



October 20, 2013

Dear Fellow East Siders:

This week's Ward Letter discusses the property tax revaluation process, reducing the neighborhood impact of road races and decentralizing our public schools.

On Tuesday, October 8, the City Council's commission to study revaluation held its first meeting. At that time, the commission reviewed the volatility of tax bills during revaluation years, producing dramatic changes in certain neighborhoods as demonstrated in this [Power Point Presentation](#) that described tax changes for sample properties in sample Providence neighborhoods for the revaluations of 2007, 2010 and 2013. The volatility in tax bills during those years resulted from a valuation bubble and crash in some neighborhoods and general issues inherent in the revaluation process. With that in mind, the Commission's next meeting (which will take place on **Tuesday, October 22 at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall, Third Floor**) will review standards that other states use for revaluations. Rhode Island has a three-year cycle for statistical revaluations, and a nine-year cycle for full-scale revaluations, with the new values implemented immediately. Other states have longer cycles, and/or phase in the new values over years. The Commission also will review the considerations Rhode Island weighed when establishing the current system.

Last week, I met with the Providence Arts and Tourism Office to discuss ways to reduce the local impact of road races. The problems raised by the recent half-marathon were unique to that event, resulting from its length and the particular course route selected. I learned that the remaining road races for this fall will largely take place in other City neighborhoods, and the ones that enter the East Side will avoid the conflicts that proved to be so difficult in the half-marathon. During this winter, the Office plans to develop a set of standard routes for road races that will be available for race organizers to choose. This will be a change from prior practice, in which race organizers were allowed to form their own route, some of which produced unacceptable local impacts. The Arts and Tourism Office is now aware of the specific issues that road races create for East Side residents, so I am optimistic that the new set of templates will permit future races to be planned and scheduled to balance the interests of participants and residents.

In a recent discussion about its strategic plan, the School Department confirmed its goal of increasing flexibility in individual schools. Providence used to have an option for schools to adopt "site based management," which allowed schools more flexibility in budgeting, staffing and curriculum design; however, that option was not renewed in the most recent teachers' contract. Boston has a program for "pilot schools", which allows public schools to have most of the autonomy currently enjoyed by charter schools, while remaining within the public school system. On **Wednesday, October 30 at 6:00 p.m.**, the Education Committee will hear a presentation from some Boston educators about the "pilot school" option, how it has worked in Boston, and how it could be translated to Providence. In this way, we may be able to bring the benefits of charter schools into the Providence Public School Department without the financial impacts of the current "money follows the child" component of the State's education aid formula.

Sincerely,

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