

## **A View Into a Local Campaign**

SWEL380  
Assignment #2

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It's hard to believe that it's time to do it again. Campaign, that is. For I can clearly remember sitting in that crowded living room on Marlboro Street on a cold February night in 2001. There we were, gathered for the kick off meeting for Doug Gutro's bid to become Ward 5 City Councilor in Quincy, Massachusetts – his first attempt at running for an elected office outside of school and civic associations. There must have been 20 or so people in Doug and Sue's living room that night. I looked around the room and saw Nick, J.D., Judi, Kathy, Glenn, Jay, and Tom - all of us friends of Doug's for quite some time. Then there were the faces I did not know. People he knew from work, through community organizations, from graduate school, and through other elections he had worked on. And of course members of his family were there – his mother, his father, and his wife, Sue. There was no question why we were all there. We were there to support a friend, however we also felt that Doug was the best person for the job. Ironically, though, many of us gathered there that night could not vote for him for we did not live in his ward and in some cases even in his town. But we all wanted to help and support him anyway. That night Doug spoke to us about his decision to run, his desire to make Ward 5 and the city of Quincy a better place to live and work and how he could do that, and the help and support he would need from us, and others, in order to get elected. He spoke of the hard work that was to come over the next nine months. But perhaps only he and his campaign manager, Tim McAloon, and a few others in that room truly knew what that meant. I, for one, was unaware of the effort that was required to get a city councilor elected.

There are many things that go into running a campaign - the candidate's decision to run being the most important. Then there is organizing of the campaign, including deciding who should fill key positions such as campaign manager and treasurer, volunteers, campaign strategies, creating a message, media strategies, campaign literature, public appearances,

speech writing, public speaking, fundraising, voter contact, voter registration, and efforts to motivate the public to get out and vote.

Of the most important aspects in a campaign is the candidates' decision to run for office, for without this, there is no campaign. I'm sure some people who gathered in Doug's living room on that cold February night thought that his decision to run was a recent desire. However, for those of us who have known him for years, knew that this was hardly a decision he arrived at overnight. Doug had been mapping out his run for political office for years. He had become interested in running for elected office about 15 years earlier when he was in his early 20's. After taking an undergraduate course while earning his Bachelor of Science in Business Management from the University of Massachusetts in Boston, Moral and Social Problems, he became inspired to learn more about the issues that were discussed and debated in this course. From here, he volunteered on several school and civic committees and associations, including joining the Ward 5 Community Association for which he was elected to serve as its President for a few years. He also volunteered his time and effort to work on several campaigns, which included among others, the successful congressional bids of Joe Kennedy in 1988 and Bill Delahunt in 1996. It was during the Kennedy campaign where Doug got his first glimpse into the inner workings of a campaign and became passionate about politics. Then in 1997, Doug went back to school to earn a Master's in Public Administration. All of these actions, and others not mentioned paved the way for his run for office by providing him with the knowledge and political experience and contacts he would need. When many people run for office they do as Doug did, through a series of well thought out actions that many take years to achieve; although this is not always the case. Still, with all of his planning, Doug's decision to run was not an easy one. For campaigning is *extremely* time consuming and it takes

over your life. As a newlywed of eight months this was something to seriously consider, for he would be spending a great deal of time away from Sue. He also needed to be sure that his “day” job as the Special Assistant to the Regional Administrator in Boston’s Environmental Protection Agency office would allow the flexibility in his schedule that he would need when campaigning as there is no way to avoid campaign events that occasionally take place during business hours. In addition, he strongly considered whether or not 2001 was the right time to run in regard to the dynamics of the political climate in Quincy and Ward 5 at that time. In the fall of 2000, Doug began this investigation process for the November 2001 election, and prior to him making his final decision he sought the advice of many friends, family and those knowledgeable of politics in Quincy and Ward 5. Doug seriously considered all he learned and he determined that this campaign could be won even though he would be running against an incumbent, Steve Durkin, with six years of experience as Ward 5 City Councilor and another twelve years of experience as an elected member of the school committee. The incumbent also had a number of contacts in the community and a great deal of name recognition, which means so much in an election. Also seeking this same office was a well-established businessman, Jim Mullaney, who was very active in the city and had the support of the business community.

Once Doug made his decision to run, he needed to coordinate a team of people to take on major roles in his campaign, including a campaign manager and treasurer. Through his work on other campaigns, he knew the importance of gathering a strong group of people who could take action and get things done. After consulting trusted associates from previous campaigns he had worked on, Doug decided on Tim McAloon as his campaign manager and Tom O’Brien as his treasurer. Tim was someone Doug knew from a local civic association who had the ability to make things happen and get things done, which is exactly what a campaign manager is required

to do. He decided on one of his trusted friends, Tom, as his treasurer because he was someone who worked in the finance industry and could quickly learn about campaign finance rules.

Doug's decision to run and gathering his core team of support were steps that occurred prior to the kick-off meeting that February night. However, shortly after this meeting, several other things happened. First, the appropriate papers were filed with the Massachusetts State Office of Campaign Political Finance in order to establish a candidate's committee to allow for fundraising activities. Second, further organization of the volunteers and their roles and responsibilities occurred. Third, the first of several fundraisers was held and Doug "officially" announced his candidacy.

After the "official" announcement, one of the first things to do was to get Doug's name on the ballot. To do so required a nomination petition containing signatures of a minimum of 50 registered voters within Ward 5. A strategy was needed for who would obtain these signatures as well as where and when, so volunteers were stationed outside of post offices and stores on a Saturday morning. The goal of this effort, however, was to gather many more than the required 50 signatures. This was the strategy for a few reasons. The more signatures that appear on the nomination petition could indicate that those people were interested in a potential change in that leadership position. Second, when someone signs their name to a petition, they become somewhat connected to that candidate.

Meanwhile, as the nomination petition was being addressed, several other tasks were occurring behind the scenes including creating the message, logo, phrasing and a layout for all literature and visibilities (i.e. bumper stickers, lawn signs, hand-held signs), organizing volunteers, public appearances, and future fundraising activities. Of all of the important tasks in a campaign, one of the most crucial besides the decision to run, is the message. Whether the

message is delivered in speeches and debates, or direct mailings, or is seen on bumper stickers or T-shirts, the content, phrasing, layout and design are critical. For Doug's campaign, the determination of the logo and literature were quite time consuming, and I imagine that would be true of most campaigns. It is very important to get all of the proper information on each form of literature or signs. When dealing with bumper stickers, lawn signs, and hand-held signs, there is a very limited amount of space for which to display the pertinent information, therefore the content and layout are vital. In Doug's case, these forms of visibilities needed to contain his name, and the fact that he was running for City Council from Ward 5, all the while trying to display this information in an appealing format and color combination. Some of this may sound insignificant, but it really is so important. After several iterations, the format, design, and content were decided for each visibility – the bumper stickers, lawn signs, hand-held signs and T-shirts. Once the decision was made for all of these, now the printing of each was needed. Because money in a campaign is usually very tight, as was the case in Doug's, it is important to shop around for competitive prices. In some cases, it may be possible to get these services and materials donated as long as it is documented and does not exceed the legal amounts. In regard to the lawn signs and hand-held signs, once the printing of these were completed, the assembly of them also needed to occur. This involves purchasing the wood to frame them and stand them up, coordinating the volunteers to assemble them, and finding a place to store them until their use. According to Quincy law, the lawn signs could not be displayed until 10 days prior to the primary and they needed to be removed within one week following the general election. This law differs from town to town. In the meantime, it was necessary to determine which supporters would be willing to display the signs on their lawns. A list of these people and their addresses had to be maintained. When the time came to display

the signs, a team of volunteers was gathered to drive to each house on the list and put up the signs.

As for the hand-held signs, they would be used at all visibility events, meaning that a group of volunteers gather at a high traffic area within the ward (i.e. a street corner, or the post office or donut shop on a Saturday morning) and for a few hours hold signs reading "Doug Gutro for City Council – Ward 5". These visibilities would occur during morning and evening rush hours during the workweek with increasing frequency as the primary and general election moved closer. Bumper stickers were given to any volunteer or supporter willing to display them, whether or not they were eligible to vote for Doug. For example, I helped out a great deal on Doug's campaign, however I could not vote for him as I not only did not live in his ward, I didn't even live in the same town. However, I put a bumper sticker on my car anyway for the increased visibility of his name. At the time, I happened to have been working in Quincy, therefore driving through town extensively. This created additional exposure for him even though I couldn't actually vote for him. The T-shirts were distributed to volunteers so we would wear them during sign holding visibilities therefore creating the illusion of more supporters. Perception is very important in campaigning and the eyes can play tricks. With volunteers holding signs and wearing T-shirts, it can be a very impressive sight.

There was also the campaign literature to create. This included palm cards, brochures, and direct mailing correspondence. Palm cards are about the size of a legal envelope and contain biographical information about the candidate – education, current employment, membership and participation on committees or in civic associations, and perhaps marital status, children and the candidate's address. The front side of the card would most likely have a picture of the candidate along with the logo and phrasing. On Doug's palm card, there was a picture of

him along with his name and the position he was seeking on the front. The back of the card contained the biographical information. These cards were distributed through literature drops, door-to-door canvassing as well as being handed out at all campaign events. In addition to the palm cards, brochures were created and distributed to voters through literature drops or direct mailings. The brochures contained information regarding issues and the candidate's position.

There were direct mailings as well. This is when information is mailed directly to the potential voters. The direct mailings included the palm cards and brochures, but also letters. These letters not only ask the voters for their support, but they also described Doug's position on the issues in greater detail than a brochure could provide. Along with the direct mailings comes an important task – the need for a bulk mail permit. This is something that most of us wouldn't think about, but a campaign manager would. This permit allows mail to be sent at a lower rate than the standard, therefore saving a campaign a great deal of money.

In addition to direct mailings and the handing out of literature at various campaign events, there were also organized literature drops. Routes were mapped out and volunteers were coordinated to drop Doug's brochures door to door throughout the ward. This effort was quite time consuming and needed to be coordinated in great detail so as not to double drop a street or worse, to miss a street entirely. Each brochure had to be left at the front doors of homes, as it is illegal to leave this information in mailboxes. This was one of the many efforts that I was personally involved in and I can tell you from experience that there are many houses in Ward 5 in Quincy with several stairs leading to their front doors. I felt no need to go to aerobics for a few days after any of the literature drops.

Another important part of the message is the delivery of it. For Doug, it was done through these mailings as well as through speeches, press releases and debates. Many

candidates have advisors to help them write their speeches. Doug chose not to write speeches, but rather he gathered talking points (i.e. a list of issues to discuss). He would pass these talking points by his campaign manager and another advisor who was also a close friend - someone whose run for State Representative in Massachusetts a few years prior fell just short and whose campaign Doug had worked on – to make sure that he addressed all of the pertinent points. Although talking points also require the same amount of extensive preparation that a speech needs, Doug preferred this to formal speeches so as not to come off too stilted and rehearsed. He preferred the more laid back approach that talking points offered.

The ability to deliver this message is vital as well. It is important that the candidate possess strong public speaking skills, as these skills may make or break an election. A dynamic and engaging speaker is more likely to captivate his/her audience and have better luck in conveying the message. Doug has great public speaking skills, which he acquired through his professional efforts at the EPA, as well as at public and neighborhood forums.

Debates are yet another opportunity to get the message out. Debating is not easy, but it can be a very effective tool. It allows the candidates to discuss the issues and come in contact with the voters. It can be very beneficial for the candidate if he/she has studied that issues and can speak knowledgeably and passionately about them. For the one debate that I attended, I felt that the candidates were very engaging and presented their views well, but I felt that Doug had studied the issues more in-depth and therefore appeared more knowledgeable. I'm sure you're surprised I thought Doug came out the winner.

The labor unions – electricians, pipe fitters, carpenters, etc. – also play an important role in elections, and they did so in Doug's. They are an important instrument in getting the message out and rallying hundreds, if not thousands, of potential voters, depending on the scope of the

election. In Doug's case, he was endorsed by nine labor unions. These unions then sent out mailings to their union members on behalf of Doug, therefore getting the message out to this large audience. Labor union members also have been known to get out and vote. This translated into hundreds of potential votes for Doug as many union members follow the endorsement of the union. Some of these people even volunteered their time to support Doug through sign holding visibilities and attending debates.

Voter contact is an enormous part of a campaign. Whether the contact is indirect through mailings or literature drops as stated above, or through direct contact, it is absolutely critical. There are many, many avenues for voter contact. In Doug's case, he did extensive door-to-door canvases. He participated in breakfasts, lunches, dinners, bingo nights, coffee hours, and fundraisers. In addition, some of the sign holding visibilities were at subway stations in Quincy where he would have direct contact with commuters who were also potential voters.

One of the largest sub-projects within the entire campaign was to gather a target audience for the door-to-door canvas (i.e. determine the voters Doug should visit). Doug had a very focused strategy for this exercise. He was able to obtain a few lists; one of all the registered voters in Ward 5, and another list of all of those who voted in the last four elections. These lists are available and can be purchased from the local city hall. He then had one of the more computer literate volunteers create a relational database to create lists all of the registered voters to all of those who voted in the last election, then the past two elections, and so on for the past four elections. Doug's goal was to knock on doors as many as three times for some potential voters, to ask for their support and to discuss their issues and concerns. His strategy was to visit those who voted in the last election one time, and to those who voted in the last two elections two times, and finally to visit those who voted in the past four elections three

times. It was the last group that was so important as they had proven to vote in the past and therefore will most likely vote again in the future, so winning their support was crucial. When all was said and done, Doug had knocked on approximately 4,000 doors while maintaining a list of the issues that were raised by these people. This hard work and determination was one of the reasons he got elected. And to this day, he continues to know, off the top of his head, the issues that are of concern street by street.

Doug also had an additional strategy on his door-to-door canvas. He made sure to knock on the doors of all homes and businesses on main streets regardless of their voting record. The reasoning behind this was that if he could gain their support, then perhaps they would be willing to display a lawn sign or placard. Main streets offer high visibility and are an effective means of getting a candidate's name out there. This turned out to be very important for Doug as he had a number of signs displayed on busy streets.

As I mentioned before, Doug also had many other voter contact opportunities through organized breakfasts, lunches, dinners, coffee hours and bingo nights. Many of these events took place at senior centers. One of the largest voting populations are seniors, so it is a strategic move to plan events with them in order to ask for their support. They have proven in the past that they go to the polls and their support may be the difference between winning and losing. The coffee hours were also an important event. A coffee hour is hosted by a supporter of the candidate, who opens his or her home to friends, family, and neighbors (i.e. voters). The candidate is there to meet potential voters and discuss the issues. These events are very important as friends, family, and neighbors may be influenced by the support the host has displayed. As with the coffee hours, the breakfasts, lunches, dinners and bingo nights also

allowed Doug to discuss the issues with voters, and it gave the voters an opportunity to meet him.

Phone banks are another form of voter contact. Doug established phone banks as a way to garner support and reach out to voters even further. A phone bank consists of volunteers getting together to make phone calls to potential voters. The volunteers asked the voter to consider voting for Doug on primary day or Election Day. If the voter indicated that they support Doug, they were placed on a voter ID call list. This list was then used on Election Day to encourage Doug's supporters to get out and vote.

Voter contact also occurs with fundraisers. Just a quick note at this point, I will not be discussing campaign financing and regulations in this paper. That is a topic unto itself. When planning a fundraiser, voters are first invited to attend the event, thereby putting Doug's name in front of them again. If they attend, it enables further contact. The fundraiser events Doug held included cookouts and receptions that requested a modest contribution to the more elegant and elaborate cocktail receptions for the high-end contributor. Fundraisers are an essential part of a campaign for two reasons. This first is obvious – to raise money for the campaign. Campaigns are expensive, and the broader the scope of the campaign (i.e. national or state vs. local), the more money is needed. Doug's campaign cost approximately \$30,000 with the bulk of that money being used for printing and postage. Therefore, strong turnout and support is crucial. Candidates also hope that if an invitee cannot attend an event that they send a contribution anyway, and this happens regularly. On many occasions, people would also contribute over and above the dollar amount requested. Attendance is important as well, as it indicates the voters who are willing to publicly support the candidate. Fundraising events are an

imperative part of the campaign process and a great deal of thought and preparation is put into each event. This brings me to the role of volunteers.

Volunteers are vital in any campaign, but most especially in a local campaign where all roles are voluntary and are done on a part time basis. Everyone, from the campaign manager to the supporter who showed up for one event, is a volunteer. This is not the case in state and national campaigns and perhaps some city campaigns where, although there are many volunteers, there is also full time paid staff to coordinate the campaign. In any case, the role of the volunteer is huge. Volunteers may do anything from coordinating the fundraisers to holding signs for visibility events. So much of a campaign rests on the strength of its volunteers. One of the toughest jobs is to coordinate the volunteers. After all, they are volunteering their time and therefore cannot be required to do everything. But it is essential to get a commitment from them as to what they are willing to do and when. In my case with Doug's campaign, I was willing to do almost anything except early morning sign holding visibilities, as I had a scheduling conflict with work, and phone banks, as I just preferred not to do that. The roles I did perform included sign holding visibilities during after work hours and weekend mornings, organizing and attending fundraisers, recruiting additional volunteers to participate in visibilities and fundraisers, literature drops, preparing phone bank lists, attending debates, and assisting with events at senior centers. All of these events were rewarding for me and I was happy to do them, yet they were also time consuming. This is something to consider when offering to volunteer on a campaign. In regard to Doug's campaign, volunteers were found by word of mouth, by people approaching Doug or other volunteers directly and asking to help, or through Doug's door-to-door canvassing. All in all Doug had approximately 75 volunteers helping him throughout his campaign.

Another crucial element to a campaign is getting people to actually get up, get out, and vote. The first step in ensuring that people vote is to make sure that they are registered. Many campaigns hold voter registration events. Although Doug chose not to during his campaign, he always carried voter registration forms with him to all events. In the instance where he may have been stopped on the street and he did not have a form on him, he would always take down the persons name and address and then send them a form.

Before discussing voter turnout, let me take a step back and describe the election in regard to Doug's run for office. Doug was running for Ward 5 City Council in a non-partisan election, as are all *local* elections in Massachusetts. He was running against the incumbent, Steve Durkin, and a local businessman, Jim Mullaney. Since there were three candidates seeking office, a September 2001 primary was necessary to determine the top two vote getters who would move on to the general election in November.

Primary day turned out to be a very confusing day for all as it was on September 11, 2001. Primaries around Massachusetts were still held despite the terrorist attacks in New York, Washington D.C. and Pennsylvania. So voters went to the polls that day in Quincy. Eight thousand of the 15,000 people in Ward 5 are registered voters. On primary day, approximately 2,800 people in Ward 5 turned out to vote, with Doug receiving approximately 43% of the votes (1,200) and Jim Mullaney and Steve Durkin receiving approximately 28.5% of the votes. Only 23 votes separated Mullaney from Durkin (823 to 800) with Mullaney coming out ahead. Thus the incumbent was defeated in the primary; something that not many people expected when Doug and Jim Mullaney, both first time candidates, declared their intentions.

From this point, it was supposed to be full steam ahead to the general election in November. However, when Doug resumed his door-to-door canvassing a few weeks after

September 11, it was much more difficult. The mood of the country, including Ward 5 in Quincy, had changed. Doug got the sense from people that he was being intrusive. He felt very awkward knocking on doors at such a difficult time. So he took a step back and regrouped. He began to focus his attention on other tasks. He decided to send a letter to every registered voter in Ward 5 to discuss and convey his thoughts regarding September 11. By acknowledging the events of that day, Doug was able to move forward and continue campaigning again. Eventually he returned to knocking on doors and it began to feel more comfortable again. In the meantime, all of the other campaign events were continuing with added frequency – visibilities, press releases, fundraisers, literature drops, coffee hours, and such. On November 7, 2001 – Election Day – phone banks were established to remind people to vote, and sign holding visibilities occurred at each of the three polling locations in Ward 5. As the polls closed, certain volunteers in Doug’s camp were assigned to obtain the raw numbers by precinct from each polling location. Once those numbers were received, they were called into Doug at his home where he was waiting with his family, campaign manager, and advisors. As this was happening, the results were sent to City Hall for the official count. Meanwhile, the rest of the volunteers headed to The Custom House in Quincy for what we all hoped would be a victory party. We soon received word from Doug’s house that the unofficial results were that he had won by a fairly large margin. As Doug headed to City Hall for the official results, we – his volunteers – celebrated as we eagerly awaited his arrival. We soon learned that 4,078 people voted in Ward 5 that day. Both Doug and Jim Mullaney doubled their vote counts from the primary with Doug receiving 2,420 votes (59%) and Mullaney taking 1,658 votes (41%). So we all celebrated that night and congratulated each other on a job well done. However, Doug knew the work was just beginning.

I would like to touch on the subject of absentee ballots for a moment. Although they had no bearing on the outcome of Doug's race, they did become a crucial component in the mayoral race in Quincy on that same day. The voting was so close between the incumbent, Jim Sheets, and his challenger, William Phelan, that a winner could not be declared that night. A recount of all votes was necessary including a recount of all absentee ballots. A week later, William Phelan was declared the winner by a mere 17 votes. This race truly proves that every vote counts.

As for my experiences with the campaign, I found them extremely insightful and rewarding. I never knew the amount of work that was necessary in a campaign like this one. For a while it seemed like every time I turned around I was holding a Doug Gutro sign. I participated in literature drops, and I even photographed Doug and Sue at their home and this picture was used on one of the pieces of literature. I recruited and organized volunteers to help with the sign holding visibilities. In addition, I assisted with the organizing and set-up of fundraisers and, what turned out to be, victory parties. All of these tasks took a great deal of time, but I learned so much and I really enjoyed the experience. Ok, so maybe I didn't exactly enjoy all those stairs I climbed up and down during the literature drops, but he did get elected so it made the effort worthwhile. The most enjoyable part of the campaign was, by far, watching Doug that November night at The Custom House after he won the general election. This was something he worked to achieve for 15 years, and all of his hard work paid off for him. As his friend of 14 years, at that time, I cannot even put into words how proud I was of him and how happy I was for he and Sue. He deserved this victory. He was the hardest working candidate many of us had ever seen.

I cannot even begin to imagine the work that is necessary for a county, state or national campaign after witnessing and taking part in a ward campaign. The organization and

coordination must be so extensive and complicated. As with any campaign, an enthusiastic, knowledgeable, energetic candidate is important. But also important is a strong team of volunteers and/or paid staff (depending on the office being sought) to support and organize the candidate, the message, and his or her time. Although I still have so much more to learn about campaigns, of the many things I learned from Doug's is that running for elected office is not for the casual politician. The candidate needs to have a focused, unwavering desire to attain the position he or she is seeking.

As for Doug, over the past two years he has learned a great deal about what it takes to be a city councilor. It is a part-time job that is anything but part-time. He has had no problem maintaining contact with the voter base as he has continued to hold fundraisers to erase the campaign deficit and to get ready for the new campaign. It's important to keep money in the bank for a campaign as this may detract opponents. He continues to receive, on average, 5 – 10 phone calls per day and another 5 – 10 e-mails per day regarding issues of concern from his constituents. Although when I spoke to him earlier this morning, he told me he had received 60 phone calls in a 24-hour period due to a hot issue in the ward. All of these require a timely response from him. Additional contact occurs through direct mailings to constituents regarding issues that may affect them (i.e. repaving of roads, repairing of sidewalks, etc.). He also issues an annual newsletter to the Ward 5 community summarizing what has occurred in the past year and what is to come.

So, as I stated at the beginning, it's hard to believe that it's that time again. Campaign time. Doug is running for re-election this November. As he gears up for another campaign, he currently has no opponents. This may change as a candidate in Quincy has until end of July to officially declare his or her intentions. And although the scope of the campaign will change if an

opponent comes forward, Doug is actively campaigning right now. In fact, the other morning, he had just come from a labor union breakfast when I talked to him. Many campaigning events will still be necessary even if he runs unopposed, but some aspects of the campaign may be lessened such as the amount of literature produced and the number of lawn signs that will be displayed.

So with the success of his first term as city councilor, who knows what the political future holds for Doug. Perhaps an at-large city council seat? Mayor? State Representative? Something else? No matter what, all will take quite a bit of hard work. At this point, I also do not know what my role may be in any future political campaigns. I will miss assisting on Doug's re-election campaign now that I've moved back to Connecticut. However, since I have a genuine interest in politics I imagine myself becoming involved again when the right candidate comes along.