



April 12, 2015

Dear Fellow East Siders:

According to the City Charter's timetable, we expect the Mayor to submit a budget to the City Council within the next three weeks. Aside from a clear promise not to raise taxes, the Mayor has not stated what his budget will contain. With that in mind, I introduced three resolutions for next Thursday's City Council meeting to discuss sensible proposals to move the City forward in the forthcoming budget.

The first resolution relates to the penalty the City charges for taxpayers whose payments are late. Each year, this penalty is codified as part of the tax levy ordinance the administration prepares, and in recent years the language has been as follows:

If the first installment or any succeeding installment of taxes is not paid by the last day of the respective installment period or periods as they occur, then the whole tax or remaining unpaid balance of the tax, as the case may be, shall immediately become due and payable and shall carry until collected a penalty at the rate of twelve percent (12%) per annum on said real estate, personal estate and excise taxes.

For example, if a taxpayer misses a first quarter payment by a day or more, then the entire tax bill becomes immediately due with 12% interest charged on the entire tax bill, not just the first quarter. This can result in interest charges, as a percentage of the quarterly amount owed, that exceed the usury laws. If the taxpayer then pays the remaining installments on time (or even early), there still remains a substantial penalty to pay, based on the 12% interest charged against the entire full-year unpaid balance. Every year, hundreds of taxpayers fall into this trap. I will urge the administration to submit a levy ordinances that ends this practice.

The second resolution relates to the nine-branch Providence Community Library. The Community Library serves more than 57,000 patrons and provides a vital study and meeting place, including access to technology for the City's disadvantaged. The current City contribution is \$3.545 million, which the Providence Community Library has requested be increased by \$250,000, less than 0.04% of the City's budget. When measured as a percentage of City budget (in figures compiled by the Providence Community Library), Providence's library contribution is less than half of such peer cities as Boston, Bridgeport, Hartford and Stamford. This requested increase would allow the Community Library to extend programming and literacy to our neighborhoods.

The third resolution requests a line item of \$12,000 to \$25,000 for middle school sports in the School Department budget. As presented to the City Council's Education Committee, the current program serves between 600 and 700 of the District's approximately 5,300 middle school children, but the funding has to be assembled each year from a variety of sources. This uncertainty compromises the ability to maintain a viable program that could, for example, recruit volunteer college students to assist in building sports skills. While the program's leaders and volunteers deserve praise for doing so much with so little, the School Department has consistently declined to include even the most modest amounts in its budget as a permanent line item, thereby compromising the program's existence.

While the Mayor will no doubt use the budget to introduce new initiatives, I hope he first addresses these fundamental priorities, and I will urge my colleagues on the City Council to lend their support as well.

Sincerely,