Stop Liberty State Park's Desecration by DEP Commissioner LaTourette's Marina Lease

Liberty State Park advocates are needed to crucially fight again to protect the park at the State House Commission's Virtual Public Hearing on Thursday 1/15 at 10am by strongly opposing the DEP's new 60 year marina lease allowing the gargantuan boat storage warehouse for 500 boats!

Five days before Mikie Sherrill becomes Governor, the shamefully undemocratic DEP Commissioner, betraying his own anti-privatization statements and ignoring 49 years of privatization opposition and 702 of 707 public comments in late summer, is pushing his severely harmful lease with the multibillion-dollar Texas-based corporation. He must not get away with his lowdown abuse of power for what will be condemned as the "Governor Murphy Boat Storage Warehouse" in this national treasure park.

Governor-elect Mikie Sherrill must be respected as she should review and revise the lease. We trust that she'll honor the decades of the broad public consensus against LSP privatization in battle after battle – no matter what money was promised – and will respect warehouse opposition by state Senator Raj Mukherji, Congressman Rob Menendez and Jersey City Mayor-elect James Solomon.

LaTourette's lease is a warehouse war on LSP's character, history, openness, purpose, and legacy by allowing the massive boat storage warehouse on 2.3 acres and 70 feet high and a second building 55 feet high on .3 acres - along LSP's northern entrance across from the 9/11 Grove of Remembrance in this priceless urban quality of life oasis and sacred American public land behind Lady Liberty and Ellis Island.

An attorney letter to the Commission explains that the State may presently have no lawful obligation to construct, replace, or finance the marina bulkhead at all so the proposed 60-year lease would be premised on an obligation that does not legally exist, further underscoring why Commission action at this time would be premature and improper.

The same attorney letter explains that the DEP's lease process was defective because it didn't comply with the Green Acres Act requiring a "valuation of the lands" and that it be made public.

Without such a professional appraisal or valuation, the Commission lacks the factual basis and legal authority required to determine whether the proposed 60-year lease protects the public interest and is a bad deal or good financial deal.

It was shamefully deceptive that the Commissioner, wanting no opposition, hid the warehouse size in the August proposed lease. He secretly signed the "Lease Terms Sheet" in November and didn't post it on the DEP website for a month. The DEP's "Summary" to the Commission omits the warehouse size, which is in "Attachment 4", mentioning only square footage but not acreage.

The National Park Service ruled in 1990 and re-affirmed in 2008, that it would be a "conversion" of federal funds for "public outdoor recreation" if a boat storage building exceeded a half-acre.

The DEP's informal athletic fields planned for the existing lease's lawn are already funded and are moving forward whether there's a new lease or not! Construction and interested contractors' meetings are happening and the current lease allows the DEP to create active recreation there.

LaTourette has no good reason to rush this lease which would permanently mar LSP with its sickening constant visual assault of gigantic commercial buildings in the People's Park.

The State House Commission (SHC) voting for these monstrous commercial buildings would be the worst decision in LSP's history and a dangerous precedent.

Liberty State Park, representing the magnificence and spirit of America in a way no other place does, must be protected for future generations and not sold down the river by uncaring officials.

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