

SAM ZURIER

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Dear Fellow East Siders:

Although the Council passed the City's budget last week, we still are completing our due diligence concerning some of the budget's key components. This week, we are reviewing the negotiated changes to the fire fighters' contract. The savings come from a number of areas, including a temporary reduction in "minimum manning levels." The contract currently requires a minimum of 94 fire fighters on duty at all times. When one or more fire fighters is absent for sick leave, personal leave or the like, other fire fighters are "called back" and paid overtime. As a result, a large number of our fire fighters receive pay in excess of \$100,000. The new contract will reduce the "minimum manning level" to 92 for part of its term and 90 for another part, before returning to 94 at its conclusion. While the almost 10% in savings meets the Mayor's target, there appear to be greater savings available in the future by reducing the minimum manning level on a steeper and longer-term basis. Also, the Public Safety Commissioner has informed the Finance Committee that he is talking with our neighbors to extend cooperative service agreements. I believe that we have the opportunity to reduce the number of fire stations if we make better use of such cooperative agreements.

The proposed tentative agreement does not produce pension savings. The administration stated that the City plans to address this issue in the coming year by seeking savings from people currently receiving pensions. This likely will have to be resolved in court. In the meantime, I am hoping to work on a study committee to look at the criteria we employ to award disability pensions, as there is anecdotal information suggesting that we can do more to ensure that disability pensions are restricted to people who are truly disabled and genuinely unable to make a living some other way.

Also this week, we began to review the City-wide overnight parking program enacted in this year's budget. The City plans to raise \$1 million in additional revenue by implementing this program, which was introduced successfully on a pilot basis in selected communities. The City Council has asked the Mayor's office for more information about its implementation to answer such questions as (1) who will be eligible for permits, (2) what the fee will be, (3) whether there will be restrictions on overnight parking on certain crowded streets, etc. Overnight parking is coming to the East Side, but we have the chance to help shape the program to accommodate local concerns. If you have any ideas or suggestions about how such a program should run, please pass them along. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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