

A bevy of local and state officials, environmental advocates and preservationists joined forces this afternoon at the City of Warwick's shoreline property at the former Rocky Point amusement park to show bi-partisan, united support for Question 4 on the November 2 ballot.

Speakers included Warwick Mayor Scott Avedisian, Senate President M. Teresa Paiva Weed, Newport Mayor Jeanne-Marie Napolitano, Providence Mayor David Cicilline, state Department of Environmental Management Director W. Michael Sullivan, Ph.D. and Jonathan Stone, executive director of Save The Bay. Stone spoke on behalf of the Save Our Shore Coalition, which consists of his organization, the Rocky Point Foundation, the Fort Adams Trust, Head of the Bay Gateway and the Fox Point Neighborhood Association. Representative Frank Ferri, whose district includes the Rocky Point property, was also present to represent House Speaker Gordon Fox.

"Rocky Lobsta," the new mascot of the Rocky Point Foundation, also made a debut appearance at the event, kicking off a series of visits to locations throughout Rhode Island between now and Election Day that will help to bring public awareness of, and support for, the bond issue.

Question 4 is a \$14.7-million bond which, if approved by voters, will provide funding for the state to purchase all of the remaining 83 acres at the former Rocky Point Park and land adjacent to India Point Park in Providence and to repair crumbling masonry at Historic Fort Adams in Newport.

"Question 4 offers Rhode Islanders a tremendous opportunity to forever protect and preserve three unique shoreline properties that represent our state's past, present, and future," said Sullivan. "Needed repairs to crumbling masonry at historic Fort Adams will allow greater public access and use of the fortifications at this Rhode Island landmark, which dates back to the mid 1800s. Expanding the amount of protected land at Rocky Point from the current 41-acre parcel owned by the City of Warwick to include the remaining 83 acres of the former amusement park will expand public access and recreation opportunities for all to enjoy. And in Providence, we can ensure that the India Point Park of the future is transformed into an active urban gateway to Narragansett Bay offering expanded recreational and public access opportunities. These waterfront assets are the fabric of Rhode Island life, and we can all take part in protecting them by voting yes on Question 4."

"Question 4 provides an opportunity to preserve open space in a very practical manner which will maximize public access," said Paiva Weed (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown). "All three of the locations proposed for preservation are located in cities, and will provide ample opportunity to enjoy our scenic coastline, while the Fort Adams restoration project in particular will provide some much-needed jobs in this economy. I encourage all Rhode Islanders to join me in supporting this important bond referendum."

"I am proud that the General Assembly placed this bond issue on the ballot and I urge all voters to support it," said Fox. "Rhode Island has the unusual opportunity to purchase for a low price valuable, accessible, historically significant coastal land that is at risk for development. This is a great investment that will mean future generations of Rhode Islanders will have places where they can reach the ocean and appreciate one of our state's most precious treasures."

Specifically, the bond would provide \$10 million to complete the acquisition of Rocky Point and preserve it as open space. The city, with a combination of local open space funds, a DEM grant and money from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, purchased 41 acres of shoreline there several years ago. Eighty-three acres remain under control of the U.S. Small Business Administration, the court-appointed receiver of the property.

Proponents envision that the entire parcel could become the “Colt State Park of the West Bay,” complete with a fishing dock, ferry service and passive recreation such as hiking, fishing, rock climbing, swimming and picnicking, as well as the chance just to enjoy the spectacular views of Narragansett Bay, including the Mount Hope and Newport bridges.

“Rocky Point has a long and unique history here in Rhode Island,” said Avedisian. “For over a century, it was a place where people gathered to enjoy nature's beauty and the company of family and friends. Its sweeping views of Narragansett Bay make Rocky Point one of the jewels of the Ocean State. I urge all Rhode Islanders to approve Question 4 so that we can preserve all of this property, which has such historic, cultural and environmental value and meaning for our state.”

A total of \$1.5 million will be set aside to repair crumbling masonry at Historic Fort Adams to allow greater public access and use of the dramatic interior of the Fort, including the 6.5 acre parade grounds.

“Fort Adams, owned by the State since 1965, is a monumental structure, which has no peers amongst coastal fortifications in North America,” said Napolitano. “It's an indispensable, yet underutilized resource for Newport and the State suitable for rehabilitation to support a wide variety of activities. With the proven success of the Folk and Jazz Festivals, upgrades could provide a world class venue for grand prix sail racing events, as just an example of an activity which would bring revenue and international recognition to the Ocean State.”

In Providence, \$3.2 million will be used to acquire land adjacent to India Point Park (the abandoned “Shooters” nightclub) so that it can become an active urban gateway to the bay with expanded public access and recreational opportunities.

“Rhode Island’s citizens have invested hundreds of millions of dollars to clean up Narragansett Bay,” said Stone. “Now, this Bond will open up some of the most beautiful and dramatic stretches of the Bay’s shoreline for all, along with Rhode Island’s many visitors, to enjoy. Rhode Island has met with success when we’ve capitalized on our assets and built on our own cultural and historical traditions. Investments in Rocky Point, India Point, and Fort Adams will serve the public interest and sustain our economic future.”

The Save Our Shore Coalition estimates that, with the tourism industry as Rhode Island's second largest employer, approval of Question 4 presents a unique opportunity to enhance the security of more than 50,000 jobs in Rhode Island. By investing in and improving tourism offerings, the Ocean State will continue to attract visitors from around the world.

"What if we could protect 83 acres of prime land on the Bay for public use forever – for the cost of one candy bar a year? We can. The \$14.7 million Open Space/Recreation Bond, including interest over 20 years, will cost \$25 million, or \$2 a year for each of RI's 590,000 taxpayers. If you're willing to give up buying one candy bar a year, please vote for Question 4 on November 2 – for the sake of future generations," said David Riley, co-chair, Head of the Bay Gateway.