

SAM ZURIER

October 17, 2011

Dear Fellow East Siders:

Let me begin by thanking you for providing feedback in response to these letters. These comments help me to clarify my own thinking, which I share in policy discussions. For example, the Council and the administration are working on revisions to the overnight parking program that will respond to concerns about possible negative impacts. The pilot program introduced elsewhere in the City had an “opt in” provision as well as an “opt out” provision, and the “opt out” threshold was 66% rather than 75%. Also, it might make sense on some streets to allow residents on a portion of a street to “opt out” of overnight parking while permitting another portion to “opt in”. These and other ideas are now being discussed, thanks in part to your comments. I cannot promise that each specific comment you submit will result in a tangible change, in part because your comments come in on both sides of issues, and in part because this is a City-wide program, and not just an East Side program. With that said, your comments are helping to shape the debate.

In addition to feedback via email, I look forward to hearing your comments in person at some upcoming meetings I hope you will consider attending. Tomorrow night (October 18), I will attend a meeting at the Martin Luther King School Parent Teacher Organization (35 Camp Street) at 6:00 to discuss education issues at that school. The following night (Wednesday, October 19), I will attend a 6:00 meeting at Moses Brown School sponsored by the College Hill Neighborhood Association. That meeting will address the issues of sidewalks, potholes and street repair. I also am working with the Council, the School Department and the East Side Public Education Coalition to schedule community meetings to introduce Superintendent Lusi to our neighborhood – one night at Nathan Bishop School and one night at Hope High School. I will forward the details when they become available. All of these meetings are open to the general public.

In other news, I plan to study the revised Achievement First mayoral academy application that was filed last week. As you may recall, this organization originally proposed a school in Cranston that would be open to children from Cranston and Providence. The large scale of the school (900 students in phase I, 900 more in phase 2) presented potentially significant impacts on the quality of education for Providence children who did not attend the school. The Board of Regents denied that application due to a lack of support in Cranston, but the Governor invited them to re-apply for a school based in Providence. I already have identified one area of concern, namely a state law that mandates layoffs based on seniority alone in the event of a decline in enrollment. Given that charter schools are viewed as separate school districts, this law would appear to apply to a Providence charter school. If so, the opening of a new school could bring about the return of “bumping” in addition to the financial impacts previously identified. There also is a question about whether the “no layoff” clause in the new teachers’ contract would restrict the School Department’s ability to manage its costs when, under the 2010 funding formula, State and local “money follows the child” who transfers from the public schools to a charter school. In short, I am hoping to develop information that will help us strike the best balance between school choice and high quality public schools in Providence. Stay tuned.

Sincerely,



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