Senators want marina plan aired

By Silvia Ascarelli

Two Hudson County state senators plan to press the state president today for an investigation of the negotiations for a proposed marina at Liberty State Park.

If Sen. John Russo names a special committee, it would look into the project, its impact on the park, public input and access the public would have to the park, said Sen. Thomas Cowan, D-Jersey City.

Although the senators admitted have heard only the Liberty State Park Advisory Commission's side of the story and its accusations of "stonewalling" by the private development corporation, "I think it's a very compelling argument that Audrey Zapp and Morris Pesin make," said Sen. Edward O'Connor, D-Jersey City. "And I want to help them."

O'Connor, Cowan and Assemblyman Joseph Doria of Bayonne met with Pesin and Zapp Tuesday at Liberty State Park.

In a related development yesterday, Pesin said he sent a telegram to Gov. Thomas Kean asking him to once again "save" Liberty State Park. Kean probably doesn't know of the plans to take 57 acres of park land (actually reduced to 50) for the 600 boat slips and the 350 land storage slips, Pesin said. He predicted it will be "a great embarrassment" to Kean if the plan goes through.

The development corporation is negotiating with Waterfront Development Corp. of Philadelphia to build the marina and a six-story repair building. A package liquor store has been deleted from the plans, and the restaurant is to be bid separately. Although plans originally were to have the first 200 slips available May 1, time is running short for getting the necessary approvals and finishing the construction in time.

Neither senator could predict Russo's reaction to their request. Russo may want to have his staff look into it first, O'Connor said.

Cowan said he wants public discussion on the development corporation's ideas.

"They may be all good, but we don't know that yet," he said. However, from what he has seen, the proposed size "could have a very negative impact on the park."

The parking that would be needed also could turn Green Acres land into a sea of blacktop, he said.

O'Connor said that for him, the final straw is the six-story repair building being proposed near the entrance which would stretch 300 feet.

"That to me doesn't seem to be the maximum type of use that I would envision for park land," he said.

Like Cowan, he wants more public input.

Photo by Mark Wyville