

A man with short, dark hair, wearing a dark pinstriped suit jacket, a white dress shirt, and a patterned tie, stands in front of a wood-paneled wall. To his left is a large American flag. The man is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

Inside Worcester

A Journal of Observation & Opinion ■ NOVEMBER 2014

The right stuff

Edward M. Augustus Jr. has it; does the City Council? **PAGE 2.**

(Mostly) Men behaving badly

By ROD LEE

So near as we can determine, the view from the peanut gallery, from the bleachers and indeed from offices and living rooms throughout the community was: yes Worcester's City Council wound up with the right man for city manager in Edward M. Augustus Jr. But by badly botching the search process it lost its soul.

In one sense the Council's last-minute swerve away from the three city manager finalists (Peter Graczkowski of Edgartown, David Moore of Worcester and Oscar Rodriguez of Taos, New Mexico) was the only logical ending to a bizarre nine-month saga. And, while it may have placated some councilors—like Frederick C. Rushton, Gary Rosen and Michael T. Gaffney, whose preference was for Mr. Augustus from Day One—it did nothing to shore up the public's perception of the Council as largely inept in the discharge of its duties when it came to the business of hiring the city's next chief executive.

Where to begin in asserting that the Council fumbled the ball? Maybe the five listening sessions that District 2 Councilor Philip P. Palmieri's committee conducted that ended up being largely pointless? Perhaps the money paid to the private search firm, Randi Frank Consulting, which went for naught? Maybe the cries of foul from such observers as Edward Landau and Lillian Corti after they learned that there was no available written record of councilors' rankings of the twelve city manager candidates who made the first cut? Maybe what Inside Worcester has gotten on reasonably good authority was in-house prospect Mr. Moore's early-on revelation to Mr. Augustus that if Mr. Augustus was going to put his name up for consideration for the permanent post, Mr. Moore would not pursue the job? Maybe the late-hour letter from a group of forty of the city's pre-eminent leaders asking Mayor Petty and councilors to in effect disregard all other particulars and instead stand united in their determination to hire Mr. Augustus?

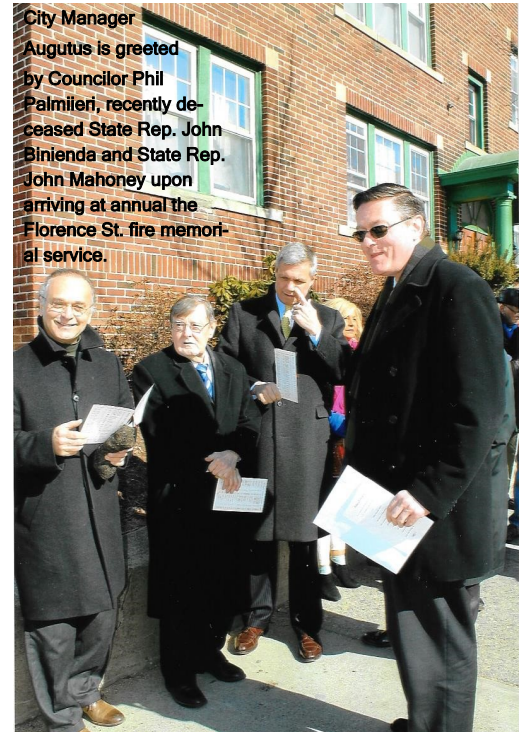
The way it played out gave the city what At-Large Councilor Konstantina B. Lukes termed "a black eye."

George Kerxhalli, president of the Grafton Hill Business Association, agrees. The GHBA had made its own pitch in requesting that the Council reopen the search, given that Mr. Graczkowski, Mr. Moore and Mr. Rodriguez were not satisfactory candidates. As Mr. Kerxhalli put it, they were "the best of the worst."

Addressing what transpired after the fact (on October 7th), Mr. Kerxhalli told Inside Worcester it smacked of inside politics. "I never considered Ed Augustus (in the ask that the GHBA put out) because of his insistence that he wasn't running for the position," Mr. Kerxhalli said. "The gist of what they did is totally wrong with how it came out, with no ill feeling toward Ed Augustus. His resume should have been thrown into the ring like everyone else's. It looked like a done deal before the fact. My criticism is based on interviews (with the three supposed finalists, during a public meet-and-greet). I think the result was a negative for Worcester and for our councilors including our own (District 3 Councilor George J. Russell), the way the operation was run. You know in Shakespeare, Julius Caesar put himself in emperor, because 'the people will it.'"

It appeared to Mr. Kerxhalli that Mr. Moore was "put in as a sacrificial lamb" and that "if no one took action he would be a shoo-in, then would come a strong-mayor form of government in the next election and then David Moore, Ed Augustus or who knows who would be elected mayor and I'm not ruling out Tim Murray. The city manager job would be gone and every Council position would be diminished. David Moore would be strictly a sacrificial lamb and he would be all set because it wouldn't be a long-term job for him. When we (Mr. Kerxhalli and Walter Thomas) questioned David Moore right off the bat I didn't understand why he was there. The other two candidates at least they had experience as city managers."

This is not to say Mr. Kerxhalli isn't high on Mr. Augustus. "I had an experience with Ed Augustus when he was a state senator," he said. "I have no qualms about his skills and personality. His resume should have been in there. I'm not questioning his ability, I'm questioning what the Council did. I have no confidence in them. I have to believe that Konnie Lukes came through again, in toeing the line."

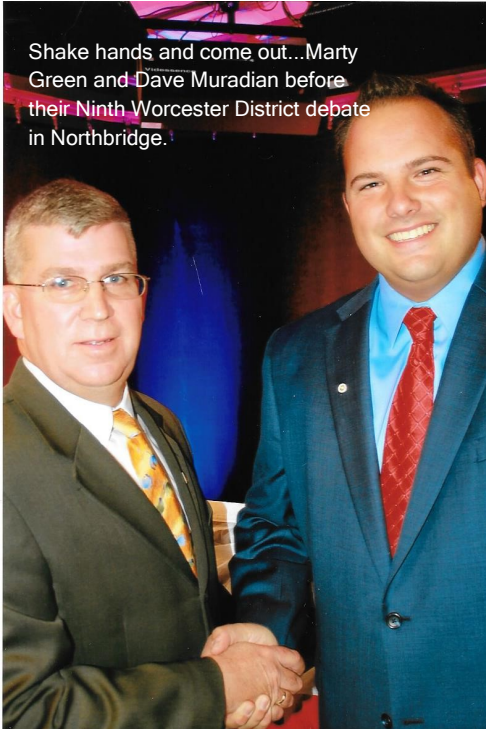




OUR TOWN/ROD LEE

'Battle lines' drawn

I had the good fortune to be asked to moderate two debates this election season, which in my mind is the equivalent of receiving a VIP invitation to ride *The Spirit of Boston* on its maiden voyage in Boston Harbor, witnessing the opening night of what



Shake hands and come out...Marty Green and Dave Muradian before their Ninth Worcester District debate in Northbridge.

was then Great Woods in Mansfield (Gov. Dukakis led the ceremonial cheers, that evening) or being presented with two courtside seats to a Boston Celtics game at the Garden during the Larry Bird era by a gentleman who had season tickets. All of those particular complimentary perks were extended to me as editor of Citizen Group Publications in Brookline from 1985 to 1988. Ah the joys of being a low-paid journalist! Anyway, refereeing Donahue-Perro prior to their primary faceoff for John Fresolo's old state-rep seat (at the Broad Meadow Brook wildlife sanctuary on Massasoit Rd.), and then Green-Muradian for the seat George N. Peterson had held with such distinction (at the Northbridge Community Television, or NCTV-11, studio in the Rockdale section of Northbridge), made for an interesting backdrop to the decisions voters will render at the ballot box on November 4th. My wife might actually accompany me to the polls for that one. She skipped the September installment. When I mentioned to poll worker George Murray at Northbridge High School that morning that Mrs. Lee was "sitting this one out" out of disgust with politicians in general he said "I don't blame her." In fairness to my wife I have to say she has always taken her civic responsibilities seriously. Like so many others today, though, she is discouraged and disenchanted. Hence disinterest and low turnouts. Not even Belanger-Campanale, Kostas-Mahoney, Abraham-Fattman are stirring much fervor. The ballot questions, yes. The races themselves, not so much. Where is Actor Richard Dreyfuss when you need him? Mr. Dreyfuss, you may be aware, has called for a return in the schools to a stronger emphasis on civics education as a way to get young people more engaged in the political process Jim Braude, noting in *The Boston Globe Magazine* on October 26th that five of six voters "stayed home" on Primary Day ("pitiful," he said), offered a number of possible solutions: voting by snail mail; making voting mandatory; giving voters a "none of the above" option; weekend voting; and how about this: a red "I DIDN'T VOTE" sticker affixed to your car with super glue—sort of an electrical scarlet letter." Personally, it rankles me to no end that the three independent candidates for governor (Jeffrey S. McCormick, Scott D. Lively and Evan Falchuk) were excluded from the Baker-Coakley debate at The Hanover Theatre. Just not right. It almost makes me want to vote for one of them, out of spite. But vote I will. I urge you to do the same.

THE ECHO CHAMBER

Ed Bourgault

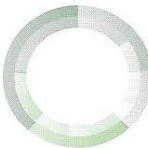
Bollus Lynch

"National Grid's 27% rate increase and Question 4 will have a big impact on small businesses. Small businesses can't take this much more. The minimum wage too."

Jim Donoghue

Tweed's Pub

"The federal government is trying to tell us how to run our own businesses. All of this will eventually cost you more for a hamburger."



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THE NEIGHBORHOODS

A tasting for a 20th

Holy Trinity marks a milestone

ANNA ST.—Congratulations were in abundance and so were food and beverage to fit the occasion which was, for the uninformed, the celebration of an anniversary. For it has been just a little over twenty years since the twelve Eastern Orthodox churches of Central Massachusetts—including St. George Ortho-

dox Cathedral on Grafton Hill—opened the doors of Holy Trinity Nursing & Rehabilitation Center here in Worcester. What better way to mark the occasion, then, than a feast? Because it was on the day of the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos—August 15th, 1994—that a dream became a reality. Today's Holy Trinity, or "HTNRC," is exactly what its founders had envisioned it to be: a facility dedicated to providing skilled nursing and rehabilitative care "with warmth and compassion" for more than one hundred residents. From



Marie Lee, Chris Liazos
and Cindy Fotos.

its resident-centered dining program to its five-star rating with the Center for Medicare & Medical Services (CMS) to the deficiency-free grade it continues to garner from the Massachusetts Department of Health, Holy Trinity has earned its listing in *US News & World Report* as one of the best nursing homes in the country. The evening of October 9th, therefore, was a proud moment for a festival committee chaired by **Chris Liazos**, former owner of the Webster House Restaurant, and his fellow volunteers **Jim Bazoukas**, **Eugenia Christy**, **Heather Dubeau**, **Francis McGrath**, **Tina Niedbala**, **Bernadette Petralias**, **Serena Shields**, **Claudia Sullivan**, **Paul Swydan**, **Tina Thamel**, **Joan Theros**, **Basil Tolos**, **Irene Tsoules** and **Jim Vasiliadis**. As for those who packed the church, it was a chance to savor a smorgasbord of delectable fare from two dozen vendors, whose ranks included establishments from A (for Auburn Town Pizza's "Individual Calzones with Cheese") to Z (for Zorba's Taverna, which offered



Nusa Dimopoulos with daughter-in-law Gina,
at the Zorba's Taverna table.

"Meatballs, Spanokapita, Tzatziks, Pita & Dolmades"). "It went very well," Mr. Liazos, who chaired the committee that put the festival together, said. "I was nervous but there was an excellent crowd and people loved the food." Why shouldn't they? The Castle Restaurant presented "New England Harvest Chicken Breast;" Eller's Restaurant presented "Grecian Scampi;" George's Coney Island presented "Hot Dogs with Mustard, Chili & Onion;" Park Grille & Spirits presented "Eggplant, Chicken & Seafood the Park Grille way;" and so on, to include desserts from Crown Bakery ("Assorted Cakes, Cookies, Linser Cookies & Butterflies"), Culpepper's ("Coconut Squares, Raspberry Crunch, Date Squares and Assorted Pastries"), Ki Cocada Brazilian Treats ("Coconut Bars, Brazilian Sweets and Cake"), George's Bakery ("Grape Leaves, Kibbee, Humus & Tabouli") and Mrs. Mack's Bakery ("Peanut Butter Mouse, Swedish Almond Cake & Apple Dumplings"). Appropriately, there was recognition of exemplary establishments with the "Stanley Nicas Award," named for Mr. Nicas and his wife **Helen** who founded and built the Castle Restaurant in Leicester—renowned for its classic French cuisine, fine wines and romantic atmosphere. Judges **Barbara Houle** of the Worcester Telegram & Gazette and **Jane Thibeau**, former head of the culinary program at Worcester Technical High School were enlisted to select recipients of award, which

went to the Meze Greek Tapas Bar & Grille on Shrewsbury St. (where "everything is homemade") and in the bakery category to both Crown and Culpepper's. We ran into a good friend at the Food & Wine Fest in **Philip G. Haddad Jr.** Mr. Haddad was the first president of the Board of Directors of HTNRC. He founded Westland Perpetual Trust (the Westland Companies) in 1987. More recently, he launched the website www.OrthodoxCustomsTraditionsandPractices.com, whose goal is to draw on his wealth of knowledge and experience to help families through their spiritual journey at the time of a loved one's death. This comes as no surprise and is in fact a continuation of his life's work. No one does this with more earnestness than Mr. Haddad.

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Make way!

Oasis at Dodge Park is 'a vision for the future'

RANDOLPH RD.—In his “Spiritually Speaking” column in a recent issue of the Shrewsbury Chronicle, J.F. Hudson selects a famous passage in Ecclesiastes by way of observing that “to everything there is a season.” So it is, he noted, that such fixtures as the Suffolk Downs racetrack, Building 19, landline telephones, afternoon newspapers and “Sundays as Sabbath” give way to change. “Human tastes and habits shift,” Mr. Hudson wrote. “Social movements can’t or won’t adapt or they forget



State Sen. Harriette Chandler: “Oasis at Dodge Park meets a huge need.”

their mission. Businesses convince themselves they can do what they’ve always done. A new generation finds an older generation’s passion-

ate pastimes passe.” Although he admits to never having been to a thoroughbred horse race or placing a bet on a horse to win, place or show, Mr. Hudson pointed out that Suffolk Downs had “a unique place in history.” It was there, he said, “that the storied racehorse Seabiscuit set a track record in front of 40,000 rapturous fans;” and that “in 1966 The Beatles gave their final Boston-area concert.” Goodbye Suffolk Downs, hello the future. The old Odd Fellows Home here in Worcester fell into the same category. Long-shuttered, it had served its purpose. It had to go in order for “Oasis at Dodge Park” to be built. With “Oasis,” the owners of Dodge Park Rest Home, directly across the street, will create a \$15 million residential complex for persons afflicted with dementia and Alzheimer’s: the first facility of its kind in the


Dodge Park Rest Home Co-Owner Micha Shalev, below left, on the grounds of what will be Oasis at Dodge Park, with Paul Morano Jr. from the city’s Economic Development office. Oasis “signifies (the beginning of) a new level of care for the frail and elderly,” Mr. Shalev said.



“In my opinion this (project) is a great re-use of the property.”

Tony Economou
District 1 City Councilor

Commonwealth. Objections to demolition of the Odd Fellows Home from Preservation Worcester are understandable. PW would be shirking its responsibilities to speak up on behalf of historic structures and historic artifacts (the missing gargoyles also come to mind) to do otherwise. But time marches on. Which is why groundbreaking ceremonies for Oasis, on October 15th, prompted only positive vibes. As local radio and TV personality **Hank Stolz**, who MC’d the event, said at the outset, “all of us have been touched by Alzheimer’s.” In thanking many individuals for their help, including State Sen. **Harriette Chandler**, State Sen. **Michael Moore**, Councilor **Phil Palmieri**, **Tim Murray** of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, Dr. **Catherine Deveau** who is chief of staff for geriatrics at UMass Memorial, Dr. **Gary Moak** of the Moak Center for Geriatric Care, Whipple Construction and Savers Bank “for believing in us,” **Micha Shalev**, a co-owner of Dodge Park Rest Home, said, “we have approached this project with a true collaborative spirit.” The complex will be dedicated to the late **Ellen Slater** of the Department of Public Health, who, Mr. Shalev said, was “very attentive and supportive.” Sometimes the significance of an occasion can be summed up in a few words; as it was when Dodge Park Rest Home Co-Owner **Ben Herlinger** said, at the outset, “It’s a happy day, today.”



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THE NEIGHBORHOODS



Monty Tech-bound Supt. Dr. Sheila Harrity chats with Robert "Bobby" Brooks of Ford's Hometown Services before a recent North Worcester Business Association luncheon meeting at Tweed's.

Cohan the Critic

Columnist misguided about Library, schools

GROVE ST.—How ironic that in one breath in his column "Wall & Main" in the Business Matters section of the Sunday Telegram on September 28th **Peter Cohan** writes that "growing up on Old English Road in Worcester...I was fascinated by books" while in the next he bemoans the amount of money the city provides to the Worcester Public Library. "In my humble opinion," Mr. Cohan wrote, "Worcester should allocate more to economic development" than that department's current 0.2 percent; "perhaps," he goes on to say, "more of the money could come from other/contingency, which gets 0.7 percent, or the library (0.9 percent)—an increasingly irrelevant institution when people can get so much information online." Woe unto both the Library and Worcester Public Schools when Mr. Cohan wields his pen. Education, he wrote, gobbles up "a whopping 58 percent—or \$332.5 million—of the city budget." Later, he asks, "Are Worcester's schools improving or could the money be spent more effectively?" How like a thud Mr. Cohan's remarks went over at an after-hours social hosted by the Webster Square Business Association at the new Goddard Branch Library on Richards St. on October 1st. "Boo!" was the retort when they were read, there. "Peter Cohan is just wrong," City Manager **Edward M. Augustus Jr.** said in stressing the importance of the Library to those in attendance. Mr. Augustus described "One City/One Library" and branches like Goddard (which is housed in the Goddard School of Science & Technology) as "anchors" that hold the city and its neighborhoods together. Mr. Augustus' thoughts mirrored those of

Christine M. Murray who is executive director of the Worcester Public Library Foundation and Dr. **Chantell L. McDowell** who is youth services coordinator for the WPL. Thousands of persons have used the Goddard branch, which is housed at the Goddard School of Science & Technology, since it opened earlier this year, making it the busiest "after the main library itself" according to Dr. McDowell (a branch at Burncoat Elementary is next to come on line). Can we assume that Mr. Cohan is also no fan of "Worcester: The City That Reads"? Because surely he must be aware that **John and Anne-Marie Monfredo's** drive to "change the culture" by way of improving literacy in the city has resulted in 200,000 books collected so far; and that this initiative is closely tied in with the Library. So that no kid can say as Mr. Monfredo pointed out at the Goddard branch that "the only book we have at home is the yellow pages. It broke my heart." Then there is the success of Worcester Technical High School to consider, as enunciated by outgoing Principal Dr. **Sheila Harrity** at a North Worcester Business Association luncheon at Tweed's on October 15th. "The first female and the first non-Vokie" in the school's history, as she put it, Dr. Harrity said that Worcester Tech went from being on the verge of closure to national prominence. A new Worcester Tech opened in 2006 thanks in large part to staunch community support "led by business." Since then the numbers speak for themselves: a doubling of the number of honors courses and the addition of "new rigors;" 95% of students graduate in four years; a 1.3% dropout rate; 82% of students go on to two and four-year schools; in seven years, the number of students who are passing has spiked from 27% to 92%; and, she said, "we're not just taking the best kids as some suggest." Partnerships with entities like Quinsigamond Community College and the Worcester Regional Transit Authority have helped. Worcester Tech even "got a bus" of its own, for advertising from the RTA's ever-gracious Steve O'Neil who told Dr. Harrity "whatever you need." Little wonder that when a contact person in the White House got in touch with Dr. Harrity to ask "when is your graduation" so that President Obama could attend, she was so stunned that she replied "I don't remember!"

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Fancy this

Business flights to Chicago, NY, D.C. may be next step

AIRPORT DRIVE—Once the shock of seeing Paul Gunnerson in a ponytail had worn off, few surprises were left at the annual meeting of the Tatnuck Neighborhood Association at Worcester Regional Airport the evening of October 22nd. Mr. Gunnerson's new look had nothing to do with his longstanding love of motorcycles or even the rebel in him coming out. It was simply a move he'd been contemplating for a while and so he went and did it. We didn't get a chance to ask Martha Gunnerson what she thought about "the new Paul." Suffice to say the Gunnersons are the same people we've known for years, the same conscientious defenders of the sanctity of their beloved Tatnuck Square neighborhood. After Mr. Gunnerson, in chairing the meeting, got past the initial pleasantries, which included recognition of District 5 City Councilor Gary Rosen, Oriola Koci of Livia's Dish who is new to the Airport Advisory Committee and city business-retention specialist Phil Niddrie, among others, he turned the gathering over to Airport Director Andy Davis for an update on all things Massport and the facility itself. Here there was little of a startling nature. Perhaps the biggest takeaway was Mr. Davis' revelation that JetBlue "sees up to seven flights a day, and we don't just want to cater to Florida. We want business flights" and the carriers that will provide those to three business markets in particular: New York (Continental, United and Jet Blue), Washington (Southwest and United) and Chicago (Southwest, United and American)." Increased service along these lines hinges on the revenue stream justifying it, he said. That has yet to materialize, despite the fact that the first year of JetBlue's experience at Worcester Regional Airport has been a success in terms of "load factor" for flights to Ft. Lauderdale and Orlando. Initially, he said, the airline was witnessing an "84-85% load factor." That was expected to taper off come the warmer months but it instead spiked upward. "June was 86%, July 87% and August almost 90%," he said. So, Mr. Davis said, "with JetBlue's popularity it allows us to approach other carriers, but this is a revenue-based decision on their part. They have to find that point where it becomes profitable, that happy medium. Also, business markets want reliability." Meanwhile, Massport's commitment to Worcester Regional Airport's future grows every stronger, he said. "We will be making an investment of \$80 to \$90 million in this airport over the next ten years," he said. This has already begun with infrastructure upgrades: the much-anticipated "Cat-3" landing system, creating space for rescue and fire operations to function effectively, add-



Worcester Regional Airport Director Andy Davis addresses the annual meeting of the Tatnuck Neighborhood Association on October 22nd.

ing snow removal and deicing equipment, for instance. Besides which Massport has exhibited community-mindedness with its support of the Worcester Tree Initiative, the Tatnuck Magnet School and the Tatnuck Neighborhood Association—as an example. An ask during a Q&A at the finish of his presentation about President Obama's visit for the Worcester Tech graduation caused Mr. Davis to beam as he talked of "six C-17s, four limos, 150 state troopers and police, 100 Secret Service and a helicopter" on the premises, in and out, over a three-hour period. "That was fun," he said. "It was cool. I was like a kid in a candy shop."



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A Trace of the roughneck



Trace Adkins' Christmas show comes to the Hanover Theatre on November 15th.

In certain regards Trace Adkins would be the last person anyone would think of as orchestrator of something called "The Christmas Show: The King's Gift," which comes to the **Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts** on November 15th—two days after West Point (the Eisenhower Theatre) and one day before Boston (the Wilbur Theatre). A 6-foot-6 onetime oil rigger, Mr. Adkins' past is as seemingly far removed from the peacefulness of the holiday season as you can get. As bad boys in Country music go, he is on a par with Merle Haggard, Randy Travis and George Jones. He recently split from his second wife. His first wife shot him through the heart and both lungs in 1994 (he survived and didn't press charges). As a youth he was in a car accident in which his 1955 pickup truck hit a bus head-on (he lost part of his nose in that ordeal). He lost his pinky finger on his left hand in another mishap and had it reattached at an angle so that he could continue playing the guitar. In 2001 he was hurt in a tractor accident. He has been through rehab for alcohol. In 2011, as if the tragedies he'd already suffered weren't



The Chamber's Karen Pelletier addresses a WSB luncheon at Zorba's Tavema on efforts to retain college grads in the city in order to build a stronger local workforce.

enough, his home in Brentwood, Tennessee burned down. What Adkins fans will see at the Hanover, however, is a softer and gentler Trace: the father of five daughters who had been hunkering for some time to put together a concert comprised of "a unique collection of Celtic carols and traditional holiday favorites." Nor will he be alone. He is accompanied on this tour by an impressive group of musicians including the Irish ensemble The Chieftains, Scottish vocalist Alyth McCormick, The Issacs, Kevin Costner and his daughter Lily and rock drummer Kenny Aronoff. **Mechanics Hall** will help usher in the Christmas season with a performance by the Worcester Men of Song barbershop quartet chorus on 11/22 which sets the stage for Handel's Messiah at Mechanics Hall on 12/6. **Peppercorn's** is the site of one of James Normandin's first talks since being named new publisher of the Telegram & Gazette, on Wednesday, 12/12 at an 11:45 a.m. luncheon meeting of the Webster Square Business Association hosted by Tom Oliveri. A week later (12/19) the North Worcester Business Association welcomes Susan Mailman of Coghlin Electrical Contractors, at **O'Connors** as its luncheon speaker. Did you know that the **Worcester Public Library** offers free citizenship classes on Wednesdays from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.?.; participants must be eighteen years or older and be able to speak English...walk-ins are welcome! The always-active **Worcester Senior Center** will host its annual Craft Fair on Tuesday, 11/25 from 10:00 to 2:00. At the **DCU Center**, shows abound starting with the 2014 Worcester Fall Home Show (11/7-9) and then the 2014 New England Power Sports Winter Expo (11/15-16), the Castleberry Fair Holiday Arts & Crafts Festival (11/21-23) and the WCKC Dog Show (11/28-30). Speaking of gatherings, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce is part of a five-Chamber Business After Hours expected to draw 500 people on Wed., 11/5 at the **Great Wolf Lodge** in Fitchburg.

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