



September 28, 2014

Dear Fellow East Siders:

This week's letter discusses proposed improvements to the lobbyist registration ordinance, the Providence Teachers Union contract and the City's new zoning plan.

Last week, the Providence Teachers Union (PTU) rejected, on a vote of 611 to 182, a tentative 3-year agreement reached between PTU leadership and the administration for public school teachers. The parties will now go into mediation. The administration stated that it was disappointed, perhaps because fewer than 10% of the PTU's 1,900+ members voted to approve a contract that PTU's leadership negotiated and recommended. It is hard for the administration to justify concessions in negotiations if there is no realistic prospect the other side will consent to any tentative agreement. With that said, one source of hope is that only 611 teachers (or fewer than 35%) voted against the contract. The PTU leadership indicated that its membership failed to support an important "school autonomy" proposal in the contract due to mistrust that administrators would implement it fairly for teachers. This innovation would allow teachers in individual schools to vote to approve greater flexibility in working arrangements. Because autonomy applies only to schools in which a majority of teachers approve it, it would appear that the "mistrust" issue is based on a misunderstanding which I hope can be overcome in mediation.

In 2013, the City Council gave final passage to the first municipal lobbyist registration ordinance in the State. While this marked an important first step, we have had experience since then at both the local level and the State level (from both the 38 Studios case and the Gordon Fox investigation) that has revealed loopholes and gaps in our ordinance that need to be addressed. Working with Common Cause, I introduced an [Ordinance](#) to close some of the loopholes based on national best practices, and a [Resolution](#) requesting that the Clerk's Office report on its implementation of the current program. I have received some preliminary concerns from nonprofit groups, and the Ordinance Committee will hold a hearing soon to hear those concerns and consider possible responses.

On this **Tuesday, September 30 at 6:00 p.m. on the third floor of City Hall**, the Ordinance Committee will hold a hearing on the proposed Zoning Ordinance amendments. Representatives from the Planning Department will present general information about the changes, which have been presented to the public in numerous hearings over the past several months. The hearing will provide an opportunity for discussion, as will a public hearing scheduled for the following week.

Sincerely,

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