



April 16, 2017

Dear Fellow East Siders:

I hope you are enjoying this weekend of beautiful weather and spiritual meaning. This week's letter discusses the upcoming community meeting, the reduced work product of this term's City Council and the continuing controversies surrounding the Council's top leadership.

On **April 24, 2017 at the Hope High School Cafeteria from 6:30 to 8:30**, I will hold a community meeting to discuss the proposed suboxone office at Lloyd and Thayer and the infrastructure bond. **The speaking portion will begin at 7:00 p.m.** The expected speakers include Jeffrey Lykins, head of the Bureau of Inspection and Standards, Megan DiSanto from the Law Department and Kevin Savage from the Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Health. We are waiting to hear back from the developer's attorney, and we expect another speaker to discuss the City's proposed infrastructure bond.

Now that we are more than halfway through the current term, there is enough experience to measure the work product of the current term of the City Council. While last term's Council produced an extensive legislative record (fiscal reforms, redistricting, City charter revisions, pension reform, night club regulation, etc.) three examples illustrate how the current Council is best known for blocking legislation and progress rather than achieving it. Last term, contractors repaved the City's streets following voter approval of a \$40 million road repair bond. After more than 85% of the City voters approved a \$40 million infrastructure bond last November, however, the City Council leadership prevented the bond from being implemented. Due to rising interest rates, this obstruction already has cost the citizens of Providence more than \$2.4 million of available financing. A second example is the different way this City Council "reviews" proposed state legislation. Last term, members introduced resolutions to support particular items of state legislation, and the Council voted on them at the same meeting they were introduced. This term, the new leadership created a Committee on State Legislative Affairs to which it refers these resolutions for "review." That Committee canceled both of the meetings it scheduled last year, and it has canceled all three meetings it scheduled this year, effectively burying all the resolutions without a vote. In the meantime, the City Council approved hiring a \$25,000 lobbyist even though the Committee has not identified any bills for him to lobby on. Instead, [WPRI reported last week](#) that the City Council President is using the lobbyist to slow down the Mayor's water supply proposal without asking the City Council's input. In other words, the Committee on State Legislative Affairs has effectively buried the ability of the City Council to debate state legislation, while \$25,000 is being spent on a lobbyist who consults only with the City Council President. Finally, last week, the City Council President devoted time and energy to scheduling two special meetings devoted to the single purpose of intervening in the review by the Board of Canvassers of Councilman Jackson's recall election, an effort termed a [sleazy political stunt](#) by the Providence Journal editorial page.

The City Council's emphasis on obstruction rather than accomplishment provides context for understanding the significance of last week's [report](#) that a grand jury subpoenaed the Council President's payroll records, a development the Mayor termed "deeply, deeply troubling." In the report, the Council President responded that "[w]e're moving forward, we're working hard, changes are being made every day . . . Council is pushing forward efforts to move the city in the right direction." In fact, the current City Council's record on the infrastructure bond and review of State legislation represent obstruction rather than forward progress, and the failed special meetings were an unsuccessful attempt to drag the City in the wrong direction, namely back to the days of Plunderdome.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Samuel D. Zurier'.