

October 21, 2018

Dear Fellow East Siders:

Having spent some quality time on the East Bay Bike path and with the leaves in my back yard, I am now pleased to share with you news about ways to involve parents in School Department decisions, the Hope Point Tower and the school bus contract.

Last week, thankfully, the school bus strike ended after eleven days, resolving one of two major stresses that have affected our children's education this year in the Providence Public Schools. During that time, parents circulated a petition expressing concern about both the strike and the impact of the Providence Teachers Union's "work to rule" policy on their children's education. It is clear that parents believe that the adults are making decisions (or failing to make decisions) that are harming the education of their children, and they want for this to change. On **Monday evening, October 22 at 5:30 p.m. at the Providence Career and Technical Academy auditorium**, Councilwoman LaFortune and I will co-host a public forum with invited guests Superintendent Maher and representatives from the Providence Teachers Union, the Mayor's office and the Providence School Board. Each of the panelists will talk briefly about lessons learned from the school bus strike and the impacts of "work to rule." We will then invite you to ask questions of the panel. We also will encourage everyone to sign an address list which may help begin an organization. Everyone is welcome, especially parents, so please come if you can.

While our meeting is taking place, the Ordinance Committee will hold a public hearing at City Hall to hear, for a second time, public comment regarding the zoning change requested by developer Jason Fane to build the Hope Point Tower. After the last hearing, I decided to vote against the project for reasons I explained in my [July 22 letter](#). The City Council voted to hold a second hearing because Mr. Fane complained he had not been invited to the first one. Given that the hearing was open to the public and other developers in Mr. Fane's position have, in the past, attended these hearings and spoken without the need for a formal invitation, the justification for a second public hearing was at best tenuous. I suspect that there will be substantial overlap between the content of the two hearings. With that said, in the unlikely event that the second hearing produces substantial relevant new information beyond what we learned before, I will give it fair consideration.

On **Wednesday, October 24 at 5:30 p.m.**, the School Department Oversight Committee will consider whether to recommend approval of two consecutive one-year extensions of the current school bus contract with First Student. (The contract expired last school year; therefore, the first extension would run retroactively to the start of the current school year.) As part of its review, the Committee will investigate the recent strike, including such questions as how the "force majeure" clause excusing First Student from responsibility for a strike was negotiated into the contract, what understandings the administration reached with First Student and/or the Teamsters Union to facilitate the resolution of the strike, what assurances exist to prevent another strike from happening, and other related topics. As these questions imply, the recent experience reduces my confidence in First Student and increases my perception of the value of a more competitive bidding process in the award of this contract.

Sincerely,

