

SAM ZURIER

April 23, 2012

Dear Fellow East Siders:

This past Thursday, the Pension Sustainability Subcommittee issued its report containing recommended reforms to the City's pension system. You can read the report by clicking on this link: [Report](#). The Report recommends several reforms, including but not limited to placing a temporary freeze on cost-of-living adjustments, or COLA's. When the Subcommittee began its work seven months ago, we believed that substantial reforms of this kind were critical to the long-term sustainability of the pension fund. In the months that followed, we learned that the City is facing a cash flow crisis that could lead to insolvency. These circumstances provide a second (and if anything more urgent) basis to support the proposed reforms. Next week, the full Ordinance Committee will review the report, and shortly thereafter the City Council will consider ordinances to implement the proposed reforms.

Tonight, the Mayor will present the 2012-13 budget to the City Council for consideration. As you probably know, the City's current year budget is running a deficit of slightly over \$20 million, some of which might be closed retroactively next fiscal year, due to anticipated relief from the General Assembly, or perhaps through ongoing negotiations with the nonprofit organizations. With that said, it will be the City Council's responsibility to review the budget's assumptions carefully, to ensure not only that next year's budget is in balance, but also that this year's carryover deficit is adequately addressed as well.

On Tuesday, the State will hold a primary for the two parties' presidential nominations. The City has reduced the number of polling stations, and all voters in Ward 2 should vote at the Jewish Community Center. If anyone wishes, they also have the opportunity to vote today (Monday) at City Hall.

Last Thursday, I had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the College Hill Neighborhood Association (CHNA), the Providence Preservation Society (PPS) and the Providence Department of Planning to review the 257 Thayer Street project. I have created a new section in my website's "Issues" page to assemble the documents associated with this project, which you can review by clicking on this link: [257 Thayer](#). In that section, you will be able to read letters that CHNA and PPS wrote concerning the project. Though each was written independently, the letters contain a number of common themes, including the need for adequate time to review the neighborhood impacts of this project and other potential projects in the same three-block area, and the need to upgrade the project's architectural design. Tomorrow night, the Providence City Plan Commission will review the project's proposed changes to the comprehensive plan and the zoning ordinance. The meeting will take place at 4:45 p.m. at 444 Westminster Street.

In the meantime, I wish to thank you for the comments you sent in concerning last week's letter. Based on those comments, I wish to clarify and/or correct some of its statements as follows. Although the Providence Journal reported the project's estimated cost at \$28 million, the developer believes this is an overstatement; therefore, the estimated taxes the project will generate will be less than the \$700,000 stated in the letter, and instead may be two or three times the \$140,000 currently generated by the existing properties. The project does not conform to the current zoning ordinance; therefore, it would require the City Council to amend the ordinance and the comprehensive plan in order for the project to go forward. Finally, Brown University has not made any decision concerning whether to construct graduate housing on property it owns in the Cushing Street/Brook Street area.

Sincerely,

