

**CITY OF PROVIDENCE  
RHODE ISLAND**



**CITY COUNCIL**

**JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS**

---

**No. 5 City Council Special Meeting, Tuesday, February 9, 2016, 6:00 o'clock P.M.**

---

**PRESIDING**

**COUNCIL PRESIDENT**

**LUIS A. APONTE**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**PRESENT: COUNCIL PRESIDENT APONTE, COUNCILWOMAN CASTILLO,  
COUNCILMAN CORREIA, COUNCILWOMAN HARRIS,  
COUNCILMEN IGLIOZZI, JACKSON, JENNINGS, COUNCILWOMAN MATOS,  
COUNCILMEN NARDUCCI, PRINCIPE, COUNCILWOMAN RYAN,  
COUNCILMEN SALVATORE, YURDIN AND ZURIER – 14.**

**ABSENT: COUNCILMAN HASSETT – 1.**

**(SUBSEQUENTLY, COUNCILMAN HASSETT JOINS THE MEETING)**

**ALSO PRESENT: LORI L. HAGEN, CITY CLERK, SHERI A. PETRONIO,  
SECOND DEPUTY CITY CLERK, TINA L. MASTROIANNI, ASSISTANT CLERK  
AND JEFFREY DANA, CITY SOLICITOR**

**IN CITY COUNCIL  
FEB 18 2016**

**APPROVED:**  
  
**CLERK**

## ROLL CALL

---

### INVOCATION

The Invocation is given by **COUNCILWOMAN JO-ANN RYAN**.

"Let us bow our heads and remember that we're in the presence of the Heavenly Father. Heavenly Father, we are meeting today to conduct matters of importance to the City of Providence. Please guide our hearts and minds in the spirit of fairness, right thought and speech, impart your supreme wisdom upon our activities so that our fears may reach a successful completion. Thank you for being our source of guidance today and always. Amen."

---

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

**COUNCILMAN MICHAEL J. CORREIA** Leads the Members of the City Council in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

---

### CALL FOR SPECIAL MEETING

#### COMMUNICATION FROM

#### COUNCIL PRESIDENT LUIS A. APONTE

Request filed with the City Clerk February 4, 2016, Requesting a Special Meeting of the City Council to be Called on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2016 at 6:00 o'clock P.M., in the City Council Chamber, Third Floor, City Hall.

**COUNCIL PRESIDENT APONTE** Receives the foregoing **Communication**.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>RECEIVED</b>
----------------	-----------------

---

## **WARRANT FOR SPECIAL MEETING**

Warrant of the City Clerk to David Tassoni, City Sergeant with Return Certification that he has notified each Member of the City Council of the Special Meeting Called for the 9th day of February, 2016 at 6:00 o'clock P.M., in the City Council Chamber, Third Floor, City Hall.

**COUNCIL PRESIDENT APONTE Receives the foregoing Warrant.**

**RESULT: RECEIVED**

---

**COUNCILMAN JACKSON** Moves to Stand at Ease, Seconded by **COUNCILMAN CORREIA**.

**COUNCIL PRESIDENT APONTE** Declares the Council to Stand at Ease at 6:20 and appoints **COUNCILMAN JOHN J. IGLIOZZI, COUNCILWOMAN MARY KAY HARRIS, PRO-TEMPORE SABINA MATOS** and **COUNCILMAN NICOLAS J. NARDUCCI, JR.** to escort **HIS HONOR THE MAYOR, JORGE O. ELORZA**, to the Chamber of the City Council.

### **RECONVENTION**

---

### **STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

**PRESENTED BY**

**MAYOR JORGE O. ELORZA**



Mayor Jorge O. Elorza

2016 State of the City Address

## **LEADING THE PROVIDENCE RESURGENCE**

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Thank you. Good evening everyone; Buenas noches a todos.

Mr. President, honorable members of the City Council and fellow residents of our great City of Providence --

A little over a year ago in my inaugural address, I said we were going to build the new Providence -- a city that works for all of its residents, a city committed to innovation, and a city that provides opportunity for all.

Over the past year, we've come a long way in achieving that vision, and while there are still many challenges, I'm proud of what we have accomplished together to position Providence for a better future.

And make no mistake, Providence is beginning a resurgence.

This year will see more construction projects than the city has seen in decades. It will see our school department restructured to better meet the needs of teachers and families. It will see a City Hall that becomes known for being efficient and for responsive customer service. And this year will see us tackle our financial challenges head on with an eye toward the long-term.

Now, before we get to the future... Yesterday we laid to rest an individual whose mark on the City of Providence will never be forgotten. To the late Mayor Cianci, may he rest in peace.

He and I are among just a few individuals to have had the distinct honor to serve as your Mayor. Only someone who has been Mayor of Providence can truly understand why it is the best job in the world, and that's because Providence is the best city in the world.

Think about all that makes Providence so special. Providence is already known as one of America's great cities and we've been recognized by national and global publications. GQ calls us America's Coolest City, Architectural Digest called us "The Country's Best Small City", Travel & Leisure named us America's Favorite City, & the New York Times lists us as one of 52 places to visit in the entire world.

For a city of 180,000, we have an Ivy League University, we have the best Design school in the world and the best culinary school in the world. And, we have 5 other colleges and universities that all together educate 35,000 students in our city each year. No other city can match us in higher ed.

And when it comes to arts and culture, we hit it out of the park. Anchored by RISD, surrounded by historic architecture, and blessed with venues like as PPAC, The VETS, and Trinity Rep; Providence is pound-for-pound the very best for arts and culture! We are the city of Waterfire; we are the Creative Capital, and this year, we will have the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual PVD Arts Festival, what I believe is already the biggest and best outdoor festival in New England.

Providence offers a "quality of life" that is unmatched. Our food and restaurant scene is top notch; we have great neighborhoods, great diversity, the greatest people, and to top it all off, we have a college basketball team at the top of the rankings filling the Dunk every game they play. Providence is alive with activity.

As we look to the future, we have so much to build off of. Tonight, I will share with you how we will lead Providence's resurgence in the months and years to come. Through innovation and fiscally responsible leadership we are building a city with more jobs, better schools, and more opportunity.

And, in keeping with our legacy, we will strive to be the very best at everything that we do and we won't be satisfied until we achieve it.

Providence is turning an important corner. We were hit hard by the great recession and we have been too slow to recover. But everywhere you look, there are encouraging signs. Businesses are hiring, people are buying homes, and developers are beginning to invest and build in Providence again.

We have built a foundation for the city's resurgence, and it is already paying off. I created a business concierge position to help businesses who are thinking of investing here and we standardized incentives to help them build and grow. Working with the Building Trades, with the City Council and with the State, we will be breaking ground on new downtown hotels, on new apartments, and we will finally begin building the innovation economy on the I-195 corridor.

Because of the steps we're taking, the upcoming construction season will be the busiest that Providence has seen in decades. We currently have more than 30 major construction projects, worth almost half a billion dollars that we expect to break ground in 2016, and there's even more on the horizon. People are investing in Providence because we're heading in the right direction.

The people of Providence are ready to see cranes in the sky and workers on the job. We are ready for our resurgence and that resurgence begins now!

We're not just building buildings; we're building the economy of the future. And to do so, Providence must be forward-looking so that we're playing to our strengths and investing in industries where we have the capacity and talent to lead.

From industries like food systems and healthcare, to creative design and the blue economy, we are bringing our institutional partners together and putting a stake in the ground and saying "we are going to be best of breed" in these sectors. If you're an entrepreneur or a business leader working in these fields, Providence is the place where you want to be.

And this Providence resurgence won't be felt only in downtown, in fact, it will strengthen neighborhoods throughout the city. Vacant, abandoned and blighted properties have been hurting our communities and bringing down the quality of life in our neighborhoods for far too long.

This fall, I launched the EveryHome program which, over the next six years, will revitalize every single vacant and abandoned home in the city. We are taking abandoned and blighted homes **back from the banks and absentee landlords** and putting people to work renovating them. EveryHome is building stronger neighborhoods, increasing property values, creating more affordable homes, and creating jobs in our neighborhoods.

And working with the city council, we have created more tools to encourage investment in distressed neighborhoods throughout the city.

This is important because a recent report by the Brookings Institute found that Providence has the fourth highest level of income inequality in the US. **The widening gap between those at the top and those struggling to get by is holding the city back and preventing us from growing a strong middle class.** We all want a rising tide, but a rising tide can't just lift the yachts; it has to lift all boats.

That's why my administration is working to create jobs that increase incomes for hard-working families.

**We need more good-paying jobs** like the ones created by EveryHome where we are working closely with local, minority- and women-owned contracting companies to ensure that they are helping to rebuild our neighborhoods.

We are transforming our department of workforce development to provide training for residents who want to skill-up and qualify for new jobs. We funded a grant program for the RI Black Business Association so that it can lend to small businesses, and I have worked with community groups to create a Latino merchants association on Broad Street.

To have a resilient economy, we must invest in our workforce, small businesses and neighborhoods. And most of all, we have to investment in public education. I am a product of the Providence Public Schools and there are many other kids out there, with a whole lot of potential, who are only asking for a chance.

Students like Francois [fran-SWAH'], who I recently met when he was presented an award for a paper he had written about Dr. Martin Luther King. Francois came to Providence when he was seven. His parents were Tanzanian refugees and they came here, just like my family, in search of opportunity.

He came to school without knowing English or what to expect. He said he recalled being scared and caught in a system that did not always seem fair or on his side. But he says he found friends and started to realize that he enjoys learning.

Francois is one of the smartest, kindest and motivated young individuals that you will meet. He tells me that he wants to help people and teach them the lessons he has learned: that if you never give up, you will achieve your goals.

Francois' friends tell him that with his knack for communication and his inspiring message, he should run for Mayor. On the other hand, Francois' mother thinks he should become a doctor. While I would encourage any motivated young person to get into public service, for the next seven years, Francois, I agree with your mother.

All joking aside, we just learned that Francois will be attending Classical High School in the fall. And so let's join in congratulating him on what he has accomplished and pledge to do more to help him realize his life goals, whatever they may be.

Francois, your success inspires us all.

Every week, I visit at least one school in our district. I talk with our committed teachers from the Providence Teachers' Union, our administrators who are always hustling around, our students who are like sponges eager to learn, and our parents who will do anything to help their children. I listen to their feedback, I ask them about their hopes and concerns, and I reassure them that the status quo is not an option.

When I took office, I ordered a full review of our school department and it found that central office had not evolved to meet the needs of kids and families. I took action and overhauled the office.

We're shifting resources out of central office and we're putting them into our schools where they belong. This overhaul will bring our school department into the 21st century by giving us more capacity for data analysis and building evidence-based measures of success. It makes us more innovative and more responsive to the needs of parents and students, including a multilingual call center that's been such a need in our district.

These are big changes and they would not be possible without our school board, clerical workers, Superintendent Maher, and the city council. To all of our partners who put the education of our students first, I say thank you!

I want our district to be on the cutting edge. We are piloting mastery-based learning so that students' education is personalized and they are being challenged at whatever level they are at.

We are developing full-service community schools whereby our school buildings become resiliency centers that bring our neighbors together and provide the social and emotional supports that our students and families need.

We are enhancing career and technical education to provide multiple pathways to success. And lastly, we are investing in our school buildings because every child deserves to study in a classroom that inspires them to learn. We are spending \$20M over two years on repairs and maintenance and we're developing a long-term plan to invest even more.

We are already taking many important steps but I'm going to need everyone's help to reach our goal. That's because the classroom is not the only place where we prepare students for success. Making sure our students enter school ready to learn is just as critical and we are expanding opportunities for children to grow when they are not in school.

We are quickly expanding the Providence Talks program, an innovative partnership with Bloomberg Philanthropies, which helps prepare our youngest residents for kindergarten and beyond. With new leadership and community outreach, we have enrolled more families in the past 4 months than we did in the previous 20.

We need to do this and we need to do so much more. What we need in Providence is a bold vision that will position us as a national leader in education, and we will accomplish this with a 12-month learning calendar.

Whether it's at a school building, a library, a recreation center, elsewhere in the community, or online in their home, our children should have access to learning tools at any time of year.

Research shows that low-income students are falling behind their peers because of summer learning loss. Without access to summer enrichment activities, our kids lose as much as two-to-three months' worth of learning each summer, while other kids move forward and the achievement gap grows wider.

That's why last week, joined by dozens of education leaders, I announced a Summer of Learning Campaign that will help us close the achievement gap and turn the summer from a time of learning loss to a summer of gain. We will work collaboratively, we will be bold, and we will lead the nation in year-round learning.

This spirit of innovation that we're bringing to our schools, is also in place in City Hall. People have told me that they've felt frustrated because they pay taxes but don't feel like they receive high-quality services in return.

Well, that's all changed. I created the City Innovation Office that's making us more efficient, responsive, and ensuring that your tax dollars do not go to waste.

I want to share a story with you about why our Innovation Initiative is so important. In a recent training exercise, an employee asked why she had to send letters via certified mail, when she knew they were going to abandoned properties. She explained that she had been trained to use certified mail, and no one had ever questioned it.

Well, after our law department reviewed her question, it turns out a first-class stamp was all we needed AND it turns out that other departments were doing the same thing. Because of this employee's question, we've changed our policy and we are now saving more than \$40,000 a year. I'd like to ask Monica DiDonato to please stand. On behalf of the city, I thank you and all of your colleagues in Local 1033 for your hard work and for all you do for our city.

This is the spirit of innovation, it's why we are engaging all of our employees and that's why the folks on the ground are the best equipped to find improvements. It's working and we are seeing the benefits.

I brought new leadership to the Department of Public Works, the Parks Department, and to the Center for City Services so that we can plan and execute better. This year we've had three significant snow storms, and I have received nothing but positive feedback on snow removal. To Director Knight, Superintendent Nilsson, and Director Bailon, I say thank you to you and the entire city crew for showing the city that they should expect nothing less than top notch service!

We're training every city employee on customer service, we're incorporating technology to make systems run better, we're empowering our employees to find efficiencies, and we are just hitting our stride. We are emerging as global leaders in city innovation and we were recently recognized by Bloomberg Associates as 1 of 35 cities in the entire world for our work in this area.

It used to be said that you had to "know a guy" to get things done in City Hall. The message I want everyone to hear is that now, "you all know a guy in City Hall". All you have to do is call 421-CITY.

We constantly strive to do more with less and to root out waste.

Especially in light of our fiscal challenges, we must seek out every responsible opportunity to save and we must keep a long-term perspective in mind.

Providence is one of America's greatest cities but we will only succeed when people believe in what we're doing and that means having the highest standards of ethics, transparency, and fiscal integrity.

Upon taking office, I impaneled the City's ethics commission, appointed a Municipal Integrity Officer, and ensured that all municipal board and commission members receive mandatory ethics training. We are sending a clear message that there is no tolerance for corruption or abuse of the public trust. Under this administration, we will establish ethics and transparency as a hallmark tradition in our city.

Now, our city has its share of financial challenges. But I am committed to being fiscally responsible to fix the city's finances. I refuse to rely on one time fixes and I refuse to kick the can down the road. This is critical to ensure Providence's long-term stability, and set the city up to succeed.

I inherited a structural deficit that would have reached \$85M by 2021 and I immediately took action:

- we bought our streetlights back from National Grid to save \$15M over 10 years;
- we renegotiated our contract with Roger Williams Parks Zoo to save \$9.5M over 20 years;
- we restructured the fire department in a move that will save \$5M a year;
- we expanded revenues by \$2.5M per year without raising taxes; and
- we negotiated two cost-neutral contracts with our unions for FY16.

My administration pursued and received one of the largest grants in history from the National Resource Network and they are currently working with us to develop a 10-year fiscal plan. This will allow us to make important investments and help us ask 'Where do we want to be tomorrow?' and not just 'How do we get through today?'

Working together and making responsible decisions, there is no challenge that we cannot overcome.

I love and care deeply about each and every neighborhood in Providence. I know that in order to have a resurgent and resilient city, we need to make sure our communities stay healthy, safe and strong.

I've had the great pleasure to see the work of our men and women in uniform. And although I've had my disputes with the Firefighter's Union, I have seen the work our firefighters do each day and let me tell you that we have the finest fleet of firefighters any city can have.

And on the police side, the truth is that there might not have ever been a more difficult time to be a police officer than today. We've been fortunate that we haven't had to deal with many of the issues that other cities have endured these past couple of years. We've been fortunate, it hasn't been simply luck. Our police officers are committed to building relationships in our neighborhoods, to being coaches and mentors in our middle schools, and to being partners with our community groups.

I thank all of our men and women in uniform for your service to our city!

I have taken action to address gun violence at the local and regional level; and we are bringing non-violence training to our public schools. We have dramatically expanded our summer and fall programming in our recreation centers, re-established Providence's Midnight Basketball League, and we provided 350 summer jobs for our young people last summer.

We have more programming than ever in our City Parks, and along with the RI Foundation, we are making huge investments in making Roger Williams Park the best urban park in New England.

Providence has great bones and our city is ready for its resurgence.

The foundation has been built and we are poised to see great growth. As I mentioned at the outset, we will strive to be the very best at everything that we do. But to reach our ambitious goals, we have to be bold and we have to work together.

I believe we can build the economy of the future; but we have to lock arms and make sure no one is left behind.

I believe we can have the best education system in the country; but we need to marshal all of our partners.

We can be global leaders in innovation; but we need to engage all of our employees;

And, I believe that when we come together, we are mightier than any of the challenges we face.

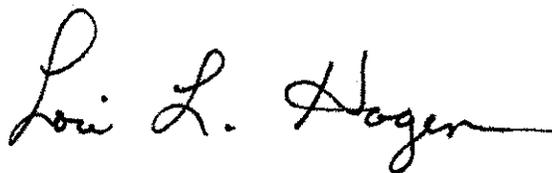
When Providence plays to its strengths and is united as one city, we can accomplish any goal. And I know that with the phenomenal partners we have in government and throughout the community, Providence's best is yet to be seen.

Thank you and God bless.

---

## CONVENTION

There being no further business, on Motion of **COUNCILMAN JACKSON**, Seconded by **COUNCILMAN CORREIA**, it is voted to adjourn at 6:57 o'clock P.M., to meet again to meet again **THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2016 at 7:00 o'clock P.M.**



**LORI L. HAGEN**  
**CITY CLERK**

