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## **It's all in the numbers: A majority of Rhode Islanders support new stadium - by Donald Grebien**

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Donald Grebien,  
Mayor of Pawtucket

The findings of a recently published state-wide poll clearly shows that when Rhode Islanders know the facts they will support a new ball park for the Pawtucket Red Sox, an economic development opportunity that will move Rhode Island forward. This investment will support the City of Pawtucket's financial and economic development potential, as well as bring in new needed revenue above the current \$2 million already generated by the team to the state.

This project has been discussed and vetted for over a year and a new poll shows that Rhode Island residents agree that this is the right investment and that we need to get this done now.

In this survey, conducted by the well-respected Fleming & Associates, when Rhode Islanders clearly understood the details of how this economic development project would be funded, the majority support it. Over 70% of Rhode Islanders polled, feel that it is important for the Pawtucket Red Sox to remain in Rhode Island and want the PawSox ownership, the City of Pawtucket and the State of Rhode Island to work together to keep the team. Over 50% support the Ballpark at Slater Mill

There has been some confusion and misinformation regarding the proposal. When the respondents were not given the hard facts of how the Ballpark at Slater Mill would be financed, they opposed the project. The fact is that the primary tenant, the PawSox, are investing \$45 million into a publicly owned stadium that will be open year-round for events. They have committed to built-in protections, such as construction cost overruns, ancillary development and keeping ticket prices low. The state's investment in the City of Pawtucket can already be paid for from the tax revenue generated by the team and the stadium (\$2 million). The city's portion is covered by revenue from naming rights and property taxes from construction around the ballpark. The ballpark is paid for by those that use it, not from the pockets of hardworking Rhode Island taxpayers.

Overall, since 1992, the state has used public funds to finance, build, renovate and maintain public assembly venues at a cost of more than \$300 million that benefits Providence, as well as the entire state. Think of the hundreds of memorable sports and entertainment events that have taken place at the Convention Center, The Dunk and the Vets. All three venues provide the citizens of the state

with significant economic impact, improved quality of life and an enhanced community pride. The same opportunity should also be given to the City of Pawtucket.

Clearly a majority of those polled know that the building of a new ballpark is a win-win for all concerned. It's an economic development opportunity for Pawtucket, the Blackstone Valley and Rhode Island to bring year-round entertainment and events, expand access to our waterfront and create a world-class destination to attract 500,000 visitors and patrons from around the country to our state. With that activity is the ability to draw hotels, restaurants, businesses, shops and residential development around the stadium.

Let's get this project done.

Donald Grebien is mayor of the City of Pawtucket, R.I.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540