



Democracy Takes a Holiday in Lincoln Park

Another egregious and heavy-handed incident to silence critiques of the Bid took place in mid-May of 2009.

Several of the No Games team (including Tom Tresser) had joined the Lincoln Park Advisory Council (LPAC) - <https://www.lpacchicago.org> - in 2008 as part of the campaign to roll back the Latin School Lincoln Park Land Grab (see <http://www.wesavedlincolnpark.org>).

A public forum was organized by the Council to look at the Olympics at the Notebaert Nature Museum in Lincoln Park on January 14, 2009. This was two weeks before the No Games Chicago Forum at the University of Illinois Chicago and about a month before the Chicago 2016 Bid details would be made public.

The speakers were:

Gyata Kimmons - Director of Community Relations for the Chicago 2016 Olympic Bid Committee. Before that, Mr. Kimmons was Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for the Chicago Public.

Patrick Sandusky – Chief Communications Officer for Chicago 2016.

Dr. Allen Sanderson - Senior Lecturer in the Department of Economics at the University of Chicago and a Senior Research Scientist at the National Opinion Research Center. Mr. Sanderson is an oft-cited authority on sports economics issues.

The falsehoods popped up in short order. “The chance ever to go over budget is historically very, very low.” Asserted Sandusky at about 11 minutes, 42 seconds into the forum. You can hear the complete session at <https://soundcloud.com/civiclabb/lpac-olympic-forum> (1 hour, 24 minutes).



Patrick Sandusky, Gyata Kimmons, Allen Sanderson



Attendees at the Jan 14 LPAC Forum

Long time environmental activist [Charlotte Newfeld](#) (who passed in 2020) demanded some answers around the environmental impact of the Games in Lincoln Park, especially on the Jarvis Bird Sanctuary located at Montrose Avenue and the lake, where she had been a dedicated steward and organizer. Mr. Kimmons said "There's going to be no impact on the migratory bird sanctuaries at all." She was not convinced. "You did not visit the sanctuary or even attempt to understand the inter-relationship of green space and growing things to heavy construction, You tell the birds! You tell me which one of your people talked to the birds!" Newfield would not be placated and demanded to know who their environmental study was done by and" where it was published and when can we see it."

Charlotte was justified in her direct and persistent demands for answers. The manner and response from the Chicago 2016 officials would be emblematic of their persistent opacity, lying, and arrogance as the Battle for the Bid heated up.



So, the LPAC was in action – asserting that the proposal to put Olympic venues in Lincoln Park was a grave issue worthy of its review. Tresser hoped to get the LPAC on the record as opposing any such facilities in Lincoln Park. At the March 11 meeting of the LPAC he made this motion – “The Lincoln Park Advisory Council opposes the 2016 Olympics on the grounds of its financial, environmental and social impacts to Lincoln Park.” After some debate a straw poll was taken and there were 12 votes for the motion and 10 opposed. The minutes stated: “The President – Vickie Matthews - cited a provision of the Council’s by-laws that calls for controversial issues that have strong support for both sides to be referred to a task force for study and then re-visiting before the full Council. Tresser agreed to chair the Park Planning Task Force that will look at the impact of the Olympics on Lincoln Park and report back to the full Council."

The No Gamers sensed that it was going to be difficult to get the LPAC to oppose the Bid.

Tresser quickly organized the Task Force which met on March 16. They heard from Charlotte Newfeld and Terry Schilling, the Stewards of the Jarvis Bird Sanctuary, located immediately adjacent to the proposed tennis venue. They gave expert testimony on the harm the construction and operation of the venue would have on the sanctuary.

Newfeld and Schilling made these points:

- The proposed tennis venue impinges on the bird sanctuary and the nature preserve
- The venue would cause the removal of approximately 100 trees from the construction area
- No one who works with the sanctuary or the stewardship program was consulted on the site, which was selected by the Park District
- The 2016 Committee has no published plans for supplying water to the tennis site, raising fears of diverting or supplanting the water supply to the sanctuary
- There would be a net loss of 7 public tennis courts currently in this area if the 2016 plan is implemented
- The disruption to the nature area and sanctuary will be harmful and irreversible

In addition, two letters opposing the venue were submitted into the record by the Lakeview Citizens' Council and by The Chicago Audubon Society.

After lengthy discussion, the following motion was made by Tresser, seconded by Pat Yeray:

“The Lincoln Park Advisory Council Planning Task Force opposes and will recommend that the full Council oppose the siting of the 2016 Olympic tennis court venue at the Waveland Park area because: (1) It would seriously damage the bird sanctuary and adjacent nature area and the wildlife therein, (2) It would destroy park land, (3) Cause a net loss of 7 tennis courts, (4) Cause a loss of approximately 100 trees. (5) Risk grave damage to this area by the presence of tens of thousands of spectators.”

The motion was passed by a vote of 7 to 3.

This was the motion they were going to bring to the full membership of the Lincoln Park Advisory Council at the annual meeting in May 2009.

What would unfold at that meeting revealed the extent of the toxic state of civics in Chicago.

The LPAC met on May 13. President Vickie Matthews presiding. The meeting was very crowded. A number of people were present who had never been to a meeting before. Very unusual – in fact – unprecedented – was the presence of 46th Ward Alderman Helen Schiller. Also present was Gyata Kimmons, Director of Community Relations for the Chicago 2016 Committee.

Tresser presented the activities of the March 16th Task Force meeting and made the following motion (seconded by Herb Kaplan – who would go on to become the President of Protect Our Parks, www.protectourparks.org): “The Lincoln Park Advisory Council Planning Task Force opposes and will recommend that the full Council oppose the siting of the 2016 Olympic tennis court venue at the Waveland Park area because:

- (1) It would seriously damage the bird sanctuary and adjacent nature area and the wildlife therein,
- (2) It would destroy park land,
- (3) Cause a net loss of 7 tennis courts,
- (4) Cause a loss of approximately 100 trees,
- (5) Risk grave damage to this area by the presence of tens of thousands of spectators.”

The minutes reflect “spirited debate.” As Secretary, Tresser prepared and submitted these minutes. Fred Hagedorn moved Tresser's motion to be out of order and offered a substitute motion that read:

"The Lincoln Park Advisory Council supports the re-sighting of the Tennis Facility for the 2016 Games away from the bird sanctuary to a better site within Lincoln Park, as outlined by Helen Schiller, 46th Ward Alderman, and welcomes the commitments to restore the surrounding areas after the 2016 Games."

The motion to replace the Task Force’s motion with the substitute motion was approved 16-13. The minutes read “The President of the Council referred the matter to the Planning Task Force for further study.”

This was clearly a put-up job; these new faces were brought in to torpedo the work of the duly constituted Task Force and prevent the LPAC from going on the record as opposing any aspect of the 2016 Bid. Tresser shouted to the President of the Advisory Council to allow a simple up or down vote on his motion. Kaplan got pretty angry, as well.

Mr. Hagedorn felt compelled to issue a statement to the LPAC membership on May 14 that read, in part: “...the meeting devolved into shouting matches (at times) for the simple fact that neither Mr. Tresser nor Mr. Caplan understood the proper workings of Robert's Rules and attempted to shout down this amendment that was presented to the body... Robert's Rules of Order work well, but all members involved in the debate need to be versed in the specific rules and not present incorrect interpretations of them, especially at volume. I brought the amendment forward, and I am very familiar with the Rules of Order presented by Mr. Roberts regarding parliamentary procedure. When a lawyer stands and yells that I am wrong, I will not be cowed, I will simply refer to the rules, which I did. It is unfortunate that I had to raise my voice simply to be heard, but mine was in reaction not in incitement, but I apologize to the body, nonetheless. Further, I am delighted that the amendment was adopted as a substitute for the original motion, we are now in a positive position to work with the Alderman, the Park District and Chicago 2016 to find a positive solution that works for all parties, while also protecting the wildlife of our parks!”

The minutes of the meeting along with the proposed submission from the Task Force is on the book web site at Chapter 18.

Granted, Tresser had only been an active member for a little over a year, but he had never seen this kind of parliamentary maneuvering and vote-stuffing in any meeting of the LPAC.

What is the purpose of park advisory council If it does not take the strongest possible action when it is confronted with plans to destroy park land and irrevocably harm a unique bird sanctuary in its care?

Where did the new faces, who had not been part of the LPAC for the past year, come from and how did they even know about the meeting? And, since when does an alderman show up at a routine park advisory council meeting?

Bottom line – there could be NO official voice of opposition to the Chicago 2016 Bid from any entity connected with the city. Democracy was crushed in Lincoln Park that afternoon and the Bid advanced unscathed.