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S&P Global affirms AA rating for city and assigns stable outlook - by Joseph Solomon

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Joseph Solomon,
Mayor of Warwick

In connection with the city's planned \$6.185 million school bond issue for renovations and improvements to schools and school facilities, S&P Global (S&P) has recently affirmed the bond rating of the city at "AA" and assigned a stable outlook. The bonds were scheduled to sell through the Rhode Island Health and Educational Building Corporation the week of September 9.

This assessment comes as welcome news, as the positive comments in the rating report support our efforts to stabilize and improve city finances and our continued work to improve the city's credit profile.

The rating agency also assigned a stable outlook to the city, citing the diverse local economy, strong wealth and income levels, favorable liquidity and debt profiles. They project that the city will maintain stable finances and reserve levels, while managing municipal costs, such as schools, pension and OPEB.

The S&P report considers Warwick's economy very strong, and noted the city's position as "one of the state's leading commercial and retail centers." It also highlighted our role as host to T.F. Green Airport, Rhode Island's major commercial airport, and its positive effect on development in the surrounding areas. It also confirmed what we have long known – our convenient access to Rtes. 95 and 295, and the Interlink intermodal rail station, which offers MBTA commuter service and a direct connection to the airport by the "skywalk," an elevated walkway – are a draw for travelers and businesses looking to locate here and further help to strengthen our economy.

Among other strengths noted in the S&P report are the city's improved communication and oversight with the school department, a growing tax base, healthy liquidity and low net debt levels. The city's assessed value has increased to roughly \$10.7 billion – an increase of approximately 15% as the result of our recent statistical revaluation. They noted that "due to the city's growing tax base and expected new growth during the next few years, we expect the city's economy will likely remain very strong."

We know that projects such as the second phase of the Pontiac Mills restoration, expansion at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott, coupled with the arrival of Rhode Island's first Tesla location, and the \$30 million OrthoRI development project, as well as a variety of expansions and the arrival of small businesses and national and regional companies, will continue to help with our positive economic development trends.

And our diverse economic base is also reflected in the range of some of our largest employers – MetLife Insurance, Kent Hospital and the J. Arthur Trudeau Memorial Center – all employ more than 1,000 people, and the Community College of Rhode Island boasts a local workforce more than 500 strong.

There's a lot that our community can offer to you and your company. Please contact our Department of Tourism, Culture and Development for more information at www.movetowarwickri.com.

Joseph Solomon is the mayor of Warwick.

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