

Friends of Clifton Park Open Space, P.O. Box 821, Clifton Park, New York 12065

For Immediate Release

April 1, 2017

FRIENDS OF CLIFTON PARK OPEN SPACE IS COMPELLED TO RESPOND TO DISPICTABLE TACTICS BY THEIR OPPOSITION IN THE PUBLIC REFERENDUM ON 34 ACRES LAND SALE

VOTE "YES" SIDE USES UNDER-HANDED TACTICS TO MISLEAD VOTERS

CLIFTON PARK, NY--The so-called Committee for Shen Futures has mailed a flyer to district households with quotes which they purposely take out-of-context to blatantly misrepresent Friends of Clifton Park Open Space as supporting a "yes" vote in the referendum. Friends is on record supporting a "no" vote on the land sale to BBL Construction. To contort the group's words in order to confuse people into voting "yes" instead is despicable. Such methods raise the question: how else are they misleading residents? We also find it telling that the School District has been vigilant in calling Friends of Clifton Park Open Space "misleading"—as a School Board member did in the Community News headlines recently. But they are very slow to apply the same standard to those who support their decision to sell the property.

Friends of Clifton Park Open Space has been consistent and clear in urging residents to VOTE NO on the April 4th Shen land sale referendum....a referendum that Friends forced on the district by securing over 7,000 signatures demanding such a vote. So to in any way contend or advertise that Friends supports a "yes" vote is not only highly unethical but also divisive to the community for which we care so much. We believe Shenendehowa residents will see through the confusion intentionally generated by BBL/Columbia Development and will NOTE NO as we have always recommended.

Columbia Development's Marc Goldstein has acted as spokesman for the "yes" vote, and actually signed the BBL bid response submitted in October. Columbia Development is the land development arm of BBL Construction and is run by Joe Nicolla—a man indicted by the U.S. Attorney on bid-rigging charges late last year. Maybe that is easier to believe if this kind of misrepresentation is an example of his company's methods, and also calls into question the company's character as a partner or qualified bidder with the school district.

On the particular claim at hand, Friends has made no secret of their desire to eventually see the establishment of a true "Central Park" in the business district on ALL 34 acres. Friends is convinced that any proposed land donation—a donation which the town of Clifton Park has made clear they have not agreed upon—falls far, far short of the "Central Park" goal.

Friends points out that the proposed land donation would be cut in half by a new road which leaves a sizeable chunk of land stranded north of this road. The road would serve as a major arterial between Maxwell Road and Moe Road. It would be a thoroughfare traveled by trucks and tractor-trailers serving the new ShopRite supermarket. It would be another funnel for traffic within the business district. And it would empty out directly across from the main Shenendehowa campus at Moe Road. None of these factors are conducive to any kind of recreational or Pedestrian Park. **These are all concerns raised by the 7,000 petition signers but who were dismissed by the school board.**

According to the Saratoga County Tax Assessor maps, there are 5 acres of wetlands on the proposed donated lands. These wetlands will only be exaggerated by increased water runoff when the higher, eastern part of the parcel is covered with buildings and parking lots. Storm water management could easily take-up a substantial portion of the proposed "park" making it unattractive to anyone but mosquitoes. **The land you see, is not the land you will get. We do not see this as a win-win, but a gift to BBL/Columbia Development letting them dump land and their tax liability onto the town instead.**

However, the heart of the argument is the **long-term effects of this land sale** for more development. A true “Central Park”, as envisioned in the Town Center Planning workshops, would provide both economic benefits to the entire area and a stronger quality-of-life for residents, students and visitors alike. This is the deep-seated concern our supporters have expressed on this issue. A “no” vote will not create a park. But if this pristine open space is lost to the ravages of development, then it is lost forever. There will be no chance to create a real Central Park to enhance and distinguish our area.

The Commons was initially opposed for some of the same reasons we hear now against working with the town to keep the property in the public domain. But what would the area be like today without that recreational, social, and economic anchor in our community? This is the long-range legacy we envision for this rare and unique gift of unspoiled nature in the heart of the district.

We have made all these points abundantly clear through many venues including our Facebook page, our website, our newsletter, our public statements, etc. The opposition has purposely distorted this information for the sole reason of deceiving voters and manipulating the voting results. They do not live in this area, the voters do. Let us have a real conversation on the future of this land. That is what we have been asking from the school board since we delivered our first petitions and comments to them back in August. Meanwhile all their discussions have taken place in Executive Sessions, behind closed doors, with no response to the many public speakers at board meetings, without any public discussion, and then the bid responses were revealed and voted on immediately with no public hearing.

Friends has tried to run a campaign that presents our position in an open and civil manner. **We have tried to avoid making this an adversarial process. However, we feel compelled to respond to this intentional deceit and attempt at manipulation.** These tactics must be challenged, and they call into question the deeper motives of the so-called Committee for Shen’s Future as well. We urge the school district to take their responsibilities seriously to both listen to the community and to consider BOTH sides of the discussion.
