



October 15, 2017

Dear Fellow East Siders:

Good things come to those who wait. This week's letter describes how three initiatives in our City have overcome challenges, namely bicycle lanes, ethics reform and infrastructure repairs.

At its September 7 meeting, the City Council approved a resolution to restrict the development of bicycle lanes. Five members voted in opposition, including all three from the East Side. The resolution's sponsors stated it was necessary due to an apparent misunderstanding regarding not-yet implemented plans for Broad Street. Instead of addressing that particular situation, however, Councilman Aponte (the chief sponsor) insisted on imposing his "solution" on the entire City, refusing an amendment I proposed to limit the restrictions he sought to the Broad Street bike lane plans that concerned him. In this way, the resolution illustrated how the parochial structure of the City Council, which increases responsiveness to neighborhood issues, can impair the interest of the City as a whole. Fortunately, the Mayor acted as an institutional check by vetoing the resolution on September 15. Today marks 30 days since the veto, which means that the window to override the veto has officially expired. It is too bad we had to go through this exercise, but the experience shows how the system ultimately worked as intended.

Patience also found its reward last week in the area of ethics reform. Following the arrest and indictment of then-Majority Leader Councilman Jackson in the summer of 2016 on, among other things, campaign finance violations, I introduced legislation to have the City Council post on its web page the Rhode Island Ethics Commission and Board of Elections disclosure reports of all City Council members. The legislation was referred this legislation to the Finance Committee, where it was never heard. When a second City Council member (who also held a leadership position) was indicted this Spring on campaign finance violations, it appeared time to revisit the issue. More than 50 of you signed petitions that, per operation of the City Charter, required the Finance Committee to hold a public hearing on the matter, whether they wanted to or not. Around 15 of you came and spoke in favor, with nobody speaking in opposition. Unfortunately, the Finance Committee did not act. Last week, the Providence Ethics Commission stepped forward, approving a resolution to place this information on its web page. I regret that the City Council missed the chance to begin cleaning up its own house, but the Providence Ethics Commission has earned our thanks for increasing transparency in City government.

Finally, the Department of Public Works is making plans for infrastructure repairs, including work in all City neighborhoods beginning next year. By an overwhelming margin, the voters approved an infrastructure bond last November, which would have permitted work to begin this year. Unfortunately, the Finance Committee blocked its implementation, creating what became known as the "zombie bond." After significant pressure from constituents and the broader community, the Finance Committee relented and reconsidered, clearing the way for the City Council to approve a resolution for an infrastructure bond this past summer. With that in mind, please mark your calendars for **Monday, November 6 at 6:30 p.m. at Nathan Bishop Middle School**. At that time, Michael Borg, Director of the Department of Public Works, will discuss plans for infrastructure improvements in our neighborhood, and across the City. Please consider attending.

Sincerely,