



November 24, 2013

Dear Fellow East Siders:

This week's ward letter discusses nonviolence training, revaluation standards, and funding school operations.

Last Monday, I attended a workshop at the Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence in South Providence, whose work you can read about at www.nonviolenceinstitute.org. This group trains youth and adults in the themes of nonviolence and the "blessed community" envisioned by Dr. King. The Institute has a staff of nonviolence trainers, many of whom overcame a personal history of violent and/or criminal behavior, to counsel and guide people towards more peaceful interaction. I believe these efforts can help to address the culture of violence which plagues parts of our City, and to reduce other types of conflict (such as bullying or cyberbullying) that can prevail even more broadly. One participant, a Narragansett elementary school teacher, described how she integrated nonviolent principles into her curriculum.

Tomorrow (Monday) night, **November 25, at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall (Third Floor)**, the Revaluation Commission will develop a recommendation regarding revaluation standards. Currently, the State mandates that all cities revalue property on a 3-year cycle, conducting a full revaluation every third cycle, and statistical revaluations during the other two. Some jurisdictions (including some in Massachusetts) revalue property every year, while others (including some in Connecticut) revalue over a longer interval, and "phase in" the changes over a period of years. Tomorrow night, the Commission will try to reach consensus on the best model for Providence, which may involve change in either direction or no change at all.

Last Wednesday night, the Education Committee received reports from the School Department about facilities and transportation, and a report from the Internal Auditor about the financial impact of the "no layoff" clause in the teachers contract. In the [Facilities Report](#), the School Department documented a mismatch between excess facilities capacity (at the high school level) and anticipated enrollment increases at the elementary and middle school levels. The report identifies ways to align needs and capacity in the short run; however, over the longer run it will be necessary to bring more facilities into service. It is not clear how to fund this expansion, given the State's limits on school construction aid. In the [Transportation Report](#), the School Department reviewed its efforts to improve bus service after the initial configuration produced an unacceptable number of late arrivals and departures. The School Department is reconfiguring the bus routes and adding additional buses (at the cost of \$100,000 each) to address this issue. Finally, the Committee received a [Financial Impact Report](#) from the Senior Internal Auditor concerning the cost of the "no layoff clause" in the current Providence Teachers Union contract. This contractual requirement (which appears to be unprecedented in both Providence and other Rhode Island communities) has cost the School Department between \$3.4 million and \$4.2 million over the contract's three-year term as "top step" teachers costing \$97,000 per year have served as substitutes. The first two reports demonstrate how the School Department needs additional resources to pay for basic operations, and the third report provides a way to address these needs in the next round of contract negotiations.

Sincerely,

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