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Statement to JC Planning Board on the Liberty National Marina 8/31

I'm Sam Pesin, speaking as the President of The Friends of LSP. This will be a very different

statement than the one I had prepared two weeks ago. The Aug. 17th statement was based on the total lack of communication that led to the Friends learning about the marina plan 8 months after they applied to the DEP and the Aug 17th statement expressed the primary concern that the marina's dock C was too close the busy LSP public boat launch. We felt their plan was not a context sensitive design.

The Friends is the 22 year old park stewardship organization. We have over 900 members. We're an all-volunteer, non-profit, tax-exempt organization. Our mission is to preserve, protect, conserve and promote LSP. We basically aim to protect public access and use of the park and to improve the park for future generations.

We are an ORFO – Officially Recognized Friends Organization of the DEP's Division of Parks and Forestry.

I'm very glad that there was a very positive meeting which Mayor Healy organized with the marina applicant representatives and park Supt. Josh Osowski and Administrator Frank Gallagher and Friends Board representatives. As a result of the discussion at that meeting facilitated by the Mayor, the applicant made a good faith effort to redesign dock C's location so there is 75 ft distance between the marina and the public boat launch area.

Additionally, marina representatives will work with park officials on buoys and channel markings and signage to enhance safety. Very importantly, it was agreed to that the golf course, marina and condo tower owners' representatives will meet periodically with park

officials and Friends Board to discuss plans and issues of concern. So I want to thank the applicant for their responsiveness and thank the Mayor for bringing neighbors together.

For this Board's public record and to emphasize the importance of communication between developers, city and state officials and citizen groups, I feel it is necessary and helpful for me, in the spirit of constructive and respectful criticism, to briefly provide the disappointing public affairs process that led up to the meeting with the Mayor and the joint pledge to work together in the future.

I get to paraphrase Paul Newman in Cool Hand Luke by summarizing the process as a failure to communicate. Last Fall, the applicant applied to the DEP for a Waterfront Development Permit and didn't show the plans beforehand to park officials or Friends. The Friends were particularly surprised and disappointed about the applicant not setting up a meeting a year ago about these plans, because the Friends have been very supportive of the golf course. We wished them great success and supported a land swap near the beginning of my father's street, Morris Pesin Drive, so that the golf course would have direct access to their main driveway. The Mayor, Bob Cotter and I were on a CBS national sports documentary about the Barclays Tournament and I spoke highly of Liberty National and the tournament. We supported using some park parking spaces during the tournament's summer weekend.

The applicant sent a notice about the DEP application to the Planning Division's Bob Cotter and Maryann Bucci Carter who is JC's representative on the LSP Public Advisory Committee. Bob and Maryann failed to communicate with park officials or Friends.

The DEP issued their permit in March and they failed beforehand to inform park officials or the Friends about the plan. That's the dysfunctionality of the DEP – that the Land Use Division didn't communicate with park officials or even Trenton's Assistant

Commissioner of Natural and Historic Resources.

I ask this Board to please officially ask the Planning Division to inform park officials and the Friends of any present or future plans as they learn about them for the perimeter of LSP. Bob Cotter, whom I have great respect for, recently wrote me about the upcoming relocation of the car pound from the park's western side, and he may not know the status of the Lucarelli project, the View near the Jersey Ave. cul de sac, or the status of George Filopoulos's hotel and conference center just north of Liberty Science Center. I know the Planning Division does value community input but with the importance to JC of LSP, I ask that the Division be more vigilant & helpful to LSP by letting us know what's going on, even in the early discussion stages of any perimeter project. The Friends have been working with Redevelopment Agency and the Planning Division on terrific plans for the extension of Jersey Ave. A top firm is currently revising the plans and I'm sure this Board will be pleased with those plans. I hope the federal TIGER grant comes in to move that forward to connect neighborhoods to each other and connect LSP to neighborhoods. Without the communication, the Friends found out on July 9th from the Army Corps of the marina plans. We expressed our concerns to the Army Corps as did others about the marina's consequences. We want to thank the organizations that wrote to the Army Corps including the NY/NJ Baykeeper, the Historic Paulus Hook Association and the Hudson River Waterfront Conservancy. We also thank the couple hundred boaters and fishermen and other park users who signed petitions over the period of a week and we thank the individuals including elected officials Freeholders Bill O'Dea and Jeffrey Dublin who supported our concerns in letters to the Army Corps.

If the applicant had come to park people a year ago, we probably would have worked out

then what we thankfully worked out last week with the Mayor's encouragement.

So, the marina design issue is having a happy ending with the Friends supporting the revised design as do park officials and with us looking forward to respectful communication in the coming years with our Liberty National neighbors.

This is one clear example and lesson for public affairs that well-meaning people who care about JC and parks can listen to each other's perspectives and find fair solutions.

But thankfully with LSP and Liberty National, we will work together as great waterfront neighbors.

A few days, after my father, Morris Pesin's canoe trip with a reporter to show how close to the JC shoreline was to Lady Liberty, he gave a speech about the park idea

to the City Commission, the forerunner of the City Council, and he stated "the attention of

the nation would be focused on the great waterfront of Jersey City adjacent to the park and the possibility of the waterfront's economic development would be brought to the forefront." His vision came to pass as LSP sparked the Gold Coast.

Both economic development and open space are of course crucial for Jersey City's future and today marks a good chapter for both.

My concluding remark as an individual is that God wants us to communicate, cooperate and care about each other and the working out of this issue bodes well for the future of

LSP and Liberty National as neighbors and I trust sets a good example for other public issues.