



October 28, 2012

Dear Fellow East Siders:

Tomorrow night (Monday), the Ways and Means Committee will hear a report from the City's pension consultant. As you may recall, the City set its budget for the current year assuming full pension reform as enacted in ordinances last Spring. The retirees filed a court challenge, and the parties compromised to settle the case. This means that we will need to contribute more to the pension fund than we included in the budget, and Buck will help to calculate the amount. Because this year's budget already is very tight, the Committee likely will ask the administration for a plan to close the anticipated deficit once the consultant provides an estimate.

Tuesday night and weather permitting, I will attend a meeting organized by the College Hill Neighborhood Association to discuss the Providence questions on next week's ballot. The meeting will take place at **6:30-7:30 p.m. at the Wheeler School New Student Union (enter on Meeting Street between Thayer and Brook Streets)**. In the past week, the City Council and the Mayor's office have published guides to the ballot questions you can read by clicking here [City Council Guide](#) and here [Mayor's Office Guide](#).

Last Monday, I attended a School Board workshop that discussed the applications by the King and Spaziano elementary schools to convert to become "in-district" charter schools. The workshop provided general information about the process you can read by clicking here [FAQ's](#) and offers a preliminary financial analysis you can review by clicking here: [Preliminary Analysis](#).

I remain concerned about the application of the King Elementary School, which proposed a charter conversion in a prospectus you can read by clicking here: [Prospectus](#). The prospectus identifies the school's neighborhood as the Mount Hope area immediately surrounding the school, rather than the greater East Side (including the Summit, Wayland, College Hill and Blackstone neighborhoods), whose children currently attend the school and have done so in the past. The school's staff is currently preparing a more complete application to submit to the State and to the School Board by December 1. The City Council Education Committee will hold a hearing on these charter schools **next Wednesday (November 7) at 5:45 p.m. at City Hall**.

In my opinion, the King application presents a mix of potential benefits and risks. As a charter school, King would gain autonomy and flexibility to support valuable innovations. On the other hand, our neighborhood will suffer a major loss if the State insists on requiring a City-wide lottery, its normal policy for charter schools. At this point, I believe the King School has agreed to request a variance from this rule. If the State grants the variance, we can have the best of both worlds. On the other hand, there may be a divergence of opinion if the State refuses to grant the variance. I believe that we need to preserve the King School's neighborhood identity, even if it means that King cannot be a charter school. I intend to present this issue to the City Council if necessary, and I would appreciate your involvement in this debate if you consider the issue important to you and our neighborhood. We faced a similar issue in 2006, when the School Department proposed the permanent closure of the Nathan Bishop Middle School. Our neighborhood rose up to save that school, and I hope we will be ready to do this again, if necessary, for the Martin Luther King School. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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