



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham Secures \$100K of Funding for New ADA Playground in Town of Ossining

PETE HARCKHAM December 15, 2023

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State Sen. Harckham with (l-r) Asm. Dana Levenberg, Mike Risko, Ossining Town Supervisor Liz Feldman, Town Budget Officer Martha Quituisaca, Park Groundskeeper Alban Sylaj and Park Foreman Mario Velardo

Ribbon cutting event at Gerlach Park brings together state and local officials

Ossining, NY – New York State Senator Pete Harckham attended a ribbon cutting event today hosted by Ossining Town Supervisor Liz Feldman for a new ADA-accessible playground in Gerlach Park, which was funded with a \$100,000 Community Resiliency, Economic

Sustainability, and Technology Program (CREST) grant that he secured for the town. The final work on the playground was completed last month.

Joining Harckham and Feldman for the ribbon cutting at the park, which is located in the Crotonville section of Ossining, was State Assemblymember Dana Levenberg, other town officials and Mike Risko, a longtime Ossining resident and popular band leader, who suggested that special musical components be incorporated into part of the playground's design.

"I was happy to support the new ADA-accessible playground here at Gerlach Park, where children of all abilities, income levels and different backgrounds can play and learn together," said Harckham. "This project is particularly inspiring because it arose from grassroots discussions and reflected the community's values. I will continue to help support our municipalities as they transform their parks and playgrounds so that all children and families have recreational spaces to create meaningful memories without barriers."

"Having this playground at Gerlach Park will help us work toward our healthy community goals," said Feldman. "Providing accessible and diverse playground equipment that is attractive to all ages and abilities will encourage children to spend time away from screens to exercise both their minds and their bodies. I would like to thank Senator Harckham for providing the funding to make this possible. This playground is located close to the ball field and pavilion, where siblings who otherwise might have spent time on mom's phone can entertain themselves in a healthier manner."

Feldman noted that the Town's new policy to include musical components to its playgrounds "adds another dimension of exploration for our youth."

The Town of Ossining reached out to Harckham last year when it decided that its existing playground structure at Gerlach Park was outdated and overdue to be replaced. The Town had made efforts in recent years to improve other areas of the park, such as installing a new swing set and renovating the park's pavilion to make it ADA-accessible. The new playground, with its ADA-accessible components and improved, safer surfacing, complements the other park improvements.

"It is always a joy to see a project you start come to fruition, especially when you know it will put a smile on a child's face," said Levenberg, who was Ossining's town supervisor last year when the grant application was submitted. "The playground at Gerlach Park had needed upgrades for some time, which was held up by the pandemic. The Parks Department had made the park accessible, but the playground wasn't. Now, it is not only accessible, but includes musical elements that will really make this playground a local destination. I thank Senator Harckham and his office for providing funding to support this project, and to my successor as town supervisor, Liz Feldman, and Ossining's fantastic Parks Department for seeing this project across the finish line."

Risko, who also co-owns a music store in Ossining, first encountered the musical playground equipment at the annual National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) convention several years ago and thought it would make a great addition to the community.

"My wife Miriam Risko and I are so happy that our town supervisor, Liz Feldman, and her team incorporated musical playground equipment into Gerlach Park, as it sets a 'tone' for more musical projects from families in the community."

Harckham has delivered more than \$15 million of state grant funding to municipalities and nonprofits in the 40th Senate District since taking office in 2019.