HELEN ANTHONY
CITY COUNCIL ★ WARD 2

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WARD 2 LETTER
PROVIDENCE

1/10/21

Providence Redistricting Process

At the January 7, 2021 meeting, the City Council elected five people to the Committee on Ward Boundaries to lead the city's next redistricting effort. The Providence Home Rule Charter, part of the code that outlines our municipal government, states that every ten years, following the federal census, the City Council will re-examine and re-establish the boundary lines of the fifteen wards of the city. The last redistricting report was concluded in 2012, and you can review it here.

The Process

The Committee on Ward Boundaries will hold at least four public meetings with public comment at various locations throughout Providence to inform a map designating the new boundaries is submitted to the City Council for approval. The City Council will hold at least one public hearing about the plan, and final approval will require support of at least two thirds of the City Council members in attendance. The plan must be adopted by May 1, 2022.

The Committee

The members of the Committee on Ward Boundaries are: City Councilors Mary Kay Harris, Nick Narducci and Rachel Miller; and Community Members Jessica Cigna, Senior Data Analyst at Rhode Island Secretary of State; and Nick Freeman, Assistant Director of The Providence Foundation. I am confident that this Committee will execute its duties with transparency and integrity.

Reintroducing At Large Seats

Having served two years as a City Councilor, I believe the structure of the council itself is a detriment to optimal governance. Providence has a population of approximately 180,000, divided into 15 wards each consisting of 12,000 residents. The Councilor of each ward is primarily focused on the welfare of its residents, and not necessarily on the City as a whole. Trying to come to consensus on issues such as pension reform, public education, and affordable housing that require broad, coordinated city-wide vision is very difficult, and yet success in these areas is at the core of our ability to thrive as a municipality. I believe the city would benefit from fewer wards and the addition of Councilors at Large who are elected to represent the whole city. A change such as this can only occur with an amendment to the Providence Home Rule Charter.

This idea is not new. In the past it has been discussed and dismissed, but I believe we need to address it again. In January 2022 a Charter Review Commission will be constituted to review and possibly amend the Charter. I intend to raise this issue during the redistricting process in advance of the constitution of the Charter Review Commission.

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