I am Roland Lewis, President and CEO of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance. The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance (MWA) is a coalition of over 690 businesses, community and recreational groups, educational institutions, and other stakeholders committed to transforming the New York and New Jersey Harbor and its waterways to make them cleaner and more accessible, a vibrant place to play, learn and work with great parks, great jobs and great transportation for all.

A few weeks ago, Mayor Bloomberg stated unequivocally that "we are not going to abandon the waterfront" in the post-Sandy era while promising to re-build better and more sensibly (Daily News Friday, 12/7/12). With respect to the Pier 17 construction scheduled to begin next June, it is incumbent upon the City to re-visit the redevelopment plan to ensure it reflects our new coastal realities, including emergency preparedness and appropriate and expanded maritime uses. This review is critical to preserve the waterfront, our downtown businesses and residents for generations to come.

In the wake of Super Storm Sandy, the current proposed timeline for mid-summer closure of the Pier 17 waterfront businesses in 2013 is now out of step with circumstances and the deadline must be extended through next summer after all environmental reviews and
disaster planning measures have been considered as it is a significant waterfront development.

While the goal of upgrading and repairing maritime infrastructure is laudable and to be encouraged, I am compelled to address several issues relating to the proposed Pier 17 renovation and repair that are of great concern to both me and my organization. MWA desires to go on the public record with some serious questions regarding Howard Hughes Corp’s proposed repair to Pier 17.

Pier 17 and its current utilization is a valuable waterfront asset that brings the community in direct contact with NYC’s amazing waterways and rich maritime history. The pier itself occupies one of the richest and significant waterfront locations in NYC, both culturally and visually. It sits at the base of one of the 7 wonders of the world – the Brooklyn Bridge. The Historic Seaport district is now protected by its landmark status and has become a desirable place to live and raise a family, and is significant as the historic crossroads for travelers and cargo from around the world that served as the birthplace of American hegemony.

Pier 17 is currently is home to the NY Water Taxi and the Clipper City Tall Ship – both of which are well-run commercial marine operators that contribute greatly to the community with very diverse opportunities for New Yorkers and their visitors to get on the water at very affordable prices.

My concerns are as follows:
• The plans so far as filed and reviewed make absolutely no mention of a Maritime Plan for waterfront access. Subsequently, there appears to be no attempt to adhere to the WAVES Policy Guidelines which were a major and historic initiative of the current administration and something that MWA and its members worked for years to help craft with the Mayor’s Dept of City Planning.

• Nothing indicates that the Pier 17 renovation plans would preserve or provide for inclusiveness or be welcoming of the surrounding community involvement and further open up accessibility to the waterfront, a major element of all guidance under the WAVES initiative.

• Nowhere is there a discussion of Waterfront Activities Programmatic goals.

• In all drawings to date, there are not even any boats shown and no mention, either. Does this mean that the projected reconstruction does not intend to enhance or even maintain the existing maritime uses of the pier?

• Considering the generous terms being granted in the LOI signed between the NYCEDC and the Howard Hughes Corporation for publicly owned land, it seems only fair that the people of NYC are given proper consideration in reaping the benefits.

• The timing of the proposed construction is a mystery, why would the outdoor areas of the pier be closed mid-summer, denying access to millions of New Yorkers and its visitors, when the project has yet to be fully reviewed.

In conclusion, on behalf of MWA and New York City’s maritime constituency, I ask for the City Planning Commission to consider the following requests:
1) We request completion of an in-depth plan for waterfront access, waterfront utilization, community involvement and recreational be included in the ULURP application.

2) We request that the timing of the closing of the outdoor space and the waterfront amenities on the pier be adjusted to minimize closure during the busy summer months when waterfront usage is highest.

3) We request the closing of the outdoor area of the pier be delayed until a satisfactory waterfront plan has been included and that the ULURP has been accepted and approved by the City Council.

Thank you for your attention

Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance

Roland Lewis, President & CEO