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Mayor's message: Excited for warm-weather events - by Scott Avedisian

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Scott Avedisian, Mayor of Warwick

Even though Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow last month, predicting another six weeks of winter, it's hard not to be excited that spring is a mere four weeks away. As the hope of warm weather looms large, it is exciting to think about all the fun warm-weather events that are headed our way.

Even with March's unpredictable weather, there are several events headed our way that will surely help put a little spring in our step.

As work in and around the city continues to progress, many of projects are gearing up for a spring makeover. First, the Pontiac Mills rehab project continues to move full steam ahead. In recent weeks, there has been a lot of activity around the historical site. Debris and trash has been cleared from the grounds, interior projects like trim fixing are also underway. Though they may not be huge milestones when considering the scope of the overall project, they are necessary steps to move the project forward to the next phase of development. When complete, the \$35 million project will include the conversion of buildings for residential space, as well as mixed-use spaces.

Rhode Island Mall will also be sporting a new look in time for the warm weather. The mall, which is currently owned by MCB Real Estate based out of Maryland, is undergoing a full rehab. Back in the fall we welcomed Burlington to the shopping center. Now, we are getting ready to welcome more eateries and retail spaces to space. What was once Sears Auto Parts has gone before the Warwick zoning board to be subdivided into two restaurants, as well as retail spaces. The first restaurant that we'll welcome to the space is BJ's Restaurant and Brewhouse. BJ's is extremely popular on the West Coast. Boasting a variety of pizzas, pastas, burgers and more, their admitted attention to detail keeps their guests coming back time and again. In addition to their entrée items, their handcrafted beer selection serves as the perfect complement to any meal. While a date for completion hasn't been set, BJ's site plans have been approved by the City Planning Department. This will be their first location in New England.

Another store will soon be making Rhode Island Mall its home. Dick's Sporting Goods will be relocating from their current location on Rte. 2 to the mall. The sporting goods retailer currently has a zoning variance slated to be reviewed by the zoning board for an exterior sign approval. Once approved, they will make their final plans to relocate.

As we continue to creep closer to spring, we'll also get ready for more city milestones. The Rhode Island Foundation along with assistance from the Rocky Point Foundation and Warwick's DPW Department will begin the installation of the new kiosks throughout Rocky Point. They will be a welcome addition to the extended walking path and the new bike path that have both recently been completed. As the land begins to thaw, we'll see some construction jobs around the city break ground, and as new projects begin, others will come to an end – construction on the Apponaug

Circulator will enter its final phase come spring. The project continues to be on budget and ahead of schedule.

And as the last of the winter whites melt away into springtime greens, we'll get ready to welcome back other seasonal favorites to the city. Cruise Nights in Oakland Beach, summer concerts and movies in the park at Rocky Point, Food Trucks Nights, clam cakes and chowder at Iggy's and so much more. With only weeks to go until the first buds blossom, it's difficult not to be excited for another spring in the city.

Scott Avedisian is the mayor of Warwick.

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