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## Worcester officials willing to talk stadium deal with Pawtucket Red Sox

WORCESTER - If the Pawtucket Red Sox look north to Worcester now that their Providence stadium bid has run aground, city officials here say they're open to a pitch.

"My administration is always open to big ideas, and I'm happy to sit down and talk to anyone about why they should invest in Worcester," City Manager Edward M. Augustus Jr. said Monday.

"The overwhelming success of our locally-owned team, the two-time champion Bravehearts, proves that Worcester is a great baseball town," he said.

"So while a new stadium would require some creative thinking, I'm open to the idea," Mr. Augustus said.

In an interview with Telegram & Gazette baseball writer [Bill Ballou Thursday](#), Larry Lucchino, managing partner of the Boston Red Sox Triple A affiliate, said Worcester sounded as if it had all the requirements for a new ballpark - especially a downtown urban location, if the PawSox' negotiations for a Providence riverfront stadium fell through.

Since that interview, the team's Providence waterfront talks have, indeed, come to a close.

The Providence Journal reported Saturday that the club had ended negotiations on the waterfront parcel along Interstate-195 and the Providence River that the team sought to acquire for a park in the Rhode Island capital.

Mr. Lucchino told the Journal the team would continue to look in Rhode Island for a new ballpark site, but declined comment when asked by the paper whether any Massachusetts communities had been in contact with the team.

If the PawSox come calling, Worcester will listen, city officials said.

A vacant industrial site in the Canal District - the 14-acre Wyman Gordon property - has been suggested as a potential site for a new sports complex.

"If Larry is serious, we'll be right here," said City Councilor-at-Large Frederick C. Rushton, chairman of the council's economic development committee.

"I don't want to be used (the way) Bob Kraft used Connecticut, as (leverage in negotiations)," said Mr. Rushton, recalling the New England Patriots' courtship with Hartford that led to a new stadium deal for the National Football League team in Foxboro.

"Mr. Lucchino's made a lot of money by leveraging all his options," he said. "So proceed cautiously. But (Mr. Lucchino) already knows, Worcester is interested in helping him if he wants to come into town."

District 2 City Councilor Philip P. Palmieri said he gave an unnamed PawSox representative a tour of the Wyman Gordon site about six months ago. While the PawSox were focused on the site in Providence, Mr. Palmieri said, the club intermediary said of Worcester: "We'd like to keep an open channel here."

"Do you have people that would be interested?" Mr. Palmieri said the club representative asked. "I said, 'Yes!' I did have people in Worcester that wanted to have this discussion."

The city councilor said the club's late principal owner, James J. Skeffington, had planned to visit Worcester before he passed away from a heart attack while jogging in May.

"We had a couple discussions and he said I'll come in the following week," Mr. Palmieri said. "Two days later he died. We were ready to start discussing (the Worcester site) as a viable option."



Rose Martelle and David Norton hold a two-part sign proclaiming they would rather see the PawSox remain in Pawtucket, R.I., during a rally against the Triple-A baseball team's proposed relocation to Providence. File Photo/The Associated Press

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