



November 10, 2013

Dear Fellow East Siders:

This week's ward letter discusses the revaluation process, tax stabilization agreements and Rhode Island's implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

On **Thursday, November 14 at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall (third floor)**, the City Council's Commission on Property Tax Revaluation will meet to discuss internal procedures related to the tax revaluation process. The revaluation process involves many steps, including the assignment of a value to each property (either through a statistical review of comparable sales, an inspection or both), an aggregation of property values to determine the size of the overall tax base, and the development of tax rates based on the size of the tax base by classification and the City's budgetary requirements. The current process provides a relatively narrow window of time in which to review each of these steps, preventing the public from having an adequate opportunity to understand the revaluation process and/or comment upon it. At Wednesday's hearing, the Commission will review the current program in Providence and compare it with best practices elsewhere in the State, in the hope of identifying ways to make the next revaluation more transparent and more amenable to improvement through public input.

Also on Thursday night, the Providence Preservation Society is sponsoring a presentation at the former Industrial Trust Building (or "Superman Building") concerning that building's future. You can learn more about this event by clicking here: [Superman Building Symposium](#). The timing is apt, because the owner is seeking a tax stabilization agreement, and the City Council just announced its plan to review the City's overall policy regarding these agreements. The City Council's Ways and Means Committee will be reviewing the status of the City's current inventory of tax stabilization agreements, consider ways to ensure better performance from pending agreements and policies to enhance future agreements. Last year, the Gilbane Development Company negotiated a tax treaty with the administration based on the developer's representation that the project would not go forward absent such agreement. When I reviewed the developer's pro forma, I asked the City Council's Ways and Means Committee to defer approval until the developer answered some questions regarding its case for public assistance. When those questions were not answered, the developer proceeded without a treaty, saving the City millions of dollars of foregone revenues. I believe this experience demonstrates the value of proceeding cautiously with tax stabilizations.

At its November 7 meeting, the City Council approved a [Resolution](#) I introduced to urge the General Assembly to enact an individual insurance mandate as part of its implementation of the federal Affordable Care Act. As I explain in an op-ed published in yesterday's Providence Journal (to read, click here: [Affordable Care Act Op-ed](#)), Massachusetts has a state-level mandate to require people who can afford insurance to purchase it (and a tax penalty if they do not) which provides a critical incentive to ensure a diverse risk pool, while providing revenues to fund the program. I plan to offer any assistance I can to the General Assembly to consider this proposal and adopt it if appropriate.

Sincerely,

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