<u>Friends of Liberty State Park Statement on LSP interior's and the park's future</u>: Major Commercialization and Privatization battle against billionaire Paul Fireman's surrogates' assault on the DEP's great "New Vision" interior plans of diverse nature habitats and paths, and free active recreation. Also, Friends' support for other amenities

The overwhelming majority broad public consensus – many tens of thousands - have always supported a Free and Accessible Urban Public Parkland behind Lady Liberty for enjoyment of free open space, free nature and free active recreation for everyone to enjoy and against commercialization and privatization. **LSP is a priceless mental, physical and spiritual urban public health resource behind Lady Liberty.**

This battle, after 46 years of grassroots anti-commercialization/privatization battles, is for LSP's Interior and its impact on all of LSP. The battle is against billionaire Paul Fireman, owner of Liberty National Golf Course, his lobbyists, two funded front groups and his other funded surrogates pushing for interior commercial venues including a 5000 and 2500 seat stadium and 7000-seat commercial concert venue.

The new LSP advisory task force is illegitimate and a travesty because the June non-protection Paul Fireman law that established it was heavily lobbied for and written by Fireman's lobbyist. The law put several; Fireman-funded surrogates on it. Those Fireman surrogates had pushed total lies and vicious smear attacks to kill the LSP Protection Act which was supported by 111 Coalition groups and 33,000 petition signers and was essential to end 46 years of privatization assaults. The Protection Act had allowed small scale commercial activities, and the Act should've become law and it should've received the $50 million dollars. Fireman's surrogates will work to hijack the task force to push their destructive commercial venues plans – assaulting the Central Park vision for LSP as a free urban park.

Their exclusionary, admission-fee, unpreventable traffic-jam causing sports and entertainment complex commercial venues plans ignores the decades of the clear and strong Voice of the People for a FREE park, and ignores the DEP's plans for diverse nature habitats, paths and free active recreation. **The Jersey Journal's** editorial on 8/15/22, stated that this "next battle (after passing the LSP Caven Point Protection bill S2956)) is preventing the construction of a Fireman-supported sports and entertainment complex that will erect a **new barrier to the people's enjoyment of the park: ticket booths."** These **commercial venues** are **exclusionary because they will rob parkland for admission fee uses with privatization.** Each will charge **high entrance fees** and only those who can afford the high-ticket prices will have access to what should be an open, free park for all to enjoy a multitude of free activities.

The commercial venues would hold regular admission-fee sports and entertainment events on all nice weekends – with LSP already jam-packed – and so the commercial venues will cause unpreventable traffic jams and taking up free parking spaces blocking park users from access. Local and other visitors to the habitats' paths and free recreation will themselves need shuttle buses and additional free parking.

The second Fireman-funded front group, "The People's Park Foundation" (a travesty name as People's Park has always meant a Free Park) is pushing the commercial venue plans with propaganda posters, flyers, and school presentations which omit the DEP's plans for 61 acres of active recreation and ignore their severe negative impacts on accessibility, use and enjoyment of LSP's Public Land.

The DEP's New Vision interior nature habitats/paths "restoration" plans, based on over 3 decades of its 1995 vision and after many studies and several public meetings (including support by the late JC Mayor Glenn Cunningham) is to create an **international model** of the former CRRNJ freight yard site becoming a spectacular **165-acre urban natural area with diverse habitats and miles of paths and education uses. This urban natural resource plans is** at 60% planned with engineering details and now fully funded along with the interior's remediation, with Exxon pollution Natural Resource Damage funds.

The DEP's June 2021 decision of 61 acres of free active recreation amenities – after not allowing active recreation amenities since LSP opened - is based on its 2020-2021 3600 survey responses, input from several public online meetings. The DEP's plans also include 11 acres of free active recreation amenities outside the interior. These free active recreation amenities should be primarily for Jersey City and county middle schools, high schools and colleges and should be reservable as a DEP official confirmed in 2020 for groups for family reunions, neighborhood groups, unions, companies. etc.

LSP is scarce and precious urban parkland to serve the Common Public Good, and not an economic development project. A **Star Ledger** 2003 editorial stated, "Parks are not supposed to make money. They are supposed to provide green oases, particularly in densely packed urban areas like Hudson County.

In addition to The Friends supporting the DEP's New Vision plan for diverse habitats, miles of paths and free active recreation amenities, we support:

- **only small-scale commercial activities** can be approved by the DEP as in Protection Act
- re-establishing an essential shuttle bus **system** which the Friends facilitated when the LSP light rail station opened in 2000 and Governor Christie terminated.
- **long popular remediation and re-use of the Terminal sheds** for small scale commercial activities and other varied uses which public input expresses support for.
- **bandshell/amphitheater in the North Cove Field behind ferry parking lot** (where the free JC Summerfest Sunday concerts are held) for free and admission-fee cultural performances but with no permanent seating as varied special events use this field such as festivals and charity runs/walks. Attendees to bandshell/amphitheater events would bring chairs/blankets or producers would set up chairs if they want to, for admission fee events.
- The Friends have always supported **periodic admission-fee festivals** as approved by LSP staff for the North Cove Field, and east of Freedom Way "Green Ring" and nearby fields.
- The only parts of the billionaire's ideas which are compatible with decades of the public mandate for a FREE park, would be a **Free-community/recreation center with amenities and programming aimed at local youth and seniors**. Also, community leaders have been advocating for community centers throughout Jersey City. Such a LSP community center only makes sense in LSP's northwest 4.25-acre area near the eastern end of Johnston Ave. (part of the 11 acres outside the interior in the DEP's 2021 plan), and there must be robust public input to help the DEP decide what will be inside it and its size. Also, **playgrounds and community gardens** and in that 4.25-acre LSP entry area.

<u>KEEP LIBERTY STATE PARK A FREE PEOPLE'S PARK next to Lady Liberty</u>
FOR ALL TO ENJOY FREE Recreation, Open Space and Nature Experiences!

Ballfields, track & field areas, basketball and other Free active recreation amenities

NO Exclusionary, Admission-Fee Commercial Venues robbing our public parkland!

NO 5000 and 2500 seat Stadiums and NO 7000 seat Commercial Concert Venue

Causing Unpreventable Weekend Traffic Jams blocking Public Access to LSP!

LSP's 46 years of the Overwhelming Majority's Broad Public Consensus for a FREE PARK and against Commercialization and Privatization of this Urban State Park Must Be Respected!

NJDEP shall only allow small-scale commercial activities, including periodic admission-fee events, and a band shell/amphitheater in North Cove Field behind the ferry parking lot