



November 18, 2012

Dear Fellow East Siders:

At tomorrow (Monday) night's meeting, the City Council will vote on a [Resolution](#) urging the School Department to preserve the City's network of neighborhood schools. As described in my [November 5 letter](#), the King Elementary School is at risk of losing its neighborhood identity by applying to convert to an "in-district charter school." This would be a major loss for our neighborhood. Following the City Council meeting, the School Department will answer the Education Committee's questions about the "in-district" charter program, including a clarification of the School Department's view of neighborhood schools. The School Department also will make a presentation about "displaced teachers," *i.e.*, those teachers who do not have a regular classroom assignment, but retain their employment under the current contract's "no-layoff" clause. The School Department will explain the assignments they have developed for this group of educators.

The Ways and Means Committee will meet on **Tuesday night, November 20 at 6:00 p.m.**, and the agenda includes two items I have been working on. The first addresses a tax penalty that affects some Providence home buyers. The City's "homestead exemption" reduces by 50% the taxes that a full-time homeowner pays in Providence, but there can be a lag of up to 18 months between the time someone buys a Providence home and they begin to receive the exemption. As illustrated by this [Example](#), this penalty can amount to almost a full extra year of taxes. I have proposed two alternative ordinances to address this issue. The [Comprehensive reform](#) version would adjust all properties (upwards or downwards) at the time of the closing. At the hearing, the Tax Assessor will describe implementation concerns about this version. The more modest [Abatement ordinance](#) would provide a single \$500 abatement to all new homeowners facing this penalty, which is easier to implement, but would address only a portion of the problem.

At the same meeting, the Ways and Means Committee will review the [Proposed tax agreement](#) the administration has reached with the Gilbane Development Company concerning the 257 Thayer Street project. The Tax Assessor will present the information on which the agreement is based, including the valuation of the project, and the amount of taxes the developer would pay if he went forward with the project in the absence of a tax agreement. After the Committee finishes vetting the agreement (which may or may not happen on Tuesday night), it will vote whether to recommend it to the full City Council. In order to become effective, the agreement has to be approved at two separate City Council meetings.

In the meantime, the Gilbane Development Company is preparing an application for the City Plan Commission. The Commission currently expects to receive the application by Tuesday, November 20, and to hear the application at its December 18 meeting. I encourage all interested residents to mark this date on their calendar. Also, the Planning Department has begun to prepare a request for proposals to engage a facilitator for a comprehensive planning study of the Thayer Street neighborhood, as the City Council requested when passing a Resolution I introduced in September as a result of this summer's review of the 257 Thayer Street project.

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays. I hope you can gather with your loved ones to celebrate this distinctively American tradition.

Sincerely,

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