



Press Release

Meeting With State Parks Commissioner Ash Shows Progress But No Commitment to Park

On Friday, February 27th, State Parks Commissioner Ash and members of her staff hosted a meeting at the Nissequogue River State Park (NRSP) Administration Building to brief community leaders about the status of the park property. They discussed plans to begin a comprehensive engineering study of the buildings and grounds on what once was the former 365 acre core campus of the Kings Park Psychiatric Center. Their goal is to determine the clean up costs associated with remediation and demolition of the buildings and to determine what buildings have the potential to be adaptively reused. They also identified 14 structures for demolition. They are proposing that these deteriorated structures be removed before the remediation study is completed to reduce the risk they pose to the health and safety of our residents and park visitors. The Nissequogue River State Park Foundation is very grateful to State Parks for their decision to demolish these structures while they conduct their engineering study.

Unfortunately, we are disappointed that State Parks will not to commit to maintaining the entire site as parkland. We understand their need to obtain an accurate assessment of the clean-up costs, but that should not delay their commitment to retain the property as state parkland. Every community representative and every one of our political leaders who were present at this meeting with the commissioner supports the park designation of the property. The state's reluctance to commit to its current park status inhibits real progress towards developing a master park plan for all 520 acres. The community overwhelmingly supports the reuse of the property for recreational and cultural purposes, but after 12 years of striving to "Keep the Park in Kings Park", it is discouraging that the state is unwilling to acknowledge and uphold the community's wishes.

The Nissequogue River State Park Foundation has worked tirelessly over the last year to help enhance and beautify the grounds. The foundation is about to begin the restoration of the cupola on the Park Administration Building and a cleanup project along the main boulevard. We have also financed the creation of a preliminary conceptual plan for the park and have offered to help fund a master plan for the entire property. On May 30th, the NRSP Foundation, comprised of 11 separate community groups, will be hosting our second major fundraising event - 5K Sunset Run in the Park and 1K Summer Fun Run. The proceeds from this event will help restore the front entrance of the Park Administration Building. The foundation has continuously demonstrated our support and commitment to this unique park. We remain hopeful that State Parks will show the same commitment.

It is our belief that State Parks, community leaders and our political representatives must begin working more closely together to create a park that will meet the recreational and cultural needs of our residents. Establishing public-private partnerships could help us achieve these goals, stimulate our local economy and help make the park self sustaining. We hope State Parks will embrace this concept. An engineering study and demolition of some of the buildings is a good beginning, but after 12 years it's time for the state to commit to establishing a park that will serve the diverse needs of our residents today and for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Michael Rosato
Nissequogue River State Park Foundation

