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***** Press Release *****

Mayor Fulop Proposes Eliminating Open Space Tax for 2020, Saving Residents \$1M Amid Health Crisis

Latest Effort to Alleviate Taxpayer Impact as part of Jersey City COVID-19 Community Relief Plan

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Steven M. Fulop announces a proposal to be introduced at the next Municipal Council meeting for the elimination of the Jersey City Open Space Trust Fund tax for next year in order to alleviate the hardships residents are facing amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the anticipated economic aftermath. The city is facing a massive budget gap due to Coronavirus, and this will equate to over \$1 million in savings for taxpayers.

Earlier this month, the Mayor introduced several additional measures under the Jersey City COVID-19 Community Relief Program to freeze rents for all rent-controlled buildings, to minimize financial burdens for needy families and seniors by improving access to food and other necessities, and to provide financial support for small businesses and nonprofits with a 100% match on the state's COVID-19 relief grants. The Community Relief Fund is also taking private donations to support the most impacted, with a goal of raising \$3 million.

“My job as Mayor is to protect the wellbeing of our residents, and that includes their financial wellbeing as we encounter unprecedented times with a lot of uncertainty ahead,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “We remain committed to preserving our parks and open space and will continue to do so, but right now it’s critical to relieve the financial pressures our taxpayers are currently under as much as possible.”

“We recognize the importance of our parks and open space now more than ever,” said **Council President Joyce Watterman**. “Every little bit helps at this point, and I think taxpayers appreciate our efforts especially since they’ve seen little to no reprieve from the federal level.”

The announcement to withhold the Open Space tax comes one day after the Mayor proposed to minimize taxpayer hardship by withdrawing of the Arts Referendum planned for the November ballot to allow voters to decide on the establishment of an Arts and Culture Trust Fund. The Jersey City Arts Fund was mirrored after the success of Jersey City’s Open Space Trust Fund enacted by the Fulop Administration in 2016.

“I look forward to the day when our parks are filled with kids playing once again, but until then we’ll continue our work on the local government side to assist our residents in every way possible,”

said **Councilman-at-Large Daniel Rivera**. "Freezing this tax, coupled with all other efforts underway, will really help support our residents to get through these times of crisis."

"Jersey City remains at the forefront of preserving and expanding green infrastructure citywide, and will continue to make positive steps in that direction for the benefit of the community overall with the funds that have been collected up to this point," said **Ward B Councilwoman Mira Prinz-Arey**.

The city's Open Space Trust Fund has proven successful since voters approved its implementation in 2016 under the leadership of Mayor Fulop. Last November, Jersey City unveiled one of the largest plans for widespread park improvements in decades with the first allocation of the Open Space Trust Fund with \$3 million in park improvements spanning all 6 wards.

"We need to be aggressive and proactive to help residents whom are struggling, and that means making some tough choices with regards to the city budget. We're doing everything we can do at the city level to make sure Jersey City bounces back stronger than ever," concluded Mayor Fulop.