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Quonset is a good neighbor in North Kingstown - by Steven King

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Steven King,
Quonset Development Corp.

While nearly 12,000 people work in Quonset Business Park at more than 200 companies, our relationships with neighbors in the Town of North Kingstown are a top priority for us, too.

Certainly, North Kingstown and Rhode Island both benefit from Quonset's success. For example, we recently joined state and local officials to cut the ribbon on four brand new multi-use athletic fields. Located on 22 acres, the new fields are open to the public and will be used by North Kingstown's soccer leagues starting this fall. Built as a collaborative effort between Quonset, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and the Town of North Kingstown, the fields are just one more example of how we work to make the business park a community asset.

We have also worked diligently to be sure that current and prospective tenants at the park can succeed without disruption to the surrounding community. We have identified passive uses (no trucks, no lights, no noise, no emissions) for entire sections of the park to provide a buffer between the park and the surrounding neighborhoods. Furthermore, the Quonset Gateway District helps to buffer our neighbors via "light" uses with retail shops, a hotel, a day care facility, office space and the Seabee Military Museum and Park.

Adjacent to the Gateway District is the Quonset Bike Path, which runs alongside a 7 foot high berm planted with wildflowers and greenery that screens the park from nearby homes, covering more than six acres on our Newcomb Road property line. Extending 2.5 miles around the north edge of the business park, the bike path is entirely off-road and runs from Rte. 1 (Post Rd.). It connects to another bike path owned by the town that runs all the way to Calf Pasture Point where cyclists can enjoy beautiful views of Narragansett Bay. The bike path was financed by QDC and the Rhode Island Department of Transportation.

Meanwhile, the Town of North Kingstown realizes significant benefits from Quonset. A recent study by Bryant University found that the Park produced \$2.85 billion in economic output, \$1.26 billion in labor income, and \$113.1 million in tax revenues in Rhode Island, much of this in North Kingstown. It also showed the average private sector jobs at Quonset paid wages 8.3% higher than the state

annual average wage. The study also projected that by 2030 the park will annually produce \$4.5 billion in output, \$2 billion in labor income, and \$180.8 million in tax revenues for Rhode Island and local municipalities.

The economic benefits to North Kingstown are further shown by the longstanding Municipal Services Agreement (MSA) and Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement. The MSA tasks the QDC with costs usually taken on by municipalities. These include all roadway maintenance throughout the 3,200 acre park, including snow plowing, roadway improvements and repaving, landscaping and common area maintenance, site planning and technical review, and all utility maintenance. The MSA also outlines the town's responsibility for law enforcement and fire protection within the park, while the work associated with building and fire permitting is handled by the state.

A PILOT agreement determines the annual compensation paid to North Kingstown by QDC, since QDC property is tax exempt. Since 2010, North Kingstown has seen an increase in PILOT payments of 20 percent. Today, the town receives approximately \$1.3 million in PILOT payments from Quonset. When taxes on privately owned property and buildings are factored in, that figure grows to \$7.2 million. Conservative estimates project that figure will grow to over \$12 million per year by 2026.

Meanwhile, we continue to work to minimize the impact on our immediate neighbors. Two new solar energy projects provide a quiet, minimal-use buffer to our neighbors while the QDC has planted hundreds of tree and shrubs throughout the Park.

We recognize that the business park and its more than 200 companies are crucial to economic development and job growth in North Kingstown and Rhode Island. It is of utmost importance to us to address shared challenges and continue in creating mutually beneficial opportunities. As one of the state's leading economic engines, Quonset Business Park's unique presence in North Kingstown is something we work hard to make certain has benefits for all.

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