



April 13, 2014

Dear Fellow East Siders:

This week's ward letter discusses regulation of campaign activity by City vendors, the Vartan Gregorian pre-kindergarten program and the instruction of behaviorally disturbed students at Nathan Bishop.

Last Monday, the Ways and Means Committee reviewed an amended version of an [Ordinance](#) I introduced to regulate campaign activity by City vendors in two ways. First, it will create a database of campaign contributions by companies bidding for City work and/or receiving City contracts, beginning in January, 2015. Second, it will limit the contributions these companies can make to City elected officials and/or candidates for office, beginning in January, 2016. The ordinance would be the first of its kind in our State, but there are examples of similar laws elsewhere. The City Council policy research office prepared a [Presentation](#) which describes the ordinance and compares it to laws currently in place at the State level (disclosure only), and in other cities in the country. The Committee continued the ordinance for further hearings.

Two weeks ago, the Mayor and School Department attended a meeting of the Vartan Gregorian PTO to discuss proposed changes for the school next year. The School Department proposes relocating Gregorian's pre-kindergarten program to Asa Messer, and to replace it with additional K-5 classes. The proposal would have several negative impacts, including a concentration of pre-kindergarten in the western one-third of the City, and an increase in Gregorian's enrollment beyond the facility's physical capacity. The parents there also have issues with the school's lack of engagement; for example, it appears to have suspended meetings of its School Improvement Team, contrary to the policies of the School Board and Title I. I express my concerns about these changes in a [Letter](#) I sent to the Superintendent and the School Board. Gregorian parents expect to express their concerns during the public comment section of the School Board meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 16 at 6:30 p.m. at the School Department (797 Westminster Street).

In the meantime, the School Department is reviewing a plan to consolidate special education services, including classes for behaviorally disturbed ("BD") middle school children. At the present time, these programs are located at Del Sesto Middle School (one class), Nathan Bishop Middle School (two classes) and Roger Williams Middle School (two classes). Next year, the School Department is thinking of sending the Del Sesto class to Bishop. The School Department believes the current program at Bishop is working well, but the Bishop community does not. At a recent PTO meeting, I learned that the BD children have acted out from time to time, in incidents that have affected the school's climate and culture, and occasionally the well-being and safety of its students, including a recent incident requiring the intervention of four police officers. The proposed move also would overcrowd the building beyond the limits established by the Rhode Island Department of Education when it was renovated.

Over the next few days, many of us will celebrate the holidays of Easter Week and Passover. These holidays bring out some of the central themes of Christianity and Judaism, against the background feeling of renewal that accompanies the arrival of Spring. I hope this season brings you refreshment and fulfillment.

Sincerely,

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