

2/27/2015

AS FED FUNDING DECISION FOR SING SING PRISON MUSEUM LOOMS, SCHUMER PLACES PERSONAL CALL TO HEAD OF HUMANITIES AGENCY TO PLUG PROJECT – FED FUNDS WOULD SUPPORT DESIGN & MARKETING FOR MUSEUM THAT COULD BE ‘ALCATRAZ OF THE EAST,’ ATTRACT 200K TOURISTS PER YEAR

Officials at the National Endowment for The Humanities Are Schedule To Meet Next Week To Decide Fed Funding for A Wide Range of Projects, Including Sing Sing Museum

*Schumer Places Personal Phone Call to NEH Chairman to Tout Merits of Project – Museum at Sing Sing Would Be One of The First at An Active Prison, Is Adjacent to Commuter Rail & Could Be A Major Tourist Destination For Decades To Come
Schumer: Like Alcatraz in San Francisco, Sing Sing Museum Would Provide A Major Boost To Culture & Tourism in Westchester*

With the decision looming on potential federal funding for the proposed Sing Sing Museum project, U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer placed a personal phone call to the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), William Adams, to express his full-blown support. Schumer, who visited the proposed Sing Sing museum site in July and wrote a letter to Chairman Adams in support of Historic Hudson River Towns’ (HHRT) application for federal funding from the NEH, re-iterated how much of a tourist magnet and economic boon this museum could be for Westchester County and the region.

Schumer said that a museum at Sing Sing, which has a spectacular setting astride the Hudson River, and easy mass transit access, has the potential to be the “Alcatraz of the East.” The prison’s history spans nearly 200 years and it is famous for the many well-known criminals who did time there, spawning the now common phrase to be

sent “up the river.” Schumer explained that visitation to the Sing Sing Museum could easily surpass 200,000 people per year, which would be a major contributor to the local economy.

“Sing Sing Prison is home to a fascinating 200-year history, and this federal funding would help ensure it is shared with the world,” said Schumer. “The prison’s many artifacts and amazing tales, not to mention its spectacular river-side setting and access to mass transit, put it in a unique position to become a one-of-a-kind tourist attraction. A museum at Sing Sing has the potential to become the ‘Alcatraz of the East’ and bring in hundreds of thousands of tourists each year, and the NEH should provide the funding that is needed to get this project underway.”

Specifically, HHRT is seeking \$75,000 in federal funds to refine its Concept Design report, start capital fund raising and marketing efforts, and cover certain administrative costs. The National Council on the Humanities meets four times a year to review applications and make recommendations to the Chairman, who, by law, must give final approval for each recommended application. The next meeting will be held on March 5-6. Schumer noted that New York State is supportive of the project, with the Empire State Development Corp. and the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council having awarded HHRT a \$250,000 grant earlier this month. This federal funding would provide a critical additional boost to the project, and construction could start in 2017 if it is awarded. If construction is able to begin in 2017, the museum would be on track to open in 2019.

Schumer visited Ossining in July to announce he was pushing to secure federal funds for the planning and design phases of Sing Sing museum, a critical first step in making the museum a reality. Although Sing Sing is still an active facility, parts of the prison are no longer in use, and various community groups have begun to put plans in motion to create a museum in a former power plant on the prison grounds. The old power plant at Sing Sing would serve as the site for the museum dedicated to the infamous prison. This museum would be one of the first at an active prison and, according to Schumer, would be a major driver of tourism and culture in Westchester County.

According to HHRT’s estimate, a museum at Sing Sing could attract upward of 200,000 tourists per year and would create close to 260 full-time jobs at the museum and in the community, as well as over 100 temporary construction jobs. It would also generate approximately \$24 million in overall spending and increase visitation at other historic and tourism sites in Westchester. Construction is estimated to begin in 2017 should the team creating the museum secure the funding they need. If construction is able to begin in 2017, the museum would be on track to open in 2019. Schumer explained that the first step in making this museum a reality is reviewing and updating previous plans for this museum that were developed in 2007, but had to be shelved due to the economic downturn.

Sing Sing Prison Museum will tell the story of Sing Sing prison and the American Penal System. Sing Sing has some of the world's most famous prison artifacts, including the now defunct "Old Sparky," which was the electric chair that was used to execute 614 convicts. A museum at Sing Sing would not be the first prison museum in the country, but it would be one of the only at an active prison. Alcatraz in San Francisco Bay and Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, for example, are at prisons that have been closed for decades. Angola Museum, which is located just outside the Louisiana State Penitentiary, is one example of a museum at an active prison and it draws close to 3,000 visitors per month. Alcatraz attracts approximately 1.5 million visitors per year. This museum would also tell the story of some of the important prison reforms that have been made over the last century, and Sing Sing is the perfect example, as it has been a real leader in the reform movement since the early 1900s.

Over the years, Sing Sing has housed some of New York's most notorious prisoners, including David Berkowitz, who did time there immediately following his sentencing for the "Son of Sam" murders; Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were sentenced to death there after being found guilty of spying on the U.S. for the Soviet Union; and many members of the infamous Murder Incorporated group, which carried out killings for the Mafia in the 1930s and '40s. The history of Sing Sing spans nearly 200 years, as it was purchased by New York State in 1825. The 135-acre site has been an active prison since the first 100 inmates arrived earlier that year.

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