

July 16, 2019

Recently, there has been a groundswell of opposition from concerned citizens who are against the construction of a new amphitheater on the grounds of Turtle Back Zoo.

At the July 10, 2019, Freeholder Board Meeting, the Board approved two resolutions allocating money from the Open Space Trust Fund, which will be used by the County Administration to determine the logistics and feasibility of the project. I have received passionate feedback from many members of the community on this issue, and I feel compelled to point out the specifics of the resolutions, the project itself, and where I stand with respect to this process.

First, the resolutions passed by the Board were NOT authorizations to build the amphitheater. As stated previously, they are the first step in determining everything needed to complete this particular project should the County decide to move forward. Secondly, if the County Administration did decide to move forward, they would have to come before the Board and have further funding approved before the start of any construction process. I have spoken with members of the Administration, members of the Open Space Trust Fund, members of local municipal agencies, and many concerned citizens. As this process moves forward, all sides will be heard and given an opportunity to voice their concerns. I am still gathering information on all aspects of the proposed amphitheater. The yet to be determined location of the amphitheater, the cost of completing the project, the impact on the neighboring communities, and the encroachment upon the open space of the surrounding area are all factors that I will consider when determining my position.

The Board will work with the administration to ensure that the specifics of the project will be relayed to all concerned parties in the most transparent form possible. Both I and the Board will allow the details of the project to be presented to us before a decision is made on using county revenue to fund the actual construction.

- Freeholder President Brendan W. Gill

Kyalo Mulumba
Public Information Officer
Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders
Phone: (973) 621-4452
Fax: (973) 621-5695
kmulumba@freeholders.essexcountynj.org