

## Just a mound of dirt in the park

*Lacking funds and enough support, state 9/11 memorial sits in limbo*

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There's still a giant mound of dirt in Liberty State Park in Jersey City where New Jersey's 9/11 memorial is supposed to be standing.

"Empty Sky" was supposed to be two stainless steel walls, 30 feet high and 200 feet long, perched on a 10-foot-high grassy knoll.

But the state's official memorial to the 743 New Jersey victims of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001 has hung in limbo as activists have battled with the state. In addition, the initial \$12 million cost has grown as high as \$25 million because of the price of steel.

This past Thursday, those supporting the memorial spoke at a 9/11 remembrance ceremony and offered ways for the public to donate funds.

Rick Cahill, chairman of the New Jersey 9/11 Memorial Foundation, opened the ceremony with a moment of silence. Then he discussed the foundation, a 501c3 organization formed this summer, which is taking donations via its Web site.

Those involved in the foundation say about \$5 million needs to be raised.

Cahill said that of the \$13 million already donated from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (\$7 million) and from the state (\$6 million), \$1.2 million will be committed to initial landscaping around the memorial.

Gov. Jon Corzine followed Cahill, impressing upon the audience the importance of the memorial.

"Remembrance and reflection are absolutely in order for those who lost and those who sacrificed so much to save others," Corzine said. "It is absolutely essential that we maintain that memory."

One of the attendees was Betsy Parks of Bayonne, a secretary for the foundation who lost her brother Robert on 9/11. She said the memorial would keep the memory of her brother alive.

Jersey City and Hoboken already have smaller memorials to the victims, and Bayonne is the site of a large memorial donated by a Russian artist.

There are two reasons that activists are against the memorial. Some complain that in its present location, it will block views of New York City, a situation antithetical to the memory of what happened. Others are frustrated at the lack of public meetings to choose a design.

On Thursday, Corzine said that "significant studies" of the memorial project do not indicate that the memorial will block the view.

Some opposition has come from the Friends of Liberty State Park (FOLSP), a local volunteer



**OPPOSED TO THE PLANNED MEMORIAL –  
Members of the Friends of Liberty State Park  
stood in the park Thursday afternoon.**

group that has helped oversee the preservation of the park since 1988. The FOLSP filed a lawsuit in November 2006 to stop construction because they say it will block views, if kept in its present location and at its present height.

Local and state officials including Mayor Jerramiah Healy and state Sen. Sandra Cunningham have also come out against the construction until other designs and new locations in the park are considered.

### **Still opposed**

FOLSP members posted signs outside the old Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal before Thursday's ceremony letting people know that the memorial will block views and that they want public meeting on this issue.

Inside the terminal, they stood quietly during the ceremony.

One of them is Tanya Chauhan, a Jersey City resident who lost four friends on 9/11 and recalled just barely getting out alive from 1 World Trade Center. But Chauhan is not on board with the memorial.

"I hear a need for a memorial ... but there are other parts of the park that could be used for the memorial," Chauhan said.

Sam Pesin, FOLSP president and son of the park's founder, Morris Pesin, said he did not hear "anything new" at the press conference. He also took issue with some of Corzine's comments about the situation.