



December 14, 2014

Dear Fellow East Siders:

This week's letter discusses the car tax, the 460 Rochambeau subdivision, the PTU tentative agreement, bus transportation and vacancies on the School Board.

In the recent political campaign, several candidates discussed the automobile excise tax, raising concerns about its fairness and affordability. Some of the discussion revolved around the reduction of the exemption from \$6,000 to \$1,000. The City Council office has prepared a research report looking at the fairness and affordability of the car tax from several perspectives, including (1) the history of the motor vehicle tax exemption in Providence, (2) exemptions offered in other New England states, (3) the affordability of the car tax as part of the overall cost of car ownership, (4) the value of City services provided to motor vehicle owners and (5) the fiscal impact of changes in the car tax. The Ways and Means Committee will review and discuss the report at a hearing on **Wednesday, December 17 at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall (Third Floor)**.

The City Plan Commission is scheduled to resume its review of the 460 Rochambeau Avenue subdivision on **Tuesday, December 16 at 4:45 p.m. at 444 Westminster Street**. With that said, the Commission has not yet posted its agenda. You may wish to confirm the meeting on the City's website at its [Open Meetings Portal](#) when it (presumably) is posted at some time before Tuesday night. (The City Plan Commission is required to post 48 hours in advance, but we are getting very close to that deadline at the time I am writing this letter.)

The Special Committee on Education met the last two Wednesdays to review the Providence Teachers Union tentative agreement (which was not ratified by the Union and is now in mediation) and bus transportation. The tentative agreement included two major reforms, namely an approval process for greater autonomy at the school level, and a transition to pay increases for highly rated teachers. The first reform will allow teachers and principals the option of changing their school's program (budgeting, personnel, schedule, etc.) to enhance the learning opportunity for students. The second reform would reward teachers for high quality work. The parties are currently in mediation, which is delaying the opportunities provided by these reforms. Turning to bus transportation, the School Department is preparing a request for proposals (RFP) for the coming school year. As described to the Committee, the RFP will include new incentives to make service more timely and customer friendly, including the installation of GPS devices to allow parents to track the location of their child's bus. The RFP also will give bus companies the option of garaging their buses in Providence (and pay motor vehicle tax) or offering a contract discount to garage them elsewhere. This flexibility should increase bidders beyond the current vendor, who has had the contract for many years.

The School Board Nominating Commission is accepting applications for the coming year. You can read about the process and download an application by clicking on this link: [School Board Vacancies](#). The School Board plays a critical role in our City's education program, and service on this Board can be quite rewarding (as I learned several years ago). If you would like more information, please [send me an email](#).

Sincerely,

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