



December 15, 2013

Dear Fellow East Siders:

This week's ward letter the United Providence school management organization and reforms to the tax revaluation process.

Last Thursday, the School Department reported to the Education Committee about the United Providence ("UP") school management organization. UP is in its second year managing three schools (Lauro Elementary School, Stuart Middle School and Alvarez High School) identified by the State Department of Education for intervention. UP has the mission of increasing collaboration between teachers and the administration to improve schools. During its first academic year, UP encouraged several "startup" issues, including turnover within the management organization and in the leadership of the constituent schools. While the schools saw improvements in attendance and culture, much work needs to be done to improve student achievement. UP manages the schools according to an operation agreement with the Providence School Board which includes specified student proficiency levels for the next three years. On the basis of an inquiry from the Education Committee, the School Board and UP agreed to modify the performance contract to incorporate more ambitious achievement goals. As part of its first year, UP worked to clarify its mission, such as how UP should, on the one hand, spur the subject schools to dramatic improvements and changes as part of its "intervention," and, on the other hand, advance its stated goal of collaboration. UP agreed to consider complying with the Open Meetings Law. Also, UP is refining its understanding of governance issues, as its Board includes the Superintendent and Providence Teachers Union representatives, but it must interact with teachers, administration and the School Board as a third-party manager. The School Board has the difficult responsibility of monitoring UP's progress, balancing the organization's "start up" challenges, the long-term value of collaboration and the urgent needs of the children at those schools for significant improvements in overall academic achievement.

This Tuesday night (**December 17, 2013**) at **6:00 p.m. at City Hall (Third Floor)**, the Revaluation Commission will review a set of tentative recommendations for its report to the City Council. You can review the draft recommendations and background information by clicking here: [Revaluation Commission](#). With regard to revaluation standards, the draft recommends changing State law to allow each community the option to "phase in" revaluations over three years, rather than all at once. This would allow taxpayers who face a large increase due to an increased tax valuation additional time in which to adjust to and plan for the change. The draft also includes several proposed changes to internal procedures that would increase the public's access to information about the process in general and the basis on which their property's valuation was calculated. In its current form, the recommendations would provide residential property owners with access to all of the data points that determine a property's value, and the formula by which each residential property is assigned a tax valuation, making it easier to understand how one's own valuation fits within those assigned to other houses in the same neighborhood, or elsewhere within the City. Once the Commission makes a recommendation, it will be incorporated into a report for the City Council to consider for possible approval. If approved, it will be necessary to submit legislation to the General Assembly to seek authority to change the revaluation standards.

Sincerely,

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