



February 28, 2016

Dear Fellow East Siders:

As the month of February heads towards its conclusion, this week's Ward Letter discusses community meetings concerning Water Department projects and the 6-10 Connector, and long-term budget planning.

During this year's construction season (April-November), Providence Water plans to replace water main pipes in a rectangular area bounded by President and Humboldt Avenues to the north and south, and Blackstone Boulevard and Arlington Avenue to the east and west. Providence Water has provided a [Fact Sheet](#) and [Map](#) describing the work. Also, Providence Water staff will conduct a **Community Meeting** on **Wednesday, March 2 at 6:30 p.m. at Nathan Bishop Middle School** to discuss the project and answer questions. Recent events in Flint, Michigan are a reminder of the importance of maintaining a quality public water system. The community meeting will provide residents with an opportunity to learn about the impacts of the program and engage in a discussion about how to manage the construction process in the manner most convenient to local residents.

With the passage of the Rhode Works program, the State has the opportunity to rethink the role of the 6-10 Connector, a set of highways that facilitates transportation and commerce but which has divided neighborhoods in the City's West End. With that in mind, the City's Planning Department is sponsoring a public meeting to discuss the future of that highway, in a discussion facilitated by outside planning experts. The meeting will take place on **Wednesday, March 23 at 6:00-8:00 p.m. at the Planning Department (444 Westminster Street)**. The Department has published a [Flyer](#) that provides more information about the meeting and the guest speakers.

This past Thursday night, the Finance Committee reviewed the 5-year budget the City submitted to the State at the end of last year. Based on the assumptions it contains (marginal growth of the tax base, no increases in salaries or State aid beyond currently known commitments), the budget projections anticipate deficits of \$4.5 million to \$33.5 million in the municipal budget, and \$12 million to \$15 million in the school budget. This compares with anticipated deficits of between \$11 million and \$19 million in a [Report](#) prepared last March by PFM Consultants. The City has engaged another consultant to prepare a 10-year budget to shape the City's budget for next fiscal year, which likely will be submitted sometime in April. It is well known that projections of this kind are difficult to make with precision, especially for the "out years" in the distant future; however, the divergences between the March report and December budget are significant, even for next year. With that said, the Finance Committee offered several suggestions about ways to improve these projections, and I am hopeful the administration will make good use of them when presenting the 10-year model in the coming months.

Sincerely,