



July 2, 2017

Dear Fellow East Siders:

I hope you are looking forward to a festive Independence Day, which celebrates our government's democratic institutions. While the Providence City Council is not exactly the Continental Congress of 1776, I am pleased to share this week's news, which relates to open government and better democracy in our City.

Last Tuesday night (June 27), 15 members of the public came to urge the City Council's Finance Committee to approve resolutions I introduced to post the campaign finance statements and Ethics Commission disclosures of City Council members on the organization's website. As each speaker emphasized, the cloud of scandal over City Hall makes these common sense initiatives more compelling than ever. There were no speakers in opposition. It will now be up to the Finance Committee Chair (John Iglizzo), who refused to hold a hearing on these matters over the past year, to schedule a hearing at which to vote on the resolutions. Tuesday's public hearing occurred because 102 taxpayers signed a petition, which triggered a requirement under Section 411 of the City Charter. Under the same section, the Clerk was required to advertise the hearing in the newspaper, which cost the City \$500, or enough to provide art supplies for two kindergarten class. Had Councilman Iglizzo wanted, he could have scheduled the hearing on his own without the cost of advertising, but ironically the Chair's reluctance to review this legislation has caused that Committee to waste the taxpayers' money in this way. This is not the first such waste of money, as a similar hearing on an ordinance to suspend indicted City Council officers from their leadership positions was also buried in the Finance Committee, until a public hearing at taxpayer initiative took place on May 29. If you would like to urge Councilman Iglizzo to schedule a vote on Tuesday's resolutions, please send him an email at ward7@providenceri.com with a copy to me at sam@samzurier.com.

The Finance Committee has a long history of being the graveyard of reform. With that in mind, I introduced [legislation](#) last month to create a six-month window for committees to review ordinances and resolutions, and for the bills to be discharged to the City Council should the committee fail to act within that time. Six months is plenty of time for a committee to do its job, but unfortunately, the Rules Committee (led by the Finance Committee Chair) rejected this proposal, saying committees are working just fine right now. Thanks to the initiatives of taxpayers in our neighborhood and others, we have petitions for other important legislation (such as pension spiking) that remains stalled in the Finance Committee, and if it requires more hearings (and unfortunately, more advertising expense) the public will have a chance to share their views with the Finance Committee notwithstanding the resistance of that Committee's Chair.

While the Finance Committee's waste of taxpayer money in \$500 increments is unfortunate, those amounts pale next to the millions of dollars it (and the City Council majority) have wasted by blocking the issuance of an infrastructure bond after the voters approved it in November. Since that time, interest rates have increased by approximately half a percent, which translates into roughly \$2 million less of repairs and renovations today, when compared with what the same payment schedule could have supported in November. With that mind, I have introduced a [Resolution](#) for Thursday's City Council meeting calling for a City Council vote on the infrastructure bond at that meeting, rather than waiting any longer for the measure to be acted upon by the Finance Committee.

Sincerely,