



My Ward Report for April 20, 2019

Dear Fellow East Siders:

I hope you are all enjoying the spring weather (wet thought it may be), and that those of you who observe Easter or Passover this weekend have an enjoyable celebration. In this edition of my Ward Report, I discuss property revaluations, provide an update on the water supply/pension issue, and provide information on resolving City complaints.

REVALUATIONS

As some of you may recall, over the past year the City has conducted a full revaluation of each property in the City in order to comply with a state law that mandates a full valuation once every nine years.

Many of you may have recently received notices from the City of Providence Tax Assessor's Office regarding the results of the City's revaluation analysis that provide you with the amount of your property's proposed revaluation. Although the value of residential property in Ward 2 has risen by an average of eighteen percent as the result of the most recent revaluation, we fared better than many other wards where average percentage increases have been significantly greater; for example, Ward 6 (Mount Pleasant) saw an average property value increase of 52 percent. Meanwhile, commercial property values have remained stagnant.

It is all but certain that the city tax rate will drop for the upcoming fiscal year (2019-2020), but it would be premature to predict exactly how your annual property taxes will be affected for the following reasons. Under state law, the City's total tax levy increase may not exceed 4 percent unless the City Council votes to override the 4 percent cap. Because Ward 2's valuation's did not increase as much as valuations elsewhere in the City, if the 4 percent cap stays in place, our Ward will bear somewhat less of the City's total tax burden in the coming fiscal year than the Ward has in past years. I expect that my Council colleagues who represent neighborhoods in which the percentage growth in residential property values has been the greatest will be under some pressure from their constituents to minimize tax increases in their wards, even if this position adversely affects Ward 2's proportionate tax burden.

I plan to support full compliance with the existing state law 4 percent cap on the application of the new tax rate to the new values, and will do my best to see that there is no disproportionate increase in Ward 2's tax burden. The Mayor will be submitting his

budget to the City Council on May 1. In the event of full compliance with the state's 4 percent cap, it is likely that the tax bill for most properties in Ward 2 will either decrease or increase only modestly.

The City contracted with a company called Vision Government Solutions (VSG) to perform the revaluations. Make sure to review your new assessment and parcel data on the VSG website: www.vgsi.com. Please remember that if you wish to contest your revaluation with a representative of VSG, you must schedule an appointment with them by Friday, April 29th. The specific information you need to schedule the appointment is contained in the letter you should have received from the Tax Assessor concerning your individual property revaluation.

If you are going to contest the valuation, make sure to search values of comparable properties and bring that data to your meeting. If you are not able to schedule a meeting with VSG, or if, after having such a meeting, your proposed assessment remains unchanged, you can appeal your assessment. To do so, you must file a written appeal with the Tax Assessor's Office within 90 days of the issuance of the first tax bill, which is due in July 2019.

Here is a list of frequently answered questions about the valuation and appeal process, <http://www.providenceri.gov/tax-assessor/revaluation-questions-answers/>. You'll also find on that web page information about appeals (the tab marked "appeals" is at the bottom of the page).

Update on Monetization of the Providence Water Supply

Mayor Elorza and his staff hosted three community meetings regarding the \$1 billion unfunded pension liability and the proposal to partially fund the liability by monetizing the Providence water supply. The last of the community meetings was hosted by me and Councilwoman LaFortune at Nathan Bishop Middle School on March 25th. Shortly after that meeting, on April 4th, the Mayor announced his decision to abandon his plan to monetize the City's water supply to pay off its pension liabilities, and he withdrew the legislative proposal that was pending in the General Assembly.

The city's financial future is dire and the unfunded pension liability, if not addressed, will eventually result in bankruptcy. We cannot simultaneously afford to make the required annual contributions to the pension plan, which will increase over the next ten years to \$114,500,000, and still maintain the City's financial viability. The Mayor has committed to further study this matter and I intend to make this a priority over my term as a member of the City Council.

COMPLAINTS

Many of you have asked me to follow up on various complaints regarding potholes, trash, noise, and other issues. I'm happy to follow up on your requests, but I'd like you to first submit your complaint to the City through PVD 311. The City's 311 system keeps a record of the status of all complaints and it will be easier for me to reference the matter if it's already in the system. I will also be able to request the history on recurring problems, which can help give me more ammunition for resolving them. Hopefully at least some of you have noticed that pothole repair requests reported through the 311 system are completed fairly promptly; DPW is trying to fill potholes reported via the 311 system within 24 hours (not including weekends).

There are several ways to submit your complaint to the Providence 311 system.

- (1) You can download the Providence 311 app to your smart phone. You can find the app by searching for "PVD311 app" on Google Play or iTunes. The app is easy to use and you can upload a photograph of the problem and send it directly to the City. Make sure to create an account on the app so you can track the status of your complaint.
- (2) You can call 3-1-1 (like 911 but with a 3) during regular business hours and you will be connected to the Mayor's constituent services office, where you can report the problem.
- (3) You can report the problem to the 311 system on-line at this web site:
<http://www.providenceri.gov/pvd-311/>

As always, please visit www.helenanthony.com or feel free to email me at helen@helenanthony.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Anthony". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.