

September 8, 2018

Dear Fellow East Siders:

September brings a new school year and the chance for a fresh start. Sadly, this past Wednesday saw the untimely death of William Parsons, a beloved Central High School student who was the innocent victim of a shooting outside his school. Our thoughts and prayers go out to William's family and the school communities living through this tragedy. While the other news from the City pales in comparison, this week's letter will discuss the City Council's votes last Thursday on the Hope Point Tower and ethics reform legislation.

After the extensive public hearing and the Ordinance Committee vote to recommend denial of the Hope Point Tower zoning change, I assumed that there was a sufficient record on which the City Council could vote on the proposal. I was mistaken. The City Council took a voice vote to return the measure to committee, apparently because leadership believed this was the only option on which there was a consensus. I voted against the motion and asked that my vote be recorded, as I do not see the point in further review of a project that has been vetted this extensively. Under the City procedures, the Ordinance Committee must schedule another public hearing if it wishes to consider amendments to the current proposal.

Even more disappointing was the City Council's roll call vote to disapprove legislation that would disqualify members with felony indictments from serving in top City Council leadership positions, and suspending them from remaining in those positions if they are indicted during their term of office. I first introduced this ordinance in 2016 after Kevin Jackson resigned from his position as Majority Leader after his embezzlement indictment, and pressed again for its passage after Luis Aponte resigned in disgrace from his position as City Council President following his felony arraignment in May, 2017. At first, Mr. Aponte claimed he could not resign because his lawyer advised him it would be an admission of guilt. This was legally untrue and probably factually untrue as well, but it demonstrated how Mr. Aponte viewed his elected position as personal property rather than as a public trust. After a chaotic week, he finally resigned, claiming he was acting selflessly for the good of the City. It therefore was surprising when, in last Thursday's debate, Mr. Aponte returned to his pre-resignation talking points, arguing that officer positions were the personal property of the office holder, and should not be taken away merely because of the triviality of a felony indictment. I was even more disappointed by the majority of City Council members, most of whom made the original mistake in 2015 of electing these two people to the top leadership position despite five-figure unpaid fines, ethics violations and false campaign finance statements. These Council members compounded their poor judgment on Thursday by failing to approve an ordinance that could prevent this type of harm from reoccurring. In a television show earlier this term, two of the Council members who voted against ethics reform on Thursday (John Igliazzi and Jo-Ann Ryan) stated their interest in someday becoming Mayor of Providence. I ask you to remember their votes against ethics reform should either of them (or any of their colleagues) ever ask for our vote for any public office in the future.

Please find the time to vote on Wednesday, September 12. In addition to nominating party candidates for the November election, the Democratic primary will select an unopposed candidate to succeed me on the City Council, and the presumptive next State Representative in District 4 to succeed Aaron Regunberg. Polling stations will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. To find out the location of your polling station, click [here](#).

Sincerely,

*Samuel D. Zurier*

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