

MARTIN J.

A Boston Irish Magazine Special Report

# WALSH

SECRETARY OF LABOR



Mayor Walsh celebrated his election victory on Nov. 3, 2013 at Boston's Park Plaza Hotel.

Chris Lovett photo

## The Man and the Politician We Know

BY BILL FORRY  
EDITOR

What should Americans expect from their new Secretary of Labor? Funny you should ask.

The *Dorchester Reporter* has been writing about, observing, and scrutinizing Mayor Martin Walsh— now US Secretary of Labor Martin Walsh— since 1996, when the 29-year-old union laborer, Little League coach, and civic activist launched his first campaign for state representative.

No other news organization has devoted more hours, ink, and keystrokes to chronicling his career in public life. Many of the highlights from those years of coverage are included in this special supplement, which is presented in the main as a

look-back, not as a look-ahead. But this deep dive into our archives reveals much about the man and the politician who will now — upon swearing an oath in Washington, D.C.— be 11th in the line of succession to the US presidency.

In 2014, when he was inaugurated for his first term as Boston's mayor, we shared some of our thoughts about the "kid" from Dorchester who we'd been keeping tabs on since he was a baby-faced civic president in Columbia-Savin Hill in the mid-1990s. Much of what we published then is true today, so it bears repeating and expanding upon.

We wrote back then: "For folks from Dorchester, he is now the vessel of their own aspirations:

the kid from the three-decker on Taft Street who has beaten cancer, a drive-by bullet blast, and 'the disease' to grasp his city's ultimate brass ring. Marty has become living, breathing proof that we can tame our own demons and even harness them for the purposes of a greater good— like ministering to an emerging generation of Bostonians whose futures are similarly imperiled by bullets and booze."

Walsh's mayoral record is imperfect and incomplete— and one that will be more fully plumbed in the coming weeks in our pages— but as he lets loose his grip on City Hall, Marty leaves behind a weary Boston that has been battered by pandemic and bruised by the relat-

ed economic fallout. And yet, his has been a sure and steady hand during a time of unprecedented crisis. And until Covid hit, his seven years in office were marked by remarkable growth and relative peace and prosperity.

In an era marred by the most depraved and degrading presidency in US history, he has led this city with compassion, empathy, and the good nature that made him a compelling candidate in the first place. He has acquitted himself well.

So, what else does Joe Biden see in the mayor of Boston? What makes him tick? There's no better person to ask than Marty's mentor and his earliest political conscience, Danny

(Continued on page 3)



Martin J. Walsh, a candidate for state representative, as seen in 1997.

Harry Brett photo





**Even when you're  
in DC, you're always  
a part of **

**The Boston Red Sox congratulate Mayor Marty Walsh on becoming Secretary of Labor  
and thank him for his dedication and service to Boston.**



# Jim Brett on Marty Walsh: A leader from a young age

By JAMES T. BRETT

Watching him as a young man playing sports in the ballfields and basketball courts of Dorchester, you could see that Marty Walsh was a born leader who grew into those skills by being a good listener, by caring about others and his community, and, simply, by being a good friend.

Having known Marty for nearly 35 years, I can say that I am not surprised at what he has achieved. I am also very proud of him as a fellow Dorchester resident and lifelong civic servant.

Marty has always had a great way of making friends. He has also been a role model for so many young people in Dorchester: He worked hard at his job and worked equally hard helping others.

He was involved as a Little League coach for many years in Savin Hill. He got to know the kids and their families. I'd see him at the Little House playing basketball with the neighborhood kids or at the Ryan Playground. I'd also see him at church.

He was the consummate community leader, among the youngest ever to serve as an officer of a civic association in Dorchester. I remember attending many meetings of the Columbia Savin Hill Civic Association, where Marty and other community leaders tackled the issues that mattered to the neighborhoods.

Marty was also interested in politics at a young age. I served as a state representative for Dorchester for 16



In June 2019, Mayor Walsh presented the 'Originally from Dorchester' award on behalf of the Dorchester YMCA to former State Rep. James T. Brett, whom Walsh succeeded as the state representative from the 13th Suffolk district in 1997. Brett is now president and CEO of the New England Council.

Isabel Leon/Mayor Walsh's office photo

years and he worked on all of my campaigns. He liked meeting people and learning and discussing the issues.

We both attended St. Margaret's school and the Sisters of Charity always spoke highly of him. He was a good student and a solid young man.

Among Marty's many friends over the years was Joe Biden, who, I think, saw in Marty what we all saw – a caring, good person.

In addition to our Dorchester roots, Marty and I share our Irish heritage. We are both first generation Irish. My parents emigrated in the 1920s from Sligo. His parents came in the 1950s from Galway and Rosmuc. That experience led to a deep appreciation

of family values, respect, and the value of work. We are very proud of our neighborhood and our roots.

When I moved on from the Legislature to lead the New England Council, Marty ran for my open seat at the State House. He was elected in a special election in 1997 and served in that position for 16 years. In that office, he took on many of the issues that I continue to work on, including improving the quality of life for people with disabilities. He also served on committees and supported programs to help individuals struggling with substance abuse.

When Marty moved on to become the mayor of Boston, it was another moment of great pride for my friend. Knowing how monumental the job was, I only called him on occasion when I would get requests from people in the neighborhood who were looking for help for a loved one with substance abuse problems. No matter how busy, he would always respond right away and be there to help.

It is clear that he loves that work – making a difference in someone's life. I have met so many people who said "Marty was there for me."

Looking back at his first election, for example, Marty did very well across the city. He was supported by all groups, all ages, throughout the neighborhoods. He was a mayor for all of the city. He demonstrated that in his work ethic. He was out in public constantly, working on issues

of education, public health, safety, affordable housing. He was also fiscally responsible and maintained the city's top bond rating.

He had an open door policy; Marty just wanted to help Boston be a great city. He welcomed everyone on that mission. He brings people together.

Marty possesses a quality rarely seen in politicians. He doesn't hold onto a score card and list who was with him and who was against him. His office has always been open to all who had good ideas.

Marty may be a good speaker, but he's a better listener.

The Secretary of Labor position is the perfect job for him. He will be an advocate for all workers. He will also be in a position to help people with disabilities as the community continues to work on issues like equal pay and access to the workforce. He will have a lot on his plate, but I believe Marty is up for the challenge. He will do a great job. Of all of the Secretaries of Labor in our history, the one people will remember will be Marty Walsh.

Marty has always been an advocate for the 'little guy' as a state rep and as the mayor, and now he will be the same on the national stage. He will be that same person in Washington, D.C. – defending the dignity and quality of life for all, while never forgetting his Dorchester roots.

Congratulations, Marty!

## The Man and the Politician We Know

(Continued from page 1)

Ryan – known around the 'hood as "Budso from 13-10."

"Marty chose people over power, and by empowering other people, he empowered himself," Ryan once told me. "He's *addicted* to helping people."

That virtue is at once his best quality and, potentially, his biggest liability, one that his opponents have tried, but largely failed, to exploit. He aims to please, to leave everyone smiling, to defuse confrontation and focus on the things people have in common. But that doesn't make him a pushover, either. He can, and does, say no every day – and not just to drink, a vice he dropped in his mid-twenties but battles against relentlessly to this day.

Marty's roots are in a hard-scrabble corner of rural Ireland called Connemara, a rocky and unforgiving landscape that has flung more than its share of migrants to Boston's neighborhoods. That deep sense of the immigrant experience (Gaelic was the language of choice in Mary and John Walsh's home) was formative for the man who would one day proclaim that immigrants facing threats of deportation could find shelter in his City Hall offices.

His dad was obsessed with two Boston blood sports: ice hockey and politics. His son Martin caught the electoral bug early and became a volunteer for the city's most powerful political force of his generation, Bill Bulger, whose wife Mary also has Connemara

roots. He pitched in to help Jim Brett's campaign for mayor in 1993 and he butted heads frequently after with the ultimate winner that year, Tom Menino.

What he didn't learn from his dad, Marty gleaned from his uncle, Pat Walsh, who ran the Laborer's Local 223 – known in most circles as the "Irish local." Generations of mainly Irish workmen were card-carrying members within days or even hours of stepping off the Aer Lingus flight from Shannon or Dublin. The nation's new Labor Secretary has been a dues-paying member of 223 since June 30, 1988. A few months after his 21st birthday, he put on a hard hat and started working at a construction job at Commonwealth Pier on the city's waterfront.

The union and its affiliates have been his natural base throughout his career – even, and particularly, when his political judgments failed him. As disciplined as he is in his personal life, Marty did, at times, seem to flail about politically. In the Legislature, he backed the wrong horse in two House leadership fights, and his influence waned inside the building as a result. In 2002, he came this close to leaving the House to take a low-profile appointment as Suffolk County Registrar Register of Deeds, hardly a job to be coveted by a politician with higher aspirations.

But within days of making that news public, he hit the brakes and ran for re-election. "I've sat in the House chamber looking around, and this job

is the best job I've ever had and for as long as the people of Dorchester will have me, or until I decide to move on, this will be the best job for me," he told the Reporter at the time.

More often than not, this paper tracked Marty's career with routine reports about bills filed, bridges built, and campaigns won. He showed guts on many occasions and defied expectations on others. He crossed an unhappy civic association crowd that wanted to block the Pine Street Inn from converting a dilapidated six-family house on Pleasant Street into transitional housing for the homeless. In the fight over building dorms on the UMass Boston campus, he defied his fellow union chieftains and stood alongside his Savin Hill neighbors in opposing dorms. And well before the Supreme Judicial Court's Goodridge decision, he would tell anyone who cared to listen that he'd happily vote to give gay men and women the right to marry.

"If you want to label me a liberal because I'm supportive of people who are trying to get sober and trying to recover, and trying to stop infectious diseases, they can label me as a liberal all day if they want," Marty told former Reporter news editor Jim O'Sullivan in a 2004 profile that is included in this supplement.

In 2008, another profile by O'Sullivan for the State House News Service portrayed Walsh as the "go-to" man for the state's labor interests, but also for people across Boston and beyond

struggling with substance abuse. He recounted a speech that Marty gave that year to persuade his colleagues to fund more beds for detox.

"The chamber hushed for his emotional account of the one time in his House career when he'd missed a phone call from a constituent looking for a detox bed. 'I missed that phone call and I called the person back who called me, and I left a message for them,' Walsh told his silent colleagues. 'On the Monday morning, a call came to my office to let me know that they no longer needed my services because the young man that they were calling for had passed away of a heroin overdose. This is real-life stuff,' he said."

As he worked to advance his agenda on Beacon Hill, Marty's dual-track career as a union leader became more prominent in 2010 when he took the top position at the Boston Building Trades Council; it was a move that further cemented his influence on the region's labor movement and positioned him well for the next step: a run for mayor, the job he always wanted.

This week, he leaves all that behind for a new job, one that a young Marty Walsh and his parents could scarcely have imagined possible. But, as Marty himself told us back in 2010: "One thing you learn in politics is you just don't know what's going to happen. Politics is funny. It's like recovery: a day at a time."

Bill Forry is editor of the Boston Irish Magazine.



# Lá Fhéile Pádraig sona daoibh! Happy St. Patrick's Day!

*A poem for Mayor Walsh by Seán Ó Coistealbha, of Connemara and CEO of Muintearas, commissioned by the Rian Immigrant Center.*

## An Ród Sin Romhat

Beir bua a Bhreathnaigh groí!  
Roghnaigh tú an ród le bród,  
an ceann ba lú a bheadh roghnaithe,  
ní hí an ceann le plód 's scód  
ach í siúd ba mhó le bheith scanraithe  
ag tráth ba thréine dúshláin,  
's tú ag fágáil an tí teolaí  
ag déanamh ar an Tí Bháin.  
Níor mhéanar duit an rogha  
do threabh 's baile a fhágáil.  
Port 's post den togha,  
urraim, stadas, meas 's cáil  
ach d'fhág tú sin ar ball.  
Beidh tú lá breá, níos faide anonn,  
buíoch don ród a roghnaigh tú  
le bheith misniúil cróga ciúin  
ach fós ag tarraingt cliú  
do chríocha fáil 's Conamara  
's ábhar misnigh don deoraí.  
Beir bua ar an ród sin romhat  
's nár laga Dia na cosa fút.

## A Path Taken

To your health and virtue Marty  
on that path you have now chosen,  
one not sought to travel by many  
and perhaps feared by plenty  
at a time when hope lies frozen  
only to be again reawoken.  
You choose to leave friends and family  
blessed with a courage and dignity,  
like your kin that crossed the ocean,  
to help to heal a nation.  
You leave your path now fair  
to throd a road much rougher  
because your mind will dare  
to favour those who suffer.  
You seek to serve a tougher station  
and I know a tomorrow will define  
the fruits of this decision  
and have cause for your elation  
when the hard road less taken,  
without fear but a quiet devotion,  
will bring a sense of place and recognition  
for all who dwell within The Nation  
or those who still seek our shores.

**Congratulations to Mayor Martin J. Walsh  
on his appointment as US Secretary of Labor.**

We thank Mayor Walsh for his fervent support of the immigrant community in Boston and we know he will continue to fight for immigrant rights on his new path.



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# Marty Walsh the mayor: A change agent, but not by himself

By CHRIS LOVETT  
SPECIAL TO THE REPORTER

Marty Walsh served as Boston's mayor for a little more than seven years, a time that unfolded mainly as a dashboard of growth and inclusion, with units of progress, stasis, or lost ground. But in a less granular future, he will be judged more as the mayor who helped the city out of one crisis only to contend with another.

He announced his first candidacy for Mayor of Boston in April 2013, less than two weeks after his predecessor, Tom Menino, whose fifth straight term had been hampered by a series of health problems, made it known he would not seek a sixth. Neither decision was very surprising.

As a state representative and labor leader from Dorchester, Walsh spent years building alliances, navigating through differences of race, neighborhood, and social agenda. With his attention to personal contact and individual needs—including jobs in the building trades and help with recovery, he was groomed as one more exponent of the “retail politics” associated with his most recent predecessors—Menino and Ray Flynn.

## Political Template and Personal Contact

Interviewed only a month into his campaign, Walsh defined himself as a political product of the city who started out as a young foot soldier in local campaigns. “Being able to help somebody, a family member, get into detox, give counselling to a parent or something like that,” he said, “that means an awful lot to me, and I’ve done it my whole career. It’s what I love, it’s my passion. I love helping people. And that’s why I’m running for mayor.”

At the same time, Walsh praised Menino’s role in the resurgence of large-scale development in downtown Boston and the emerging Seaport District, both of which were accompanied by consistently high bond ratings for the city. Vowing to be the “CFO of the City of Boston,”



Mayor Walsh, who spent many years coaching baseball at Savin Hill’s McConnell Playground, tossed a pitch to a youngster in the Martin Richard Challenger Baseball program’s opening day on May 6, 2018.

*Photo by John Wilcox/Mayor’s Office*

Walsh stressed the importance of jobs as the way to raise revenue and solve problems. It was an update of the same growth credo that had held sway in City Hall since 1949, when John B. Hynes defeated James Michael Curley.

Less than three weeks after Menino’s announcement, the city was rattled to its core by the bombing near the finish line of the Boston Marathon. It was a blow to Boston’s standing as a world-class city, but also something personal for Walsh. One of the victims, eight-year-old Martin Richard, played in the same Little League where Walsh was a coach. A few nights after the bombing, 3,000 people responded with a vigil

at Garvey Playground in Dorchester. Walsh was there, looking very much like the same figure stockpiling one-on-one contacts with voters at a polling place or a candidate forum.

Through the rest of 2013, Menino presided over the beginning of recovery – and also summoned the duck boats for another World Series championship celebration. But the Walsh for Mayor campaign signage—matching the colors of the Boston Red Sox—also channeled the spirit of “Boston Strong” that would later be revived in the “One Boston” events on the bombing’s anniversary.

Seven years later, with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, a mayor used to personal contacting and full-throated gatherings found himself governing as a model of face mask attire and social distancing. When the spread of infections and fatalities overlapped with the national surge of protest over the racial divide exacerbated by the use of force by police, the transition from continuity to change became all the more urgent. As marchers took to the streets in Boston and others across the country – and almost three months after racial disparities were spotlighted by City Councillor Ricardo Arroyo – Walsh declared racism a “public health crisis.”

## Entrenched Divides, Struggles with Progress

If there was a racial reckoning for Walsh, it would be inaccurate to say it was sudden. Even though his co-finalist in the November 2013 election

was a fellow Irish-American, John Connolly, both were pressed to make the cast of city government a closer match for Boston’s increasingly diverse population.

In November 2014, as protests raged around the country after a jury refused to indict a white police officer for the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, Walsh took part—mostly as a listener – in a speak-out at Twelfth Baptist Church in Roxbury. The discussion touched on racial profiling and accountability for the actions of police. Walsh said the problem was also something deeper, which could be understood as acknowledging its seriousness, but also the limited powers of a single mayor.

He did bring racial diversity to positions with high profile in his administration, most visibly with the city’s first Asian-American school superintendent and the first African-American police commissioner, but also with cabinet appointments for economic development and health and human services. What changed very little was the disproportionate share of people of color in positions with lower visibility and pay.

Walsh also set more ambitious goals for diversity and the hiring of Boston residents on major construction projects in Boston. But as late as 2020, community advocates were continuing to express frustration with the lack of progress. And metrics for city spending on goods and services continued to show a wide racial gap, even as late as early 2021.

During Walsh’s tenure, the dropout



Mayor Walsh used an excavator to ceremonially kick off construction for One Seaport Square on Nov. 14, 2014.  
*Mayor’s Office photo by Don Harney*



rates for the Boston Public Schools showed an overall decline and the high school graduation rate climbed to an all-time high in 2018, only to decline the following year. The lack of overall progress was enough to trigger a heightened threat of intervention from the State Department of Elementary Education, coming less than two months after the newest Boston School Superintendent, Brenda Cassellius, released her five-year strategic plan. She is the fourth superintendent to serve under Walsh, making for the highest turnover rate of that office under any Boston mayor since at least the beginning of the 20th century.

### Growth, Displacement, Arrested Development

In his first term, Walsh tried to spur new kinds of growth, even for the hours when Boston's vibrancy could be open for business. The possible selection of Boston for hosting the Olympics in 2024 caused some fleeting euphoria, but even more questions and push-back. Nor did any benefits materialize from an abortive proposal to use parts of the Seaport District for an IndyCar race.

Probably the most impressive growth metric under Walsh was for housing production.

He exceeded the pace in his Boston 2030 plan and even raised the bar in 2018, after expectations were also revised upwards for Boston's population growth.

The 2018 revision set a goal of 69,000 new units by 2030, with 16,000 of them income-restricted, to be made possible by higher linkage contributions from developers and zoning largesse from the city.

A Boston 2030 report cited a modest decline in the cost of renting the city's older housing, but other figures showed some of the most affordable areas were faced with a higher rate of evictions—even before the economic crisis triggered by the pandemic. Along the Fairmount/Indigo rail line—a prime conduit for transit-oriented housing, many residents of Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park faced displacement or steep increases in rent.

The same population growth that fed the supply of housing and jobs also resulted in more traffic congestion. Walsh oversaw efforts to diversify transportation, with more lanes for bikes and buses. But, after a succession of fare increases on the MBTA, the same population struggling disproportionately squeezed by the housing market struggled with the cost of transportation and, in many cases, substandard service.

### From Crisis Candidate to Anti-Trump Personage

The first crisis to confront Walsh as mayor was the closing of the Long Island Bridge, with a need to find immediate replacement for the loss of the island's recovery programs and shelter capacity. He responded with new facilities and new gains for transitional housing. But the



Mayor Walsh, surrounded by members of the Boston City Council and Superintendent Brenda Cassellius, announced the district-wide closure of all Boston Public Schools as the Covid-19 pandemic hit the city in March 2020.

*Isabel Leon/Mayor's Office photo*

troubling spectacle of unmet needs around homelessness and drug activity at Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard—much of it gravitating to Boston from other communities—remained in place, and, during the pandemic, became even more alarming.

In March 2020, when Boston had suffered only its second death from the pandemic, Walsh brought on the retired four-star general Stanley McChrystal as an emergency consultant for pandemic response. Following severe outbreaks in northern Italy and New York City, there was an intense focus on stopping infections and adding capacity for treatment—even if it meant shutting thousands of people out of work and closing schools.

Pandemic response also meant an extensive relief effort—in some cases building on grassroots efforts and support from business leaders. By January of this year, the "Boston Resiliency Fund" had distributed more than \$30 million, mostly for basic needs and help with remote learning, along with support for first responders and healthcare workers. By the city's count, more than half the grants went to organizations headed by women or people of color. Walsh had to simultaneously be a mayor for neighborhoods and downtown, but in a way not foreseen seven years earlier.

The racial disparities in Boston's pandemic figures were dramatic early on, with Blacks accounting for more than 40 percent of the spread almost through the end of April 2020. Though that figure would gradually decrease to less than 25 percent, the number of fatalities remained

disproportionately high.

Walsh also had to contend with the division between people who could work or study from home and those who depended on in-person contact for income and education. As he was making his transition to become President Biden's Secretary of Labor, questions about the balance between shutdown and reopening were still being debated, most critically about whether a different mix of leadership and resources could have speeded up reopening of schools, at least for early grades.

As he was looking to another election year in 2021, Walsh could have followed the playbook of Donald Trump: boasting of the economic growth before a pandemic inflicted from outside, or even reinforcing a division between the champions of

reopening and proponents of caution. Instead, the mayor cast himself as the anti-Trump, as he had geared up his re-election campaign four years earlier, in 2017.

If Trump claimed to be the one and only person who could restore greatness on a national scale, Walsh cast himself as the city's listener, learner, and problem solver. By approving reforms in police accountability—advanced by his own task force in 2020, but following a push by many other elected officials from Boston—Walsh did invite the question of what might have been accomplished sooner had he been more assertive. Even if his tenure provided less continuity than expected, he was still Trump's opposite: an agent of change, after all, but not on his own.



Rep. Walsh on Election Day 2013 outside of the Cristo Rey School in Savin Hill, a polling location for voters in Ward 13, precinct 10. Walsh is flanked by Danny Ryan, left, and Roger Croke, right.

*Walsh campaign photo*



# How it started: Marty Walsh's first campaign

By BILL FORRY  
REPORTER EDITOR

Marty Walsh is undefeated when his name has appeared on ballots in Boston. By our count he's 22-0. Not too shabby.

But there's an asterisk involved: He did, technically, come in *third* in his inaugural election day effort.

Confused? Well, buckle up. A strange thing happened on the way to Walsh's first-ever victory in March 1997 when he, then 29, won a six-way race to fill the vacant 13th Suffolk state rep seat held by Savin Hill's Jim Brett.

But the March 1997 special election was not Walsh's first effort to replace Brett, who had announced his plan to leave his seat vacant the previous September. Walsh, and several other would-be successors, first sought to "beat" Brett during the November '96 general election by using stickers.

It was an awkward political dynamic. Brett, who had run for mayor and lost to Tom Menino in 1993, was a popular figure in his district. But once it became apparent that at least one candidate—Neponset's Charlie Burke—was intent on seeking to win the seat outright using a sticker/write-in campaign, everyone else

in the field followed suit. All, that is, except a political newcomer, an assistant district attorney in Middlesex County, who had just recently settled on Pope's Hill, and who ended up urging her supporters to vote for Brett. Her name: Martha Coakley.

In one sense, the sticker campaign didn't work out for those who participated. Brett, who had already moved on to lead the New England Council, piled up 4,144 votes, in large part because his name was the only choice on the ballot for the state rep's seat. In second place: "Blanks" with 2,896. Marty Walsh was next in line with 1,953, well ahead of the fourth-place finisher, Charles Tevnan, an attorney rooted in Ashmont-Adams who managed to get 847 sticker or write-in votes.

Despite coming up short, Walsh showed considerable organizational strength in his rookie electoral outing. He blew away all other hopefuls in his home base precincts in Ward 13, where he was born and raised. But he also won in Ward 16, which included precincts in Neponset, Fields Corner, and the St. Mark's Area. It was a signal to his supporters and rivals that the fresh-faced, red-head-

ed baseball coach was more than just a contender. Suddenly, he was a front-runner for the special election that would no doubt come next.

In the first week in January, the Speaker of the Massachusetts House—Mattapan's Tom Finneran—set the date of the special election to fill Brett's seat: Tues., March 11. It was going to be a sprint, but the field that had taken form months earlier was still largely intact. In addition to Walsh, Burke, Coakley, and Tevnan, there was another young attorney, James Hunt III, who could mine from deep political and civic veins in Neponset. Hunt had served as chief of staff to state Sen. Paul White, who then represented the area and was a beloved figure. Another candidate, Ed Regal from the St. Mark's area in Ward 16, also joined the fray.

Another compelling candidate was Rosemary Powers, a well-known civic figure in Columbia-Savin Hill and a vocal proponent of toughening Boston's residency requirements. She and Walsh were seen as rivals and shared a base in Ward 13. Her husband Coleman had replaced Walsh as president of the influential Columbia-Savin Hill

Civic Association the year before.

Powers was impressive — she went on to run state Sen. Jack Hart's office, served as a key aide to Gov. Deval Patrick, and now runs the Cristo Rey School in Savin Hill. She and Walsh would've carved up the Savin Hill vote to devastating effect for each candidate.

But on Jan. 9, she withdrew from the race and threw her support to Walsh telling the *Reporter*: "I'm going to work hard for Marty. I'm going to ask people I know to do the same." Walsh told us: "It's nice to have. I welcome her support. I have to go out and touch every vote. I'm going to try to outwork everyone else."

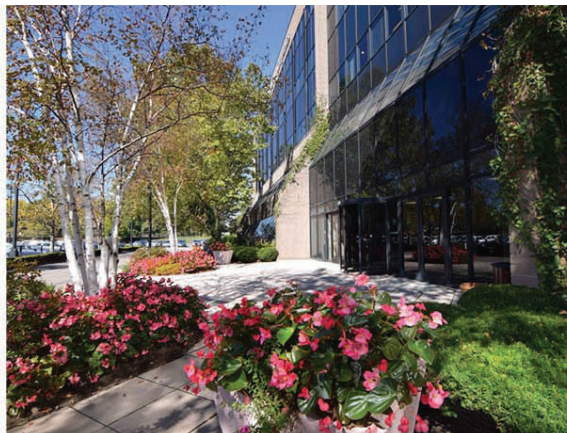
He and his campaign manager, Michael McDevitt, could now stop worrying as much about an internecine fight among Savin Hill's tightly packed three-deckers.

As I wrote at the time: "Now that Walsh is the sole master of Ward 13, he can pour all of his considerable support into the breach while the six Ward 16 candidates chew each other up."

But the field of possibles was not yet done contracting. Barry Mullen, a St. Mark's Civic Association leader who had toyed with a run himself, decid-



DoubleTree Boston Bayside, Dorchester, MA



Bayside Office Center, Dorchester, MA



Harbor Point on the Bay, Dorchester, MA



Keystone Apartments, Dorchester, MA



Savin Hill Apartments, Dorchester, MA

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The candidates for 13th Suffolk state representative were shown during a candidate's forum in Fields Corner in Jan. 1997. From left: Charles Tevnan, Martha Coakley, Charlie Burke, James Hunt III, Martin J. Walsh and Edward Regal. *Bill Forry photo*

ed not to after Powers made her exit, throwing his support to Hunt, saying: "I feel he's doing it for the community and not for his own personal gain."

After the first of several candidate forums on Jan. 28 in Fields Corner, the Reporter's front page trumpeted: "Fireworks Begin in 13th Suffolk Race." Walsh, recognizing that the contest would likely be a two-man race between him and Hunt, targeted his rival directly for not having a public safety plan. "I have the guts to put it in writing," Walsh told him.

Hunt fired back: "I don't have paid people writing for me and developing those plans." He sought to exploit the opening, describing Walsh's resume as "vague," adding, "after four months of campaigning against you, I still don't know much about you."

On Feb. 24, two weeks before the primary election that would decide the outcome among the all-Democrat field, the Reporter staged a debate at the John F. Kennedy Library. I was a panelist — and timekeeper — along with John Krall, president of the now-defunct Dorchester Allied Neighborhood Associations, and Jose Duarte, the principal of the Grover Cleveland

School. Rep. Charlotte Golar-Richie, who would one day compete with Walsh for mayor, was the moderator.

More than 400 people packed the Stephen Smith room for a 90-minute program that began with one of the six candidates, Charlie Burke, using his opening statement to withdraw from the race. (I was so stunned that I neglected to grasp the moment and rang a bell midway through his speech, not realizing that he'd be exiting stage left momentarily.)

Burke added intrigue to the moment by revealing that his own polling data revealed that it was a two-person race and he was not in the mix. "In this race, while I'm many people's second choice, you run to win, not to come close."

While he did not explicitly back any other candidate, Burke's exit was widely seen as an assist for Hunt, who was gaining traction as the number of dawns before election day could be counted on two hands.

The rest of the debate was substantive and, at times, testy, with most everyone challenging Walsh with tough questions. "I wish Charlie Burke were still here," Walsh joked at one point.

Hunt targeted Walsh for using an expensive hired consultant, Worcester Mayor Ray Mariano, to help direct his election, but Walsh was ready: "I, unfortunately, don't have an elected official helping me," he rejoined, a reference to Sen. White.

The ascendant nature of Hunt's campaign was again underlined when Tevnan noted that the 24-year-old, youthful-looking law student "lives at home with his parents." It was a line that elicited more than a few groans for Hunt's loyalists in the room.

Walsh finished the night still in control, but with a resurgent Hunt, buoyed by Burke's exit, gaining steam. A pre-election night rally at Florian Hall gave the rival camps a chance to flex their strength, and it was clear that the blue and red Hunt signs and the white and red Walsh signs would be the story the next day.

Election day turnout was steady throughout the day, but particularly strong in Walsh's Alamo — Ward 13, precinct 10, St. William School on Savin Hill Avenue, where he could count on a lopsided margin and a gauntlet of poll workers led by Danny 'Budso' Ryan, one of Walsh's closest allies throughout his career. He ended up with 436 votes at 13/10 on his way to winning 69 percent of the vote in Ward 13.

In Neponset, Hunt's forces countered by pulling 75. Or so volunteers off the polls and sending them door-to-door onto the side streets of St. Ann's parish to track down and drag out his "ones and twos," campaign jargon for voters who had been identified as committed to or leaning towards a candidate.

It wasn't quite enough, though. When the clock struck eight and the first Bud Lights cracked open, the results quickly showed a Walsh edge. The unofficial tally was Walsh 2,085 and Hunt 1,839. Tevnan was strong with 1,039 votes. Martha Coakley, who would go on to become the state's attorney general, was a spoiler of sorts, plucking another 716 votes, mainly

from Neponset precincts. Eddie Regal rounded out the field with 612.

In context, Walsh had barely survived. He grew his total from the November sticker campaign by a less than a hundred votes. To this day, some of Hunt's stalwarts say that another week would have changed the outcome.

But the numbers didn't take the edge off the sweetness of victory that night. Walsh gathered at the IBEW Union Hall on Freeport Street with several hundred supporters, many of them fellow laborers from the 223 local that his dad, uncle, and assorted cousins controlled. Stae Sen. Stephen Lynch and Rep. Jack Hart came by to congratulate him. Also in the crowd: one of his sandbox friends and super-volunteers, Annessa Essaibi, destined one day to win an at-large council seat and launch a campaign to succeed Walsh as mayor.

"I'm very happy and proud of the campaign we ran," Walsh beamed. "Everybody who helped me conducted themselves in a classy way." He added: I look forward to working with all of my ex-opponents. As we said before, we'll all be friends."

On April 11, Walsh cruised to his second election victory as the unopposed Democratic nominee for state representative. He was seated two weeks later.

He never lost a bid for re-election, and was only challenged once, in 2002 by a former supporter, Ed Geary, Jr. It wasn't a contest.

Geary launched his campaign after it looked like Walsh would be leaving the Legislature. Secretary of State William Galvin had proposed that Walsh fill the vacant Registry of Deeds position, but after initially accepting Galvin's offer, Walsh reversed course and decided to run for re-election.

At the time, he told the Reporter that he wouldn't rule out running for another office in the future, saying, "I may still do that someday when the opportunity is right. Right now, I'm not done being a state rep."



The five candidates who competed in the preliminary election for 13th Suffolk were shown after a debate held at the JFK Library in February 1997. From left: Ed Regal, Charles Tevnan, Jim Hunt III, Martin J. Walsh and Martha Coakley. *Harry Brett photo*



# THANK YOU *Mayor Walsh*



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Mayor Walsh your leadership and dedication  
are clear reflections of your passion and pride for  
the people of the City of Boston. We wish you,  
a true son of Dorchester, the best as you move  
onto your new role as the  
United States Secretary of Labor.



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Marty Walsh with Richie Gormley, Boston Funeral Director and President of the Irish Social Club of Boston.

**Congratulations to our good friend  
Marty Walsh**

**As you begin your new career as  
US Secretary of Labor**

From your friends at the  
Irish Social Club of Boston  
Richie Gormley, president



“Thank you Mayor Walsh for your leadership, support, and friendship. I especially thank you for your collaboration with the City of Brockton in 2020 as we battled the COVID-19 pandemic.

Best of luck in Washington!”

- Mayor Robert F. Sullivan  
City of Brockton



**Congratulations  
to our Mayor  
Marty Walsh**

as he begins  
his new post as  
U.S. Secretary  
Dept. of Labor



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# ‘A Legacy of Labor’ – the story of the Walsh clan

In 2000, when Rep. Martin J. Walsh was still a back-bencher in the Legislature, he and his family were featured in *World of Hibernia*, a now-defunct magazine that focused on the Irish diaspora. The story, titled “A Legacy of Labor: The Walsh Family of Dorchester,” was written by former Dorchester Reporter editor Eoin Cannon, who would go on to become a speechwriter for Mayor Walsh. It was accompanied by this photo of the clan gathered around a table at Greenhills Irish Bakery in Adams Village.

Shown, from left: The mayor’s mom Mary (O’Malley) Walsh, his brother, John Walsh, his cousin, Marty Walsh, his uncle Pat Walsh, then-Rep. Walsh, and his father, John Walsh.

The story recounted the family’s rise to prominence through union activism, primarily Laborer’s Local 223, headquartered in Dorchester. The mayor’s uncle Pat, who died in 2012 at age 90, led the union for decades. Today, his son Marty is the president.

Mayor Walsh’s father John died in 2010 at age 82. In his obituary in the *Dorchester Reporter*, Bill Forry wrote: “John died in his tidy first-floor bedroom on Taft Street, surrounded by family and the modest trappings of a hard-working life.

‘He would never, ever even think of moving somewhere else,’” said his widow, Mary (O’Malley) Walsh.

The mayor’s parents met at a Roxbury dance



shortly after they emigrated and married in 1965. “I moved all this way to marry a man who grew up 20 miles from me,” Mary told the Reporter.

The night back in 1997 — when Marty won a special election to replace Jim Brett in the State

House— “was the proudest moment in dad’s life,” recalled Johnny Walsh, the mayor’s brother. “He absolutely loved, loved, loved local politics his whole life. And for his own son to win... it was easily his proudest moment.”

Thank you and best wishes, Mayor Marty Walsh.

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Affordable and equitable are our guiding principals. We want to make sure everyone who wants to live here in the city of Boston, can.

And we’re committed to making sure that our neighborhoods and communities thrive.”

- Mayor Martin J. Walsh





# From Connemara to the Cabinet

## The Irish American Partnership salutes Marty Walsh

### Primary schools in rural Galway celebrate his nomination by Biden

Apart from his Dorchester neighbors, one would be hard pressed to find bigger fans of Marty Walsh, the soon-to-be US Secretary of Labor, than the pupils and teachers at Scoil Náisiúnta Áird Mhoir and Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire in Co. Galway. Though these schools in the heart of the Gaeltacht are thousands of miles away from the Boston mayor's hometown, their immense pride in him can be felt an ocean away.

As the principal of Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire, Marty Walsh's mother's former primary school, wrote, "We are so proud of Marty, and we wish him every success in his new role."

With fewer than 100 pupils combined, the humble primary schools nestled along Ireland's west coast seem unlikely origins for Walsh's journey to the US president's cabinet. Yet it is precisely these strong Connemara roots

that earned this son of immigrants a seat at one of the most powerful tables in the world.

For it was in these primary schools that educators instilled within his parents, John Walsh of Carna and Mary (O'Malley) Walsh of Rosmuc, the importance of hard work, which in turn has come to define their son Marty.

There are few who better embody the tough, tireless, and tender trajectory of Irish America than Mayor Walsh. His family's story of immigrating to Boston for a better life tells of resilience and a profound commitment to honoring the past while building opportunity for the next generation. He is always mindful of this, cherishing his heritage while also leveraging it to open doors for those that follow.

Marty Walsh's connection to his ancestral home is deepened by his



Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire, Galway

involvement with the Irish American Partnership, a Boston-based non-profit organization that works to educate and inspire the next generation of Irish leaders while connecting Irish Americans back to the people and places they hold dear.

Through its hallmark Primary School Library and Science Program, the Partnership has awarded grants in his honor to his parents' former primary schools, providing much-needed resources and inspiration.

Upon receiving the grants, the schools hosted an America Day to express their gratitude for the

Partnership's support. When Mayor Walsh heard that the pupils dressed in red, white, and blue and learned about American history and geography in his honor, he beamed, "The work of the Irish American Partnership is not only helping to advance the educational opportunities for students over in Ireland, but it also strengthens the bonds between those of Irish descent."

The Partnership shares in the schools' pride and celebration of this son of Connemara. "Heartiest congratulations to Marty Walsh, a dear friend of the Irish American Partnership and of Ireland, on his nomination as Labor Secretary," said its chief executive, Mary Sugrue.

"Mayor Walsh has been an invaluable partner in our mission to empower the next generation of leaders through education. There is no greater champion of working families and young people and we are so grateful for his support."

Gonéirí an bothar leat, Mayor Walsh.

**Representative Walsh ... Mayor Walsh**

**and now ...**

**Secretary Walsh**

**but always ...**

**MARTY!!**

**Congratulations to someone  
who has never forgotten where they came from ...  
or where they're going.**

**From all your family and friends in the Norwood "area"**  
**The O'Malleys • The Rogers Family • The Carroll Family**  
**The Sheehan Family • The Currans • The McDonoughs • The Conneelys**  
**Connemara Roots • 223 Proud**



# It's farewell, not goodbye

By FRANK BAKER

Marty Walsh has been building relationships for 25 years in and around elected office. He understands the value of leadership and communication more than any elected official I have ever met. And he genuinely cares about you, the individual.

You could feel that when he shook your hand (pre-pandemic), looked you directly in the eye, and opened his ears to the needs of the community. He will apply that "building bridges" philosophy as part of one of the most inclusive and diverse presidential cabinets in US history.

He will be a star as he assists President Biden and Vice President Harris as they position this country onto the right trajectory — a direction leading to a return of values-based leadership and ethics-based government. He will be forward-leaning and transparent and he will serve loyally as one of the hardest-working people in Washington.

And back in Dorchester, everyone will still have his cell phone number.

Marty and I attended St. Margaret's grammar school together and we have

been in each other's orbit ever since. One of the greatest joys of this friendship has been witnessing Marty lead this amazing city as its mayor for the past seven years.

Working with us on the City Council, Marty has been a visionary and steadfast in his persistence to advance the city of Boston to greater heights — with smarter budgets, better schools, and safer streets.

While the majority of the councilors bowed to advocates, their specific agendas, and legislating with a cancel-culture mindset, Marty stayed true to his principles; he knew he could not move the city forward without building relationships, without collaborating with others who had opposing views, and, just as importantly, without maintaining civility in our political interactions.

And that approach is just one way in which Marty achieved, making a positive difference in today's politics and in this city.

Mayor Walsh's lists of accomplishments and policy achievements are well-noted. I believe one of the lasting impacts on our city that reflect Mar-

ty's earnest work and political acumen are his actions with police reform and navigating one of this country's most populous cities through the deadliest pandemic in history.

I have been very outspoken about supporting Boston Law Enforcement and Black Lives Matter initiatives in our city. Marty Walsh has done the same, delivering results on historic levels. Arrests are down 30 percent since he became mayor.

In his own words: "We have a very strong community policing model. I don't tolerate bad behavior, but I also respect the hard work that the men and women of the Boston Police Department do every day, and they have not missed a beat as far as going to work every day and keeping people safe."

Marty has stated: "Back in 2015, when President Obama put together his Task Force on 21st Century Policing, we were part of that. There were lots of recommendations that came out of that police report and we instituted mostly all of them. So, a lot of this work is just putting another layer of confidence, if you will, in public on what we're doing with our police department."

In June, the city was besieged at

the height of the Covid-19 pandemic with widespread protests in reaction to the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Marty viewed racism as just as much of a public health crisis as the Covid virus and declared it as such.

While he diverted money away from our police departments, he made a point to emphasize that support for our women and men in police uniform was strong. And it is.

Through a public health crisis, racial unrest, and trying budgetary times, it has taken skilled and experienced leaders to make the hard decisions to keep Boston moving forward.

And Marty made them.

That is what Marty Walsh has done since Day One — understand, care for, and prioritize our citizens. And he will do the same as President Biden's Secretary of Labor.

He will be remembered as a mayor who effectively led with a strong constitution to do right by this city and its people. He will leave Boston as one of its most popular mayors, with a 69 percent favorability rating. Good luck in Washington, Marty. Boston's loss is the country's gain.

*Frank Baker represents District 3 on the Boston City Council.*

# Thank you, Mayor Walsh.

The Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers and our twenty-one Boston community health centers congratulate Mayor Marty Walsh on this next phase of his public service career. The League and its members are grateful for your longstanding support of community health centers in furthering their mission of providing a trusted local source of health care, hope and opportunity for individuals and families. Our patients and communities thank you!

Massachusetts League  
of Community Health Centers

[massleague.org](http://massleague.org)



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#### Tuesday, March 2 at 6pm:

Lecture: "Sarah Remond - A Black Abolitionist in Ireland."

#### Thursday, March 4 at 7pm:

Virtual Mixology Class with Terri Nixon & Devri

#### Saturday, March 6 at 6pm:

Virtual Concert with Scotland's finest "Heron Valley"

#### Sunday, March 7 at 3:30pm:

Author Discussion with Kyle Darcy & Michele McPhee "Crime Time"

#### Saturday, March 13 at 7pm:

Virtual concert with "Strawberry Hill" streamed live from the ICC

#### Wednesday, March 17:

Virtual St. Patrick's Day celebration kicks off at 3:30pm. "Music, Songs, Stories & Irish Dance."

#### Saturday, March 21 at 3pm:

Virtual concert with Celtic Violinist "Máiréad Nesbitt"

#### Tuesday, March 30 at 5:15pm:

Lecture "Revolution in Ireland: 1921 and the violent quest of self-determination" by Professor Ruan O'Donnell from the University of Limerick

#### CLASSES OFFERED AT THE ICC

**Beginners Tin Whistle online** - registration open

**Tuesday at 5pm** with Denis Galvin. Next session begins on March 2

**Bodhran for Beginners / Beyond Beginners online** - registration open

Wednesday at 5pm / 5:45pm with Aimee Farrell Courtney. Next session begins on March 3

**Adult Baking Class** in person at the ICC - registration open

**Wednesday at 6:30pm:** March 3 - Mushroom risotto & sponge cake

**Wednesday at 6:30pm:** March 10 - Sheet pan chicken & profiteroles

**Singing Workshop online** / for ages 11+ (youth) - registration open

Thursday at 5pm with Jen O'Shea

**Irish History Classes online** - registration open / 4 week course

Thursday at 6pm: A virtual history tour of Co. Cork starts March 4

Thursday at 7:30pm: The life and times of St. Patrick starts March 4

**Irish Music Classes** - registration open: next session began February 27

Saturday / all ages

9:30am: Beyond Beginner online Tin Whistle

10:45am: Fiddle in person at the ICC

11:30am: Button Accordion in person at the ICC

**Irish Language Classes** - next session will begin in March. Registration now yet open. This class is offered in conjunction with Cumann na Gaelige

**ALL EVENTS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.**

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