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FROM MAYOR TO MEDIATOR

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Brockton Mayor John T. Yunits wasn't born a politician.

He was drafted.

A trial lawyer by trade, "Jack" (as he is known around town) was running his own firm in the mid-1990s when members of Brockton 21st Century Corp. — an organization he was part of that worked towards improving the city — suggested he run for mayor.

The rest, as they say, is history. Yunits went on to win that election and the next four that followed, making him the longest-tenured mayor in Brockton's history.

But it looks like the popular mayor's tour of duty at City Hall is about to end. Yunits recently announced that he won't seek reelection at the end of the year when his fifth term expires.

Yunits says he has achieved everything he expected to accomplish as mayor, including his biggest goal, which was to reinvigorate the City of Brockton.

"The city had stopped believing in itself and residents were despondent. We were losing our middle class," the mayor says, recalling the year he first took office back in 1995.

But after nine years of fixing what was broken, Yunits says that families and businesses have returned. "The whole city has changed its attitude," he happily notes.

What's more, real-estate values in Brockton have more than doubled, dozens of new businesses have moved into the city and more than 2,500 new jobs have been created, all during his tenure, he reports.

The Brockton-born-and-raised politician was also instrumental in the opening of Campanelli Stadium, home of independent baseball's Brockton Rox, and he helped build three "state-of-the-art" schools.

The mayor is further credited with bringing the Brockton District Court into the downtown area — a project Yunits had pushed for even before he took elected office.

While he'll miss "the opportunity to effectuate change," Yunits says he won't miss the long hours that have taken him from his family. "I've just reached a point where, when balancing the love of the job with the love of the family, the family wins," says the father of four.

So what's next for the soon-to-be-former-mayor? Yunits says he plans to return to the practice of law, though this time as a mediator with Paul Finn of Commonwealth Mediation and Conciliation.

The experiences he's had as mayor should come in handy in the ADR arena, he notes, just as his legal background helped him run the city.

Specifically, he credits his lawyering experience with giving him a "good feel for people," which he says is important for a leader and for someone who is often called upon to settle disputes. Mediation, Yunits adds, is the "wave of the future" — even in the municipal setting — which is why he's excited to take on his next challenge.

But while he's leaving the familiar confines of City Hall, Yunits won't necessarily rule out a run for some future political office.

"I still have a sizeable campaign account ... so I'm leaving my options open," the outgoing mayor reports. "But I don't see any positions on the horizon that I would be going to at this point in time. I just want to spend as much time as I can with my family."