



NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

Superfan appreciates Bill Belichick's success

Head coach steps down after 24 years and six Super Bowl championships

By RAY DUCKLER
Monitor columnist

Randy Pierce has been rooting for the New England Patriots for nearly 50 years.

He watched them when they were awful, at Schaefer, Sullivan and Foxboro Stadiums in the 1970s and '80s. About a dozen years after his first live game, he began to listen to them live, attending nearly every game at Gillette Stadium even after he'd lost the rest of his already-fading sight.

The Patriots once named him their own personal Superfan, combining his allegiance to the team with the mountainous obstacles he's conquered, and these days his thoughts are filled with the historic press conference held Thursday in Foxboro, where Bill Belichick and Robert Kraft announced an amicable split, ending Belichick's 24-year coaching career in New England.

Pierce's message? For those who wanted Belichick gone, shame on you for your short memories.

"I wanted to hear Bill and Robert's press conference so we could finally hear from them," said Pierce, 57, and the

CEO of Concord-based Future in Sight, a non-profit organization that provides vision rehabilitation services. "I wonder how some could not have been more appreciative for 24 years of success. Bill at times was hard to like, but that is not his job. His job is to take a culture that never won anything and turn it into the greatest dynasty of all time."

Six Super Bowl championships, more than any other team in history, say mission accomplished. And following title No. 6 five years ago, Belichick could have drank for free in Boston for 100 years.

Glory in sports, however, is fleeting. Just ask former Red Sox shortstop Nomar Garcia-

parra, who went from a potential hall of famer and a fan favorite with the perfect New England name (remember NOMAH?), to a clubhouse cancer just a short time later, traded away shortly after the Red Sox broke their 86-year curse and won the World Series.

As for Belichick, radio lines have crackled with don't-let-the-door-hit-you-on-the-butt messages and that began the first month of the season, after a shaky start that led to a 4-13 record, the worst in all of Belichick's years here.

"I am concerned that fans are so frustrated about losing

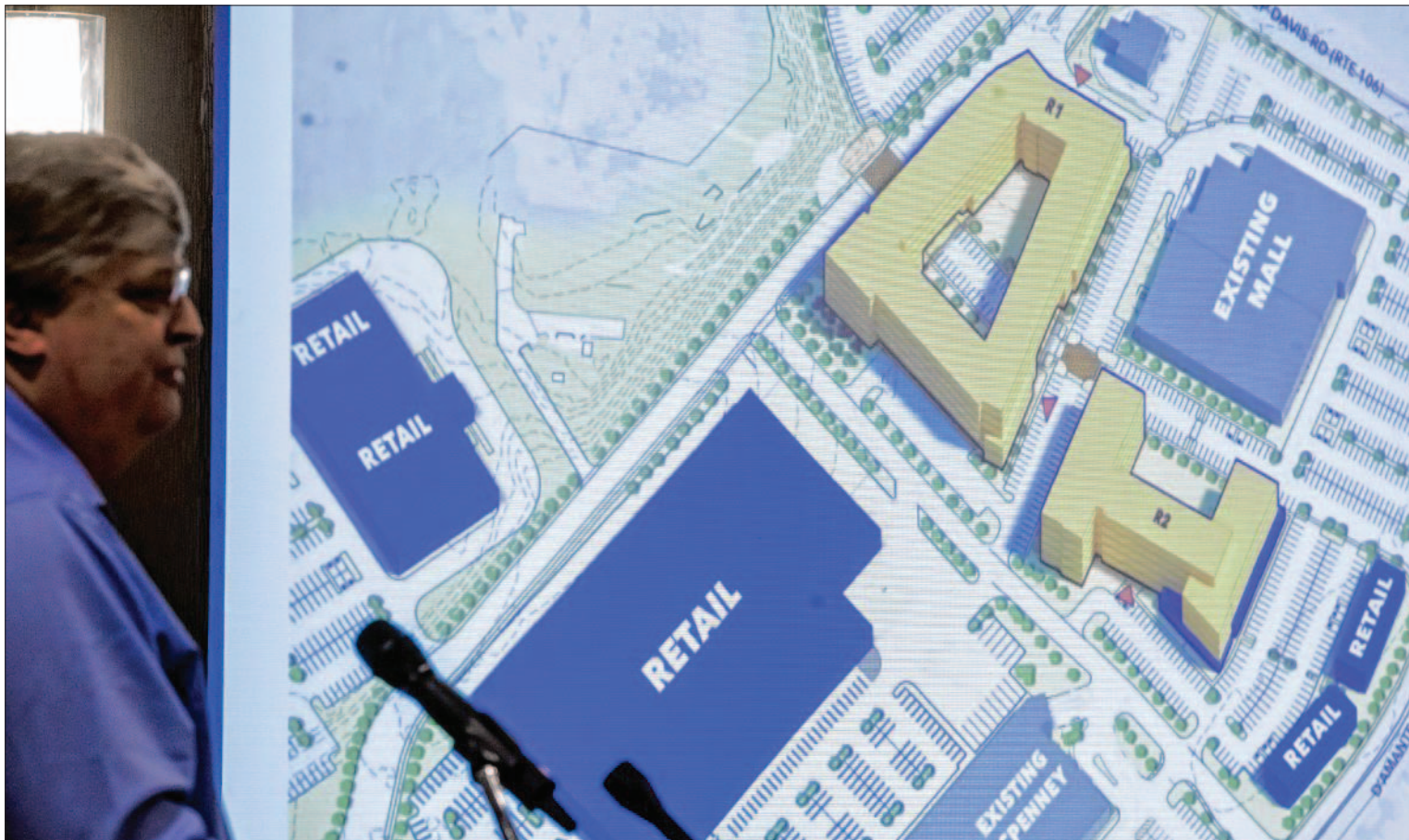


STEVEN SENNE / AP

Former New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick faces reporters during a news conference Thursday.

SEE BELICHICK A3

CONCORD: Two projects adding 1,500 housing units aired before business community



GEOFF FORESTER / Monitor staff

Doug Richardson, executive vice president of Onyx Partners, show a rendition of the plans for the Steeplegate Mall site at the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce luncheon presentation of both the Steeplegate and Monitor Way projects on Thursday in Concord.

'NOT FAST ENOUGH'

By CATHERINE McLAUGHLIN
Monitor staff

With workforce shortages and a barebones rental market, employers are eager for a boost in city housing stock. Developers behind two major mixed-use projects are eager to provide it — once they get a green light

from the city.

Representatives for the Monitor Way project, seeing the construction of more than 900 new units over six years, and the new owners of the Steeplegate Mall property, slated to add more than 600 market-rate apartments set to be completed by fall of 2026, presented their plans and fielded questions from about a hun-

dred members of the Concord Chamber of Commerce Thursday.

Developers for both projects are hoping to start construction sometime this year. Both were brought to the planning board last year, yet neither project has emerged from the ap-

SEE DEVELOPMENTS A3

CONCORD

Committee slows down process for clubhouse

Many residents at meeting spoke against \$10.3M price

By CATHERINE McLAUGHLIN
Monitor staff

The committee considering the future of the clubhouse at Beaver Meadow Golf Course will move at a slower pace while considering a wider slate of plans that includes possible renovations.

The city hit the brakes on a proposal to spend \$10.3 million to build a new clubhouse after vocal public demand at the end of last year. Multiple residents criticized the scope of the plan, a rebuild tripling the size of the existing one, and its price tag. Others expressed concern that it had been developed without sufficient public input.

On Wednesday the Beaver Meadow Golf Course Building Committee met for the first time since the clubhouse proposal was sent back from the City Council.

Mayor Byron Champlin said he wants the committee to explore plans and costs of more options for clubhouse improvements, including renovation, renovation with an addition and a scaled-back rebuild.

He also wants the committee to look into adding a public fundraising target. He cautioned that the

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MAINE

Shooter's friend warned officials; 'I literally spelled it out'

Multiple red flags and warning ignored before Lewiston killings

By HOLLY RAMER, NICK PERRY
and DAVID SHARP
Associated Press

Sean Hodgson watched and worried as his best friend of nearly two decades unraveled. His former roommate and fellow U.S. Army reservist's anger and paranoia were mounting, he had access to guns, and he refused to get help. So Hodgson

did the hardest thing of his life: He sent a text about Robert Card to their Army supervisor.

"I believe he's going to snap and do a mass shooting," he wrote on Sept. 15.

Six weeks later, Card fatally shot 18 people at a bowling alley and a bar in Lewiston before killing himself. His body was found in a trailer after a two-day search and regionwide lockdown.

"I wasn't in his head. I don't know exactly what went on," Hodgson told The Associated Press last week in an

exclusive interview, his first since the Oct. 25 shootings. "But I do know I was right."

The series of warning signs about Card have been well documented. In May, relatives warned police that Card had grown paranoid, and they expressed concern about his access to guns. In July, Card was hospitalized in a psychiatric unit for two weeks after shoving a fellow reservist and locking himself in a motel room. In August, the Army barred him from handling weapons while on duty and declared him nondeploy-

able.

And in September, Hodgson raised the most glaring red flag, telling authorities to change the passcode to the gate at their Army Reserve training facility and arm themselves if Card showed up.

"Please," he wrote. "I believe he's messed up in the head."

But authorities declined to confront Card — the clearest example of the missed opportunities to intervene and prevent the deadliest shooting in state history. That's hard to swallow for Hodgson, who's pushing

back against an independent report for law enforcement that described him as "over the top" and "alarmist."

"I did my job, and I went over and beyond it, and I literally spelled it out for them," said Hodgson, 43, referred to by only his last name in documents related to the case. "I don't know how clear I could have gotten."

Hodgson's account, taken together with law enforcement documents, videos and other interviews,

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INSIDE

REGION

SCIENTIST: EXPECT A WARMER WINTER

An El Niño weather pattern is combining with the effects of climate change, causing "an enhanced warming this winter," said state climatologist and UNH associate professor of geography Mary Stampono.

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Steeplegate Mall, Sewalls Falls developers present their plans

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proval process.

Kevin Lacasse, founder and CEO of New England Family Housing, laid out how the overlapping phases of construction for the project on Monitor Way ending in 2029 would allow for a speedier rollout of different housing options. The project is called Monitor Way because much of it would be built near the Concord Monitor building on land currently owned by the Monitor.

On undeveloped land stretching along the Merrimack River from the Sewall Falls bridge toward the new Merchant's Way complex in Penacook, construction will begin at the northern end of the parcel and generally work south, beginning with townhouses before adding apartments and commercial space, workforce housing, condominiums, then self-storage.

Starting on a fresh swath of land also poses hurdles for the project, namely the costs of creating infrastructure to support that many new residents and businesses.

Without an interstate exit at Sewall Falls, traffic flow is a concern — and was a point of inquiry at Thurs-

MORE ONLINE

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currently zoned industrial, will also have to be reclassified before it gets moving.

At the Steeplegate, traffic is less of a concern since the project is projected to decrease circulation compared to what the former mall saw at its peak, said Doug Richardson, executive vice president of development at Onyx Partners, which bought the property and the abutting Regal Cinemas plot,

"The city should be doing everything they can to expedite this kind of development."

STEVE DUPREY

last year.

Demolishing most of the existing mall structure and leaving its few remaining tenants in a section on the southeast corner, Onyx's plans include multiple five-story apartment buildings with market-rate studios, along with one- and two-bedroom apartments; adding a Whole Foods and a Costco; and more greenspace along a nearby pond for public water access.

As a nudge, and in line with the name of the event — "Catalyst Projects for Building Concord's Tax Base" — both developers highlighted



Kevin Lacasse, CEO of New England Family Housing, shows the proposal plans for the Monitor Way project at the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce luncheon on Thursday.

GEOFF FORESTER / Monitor staff

that their projects, once completed, would bring Concord more than 1,500 housing units and \$10 million of new annual tax revenue.

Not only because of the housing crisis but because of that revenue, the city should share their sense of urgency, said Steve Duprey, a long-time Concord businessman who has

his own Main Street project in the works.

"We haven't had any large major new employers move into the market, so these kinds of developments are going to be the source of tax base growth," Duprey said. "The city should be doing everything they can to expedite this kind of develop-

ment."

With one commercial tenant willing to open this fall if the property were ready, Onyx is especially anxious to work out approvals with the city.

"As fast as the city of Concord is right now, it's not fast enough," Richardson said.

Superfan says those eager to kick out Bill Belichick are shortsighted

BELICHICK FROM A1

because they've been spoiled and may fail to see how much greatness he brought," Pierce said. "I believe in a change that could have left him as the coach. I would have loved that most of all."

Storylines have flown through the fall and into winter, and that was one of them. Belichick doubled as the general manager for his entire career with the Patriots, meaning he drafted players, signed free agents and coached. Did Kraft tell Belichick he could stay if he relinquished his GM duties?

Pierce thought that that was a good idea. Belichick's track record of adding vital offensive players was seen as awful around here. He failed to give former quarterback Tom Brady the weapons he needed to win another championship. He did the same thing with Mac Jones, Brady's replacement, and was also criticized for drafting him in the first place.

He resisted acquiring a tall, speedy receiver, a deep threat, and was slow to bolster the offensive line, the unit that protects the quarterback.

"Brady was able to cover up a lot of those mistakes," Pierce said. "Bill loved defense, and that was a top-tier defense this season. Always, his first pick was defense, defense, defense. He was stubborn."



President and CEO of Future In Sight Randy Pierce with his guide dog, Swirl.

Courtesy of Julia Furukawa

Other things bothered Pierce. Once, after Jets coach Rex Ryan spoke to the media about his supposed foot fetish, receiver Wes Welker poked fun at him during the pre-game press conference, saying, with a straight face, "What you spend all year getting ready for and you just want to put your best foot forward," and "You can't just stick your toe in the water," and "Just go out there and be good little foot soldiers."

Patriots Nation thought Welker was a riot. Stuffy, old-school Bill, who maintained a powerful muzzle over his players and what they could and could not say to the media, did not. He benched Welker for the start of the Jets' game.

"He holds grudges," Pierce said.

Thursday's press conference revealed little about closed-door discussions and the Boston media's skepticism that this was a love fest until the end will run wild before

Spring Training.

Would Belichick have stayed if Kraft stripped him of his GM duties but retained him as coach? Did Kraft even offer that? Was it really amicable? And how much did breaking the all-time record for wins by a coach figure into the formula?

This end of the dynasty is hitting Patriots fans hard and will continue to for a long time. Especially fans like Pierce. His allegiance and personal story earned him Patriots Fan of the Year honors in 2003.

Former linebacker Tedy Bruschi greeted Pierce at his stadium seat after wins. Bruschi sought advice from Pierce in 2011 after suffering a stroke and hearing the story about Pierce, the poster boy for grit who lost his sight at age 22, then, after a period of self-pity and despair, returned better than ever, scaling the Granite State's 48 mountains over 4,000-feet, scaling mountains in other countries, and

all sorts of mountains all over the place.

His home contains more Patriots paraphernalia than a street vendor working the Gillette Stadium parking lot. He saw the Patriots play when they were terrible, and he watches them today, at their

very worst.

He appreciates what Belichick did for this region, and would have welcomed him back in a lesser role. No matter your opinion, though, the sports landscape here is shifting. Everyone can agree on that.

"I've gone to every game for 30 years and missed maybe two," Pierce said. "For 24 years, that stability was helpful and you knew what to expect, and now we don't know what to expect. There was stability with him that I am going to miss."

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