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Mayor's message: Pawtucket on the move in 2019 - by Donald Grebien

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Donald Grebien,
Mayor of Pawtucket

While 2018 had some trying times, the city of Pawtucket continues to move forward seeing movements in economic development projects, upgraded road infrastructure, continued sound finances through and responsible fiscal management, of its tax dollars.

Finances in the city continued on the sound trajectory established over the past five years, as Rhode Island emerged from the Great Recession on stronger financial footing. Last month, Fitch ratings, one of the "Big Three credit rating agencies," reaffirmed the city's bond rating at "A+" and its general obligation bonds at "A-" with a stable outlook into the future. Pawtucket is fully funding pension obligations and addressing other post-employment benefits (OPEB).

Financial management software, including employee time management and the Munis system, will allow us to continue maintaining real time financial controls. With these new accounting systems and other best practices, we continue to realign our internal operations to further improve accuracy, transparency, and efficiency resulting in cost savings for resident and business taxpayers and improved customer service.

Last year, the city was recognized by Verizon Business as one of the top communities for small business by rolling out the red carpet to businesses. We continue to make it easy to do business in Pawtucket by continuing to find ways to streamlining the city's regulatory process for businesses to reduce the time and cost of permitting. An interdepartmental task force released its final report identifying ways to efficiently process and manage business loans and many of its recommendations have now been implemented.

This year, Pawtucket will continue its revitalization of the riverfront and downtown, which will be bolstered by the incoming commuter station. With the groundbreaking for the Pawtucket/Central Falls Intermodal Center (including a commuter rail station and a bus hub), taking place two months ago, construction has now begun. The transit hub will connect our community to both Providence and Boston and generate development in the surrounding mills in the newly designated Conant Thread district.

The Carpionato Group moves forward with its proposed \$78 million lifestyle center at Narragansett Park Plaza on Newport Ave. to redevelop the underutilized land with new office space, residential units and retail and restaurant space on the Pawtucket/East Providence line. The project's master plan has been approved by both the Pawtucket City Planning Commission and East Providence Planning Board. Now in the process of obtaining the necessary state approvals, the project will be a catalyst for economic development once complete.

We also see our businesses expanding. Collette is expanding operations in Pawtucket adding almost 100 jobs. Additionally, our already robust brewery scene continues to grow, placing us third (in the) "6 Underrated Cities for Craft Beer Lovers (and brewers)" by Livability. Despite the PawSox ownership's announcement to take the team from our city, we are excited about all the prospects that have come about for the possible repurposing of the stadium.

Finally, Pawtucket continues upgrading our roads and infrastructure. In the past eight years, we have repaved over half of our roads and, thanks to the overwhelming support in this year's bond referendum, will continue to do so.

I am excited more than ever for what is on the horizon in 2019. We will continue to push forward to make Pawtucket a more business-friendly community. Join the evolution.

Donald Grebien is mayor of the City of Pawtucket.

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