

May 25, 2014

Dear Fellow East Siders:

I hope you are enjoying your Memorial Day weekend. This week's letter discusses a proposal to enact a \$15 minimum wage for hotel employees, and Wednesday's meeting on crime watch programs.

On May 1, the City Council received a petition (signed by 1,000 residents) to enact a \$15 minimum wage ordinance for hotel employees. Pursuant to the Home Rule Charter, the City Council has 70 days (or until July 10) to act on this ordinance. If the City Council does not enact the ordinance as proposed, the petitioners can collect additional signatures to place the measure on the ballot for the voters to decide. The Ordinance Committee assigned this matter to a public hearing on **Tuesday, May 27 at 6:00 p.m.**, and to a committee hearing on **Thursday, May 29 at 6:30 p.m.**

The legislation's sponsors recommend the ordinance as a way to bring a living wage to a group of hard-working and deserving people with only a minimal economic impact (estimated at an increase in the hotel rate of \$2-\$3). The opponents argue the ordinance's impacts will be more substantial, resulting in layoffs. I have an open mind on this issue, and I will attend the hearing looking for answers to several questions, including the following: (1) What is the current wage scale at Providence hotels, including those that have unions?; (2) What is a living wage for Providence?; (3) What are the costs/benefits of (a) a minimum wage at the municipal (rather than state or national) level, and (b) an industry-specific minimum wage?; (4) What ramifications would the ordinance have for other hotel employees, such as those employed in a hotel restaurant or gift shop, and what would be the full impact on room rates and hotel operations? These are complicated questions, and it is not clear that we can learn all of the answers within the next week. As a result, it may be prudent to hold further hearings, consistent with the 70-day clock specified in the voter initiative procedure.

On Wednesday night, I joined a group of around 40 residents for a panel discussion on crime watch programs. The panelists included Jay Tavares and Monica Anderson from the West Broadway and Summit neighborhoods, who discussed how their neighbors work together to report suspicious activity to the police, and monthly follow-up meetings with the police to review specific cases and arrests. The police officers on the panel described the value of "real time" tips, and neighborhood education on crime prevention, which has been correlated with a reduction in the crime rate in the West Broadway neighborhood. (Summit has seen improvements on an anecdotal basis.) The citizen leaders also described how crime watches improve a neighborhood's sense of social connection and overall quality of life. A College Hill resident described how she successfully organized a block-wide crime watch with her neighbors to start on this path. We heard from Katusck Perez of the Mayor's Constituent Services Office, which provides technical assistance to help establish and maintain neighborhood crime watches across the City. If you wish to learn more about starting a crime watch group or about crime prevention tips, please click on this link: [Crime Watch Resources and Crime Prevention Tips](#). While the issue of crime is a complex one, as discussed in my [April 29, 2014 Ward Letter](#), I believe that crime watches can provide us with a useful tool to work cooperatively with the police to reduce crime in our neighborhood.

Sincerely,

