

Jackson Park Watch Statement

Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners Meeting, 11/9/2016

Margaret Schmid, Jackson Park Watch co-coordinator

Good afternoon CEO Kelly, President Ruiz, and Commissioners. I am pleased to have the chance to bring some additional issues to your attention.

First, thanks to you, Mr. Kelly, for revealing at last month's Board meeting that the Yoko Ono sculpture on Wooded Island was donated to the Park District by Yoko Ono and Project 120, answering at last our repeated inquiries on this matter. This information has further heightened our interest in locating documentation of the process by which the Park District accepted this donation and of the agreements that have been made for its maintenance, something we have been unable to locate to date either in publicly available Park District records or via FOIA request. It has also drawn our renewed attention to the July 14, 2014 Memorandum of Understanding between CEO Kelly and Bob Karr, president of Project 120, which is the only authority ever cited to us as legitimating the installation of the sculpture on Wooded Island. You may know that this MOU became public only after we made repeated requests to Park District personnel and finally submitted a FOIA inquiry. As we consider it further, there appear to be numerous unanswered questions in relations to this apparently crucial agreement.

Second, a question: we have noted that the Park District web site now contains a new Jackson Park Project and Framework plan. While this new plan includes a cover image of the 1999 "South Lakefront Framework Plan, Phase 2" that was developed for Jackson Park and the South Shore Cultural Center through a process including extensive community input, the contents of the new plan reflect only the contents of the MOU between the Park District and Project 120 (written, we were personally informed, by Mr. Karr himself) and address only that portion of the park that the MOU appears to hand over to Project 120. Is this now an official Park District document? Does it replace the previous 1999 Framework Plan? Is this yet another example of action taken under the apparent authority of this secretive MOU, taking precedence of standard ways of doing public business?

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