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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Rally & Press Conference
Assembling at Calahan Park in Burlington at Charlotte Street
March 9, 2023 @ 3:30 (press conference) 4 PM (rally)

FreeHer VT | Cooperation Vermont | Peoples Network for Land and Liberation
Food not Cops | People's Kitchen

In response to the National Call to Action from the Stop Cop City Coalition in Atlanta, GA, activists in Vermont are responding with a rally and press conference in solidarity directed at Cox Enterprises to immediately divest from Cop City and cease their fundraising activities.

The City of Atlanta has leased 381 acres of Weelaunee Forest (the last substantial green space in the Atlanta area) to the Atlanta Police Foundation for a militarized police training facility funded by corporations. At the price of 90 million dollars, it includes a mock city to practice urban warfare, tear gas and explosives testing, dozens of shooting ranges, and a Black Hawk helicopter landing pad. Supported by the Atlanta Committee for Progress, which is composed of over 40 corporate elites including the CEOs of Coca-Cola, Home Depot and Cox, its aim is to further the surveillance of the population, stifling decent, and gentrification of the city.

Kali Akuno of Cooperation Jackson and Cooperation Vermont stated, "Our communities need more resources to be safe and secure. Throughout the world the safest communities are those with the most resources, not those with the most police. Police support the exploiters and enclosures who deprive people from the natural bounties of the earth. This national day of action is a point of correction. A step towards stopping the terror that limits the life chances if so many black and brown people."

Jim (Fergie) Cox Chambers, Jr. will be speaking out in person on March 9th in Burlington against his family company's (Cox Enterprises) direct involvement in the private fundraising efforts for Cop City.

"For too long, the Cox family and others in the corporate ruling circle of Atlanta have dictated the narratives and the affairs of that city, as the rich and powerful do everywhere. My family has materially supported the police foundation and the Cop City project in significant ways, and its media outlets have gone out of their way to silence popular resistance, and demonize the good people who are fighting for their humanity and the future of their city" – Jim (Fergie) Cox Chambers, Jr.

Cox Enterprises owns Dealer.Com in Burlington

Jayna Ahsaf, VT Field Organizer with FreeHer states, "FreeHer stands in solidarity with the Stop Cop City movement against all forms of carceral construction. In our own state of Vermont, we are also facing carceral construction and can see the counter-revolution in action with these types of projects popping up around the country following the 2020 uprisings. Our liberation is interconnected and Stop Cop City illustrates the collective nature of this fight because these grounds will serve as a training space for police departments across the country to learn to exterminate and control social movements & uprisings. Our government only plans to answer our calls for freedom with more violence and containment. They have no public safety plans that involve nourishing communities by investing in them

— they only plan to control us. It is time to rise up and push back against cop city with everything we've got because the construction of cop city will be detrimental for our communities, the environment, and our movements.”

As Vermonters, we are linking this troubling trend of increased militarization of police forces and a growing prison industrial complex to the fight here at home to stop the allocation of \$290 million towards the construction of new prisons in Vermont – and specifically the planned construction of a new women's prison.

FreeHer VT is currently advocating for the passage of two bills in the Vermont Legislature – H.445 to place a five-year moratorium on spending for new prison construction and H.438 to plan for alternatives to incarceration.

Michelle McCormick, of Cooperation Vermont, states, “At a time when Burlington High is being operated out of an abandoned department store, there is a moratorium on spending for school construction. At a time when Vermont is facing a housing shortage nearing crisis proportions, when our healthcare system is stretched particularly for drug treatment and mental health services, how can Vermont state legislators – with a straight face – propose spending public money to build prisons? Unless this is what they are planning as their housing option for poor people... Vermonters and people all across the country must stand up against this path of exploitation and oppression and demand better for our communities. No to new prisons and No to Cop City!”

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