

Remarks to Park Board: September 12, 2018

Good evening. My name is Kate Gjaja, and I live at 325 Central Ave. I am co-President of the League of Women Voters of Wilmette. Tonight I am speaking on behalf of the League. Let me begin by thanking the Park District Commissioners and Staff for all of your hard work for our community.

One of the ways that the League stays abreast of the happenings of local government is through our Observer Corps. One observer recently flagged to us that the Village staff attended a Park Board meeting in July to present the stormwater plan approved by the Village Board.

We have gone back and reviewed agendas, minutes and video from Park Board meetings and Real Estate Committee meetings since December, 2017, to see what reporting from Park District staff and discussion among Park Commissioners has taken place up to this point. We have also met separately with Village and Park District staff to check our understanding of the communication between the Village Board and the Park Board.

With passage of the stormwater plan by the Village Board, the development of a detailed plan by Village and Park District staff has now begun, and we see that Director Wilson is updating the Board on that plan

tonight. In many ways, the ball is now in the Park Board's court. Although we appreciate the level of Park District staff involvement to date, the massive nature of the stormwater project and the effect it will have as currently envisioned on the Village's parks require Park Board involvement. As the elected representatives of the citizens of this community, Park Board engagement is the citizens' best way to have a "representative in the room" looking out for our parks and also the best way to make sure that there are opportunities for citizen input on park development throughout the process. Public meetings lend themselves to these goals. The Village Board and the Park Board represent the same constituency but they represent different resident priorities.

Residents have a strong interest in being informed about and having opportunities to comment on issues related to park land such as: 1) How the stormwater plan will impact their current and future ability to use and enjoy the parks; 2) The financial implications of these plans for the asset values and running costs of the parks in question as well as any long term limitations on potential alternative uses of the land; and 3) Analyses of environmental impacts.

We urge the Park Board to establish a process for periodic systematic input on the stormwater plan. We defer to Park Board

Commissioners for the best way to make sure that happens. This Park Board engagement should be in addition to, rather than a substitute for, the cooperation currently underway at the staff level of both organizations.

Thank you for your consideration of the League's recommendation.