



July 15, 2018

Dear Fellow East Siders:

The Blackstone Parks Conservancy's program summer music concerts returned to Blackstone Boulevard this Wednesday, to the delight of both audience and passers-by. I invite you to catch as many of the remaining three that are scheduled. This week's letter discusses the School Department supplemental budget and the Ward 2 City Council campaign.

On Thursday night, the School Department Oversight Committee approved a supplemental budget to expend of \$2.7 million in additional funds appropriated by the State, based on a posted enrollment increase. The majority of additional funds will be set aside for anticipated contractual raises and increasing student security. Other funds will marginally enhance programs which could not be funded completely in the original budget, including building security, junior varsity sports and after school programs at Central and Mount Pleasant High Schools.

The funding also will permit Classical High School to address a longstanding need for an additional guidance counselor, following an extensive discussion of that school's role within the City's system. In prior years, the School Department was unable to fund this position because of the competing demands of children in other schools struggling to achieve proficiency, while the norm for Classical's students is to strive for admissions to selective colleges and win competitive scholarships. The School Department justified the allocation to Classical this year based on four principal arguments. First, Classical's students have a special need for guidance counselors because of their high rate of college enrollment in addition to the emotional needs that all high school students face. Second, Classical's share of resources (\$9,000 per pupil versus \$14,000 per pupil at other Providence high schools) is particularly thin. Third, the academic needs of Classical's students may fly "under the radar" because of the current proficiency tests, which measure the student's current level of achievement rather than their growth of learning over the previous year. On the one hand, this "static" form of measurement fails to note the great accomplishments of many Providence students, who start the school year far below the standard, but advance two grade levels or more in a given year. They may still be still deemed "unsuccessful" because they did not make it all the way up to proficiency. On the other hand, "static" measurements can overstates the "success" of students who begin the year ahead of grade level, but do not advance sufficiently while in school. Finally, Classical is a valuable part of our school system because of its unmatched socioeconomic and demographic diversity, a Title I school "majority minority" school that also is attractive to our City's middle class. Providence needs to retain its middle class to have a bright future, and Classical High School is a critical part of that future.

In my [June 3 letter](#), I noted that three of our neighbors have stepped forward to campaign to represent you on the City Council in the term that begins next January. I would like you to know that, while I did not ask any of them to run for the seat, all three asked to meet with me before announcing their plans. I found the meetings to be enlightening and rewarding. I told each one I was delighted they were interested in serving our City, and that I believe each of them is capable of doing fine work on the Providence City Council. I encourage you to take the time this summer to learn about the candidates, ask them questions, share your concerns and priorities, and then join me in voting in the Democratic primary on Wednesday, September 12.

Sincerely,

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

