

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

The overwhelming majority broad public consensus – many tens of thousands - have always been for an urban FREE People's Park behind Lady Liberty for the enjoyment of free open space, nature and free active recreation for everyone to enjoy – and against commercialization and privatization., but supporting small scale commercial activities as included in the LSP Protection Act, killed by Paul Fireman.

The battle for LSP's Interior and its impact on all of LSP is against billionaire Paul Fireman, owner of Liberty National Golf Course, his lobbyists, two funded front groups and other funded opportunist surrogates shamelessly 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 law that established it was heavily lobbied for and influenced by billionaire Fireman's lobbyist, and the law put a few of Fireman-funded surrogates on it. Those Fireman surrogates had pushed total lies and vicious smear attacks to kill the LSP Protection Act supported by 111 Coalition groups and 33,000 petition signers and it was essential to end 46 years of privatization assaults. The Protection Act had allowed small scale commercial activities, and the Protection Act should've become law and it should've received the \$50 million dollars. Fireman's surrogates will work to hijack the interior task force to push their destructive commercial venues plans –assaulting the Central Park vision for LSP as a free park behind Lady Liberty.

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 public land 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.

In addition to The Friends of LSP 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 re-use of the Terminal sheds for small scale commercial activity, and uses which public input expresses support for in a public process.
- 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 performances but with no permanent seating as various other special events use this field such as festivals and charity runs/walks. Attendees to bandshell/amphitheater evens would bring chairs or use 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 "Green Ring" and "Green Park" east of Freedom Way.
- 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 for local youth and seniors. Community leaders have been advocating for community centers in all Jersey City wards. Such a community center 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 June 2021 plan). and there must be robust public input to help the DEP decide what will be inside it and its size. Also, community gardens and playgrounds in that area would be walkable to neighborhoods.

LSP is a priceless mental, physical and spiritual public health resource behind the Statue!

We will never stop fighting for a free & accessible park for future generations!

KEEP LIBERTY STATE PARK A FREE PEOPLE'S PARK next to Lady Liberty

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