

Footnotes...

FIRST QUARTER 2009

Jim Barry III takes over as Forum chairman

After three years as Forum chairman, Michael Best & Friedrich attorney Bill Haberman has turned over the title and its responsibilities to Jim Barry III, a well-known Milwaukee commercial real estate broker.

At the Forum's annual meeting in early March, Barry was appointed chairman, after having served as a vice chair of the organization for the past two years.

In accepting the position, Barry, 44, said, "It's truly an honor to lead an organization that has been an integral part



Jim Barry III

of this community for 96 years. Leaders in both the public and private sectors have relied on the Forum for nonpartisan, in-depth, and reliable research on a number of public policy issues. During the last few years, the Forum has extended its reach and influence well beyond the borders of Milwaukee County to include all of southeastern Wisconsin. There is no doubt that the Forum is on an upward march, with a new president and an expanded staff, and I intend to continue the fine work of my predecessor in guiding the organization to even greater heights."

A native Milwaukeean, Barry is president of Colliers Barry, one of the region's largest commercial real estate brokerage firms. He has been involved in hundreds of local industrial, office, and investment transactions, including the sale/leaseback of Briggs & Stratton property to Harley-Davidson in 1997 and the 2008 sale/construction/leaseback deal involving We Energies/First Industrial/QuadGraphics, both of which won the "Deal of the Year" award from the Commercial

Association of Realtors of Wisconsin. Prior to joining Colliers Barry – founded by his father – Barry was an attorney with Foley & Lardner LLP from 1991-1993.

Also an active civic leader, Barry has served as president of the Rotary Club of Milwaukee, chairman of

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Beginning in this issue, Footnotes introduces a regular column by Forum President Rob Henken to discuss research the Forum is conducting or policy issues affecting the region.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



One of the consistent themes I heard from trustees upon assuming the Forum presidency a year ago was the need for the organization to be "relevant." In other words, it was not enough for us to simply produce interesting and informative research; we also needed to make sure that our research was applicable to issues immediately confronting policymakers, and that our findings generated meaningful responses.

Of course, that's easier said than done for a non-partisan organization like the Forum, which fiercely clings to its objectivity and which pointedly does not advocate. Still, there was a feeling that by returning to our roots as a government fiscal "watchdog" and by actively seeking opportunities to present our research to governmental bodies, we could encourage policymakers to pay attention without taking sides in political debates.

I'm pleased to report that our efforts are bearing fruit. Last fall, the Forum produced and disseminated separate analyses of the Milwaukee County and city of Milwaukee budgets. Among other things, we cited the county's failure to assess its structural budget problems and urged it to prepare multi-year fiscal forecasts. Meanwhile, we praised the city's analysis of its structural problems, but warned of their escalation and the need for concerted planning to address them.

These suggestions appear to have caught the attention of budget officials in the Courthouse and City Hall. Last month, the county's budget director formed a work group consisting of budget staff from both branches of government and a couple of outsiders (myself included) to prepare a five-year fiscal forecast for use in future budget deliberations. Meanwhile, his counterpart at the city launched a similar work group (on which I am also serving) to begin grappling with the city's structural issues in advance of the 2010 budget process.

While these efforts won't solve the fiscal challenges facing both governments, they show a commitment to good government that should lead to better decision-making when budgets are debated this fall. That's precisely the type of response we hope for when we issue a report.

Footnotes (published quarterly)

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Haberman steps down as Forum chairman; new trustees elected

the Greater Milwaukee Chapter of the American Red Cross, and president of the Milwaukee River Revitalization Foundation, among others.

Barry is an honors graduate of both the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and the University of Chicago Law School, where he was editor-in-chief of the *Law Review*.

“We look forward to the economic development perspective Jim brings to Forum leadership,” says Rob Henken, Forum president. “In addition, his long and varied civic involvement will serve the organization well as it seeks to expand its reach and research partnerships. At the same time, we are grateful for Bill’s three years of service to and support of the Forum. It was through his leadership that we have raised our profile and credibility in the community.”



As Forum President Rob Henken (right) looks on, Milwaukee County Supervisor Gerry Broderick (3rd District)(center) presents Bill Haberman with a proclamation from the Milwaukee County Board thanking and congratulating him for his work as Forum chairman during the past three years.



New Forum trustees elected include: (top row, left to right) David DeYoung, senior vice president & managing director, public finance, Stifel Nicolaus & Co., Inc.; Geoff Hurtado, AICP, senior vice president, Hurtado Consulting, LLC; Philip Koutnik, associate, Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek S.C.; Joanne MacInnes, vice president for advancement, Alverno College. Bottom row, left to right: Ken McNamee, senior vice president/CFO, Journal Sentinel, Inc.; Tracy Shilobrit, president, StrateVantage Communications, LLC; and Bradley Viegut, director, public finance, Robert W. Baird & Co., Inc. Not pictured: Edward Purcell, director of business development, CG Schmidt, and Wendi Unger, CPA, senior manager, Partner Development Program, Virchow, Krause & Co., LLP.

Variables cloud school governance issue

In February, the Forum teamed with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation to issue a research report on school governance reform in large, urban public school districts.

While the report (www.publicpolicyforum.org/pdfs/SchoolDistrictGovernance.pdf) asked many questions about governance, Forum researchers admitted there are no clear answers because of the number of variables involved. Nevertheless, an editorial in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* gave the report “credit for laying out the obstacles, potential pitfalls and the possibilities of reform.”

The report’s key findings include:

- Governance reform evolves and occurs in several variations.
- Success of mayoral takeover is dependent on many factors, like state policy, labor contracts, constituent and business sector priorities, and the mayor’s experience, leadership ability, and political aspirations.
- Governance reform is influenced by political conditions and other reform efforts, including school choice, charter schools, and decentralization.
- Governance reform models are as numerous and varied as the districts that have undergone such reform.
- Governance reform impact on a school district’s fiscal stability is uncertain, dependent upon a mayor’s willingness and ability to reopen labor talks or garner sufficient state and local revenue.
- Governance reform can result in student performance improvement, but not necessarily across the board, and cannot be counted on as narrowing the achievement gap between high and low-performing schools.

The report, “School District Governance Reform: The devil is in the details,” received significant news and editorial coverage in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and *The Business Journal*, and on BizTimes.com, OnMilwaukee.com, Milwaukee Magazine’s “Murphy’s Law”, WISN-TV12, and WUWM-FM.

In a follow-up to the study’s release, the Marquette University Law School held a forum on governance.

Choice and public schools showing less difference

The Forum has released its 11th edition of the annual census of schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP). The *Research Brief* focuses on long-term trend data, including enrollment, school characteristics, accreditation and achievement tests, and teaching staffs.

After more than 10 years of MPCP growth, choice schools are starting to look more and more like Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), according to the report. For example, MPCP enrollments are at least 78% low-income, while those at MPS schools are 77%. Also, minority students account for 85% of enrollment at MPCP schools and 88% at MPS. And student-teacher ratios in the two systems are similar – 15.6 students per full-time MPCP teacher; 14.9 students per full-time MPS teacher.

Nevertheless, there are still differences. MPCP retains high school students more successfully than MPS, with a 36% drop-out rate for the 2008 MPCP class and 63% at MPS. And while MPS administers the same state standardized test, only 53 of the 114 MPCP schools using standardized tests use the state test.

Total voucher use grew five percent in the 2008-2009 school year, the second smallest annual increase since religious schools joined the program. Overall enrollment in private schools participating in MPCP grew less than two percent.

Other key findings (www.publicpolicyforum.org/pdfs/2009VoucherBrief.pdf) include:

- MPCP schools receive accreditation from 15 agencies; 27 schools reported being accredited by more than one agency.
- One-third of MPCP schools have teaching staffs too small for each grade level to have a full-time teacher.
- Eighty-one percent of voucher users attend religious schools.

Neighboring states provide early childhood education model

A Forum report released in January showed how Minnesota and Illinois have recognized the economic value of high-quality early childhood education and have taken steps to invest in such education.

According to the report (www.publicpolicyforum.org/pdfs/ECCECaseStudiesBrief.pdf), the lessons to be learned in Wisconsin include:

- Business leaders were engaged by policy discussions that underscored the economic and workforce development implications of the issue.
- Reports by independent economists and philanthropic foundations were catalysts for change.
- Pilot projects and phased implementation tested policy prior to widespread implementation.
- Progress was realized after groups with policy agendas ranging from child welfare to education reform to economic development worked together.

In a *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* op-ed, Forum President Rob Henken discussed the need to respond to the fraud uncovered by the *Journal Sentinel* in the Wisconsin Shares child care program with strategies not only to correct the program's shortcomings, but also to improve the quality of care received by program participants as part of a larger effort to improve school readiness.

An upcoming Forum study will include a cost-benefit analysis of high-quality early childhood education in the seven counties of southeastern Wisconsin.



The Forum – in partnership with Milwaukee's Penfield Children's Center – held a Viewpoint Luncheon, "High Hopes: Quality early childhood education isn't child's play," to discuss the issue. The February event included Reggie Bicha (not pictured), secretary, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families; (seated from left to right): Deborah Blanks, chief executive officer, Milwaukee's Social Development Commission; Ed Flynn, Milwaukee police chief; Tom Gazzana, corporate vice president, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin; and Jose Vasquez, chief executive officer, Milwaukee Child Development Center of St. Joseph. The event was part of Penfield's James R. Ryan Memorial Lecture Series.

In the photo above, Vasquez (far right) emphasizes how high-quality early childhood programming can result in better school readiness, stronger families, lower crime rates, and higher wages. Joel Dresang (at podium) Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reporter, moderated the discussion.

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The Forum report on Milwaukee County government's fiscal condition was released on March 24 and has drawn considerable attention from county officials and media. An imminent publication deadline precluded coverage in this edition, but the next issue of *Footnotes* will provide all the details.

New members (since January 1, 2009)

Alverno College	Milwaukee Urban League
Armstrong, Kevin	Ozaukee County
Black & Veatch	Penfield Children's Center, Inc.
CG Schmidt	Regional Workforce Alliance
Hill, Christine B.	Seeds of Health, Inc.
Hill, James M.	StrateVantage Communications LLC
Mellowes, Linda T.	Zeppos & Associates, Inc.

Longtime Forum member Earth Tech has changed its name to AECOM. Jim Kunz, P.E., senior vice president is a Forum trustee.

DPI candidates debate



The Forum's annual meeting was highlighted by a debate between the candidates for state superintendent of public instruction. Tony Evers, deputy superintendent, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, and Rose Fernandez, president, Wisconsin Coalition of Virtual School Families, squared off on everything from school choice to school governance to higher taxes for education. Denise Callaway of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation moderated the debate.

Forum blog gets a plug

"Milwaukee Talkie", the Forum's blog, was recognized by "Across the Board," the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* editorial board's blog on the day's events, as being "always worth a read." The kudos came after a posting by Forum President Rob Henken reviving the discussion about possible government consolidation in Wisconsin. (www.milwaukeetalkie.blogspot.com)

Forum 2008 annual report available at:

www.publicpolicyforum.org/pdfs/2008AnnualReport.pdf

School choice results released

Second-year results of the comprehensive longitudinal evaluation of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program were released at the Forum's first eye-opener breakfast on March 26. Presenting the results were Dr. Patrick J. Wolf, professor and 21st Century Chair in School Choice at the University of Arkansas; Dr. Jay



Greene, endowed chair and head of the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas; and Dr. John Witte, professor of political science and public affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The results were discussed by a panel of experts that included Deb Lindsey, director of research and assessment at Milwaukee Public Schools; Susan Mitchell, president of School Choice Wisconsin; Cory Nettles, of counsel at Quarles & Brady and founder of the Milwaukee Quality Education Initiative; and Dennis Oulahan, president of the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association. Stephen Percy, director of the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, moderated the discussion. In the above photo, Oulahan makes a point while Nettles and Mitchell look on.

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