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February 25, 2013

City of Providence, Rhode Island

Mr. William Bombard, P.E.
Acting Director, Department of Public Works
700 Allens Avenue
Providence, R.I. 02905

Dear Mr. Bombard:

Over the past few weeks, my constituents have shared with me several ideas and concerns regarding the City's response to the Blizzard of 2013. I wish to share them with you in this letter, with the goal of starting a dialogue to review and improve the City's capabilities moving forward.

- The City's inventory of heavy snow removal equipment did not appear adequate for the storm. Some smaller trucks and plows were not effective; for example, on streets with hills. Also, some plow operators lifted their plows instead of using them, which was upsetting to residents who observed this practice.
- The telephone hotline was not adequately staffed, causing some constituents to try for hours without getting through.
- The City should designate an area where cars with overnight parking permits can relocate during a snow emergency.
- The City should consider pre-treating streets more extensively, perhaps using the "brine" formula of salt solution that the State used on its highways.
- If a heavy snowfall is expected and the equipment cannot handle it, perhaps the City can make extra plowing runs while the snow is still falling.
- The City's policy should be to plow "curb to curb" as a standard procedure. In the recent snow on some streets, the plows only cleared a single lane, creating difficulties for residents to access that lane from their driveways.
- The City should enforce more vigorously the ordinance requiring residents to shovel their sidewalks. Also, the City should have a clear plan to shovel its own sidewalks in compliance with the ordinance.

I have asked Councilman Hassett, Chair of the Public Works Committee, to hold a meeting to address these issues. At that time, I would appreciate your addressing these comments and suggestions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,