

Jackson Park Watch Statement
Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners Meeting, 02/8/17

Margaret Schmid, JPW co-coordinator

Good afternoon CEO Kelly, President Ruiz, and Commissioners. I have several questions for you today.

FIRST: we have obtained additional information on the SmithGroup JJR consulting contract with you. The timeline in the contract calls for the design development report to be issued by March 1 and for construction on the remake of the South Shore golf course to begin in May. At your last meeting, many of you talked at length about the importance of community input. The schedule included in your contract with SmithGroup JJR precludes anything beyond a series of one-way public presentations reminiscent of the public presentations on Project 120's proposals in 2014 and 2015. Legitimate community input has to be a two-way street, in which you, the Park District, listen to the community, make adjustments and accommodations accordingly, and then communicate back to the community before moving ahead. In light of your own statements on the importance of community input at your January meeting, will you put the start of any construction on hold until the SmithGroup JJR plan and recommendations are complete and have been released to the public, and until a proper process of community consultation has been planned and completed?

SECOND, many have noted the contrast between the frequency with which you plead lack of funds when asked about new various projects by a variety of citizen groups and the ease with which you approved the \$1.1 m SmithGroup JJR contract at the last meeting. You are further prepared, according the media reports, to spend at least \$6 m in taxpayers money for the golf course project. Would you please explain why funds for the golf course project are such a high priority while funds for other projects are not available?

THIRD, calls for an overall plan for all of Jackson Park are mounting from a variety of sources. This planning needs to occur BEFORE, not after, any of the major projects now being discussed are undertaken and historic Jackson Park is in essence dismembered. This is another critical reason to put any start date for the golf course project on hold immediately. Will you take this important step today?

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