

September 16, 2012

Dear Fellow East Siders:

This Wednesday, the Education Committee will meet at 5:45 p.m. at City Hall to review the probable final draft of the [Hope Academy Report](#). At the same meeting, the Chief of Staff from the Providence School Department, Colleen Jermain, will discuss the Department's review of the Student Registration Office. For many parents, the Registration Office represents their entry point into the Providence Public Schools, and the process has faced a number of pitfalls in recent years. For example, the Vartan Gregorian Elementary School had a particularly long waiting list this past year, which included surprisingly low placements for children living very close to the school. The School Department resolved this issue by introducing a third kindergarten class for this year; however, building capacity issues prevent this solution from being repeated. In the meantime, the Registration Office assigned an extra class of 26 students to the sixth grade at Nathan Bishop in the final week before school opened, creating dislocations. Ms. Jermain will discuss the School Department's investigation and possible reforms for these issues and other similar ones across the District.

This past Tuesday, I attended a meeting of the Thayer Street District Management Authority, where I learned about that group's plans to enhance the area's living and business environment. I discussed with them the Planning Department's project to develop a plan for Thayer Street. The Management Authority will remain informed about the planning process and contribute as appropriate. In the meantime, I spoke with the administration about the issue of a tax treaty. I learned that Gilbane has not yet submitted a proposal, but I reminded the administration of its previous statements against tax abatements or stabilization agreements. I also learned that Gilbane has not purchased the property, but has retained the option to purchase it later as the approval process moves forward.

Last week, the School Department announced that it will accept applications for schools to become "in-district charter schools." This would allow current public schools to gain more autonomy from District-wide rules, provided that a majority of teachers agree to the change. The Providence Journal reported that Nathan Bishop is in the early stages of considering this option. I met with the principal, who believes that the school can serve its students better with the additional flexibility that "charter" status confers. He also stated his belief that the new status will allow Nathan Bishop to continue as a neighborhood school, and that the school will not continue the application if this condition changes.

Sincerely,

