



July 1, 2018

Dear Fellow East Siders:

I hope you are making fun plans for the Fourth of July. This week's letter discusses a discussion concerning short-term rentals, regulation of student housing and final passage of the City budget.

Last Monday night, Councilwoman LaFortune and I hosted a discussion concerning the regulation of Airbnb and the growth of short-term rentals of homes. Our review began when some residents of Belair Avenue began calling the police regularly as their quality of life and public safety were damaged by the activities of strangers occupying a neighbor's house that became a de facto hotel. At Monday night's meeting, other residents also shared Airbnb horror stories. Other participants described their experience as conscientious Airbnb operators who meet nice people, supplement their income and provide new travel and temporary residence options to visitors. Both sides of Monday's discussion were firmly committed to their position, with impacted neighbors asking the City to force disruptive Airbnb operators to leave, and Airbnb operators urging neighbors to be more vigilant and/or get used to living in a city. I concluded that the City's role should be to use regulation to encourage the advantages of short-term rentals while minimizing or eliminating the negative impacts. The Planning Department is looking at this issue also, and Boston's recently enacted regulatory program (including a licensing program) may provide a good place to start.

On June 27, the City Council conducted a public hearing on the student housing ordinance, which was well-attended by concerned College Hill residents. As noted last week, the City Plan Commission voted to support the ordinance for passage at this time, while also committing to study the broader issues it raises, as the incremental change the ordinance proposes will not address the major underlying issues. Unfortunately, the Ordinance Committee appeared to misunderstand the report from the City Plan Commission, and decided to place the ordinance on hold until after the City Plan Commission completed its supplemental study. In light of this apparent misunderstanding, the Planning Department sent a [Letter](#) to the Ordinance Committee clarifying the issue and asking them to reconsider their vote.

On Friday night, the City Council passed the City budget for a second time after reaching an understanding with the administration regarding the disposition of unspent balances in neighborhood infrastructure fund accounts. The municipal budget is now set, but there will be changes to the School Department budget. On Wednesday night, the School Board approved a supplemental budget that incorporates additional State aid that was released after the original budget was submitted. The School Department Oversight Committee will review that budget promptly and forward it to the City Council for approval prior to the August recess to ensure that the funds will be available to support our children when they return to school in September. While this year's budget achieves the basic election year goals of maintaining current programs without a tax increase, I remain concerned about the ever-growing pension obligation, and I will continue to use my remaining time in office to generate discussion and hopefully action on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

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