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THE COUNCIL  
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TWIN PARKS CITYWIDE TASKFORCE ON FIRE  
PREVENTION

August 7, 2023

Andrew Kimball, President  
Economic Development Corporation of NYC  
1 Liberty St  
New York, NY 10006

Dear President Kimball,

As you know, our office has been working closely with the EDC since the start of the summer season in order to resolve traffic and collateral issues resulting from the placement of MSC Cruises in the neighborhood of Red Hook. While severe traffic congestion and negative impacts on local businesses could have been mitigated by the Mayor's Office and EDC had both entities engaged with community stakeholders before reaching an agreement with the cruise operator, I have, nonetheless, valued the subsequent work the EDC team has been engaging in with my office and the community. Through these weekly calls, EDC has demonstrated commitment to mitigating the various impacts of the cruise liner on the local community, and in a similar fashion, hope that you will address a host of questions that remain unanswered from myself and our community. While these questions have not been within the scope of our weekly traffic calls, they pertain to the cruise operation in Red Hook, and deserves your attention and consideration.

The focus of this letter is to address a deep concern of mine and the residents of our community around what is likely to be the exacerbation of existing environmental health hazards in Red Hook concurrent with the introduction of MSC Cruises. As was reported on in the New York Times, cruise operations are estimated to bring [tons of carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide](#) annually to a community already suffering the ill effects of air pollution.

Before listing our questions, I want to briefly add more context to the disproportionate burden being shouldered by Red Hook when it comes to environmental hazards. As you very well know, Red Hook already faces an onslaught of Last Mile facilities within a very small geographic zone. The clustering of these logistics facilities has resulted in not only traffic congestion, but associated diesel emissions from an estimated 3,000 additional trucks and cars added to our neighborhood roadways.

In addition, Red Hook is home to a number of state and federally designated brownfield and superfund sites due to its [manufacturing past](#), resulting in associated air quality, among other environmental concerns. Lastly, it is also directly impacted by the Brooklyn Queens Expressway that transports over 130,000 trucks and cars daily. Considering these dynamics, it is no surprise that the [residents of Red Hook suffer disproportionately from negative health outcomes](#), especially asthma. Finally, it is worth noting that as a waterfront community, Red Hook is also on the frontlines of climate change, and was submerged during Hurricane Sandy. Having borne the brunt of environmental injustices for decades, Red Hook's history and geography ought to make it prime for consideration as we pursue opportunities to green our infrastructure.

In 2011, when the Shore Power System was finally greenlighted by the Bloomberg Administration, it seemed that our city was beginning to recognize the enormous potential of our waterfront community. At that time, the EDC boasted that use of the shore power system would amount to removing about [5,000 vehicles per year from the road](#). The Port Authority of NY and NJ, also supportive of the project, noted in a letter to the Public Service Commission that the net health benefits to Kings County were an estimated \$9M annually. Touting these public benefits, the shore power system became the first of its kind on the eastern seaboard, and remains still to this day. Yet twelve years after the EDC and Port Authority committed to building a shore power system at the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal in Red Hook, and seven years after the EDC announced that the shore power system was "fully functional", [the system has been overwhelmingly underutilized](#), if used at all. It cannot be overstated that the lack of use of our shore power system, especially with the introduction of MSC, is a blow to community health and our city's collective goal to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% within less than three decades. From the perspective of the community I represent, millions of dollars in investment have been squandered, and toxic fumes continue to escape unfettered into the community of Red Hook with no consideration for preexisting conditions.

As the elected local representative, my own knowledge of the shore power operation is limited to what is reported on in the media, and information I receive from my constituents. From these two sources, we know that the shore power system was intended to allow for the [Queen Mary 2](#) to plug in, yet community members observe that the Queen Mary 2 does not plug in on a regular basis, if at all. In addition, we know that during his time as Borough President, Mayor Adams [committed \\$750,000](#) to install a "cable positioning device" at the terminal so that all ships visiting BCT would be able to plug in. While we know that the EDC has stated in the past that the shore power system must be "turned off" while upgrades are being made, we are not aware of any planned work being done as a result of the Mayor's commitment or otherwise. Myself, and my community, is left wondering whether the shore power system is working at all. President Kimball, in our most recent conversation, while we acknowledged the challenges of the state of sustainability practices within the maritime industry, you did assure me that the EDC is deeply committed to fixing the plug-in situation within a year. I noted at the time of our conversation that this same commitment was offered by EDC staff over a year ago. I expect we share the same urgency in reaching a solution as soon as possible given the conditions our residents are facing daily.

Based on this, I request a prompt response to the below questions:

- Can you provide clarity on the milestones and progress that is being made on fixing the shore power system?

- What new investments, if any, have been made to upgrade the shore power system since the Bloomberg Administration?
- If the shore power system was built for the Queen Mary 2, why is the ship not plugged in when docked at the terminal?
- If the Queen Mary 2 does plug in, but there are exceptions to when it plugs in, under what conditions does the exception exist?
- What is the frequency with which all ships plug in to the shore power system?
- What other statistics is EDC collecting with regards to shore power usage?
- Will the EDC provide all metrics the organization is using to monitor the use of the shore power system? In the spirit of transparency and rebuilding trust with the community, can those metrics be made public?
- Does EDC monitor and enforce plug in to the shore power system?
- How is EDC conducting air quality monitoring in the environmental justice community of Red Hook to measure the cruise liners impact on breathable air?
- While the cruise industry claims to have improved its “sustainability” practices, we would like to understand how EDC validates the claims of the company regarding both cleaner emissions and water pollution levels?
- What air quality mitigation methods, if any, is EDC pursuing in order to minimize impact on the Red Hook population?
- If the shore power system is inoperable for any period of time, how is EDC leveraging opportunities to purchase clean energy from the local power authority, NYPA, in order to power cruise liners instead of purchasing from international fossil fuel sources?
- How is EDC demanding Cruise operators engage in a less extractive relationship with the local community, especially around diminishing air quality in an environmental justice community?

Finally, when Ports America took over operations of the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal in 2017, a commitment was made to have a [zero-emissions operation by 2029](#). In your response to the above questions, I request an update on progress towards that goal and how the MSC Cruise operation fits into the overall strategy for achievement of zero emissions.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. I trust that EDC’s commitment to the Red Hook community will be exhibited in your response.

Sincerely,



Alexa Avilés  
Council Member  
District 38