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## **Goalllll! FC Rhode Island's first game is a win for Rhode Island - by Donald Grebien**

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Donald Grebien

Nearly five years ago on September 2, 2019, the beautiful sounds of professional baseball sadly fell silent in Rhode Island when the Pawtucket Red Sox played their final inning at McCoy Stadium.

The loss of our beloved PawSox was a gut punch, and it's been tough for the residents of Pawtucket and Rhode Island to miss out on the joys of having a professional sports franchise in our community. I personally have missed the sights and sounds of families having a great time together, taking in a game, and rooting for their home team.

Tidewater Stadium rendering - Pawtucket, RI

That's why I was so thrilled to attend the very first game of our new FC Rhode Island football club on March 16th at Beirne Stadium at Bryant University. The energy of the sellout crowd was simply incredible, with people of all ages and ethnicities coming together to support our new football club.

In one year from now, FC Rhode Island will be playing in the absolutely beautiful, state of the art new Tidewater Stadium on the banks of the Seekonk River in Pawtucket. A stadium that will return the sounds of professional sports to Pawtucket, while also serving as a community resource open for concerts and other public events.

Bringing the joy and excitement of professional sports back to our community would not have been possible without the support of governor Dan McKee, the Rhode Island General Assembly, and other partners like Commerce RI. Working closely together with Pawtucket after sadly losing the PawSox, these partners believed in our vision for a destination stadium, and second project phase that will include much-needed new housing. That vision is now coming to reality with steel going up and a beehive on construction activity at the stadium construction site.

Based on what I saw at FC Rhode Island's first game, Tidewater Stadium is going to be packed with football fans thrilled to root for their new home team. We can't wait to welcome them!

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

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