

SAM ZURIER

October 31, 2011

Dear Fellow East Siders:

- 1. Meeting with Superintendent Lusi.** Tomorrow night, Tuesday, November 1, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Superintendent Lusi will be meeting with the community at the Nathan Bishop School in an event co-sponsored by the East Side Public Education Coalition and the PTO's of King Elementary School, Vartan Gregorian Elementary School and Nathan Bishop Middle School. You are invited to attend.
- 2. Oversight of the City Budget.** Last Tuesday, the administration presented an updated review of the recently concluded fiscal year and the first quarter of the current year. Last year's budget ended with a \$5 million deficit, or slightly less than 1%. Several factors combined to cause the deficit, and the administration announced new procedures to prevent their reoccurrence. The picture from the first quarter of this year is less clear, in part due to the excessively general nature of the administration's presentation. The Internal Auditor (who works for the City Council) prepared a more detailed analysis, in which he projected possible shortfalls in the Police Department due to a lower-than-expected number of officers who accepted the early retirement incentive. The administration does not agree that a deficit is likely, and plan to review another quarter of experience before reaching any conclusions. In the meantime, the City Council is working on a template to specify more detailed quarterly reports from the administration.
- 3. Achievement First (AF) Mayoral Academy.** The City Council's review of the AF application continues. AF will present its case to the City Council as a whole within the next few weeks. You can review the draft AF application by going to the Mayoral Academy website at <http://www.mayoralacademies.org/> and clicking on the link there to the draft application. The School Department is preparing a financial projection of the school's impact on the District, which it will present to the Education Subcommittee. Also, we received a letter (link here: http://www.samzurier.com/images/stories/articles/Ward_Letters/ptu.pdf) from the Presidents of the Providence Teachers Union and Local 1033 urging that we defer our review until they present a "comprehensive plan to improve all of our schools and provide a vision that will move our district forward over the next several years." The Education Subcommittee invited the Unions to make a presentation.

I have begun my own review. The AF application anticipates twin schools opening on staggered schedules, with the first opening in 2013-14 and the other in 2014-15. They will open one grade at a time beginning with kindergarten, with 88 children per grade per school. AF estimates that approximately half of the students will come from Providence. If overall Providence enrollment does not increase, it may be necessary to reduce Providence Public School Department teachers as enrollment shifts to AF. This raises issues under the current contract and under a State law that requires layoffs exclusively on the basis of seniority when there are declines in enrollment. On the other hand, the new schools will feature a school day from 7:30 to 4:00, which is more than two hours longer than what we currently have in Providence. Such issues as the current lack of time for school recess, art and music could be easily addressed with a school day of this length. In short, the new school presents a range of costs and benefits we will have to investigate further.

Sincerely,

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