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Mayor's message: Spring promises to be a busy one

May 09, 2013 - Rhode Island

As we bid goodbye to winter and look ahead, the spring promises to be a busy one.

At this writing, we are in the process of finalizing my proposed budget for FY14. The city council will hold a series of public budget hearings at the end of May prior to voting on a final budget that will take effect on July 1.

We are looking forward to the completion of construction on and grand opening of a number of new restaurants and retail/service establishments along the Rte. 2 corridor, at the Warwick Mall campus on Rte. 5 and along busy Jefferson Boulevard near T.F. Green Airport.

Also on the economic development front, the Department of Tourism, Culture and Development will soon unveil a new website, which will enhance and expand the features of its existing database of commercial properties available for sale/lease and make it easier and more convenient for visitors to use.

The department recently launched the "Nate Blog," which stars Nate Greene, named in honor of Warwick's Revolutionary War hero, Nathaniel Greene. The character's inaugural "visits" thus far have been to local restaurants, where he blogs about the modern-day fare. In just a few weeks, the feature has proven very popular and bringing added exposure to local businesses. Based on the enthusiastic response to an online pizza challenge, the department is considering a pizza challenge in the coming months.

The planning department, in cooperation with the state Economic Development Corporation, the state Department of Transportation and its marketing/development consultants, is in the process of tallying results from a survey soliciting ideas for a name for the Warwick Station Development District, the 95 acres surrounding the airport and intermodal train station. A market segment analysis is also underway and is meant to identify and refine key market areas and opportunities. I look forward to sharing more information about these projects in the months ahead.

Finally, a May 2 ceremony at the State House officially marked the beginning of Gaspee Days, the two-month series of events to celebrate the "First Blow for Freedom," the burning of the HMS Gaspee, an act of rebellion that pre-dates the Boston Tea Party and other events leading to the founding of our country. For more information about the many family-friendly events that are planned through mid-June, visit gaspee.com or www.visitwarwickri.com for city-wide events.

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

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