

RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTH ORANGE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION FEBRUARY
2020

WHEREAS: The Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders has authorized \$600,000 from the Recreation and Open Space Trust Fund to determine the feasibility of constructing a 500-seat amphitheater at the Turtle Back Zoo location ("proposed project"); and

WHEREAS: In the last 10 years, significant acreage of undeveloped land in the South Mountain reservation has already been taken from the South Mountain Reservation and developed into the South Mountain Recreation Complex;

WHEREAS: The County has not established limits or boundaries on the ongoing development of the Complex;

WHEREAS: The proposed project would involve the removal of another 1.5 acres of land from the South Mountain Reservation; and

WHEREAS: This proposed project would involve the deforestation of much of that 1.5 acres;

WHEREAS: This proposed project would convert open land area, with attendant soil, plants and other means of minimizing stormwater runoff to developed land area; and

WHEREAS: This proposed project would include land for additional parking in the Zoo area; and

WHEREAS: This proposed project would generate stormwater runoff in excess of present stormwater runoff volumes; and

WHEREAS: This proposed project would entail automotive fluids and other pollutants entering that stormwater; and

WHEREAS: This proposed project would generate construction and maintenance related pollutants that would enter the stormwater; and

WHEREAS: This proposed project would remove from South Mountain Reservation land, vegetation, streams and animal habitats which are irreplaceable in location and kind; and

WHEREAS: This proposed project would, if brought to fruition, cost the County and therefore its Townships and Municipalities \$8,600,000 at current estimates; and

WHEREAS: This proposed project would involve significant environmental impact on the undeveloped open space of South Mountain Reservation, which is used by residents of South Orange,

WHEREAS: This proposed project would be inconsistent with the guidelines of environmental best practices, as well as the objectives of the State Master Plan; and


WHEREAS: This proposed project was drafted without public comment and has been funded with the expenditure of over \$400,000 without public referendum on the spending of such funds, let alone performing an independent Environmental Impact Study prior to spending such funds;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE SOUTH ORANGE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION REQUESTS:

1. That the proposed project be suspended immediately, pending more consultation with stakeholders including citizens of Essex County;
2. That an Environmental Impact Study be performed by an accredited, independent licensed professional firm before the project is resumed;
3. That absent a finding from said Study that the proposed project will have a net neutral environmental impact on the water, air, lighting, groundwater pollution, surface pollution, carbon absorption, open space area and other related impacts, the proposed project be Abandoned. Traffic and Parking Concerns should also be addressed.
4. That Essex County establish geographical boundaries on the Zoo and the Essex County Recreation Facility to reassure the public that it will not grow without bound;

COMMISSION MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYES	NAYES	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
BECK (ALTERNATE)			X			
BELL			X			
BOUR			X			
GRAVES			X			
HASKINS	X					
HIRSCH						X
KRAIKER						X
ORGERA		X	X			

Respectfully submitted,
South Orange Environmental Commission


William Haskins
Chair