

THE HISTORY OF THE
CITIZENS' PLAN E
ASSOCIATION

by

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The Worcester Citizens' Plan E Association, formed in response to a crying need for a streamlined and efficient form of government for Worcester, has enjoyed a measure of success that few such organizations have attained. Not only did CEA obtain a new charter for Worcester, but the organization has led the fight to keep the initial provisions of the charter intact over the years. In addition, CEA has a remarkable record of successfully sponsoring candidates for public office .

CITY MANAGER GOVERNMENT IN MASSACHUSETTS

The origin of city manager government as we know it in Massachusetts dates back to 1938. At that time a new plan, Plan E, was added to the four previously acceptable plans for all Commonwealth cities except Boston, which operates under its own charter. Plan A called for a strong mayor; Plan B, a weak mayor; Plan C, government by commission; Plan D, a city manager and plurality voting; Plan E, the city manager plan with proportional representation. Plan F, calling for the election of a partisan mayor, was later added to the list.

In 1947, the year that Plan E was made available in Massachusetts, Worcester was operating under the oldest existing charter, incorporated in 1848, in the nation.

Pre-Plan E government was a top-heavy proposition. The partisan mayor was elected at large, along with one alderman and one school committeeman. The ten wards each elected one alderman, three councillors, and one school committeeman. This meant that the city council was crammed with 41 members. Elections abounded with petty politics, backstabbing, and party voting. Once elected to the council, the individual councillor found it difficult to initiate legislation, and a typical calendar was jammed with up to 250 items. Each item went to a committee for study. Some items, rather than being in the public interest, were in the interest of one citizen:

"Suppose Sadie Jones says she broke an automobile spring bouncing over the potholes on Bowdoin Street. She files a petition at City Hall which wends its way through the City Solicitor's Office, the Clerk's Office and onto a calendar of the City Council. The City Council refers it to the eight-man Joint Committee on Claims made up of both Aldermen and Common Councilmen. It receives a report from the City Solicitor and eventually holds a hearing at which Sadie appears and states her grievance which she has already done to the City Solicitor and probably at the Clerk's Office. This recommendation of the Committee goes back on the calendars of both bodies for further action. If payment is recommended by the Committee the matter will end with the approval of both bodies. But suppose the Committee feels there is no liability and recommends the petition be

Council to take effective action; e.g., the last public school was built in 1926, and the older units were in deplorable shape. One group sought to rectify this situation.

THE GREENBRIAR GROUP

The nucleus of what was to become the CEA, the Greenbriar Lane Improvement Society, begun as a neighborhood discussion forum, gradually became an arena for the members to air their disaffection with the Worcester government. The group was headed by Albert E. Bailey, a retired professor from Boston University. At the heart of the discussions was the inefficiency of the city administration. The criticisms transcended specific complaints about then-mayor Charles F. Jeff Sullivan, and dealt with the higher question of the structure of government. Partisan politics, the members reasoned, had no place in local government. There is no Democratic or Republican way to pave a street. Yet the deficiencies in services in Worcester at that time were not found in some cities with similar backgrounds. Partisan politics seemed to be one of the reasons. Another sticking point was the size of the Council, a group largely incapable of effective action, for reasons explained above. The Society also saw a large degree of voter disenfranchisement under the ward system. A Republican in a Democratic ward might go for years before his vote was meaningful. Some system of proportional representation seemed fairer to the interests of minority groups.

After a detailed study of the plans available to cities in the Commonwealth, it was decided that Plan E would be the best way to clean house. Among factors affecting this decision was the experience of Cambridge, which adopted Plan E in 1940. Compared with other cities in Massachusetts, Cambridge was a shining example. After enacting Plan E, Cambridge lowered its tax rate; it was the only city in Massachusetts to have done so.

Having pondered all these questions, the Society sought to place the question of adoption of Plan E on the ballot of 1947. Thus the Greenbriar Lane Improvement Society became the Citizens Plan E Committee.

THE BATTLE OF PLAN E

The first step in bringing Plan E to Worcester was to obtain a petition with the necessary 9000 signatures. To this end the support of Harry Stoddard of the Worcester Telegram and Gazette was sought and obtained. By the beginning of July 12,464 signatures had been obtained. The petition to place the question of Plan E on the ballot was filed with the Registrar of Voters and the Clerk.

Then the battle was on. The issue grew, snowballing throughout the city. Those who felt steamrollered were none too pleased with the trend of events. The forces in favor of Plan E fought an

intellectual campaign, enjoying great success with some segments in the city. The Citizens Plan E Committee led the fight, with strong support from the Telegram and Gazette:

"These newspapers are convinced of the need for a change from the present antique form of city government... The arguments for this course are clear... Our City Council's very size, not to mention the quality of membership attracted to it under the ward politics system, invites maneuvering, bickering, confusion, delay, and indecision... We do not contend that Plan E will be a magic powder to cure all municipal ills overnight... The important point, however, is that Worcester now has the opportunity to win a charter change that it sorely needs... The time for that change is now."⁴

But the CEC and other groups in favor of Plan E had to overcome an extensive campaign aimed at the less sophisticated. Old-line party bosses, including many incumbent members of the Common Council, a large number of whom had no chance of re-election under the at-large provisions of Plan E, saw their own political destruction in the plan. Rather than being obvious and attacking the principle of Council/manager government, they went after the system of proportional representation:

"Opponents of Plan E continued their active campaign last night, presenting Charles H. McGlue, former chairman of the State Ballot Law Commission... McGlue charged that 'the do-gooders are raising large slush funds to put over on the people of the state this Communistic setup. They want to see our democratic cities adopt this system of proportional representation that ruined German, Italy, Austria, that produced Hitler and Mussolini' "⁵

Along with this smear, opponents contended that under Plan E city workers would be fired; in fact their jobs were under civil service, and therefore protected. It is to the credit of the CEC that they did not resort to this type of tactics:

"Wake up Worcester... People who know nothing about government want to change our charter. Even these people should tell the truth. They publicly say there is no gambling under Plan E. The law says there is. Chapter 54A, Sec. 8 of the general laws says: 'The ballot recepticals shall be assembled by polling places for counting at the central counting place in an order of polling places determined by the city or town clerk by lot. For such purposes lots shall be drawn not later than the closing of the polls...'

4. Gazette, 10/31/47

5. Ibid

The law also provides that any tie not otherwise provided for shall be decided by lot. Shall we believe the law or the lie. Under Plan E a small group of hand picked people will control Worcester. If they withhold the truth before they have control what will they do after? Vote no on Plan E."⁶

Plan E supporters fought back effectively:

"On Sunday morning .. an excited City Councilman rushed in waving a pamphlet, and very loudly declared: 'Read this; its Communistic!' When asked to explain what it was all about, we discovered that he was against the 'Plan E' form of city government. I certainly could not convince the City Father that Plan E was not 'Communistic'. If he would only read the newspapers he would find the following on page one in the Telegram of Oct. 16: 'The Communist Party of Worcester County has come out in opposition to the Plan E form of city government.'.... It seems the sore spot with this Councilman was the proportional representation method of electing members of the City Council.... When told the P.R. system was and is still used in Ireland, he then blew a fuse."

In the last few weeks before the balloting, charges and counter-charges became more frequent. Always the foes attacked the P.R. issue, emphasizing the system's complexities. But the Communist Party spoiled some of the Plan E opponents' efforts by coming out against P.R.

On November 5, 1947, in the last city election to be held under the old charter, Plan E was approved by a margin of almost two to one, 40,483 to 21,649 . Incumbent Charles F. Jeff Sullivan was reelected as Worcester's last popularly elected mayor. The City was to have Plan E government for at least four years, starting on January 3, 1950.

The adoption of the plan was a remarkable feat accomplished by a dedicated citizens' group against an entrenched political class. The feeling was that Worcester was embarking upon a new political era, one not to be a panacea for all the ills of the city, but rather a way to get more for the tax dollar.

Why did Plan E win in Worcester? It is difficult to single out any one decisive factor. Several elements played a role in the final victory. The most important factor was that, before Plan E, there was widespread disaffection with the status quo. The middle class felt itself most estranged, and they were the ones most able to effect change. The support of the Telegram

6. CEA Scrapbook clipping, source unknown.

7. Gazette, 10/23/47

and Gazette and the larger business community swayed many voters. Above all, the merits of the plan were indisputable; indeed, critics of the plan honed in on P.R. rather than council/manager government. In fact, no organized opposition to the plan was fronted to match the likes of the CEC.

With the passage of Plan E, one might think the story is over. This is far from the actual case, however. Work for the CEC only shifted into high gear. They now had to make sure that Plan E was given a fair shake in Worcester. Their immediate aim was two-fold: First of all, they had to educate the populace of Worcester about the plan just voted in. Then they had to fight off attempts of the legislature to alter the new charter.

WORCESTER'S NEW COMPACT

The new charter is drastically different from the old. The idea of partisan ward politics was scrapped. Nine Councillors are elected at large, as well as six School Committeemen, biannually. The nine Councillors elect a Mayor from their ranks and appoint a City Manager.

The Mayor is the nominal head of the city. He is also the chairman of the Council and the School Committee. The administration of the city rests with the city manager, who is responsible to the Council, which can replace him at any time. The manager is the chief executive and administers the day-by-day affairs of the city. Great pains should be taken to find a man of character for the job, since:

"He appoints all department heads, boards and commissioners (with the exception of the city clerk and the city auditor) and is in complete charge of the hiring of the city's personnel subject to civil service laws and regulations."⁸

Another feature of the Plan E charter adopted in 1947 is the proportional representation voting system, which is designed to insure representation of minorities on elected bodies in proportion to their numbers in the electorate.

1948-50 A PERIOD OF FLUX

With Plan E safely adopted, the energies of the Committee turned to the smooth institution of the new charter. The battle for good government was far from over, or in the words of the Committee: "Good government is no accident." A plan such as Plan E, relatively new and untried, needed to be given a chance, and that chance would only come with an informed electorate, coupled with a group who had the best interests of the city in mind.

Therefore a strong movement for a watchdog organization flourished in the CEC. To this end, the Citizens Plan E Committee became the Citizens' Plan E Association on January 21, 1948. Almost immediately, Timothy Daley, president of the old group, broke away from the new association, accusing "some members of the old Plan E Committee of not adhering to a policy of no-partisan organization."

Undaunted, the CEA officially denied these charges. They did admit to some charges of ethnic imbalance; subsequently seeking and admitting members of Italian and French extraction. The drive for new membership was so successful that offices on Main Street were opened that July.

During this period, two serious attempts to alter the charter had to be fended off. One proposed change, originated by Charles McGlue, long-standing opponent and vigorous campaigner against Plan E and P.R., would have rescinded the provision that barred politicians holding elective office during the two preceding years from becoming manager. Another bill would have revoked P.R. entirely. Both these measures were turned aside in 1949, due in no small way to the vigorous opposition of the CEA.

In one campaign, however, the foes of Plan E won an important victory. They forbade any city which had not acted on Plan E by 1949 the opportunity to adopt it.

On the home front, the CEA sought to insure the best possible election in November. To this end, it was decided to endorse candidates that best adhered to the CEA philosophy of government and supported Plan E. Other criteria for endorsement included reputation for integrity, ability to do a good job, demonstrated interest in civic affairs.

The Association became the target of some criticism when the decision to endorse candidates was made public. Some critics said that the endorsement process smacked of politics, in effect making the CEA a political club. The CEA saw things differently. In one of their many advertisements they pledged a "hands off policy" if their candidates were elected.

THE FIRST PLAN E ELECTION

The final hectic weeks before November 8, 1949 were filled with charges, counter-charges, and confusion. No less than 152 council candidates, and 36 school committee aspirants were in the race. Only names and addresses were listed on the yard-long council ballot and the shorter school committee ballot. The CEA

vigorously canvassed for their slate, despite determined opposition from George Wells: "The CEA campaign drive is 'collapsing' and 'the White Knights are galloping back in all directions' " ¹⁰

On election day a record voter turnout of 76,390 eyed the two huge ballots and, for the first time, voter by number rather than letter. The next three weeks saw the difficult 'Boulder' system of surplus transfer put to the test. Finally Holmstrom, Wells, Duffy, O'Brien, Marshall, Rousseau, Tomaiolo, Burrows and Sweeney were elected to the Council, in that order. Five of these men were endorsed by CEA, as well as three of six winning School Committee members.

Even arch-foes of CEA had to admit that they had won a stunning victory. Not only had they dramatically changed the charter; they had endorsed a majority of the winning candidates. However, those who had hoped that the CEA would be an apolitical force were to be disappointed. For as soon as they had disposed of the archaic government, the group became involved with the preservation of a viable alternative.

THE CITY MANAGER

After the election of the legislative bodies of government, the executive, or city manager, had to be chosen. Two schools of thought developed concerning this selection. One proposed that the city manager be chosen from among Worcester residents, for he would know the problems of the city best. The CEA took the alternate stance; that is, they urged that the best man be chosen regardless of his residence. The Council's subsequent dilemma resulted in the naming of E. F. Merrill, head of the Chamber of Commerce, as temporary manager, along with Andrew Holmstrom as the first mayor under Plan E.

As promised, the CEA did, in effect, follow the policy of "wait and see" in regard to the city government in the first half of 1950. The legislative fight in Boston over P.R. waxed again. At home, it was all the government could do to keep expenses down, and the tax rate down. This was of vital importance, since one of the reasons people voted for Plan E was the less costly government it was supposed to supply.

Finally, the CEA began to assert its role of a local political reform group. They began to interview state candidates in much the same way they had quizzed Council aspirants. They also made some changes in the Association itself:

"The Board of Directors will propose amendments to the

By-Laws at the fall membership meeting to correct the following: 1, Lack of continuity from year to year of experienced, hard working directors on the Board; 2, Last minute rushes to join CEA to vote for a favorite Board candidate at the annual meeting; 3, The possibility of a clique maintaining power indefinitely on the Board; 4, Confusion about who is a CEA member and who isn't; 5, Loose requirements for eligibility to run as a candidate for the Board of Directors."¹¹

We see here an attempt by CEA to reform their own organization. The foes of Plan E were in high gear. A bill signed by Gov. Dever lifted the two-year ban on officeholders seeking the post of city manager. The CEA issued a one-year progress report on Plan E:

"Things are done and decisions are made...with an eye to the general good of the city rather than to any individual's political advantage... the Plan E government is motivated in the right direction.

"City Hall 'hangers on' (usually politicians in the past) have virtually disappeared; in decisions of the City Council on such matter as street conversion, sewers, new positions, etc., the city has come first in almost all cases.

"There is, in our view, no comparison between the performance of the present nine-man council and the old 41-man council."¹²

Of course, there were a few snafus:

"There seems to be a feeling among many people that under Plan E the citizen has less recourse to the city government. There is no local councilman to call up if one has a problem. Of course this is in great measure a virtue.. but it has made not a few citizens feel lost when they believed an injustice was being done...In this connection, we feel that Worcester could benefit by investigation.. in the field of municipal public relations."¹³

In 1951, the issue of the city manager came again to the fore. Mr. Merrill announced his retirement in the early part of 1951, but was willing to stay on an additional month without pay in order that the Council might have the time to choose the best man for the job. The CEA immediately fired off the following telegram to the Councillors:

"Regarding selection of new City Manager, this organization

¹¹.CEA Planner, 9/11/50

¹². "One Year of Plan E", 1/29/51

¹³. Ibid.

emphatically feels your responsibility to citizens of Worcester demands avoidance of hasty action. General feeling in city unquestionably is for hiring professionally trained City Manager who has proved competence in management of another sizeable city. C.E.A. stands ready to help find such a man if such help is requested by council."¹⁴

The CEA demonstrated their belief that the best man for the job would have to have practical experience in government. To this end, they ultimately sent a list of men they felt qualified to run the city to the Council. All of the men were from out of town, a fact which, coupled with the following statement, indicated CEA's unwillingness to recommend a local man:

"Here are all the important questions: When the 'tumult and the shouting dies,' will the Council give the public a little window dressing by going through the motions of examining all candidates, and revert to the game of politics as usual and select a local man?"¹⁵

The preceding statement is far removed from the praises heaped on the Council in the first year report, and contrasts strongly with the support subsequently given to Francis McGrath. Despite his residence, he seemed to be a man that the CEA could support.

THE ELECTION OF 1951

Compared to the tumultuous election of 1949, the election of 1951 was one without a dramatic issue. No longer could the hue and cry of "turn the rascals out" be used. The CEA found itself in the position of supporting the status quo. They screened candidates for endorsement, which had by now become a largely accepted practice. They decided to endorse six of the nine incumbents: Holmstrom, Duffy, Marshall, Sweeney, Tomaiolo and Rousseau, and three newcomers: Mrs. Service, Soulliere and Katz. The endorsement policy came under attack in Worcester Life:

"Worcester likes things the American Way. In the American Way, the voter is the only boss and the voter picks his - or her - own candidates. Only in Russia today is there a comparable system where commisars pick the public officials and the serfs can only bow down and accept these choices."¹⁶

In the 1951 election, Mayor Holmstrom was returned to the Council with 14,682 first place votes out of 61,467 total votes, more than twice the P.R. quota. Rounding out the new Council were:

^{14.} Telegram, 3/21/51

^{15.} CBA Planner, 4/26/51

^{16.} Worcester Life, Nov. 1951

Wells, Duffy, O'Brien, Katz, Sweeney, Rousseau, Marshall and Soulliere. The CEA expressed pleasure at the election of seven of its Council endorsees.

However, the forces against P.R. were at it again. Their new attack centered around the idea of a referendum in Plan E cities to abolish P.R. The CEA countered that this move would be an attempt to accomplish locally what the legislature had failed to do. The Worcester Life said:

"The T-G and the C.E.A. want the rest of Worcester to wander about in a phony fog of non-partisanship while they continue to play the game of politics as the G.O.P. calls the turn. It's time that the rest of our people saw through this and maybe the fear that they have is why both the T-G and the C.E.A. oppose the very idea of a referendum on P.R."¹⁷

1952

The two burning (?) issues this year were the passage of a bill by the legislature and the study of the police department. The bill enabled five percent of the voters in a Plan E city to put the question of P.R. on the ballot. The police study called for motorization of the force, a planning department, centralization of records and more police training.

This year Worcester was nominated for an All-America City award.

1953

The backers of Plan E had to fight on two fronts this year. The Worcester contingent of the enemy busily planned to circulate petitions calling for the repeal of P.R., while the Boston faction readied their annual campaign to purge P.R. for the entire state. The local petition for repeal failed by 356 signatures to reach the ballot. In the legislature the only significant development was a rider on the P.R. repeal law that would require five years to pass after the referendum question was defeated before it could again go to the voters.

In order to meet the problems which might lead to disenchantment with Plan E, the CEA recommended increased public relations in a pamphlet printed in June: "The average citizen does not know what is going on in his city except as it touches his neighborhood. He should know and understand. He is entitled to know."¹⁸ The report goes on to suggest extending courtesy through various city departments, a public relations office, and on-the-job courtesy training. The Telegram stressed honesty among city officials.

17. Worcester Life, Dec. 1951

18. "Municipal Relations". CEA 1052

The election of 1953 saw three more CEA candidates elected: Favulli, Lawless and Morgan joined Sweeney, Holmstrom, Wells, Katz, O'Brien and Soulliere on the Council. For the first time, a monumental struggle ensued over the election of the Mayor. After an incredible 271 ballots, O'Brien was elected. The long process was due to the insistence of the Democrats on the Council that one of their number be chosen. This severe blow to the non-partisan concept irked many people:

"What of non-partisanship? The head of the partisan camel, strongly resembling the Democratic donkey, has thrust his head far into the Plan E tent, and threatens to collapse it. Candor compels the statement that, for the time being, non-partisanship is out the window. How can anyone delude himself by thinking otherwise?

"And what of the Citizens' Plan E Association, which endorsed some of these Councillors only to see them flout the principles upon which they were endorsed? The CEA will have to do some serious thinking and hard work if it hopes to continue to lead the forces of good government effectively in Worcester. As of now, it has taken a licking. Mayor Holmstrom won a clear non-partisan endorsement from the voters in November - an endorsement of him as Mayor. Now he winds up as 'Vice-Mayor' on the tag end of long and weary balloting.

"We are frank to say we believe he ought not to have accepted a consolation prize like that under the circumstances.. He ought to have gone down with his ship."¹⁹

1954

This year started out with McGrath's call for two million dollars for sewers. The city manager also pointed out that the city had spent a million dollars on school repairs since 1948.

The CEA continued its widely successful series of Little Town Meetings. These were designed to appeal to a small area of the city, with the hope that the residents could discuss purely local as well as city-wide issues in a group that almost always included at least one Councillor and leaders of the CEA. Besides guaranteeing continued feedback into City Hall, the smallness of these meetings was intended to insure that the citizen who felt the world ended at his streetcorner would be satisfied without ward representation.

This year the usual legislative donnybrook ensued, with the opponents of P.R. never able to get the necessary votes to overturn the whole thing. The foes of P.R. were said to have given up hope, until next year.

19. Telegram, 12/24/53

THE ELECTION OF 1955

The action of the Democratic caucus in the last mayoralty election had a effect in the spring of 1955, when the G.O.P. announced that it would endorse a slate in the November election. The Worcester Telegram said: "If the Republican City Committee goes through with its plan to promote a slate of Republican candidates this fall, we may as well kiss that concept of non-partisanship goodbye."²⁰ The ensuing hue and cry over the proposal forced the City Committee to scrap its plan.

The CEA endorsed Brassard, Casdin, Favulli, Holmstrom, Jette, Mack, Morgan, Rousseau and Sweeney for election to the Council. For once, there were some major issues in the campaign, including flood control, the tax rate, the Salem Street redevelopment, zoning, parking, a new library, clean streets, and gambling.

Ultimately, O'Brien, Holmstrom, Wells, Morgan, Shea, Favulli, Rousseau and Casdin won Council seats.

1956

This year saw a continuing series of modernizations taking place in the city, most notably the Lincoln and Washington Square renovation projects. This year saw the battle for fluoridation of water, assailed by some as a Communist plot to undermine the national health.

Mayor O'Brien saw an increase in the tax rate, something he felt would take place under any government due to the increasing costs of such projects as the refurbishing of the antiquated schools. At any rate, the city's debt shrank noticeably, and the tax rate, while rising, was the only one in major Massachusetts cities to remain under \$100.

1957

For the first time, the opponents of Plan B offered a positive alternative. They wanted to adopt Plan B, calling for a 'weak mayor', with the Council acting as the ruler of the city. This idea expired in June, but was to be heard again. This time, only 2,652 of the required 10,200 signatures were raised.

The CEA endorsed Council candidates Casdin, Daigle, Favulli, Holmstrom, Lane, Maher, O'Brien, Sweeney and Rousseau. Elected were O'Brien, Holmstrom, Wells, Katz, Shea, Favulli, Tivnan, Lane and O'Brien.

²⁰. Telegram, 5/18/55

The major issue was the building of new schools. The demolition to make room for the new Expressway, coupled with the need for renovation of older buildings, placed a heavy drain on the city coffers. City Manager McGrath asked for five new schools.

1959

In 1959, the opponents of council/manager government went at it with a vengeance. Councillor Wells led a fight far more coordinated than the abortive attempt two years before. The tactics were the same; they offered Plan B as an alternative to Plan E. By June there were enough signatures to put the issue on the ballot. Meanwhile, the legislature killed two bills that would have forced the issue of Plan B onto the ballot and scuttled P.R.

The battle was on. Heavy artillery, in the form of the "Citizens' Committee to Keep Plan E", was wheeled in. The Plan B people said that the charter would give the people a greater voice in the running of the city through the choice of the mayor. They also claimed that ward representation would insure equal representation for all parts of the city.

Supporters of the status quo insisted that the record of the present government could stand proudly by itself. Most citizens were keenly aware of some defects of the ancien regime:

"'Before Plan E came in ten years ago, there was a police station within 100 yards of this church and a gambling establishment within 500 yards of it,' one member of the audience said. 'Since the council-manager form of government, both have disappeared,' he said."²¹

The CEA had to do a job of public relations for Plan E. In August, workers were solicited for the fight. A fact sheet extolling the merits of Plan E was drawn up.

The campaign was a radical departure from the relatively quiet ones of recent years. CEA Council endorsements went to Casdin Coontz, Favulli, Figurski, Holmstrom, Liston, Mullaney, O'Brien and Payson. The campaign centered around the charter, with Wells as the principal speaker for Plan B and James Gratton speaking for CEA and Plan E. The CEA emphasized their belief that pre-Plan E government was corrupt: "Everyone knows that prior to Plan E several illegal establishments flourished in Worcester."²² The Telegram ran a lengthy series on the merits of council/manager government. On the other side, Michael Selze, an attorney, summed

21. Telegram 4/14/59

22. Labor News, 10/16/59

up anti-Plan E feelings: "Selze said a Plan B mayor would be 'responsible to the people; accountable for his stewardship.'"

The was rather close. Elected were: Holmstrom, Casdin, O'Brien, Wells, Mullaney, Katz, Payson, Shea, and Tomailo. The referendum died, 35,081 to 31,019, a plurality of 4,062 votes.

1960-1961
THE DEFEAT OF PR

Scarcely one week had passed before the new council called for the repeal of PR. Political insecurity, both real and imagined, played a large part in this decision. The CEA fought to keep PR, although several CEA members wavered newfound concern over the issue. The intramural dissent, however, did not force the group to change its stance: "We reaffirm our support of the present Plan E charter and we will carry out a vigorous program to educate the the citizens of Worcester as to the desirability and advantages of the present Plan E charter."²³

A bill was passed that would allow Worcester to decide on the fate of Plan E in the fall of 1960, despite the pressure brought by various groups that saw the bill as an affront to the principle of home rule. The City Council, in a surprising about face, opposed the signing. Casdin maintained that the bill should require the vote in an off-year, when purely local matters were on the ballot, rather than the national election year of 1960. O'Brien countered that PR divided the city voting on racial lines.

After a vigorous campaign, the city voted overwhelmingly, 46,873 to 30,436, to substitute the '9-x' system for PR. In the '9-x' system, the voter marks with the letter 'x' his choices for council and school committeemen.

Why was PR defeated? I believe that there were two reasons. Many people thought that the '9-x' system would diminish the tendency toward ethnic bloc voting, which was frowned upon. Another consideration in the downfall of PR was the extremely long time it took to count ballots.

Worcester was chosen as an "All-America City " in 1961. The criteria were the good government that Worcester has maintained, and the construction undertaken in an effort to improve the city. This was a big honor for the city, one that CEA had a big part in. The work that they did throughout the years, was formally recognized in the Worcester Telegram:

"More than 100 persons took the time to attend a Little Town Meeting sponsored by the Citizens' Plan E Association the other night.

"This speaks well for the civic-mindedness of these Worcester citizens. It also tells something about why

council-manager government, now entering its second decade in Worcester, has retained its vitality and purpose.

"One complaint that has been against the manager system generally is that it tends to fall into a dull routine. The scraps and fireworks of more politically oriented systems are missing. In too many cases, public interest is missing also.

"It is one of the truisms of all good government movements that they can survive any obstacle except public apathy. When public interest fails, the system is likely to fall with it.

"Happily this not true of Worcester. Citizen interest in the conduct of municipal affairs has been maintained to an exceptional degree. The Citizens' Plan E Association is not the only agency that can take credit. Nevertheless, it is the one organization that has focused consistently and solely on the issues of Worcester city government.

"The little Town Meetings sponsored by the CEA have been instrumental in providing all areas of the city with a means for meeting city officials face to face and exchanging views. Thursday night's meeting was the 52nd such affair the CEA has arranged.

"With a new type of voting system in use this fall for the election of councillors and school committee members, it is to be expected that public interest will run higher than in some other years. But the lasting success of council-manager government cannot rest upon new gimmicks, such as a different voting method, to arouse popular interest.

"It must rely, rather, on the steady concern, year in and year out, of thousands of individuals who are alert to the city's problems and interested in their solution.

"To maintain this interest requires finding a substitute for the old-style political sideshow which serves to attract voters in non-council-manager communities and used to attract them in Worcester.

"The CEA and its Little Town Meetings offer one of the best substitutes that it has been Worcester's good fortune to devise."²⁴

In the Council election, The CEA gave its nod to :
Bellenoit, Bisceglia, Casdin, Coontz, Foley, Holmstrom, Melican, Mullaney and Payson.

For the first time in many years, a preliminary election was held; under PR, no preliminary or runoff election was ever needed. Only 48 percent of the registered voters bothered to show up. The preliminary election cut the field to 18 council and 12 school committee aspirants. Final figures showed Casdin, O'Brien, Mullaney, Wells, Holmstrom, Coontz, Shea, Katz, and Melican on the City Council for two years.

²⁴Telegram, 1/14/60

1962

THE YEAR OF THE REFERENDA

From out of nowhere, 1962 rose like the proverbial phoenix to the skies of politics. First off, the Council, to avoid a deadlock of historic proportions, such as in 1958 when it took 277 ballots to elect Casdin to fill the post vacated by O'Brien, decided to fill the Mayor's position with a triumvirate of Shea, Casdin and Mullaney, each to serve eight months; Councillor Wells called this move a "package deal" that would "deal a death blow to Plan E in Worcester".

This election was hardly recorded in the city files when another charter fight got underway. A bill, introduced into the Legislature, gave Worcester the option of putting Plan F (partisan mayor) on the November ballot. This move came about as a result of the successful attack on PR two years earlier, an attack that started in the same manner. The City Council opposed the bill, as they opposed the previous bill on PR, for the reason that the balloting again would mix national and local issues. Nevertheless, passage of the bill was all but assured.

Boosters of Plan F argued for the concept of ward representation, as the answer to the charge that parts of the city were under-represented in the Council and were therefore suffering a decline in municipal services.

Opponents of Plan F blasted it as another attempt to bring partisan politics, with its constant bickering, back to City Hall. They claimed that ward representation often ended in deadlock and inefficiency. Why should a Councillor from one area vote for improvements in another if he doesn't get something in return? Supporters of the Plan E government pointed out that the years of the new government had brought many benefits; why change a good thing when it is working effectively?

To wage war against Plan F, the Worcester Charter Committee, the instrument used to stave off Plan B in 1959, was resurrected. Debates, formal and informal, sprang up all over the city. In the final debate, Plan E won, 42,482 to 29,781.

Soon after the referendum Councillor Casdin criticized the method of choosing the mayor under Plan E. He wanted to have the Mayor elected in a separate election. Opponents of this idea said that this move would place altogether too much importance on the role of the Mayor, who was the ceremonial head of the city. The motion died in Council, five to four.

THE ELECTION OF 1963

This year's lackluster campaign inspired few accolades from those who wanted exciting government. The CEA endorsed Casdin,

Coontz, Holmstrom, Mullaney, Foley, Marcus, Melican, Scola and Swillo. Elected were Casdin, Mullaney, O'Brien, Wells, Foley, Holmstrom, Coontz, Shea and Melican. Eight of the nine incumbent Councillors gained re-election. Fluoridation of water was crushed, 46,732 to 11,370. The City Council elected Mullaney to a two-year term as Mayor on the first ballot.

1964 - 1965

A group to oppose Plan E, the Citizens for Plan A Association, began their fight in June 1964. Their aim was to replace the city manager with a mayor who would wield broad power over a weak Council.

To counteract this move for a new charter, an impressive list of improvements under Plan E was drawn up:

- "1. Schools: 19 new schools completed... no new schools for 20 years prior to Plan E.
3. Public off street parking: Two municipal garages and 13 surface lots; \$800,000.
5. Construction of Worcester Expressway.
6. Police department reorganized; five day work week authorized; outstanding performance in law enforcement.
7. Fire Department... new fire prevention code prepared by the City Manager's Advisory Council and approved by City Council.
9. Sewers: Construction of 135 miles of sewers.
11. Major projects... Lincoln Square.. Washington Square.. Western Artery.. ; Salem Street Redevelopment; flood relief, urban renewal survey.
13. Private street conversion.. 51 miles.
16. Street light program increased two and one-half times since 1950.
17. Housing for the elderly."²⁵

The CEA announced that it would use stricter standards for screeneng those it endorsed. This was to be done by emphasizing the candidates' philosophies and de-emphasizing vote-getting ability and ethnic backgrounds. The move was seen by some as an attempt to restore order to the school committee, then at was with Superintendent Davis.

The CEA called for improved parks, regional planning and urban renewal. The number of candidates filing was the lowest in years. CEA endorsements were given to Council candidates Mullaney, Cotton, Shea, Holmstrom, Foley, Graham, Coontz, Casdin and McManus. Elected were Casdin, Mullaney, Wells, McManus,

²⁵. CEA publication, 1965.

Shea, Coontz, Foley, Tinsley and Holmstrom. The mayor's job went to Wells and Casdin.

1966-67

The year 1966 brought an important change for Massachusetts cities and towns, due to the "Home Rule" Amendment. Now cities could write their own charters without worrying about the desires of Beacon Hill. Under the provisions of home rule:

"Cities can adopt, revise and amend their own charters; second, cities.. shall have all the powers of local government, except the power of regulating elections, of taxation, of borrowing money, of disposing of park land, of promulgating civil law and of prescribing felonies; and finally, the General Court cannot pass an act affecting only one city or town without the permission of the city or town, except under specific circumstances."²⁶

In 1966, for the third time under Plan E, Worcester was named an All-America City.

A move to utilize the charter-changing provisions of the Home Rule Amendment sputtered out for lack of the needed signatures. The CEA screened candidates under the more selective procedures. Council candidates Casdin, Coontz, Cotton, Deedy, Holmstrom, Kelly, McManus, Shea and Tomaiolo passed through the screen.

Perhaps the most surprising result of the election was the defeat of Worcester's first Plan E Mayor, Andrew Holmstrom. He ran twelfth in the Council race in November. The more fortunate were Wells, Casdin, Cotton, Coontz, McManus, Foley, Tinsley, Shea and Tomaiolo. The struggle for the mayoralty resulted in a split between Casdin and Shea.

1968-69

A move to make the top vote-getter in Council elections the Mayor did not get very far. In the legislature, a study of ward representation in large cities was proposed, and the study quickly grew into a bill which was only narrowly defeated.

In 1969 the CEA for the first time asked its membership to rate incumbent candidates for office. This was done in order to learn the feelings of the membership so that the endorsements might reflect members' opinions.

One of the issues of 1968 was a plan to raise the salaries of Councillors. This plan drew the objection of many groups, including CEA. They took the position that "the Councillors

²⁶. Paper on Home Rule by ...

contribute their services, they don't sell them." In the end the Councillors kept their salary at \$5000.

In 1969 CEA initiated Worcester's first Student Government Day, with local high school students taking charge of the city on February 13. The aim was to give the students a greater understanding and sense of involvement in local government.

Rep. Harris of Ward 10 called for ward representation for Worcester since he was "sick of getting telephone calls about city business" from people who claim "they don't know those nine guys in the Council." He went on to say: "There are a lot of high-priced jobs in the city that we don't need."²⁷

Six local citizens charged that the city was in decline. They placed the blame on a government they charged had no real response to the people. Meanwhile, plans were being made to revitalize the downtown area and Worcester airport. Worcester Center was well under way.

In 1969 many people took note of the dearth of well-qualified candidates for municipal office in recent years. In some years no preliminary election for School Committee was needed. The CEA decided to allow itself the option of endorsing less than a full slate:

"In the early days of Plan B in Worcester, the CEA decided to limit its endorsements to the number of seats on the Council and School Committee. In those days, a great number of candidates sought election and it was necessary to pass over some good people in order that a CEA endorsement would have maximum effect. But in recent years, the problem has been very different. So few candidates have announced for either Council or School Committee that the CEA has had difficulty finding enough outstanding people to fill its slate."²⁸

In accord with this opinion, the CEA announced its endorsement of only seven Council candidates in 1969: Casdin, Doherty, Tinsley, Early, Deedy, Weinheimer and Tomaiolo. The lackluster campaign brought out only 51% of the voters. Elected to Council were Wells, Tinsley, Deedy, Doherty, Early, McManus, Shea, Casdin, and Cotton.

1970-1971

In the spring of 1970, CEA issued for the first time its "critical needs" lists for Worcester. The CEA Executive Committee, in a letter to the Council and School Committee, wrote:

²⁷ Telegram, 2/20/69

²⁸ Gazette, 5/10/69

"CEA has presented the critical needs lists to the City Council and to the School Committee, because we feel that it is the responsibility of these elected officials to insure that there are adequate programs and progress in each critical need area. Although much study lies behind these lists, we do not expect that all will agree with our priorities."²⁹

The municipal needs list started with a need for "more emphasis on and attention to various "human rights" programs and implementation of recommendations made by the Community Services' Public Affairs Committee." Other items on the list involved planning and land use, regional planning, housing, maintenance, housekeeping, program planning and budgeting, and so forth.

The School Needs List included items on staff evaluation, curriculum, professional development, salaries and construction priorities. CEA Directors met with elected officials to discuss the lists and emphasized that performance in meeting the critical needs would be taken into account in CEA's candidate endorsements.

In response to some outbreaks of racial violence in Worcester in the summer of 1970, and in accord with their concern for "human rights" as evidenced by the CEA's municipal needs list, the Board of Directors issued a statement on race relations in August. The CEA strongly supported the creation of the Human Rights Commission, and also supported the institution of a training program in human relations for police.

In 1971, both needs lists were revised and updated, and the Board approved the setting up of a procedure for careful monitoring and assessment of the performance of elected officials.

The Citizens Charter Review Committee, established in the summer of 1971, was charged by CEA with the task of preparing a careful study of the City Charter, and seeking a broad range of views. The CEA, as the group most responsible for bringing Council/Manager government to Worcester, feels a responsibility to prepare for the next attack on Council/Manager government by investigating the sources of discontent with Plan E, and by considering with an open mind the possibility of some modifications in the Charter as a means of strengthening Council/Manager government in the City.

CEA endorsements in 1971 went to Council candidates Casdin, Doherty, Early, Tinsley, Leaby, Koontz and Scott. Six School Committee candidates were endorsed, and elected, and only one of the candidates for Council, Norman Scott, failed to win election. It was one of the CEA's most successful campaigns, and an emphasis

29. CEA, April 2, 1970.

on selective voting in the Council race was very effective. In December, the CEA filed legislation to change the wording on the ballot and to change the practice of listing incumbents first, in the hope of making it easier for new candidates to win election.