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Scott Avedisian - 2011 economic development report: Rocky Point waterfront, Metro East Office Park, flood re-openings and a lot more

July 28, 2011 - Spotlights

I am pleased to present this economic development report.

Many residential and commercial properties have been fully restored following the March 2010 floods and turned the disaster to their benefit, with improved facilities and equipment. The NYLO Hotel, which suffered extensive damage throughout its first floor, will re-open in August, in a series of grand re-openings we have celebrated in the past six months.

The Sewer Authority and Animal Shelter, under more than six feet of water, also reopened last summer, with upgraded systems and technology, and some new policies in place thanks to lessons learned from the disaster.

We've also welcomed a diverse mix of many new businesses to Warwick. Most recently, within one week we attended ribbon cuttings for Red Robin Restaurant and Fat Belly's Irish Pub - which, combined, have brought over 200 jobs to Warwick. Michael Intelglia & Co. said recently that it has begun work on Phase II of its Metro East Office Park development - a \$10 million investment in our community.

The fall brought the opening of the InterLink, the long-awaited intermodal train station near T.F. Green Airport. City staff is currently working with Goody, Clancy and Associates to finalize and adopt the Warwick Station Development District Master Plan, which will guide development of 1.5 million s/f for mixed uses. The Plan, among other things, will also promote shared parking, walkability and connectivity within the district, attract new businesses and the workforce they rely upon; offer convenient residential and commuter opportunities; and create a strong, vibrant sense of place that will appeal to businesses, residents, developers and tourists.

The state Department of Transportation continues work on the Apponaug Bypass project, set for completion in 2013. Coupled with proposed municipal "Village Zoning" amendments, these improvements will make Apponaug more pedestrian-friendly and offer expanded cultural and economic development opportunities; reduce existing traffic concerns and attract more businesses and tourists to the area; and complement the state EDC's renewed commitment to "main streets" as a cornerstone of its job growth strategic plan.

The city has recently begun an update of its Comprehensive Plan, required by state law to help shape policies and actions relating to future development and its impacts. Part of this 18-month process will include soliciting input from residents and business owners. A project website, www.warwickcompplan.com, has been developed for the new Comprehensive Plan, called 21st Century Warwick: City of Livable Neighborhoods, and will be the central information source for the planning process.

On a nostalgic note, a ribbon cutting for the much anticipated opening of 41 miles of coastline at the

former Rocky Point Park location came to fruition on June 24, 2011. Generous donations from Shaw's and Pepsi, amounting to over \$15,000 in tree plantings, complimented the opening. The park will continue to prosper as educational signage and overlook benches adorn the route in the coming months. From dawn to dusk, park access has been drawing many to enjoy activities such as hiking, biking, fishing, strolling and sightseeing. Greatly anticipated, Rocky Point is a welcomed re-addition to the Warwick destination.

Our Department of Tourism, Culture and Development (TCD) continues to work closely with the business and hospitality communities to attract companies and visitors to Warwick. Along with print, Internet and social media advertising, TCD offers a website, www.movetowarwickri.com, specifically tailored to business' needs and offering a no-cost, searchable commercial property database, accessible to businesses and individuals alike.

I encourage you to contact TCD for more information about Warwick and business opportunities in the city. Staff can be reached at (401) 738-2000, ext. 6202 or at econ.dir@warwickri.com.

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