



January 1, 2017

Dear Fellow East Siders:

I hope you enjoyed a festive New Year's Eve or, alternatively; a restful night of sleep. This week's letter will discuss the fire fighters' contract and the Achievement First expansion plan.

On December 21, a group of neighborhood residents met with Public Safety Commissioner Stephen Paré to discuss plans to decommission Engines 4 (Rochambeau) and 5 (Humboldt) in connection with the proposed contract with the fire fighters. The Commissioner presented a [Letter](#) and a [Power Point Presentation](#) to explain the Department's position. The tentative agreement would reduce the continuous minimum staffing level from 94 to 88, and part of that reduction would come from decommissioning two engine companies of 3 fire fighters each. (The tentative agreement also proposes closing one ladder company of 3 fire fighters and adding three supervisors). The City Council commissioned a [draft consultant's report](#) which recommended a reduction of two engines and two ladder companies, noting that Engines 4 and 5 were the least active in the City. With that said, residents asked whether it made sense to remove two engines from service in such proximity to each other, as opposed to pairing one engine closure from the East Side with another from a different part of the City. The Commissioner suggested that while there are clearly more engines than the City needs, the firehouses are located inefficiently. The Commissioner maintained that if Engines 4 and 5 were taken out of service, response times to the East Side would increase but still remain below the safety threshold standard of 4 minutes or fewer. I learned that the deployment of fire engines at different stations is a management right – while the contract specifies how many engines must be in operation at all times, management can deploy them in different locations. In other words, the contract as negotiated does not require the removal of the Rochambeau and Humboldt engines if management decides a different location is preferable. I plan to request additional data to understand the administration's choice of engines removed and suggest alternatives if there is an appropriate basis for doing so. The City Council will vote on the tentative agreement on January 5, and I expect to use the next several days studying the issue further before deciding how to vote.

On December 20, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approved the full expansion of the Achievement First Mayoral Academy from 916 to 3,116 students. Among those testifying against the proposal was Representative O'Grady of Lincoln, the principal sponsor of the law requiring the Council to consider the impact of the expansion on the City's finances and the education of the Providence children who do not go to the new school. He noted that the Commissioner's analysis was deficient in this area and therefore the Council could not approve the application. Unfortunately, the Council did not perform its legal duty, which means the a new, unfair and possibly crippling burden has been passed onto the Providence Public Schools. To help understand and plan for these consequences, Councilman Principe and I have introduced a resolution for the January 5 City Council meeting requesting that the School Department prepare and present to the Education Committee a 5-year budget that accounts for the fiscal impact of the approved expansion, projects the resulting budgetary gaps, and presents alternatives for closing the gap.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Samuel D. Zurier'.