

**BELMONT PARK COMMUNITY COALITION**

P.O. Box 30285, Elmont, NY 11003

**Email:** belmontparkcoalition@gmail.com

February 13, 2018

Hon. Howard Zemsky, President & Chief Operating Officer

Empire State Development

633 Third Avenue—Floor 37

New York, NY 10017

**Re: Belmont Park Community Coalition Calls on Empire State Development to be Transparent and Adhere to the NYS Open Meetings Law**

Dear Mr. Zemsky:

On Tuesday, December 18, 2017, the Belmont Park Community Coalition (“BPCC”) requested that at least one Community Advisory Council be established under section 6266(1) and section 6254(7) of the Urban Development Corp Act. BPCC understood that such a Community Advisory Council would enable members of the communities affected by the Belmont Park Redevelopment Project to have a meaningful opportunity to provide input regarding the 2008 Elmont Community Vision Plan, the Empire State Development’s 2008 Master Plan, the 2012 Request for Proposal and the 2017 Request for Proposal.

Significantly, BPCC made this request before Empire State Development’s (“ESD”) December 19, 2017 decision in favor of the proposal by Arena Partners, Oakview Group, Sterling Project Development and the Islanders, despite the fact that neither the Elmont Community Vision Plan nor the ESDC’s Master Plan included a stadium or arena.

Despite this request, BPCC was not contacted or consulted by ESD when it put together the Belmont Community Advisory Committee (“the Advisory Committee”). BPCC learned about this Advisory Committee with ESD’s February 6, 2018 public announcement, after the members of the Advisory Committee had already been chosen. At least as troubling, it appears that the Advisory Committee has held at least one apparently closed meeting at a location outside the Elmont Community.

Both the creation and convening of the Advisory Committee evidence a lack of transparency and interest in true community engagement, despite ESD’s claiming that the Advisory Committee will “facilitate open communication and engagement between local residents and other stakeholders and the New York Arena Partners joint venture.” If ESD were truly committed to “meaningful community engagement at every step of the redevelopment” it

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would have reached out to BPC and its members and it would have created an Advisory Committee that includes, for example, civic association members from Elmont, Floral Park, Bellerose Terrace, South Floral Park, the local chamber of commerce in Elmont, the surrounding school district board members, fire emergency management, the 5<sup>th</sup> Pct. Community Police Council, transportation, financial advisors, and legal experts.

BPC is hereby requesting the ESD make good on its claimed commitment to engagement with the local communities and that future Advisory Committee meetings be open to the public under the Open Meetings Law (OML) and held in the community at the Elmont Memorial Public Library, 700 Hempstead Turnpike, Elmont, NY 11003.

Additionally, the meetings should exclude sales pitches from “conditional designees.” These meetings are not intended to get “buy-ins” from local community leaders. These meetings are designed to address agenda items within the scope of the Belmont Park Redevelopment.

Greater and more effective government transparency and community engagement is urgently needed. We look forward to the opportunity to discuss these concerns with you personally and to learn more about how we can achieve the best vision for the Belmont/Elmont community.

Sincerely yours,

**Tammie S. Williams, MSW**  
Elmont Civic Leader

**Aubrey Phillips**  
Elmont Civic Leader

**Lori Halop**  
Elmont Civic Leader

**Sheila Moriarty**  
Bellerose Terrace Civic Leader

**Nadia Holubnyczyi-Ortiz**  
Floral Park Civic Leader

**Matthew Sexton, LMSW**  
Floral Park Civic Leader

**Sabine French**  
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**Mimi Pierre-Johnson**  
NYS Haitian Coalition

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