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April 28th, 2010

Adrian Benepe
Commissioner
Department of Parks and Recreation
The Arsenal
Central Park
New York, NY 10021

Dear Commissioner Benepe:

We write to express our concern over the current proposal to construct four inflatable bubbles over tennis courts located in Central Park between the North Meadow and the Reservoir. This proposal raises a number of issues, including the appropriateness of such large-scale construction within the park, the potential environmental impact of this construction, and the extent to which these bubbles would represent the privatization of public space. Given these concerns, we urge you to reconsider this project.

Central Park is an iconic part of the City landscape, and has been designated as a New York City landmark. As such, any proposal to build a structure in the park should be subject to strict scrutiny. The proposed bubbles would rise 35 feet – more than 3 stories – above the park, and would fundamentally alter views both within the park and from the surrounding community. The large opaque structures would also seem to be completely out of context with the area of the park in which they would be situated.

It is also clear that this project has the potential to have negative environmental impacts on the park. Parks Department officials indicated to Community Board 7 that the bubbles would be powered by two diesel generators which would operate 24 hours a day. These generators will only lower air quality in the park, and will also result in noise pollution. In addition, the plan to light the facility 24 hours a day will result in light pollution. The Audubon Society has also raised concerns regarding the potential impact of the bubbles on bird nesting and migration patterns. We are concerned that the current proposal does not adequately consider all these negative environmental impacts on Central Park.

Finally, the RFP for this proposal raises significant concerns about expanding private use of our parks. While this is a much larger issue, the bubbles would be one more case of our public

resources being devoted to private profit. We are also concerned that these covered courts would exclude much of the community because of high costs. Parks Department officials told Community Board 8 that the cost of the courts would likely range from \$30 to \$100 an hour, which would be unaffordable to many New Yorkers. Furthermore, all revenue from the concession arrangement would go to the City general fund, rather than being devoted to addressing potential negative impacts of the facility on Central Park, or for other park related purposes.

For all these reasons, we do not believe that construction of tennis bubbles is appropriate for Central Park. We urge you to reconsider this proposal, which has the potential to impact the natural beauty of the park and its environment, and to further privatize public parks space in a way which excludes large portions of our communities.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,



Liz Krueger
State Senator, 26th District



Thomas K. Duane
State Senator, 29th District



Eric Schneiderman
State Senator, 31st District



Jose Serrano
State Senator, 28th District