Mayor Smiley
Office of the Mayor
City of Providence
Providence, RI

August 25, 2025

Re: Thank you &
Letter of Resignation
Effective October 2, 2025

Honorable Mayor Smiley,

I write today with deep gratitude. I am submitting this letter of resignation from the Providence Board of Licenses. Serving in this role has been one of the most meaningful and formative experiences of my personal, political, and professional life.

It's a long letter, but I have served for almost a quarter of my life. It's been a minute. For my last act, I wanted to try to give credit and thanks to everyone that made this experience possible.

When I joined the Board, we faced extraordinary challenges:

- A law firm's investigation had outlined systemic problems in nearly every facet of our processes
- A management consulting firm had published a scathing report regarding byzantine and antiquated systems
- We were overwhelmed with show cause hearings
- Our hearings stretched six to nine hours a week
- Every meeting was packed with angry neighbors and frustrated licensees
- Our decisions were almost always overturned by the Department of Business Regulation
- Staffing and tools necessary to conduct thorough investigations or manage applications effectively

All of these struggles were lived in the headlines. At best, our work was reactive and ad hoc.

Today, the Providence Board of Licenses is the most efficient and well-organized municipal board in Rhode Island. To get here was an all-encompassing effort by unsung muni-gov heroes the likes of which would make Leslie Knope proud.

- We rewrote our regulations and procedures from the ground up
- We restructured our agendas
- We created a predictable pre-hearing process, established consistent penalties, and built systems for precedential decision-making
- We modernized operations with online filing, electronic tracking, and virtual/simultaneous interdepartmental review
- We clarified review procedures and coordinated our actions and enforcement with a myriad of other city departments

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Tina L. Mastrocola CLERK

- We were even able to expand investigative staff and begin to proactively manage nuisances across all license types, not just alcohol and entertainment

The impact is literally visible. Unpredictable hearings that once drew crowded and contentious audiences have become boring proceedings in empty rooms. Neighbors and business owners alike describe the process as predictable, fair, and manageable. Our investigators, police licensing unit and solicitor's office quickly secure successful plea deals predictably and as a result our decisions stand firm on appeal. It was a show, now it's a snooze.

I am often asked, "How did you do it?" My answer is always the same: I didn't. The staff did, the team did, the board did, and they do not get enough credit.

In the licensing department, Serena Conley showed me the ropes. Heather Kilkenny rebuilt the whole way we do everything. From mountains of paper to automated, electronic, interdepartmental procedure. Stephany Lopes has a gift for managing people and keeping small problems small. Jose Giusti created our new system for investigations and renewed proactive oversight of non-liquor licensees. I am always told that everyone on the staff is incredibly helpful and they have always been remarkably kind and welcoming to me.

I learned communications, political thoughtfulness, and administrative realities from people like Emily Crowell, Victor Morente, Jordan Day and Theresa Agonia. Their extra effort and expertise facilitated the ambition of our changes and the execution of our plans.

The Providence Police Command Staff and licensing unit have shown me what it means to have a duty to protect and serve. No one understands how difficult it is to both protect and serve until you get a close up look at what it means and how it feels to enforce the law. Sergeant Tejeda broke me into the practical realities of enforcement. Captain Deandrade's deft insights into problem solving and relationship management taught me how to understand hierarchies. Sergeant Sollitto has shown me how to be kind without giving an inch.

The legal realities of quasi-judicial appointed boards are tough. Balancing the competing interests of businesses, neighbors, and elected officials while strictly adhering to correct procedure and making appropriate findings is brutally complex. I have been truly blessed to have Mario Martone and Lou DeSimone working alongside me. I am forever indebted for their work and their wisdom.

To my fellow board members, I am grateful for you all. To all of my current board members, I am only ready to leave because I know the board is in good hands. I was young when I started. I didn't see it then, but I know that now. If Charles Newton hadn't taken me under his wing, I don't know where I would be. Councilor Pichardo's grace set a standard that I will try to live up to for the rest of my life. Delia Rodriguez-Masjoan gave me confidence and support in understanding how Providence's cultural diversity interacts with the Board's responsibilities.

To the licensees and hospitality experts who have taught me about the industry, your lessons were and still are invaluable to me. To the neighbors struggling with nuisances, your patience

with the process and understanding our needs for diligence and professionalism have always meant so much to me.

To the lawyers who practice in front of us, I hope I was fair, I hope the board was even handed and considerate.

To the City Council, each of your voices and insights into each of your wards has been incredibly important. From the outset, Councilwoman Ryan's focus and demand for solutions helped me strive for excellence. Councilor Aponte's focus on the interplay between community need and business rights forced me to think through each matter from multiple perspectives. I am grateful for their guidance at the start of my journey.

Above all, without Mayor Elorza and Mayor Smiley's trust, I would not have endeavored to change anything at all. I cannot understate how critical that is. I was not simply appointed, I was trusted and empowered. None of the City's successes is possible without their leadership.

To everyone that has been obligated one way or another to deal with my varying shades of hubris, boredom, ambition, exhaustion and time consuming self-indulgences (like this letter) I offer you a humble thank you. I am who I am, and I am thankful for your patience and understanding. On balance I hope I did well with each and every one of you.

I leave not because the work is finished, but because time is finite, and I want to devote more of mine to my son and daughter.

I leave with the hope that I earned the trust and respect of the people that empowered me. Most of all, I leave with an overwhelming sense of gratefulness to everyone that made the experience such a success and made me the person I am today.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to serve Providence and to grow alongside the people who make this city what it is.

Providence,

I love you, thank you!

Dylan