

Jackson Park Watch Statement

To the Meeting of the Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners

Wednesday, July 13, 2016

Brenda Nelms, JPW Coordinator

Good afternoon Commissioners, President Ruiz, and Superintendent Kelly. I am Brenda Nelms, co-coordinator of Jackson Park Watch. Thank you for the opportunity to address you.

Jackson Park Watch is dedicated to ensuring that plans and decisions about Jackson Park are developed through an inclusive and transparent process grounded in robust community engagement. Such a process has not been followed with regard to the proposals emanating from the Park District's public-private partnership with Project 120.

Last month my colleague Margaret Schmid addressed you to express appreciation for the participation of CEO Kelly and senior Park District officials in the community meeting called by Alderman Leslie Hairston on May 31 and to request the development of revised proposals that would align with community concerns expressed at that meeting. A central theme emerging from that discussion was the community's deep concern about the proposal for an over-sized, multi-functional, glass-walled pavilion *cum* music venue that would destroy picnic and parking space, remove trees, and intrude on nearby nature and garden sanctuaries and residences with noise and congestion. There is a clear call to design a down-sized and relocated facility *sans* music venue that would be more in keeping with the natural setting of Jackson Park's core.

Recently Alderman Hairston announced that she wants to use a community engagement process for further review of and development of plans for Jackson Park. Such an inclusive process will allow the Jackson Park community – a very large and diverse constituency that so far has not been fully represented in discussions with Project 120 – to define its vision for the park and to assess a revised pavilion proposal against that vision.

A return to square one is needed and demanded. We request and urge the Park District, with its partner Project 120, to present an alternative proposal aligned with community views and to embrace and fully support a community engagement process as desired by Alderman Hairston.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address you. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

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