



December 18, 2016

Dear Fellow East Siders:

I hope you survived yesterday's early introduction to winter. This week's letter discusses a neighborhood meeting on the Fire Department and infrastructure, and the Fields Point LNG facility.

On Wednesday night, December 21 at 6:00 p.m. at the Nathan Bishop Middle School Cafeteria, we will have a neighborhood meeting with Stephen Pare, the Commissioner of Public Safety, Nicole Pollock, the Chief of Staff and Robin Muksian, the Director of Administration. They will discuss a proposal to remove from service Engines 4 and 5 of the Fire Department as part of a staffing reduction plan that is part of a tentative agreement between the administration and Local 799 of the Fire Fighters Union. Engine 4 is stationed at Rochambeau Avenue, while Engine 5 is stationed at Humboldt Avenue. According to a [Draft Report](#) prepared by a consultant, it is possible to reduce staffing by two engines and two ladder trucks (for a total reduction of 12 staff per shift) while maintaining appropriate fire safety standards. (In addition to proposing the decommissioning of two engines, the tentative agreement proposes a reduction of one ladder truck, but not two, thus missing out on \$1.5 million in annual savings.). Commissioner Pare will hear your comments and answer your questions about this proposal. In addition, Chief of Staff Pollock and Director Muksian will discuss the City's infrastructure needs. As you may recall, 86% of City voters approved a \$40 million infrastructure bond on Election Day; however, the City Council so-called "leadership" voted to block the proposal because it did not meet their condition of giving individual City Council members discretionary control over the disbursement of the funds allocated to the ward they represent. (These Council members refer to those funds as "their funds" directed towards "their neighborhoods.") Ms. Pollock and Ms. Muksian will describe the City's infrastructure needs and alternative ways to address them. The discussion will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Last Tuesday, around 75 interested citizens attended a public hearing of the Ordinance Committee to describe their concerns to the Ordinance Committee about the proposed LNG facility at Fields Point. The hearing was propitiously timed, taking place in a week in which a wind farm opened off Block Island, and the speakers raised these and other important considerations. The Ordinance Committee previously refused to schedule a hearing but many of you stepped forward to sign petitions that triggered a required hearing under the City's Home Rule Charter. The City Council President tried to block even this hearing through a restrictive legal interpretation of the Charter, but the City Solicitor rejected his interpretation. This hearing was a victory for the public against the people in power in the City Council, who misuse their control over the committee process to bury legislation they do not like. Now that the Ordinance Committee has reluctantly heard from the public, I will press them to do their job and vote the legislation out of the committee, so that the rest of us on the City Council can cast our vote on this important issue.

Sincerely,