



My Ward Report for March 23, 2019

Dear Fellow East Siders:

I'm proud and honored to represent Ward 2 on the Providence City Council. I look forward to working with you on the important issues facing our ward and city. I have a new website up and running. Please visit www.helenanthony.com or feel free to email me at helen@helenanthony.com.

This inaugural issue of my Ward Report reviews what I've been doing my first few months on the City Council. It also discusses some proposed ordinances that affect our Ward as well as some issues that have cropped up for Ward constituents. In future Ward Reports, I hope to address one or more questions that I have received from constituents and that you might benefit from having answered as well.

1. My Committee Assignments

Despite a rocky start with the leadership team, whose election I did not support, I was appointed to the Finance Committee and the Claims and Pending Suits Committee. The Finance Committee is responsible for the budget, appointments, approval of all expenditures over \$5,000, and approval of Tax Stabilization Agreements. The Claims and Pending Suits Committee is responsible for approving the payment of claims and settlement of lawsuits against the City.

Although I am not on the leadership team, I'm working hard to develop relationships with all of the Council members. I'm optimistic that I will be able to collaborate with them to solve some of the important issues facing the City and Ward 2.

2. Beresford-Nicholson Estate

As many of you are no doubt aware, a developer is interested in building a cluster of houses on the former Beresford-Nicholson Estate, which is located between Blackstone Boulevard and Slater Avenue. At the City Planning Commission's recent meeting, I joined others in testifying that the proposed subdivision is not consistent with the City of Providence's Comprehensive Plan, specifically the portions of the Plan that address historic preservation and protection of the character of the City's neighborhoods. Unfortunately, despite the vocal opposition of neighbors and other interested parties, the Commission approved the developer's preliminary plan for a ten-lot subdivision. Some of the project's opponents have hired Attorney John Mancini, who has filed an

appeal of the Commission's decision. The appeal will "stay," or temporarily halt, development until the appeal is heard and the Zoning Board of Appeals issues a decision.

3. Student Housing Ordinance

Many of you, particularly those living in the College Hill area, are perennially concerned about student "over-occupancy," that is, a situation where more students lease an apartment than the living space was meant to comfortably house. A subgroup of the City Planning Commission studied the over-occupancy issue in residential neighborhoods, a problem which affects neighborhoods in Ward 5 (Providence College area), as well as our own Ward. Many Ward 2 residents participated in the process and testified before the subcommittee. The result is a proposed ordinance that, if enacted in its current form, will limit the number of undergraduate students to 3 students per housing unit in all dwellings in R-1 and R-1A zones.

In addition to the limitation on occupancy, the proposed ordinance would also require the colleges and universities, as part of their regular Institution Master Plan submissions, to provide a statement that contains the following information designed to make our institutions of higher learning more accountable to City residents for their students' behavior:

- The number of students living off campus;
- The institution's behavioral expectations for students living off campus;
- The institution's process for explaining how it communicates City ordinances to the students;
- The institution's process for disciplining students living off campus for violations of City ordinances; and
- A procedure for contacting the institution regarding violations of City ordinances.

The proposed over-occupancy ordinance is currently waiting for action to be taken by the Ordinance Committee. I am working with Committee Chairwoman Jo-Ann Ryan, who represents Ward 5, to vet the ordinance and present it to the entire Council for a vote as soon as possible.

4. Petition to Amend Zoning Ordinance by Soltani Family Limited Partnership

As those of you living in the College Hill neighborhood may already be aware, there is interest in developing a large property located at 19 Stimson Avenue. Attorney John Garrahy, who also represents local landlord and developer Walter Bronhard, submitted a petition to amend the zoning ordinance to allow for such development. Specifically, the petition seeks to allow alterations in R-1 and R-1A zones to accommodate two or more dwelling units on a single lot, provided that the total number of dwelling units on the lot does not exceed one dwelling unit for every 5,000 square feet of lot area (within the R-1 zone) or 7,500 square feet of lot area (within the R-1A zone). In addition to

permitting development at 19 Stimson Avenue, the zoning amendment would obviously have an impact on all R-1 and R-1A zones throughout the City. The City Council referred the petition to the City Plan Commission, which in turn referred the petition for further study. I will follow the issue and advise you when I learn of further action on the matter.

5. 150 Lloyd Avenue

150 Lloyd Avenue is a large house located at the corner of Lloyd Avenue and Prospect Street that for several years has displayed a sign out front stating that a suboxone treatment center of some sort would be opening soon. I can now report that on February 8, 2019, the Lloyd Avenue property was sold for \$1.9 million to a corporation called 150 Lloyd Avenue, LLC. According to the Providence Tax Assessor's records, the corporation's address is 4 Woodland Terrace, a property in Ward 2 owned by Walter Bronhard. Permits have been pulled to renovate 150 Lloyd Avenue "as is"; this will permit doctors' offices on the first floor as well as two residential units, one on each of the second and third floors of the building. The proposed use complies with the zoning variance that was granted to the 150 Lloyd Avenue property back in 1955.

6. Jenckes Street

Last year the City Council passed an ordinance to allow only local traffic access in each direction on Jenckes Street between Congdon and Benefit Streets. The signs were installed during the fall of 2018. A number of residents have raised concerns about that change and its ripple effect on traffic patterns throughout the neighborhood. That's why, on February 25th, I convened a community meeting to discuss the traffic situation. Nate Urso, the City's Traffic Engineer, and I listened to the residents' concerns and we will be setting up a follow-up meeting in April. At the April meeting Mr. Urso and I will also arrange to have a parking official available to address the parking issues that residents raised during the February 25th meeting.

7. Monetization of the Providence Water Supply

It should be well known by this point that the City has a \$1 billion unfunded pension liability. Right now, the City is required to make a contribution of \$83 million per year to the pension fund; this is known as the "Annual Required Contribution," or "ARC." The ARC will increase by \$35 million over the next decade so that, ten years from now, the City will need to make an ARC of \$118 million. Even with all those payments, a decade from now the pension fund will be only 44% funded. Under the current formula, the City would not be 60% funded until 2034.

Last year, and again this year, the City presented a proposal to the General Assembly to monetize Providence Water, which currently provides water to approximately 60% of Rhode Island residents. The City did not propose selling the water system to a private vendor; instead, the proposal contemplates a long-term lease, preferably to a quasi-public entity such as the Narragansett Bay Commission. Such a lease arrangement

would allow the City to realize cash proceeds that could be invested directly into the pension fund. To give you an idea of how much cash could be invested into the pension fund as a result of this sort of transaction, I note that the Providence Water Supply's physical plant had a replacement value of slightly over \$400 million as of March 31, 2017 (after taking depreciation into account).

The proposal is a complicated one, raising both pros and cons for consideration. I therefore urge you to attend a community meeting regarding the status of the City's finances and the possible monetization of the water supply at Nathan Bishop Middle School, this coming Monday, March 25th at 6:00 p.m. I hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

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