

Jackson Park Watch Statement
Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners Meeting, 01/11/17

Brenda Nelms, JPW co-coordinator

Good afternoon CEO Kelly, President Ruiz, and Commissioners. I appreciate the chance to address you again today.

On Monday evening Mr. Kelly attended the monthly meeting of the Jackson Park Advisory Council for the very first public discussion of the proposed \$30+ million transformation of the Jackson Park and South Shore Cultural Center golf courses. The meeting room was overflowing with more than 150 attendees, eager to understand what was behind the news reports and swirling rumors. Most left without much understanding of the proposed new golf course, but with a uneasy sense that a deal had been made behind closed doors without any public input.

Mr. Kelly's comments provoked skepticism on a variety of fronts. For example, his promise to provide written answers to audience questions reminded many of a similar promise made at the May 31 meeting about Project 120's proposals, a promise that has yet to be fulfilled. His attempt to use the 1999 South Lakefront Framework Plan as the basis for the golf course proposal was refuted by those who know that the 1999 plan focused on improving the golf courses and the facilities *for local users*. (And in any case that plan was intended for only the next 10 years.) His assertion that nothing is set and everything is subject to community review stands in stark opposition to his stated desire to break ground at South Shore in the spring and to the fact that you are being asked today to approve a \$1.1 m contract to begin work on the project without further ado. His statement that the South Shore beach would be untouched is contradicted by suggestions in golf course news sources that a "cape hole" would play directly over that beach. None of this is conducive to community support for the golf course proposal or to the development of community trust in the Park District and its operation.

Mr. Kelly is slated to appear at Alderman Leslie Hairston's ward meeting on January 24 to discuss the golf course proposal. This will be a critical opportunity for the Park District to release details of the proposed golf course plan (including a business plan) to the public and to be clear about what is and isn't proposed and whether the PGA-standard course will be viable financially in the long term. It will also be a major opportunity to begin to demonstrate whether community input is truly sought and whether it will be honored.

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