



October 12, 2015

Dear Fellow East Siders:

I hope you have had a chance to enjoy this beautiful long weekend. As City government returns to work tomorrow, this week's letter discusses setting contingency reserves for the fire fighters' litigation, ideas for targeted economic development in the City, and the School Board application process.

The administration's dispute with the fire fighters resulting from a change to working hours continues through the courts, and an [Editorial](#) in yesterday's Providence Journal with the evocative title "Big Risk" highlights the need for the City to resolve this dispute as soon as possible. With that in mind, the Claims Committee will meet on **Tuesday, October 13 at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall, Third Floor** to discuss, among other things, the proper amount of reserves the City should set aside for different contingencies. When North Kingstown engaged in its five-year dispute with the fire fighters, the Town maintained adequate reserves for a loss, and only realized anticipated savings when the parties entered into a new contract. Among the contingencies the Claims Committee will review tomorrow night are two "final offers" the administration presented in negotiations prior to reaching an impasse. These alternatives reflect the administration's balancing of the risks and rewards the litigation presents, and thus represent a floor for adequate reserves. The Committee also will consider the cost of a possible adverse ruling from an arbitrator. Because the City made its settlement position public (in a filing with the Superior Court), the Committee will review all of these estimates in open session, as well as what available funds the City has on reserve to satisfy these contingencies.

Last year, the City Council's Economic Development Task Force issued a [Report](#) recommending the formation of a systematic economic development plan. The Task Force recommended, as part of developing such a plan, that the City "conduct a cluster and industry intersection analysis to identify industries with the potential for employment growth and use this information during the development of the city's economic development plan. . . . Completion of a full cluster analysis will allow city policymakers to target programs and partnerships to bolster industries likely to grow in importance in the coming years." Last week, the Task Force reviewed a [Preliminary Draft](#) of a plan that a consultant developed. In future meetings, the Task Force will revise and refine the cluster analysis, before presenting it to the City Council and the administration. In this way, the City can focus its economic development tools to gain the largest advantage in terms of employment and economic growth.

Over the past year, parents from our neighborhood's schools have attended School Board meetings to encourage it to rectify an anomaly in the School Department's neighborhood assignment plan. Under the current plan, children families that move into a neighborhood after February 1 are essentially foreclosed from attending their neighborhood school, as all of the seats are assigned in a lottery that takes place in the Spring. While a few seats may open in September, most families are unable to wait through this uncertainty. After much discussion, I am hopeful the School Board will create room in its policy to support neighborhood schools. The policy of neighborhood schools is a City-wide issue, but this recent experience demonstrates how local neighborhoods can be affected by City-wide decisions. With that in mind, I would like encourage anyone interested to apply for three upcoming School Board vacancies. You can learn about the process by clicking on [this link](#).

Sincerely,

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