



Crimebusters: PAGE 4.

# Inside WORCESTER

A Journal of Observation & Opinion ■ February 2014

# Next- man up?

Why the push  
for Mr. Augustus  
as permanent  
is a misguided notion  
—PAGE 2.



# 'Q'less?

MAIN ST. (BY WAY OF JUNE ST.)—The temptation upon discovering that June St. resident **Steve Quist** is trying to drum up support for keeping **Edward M. Augustus Jr.** on as city manager after his nine-month appointment ends is to slap Mr. Quist upside the head and say “what were you thinking?”

In professing such a course of action—bold even by his standards as a rather loose and quirky cannon on the local political scene—Mr. Quist ignores certain keen considerations. Not the least of which is Mr. Augustus’ desire (expressed more than once, and fairly emphatically) to return to his job as director of the office of government and community relations at the College of the Holy Cross.

Could Mr. Augustus have been more clear about that wish? Which raises a point that Mr. Quist apparently misses; namely, that Mr. Augustus *has* his reasons. One of them presumably being the level of comfort he feels as a top-ranking officer of a pre-eminent educational institution here in the Northeast.

But Mr. Quist also turns a blind eye to another possible motivation for Mr. Augustus’ stance, and that is a very real awareness on his part that **Michael V. O’Brien** is the proverbial “tough act to follow.” Splendid as Mr. Augustus’ credentials and experience are (including a stint in the Massachusetts State Senate), he surely must have taken into account the prospect that regardless of how well he discharges his duties as city manager he might fall short of city councilors’ expectations.

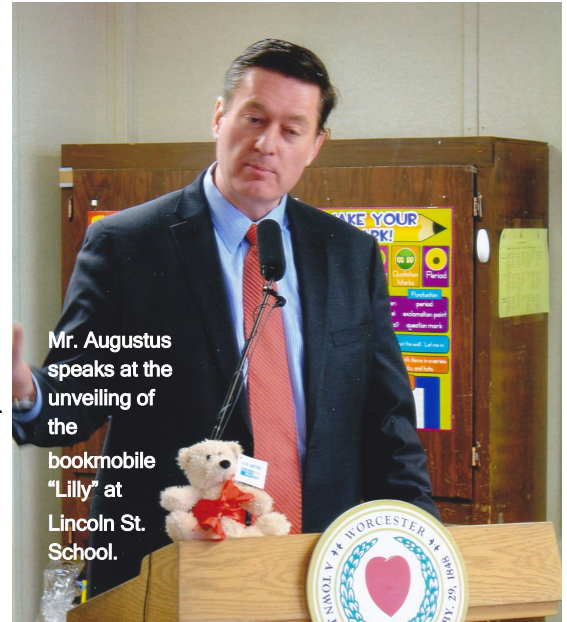
**Tom Hoover** knows all about what happens next when a leader falls into disfavor; as did Julius Caesar, Marie Antoniette—Hosni Mubarek even.

Even amid such attention-drawing diversions as the latest call for Worcester to ban the Ringling Bros. circus from an appearance at the DCU Center because of its supposed cruelty to animals, the most recent shenanigans of the Santa Maria family, the continuing clamor for the city’s non-profits like Assumption, Becker and Holy Cross to voluntarily ante up to ease the local property-tax burden—even a “People’s Forum” article by Holy Cross Senior **Neema Hakim** advocating for Worcester to more ambitiously engage students in the life of the city, if it sincerely wants to be seen as great—“Q” must be aware that several prominent businesspersons have professed no interest in being a candidate to ultimately replace Mr. O’Brien. Topping that list is **Tim Murray**, who Congressman **Edward Markey** referred to as “lieutenant governor” at the city’s recent Inaugural Exercises but who is in fact now president of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. Reading between the lines, Mr. Murray may have seen something sinister in the tea leaves involving the city manager’s position, to have deferred so early on.

To say that Mr. Augustus’ appointment should be “a no-brainer” and thus preclude At-Large Councilor **Philip P. Palmieri** (who chairs the Municipal Operations committee, which also includes District 1 Councilor **Tony Economou** and District 3 Councilor **George J. Russell**) from undertaking a search that would involve both local, regional and national candidates is the equivalent of foregoing due process in the judicial system.

It rubs business people I know who have a vested interest in the city’s machinations the wrong way. **Chris George**, president of George & Co. on James St., said, “I think we have to go by whatever the charter says.” **Elizabeth A. “Beth” Proko** of Mill St. Motors and the presently inactive Worcester Citizens for Business told me “I like Ed Augustus an awful lot. I think he’s a smart man but honestly why would the community have an expectation of a temporary appointment and then have the city go back on that? Something doesn’t seem right. Both sides said that. I take issue with that.”

The city may not necessarily be looking for an exact replica of the rah-rah Mr. O’Brien (who upon the arrival of Jet-Blue at Worcester Regional Airport gushed “fly JetWool!”) But the public hearings Mr. Palmieri’s committee will hold in all five Council districts to get input on selection of the next city manager should proceed. May the best man, or woman, emerge. May Mr. Quist’s “groundswell” for adoption of “the inevitable” fade quietly into the night. —ROD LEE.



Mr. Augustus speaks at the unveiling of the bookmobile “Lilly” at Lincoln St. School.

# Confessions of a political waffler

What better time than the week after President Obama's State of the Union address and Gov. Patrick's State of the State speech to render an admission that over the years going back to the 1960s (when my taste in politics was first whet) I have drifted back and forth between an affinity for Democrats one minute and Republicans the next—sometimes Independents too (but never Fascists).



(Why, by the way, do the newspapers always write "President Barack Obama"—using both his first and last name—when traditionally it has just been "President Truman" or "President Eisenhower"?)

Also incidentally (so long as I am coming clean), I am a long-since out-of-the-closet Yankees fan which—in defense of that particularly blasphemy I hasten to note that I grew up in a place (Binghamton) that had a Yankees farm team for many years, and so got to see the likes of Munson, Pepitone and Ken "Hawk" Harrelson come through (I hereby reveal that a business acquaintance of mine, **Arlette Lynch** of Bank of Canton, is ALSO a rabid Yankees fan, my thinking being that by doing so I will not be standing alone when the arrows start to fly).

As for my preferences when it comes to political candidates, it all began with JFK's inaugural speech. I was a junior in high school in Endicott, New York with no heretofore tapped interest in American politics. That changed when I heard Mr. Kennedy's call to action (in his thick-laden Massachusetts accent), his voice ringing out from the steps of the Capitol on a frosty January morning. It gave me goose bumps. I subsequently picked up the vinyl recording of that "Ask Not" moment. I played it over and over.

Today, JFK is viewed in most circles as a "moderate." Liberal in some regards, conservative in others. But a Democrat.

Just a few years later, when the crusty Arizonan Barry Goldwater launched the modern conservative movement, I rushed out to buy his book "The Conscience of a Conservative." I was hooked. At about the same time I discovered William F. Buckley Jr. (WFB), whose "God and Man at Yale" excoriated the Ivy League school's liberal stance toward the teaching of religious doctrine. A huge, and controversial best seller. I bought Mr. Buckley's book too. Purchased a subscription to the magazine Mr. Buckley founded—National Review. Joined YAF (Young Americans for Freedom).

Then came Ronald Reagan, cementing (I thought) my preference for conservatives and the conservative cause of "less government."

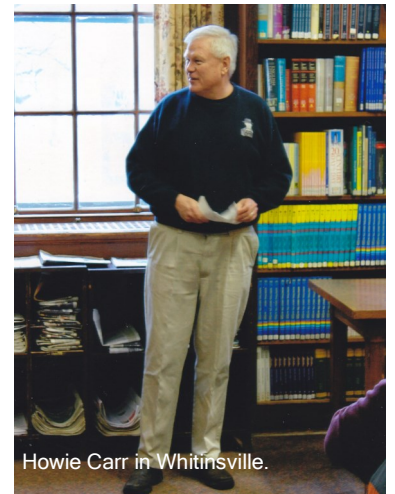
As time passed I found out something about myself when it comes to politics. And that is that whether the individual is a Democrat, Republican or Independent, what attracts me to them is their personal magnetism and their passion for their cause. And so evolved an ever-fluctuating affection for both Democrats (Bill Bradley, John Silber, Robert F. Kennedy) and Republicans (Jack Kemp, Mitt Romney, Bill Weld and Paul Cellucci).

I am currently reading Evan Thomas' "Robert Kennedy: His Life," a fascinating portrait of the man who was considered a "runt" and the least likely of the Kennedy clan to succeed by his father (Joe Kennedy Sr.) and his brothers and sisters. RFK captured my imagination right smack on the heels of Mr. Goldwater's aborted stab for the presidency and even as I continued to hold Mr. Goldwater, Mr. Buckley and Mr. Reagan in high esteem for their defense of individual freedoms.

So it goes. I often wonder, as I did again in listening to my pal **Hank Stolz's** chat with Evan Falchuk (an attorney, businessman and candidate for governor, representing the newly formed United Independent Party) on WCRN 830 AM one morning, if most people sway to and fro like a weed in the wind—as I do. Exercising such continuing ambivalence.

When my Northbridge buddy **Harry Berkowitz** telephoned to say that Boston Herald Columnist, WRKO Radio Talk-Show Host and Bulger-family tormentor Howie Carr would be signing copies of his latest book ("Ratman") in Whitinsville, two miles from my house, I made a point of going. Mr. Carr is a staunch conservative and always good for laughs and insights. As for instance during his talk he related that Whitey Bulger had been brought up on charges of statutory rape while in the Air Force. Summoned to the desk of a superior officer, the future gangster was warned that a dishonorable discharge would hurt his chances of employment. "The kind of work I am going to be doing, it won't matter!" Bulger said.

The explanation for my wavering may be that in my never-ending search for the political candidate who is the perfect amalgamation of the qualities I most admire, I hold out hope that one with common sense (regardless of party) will win.

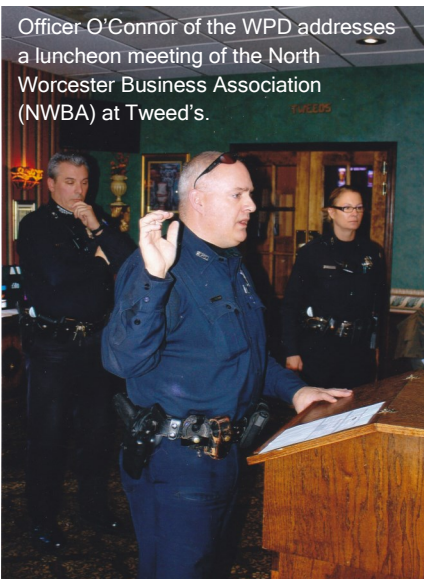


Howie Carr in Whitinsville.

## THE NEIGHBORHOODS

### The graffiti wars

GROVE ST.—As a fan of such television shows as “NCIS Los Angeles,” “Bluebloods” and “Hawaii Five O” in which video surveillance is a key ingredient (I have said to my wife “what would my Bible-toting Baptist grandmother think of me, watching this kind of stuff when Lassie and Lawrence Welk were as risqué a venture as her viewing tastes went?”) I was not surprised to hear **Gerald S. O’Connor** of the Worcester Police Department tell a luncheon meeting of the North Worcester Business Association (NWBA) at Tweed’s on January 15th that crime in



Officer O'Connor of the WPD addresses a luncheon meeting of the North Worcester Business Association (NWBA) at Tweed's.

Worcester almost always starts “with graffiti.” His advice, then? Put eyes on the subject. “If you can get camera systems, get them. If you have a camera system” and can upgrade it, “even better.” I was hoping to hear Officer O’Connor say that he, like Commander Steve McGarrett or Detective Danny Reagan, sometimes takes

matters into his own hands and exacts the punishment so justly deserved on perpetrators of wrongdoing when they are caught: string them up by the thumbs at least. But he left it at “we see these pictures” (obtained via camera systems) and they are an invaluable aid in the work of apprehending those responsible for all sorts of mischief.

“Business groups like the NWBA are the best way” for the WPD to do its job in safeguarding the interests of the merchant community, he said, “because you talk to one another.” As might be expected, Mr. O’Connor (who was accompanied by Officers **Janis Bianculli** and **Ken Carville**, at the invitation of District 1 City Councilor **Tony Economou**) was bombarded with comments and questions at the conclusion of his remarks: from **Tim Firment** of Habitat for Humanity about a “stolen truck;” from **Michele Hoey Sloan** of Hoey Tire about an intruder whose very same footprint was later found at Jerry’s Hardware; from **Jim Magay** of Magay & Barron Eye Center about what a store owner should do if he sees someone shoplifting (“call 911 if you think the situation is serious enough, otherwise 508-799-8606, or 508-929-1300 which is the citywide service line” for complaints about trash, tagging and a host of oth-

er ills). Listening to Officer O’Connor, I had a momentary rush of guilt for having soaped windows as a teenager, at Halloween—pretty much the extent of my own “life in crime.” These days I am content to experience crime peripherally, as for instance by watching “Boardwalk Empire,” “Mob City” or by reading “Billy Bathgate” by E.L. Doctorow. As for the proliferation of graffiti in Worcester in recent weeks, it seems inherently ludicrous for the city to be towing such a hard line with victimized merchants—all the more so when we learn that the mammoth CitySquare project, when similarly tagged, was spared the indignity of the written warning and threat of fines smaller operations receive. One can only hope that reason will prevail—common sense encouraged by the likes of At-Large Councilor **Morris A. “Moe” Bergman** who in one of his first acts in the seat (he also owns commercial property) pushed back against the ordinance. And by letter writer **Carl Benander** who recommends that the offender(s) get a mandatory sentence—but with the option of wire-brushing the paint off, or making restitution to do so.

### NY bagels, Straight Up

MAIN ST.—Straight Ahead Ministries would not have needed to do anything more to cement its good standing in a building owned by **Arthur Mooradian** in Worcester’s Main South neighborhood. But true to form the faith-based organization headed by **Dr. Scott Larson** keeps thinking of new ways to improve on its apparatus, which consists of a café, a thrift shop and a catering business. Recently, at the urging of Straight Ahead’s **Robb Zarges**, Straight Up Café began offering what Dr. Larson refers to as “true, authentic” bagels from New York City. “They are the real deal,” Dr. Larson told Inside Worcester: the first available in the Worcester market, he believes. “They are boiled there (at Davidovich Bakery in NYC), sent to us and we bake them. We bought a case to try and loved them.” New York bagels are just another reflection of Straight Ahead’s mission to help young people coming out of lock-up; Clark University is doing “poetry slams” in the café, and a group of about fifteen (including District 4 Councilor **Sarah Rivera’s** son Caleb) will take mission trip to Haiti in May.



Gabe Rodriguez, Alissa Nieves, Beth Swedberg and Anna Culton on the job at Straight Ahead Ministries’ Straight Up Café, which is now offering New York bagels.

## THE NEIGHBORHOODS

### Fuzzy math?

BERNICE ST.—Earnest watchdog **Joan Crowell** may not be Edward Snowden but as the principal spokesperson for AWARE (Accurate Worcester Assessments on Real Estate) she has been known to blow a whistle with all the strength of the man who is held in such contempt for leaks of highly sensitive government information. Again in recent days Ms. Crowell has held the city Assessor's Office to the fire (has anyone checked to see if **Bill Ford's** feet have scorch marks on them?). First she wondered (not aloud, but every bit as effectively) if the four-acre site of the former Howard Johnson's at Southbridge and College streets has been incorrectly accorded tax-exempt status since being purchased by Holy Cross more than fifteen years ago. Initially targeted for development into mixed use (retail/office/commercial), the property still sits (though "nicely maintained" by the school, "if you drive by," she acknowledges). As a charitable organization, Ms. Crowell notes, Holy Cross is exempt from paying taxes on the land if its intent for it in the future is a charitable use. **HOWEVER** (ahem!), she adds, if this does not occur within two years of said acquisition "it becomes taxable **until** (my emphasis, not hers) put to such use. Apparently, lo and behold, Holy Cross has been dodging a bullet. If that is true, she asks, "how many other properties in the city, owned by non-profit organizations, have been incorrectly classified?" No sooner had we digested this curious bit of information from Ms. Crowell than another came along. "Check The Numbers:  $2+2=5$ ," she wrote. Seems that "some real-estate tax bills may have inaccurate info." The assessment valuation that is printed on the third-quarter tax bill "may not be the same valuation that is shown on the Property Report Card. In some cases the inflated valuation on the tax bill could cause the taxpayer to pay additional taxes if the property valuation is incorrect." In looking into this matter further (and as evidence that Ms. Crowell eats her Wheaties every morning, since hardly any time at all had elapsed) she fired off a missive entitled "Waterfront Property Owners Get Soaked." It appears that they (she said) "are the only ones affected by (the aforementioned) questionable increase in one's tax obligations. **How and why were Waterfront Property Owners targeted with this additional assessment?**" To the tune of, on average, an extra \$4500 which equates to approximately \$100 more in taxes. **How and why was this manual override on the tax bills increased and why was it added to the Waterfront Property Owners' tax obligations?** she asks. Imagine being Mr. Ford or working in the Assessor's office when she further points out that "during the FY2014 revaluation period, the city did not send out Property Report Cards to all property own-

ers—why not, before the tax rate was set? Another irregularity to ponder, she says: the Property Report Card "shows FY 2014 valuations that most likely were already approved by the DOR during the revaluation process. **How and why does the tax bill show a higher and different assessment?** And, "the city should have conducted a Public Disclosure Period after creating the FY 2014 property assessments," but didn't. **Why not?** Ms. Crowell and AWARE "respectfully" request answers from "the city administration" to these questions. There the matter rests. For now.

### 'Carnaval' fever rages

MILLBURY ST.—The Canal District's third annual "Carnaval de Canal" is several weeks away but there is already "electricity in the air" after "an unbelievable planning meeting" at



Mayor Petty chats with John Giangregorio prior to the start of the Canal-o-Ween parade.

the new Electric Haze according to neighborhood impresario **John Giangregorio**. "Thirty of the most interesting and exciting folks attended the Mardi Gras" strategizing session: "an eccentric combination of bar owners, musicians, performers and a locksmith." Sponsors are stepping up too:

Webster First Federal Credit Union, Wings Over Worcester, Westerman's "and many others." The Pulse and Womag are "donating huge ads." The Banner, the Center, Electric Haze, Blackstone Tap, 3 G's and others are "sending in their support forms." Building on the success of its recent Canal-o-Ween parade, the Canal'ers are booking a number of street performers including a fire spinner and a stilt walker. Shuttle buses will run from local colleges to the Canal District and there will be an in-District trolley. The next planning meeting for the event is scheduled for Wednesday, February 5th at 5:30 p.m. at Center Bar & Grill on Green St. Mark Tuesday, March 4th on the calendar for a night of "wild fun" throughout the city's most scintillating neighborhood.

## THE NEIGHBORHOODS

### A snub from Paulie?

CHANDLER ST.—It makes perfect sense of course for **Paulie Collyer** to move his popular jazz and blues festival from the only home it has known in and around the Keystone Plaza to the city's hottest neighborhood: the Canal District—starting this year (June 20-22). Nevertheless one can't help but think that the Chandler St. crowd will view the announcement as insult added to the injury of Mr. Collyer's recent departure as chair of the Chandler St. Business Association. His explanation, delivered by email, would seem to suggest that the relocation is strictly a business decision.

Canal'ers, he said, have "overwhelmed" the festival with their support for the past six years and now they are providing him with "a new, larger venue" that draws on the enthusiasm of the atmosphere that has been created by a hotelier (**Bob Largess** of the Hotel Vernon), a bar owner (**John Giangregorio**), restaurateurs and retailers including those now housed at **Dino and Robin Lorusso's** Crompton Collective sandwiched between Green and Harrison streets (new home of the NeighborWorks center as well) working in close collaboration to elevate their status. "The new" site "is also a parking lot" that maintains the "gritty urban" environment that has been conducive to the festival's success, Mr. Collyer said. He has ties to the Canal District as well; "I created one of the first road races there, the Canal Diggers 5K," he said. There is no danger that the 2014 version of the festival will be a dud, either; already, Mr. Collyer said, "the iconic New Orleans band George Porter Jr. & The Runnin' Partners" are booked—with other acts to follow.



Johnny Sansone and James Bennett perform at Paulie's jazz and blues fest. (PHOTO/COURTESY OF PAUL COLLYER)

### A tempest in a teapot

TATNUCK SQUARE—It is hard to picture an outcome any more favorable for National Grid than has been the case so far in the company's efforts to erect a communications tower at 30 Tory Fort Lane, 597 Mill St. or either of the two locations now being looked at as alternative sites in the face of fierce neighborhood opposition to the plan. NG's only hope to get its way seems to lie in Zoning Board of Appeals Chairman

**Lawrence Abramoff's** assertion that the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 would appear to allow the utility to proceed on the grounds that a tower is needed to enhance the capabilities of its "SmartGrid" program. If it happens, it is obvious it will only be after National Grid has run the gauntlet that would make those of ancient times look like patty-cake.

### A Caring superstar

RANDOLPH RD.—Everything is coming up roses for Dodge Park Rest Home these days, with Co-Owner **Micha Shalev** in the process of publishing a book, new residences on the grounds of the former Old Fellows Home property in the offing and now a "Caring Star" of 2014 award for service excellence from Caring.com based on consumer ratings and reviews posted on the website.

The five-star honor puts Dodge Park Rest Home in the top 1% of facilities offering Assisted Living and Memory Care services, nationwide.

"We appreciate that we've received positive feedback from families about the services we offer and we thank Caring.com for recognizing our community as a Caring star," Mr. Shalev said. "We strive daily to deliver high-quality care (to) our residents and this award helps validate our delivery on that promise."

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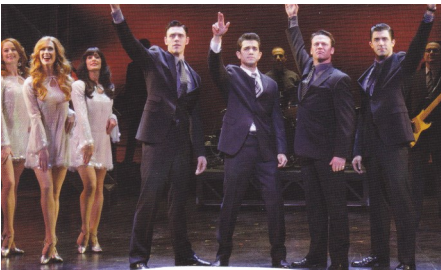
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## THE NEIGHBORHOODS

### Oh, What a Night

SOUTHBRIDGE ST.—Absence always makes the heart grow fonder when it comes to the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts. When it involves three tickets in Row T as part of a packed house for “Jersey Boys” (on a Thursday, no less) even sweeter. When it also means an eldest daughter’s first visit to Worcester’s downtown showpiece and the look on her face as she soaked in the story of



Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons—set to the music her parents remember so well, it is an evening to savor for all time. The only downer: waiting too long

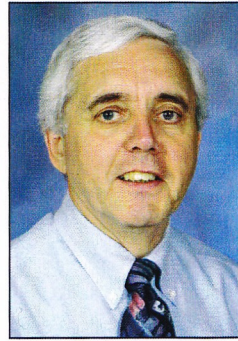
(unlike **Barbara Roach Kyes** of Peoples United Bank, who had her seats weeks ahead) to fork over the money so as not to miss a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The young woman in the box office did the best she could to accommodate the last-minute request. No regrets; hearing Hayden Milanes (as Frankie Valli) magnificently capture “The Voice” that Tommy DeVito (as portrayed by Nicolas Dromard) instantly recognized as a world-beater to those many years ago and reacquainting oneself with the bushel of hits Bob Gaudio (Jason Kappus) wrote (starting with “Who Wears Short Shorts,” at 15) was “worth every penny”—as one of us put it afterwards. To see how far the Hanover has come as a venue for all kinds of theatrical productions, to mingle with a crowd whose joie de vivre is always uplifting, is the frosting on the cake. If you haven’t been, go. If you haven’t been in a while, go again.


### Fallon, Veterans Inc.: A potent parlay

GROVE ST.—Put two standout organizations together and you get the \$24,000 “Community Benefits Grant” Fallon Community Health Plan has given Veterans Inc. to help veterans who may be suffering from mental health or substance-abuse issues: a first step on the road to “sustainable living,” Veterans Inc.’s **Denis Leary** noted.

“Our veterans face unique challenges upon returning home; we are very pleased that (FCHP) has recognized these challenges and chosen to partner with us as we create innovative programming to help address (such issues), Veterans Inc. President/CEO **Vincent J. Perrone** said.

Fallon is “proud” to have been “a long-time supporter of the kind of programs” Veterans Inc. offers, FCHP President/CEO **Patrick Hughes** said.



  
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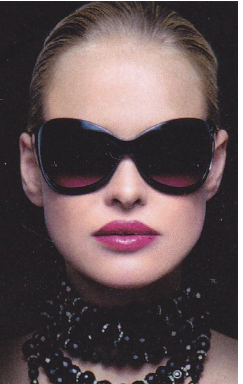
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## THE NEIGHBORHOODS

# Cathy Walsh, RIP



## A rose whose bloom never faded

CHANDLER ST.—For those of us who did not know **Cathy Walsh** of the Sprout flower shop well, the outpouring of affection for her during the months she battled a terminal illness leading up to her death on December 26th were an education in the impact one person can make in the affairs of a city like Worcester.

My own dealings with Ms. Walsh were limited, consisting first of visits to her store on June St. to discuss articles I wrote for advertising-driven neighborhood pages in the Telegram & Gazette. Last year I dropped by Sprout at its new address on Chandler St. to order an arrangement on behalf of the Webster Square Business Association for the funeral of my friend **James H. Finnegan**, who immediately preceded me as president of the WSBA. I did not see Ms. Walsh that day.

She had been emailing me for a while, however, about the West Side Business Network she had organized.

It was only after she took sick that I realized how deeply the love for her ran, among family and friends, as evidenced by such gestures as the gathering of admirers to decorate the “Turtle Boy” statue for the holidays (pictured, above), social-media messages offering her support and then a dedication of the Flora in Winter show at the Worcester Art Museum to her memory—in tribute to her long and illustrious association with that event.

Ms. Walsh could have been content to maintain her focus on the survival of Sprout when a number of flower shops have closed due to competition from the supermarkets. Instead she set about rallying merchants in the June St. and Tatnuck Square areas around issues of import to them including a controversial proposed alteration of the traffic pattern at Whitaker Square.

**Janet Rossetti** of Knitscape on Pleasant St. has been “holding the reins” of “WestSideBiz” as best she can, aided, she says, by advice and encouragement from **Julie Therriault** of Worcester Local First and **Phil Niddrie** who is business-retention manager for the city. Ms. Rossetti is cognizant of the challenge, with a relatively new organization. “I took over one (WSBN) program at the end of May and no one came, and held another at the end of September. Seven people came,” Ms. Rossetti said. She is doing it for Cathy, a “friend since I moved back to Worcester in the late 1990s.”