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MAYOR OF JERSEY CITY

CITY OF JERSEY CITY

OFFICE OF CITY COUNCIL

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JERMAINE D. ROBINSON
WARD F COUNCILMAN

October 15, 2020

Olivia Glenn
Deputy Commissioner, NJDEP
401 E State Street
Trenton, NJ 08608

Dear Deputy Commissioner Glenn,

On behalf of the residents in the Ward F neighborhoods I represent, I am writing to express our serious doubts and concerns with the Department of Environmental Protection's remediation plan for Liberty State Park and the process by which this plan has been rolled out. I appreciate your office having a focus on environmental racism and ensuring underserved communities have a voice on these matters. That said, I have serious concerns that the proposed plan appears to leave contamination in the Park, does not provide for the kinds of active recreation that was originally promised in the Park's inclusive 1977 Master Plan, and was put forward without any input from communities of color and is now being pushed in a process that is incredibly inconvenient for the men, women and families I represent.

The DEP's plan appears to cap contamination within the Park rather than remove it completely. This lesser standard has become all too common in communities of color. It is no longer acceptable, either in Liberty State Park or anywhere else where Black and Spanish speaking people would bear the brunt of the contamination. Any plan should clean up all contamination and remove it from the Park once and for all.

Liberty State Park is a remarkable place, but it sorely lacks active recreation and has since the 1970s. The original plan for the Park called for things like ballfields, tennis courts, basketball courts and other kinds of recreation that Jersey City youth could take advantage of. They have never been built. For years, we have heard promises that these kinds of activities were coming. Instead, we are no closer to active recreation today than we were 40 years ago. The DEP's vague claims of active recreation as part of this new plan leave little hope and much skepticism. We have heard it before.

What concerns us most, however, is both the process by which the plan was announced and the way in which DEP is soliciting public feedback. Despite the Park being located in the ward I represent, we were not provided any details of the plan nor was our opinion asked on it before it was announced. If you are aware of the 40 years' worth of communities of color being

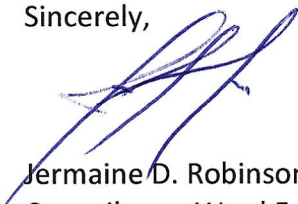
ignored on Liberty State Park, you know why the DEP's lack of outreach is especially problematic.

Now that a plan has been announced, there is apparently only going to be a single, virtual meeting held next Tuesday, October 20, to discuss the plan and take questions from residents. Does the DEP really believe that a single virtual meeting, held a time when most parents are taking care of their children and many in the community are either still working or just returning from work, is sufficient? We fail to understand how this process can be justified.

The communities we represent deserve better from their State government. Local residents deserve an opportunity to be heard and listened to regarding the future of Liberty State Park. We are requesting that the DEP agree to hold additional meetings on the Park remediation plan. Further, these meetings should be planned in coordination with my office and other local community leaders so that a maximum number of residents can be informed of and provide feedback on the plan. Moreover, as a recognition of the technological disadvantages communities of color face, additional methods of communicating feedback on the plan be provided.

The future of Liberty State Park is too important to be determined over a two-week period and with just one public meeting. The Park needs to be cleaned up of all contamination, provide true active recreation, include feedback from communities of color and have a truly open and thoughtful public input process. I, and the communities of color I represent, find anything short of that unacceptable.

Sincerely,



Jermaine D. Robinson
Councilman, Ward F – Jersey City, New Jersey

C: Sandra D. Cunningham - Senator, NJLD-31
Angela V. McKnight - Assemblywoman, NJLD-31
Steven M. Fulop - Mayor, Jersey City, NJ
Catherine McCabe-Commissioner NJ DEP