidate fundraising for municipal candidates in Lowell demonstrated by the 64% drop in candidate fundraising for non-incumbents. There appears to be many parallels between the Lowell and Worcester races in

terms of competition, however, Lowell's elections are considerably less expensive in comparison.

*Cambridge:* Cambridge is a city very similar to most small American cities, despite being slightly more wealthy than average. Cambridge, like Lowell and Springfield, has a rather unorthodox system of government, a City Council made up by nine individuals elected at large. Unlike those cities, however, Cambridge's council is one of the only governing bodies within the United States to still use the single transferable vote system, or STV. Once the City Council has been decided, the members elect a Mayor and Vice Mayor to serve as chief legislative officer. Within the Council the members are broken up into a number of different action committees dedicated to certain aspects of government.

Cambridge and Worcester are comparable in many of their fundraising trends. Incumbents in both cities raise much more than challengers do. Incumbents also tend to raise their money in larger increments. But Cambridge also has a larger group of people capable of those contributions. The city is roughly half the size of Worcester yet the average at large candidate raises roughly the same amount as in Worcester. Challengers tend to rely somewhat more than incumbents on money from sources outside of Cambridge. With twenty-one candidates running for nine seats, the 2009 elections were particularly competitive. Six candidates, all of whom were incumbents, raised over \$30,000.

These figures, however, mask substantial variations in the fundraising of successful candidates. Consider the following three examples:

Leland Cheung is the youngest current member of the Cambridge City Council. Cheung is an excellent example of an individual who was able to beat out an incumbent without raising a shocking amount of funds. Having raised only \$7,706 as of Dec. 31, 2009, Cheung was in the bottom ten in fundraising. He ran his campaign based on a number of different goals, but none of these goals were radically different from the themes of other council candidates. He promised to focus on creating jobs, improving schools, making Cambridge affordable to live, improving university relations, and making City Hall honest and accountable. Cheung prioritized grassroots campaigning, however, and this effort may have been what made a difference. Cheung's average contribution was smaller than for other successful candidates, and 88 percent of the money he raised came from within Cambridge, a somewhat higher number than that of other candidates.

The most successful candidate at raising money was Marjorie Decker. An incumbent of the Cambridge City Council Decker had little worry about being reelected in the 2009 campaign. Despite this she raised over \$70,000 dollars from a number of different sources. This was not money raised solely to win re-election to council, however. Decker declared her candidacy for a special election to the state Senate, and although she ultimately withdrew from the election, the \$70,000 raised for her campaign was most likely raised as a means of getting her name out to the more general public. Only 24 percent of Decker's finances came from donors within the Cambridge area; she received donations from the Carpenters' Union and other unions in the greater Boston area, as well as from real estate groups outside of Cambridge.

Cheung and Decker are extreme cases, however. A more typical council member is Craig Kelley, who is now beginning his third term. Kelley was right at the middle of the pack for money raised in the Cambridge election with roughly \$11,000. With about 88 percent of his money coming from individual contributors within Cambridge it is rather obvious that Kelley is a local official with a large voter base among his local constituents. He took over 1,200 first-place votes in the first round of voting, effectively guaranteeing himself a spot on the City Council.

Overall, Cambridge is certainly not out of the norm for cities its size, except for the quantity of money raised. Politicians with federal goals will always bring excess money into a campaign but even aside from Decker, two other council incumbents raised over \$50,000 dollars each. The committees council members sit on do play minor roles in raising out of city money from unions and other PACs. Cambridge covers the entire spectrum for possible electorates, and the candidates here demonstrate that while money helps win elections, it is certainly not necessary.

*Boston:* Boston, with a population of approximately 589,000, is distinctly different than Worcester in terms of campaign financing for municipal elections. Boston is divided into nine districts, each with a city council representative. There are also four counselor at large positions which are elected to represent Boston in coordination with the mayor. Each position has a term of two years. In 2009 there were at total of 23 candidates running for municipal office in Boston.

Demographically, Boston is much larger than Worcester, significantly altering campaign finance patterns. The size of Boston and its economy has a dramatic effect on campaign contributions. Aggregate contributions in Boston have historically exceeded those in Worcester by approximately 500 percent. Although the average income in Boston is relatively close to that of Worcester, it is likely the large concentration of business PACs and labor unions increase the aggregate contributions by an exponential amount. Labor unions accounted for 94 percent of independent expenditures in 2007, playing a dominant role in Boston municipal elections. Boston's role as the state capital as well as an East Coast economic force increases the public profile of municipal positions, likely affecting contribution totals as well.

Boston is also the lone city here where the mayor is not also a city councilor. Boston's mayoral seat, currently held by Thomas Menino. has historically exhibited extremely high aggregate contributions in comparison to the same office in other cities. In 2005 Menino raised a total of \$1.3 million in contributions. That same year all of the nine city council positions were won by incumbents. Of the four at large council positions, two were won by incumbents and two were taken by challengers. Incumbents averaged \$238,994 in contributions while Worcester incumbents averaged approximately \$30,000, showing the vast difference in magnitude of Boston and Worcester's municipal elections.

## Conclusions

In many ways, the 2009 elections in Worcester were less competitive than those of 2007. There were fewer candidates, the candidates spent less, and in the end there were few particularly close races. With the exception of the mayoral race, no incumbents were defeated. These were all trends in other Massachusetts cities as well; although it is hard to know the reasons – perhaps there is a larger trend, perhaps there are idiosyncrasies in each city – financial competition declined in most places. Despite the decline in spending, however, the Worcester elections were clearly not any less exciting than those of 2007. The Joe O’Brien mayoral campaign may have distracted the public from paying attention to the other council races, but O’Brien showed that, while money may be a necessary prerequisite for winning, a strong candidate can bring excitement to a campaign even without substantially outspending his opponent. O’Brien raised less than half what Konnie Lukes’s chief competitor raised in 2007, yet O’Brien won handily with a grass roots campaign that combined small donor fundraising and an extensive field operation with the support of major Democratic Party figures. In many of the 2009 races, voters endorsed the status quo, but in the one race where they did not, 2009 was a return to the activist mayor model established by former Mayor Tim Murray.

## Interviews

Buchalter, Stephen. Interviewed by Joelle Kahale, April 2010.  
Haller, Barbara. Interviewed by Noreena Chaudari, April 2010.  
Lukes, Konstantina. Interviewed by Hannah Atkins, April 2010.  
McCarthy, William. Interviewed by Baran Cansever, April 2010.  
O'Brien, Joe. Interviewed by Amanda Gregoire, April 2010.  
Petty, Joe. Interviewed by Jarett Monterio, April 2010.  
Toomey, Kate. Interviewed by Emily Schofield, April 2010.

## Bibliography

- Adams, Brian. 2010. *Campaign Finance in Local Elections: Buying the Grassroots*. Boulder, CO: First Forum Press/Lynne Reinner Publishers.
- Boatright, Robert G., *et al.* 2008. "Campaign Finance in Municipal Elections: The 2007 Worcester City Council Candidates." Worcester, MA: Department of Government, Clark University.
- Horn, Danielle M. 2009. "Lukes Lags Behind two in Spending." *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, 30 October, p. B1.
- Lowell Sun*. 2009. "Why Lowell's City Council Election Matters." *The Lowell Sun*, 19 April.
- Massachusetts Office of Campaign and Political Finance. N.d. "Depository and Non-Depository Candidates and Committees." On line, [http://www.mass.gov/ocpf/candcomm.htm#dep\\_non\\_dep](http://www.mass.gov/ocpf/candcomm.htm#dep_non_dep) (accessed April 7, 2010).
- Nicodemus, Aaron. 2009. "Battle for 6<sup>th</sup> Spot was Tough." *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, 4 November, p. B1.
- Sutner, Sean. 2009. "Bucking Trend: Other Mayoral Incumbents Win." *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, 4 November, p. A1.

Table 1: Vote Share and Receipts per Vote, City-Wide Candidates, 2009

| Candidate             | Status          | Council Votes | Council Percentage | Mayoral Votes | Mayoral Percentage | Result                   | Receipts*      | Receipts per Council Vote |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Akindele, Kola        | Nonincumbent    | 5,950         | 7.36%              |               |                    | Lost Council             | \$4,050        | \$0.68                    |
| Buchalter, Stephen    | Nonincumbent    | 6,227         | 7.70               |               |                    | Lost Council             | 27,614         | 4.44                      |
| Germaine, Michael     | Incumbent       | 6,926         | 8.56               |               |                    | Won Council              | 27,801         | 4.01                      |
| Keefe, Mary           | Nonincumbent    | 5,801         | 7.17               |               |                    | Lost Council             | 6,210          | 0.93                      |
| Lukes, Konnie         | Incumbent Mayor | 7,328         | 9.06               | 5,663         | 28.04%             | Won Council, Lost Mayor  | 33,895         | 4.63                      |
| McCarthy, William     | Nonincumbent    | 5,828         | 7.21               |               |                    | Lost Council             | 15,373         | 2.63                      |
| O'Brien, Joseph       | Nonincumbent    | 12,206        | 15.09              | 10,214        | 50.58              | Won Council, Won Mayor   | 43,300         | 3.55                      |
| Petty, Joseph         | Incumbent       | 9,190         | 11.36              |               |                    | Won Council              | 26,920         | 2.93                      |
| Rushton, Rick         | Incumbent       | 8,068         | 9.98               |               |                    | Won Council              | 13,506         | 1.67                      |
| Toomey, Kate          | Incumbent       | 10,365        | 12.82              | 3,722         | 18.43              | Won Council, Lost Mayor  | 33,633         | 3.24                      |
| Tsitsilianos, Emanuel | Nonincumbent    | 2,782         | 3.44               | 595           | 2.95               | Lost Council, Lost Mayor | 0              | --                        |
| <b>Total</b>          |                 | <b>20,912</b> |                    | <b>20,194</b> |                    |                          | <b>232,302</b> |                           |

Table 2: Receipts, City-Wide Candidates, 2009

| Candidate             | Status          | Result                   | Total Money Raised | Itemized Individual Contributions | PAC Contributions | Contributions /Loans from Candidate | Mean Itemized Contribution | Number of \$500+ Donors* | Contributions from outside of Worcester** |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Akindele, Kola        | Nonincumbent    | Lost Council             | \$4,050            | \$2,352                           | \$0               | \$93                                | \$112                      | 0                        | \$352                                     |
| Buchalter, Stephen    | Nonincumbent    | Lost Council             | 27,614             | 19,199                            | 0                 | 938                                 | 188                        | 13                       | 10,024                                    |
| Germaine, Michael     | Incumbent       | Won Council              | 27,801             | 15,965                            | 3,675             | 0                                   | 127                        | 7                        | 5,150                                     |
| Keefe, Mary           | Nonincumbent    | Lost Council             | 6,210              | 4,780                             | 350               | 0                                   | 65                         | 0                        | 900                                       |
| Lukes, Konnie         | Incumbent Mayor | Won Council, Lost Mayor  | 33,895             | 23,170                            | 300               | 4,200                               | 168                        | 8                        | 7,965                                     |
| McCarthy, William     | Nonincumbent    | Lost Council             | 15,373             | 10,445                            | 500               | 1,890                               | 89                         | 9                        | 4,885                                     |
| O'Brien, Joseph       | Nonincumbent    | Won Council, Won Mayor   | 43,300<br>***      | 37,509                            | 9,541             | 0                                   | 107                        | 23                       | 18,365                                    |
| Petty, Joseph         | Incumbent       | Won Council              | 26,920             | 24,767                            | 1,475             | 1,200                               | 115                        | 11                       | 8,444                                     |
| Rushton, Rick         | Incumbent       | Won Council              | 13,506             | 5,433                             | 1,050             | 0                                   | 139                        | 1                        | 375                                       |
| Toomey, Kate          | Incumbent       | Won Council, Lost Mayor  | 33,633             | 16,925                            | 1,650             | 6,000                               | 133                        | 6                        | 8,150                                     |
| Tsitsilianos, Emanuel | Nonincumbent    | Lost Council, Lost Mayor | 0                  | 0                                 | 0                 | 0                                   | 0                          | 0                        | 0   |
| <b>Total</b>          |                 |                          | <b>232,302</b>     | <b>160,545</b>                    | <b>18,541</b>     | <b>22,463</b>                       | <b>121</b>                 | <b>78</b>                | <b>64,610</b>                             |

\* Includes PACs.

\*\* Individuals only.

\*\*\* O'Brien also reported \$8,142 in independent expenditures, not included in this total.



Table 3: Changes for Repeat Candidates, 2005-2009

| Candidate         | First Elected | 2009 Receipts | 2007 Receipts | 2005 Receipts | Pct. Change 2005-2009 | Pct. Change 2005-2007 | Pct. Change 2007-2009 | Notes  |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Germaine, Michael | 2007          | 27,801        | 34,010        |               |                       |                       | -18                   |  |
| Lukes, Konnie     | 1995          | 33,895        | 31,381        | 13,700        | 147                   | 129                   | 8                     | Ran for Mayor each year; won in 2007.  |
| Petty, Joseph     | 1997          | 26,920        | 30,275        | 26,520        | 2                     | 14                    | -11                   |  |
| Rushton, Rick     | 2007          | 13,506        | 86,662        |               |                       |                       | -74                   | Ran for Mayor in 2007; held District Council seat before 2007.   |
| Toomey, Kate      | 2005          | 33,633        | 23,953        | 28,745        | 17                    | -17                   | 40                    | Ran for Mayor in 2009.   |
| Irish, Dennis     | 1999          |               | 39,839        | 23,685        |                       | 68                    |                       | Lost seat in 2005, but regained it when Tim Murray left office. Declared for Mayor in 2007 but dropped out after preliminary election. |
| Perotto, Michael  | 2001          |               | 60,520        | 33,390        |                       | 81                    |                       | Declared for Mayor in 2007 but dropped out after preliminary election.   |
| Rosen, Gary       | 2005          |               | 19,861        | 23,499        |                       | -30                   |                       | Had served previously; ran for Mayor in 2007.  |

Table 4: District Races, 2007

| Candidate                           | Preliminary Election<br>Votes | General Election<br>Votes | Receipts | Transfers/Loans | End Cash<br>on Hand | Expenditures |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|----------|-----------------|---------------------|--------------|
| <b>District 1</b>                   |                               |                           |          |                 |                     |              |
| Smith (Incumbent)                   | 48.4                          | 55.8                      | \$28,610 | \$7,445         | \$9,236             | \$26,819     |
| Casello (Challenger)                | 30.7                          | 43.8                      | 6,976    |                 | 26                  | 6,950        |
| Rosario (Preliminary Challenger)    | 20.3                          |                           | 15,635   |                 | 1,553               | 14,082       |
| <b>District 2</b>                   |                               |                           |          |                 |                     |              |
| Palmieri (I)                        |                               | 95.6                      |          | 10,898          | 10,818              | 80           |
| <b>District 3</b>                   |                               |                           |          |                 |                     |              |
| Clancy (I)                          |                               | 68.2                      | 14,250   | 19,622          | 27,994              | 5,928        |
| Kiely (C)                           |                               | 31.4                      |          |                 | -163                | 163          |
| <b>District 4</b>                   |                               |                           |          |                 |                     |              |
| Haller (I)                          |                               | 61.9                      | 13,215   | 1,051           | 2,268               | 11,998       |
| Simonds (C)                         |                               | 37.6                      | 5,162    | 227             | 25                  | 5,364        |
| <b>District 5 (Open)</b>            |                               |                           |          |                 |                     |              |
| Eddy                                | 43.7                          | 52.0                      | 30,170   |                 | 566                 | 29,604       |
| Ball                                | 31.1                          | 47.7                      | 9,985    |                 |                     | 9,985        |
| Plante (Preliminary only)           | 24.8                          |                           | 7,535    | 8,684           | 9,389               | 6,830        |
| Mean , Incumbents                   |                               |                           | 14,019   | 9,754           | 12,579              | 11,206       |
| Mean, Incumbents in Contested Races |                               |                           | 18,692   | 9,373           | 13,166              | 14,915       |
| Mean, General Election Challengers  |                               |                           | 4,046    | 76              | -37                 | 4,159        |
| Mean, Preliminary Candidates        |                               |                           | 11,585   | 4,342           | 5,471               | 10,456       |
| Mean, Winners                       |                               |                           | 17,249   | 7,803           | 8,216               | 14,886       |
| Mean, Winners in Contested Races    |                               |                           | 21,561   | 7,030           | 7,566               | 18,588       |
| Mean, Losers                        |                               |                           | 7,549    | 1,485           | 1,805               | 7,229        |
| Mean, General Election Losers       |                               |                           | 5,531    | 57              | -28                 | 5,616        |
| Total                               |                               |                           | 131,539  | 47,927          | 61,712              | 117,803      |

Table 5: District Races, 2009

| Candidate                           | General Election Votes | Receipts | Transfers/Loans | End Cash on Hand | Expenditures |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|----------|-----------------|------------------|--------------|
| <b>District 1</b>                   |                        |          |                 |                  |              |
| Smith (Incumbent)                   | 52.5%                  | \$11,299 | \$12,464        | \$8,185          | \$15,578     |
| Casello (Challenger)                | 47.1                   | 9,125    | 26              | -4,245           | 13,396       |
| <b>District 2</b>                   |                        |          |                 |                  |              |
| Palmieri (I)*                       | 84.0                   | 11,730   | 19,647          | 31,172           | 205          |
| Raffa (C)                           | 10.8                   |          |                 |                  |              |
| <b>District 3</b>                   |                        |          |                 |                  |              |
| Clancy (I)                          | 65.7                   | 6,627    | 26,186          | 24,355           | 8,458        |
| Beshai (C)**                        | 33.8                   | 4,835    |                 | 47               | 4,787        |
| <b>District 4</b>                   |                        |          |                 |                  |              |
| Haller (I)                          | 61.8                   | 8,985    | 5,483           | 5,099            | 9,369        |
| Ross (C)***                         | 37.6                   | 11,594   | 213             | 427              | 11,380       |
| <b>District 5</b>                   |                        |          |                 |                  |              |
| Eddy (I)                            | 96.9                   | 6,745    | 6,670           | 3,684            | 9,731        |
| Mean , Incumbents                   |                        | 9,077    | 14,090          | 14,499           | 8,868        |
| Mean, Incumbents in Contested Races |                        | 8,970    | 14,711          | 12,546           | 11,135       |
| Mean, Challengers                   |                        | 8,518    | 80              | -1,257           | 9,854        |
| Total                               |                        | 70,940   | 70,689          | 68,724           | 72,904       |

\* This is treated below as an uncontested race.

\*\* Beshai lists loans from himself under receipts.

\*\*\* Ross ended the race with outstanding loans (from herself) of \$24,707.

Table 6: Changes in Candidate Fundraising for Massachusetts At-Large Municipal Candidates, 2005-2009

|                    | 2005                  |                       |         | 2007                |          |          | 2009                |          |         | Change<br>'05-'07 | Change<br>'07-'09 | Change<br>'05-'09 |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|----------|----------|---------------------|----------|---------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|                    | Average<br>Receipts   | High                  | Low     | Average<br>Receipts | High     | Low      | Average<br>Receipts | High     | Low     |                   |                   |                   |
| <b>Worcester</b>   |                       |                       |         |                     |          |          |                     |          |         |                   |                   |                   |
| Incumbents         | \$79,062*<br>(24,030) | \$354,222<br>(33,390) | \$7,900 | \$34,304            | \$60,520 | \$19,861 | \$27,081            | \$33,895 | 13,506  | -57%<br>(43)      | -21%              | -65%<br>(13)      |
| Nonincumbents      | 14,754                | 28,745                | 1,100   | 34,705              | 86,607   | 1,369    | 16,091              | 43,300   | 0       | 135               | -54               | 9                 |
| Winners            | 79,046<br>(24,011)    | 354,222<br>(33,390)   | 7,900   | 37,681              | 86,607   | 19,861   | 29,784              | 43,300   | 13,506  | -52<br>(57)       | -21               | -62<br>(24)       |
| Losers             | 11,824                | 28,659                | 1,100   | 31,329              | 60,520   | 1,369    | 10,649              | 27,614   | 0       | 154               | -66               | -10               |
| <b>Lowell</b>      |                       |                       |         |                     |          |          |                     |          |         |                   |                   |                   |
| Incumbents         | 18,743                | 35,824                | 4,900   | 20,330              | 33,015   | 9,530    | 17,339              | 27,020   | 11,440  | 9                 | -15               | -7                |
| Nonincumbents      | 13,099                | 45,331                | 776     | 20,802              | 66,535   | 3,590    | 4747                | 14,928   | 0       | 59                | -77               | -64               |
| Winners            | 18,743                | 35,824                | 4,900   | 26,594              | 66,535   | 9,530    | 14,625              | 22,300   | 3,626   | 42                | -45               | -22               |
| Losers             | 13,099                | 45,331                | 776     | 15,838              | 26,464   | 3,590    | 5,733               | 27,020   | 0       | 21                | -64               | -56               |
| <b>Springfield</b> |                       |                       |         |                     |          |          |                     |          |         |                   |                   |                   |
| Incumbents         | 17,879                | 35,930                | 1,597   | 22,149              | 44,590   | 1,135    | 19,977              | 22,905   | 18,488  | 24                | -9                | 12                |
| Nonincumbents      | 5,367                 | 20,730                | 600     | 7,955               | 28,555   | 100      | 3,468               | 8,585    | 0       | 48                | -44               | -35               |
| Winners            | 17,879                | 35,930                | 1,597   | 22,862              | 44,590   | 1,135    | 17,699              | 22,905   | 8,585   | 56                | -23               | -1                |
| Losers             | 5,367                 | 20,730                | 600     | 3,584               | 9,868    | 100      | 1,762               | 5,287    | 0       | -33               | -51               | -67               |
| <b>Cambridge</b>   |                       |                       |         |                     |          |          |                     |          |         |                   |                   |                   |
| Incumbents         | 76,798                | 182,638               | 32,238  | 54,507              | 95,968   | 29,810   | 40,330              | 71,080   | 11,711  | -30               | -26               | -47               |
| Nonincumbents      | 14,659                | 41,052                | 1,610   | 17,370              | 34,560   | 2,460    | 10,003              | 34,409   | 0       | 18                | -42               | -32               |
| Winners            | 63,576                | 182,638               | 32,238  | 52,050              | 95,968   | 28,392   | 37,332              | 71,080   | 11,711  | -18               | -28               | -41               |
| Losers             | 31,865                | 146,832               | 1,610   | 12,638              | 34,560   | 2,460    | 9,631               | 34,409   | 0       | -60               | -24               | -70               |
| <b>Boston</b>      |                       |                       |         |                     |          |          |                     |          |         |                   |                   |                   |
| Incumbents         | 125,593               | 147,640               | 84,276  | 202,899             | 353,558  | 47,129   | 238,994             | 373,355  | 104,633 | 62                | 18                | 90                |
| Nonincumbents      | 192,505               | 310,120               | 73,319  | 167,278             | 497,543  | 363      |                     | 143,788  | **      | -13               | **                | **                |
| Winners            | 272,652               | 310,120               | 143,663 | 353,037             | 497,543  | 208,010  | 186,410             | 373,355  | 104,633 | 29                | -47               | -32               |
| Losers             | 109,125               | 170,049               | 73,319  | 17,139              | 47,129   | 363      |                     | 78,202   | **      | -84               | **                | **                |

\* 2005 averages for Worcester include fundraising by incumbent Mayor Tim Murray, who subsequently used much of his campaign treasury for his Lieutenant Governor campaign. Figures in parentheses exclude Murray's fundraising.

\*\* Not all Boston disclosure reports have been filed.

*Table 7: Election Systems for Major Massachusetts Cities*

| City               | Population | Number of at-large Council Members | Description of Election System  |
|--------------------|------------|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Worcester</b>   | 174,000    | 6                                  | Modified “Plan E” government – six at-large councilors, five district councilors. Mayor is one of the at-large councilors, but must run for both offices. All councilors serve two-year terms.                                    |
| <b>Lowell</b>      | 103,500    | 9                                  | “Plan E” government – all nine councilors elected at-large; one of the nine is elected by the other councilors to serve as mayor. All councilors serve two-year terms.  |
| <b>Springfield</b> | 149,900    | 9                                  | Modified “Plan E” government – all nine council members are elected at-large; one of the nine is elected by the other councilors to serve as council president. Mayor is elected separately. All councilors serve two-year terms. |
| <b>Cambridge</b>   | 101,400    | 9                                  | “Plan E” government – all nine councilors elected at-large; one of the nine is elected by the other councilors to serve as mayor. All councilors serve two-year terms.  |
| <b>Boston</b>      | 599,400    | 4                                  | Modified “Plan E” government – four at-large councilors, nine district councilors. Mayor is elected separately. All councilors serve two-year terms, mayor serves a four-year term.   |

Population data from 2007 census estimates.