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Mayor's message: Preserving Rocky Point Amusement Park

October 11, 2012 - Rhode Island

A collaborative effort among state, local and federal agencies to preserve the remaining 80+ acres at historic Rocky Point Amusement Park recently cleared two major hurdles. The U.S. Small Business Administration, which is the court-appointed receiver for the property, accepted the state Department of Environmental Management's offer to purchase the land for \$9.65 million, and the Warwick City Council agreed to waive back taxes owed on the property as a condition of the sale. The public enjoyed access to the site for almost 150 years until the property was closed in the mid 1990s. After that, it sat shuttered, decaying and closed to the public until, in 2007 with a combination of federal, state and municipal funds, the city purchased and subsequently restored access to 41 acres of shoreline. Final work of a one-mile walking path along the Rocky Point shore of Narragansett Bay was completed by the city this past summer with the help of many local, state and federal project partners.

The purchase of the rest of the land, which must be approved by the state properties committee and the federal court, will be paid for through a \$10 million open space bond overwhelmingly approved by Rhode Island voters in 2010 after widespread support from a variety of groups dedicated to preserving the environmentally, historically, and culturally-significant property.

If the sale is approved, DEM director Janet Coit says revitalization of the property will be a collaboration among many stakeholders and partners. A public/private partnership would be envisioned to help minimize the use of resources for maximum return. A condition of the sale is that no fewer than 50 acres remain as recreation/open space/conservation purposes.

This latest development is welcome news to the thousands of residents in Rhode Island and beyond who hold fond memories of the park. We are optimistic that the sale will be approved so we can begin working with the state and other partners to restore this property, which has been such a vital part of Rhode Island's rich history and culture.

Scott Avedisian is the mayor of Warwick and the chairman of the RIPTA board of directors.