



February 15, 2015

Dear Fellow East Siders:

I hope you are surviving this weekend's storm. For news about the City's response to the weather, including parking bans and adjustments in City services, please consider signing up for the Mayor's email updates by [logging onto the City's web page](#) and filling in the form at the left side of the page. This week's letter discusses snow removal, City Council education oversight and the block grant program.

Last week, the City Council's Public Works Committee met with officials from the Public Works Department to address constituent questions arising from the snow removal program. I also spoke with my colleague Councilman Wilbur Jennings (Ward 8), who previously drove a snow plow as a City employee for many years. I focused on your questions regarding the City's inability to plow from curb to curb, instead leaving margins of five feet or so on either side of many roads, which has produced traffic congestion in the past few weeks. I learned that the City's plowing program faced three constraints from the volume of snow we received in a relatively short amount of time, namely time (extra plow runs), the impact on resident's driveways (which would have significantly higher snow banks) and sidewalks (which would also receive higher piles of plowed snow.) Other communities with more experience with high-volume snow storms have fully-organized programs to remove the snow, rather than move it within a particular street's area. Recently, Providence has been doing more to move the snow to designated reception areas, but the City lacks the facilities, the budget and the planning to do this on a larger scale.

Many of you have shared suggestions about how to manage the partially-cleared roads that have resulted. Three years ago, I introduced a [Resolution](#) the City Council approved to authorize the Public Works Department to install single-side parking restrictions during snowstorms. That year, the Department installed paper signs on telephone poles on narrow College Hill streets, but some scofflaws removed the signs and parked their cars in the restricted areas. If the City installed permanent parking signs and poles, it would be possible to implement either single-side or alternate-side parking programs. The latter alternative would allow the City to plow to the curb periodically, rather than restricting operations to times when there is a full-fledged parking ban. At this point, I expect the administration to investigate a permanent signage program for all City streets, taking into account the cost of installing the signs and the best program (single side, alternate side, etc.) to use on the new signs.

The City Council has re-organized its committees for the current term. One major change will be the division of educational oversight between the Finance and Education Committees. The City Council's formal authority covers approval of the School Department budget and contracts, and School Board nominations. In addition, the City Council provides a forum for discussion of school-related issues. Last term, all of these functions were consolidated, first in an Education Subcommittee of the Finance Committee, and then in a free-standing Special Committee on Education. This term, the City Council leadership assigned all approval authority to the Finance Committee, while creating an Education Committee for discussion purposes only. At the latter committee's first meeting (where I was elected Vice Chair), members discussed several topics they would like to address, but almost all of them involved a contract or the budget, which matters are the formal responsibility of the Finance Committee, not the Education Committee. Committee members suggested other topics relating to education policy, which is primarily the responsibility of the School Board, not the City Council. With two different City Council committees discussing and/or acting on educational matters in potentially contradictory ways, there is the prospect of mixed messages for the Mayor, the School Department, the School Board and the Superintendent. I will do my best to navigate the serious challenges presented by this new framework, and look for ways to make a positive contribution.

Last year, the federal government updated its map of City neighborhoods eligible for funding under the Block Grant Program as indicated on this [Map](#). In previous years, the federal government has not identified any eligible neighborhoods within Ward 2; therefore, Ward 2 did not receive any funds under the neighborhood improvement

program. With the new map, Ward 2 will receive approximately \$58,000 of federal funds, which can be used to fund facilities and infrastructure improvements either (a) within the designated area or (b) for organizations that serve primarily people in poverty. The City of Providence will hold a series of fora to inform the public about the program and solicit feedback which you are welcome to attend. I will join Councilman Yurdin at a forum taking place on **Wednesday, March 4 at 6:30 p.m. at Fox Point Boys and Girls Club, 90 Ives Street.**

Sincerely,

Samuel D. Junier
