

1991

Letters: Outgoing (1990-1994): Correspondence 57

Claiborne Pell

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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND
HUMAN RESOURCES

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

September 10, 1991

Mr. William D. Warner
Locust Valley Farm
595 Ten Rod Road
Exeter, Rhode Island 02822

Dear Bill:

I very much appreciated receiving your kind letter of August 26th.

I too was delighted to learn that the Arts Endowment had endorsed the Providence Foundation's proposal to study the redesign of a prominent part of the Providence waterfront. It is a worthy project which has enormous potential to transform the Old Harbor District into an exciting and livable environment.

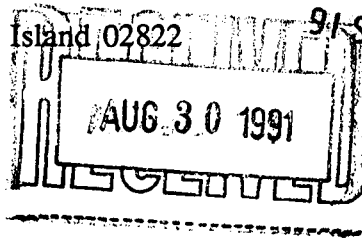
I will follow future developments in this regard with great interest.

With warm regards,

Ever sincerely,

Claiborne Pell
Chairman
Subcommittee on Education,
Arts & Humanities

William D. Warner, Architects and Planners
A Corporation
Locust Valley Farm
595 Ten Rod Road, Exeter, Rhode Island 02822



August 26, 1991

The Honorable Claiborne Pell
United States Senator
418 Federal Building
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Claiborne:

As indicated in the enclosed Providence Journal editorial, our firm and the Providence Foundation have received a grant from the NEA to explore the urban design and economic potentials associated with the relocation of Interstate 195.

The 1983 NEA grant enabled us to develop plans that culminated in the River Relocation Project. We hope this grant will have similar results with regard to I-195 and the "Old Harbor".

Claiborne, I wish to personally thank you for your support and successful efforts on behalf of our application. One of the project's goals is to dredge the "Old Harbor" portion of the Providence River to permit boats from Narragansett Bay to navigate through the relocated rivers up to Waterplace. 1992 will mark the 90th anniversary of the Charles River Lock projects that transformed the mud flats into a waterway connecting Watertown with Boston Harbor. Perhaps 1992 will be the year that Rhode Islanders will make a commitment to do the same with the Providence River.

We will keep you informed of our progress. In the interim, let us know if you have any questions or suggestions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Warner". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

William D. Warner, FAIA
President

William D. Warner, FAIA, APA - President
Paul D. Mandigo, AIA - Vice President
401-295-8851

From rivers to roads

PJ 8-7-91

The Providence Foundation has received a timely grant of \$24,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts to study the impact of moving Interstate 195, which now slices through the center of town, to a point south of the Fox Point Hurricane Barrier. The proposal was made last year by the Foundation, and a study is already under way at the state Department of Transportation. In any case, it is not too soon to consider how such a bold project might affect the city's environment.

(In case you ask, urban design is among the arts agency's many interests.)

Despite recent repairs, the aging bridge that carries I-195 over the Providence River must be replaced within this decade. Moving it southward rather than reconstructing it at its current location would open up 35 acres in the Old Harbor District, now mostly dedicated to the highway and its access ramps.

The Foundation's study will help the city decide how much of that acreage should be devoted to commerce, and of what sorts, and how much should be park land. We hope it will continue to promote the city's effort to recapture its maritime heritage as both aesthetic and commercial goals. Surely the study ought to encourage Providence to continue farther downriver with riverwalks already planned for the Capital Center and the river-relocation projects — indeed, this should be a high priority whether the I-195 project goes forward or not.

The grant will have to be matched by

the city, of course, but the credibility of Providence in the eyes of the Endowment is already considerable. After all, the last time the Endowment involved itself in local development was when it supported the 1985 Providence Waterfront Study, undertaken by architect William D. Warner and sponsored by the Foundation. The upshot was the \$40-million River Relocation Project.

The idea of moving the rivers solved a transportation problem that had threatened to undermine the feasibility of the Capital Center Project (also a brainchild of the Providence Foundation, which in the 1970s revived the idea of relocating the railroad tracks in order to open up land for development). Moving I-195 would solve some equally knotty problems. For example, traffic congestion and safety concerns would presumably be eased by moving the confluence of I-195 and I-95 south of the points where downtown traffic now exits and enters both highways. That juncture might have been convenient two decades ago; today it's a mess.

Together, the Providence Foundation, city planners and state transportation officials have developed a commendable knack for piggybacking civic and commercial improvements on top of projects mostly financed by the federal government to solve transportation problems.

Now they are trying to do it again. Good luck to them!