



June 15, 2014

Dear Fellow East Siders:

I hope you are enjoying this beautiful Father's Day. This week's letter discusses a proposal to shift the tax burden between landlords and homeowners, the River Road meeting and an opportunity to serve on the Ward 2 Committee.

On Monday night (June 16) at 6:00 p.m., the Ways and Means Committee will hold a public hearing on a [proposed ordinance](#) (listing its 11 co-sponsors) that would change the ratio between the homeowner and non-resident landlord tax rates. As described in my [June 1 letter](#), the measure would (under a revenue-neutral scenario) produce a 5% reduction in the landlord tax rate at the expense of a 5% increase in the homeowner's tax rate. This shift would compound a similar one that occurred in 2013. At that time, the average residential tax bill increased by 6%, but the impact was different for landlords and homeowners because of the revaluation. In a sample compiled by the Tax Assessor, the average landlord tax bill declined by 4%. In contrast, the City's average single family homeowner tax bill increased by more than 10%. In light of the 2013 shift favoring landlords over homeowners, it is not clear why now is the right time to extend that shift further. Some have suggested that lower taxes for landlords will lead to lower rent for tenants, but it is not clear whether tenants received any benefit from rental the properties that saw a tax reduction in 2013. With that said, both homeowners and landlords will have the opportunity on Monday night to present their case to the Ways and Means Committee, where I will pay close attention. If you wish the entire City Council to consider your perspective, please make every effort to attend the hearing and testify. Upon the conclusion of the public hearing, the Ways and Means Committee will discuss the ordinance and take a vote.

Last Thursday (June 12) I held a community meeting to discuss a proposal to change the configuration of River Road.¹ Around 50 people attended to consider a proposal by local residents to develop the area more in the style of a park. As part of their plan, River Road would be converted to a 1-way street, with a dedicated parking lane and a separate (2-way) bike path. Residents who opposed the plan questioned the impact on traffic from Richmond Square and Pitman Street, especially during peak traffic periods. The Providence Police Department described how the proposal can reduce of criminal and illicit activity, along with other prevention such as better lighting and clearing of the underbrush in the park trails. The City Traffic Engineer agreed to research the potential traffic issues. I will provide an update when that information has been compiled.

The Democratic Party is organized into committees in each Ward with eleven members. The Ward 2 Committee, chaired by Howard Schulman, has been a valuable resource. During my term in office, I have met with the Committee on a quarterly basis to discuss City and neighborhood issues. (The committee's only official duty is to endorse City candidates for office every four years.) Due to redistricting, there will be at least three vacancies on this Committee. Ward 2 residents are eligible to serve in this volunteer position, and if you are interested, please [send me an email](#). Candidates are required to submit a petition with the Board of Canvassers in City Hall during June 23-25. I am very grateful for the service performed by the current Ward Committee and I encourage other Ward 2 residents to step forward to perform this important public service.

¹ I selected this date a month ago, announced it in my [May 15 letter](#), and listed it in the City Council calendar at that time. Despite this, earlier last week, the City Council scheduled a special meeting for Thursday night on the hotel worker minimum wage issue, creating a scheduling conflict for me. Because our neighborhood had been planning to attend the River Road meeting for four weeks, I decided not to reschedule it, even though I missed the special City Council meeting as a result.

Sincerely,

Samuel D. Jones