

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

Margaret Schmid, JPW co-coordinator

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

Our interest in Park District decision-making originated in our efforts to understand the Park District's relationship to Project 120 and its proposals for significant changes in Jackson Park. Our diligence uncovered the secretive MOU between CEO Mike Kelly and Project 120's Bob Karr, a document developed behind closed doors, never voted on by the Park District Board, and executed without public review or community input on the sweeping changes it authorized. It is noteworthy that, as we have discovered, the installation of the SkyLanding sculpture on Wooded Island, done under the auspices of this MOU, was never voted on by the Park District Board, was not reviewed by the Park Enhancement Committee, and was not subject to public review or community input. We oppose any further work done under this dubious MOU, and note that decision-making of this sort creates distrust of the Park District among members of the public.

Now we have the proposal for a massive project to redo the existing golf courses in Jackson Park and South Shore Cultural Center, a project which would take significant public funds at a time when the Park District claims it has no monies for a multitude of projects that would be of far greater benefit to average Chicago park users. It too was developed behind closed doors. There has been no meaningful public review or community input. You, members of the Park District Board, have never voted to approve this initiative, yet you are about to be asked to authorize \$1.1 m in scarce taxpayer funds to jump start this project with the SmithGroupJJR contract, a contract that only makes sense if an initial routing plan, at least for the South Shore holes, is already in place.

We decry this way of conducting the public's business and this under-handed way of dealing with Chicago's parks, a precious resource. We call upon you to reject this proposed contract and instead to bring a halt to this golf course project until there is meaningful community input on a detailed plan including a viable business plan, and most importantly, until there is one overall comprehensive plan for the many significant changes that are in store for Jackson Park. Chicagoans deserve better than this haphazard, money-driven process that puts our parks at risk.

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