



January 18, 2015

Dear Fellow East Siders:

I hope you had a happy New Year. With the official start of the City Council's 2015-18 term, I am pleased to resume sharing information with you about my work on the City Council.

The Rhode Island House of Representatives organized a commission to study the impacts of the 2010 school aid funding formula, particularly in terms of the interactions between charter schools and host public school districts. At its first meeting, the Commission reviewed this [Slide Show](#), which identifies a broad range of issues to investigate in order to strike the fairest possible balance between the interests of children in charter schools and those in public school districts. The Commission invited me to attend this Friday's meeting to discuss a [Report](#) the City Council prepared examining the financial impact of the Achievement First charter school. The report estimates the new school ultimately will cost the Providence Public Schools \$8.7 million beyond any savings realized from being relieved of the responsibility of educating these children.

Now is a good time to remind everyone of how to reach the Department of Public Works with your snow plowing questions. The main telephone number is 467-7950, which works Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. This is helpful for 40 hours a week, which is slightly less than a quarter of the time. Unfortunately, snow storms are not limited to the working week. There also is a "snow ready" number, 680-8080, which works after hours when the City activates it, but not otherwise. When it is not activated, the line rings directs callers to dial 911, which is not set up to address street plowing. This is not satisfactory for someone who wakes up on Saturday morning and cannot leave their house because the City has failed to plow the street. I have not been successful in convincing the administration to expand telephone answering service, so I would appreciate your help. If you believe the City should have a service to answer telephone calls for snow plowing requests (within a reasonable amount of time) after working hours, you have three ways to convey that message. You can call the Mayor's Constituent Services Office at 421-2489 and tell them. You can [sign an online petition](#). You also can [send an email to the administration](#). Please consider taking any (or, even better, all) of these three steps to encourage the administration to provide this service.

This past Thursday (January 15), the City Council held its first official business meeting since taking office. Among the items discussed was a [Resolution](#) eleven of my colleagues co-sponsored urging funding for two new police academy classes, with the goal of adding 80 to 100 officers to the force. While I agree that we need more police officers, the sponsors did not offer any ways to pay for a budgetary commitment of \$10 million or more per year. The City Council enacted a similar resolution in 2001 (led by many of the sponsors of the current one), and the administration paid for the new police officers by under-funding the pension fund by more than \$10 million per year and/or spending down reserves, triggering the fiscal crises we experienced in 2011-12. This resolution reveals two challenges to effective government. First, it is much easier to talk about the results one wishes to achieve than figuring out how to achieve those results. Second, as Providence's successful (but temporary) resolution of its fiscal crises recedes into the past, we will be continuously tempted to forget the lessons we learned about how we created those problems and how we must act going forward to prevent their return. The City's recent addition of 40-45 police officers was funded by a federal grant (which lasts for three years), and I support all efforts to expand our police as we find more money to do so; however, we will foster the return of the "fiscal hurricane" and pension crisis if we revert to the irresponsible policies of the past.

Sincerely,