

September 16, 2018

Dear Fellow East Siders:

On Tuesday night, I will join members of the Jewish community in observing Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. As part of my observance, I would like to ask you to forgive me for the wrongs I have committed against you during the past year. I wish everyone else observing the holiday an easy fast and a fulfilling experience. Returning to the municipal level, this letter will discuss the results of Wednesday's primary on the City Council for the coming term.

The mayoral side of the City's primaries points to continuity, as Mayor Elorza won the Democratic Party nomination for re-election. Any contested election brings uncertainty, but he is favored to return to office in November.

The City Council has 15 seats, and the entire City Council for the past two terms has been filled with Democratic Party members. As a result, the winners of last week's primary (along with those other Democrats who did not have a primary opponent) are the presumptive members of next term's City Council. From this perspective, next year's presumptive City Council will have four new members, from Wards 2, 8, 12 and 13.

In Ward 2, we nominated Helen Anthony to represent us next term. Attending candidate forums and speaking with our neighbors during the campaign, I was impressed (though not surprised) by our high level of discussion, our knowledge of critical issues and the attention we paid to this campaign. I am optimistic that presumptive Councilwoman-elect Anthony will do an excellent job. I will be pleased to provide her with all the help I can over the coming months to ensure a smooth transition.

In Ward 8 (Reservoir Triangle neighborhood), my colleague Wilbur Jennings was defeated in his campaign for a third term. In my opinion, Councilman Jennings was one of the unsung heroes of the City Council over the past two terms. During the 2011-14 term, the City Council addressed several of the City's critical problems ("fiscal hurricane," pension reform, economic development, etc.) that were enacted by a divided (and sometimes closely divided) City Council with his support, while in the current term, Councilman Jennings has stood up against many of the abuses of the leadership team elected to begin the term. As you may remember, this term began with the election of a Council President (Councilman Aponte) and Majority Leader (Councilman Jackson) who had lengthy records of campaign finance violations, and who were indicted during the term for felony crimes, leading each to resign his leadership position in disgrace. Throughout these events, the members of the Aponte/Jackson faction continuously courted Councilman Jennings to join their side, one time coming to his house with bottle of wine as an inducement. Councilman Jennings stood tall, supporting policies that benefitted his neighborhood and the City as a whole, rather than supporting the tactics other Council members pursued to extract an advantage for their particular ward (or wards) at the expense of the rest of the City. Thanks to his vision and principles, the City is much better off.

More generally, now that we know who the likely City Council members are, my colleagues will be caucusing among themselves to form a leadership team of eight or more Council members who will vote as a block to fill the key leadership positions (President, Majority Leader and committee chairs). I believe that many of the failures of this City Council term (such as the "zombie bond," which was approved by 85% of the City's voters, only to be blocked by the City Council "leadership" in a failed attempt to create multimillion dollar accounts for individual members to control) can be traced directly to the City Council's poor judgment in electing the Aponte/Jackson team. More generally, this leadership team clashed frequently with the Mayor, and will be remembered more for preventing the City's progress than for allowing it, never mind advancing it. We have seen some progress since Councilman Salvatore won election as City Council President late last year, but those results have been limited by the committee structure and other remnants of the Aponte/Jackson team.

It is my hope that we will not see a repeat of last term's faction-driven group that put their individual careers and their individual wards' interests above the well-being of the City as a whole. While my status as a "lame duck" limits my effectiveness, I will contribute wherever I can to promoting a better City Council leadership team for the next term.

Sincerely,

