

Liberty State Park Design Task Force Meeting

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

6 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

Liberty State Park, Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal, Main Lobby Area

1 Audrey Zapp Drive, Jersey City, NJ 07305

Task Force Member or Attendee	Attendance
Shawn LaTourette Commissioner, NJ Department of Environmental Protection	Present
John Cecil, Co-Chair Assistant Commissioner, State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites, NJ Department of Environmental Protection	Present
Maggie McCann-Johns, Co-Chair Administrator, Urban State Parks & Initiatives NJ Department of Environmental Protection	Present
Charles Brian Shankle Superintendent Liberty State Park	Present
Stacey MacEwan Bureau Chief, Office of Natural Resource Restoration NJ Department of Environmental Protection	Present
Sam Pesin President of the Friends of Liberty State Park	Present
Elnardo Webster President of Liberty State Park for All	Present
Hon. Steven Fulop Mayor of Jersey City	Represented by Barkha Patel
Lucinda McLaughlin Director, Recreation and Youth Development, Jersey City	Present
Hon. Jerry Walker Hudson County Commissioner for District 3	Present
Michael Ascolese Hudson County Chief of Division of Parks	Present
Norma Fernandez Jersey City Public Schools Superintendent	Absent
Richard T. Smith NAACP, New Jersey State Conference President	Absent
Charles Mainor NAACP, Jersey City Branch President	Absent
Jane Cohen Public Member appointed by the Governor <i>Former Director of the NJ Governor's Office of Climate Action</i>	Absent

Paulina Banasiak Public Member appointed by the Governor <i>Vice President at the Zita Group</i>	Absent
Edward Oatman Public Member appointed by the Senate President <i>Union County Manager</i>	Absent
David Passante Public Member appointed by the Senate President <i>NJ Business Owner, Royal Printing Service</i>	Present
Tonya L. Keyes Public Member appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly <i>Jersey City Business Owner, Keyes Red Door Realty & Associates</i>	Absent
Franklin Walker Public Member appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly <i>Former Jersey City Public Schools Superintendent</i>	Present
Luz Guzman Jersey City Resident Appointed by DEP Jersey City Environmental Commissioner <i>Friends of Lincoln Park Member</i>	Present
Robert Hurley, Sr. Jersey City Resident Appointed by DEP <i>Former Jersey City High School Basketball Coach President, People's Park Foundation</i>	Present
Meera Jaffrey Jersey City Resident Appointed by DEP <i>Retired Jersey City Public School Teacher</i> <i>Member of the NJ Sierra Club and Jersey City Reservoir Alliance</i>	Present
Paula Mahayosnand Jersey City Resident Appointed by DEP <i>President, Jersey City Parks Coalition</i>	Present

Meeting Notes

1. Call to Order (Co-Chair John Cecil, Assistant Commissioner, Parks, Forests, Historic Sites)
 - a. Call to order by John Cecil
 - b. Quorum met
2. Commissioner's Welcome (Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette)
 - a. Reviewing the agenda
3. Phase 2 Planning (Overview by Arup)
 - a. Sherazad Mehta, Amelia Casey, Jared Edgar McKnight, and David Ostrich presenting
 - b. Public Feedback Key Findings (Virtual Survey)

- i. 728 responses
 - ii. Environmental health is the goal that resonates most with public respondents
 - iii. Top active recreation priorities are water, play, and track
- c. 5/11 Open House Takeaways
 - i. 120+ participants
 - ii. Reviewed attendee survey results and images from the event
 - iii. Findings from each Open House Station

Task Force Feedback

- Elnardo Webster – The survey results are consistent among the results we have seen so far.
 - Sam Pesin - The more public comment the better. This is building off a survey from 2021, which was an active recreation survey.
 - Lucinda McLaughlin – Found the presentation helpful to link everything together, as there was a lot going on at the open house and the information come across choppy. Liked that her daughter was excited at the Open House and believes we need to hear from more young voices since it is their future, in different environments than just the park itself. Asks what other opinions or groups that we should solicit opinions from might be.
 - Paula Mahayosnand – Liked the opportunity to engage with the public - it was very easy for the public to explain changes they'd like to see and adds more context than just paper-based surveys
 - Franklin Walker - We met our target of putting together a lot of variables. The assignment for the task force was to do a needs assessment, and the process became like a Christmas list with lots of ideas. We don't know everything what we need - the future might have different needs so we should emphasize the presence of flex spaces so that the needs of people can be accommodated into the future.
 - Robert Hurley, Sr. – Excited about the potential of the park and to see the interior's progress. Notes it is important to address what will become of the train shed.
 - Barkha Patel - New observations have come to light that previous surveys didn't highlight, such as sensory experience. Emphasizes that we need to start thinking about placemaking with the natural elements of the park - we've said we want to integrate that, but how are we going to do that? Appreciates the consistency of messaging around accessible access to the park. Today a barrier exists getting into the park (both physical and psychological) - does a flexible and more intentional programming for the north end make more sense, and how can we make it feel more welcoming?
- d. LSP-South Program Opportunities: Southern Athletics Hub
 - i. Reviewed three (3) design iterations that had been updated from the previous versions shown during the 4/9 Design Task Force Meeting

- e. Integrating Active Recreation: Distribution of Facilities Between LSP-North & South (track and field, soccer field, baseball/cricket fields, courts, and flex play zones)
- f. Parkwide Transportation Considerations – *did not present these slides*
- g. Revitalization Program Next Steps

Task Force Feedback

- Elnardo Webster – Asks why supportive infrastructure makes up a third of the property and why not have more fields. Expresses that to him parking is a non-starter.
- Barkha Patel – Asks if implementation phasing is influenced by desire for each amenity or for logistics reasons. John Cecil explains that there is a yearning for things to happen quickly. Barkha suggests maybe that we prioritize larger flexible fields first then the courts second. John agrees that we may have overprogrammed and that a flexible northern portion of the park makes sense.
- Sam Pesin - Work needs to be done for the transportation elements – notes that the natural areas have been reduced and says parking would have to be in the field area due to space constraints.
- Meera Jaffrey - Unstructured spaces in the north and structured in the south is a good idea - can move the nature play to the unstructured side.
- Jerry Walker – asks if it is possible to find space for recreation that is accessible to those with special needs. Commissioner LaTourette and Maggie McCann-Johns discuss funding behind an inclusive, universally designed playground space that is planned to be implemented in the park.
- Luz Guzman - Asks if the historic nature of the train shed will remain. Suggests using the train shed for arts. Commissioner LaTourette assures that the historical elements will be preserved aside from any modifications needed for safety.
- Paula Mahayosnand asks if multi-seasonal functionality will be included in recreation spaces. Commissioner LaTourette says opportunities to capitalize on multi-seasonality will not be given up.

4. Open Public Comment

- a. Members of the public had the opportunity to provide comments and were called by name following signup, including those that joined virtually.

1. Adjourn

- The meeting ended at 9:30 p.m.