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Cutting through the red tape: Governor Chafee launches new program that fast tracks business expansion to create jobs

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Building on a recent initiatives at Quonset and the R.I. Economic Development Corp. (RIEDC) to make it easier to do business and improve regulatory and permitting processes in R.I., governor Lincoln Chafee joined with state officials and local business leaders to launch two innovative site readiness programs aimed at fast-tracking land parcels for development, business expansion and job growth.

In March, governor Chafee and the RIEDC board of directors adopted a focused yet flexible work plan aimed at streamlining state and local regulatory processes to save companies time and money and accelerate the creation of jobs, while protecting the health, safety and quality of life for R.I.'s citizens. "Helping businesses cut through the red tape with an easy to understand and predictable regulatory system is key to making R.I. an attractive place for companies to invest. These site readiness programs will keep R.I. ahead of the marketplace, anticipating what businesses need to keep growing here or come to our state and create more jobs," governor Chafee said. "By state agencies and municipalities working together to make it easier for companies to expand or relocate here, we will be able to continue to move our economy forward and be competitive."

To highlight how an efficient and predictable regulatory environment can help revitalize the state's economy, governor Chafee unveiled Quonset Business Park's new "Site-Readiness" program designed to attract new business to Quonset Business Park and create more jobs in R.I. The Site-Readiness program was spearheaded by the Quonset Development Corp. (QDC) to simplify and expedite the permitting process so that 35 pad-ready sites in the business park are ready for immediate development by future tenants.

The QDC initiative will serve as a model for a larger statewide "Rhode Island-Ready" demonstration project being developed by the RIEDC's Office of Regulatory Reform. The Rhode Island-Ready project will reduce time and increase the predictability of getting land developed, buildings constructed and operations up and running. The initial demonstration project will target eight to ten parcels in urban, suburban and rural areas of the state.

The two programs will create an attractive inventory of pre-qualified sites ready for development to be branded and marketed regionally, nationally and internationally to companies looking to expand or relocate.

The QDC partnered with the R.I. Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) and the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) to pre-permit each parcel to meet environmental requirements. The QDC also worked with building and zoning experts to pre-engineer the parcels to anticipate likely uses for a variety of industries. As a result, a due diligence package has been prepared for each parcel that includes a complete review of the property. This package includes an environmental Phase I review, geotechnical soils review and borings, utility availability and capacity

analysis, concept site plans and permits, and a land title review.

Through the Rhode Island-Ready program, the RIEDC will work with cities and towns, property owners, developers, state agencies, utility companies and other public and private partners to develop consistent standards for the availability and development of potential commercial and industrial sites. Using the QDC's model, Rhode Island-Ready will simplify the development process, greatly reduce costs and time in site selection and relocation plans for companies and significantly improve Rhode Island's competitive advantage.

The launch of the Site-Readiness program comes at an exciting time for Quonset Business Park. In February, governor Chafee said that the Port of Davisville at Quonset Business Park had moved up to become the 7th largest auto importer in North America. Later this year a new Gottwald 7608 Mobile Harbor Crane is expected to arrive as part of the \$22.3 million in TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grant funds that have been invested over the past year to improve the Port and Park.

Shown (from left) are: Steven King, P.E., managing director of the Quonset Development Corp.; governor Lincoln Chafee; Robert Baldwin, president of the R.I. Builders Association; representative Laurence Ehrhardt; senator Dawson Hodgson; Janet Coit, director of the R.I. Department of Environmental Management; Keith Stokes, executive director of the R.I. Economic Development Corp.; Grover Fugate, executive director of the R.I. Coastal Resources Management Council.

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