

STATEMENT BEFORE THE CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT BOARD – 9-3-08

My name is Tom Tresser. I live in Lincoln Park and I'm opposed to the soccer field construction in Lincoln Park.

My remarks are directed to the person truly responsible for this fiasco.

Congratulations Mr. Mayor, your lap dogs at the Park District and Chicago Plan Commission have sullied public process and honest government once again. Your appointees to these bodies have shown us that clout and law breaking is what drives policy decisions in your administration. You have appointed hacks and cronies to every agency that is supposed to serve the public. Instead, they are fleecing the public. Your way of governing looks more like Stalinist Russia and Communist China than main street America. This body and the Plan Commission are stacked with your minions who vote in lock step after zero true public debate. This very meeting was called early to cut short public protest. You worked on the site on August 19 without permission and in defiance of a court order. We are allowed a few minutes before the mike in the middle of the day when it is difficult to get ordinary citizens to attend these show meetings. At the recent charade of a Plan Commission meeting, the city's witnesses had unlimited time to talk and one so-called expert was the vice president of marketing for the company selling you the synthetic turf for this project. No commissioner asked opponents of the project a single question. One of the dissidents was arrested after he dared scold the commissioners.

But, Mr. Mayor, this is OUR city. These are OUR parks. If you need more money to improve our city - stop cutting these bad deals. Instead, sun set the 140+ Tax Increment Finance Districts that suck over \$500 million in revenues out of the city's operating budget every year. So, despite pleas of poverty and a looming deficit - there ARE funds to run our city well. You should not sell our public assets to the highest bidder - including our precious and irreplaceable parks. Don't destroy them, don't partition them and don't lease them to private leagues that gobble up all the use of them and which freeze the neighbors out of them.

We will continue to protect our parks from you and your minions - from land grabs, privatization and other shady deals which keep neighbors out of their parks. This includes putting up a big STOP sign for the wholesale destruction that threatens a number of our major parks promised by the 2016 Olympic bid.

So, Mr. Mayor, if you need funds to run the city properly, just put our property taxes to work properly and stop TFing everything in sight and then using that money for private deals that do not advance the common good. If you want a world class city, please ditch your Olympic schemes and instead pledge to have every public school student read at or above grade level by 2016. Pledge to have every high school student graduate with honors by 2016. Next year we celebrate the centennial of Daniel Burnham's vision for Chicago. Pledge to double the number of park acres per 1,000 Chicago residents by 2016 - from the paltry 4 that is now the case to at least 8 - which is still short of the ten acres of park land per thousand residents that Mr. Burnham called for.

Clout and cronyism represents the Chicago of the last century. Making Chicago run green, lean, honest, open, smart and super literate - that's the ticket to a 21st century Chicago we can all be proud of.