

SAM ZURIER

December 12, 2011

Dear Fellow East Siders:

Tonight, the Education Subcommittee will meet at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall (Third Floor) to review a draft report concerning Achievement First. You can read a copy at this link:

<http://www.samzurier.com/images/stories/issues/af%20education%20subcommittee%20report%204.pdf>

I would like to thank those of you who sent in comments over the weekend concerning the draft report's proposed findings and recommendations. One of the report's key recommendations is that the Board of Regents consider approving the opening the first of the two proposed elementary schools in 2013 as requested, but to wait three years before approving the opening of the planned second school. This window would create an opportunity for Achievement First to adapt an urban model to the mixed student population of an urban/suburban mayoral academy, while also slowing down the anticipated financial impact of the new school. The City Council does not have an official role in the mayoral academy approval process; however, once we have completed reviewing the report, we may choose to forward it to the Board of Regents for their consideration.

Also last week, I worked on a series of "quality of life" initiatives that you have suggested to me over the past several months. The City Council passed for the first time an ordinance Councilman Salvatore and I co-sponsored to authorize the police to enact partial parking bans (such as single side of the street parking) during snow emergencies, something we need for narrow streets in the College Hill neighborhood. The Council also passed for the first time an ordinance I introduced to make it a ticketable offense to park within 12" of a driveway entry, as homeowners need some space on either side of their driveway clear when they are backing out or backing in. Also, the Finance Committee heard an ordinance I co-sponsored with Councilwoman Matos to fix the homestead exemption date to match the closing date for people moving into the City. This would correct an inequity that results when new homeowners do not gain the benefit of the homestead exemption during some or all of the first tax year of their residence and, conversely, it would remove from foreclosing banks the windfall of a homestead exemption for which they would not qualify. In the hearing, the Tax Assessor noted that a change to this system would create additional burdens on her office, and we are going to meet to discuss those concerns before voting on the bill in committee. The Tax Assessor also reported to the Finance Committee that she plans to canvass the entire tax roll in January to require all of us to re-apply for the homestead exemption. As part of that application, we will need to verify that we have registered all of our cars in Providence in order to retain the exemption, pursuant to a new law the Council passed last summer. It is my hope that this process will increase motor vehicle tax revenues for the City.

Sincerely,

