University of Massachusetts Lowell
Center for Public Opinion
Boston Mayoral Election Poll, 2013
October 2-7, 2013

N=605 City of Boston registered voters, including 375 identified as likely voters with a sampling error +/- 5 percentage points for all RVs, +/- 6 percentage points for likely voters (note: margin of errors include adjustment for design effects)

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HIGHLIGHTS

Connolly vs. Walsh Head to Head: Boston City Councilor John Connolly leads former state representative and union leader Marty Walsh by a margin of 45% to 37% among likely voters (LVs) in the race for Mayor of Boston, set to be decided on November 5, 2013; Connolly's lead is +4 among registered voters (RVs), 38% to 34%. With under a month to go before election day, Connolly, who was the first to enter the race and has campaigned heavily on the issue of improving education standards in the city of Boston, is the favorite to be Boston's next mayor. With 18% of LVs saying they are undecided, there is still room, however, for this race to evolve in the weeks ahead. Additionally, 4 in 10 LVs report soft support for their preferred candidate, describing their selection of Connolly (39%) and Walsh (42%) as not a firm choice.

Preliminary Election Preferences: Walsh and Connolly are the two candidates that advanced in a preliminary election on September 25, 2013 that saw 12 candidates vying to become Mayor of Boston. But, collectively, they only received 35% of the total vote tally on September 25, 2013. Registered voters were asked first if their preferred candidate made it through and secondly, who their preferred candidate was. While 37% of registered voters report that their preferred candidate was Walsh or Connolly, 46% report supporting another candidate. Among registered voters who preferred another candidate, voters appear to be splitting relatively evenly with 36% supporting Connolly and 34% supporting Walsh. Fully 28% of those that preferred a different candidate report being undecided, compared to only 9% of RVs who supported Walsh or Connolly in the preliminary election. This suggests that much of this election hinges on the ability of Walsh and/or Connolly to tap into the preferences of voters who were stranded on September 25. The fact that Walsh does better among all RVs than he does among a subset of LVs suggests that much of this election for him hinges on his ability to drive turnout up and convince these undecided voters, who supported an eliminated candidate, that he is the best choice. Given the number of undecided voters, it certainly helps his case to have just earned the endorsements of both Felix Arroyo and John Barros.

Gender, Age, Education and Geography: Connolly's lead is bolstered by support from women, those with a college degree and those between the ages of 40 and 64. He leads Walsh

by 10 among women (40%-30%) while he trails Walsh by 3 among men (36%-39%). Connolly also leads Walsh 14 points (43%-29%) among those age 40-49 and 9 points (41%-32%) among those 50-64, compared to even splits for those 18-29, 30-39 and 65 and over. For women age 50-64 Connolly leads Walsh by 25 points (50%-25%). RVs with a college degree prefer Connolly by 14 points (43%-29%) while those with a high school education or less prefer Walsh by 5 points (37%-32%). Interestingly, there are few significant differences in the geography of preferences of voters with the exception of the downtown area (which includes the North End, Back Bay, Beacon Hill, and Fenway, the Leather District and the West End), where Connolly leads by 30 points (50%-20%). In the four other areas (defined in the topline document), Connolly and Walsh are polling at near-even margins.

Race and Ethnicity: According to estimates from the US Census, non-Hispanic whites make up approximately half of the population 18 and over in the city of Boston, while minority voters make up the other half. In our survey, non-white voters make up 50% of the population, 42% of RVs and 36% of LVs. The biggest difference between the total population and the likely voter population is that Hispanic respondents make up 15% of the population and 12% of RVs, but only comprise 7% of the likely voter population. As a useful comparison, African Americans make up 21% of our respondent pool and 20% of likely voters, non-Hispanic whites make up 50% of respondents and 64% of LVs and Asians make up 7% of respondents, but only 2% of the LV electorate. Hispanic/Latino RVs also are the most up for grabs, with 43% undecided. African American RVs appear to favor Walsh (40%-33%), but among African-American-likely voters, Connolly leads by 14 points (52%-38%). It is a common mistake to assume that members of a certain racial or ethnic group will vote completely in unison, particularly in local elections. However, to the extent that a candidate can capitalize on undecided voters, it appears that the Hispanic/Latino community is the least engaged and most undecided in this election.

Partisan and Ideological Divisions: While Boston elections are non-partisan, Boston's electorate is overwhelming Democratic: 74% of RVs identify or lean to the Democratic party, while only 17% identify or lean to the Republican party, with 9% identifying as Independent or something else. The large majority of RVs, Democrats, split evenly between Connolly and Walsh, but both Independents (45% to 18%) and Republicans (45% to 35%) strongly favor Connolly over Walsh. Interestingly, this does not mean that Connolly does best among ideological conservatives, as conservatives favor Walsh 34%-33% while liberals favor Connolly 43%-33%. Connolly's coalition is therefore made up of well-educated liberal Democrats on the one hand, and moderate conservatives on the other. Walsh wins more moderate and conservative Democrats.

Union Advantage Walsh: Perhaps not surprisingly given his strong ties to the labor community, Walsh leads Connolly 49%-31% among those who report belonging to a labor household (either the respondent or someone who lives in the home belongs to a union). Respondents from union households make up 17% of RVs in our sample. The problem for Walsh, to be sure, is that he trails among the other 83% of RVs from non-union households by 10 points (30%-40%).

The People's Pledge: In recent weeks in the campaign, much has been made about Connolly's challenge to Walsh to sign the people's pledge, to keep "outside money," or that money that is collected in large donations in unregulated independent expenditures out of the campaign.

Walsh has subsequently declined to sign the pledge, saying Connolly's challenge to him is self-interested and insincere. When asked if willingness to sign the People's Pledge would affect who they would vote for, 32% of RVs said that they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who signed the pledge, compared to 61% who said it does not matter. Among those who indicated that the pledge is important, Connolly leads Walsh 45-29. Among those that did not support Connolly or Walsh in the preliminary election and who identify the pledge as important, Connolly leads by 17 points (45%-28%). It appears as though this has been an effective strategy for Connolly in the eyes of potential voters.

Education Policy: Boston RVs were asked to grade Boston Public Schools (BPS) on a A-F grading scale; 35% gave BPS a grade of A or B, 32% gave the public schools a C, and 20% gave a score of D or F, with 13% saying that they "don't know." Connolly leads by 5 points (38% to 33%) among those who give schools an A/B grade, and by 8 points (41% to 33%) among those who give schools a grade of D or F. Additionally, all RVs were asked if it was more important for the next mayor to invest in alternative forms of education like charter schools or invest more money in existing public schools; 30% chose alternative forms of education, while 63% chose existing public schools. Connolly leads Walsh by 6% among RVs from both groups.

Public Transportation: Respondents were also asked to grade the MBTA system on an A-F scale. A majority (53%) of Boston RVs give the MBTA a passing grade of A or B. Additionally, when asked about late night T service, 37% of RVs who ride public transportation would be willing to pay $3 or more for one-way service on the T between 12:30-2:00am.

Right Direction/Wrong Track: People who live in Boston are optimistic about how things are going in the city and the Commonwealth as a whole. Large majorities of Boston RVs think that things are on the right track in the city of Boston (72%) and the commonwealth of Massachusetts (68%), but not in the nation as a whole (24%).

Crime: While recent surveys have shown that crime has gotten better, 69% of Boston RVs still say that crime is a problem in the city. Connolly leads by 6 points (38% to 32%) among those who view crime as problem, while Walsh leads by 4 points (41%-37%) among those who say it is not a problem.