



November 17, 2013

Dear Fellow East Siders:

This week's ward letter discusses the revaluation process, late homeowner tax rate applications, the teachers' contract and School Department operational issues.

Last Thursday, the Revaluation Commission reviewed the Assessor's internal procedures when conducting revaluations. The vendor who prepared the 2013 revaluation missed several deadlines in completing its work, complicating the development of the budget. The delays also reduced the time taxpayers had to meet with the vendor to review informally their property's valuation, as well as the time the City had to explain the general process to the public. Having completed an overview of the broad issues, the Commission divided into two subcommittees to make policy recommendations to the entire Commission on revaluation standards and internal procedures. The subcommittee reviewing revaluation standards will meet this **Tuesday, November 19 at 5:00 at City Hall, Third Floor.**

That same night, **Tuesday, November 19 at 6:00 p.m.**, the Ways and Means Committee will review an ordinance I introduced to simplify the process taxpayers follow to obtain late approval for the homeowner tax rate. Existing homeowners are required from time to time to reapply and confirm their status as owner-occupants to maintain the lower tax rate. When someone misses the deadline, the Tax Assessor denies the application, but asks them to contact their City Council representative. The City Council representative sponsors legislation to grant the taxpayer retroactive relief. This process removes any incentive for taxpayers to get their paperwork in on time, and bogs the down the City Council with hundreds of extra agenda items. The ordinance I introduced will solve both of these problems by authorizing the Assessor to approve late applications upon payment of a 1% monthly fee based on the annual savings the taxpayer will gain from the exemption.

On **Wednesday, November 20 at 6:00 p.m. on the third floor of City Hall**, the Education Committee will meet to begin its review of the Providence Teachers Union contract and to discuss two operational issues with the School Department. The Senior Internal Auditor will present his analysis of the financial impact of the current contract's "no layoff" clause, which requires the School Department to retain teachers who are not selected to teach in a classroom to work as substitutes at their full salary and benefits, rather than laying them off. Because substitutes normally receive a lower per diem rate, this clause increased the cost of substitute teachers without providing any significant additional benefit to students. Also, the Education Committee will hear presentations from the School Department concerning facilities and transportation. At last Monday's School Board meeting, the School Department presented possible ways to reconfigure school assignments to accommodate an anticipated increase in middle school enrollment. On November 7, the City Council approved a resolution I introduced urging the School Board to consider carefully the interests of all stakeholders when addressing potential school closures. The transportation issue relates to problems providing timely school bus transportation to all students on a consistent basis.

Sincerely,

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