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Dear Jersey City Reporter Editor in Chief Caren Matzner ,

The Friends of Liberty State Park express our gratitude to the Hudson County Open Space Advisory Board for recommending the grant of \$200,000 for the Friends to fund the first sheltered picnic pavilion in LSP in a planned Group Picnic Pavilion Area (GPPA).

We thank County Executive Tom DeGise for his administration's leadership in initiating and supporting the Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust Fund to enhance the quality of life of county residents.

It's been almost six years since the ballot passage of the Trust fund, which is funded through a property tax, and over \$26 million has been approved – not counting this year - for local government agencies and non profit organizations working to preserve open space, improve recreational facilities, and restore historic and cultural resources.

The Friends applied for this grant because there are not enough group picnic areas in LSP to meet the high demand for group reservations, sought mostly by Hudson County residents, and because many people, upon learning that there are no sheltered tables, decide to go elsewhere and most likely out of our county for their family, work, civic and church gatherings. Also, these sheltered tables will prevent the disappointment by those making group picnic reservations and then rain ruining their day in the park.

Hudson County taxpayers pay into this Trust Fund and it's great that many of them will benefit by being able to reserve this first LSP picnic pavilion in our county's great public resource. Our county's groups with ethnically diverse backgrounds enjoying themselves behind Lady Liberty is a symbol of our American values and of democracy itself.

The Friends' eventual goal is a Group Picnic Pavilion area with 3 to 4 pavilions in "Freedom Field", formerly the "Dog Show Field", by the corner of Pesin Drive and Freedom Way, and between Pesin Drive to the south and Conrad Drive to the north.

This pavilion can be opened by next Memorial Day, and with this important project started, the Friends will spend \$30,000 on landscaping and seek grants to fund a larger pavilion. The State of NJ has already invested \$150,000 for site improvements and additional State funds are dedicated for the engineering plans, infrastructure, parking area, and bathroom.

The GPPA will be a worthy amenity primarily used by our county residents wanting group picnics. Picnickers can engage in unstructured recreation in the field next to the pavilions, such as tossing balls and frisbees, playing choose-up ballgames, etc.

We also thank the Jersey City Council for its supporting Resolution, which emphasized that the biggest demand for special use permits in LSP is for group picnic reservations. Thanks goes out also for the letters of support from many community groups including the Urban League of Hudson County, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Hudson County, the Lafayette Neighborhood Action Committee and Van Vorst Park Association.

If my father Morris Pesin, Audrey Zapp and Ted Conrad were here today, they would applaud this recommendation as furthering the Hudson County grassroots vision and campaign for a “family park”- with picnicking a primary way of our serving hard working families. In 1965, Jersey City donated 165 acres to the formation of LSP which opened in 1976. The County Trust Fund picnic pavilion grant is a bookend to that donation and will improve our County’s crown jewel of Liberty Park.

We also want to take this opportunity to thank County Executive Tom DeGise - whose sister, former Councilwoman Lois Shaw, spoke for him at the Friends’ 2006 public meeting - for joining Mayor Healy and our county legislative delegation in opposing the ill-conceived location of the NYC skyline view-blocking memorial at LSP. The Governor has refused to hold public hearings or to listen to park users about the impact of the 9/11 memorial in its Terminal riverside location with its 10 ft hill and its 2 steel walls, 30 ft high by 200 ft. long.

Sam Pesin,
President on behalf of Board
of Friends of LSP

