



July 30, 2017

Dear Fellow East Siders:

Many of you residing within the rectangle bounded by President, Arlington, University and Cole Avenues were surprised by the unannounced arrival of road construction equipment, in some cases potentially blocking people in their driveways. In the weeks that have followed, the repaving work has proceeded at a less than expeditious pace, causing inconvenience and a heightened risk of damage to cars using the unfinished roads. I asked the City Council office to research these disruptions, and ultimately learned they are symptoms of a broader City-wide problem I hope to address when the City Council returns to work in September.

More specifically, National Grid is repaving roads that it cut into last year for utility work, replacing temporary patches with broader paving. Under an agreement reached with the City and approved by the State's Public Utilities Commission, the size of the repaving patch is determined by the size of the previous cut. In this neighborhood, the cuts were typically around 3 feet wide, and the replacement patches are approximately 1/3 of the width of the street.

In theory, the utilities should obey the agreement, the City should monitor compliance, and issues with compliance should be resolved before the Public Utilities Commission. In practice, the utilities' performance has often been deficient, and the City has not monitored the deficiencies closely, resulting in many failed utility patches on the City's roads. In recent years, the City has become more vigilant, and this year's budget includes an additional engineer in the Public Works Department assigned to this task.

With that said, the utilities (in this case National Grid) have not coordinated their work with the Public Works Department, and did not notify them, the City Council or the affected residents about this year's work, which is currently taking place in several neighborhoods across the City. When the City Council office contacted National Grid about their failure to notify the residents in our neighborhood, they responded by saying that this year's project was the continuation of a multi-year project that began last year, they provided everyone enough notice at that time, and they will finish this year's work soon.

Needless to say, this non-response is unacceptable, and I will ask the City Council's Public Works Committee to hold hearings this fall at which utility company representatives will be invited to come in, explain their policies, and (hopefully) work to improve them.

On a different note, please mark your calendars for **Wednesday, September 13 at 6:30 p.m. at the Hope High School Cafeteria**. At that time, the Planning Department will answer your questions concerning the proposed bicycle lane on Olney Street between Hope and North Main Streets. Because the meeting will take place after the Ward 3 election, I will invite the newly elected Council representative to join me as a co-host.

Enjoy the rest of your summer!

Sincerely,