



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

BRIAN M. HIGGINS
Assemblyman 145th District

COMMITTEES
Banks
Environmental Conservation
Transportation
Tourism

Please Reply To:
 DISTRICT OFFICE:
306 Abbott Road
Buffalo, New York 14220
(716) 825-6080
FAX (716) 821-0800

ALBANY OFFICE:
Room 919
Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York 12248
(518) 455-4691
FAX (518) 455-5238

July 22, 2002

Mr. Lawrence M. Meckler
Executive Director
Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
181 Ellicott Street
Buffalo, New York 14203

Mr. Luiz F. Kahl
Chairman
Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
181 Ellicott Street
Buffalo, New York 14203

RE: Relinquishing control and possession of waterfront lands

Gentlemen and Honorable NFTA Board Members:

I respectfully request that the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) relinquish control and possession of approximately 75-80 acres of Outer Harbor land for the purposes of establishing a state park facility consisting of the Small Boat Harbor marina, adjacent 24-acre parking area and the recently upgraded Gallagher Beach site.

I make this request based on a strong belief that the Office of New York State Parks is the best public entity to develop this prime waterfront area to become a first rate regional attraction. As a state park, these lands could be vastly improved to enhance the life quality of our community, to bolster our regional and national image and to help stimulate new private investment in housing and commercial uses in the Outer Harbor area.

Under this proposal, Gallagher Beach would become a full-service swimming and sunbathing beach; the boat marina would be improved to increase its regional appeal and commercial viability. New restaurant facilities, new food concessions and comprehensive site and public access improvements to the marina, adjacent 24-acre parking area and Gallagher Beach would create an exciting new waterfront experience. Programmatic linkages to the 264-acre Tiffit Nature Preserve would further enhance this area's regional appeal.

I appreciate the NFTA's efforts in working with my office over the past two years to improve the Gallagher Beach site. Under my sponsorship, \$1.7 million was approved

July 22, 2002

Relinquishing control and possession of waterfront lands

Page Two

in the state budget for these improvements. At my request, Erie County and the City of Buffalo also contributed funding for this project. The 2002-2003 state budget includes a new \$700,000 appropriation for more public improvements in this area.

Your agency proved to be highly effective in facilitating these improvements. Former NFTA Property Manager Kevin McCarthy in particular is deserving of praise for his good work with my office and the design consultant in managing this project.

After only 16 months, the project is about 90% completed and in use. Jet skiers, wind surfers and the general public are enjoying the beach, boardwalk and hiking paths. While we should be proud of these recent accomplishments, they are not enough, not nearly enough. This area of the waterfront has enormous and unrealized potential.

Swimming is not permitted and the beach sand is not suitable for sunbathing. This is a major problem and serves to undermine the highest and best uses for this prime waterfront property.

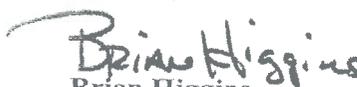
New York State Parks has an excellent reputation for operating high quality marinas; beaches, park and linear park systems, the Buffalo waterfront and the people of this community are deserving of these same services.

Over the past several years, the NFTA's operating mission has changed primarily to airport and public transportation management. The NFTA has done very little to develop the Outer Harbor over the past fifty years. The NFTA controlled waterfront lands are mostly desolate and unsightly, and are viewed largely by our community as a disgrace and an embarrassment. The lack of improvements to the Outer Harbor area has also resulted in a public that has grown reasonably cynical about waterfront development.

I believe the aforementioned assessment of the current situation with the NFTA controlled Outer Harbor area is fair and accurate, and represents a widely held community view. I am requesting your agency's cooperation in this proposal and am prepared to meet with your board at your earliest convenience to discuss this proposal in greater detail.

I appreciate your consideration of the aforementioned. Should you have any questions or need additional information please feel free to contact me directly at my district office at 825-6080.

Sincerely,


Brian Higgins
Member of the Assembly