



November 15, 2015

Dear Fellow East Siders:

The attacks in Paris remind us again how our world is connected, and how a tragedy abroad can cast a shadow on our life in Providence. As the Parisians try to make sense of what happened and to restore their way of life, this week's letter will discuss a community meeting on economic development, the City Council's review of the "cluster development" study and a monument to mark the birthplace of the writer H.P. Lovecraft.

On Wednesday night, December 2, from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at the Hope High School Cafeteria, I will host a community meeting with Mark Huang, the City's Economic Development Director and Stefan Pryor, the State's Commerce Secretary (or someone from his office). We will discuss the City's and the State's vision of the City's the City's assets, opportunities and challenges, and programs they are working on to advance economic development with business location (in the I-195 parcel, downtown and elsewhere), workforce development and other ways. The general public is invited (and refreshments will be served). If you cannot attend but have a question you would like the speakers to answer, please [send me an email](#).

This Wednesday night, the City Council will meet as a whole to review the [Cluster Analysis Study](#) prepared by the Economic Development Task Force on which I was pleased to serve. The report covers a broad range of data and ideas upon which to base a plan. I am hopeful the City Council will work with the consultant to extract a more focused set of goals and action steps to implement from this wealth of material. Within the recommendations are helpful "first steps" the City can take to improve its business climate without elaborate analysis or commitment of resources. For example, at p. 61 of the Study, the consultant notes the following:

Procurement - City Council approval is required for all Providence School Department contracts over \$5,000. This low threshold coupled with the mismatch in school and City Council's calendars is a barrier to action and innovation in Providence schools. The standard seems to be a \$25,000 threshold. to identify industries that are compatible with the City's current strengths and opportunities for economic development.

Based on this recommendation, I drafted and introduced an Ordinance for Thursday's City Council meeting to raise the Council's contract review threshold. (I had made a similar effort last term while serving as Chair of the Education Committee, but I could not gain support of my colleagues at that time.) The School Board already vets contracts, and, as the Report observes, the City Council's additional layer of review hampers and reduces the opportunities available to our children and the City's well-being as a whole.

This summer, a group of fans of the 20th century writer H.P. Lovecraft celebrated the 125th anniversary of his birth in a festival they called [the Necronomicon](#). The festival brought an international following of Lovecraft's fans to Providence, and generated a stream of visitors every week. The Lovecraft community now proposes to build a sign or a monument to mark Lovecraft's place of birth near the Starbucks on Wayland Square. They would like the community's input about two proposed designs you can see by [clicking here](#). Please [send me an email](#) with your comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,

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