



311 West 43rd Street
Suite 300
New York, NY 10036

Tel: (212) 757-0981
Fax: (212) 757-0985

New York City Council
Landmarks, Public Siting & Maritime Uses Committee
Jessica S. Lappin, Chair

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

November 14, 2008

Douglas Durst
Ross Graham
Co-Chairs

Testimony of A. J. Pietrantone, Executive Director Friends of Hudson River Park

William J. Zwart
Treasurer

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to be here today. My name is A. J. Pietrantone, and I am the Executive Director of Friends of Hudson River Park, a position I have held since May 2008.

John Doswell
Secretary

Richard Dadey
Assistant Treasurer

Friends of Hudson River Park is a 501(c)3 organization that exists to support the completion and maintenance of Hudson River Park as a world-class amenity. We are the only community organization exclusively dedicated to the creation and preservation of the entire Hudson River Park. We advocate for public funding to build the park, raise private-sector support to develop programs, and support the activities of the Hudson River Park Trust, as well as take steps to ensure the integrity of the Hudson River Park Act of 1998, which established it.

Robin B. Shanus
Assistant Secretary

As you know, the Park runs approximately five miles along the west side of Manhattan from Battery Place to West 59th Street.

Tobi Bergman
Meta Brunzema
Albert Butzel
James Capalino
Cynthia Coulson
Tom Fox
Arthur E. Imperatore Jr.
Ben Korman
John Krevey
Matthew Mayer
Francis X. McArdle
Vince McGowan
David Redden
Steven Salsberg
Arthur Schwartz
Douglas E. Sarini
David Tewksbury
Tim Tompkins
Robert Trentlyon
Peter Tully
Madelyn Wils
Joshua Zamir

I am here this morning to provide context for the impetus to relocate sanitation facilities currently occupying the Gansevoort peninsula to the proposed Spring Street Garage, to clarify that our organization played no role in the City's planning of that proposed facility, and to urge the members of the Council to take action in the best interests of the community at large.

STAFF

A.J. Pietrantone
Executive Director

Under the terms of the Hudson River Park Act, the City of New York and the Department of Sanitation were obligated to relocate all sanitation uses at Pier 97 by December 2003; to relocate the salt pile and remove the incinerator from the Gansevoort Peninsula by December 2003, and to use best efforts to relocate the Sanitation garage from Gansevoort, as those uses were defined as incompatible with park use.

Matthew Washington
Deputy Director

In early 2005, after the City had missed those deadlines, and continued to violate the provisions of the Act by constructing new sanitation facilities on Gansevoort, Friends with fourteen other plaintiffs, including State Senator Tom Duane, City Council member Gale Brewer, and District Leader Kathleen Berger, brought a lawsuit to enforce the Act. That suit was resolved in October 2005 in a settlement agreement

that was shared with members of the Council and other elected officials before it was finalized, and included a commitment of additional funds for the creation of the Park in those locations; and specific timetables for the withdrawal of those activities from the sites. The primary goal throughout our negotiations was to convert the sanitation sites to open space as quickly as possible in compliance with the Hudson River Park Act.

Our agreement only references this Spring Street site because it was identified by the Department of Sanitation as its intended site for a new garage, and approved by Community Boards 2 and 4 even though it was not our preferred location; and we developed a timetable for removing the facilities based on what the Department said was realistic under the regulatory process. That agreement obligates Sanitation to vacate the Peninsula by 2013.

We understand the community concerns about the size and scope of the proposed garage and concentration of Districts, and these concerns should be given their due consideration – just as the freeing up of Gansevoort demands. Furthermore, if the Council, or the Department of Sanitation can identify a change in the current proposal for either the size of the garage or location of the salt pile that would allay those community concerns, and result in a better solution for the City overall but would delay the vacating of Gansevoort, we would not object, provided there was no further infringement of the Hudson River Park Act.

However, we cannot defer action on converting Gansevoort to parkland on the hope that something might develop at some unidentified point in the future that has no identified appreciable additional benefits for the City.

That is the decision before the Council, and we urge you to act in that context to take some specific action. Rejecting this proposal without providing a workable alternative solution is far worse. You must move this process forward so that the commitment made to the community for open space in Hudson River Park at Gansevoort can be realized, and the citizens of the entire City can benefit for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration.