

# Come clean on Ground Zero: Port Authority must end secret talks with builder

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The future of Ground Zero remains shrouded in secret negotiations between the Port Authority and builder [Larry Silverstein](#). It's time to bring the discussions into the open.

Silverstein and the authority are haggling over billions in public money as well as the shape and timing of construction on the city's most important development site.

Outrageously, they have signed a confidentiality agreement to prevent scrutiny of their talks. PA [Chairman Anthony Coscia](#) and [Executive Director Chris Ward](#) should have known better than to enter such a deal. They should shred the pact forthwith.

Paralyzed by the economic downturn and the financial crisis, Silverstein has reportedly asked the PA to finance two office towers with at least a couple billion dollars. Coscia and Ward have reportedly countered by offering \$1 billion to help Silverstein build a single skyscraper.

The authority has no business diverting public money from transportation projects, let alone a billion or two, to support a real estate development that has no tenants and not a prayer of private financing.

The virtual certainty is that, together, Silverstein and the PA would end up with vacant, publicly financed office buildings that compete against the authority's own enormous skyscraper project, formerly known as the [Freedom Tower](#).

Coscia and Ward apparently believe that it's wise to shore up Silverstein with public money. That being the unfortunate case, they need to explain their thinking to New Yorkers at large, as well as to the 9/11 families, who have the highest stakes in progress on Ground Zero.

What happens between Silverstein and the PA will determine, among other things, the schedule for completing the memorial to those killed in the terror attack.

When Ward took over as Port Authority chief a year ago he vowed to end the confusion, deceptions and incompetence that plagued rebuilding on the [World Trade Center](#) site. He also promised full accountability and transparency.

He can fulfill his pledge by presenting a full public brief that explains the choices facing the PA as well as the grounds for his recommendations. New Yorkers need to know what's going on at Ground Zero.