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STATEMENT OF NORMAN SIEGEL ON BEHALF OF
BELMONT PARK COMMUNITY COALITION

March 22, 2018

Good evening. My name is Norman Siegel, and I am here tonight with my colleague, Kate Fletcher. We are attorneys in the law firm of Siegel Teitelbaum & Evans, LLP. Our firm has been retained by the Belmont Park Community Coalition (BPCC) to represent them regarding the Belmont Park Redevelopment Project (“the Proposed Project”).

Large-scale development projects, including arenas and stadiums, disrupt life in the adjacent communities and frequently negatively affect the environment, including the characters of the local communities. As the SEQRA process proceeds, the BPCC believes complete transparency is imperative. The BPCC seeks to ensure that everyone’s interests are considered and taken into account during the process and will vigorously oppose any efforts to obscure the process and related decision making.

The BPCC has concerns about and is troubled by aspects of the Draft Scope for Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (the “Draft”). The BPCC believes that the Draft should provide for the resulting Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to address the following concerns:

- On page 7 of the Draft, you state that some of the purposes of the project are to “benefit the neighborhoods and communities adjacent to and surrounding Belmont Park” and on page 6, you commit to seeking “community input.” However, the Draft—which is frequently highly specific concerning other matters—is devoid of details relating to how, when, and to what extent community input will be sought and taken into account. Will there be surveys of the residents of affected communities? What will you do if a majority of the residents oppose the new arena in Belmont and believe the new home for the Islanders should be Nassau Coliseum? What if affected communities do not want “a striking new presence for Elmont,” “premier destination” or “a new gateway to Long Island”? *See* Draft, p. 7. Will the Proposed Project proceed despite widespread community opposition? Who decides what is best for Belmont Park--the affected communities themselves, the State, or New York Arena Partners, LLC (“NYAP”)? These issues must be taken into account.
- It is one thing to say that the Proposed Project will benefit the surrounding communities; it is another to ensure that the Proposed Project brings immediate and tangible improvements to the surrounding communities. Will New York Arena Partners be required to negotiate a community-benefits agreement with Elmont, Floral Park, and other Belmont Park adjacent communities?

- On page 7, you also state that a purpose is “meaningful participation of Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses.” Yet, the Draft Scope does not detail what that means. What are the goals and timetables on inclusionary hiring? On equal opportunity employment? Is the goal 10%, 25%, 50% or what? This needs to be spelled out.
- On page 11, you state that “the DEIS will include an assessment of the Proposed Actions’ consistency with land use, zoning and community character.” The BPCC supports such an assessment but believes that as currently defined it is too narrow. Specifically, the BPCC objects to limiting the detailed study of land uses to those within “a ½-mile radius of the Project Sites and other directly affected areas.” The Proposed Actions should be consistent with land use within a broader surrounding area.
- On page 12, you state that “The Proposed Project would not result in direct displacement of any existing community facilities or utilities”, but then mention the possibility of “indirect effects.” On page 17, you mention “displacement effects (changes in the vacancy rate).” With these types of redevelopment projects, a concern is the negative environmental effect on the community character caused by indirect secondary displacement of existing neighborhood businesses and residents. This well-known dynamic must be investigated, considered and addressed.
- The Draft should also provide for consideration in the DEIS of the costs that the Proposed Project will impose.
 - Will New York Arena Partners offset the increased cost for police/fire/rescue and sanitation for Elmont, Floral Park, and other adjacent communities to Belmont Park?
 - Will New York Arena Partners be required to contribute to a community fund to retain independent environmental experts to assist local communities in the EIS process?

In sum, the Draft should ensure that the DEIS will document in detail the direct and indirect effects of the Proposed Project, including, among others, the effects on community character, residential and commercial displacement, and how much of tax payers’ money will be spent and/or waived on this project.

The BPCC looks forward to your addressing these concerns and questions.

Thank you.