Minutes of the January 13, 2020 Jackson Park Advisory Council Meeting

Louise McCurry convened the meeting and distributed the agenda at 7:10 p.m., with a quorum present and a total attendance of 20. Brief introductions were made. Distributed materials included an annual report on JPAC programs and activities and a provisional financial report for 2019. Final revision of the latter is attached to these minutes.

Treasurer’s Report. Dwight Powell reported the December and year-end final balance as $4,662.71. In December $860.00 in 2020 dues and gifts was deposited, $58.73 was spent on the fieldhouse kids holiday party, and $75.00 for the annual fee to our fiscal agent. We are in the black for the year [gaining $613.47 in 2019]. Dwight said we have a request to contribute to the purchase of team jerseys-- more information next month.

New actions: Louise McCurry introduced and led discussion of hosting on March 14 a One Earth Film Festival- work project at 10, resource fair at 12, and screening at 1:30 of a film by RISE: “Child of Nature”, about grass-roots environmental and climate change projects worldwide, led by youth. Film rental cost is $350.00, with possible additional cost to be discussed later. Moved by Mary Anton, seconded by Anne Marie Miles to spend up to $350.00 for the film rental. Approved.

Presented by Louise and Dwight to purchase for the fieldhouse preschool class: a small-person table and 4 small-person chairs, at discount from a Park District approved catalogue shown, as in use at Nichols Park fieldhouse. Moved by Spencer Bibbs, seconded and approved to spend up to $250.00. Attendees donated $100 on the spot towards this purchase.

Minutes of the December meeting. There were no corrections or objections to the minutes.

High water and trees. Margaret Schmid noted in regard to the Newsletter feature on shore erosion, flooding, and high water table, that the trees on the west side of Wooded Island have been strongly impacted by high water and are leaning heavily. This was immediately reported to park district staff. It was also noted that OpenLands has a proposal and petition for tree rescue, replacement, and planting throughout the city.

Reports and presentations
Erin Adams said that children’s books are steadily shared and replaced at the two Little Libraries. Stickers and notices placed on the boxes are regularly removed—that’s not a proper place to post. It’s the only problem.
We are looking for kid’s books on birds and helping birds—donations are welcome.

Fieldhouse program and recreation. Supervisor Bobbie Beckam thanked members for help with the heating failure in the building that evening. Pickleball, winter sports, and tiny tots programs are up and running. JPAC was thanked for the chairs and tables and for helping with the tumbling contest in December.

Shoreline erosion and flooding discussion was lead by Heather Gleason, Director of the Chicago Park District Department of Planning, with Phil Weaver, engineer with Westrec, which...
manages the harbors. They presented design for two breakwaters, one projecting from each shore into the harbor inlet near the lake at c.64th Street, to deflect wave action. They would be of sheet pile and concrete with a concrete cap, riprap along side, and the required lights. The Corps of Engineers is reviewing for compliance and permits. Depending on these and final cost and funding, they may not both be built at the same time, but it was implied work should begin this year. Many questions were asked about the breakwaters and the damage and temporary measures along whole shore and the park interior, and the long-term solution study requested. Gleason said temporary measures such as jersey barriers and boulders is being handled by CDOT. The many water-weakened trees are park district. She expected the breakwaters will reduce wave action and water pressure through both harbors and on the west shore, which includes Lake Shore Drive, the Lakefront Trail, and the historic harbor station, all of which are under siege. The breakwater will not address 67th, La Rabida, the Drive at 64th, 59th, 57th beach and trail, or impacts of high water in the lagoons and beyond and will not address the collapse of the inlet and harbor walls. Members noted that not only are boaters attached to these harbors (and oppose being moved to other locations) but so are small scale users including kayakers and fishermen, and that there is room in the Lakefront Plan for restoration of paddleboats and for dragon boats etc.

New partnerships and community action. Jackson Park and JPAC have an opportunity to participate in a near-drownings and Drowning Prevention Study being launched by Lurie Children’s Hospital with support from the Robert Woods Johnson Foundation. We will learn more at an open informational meeting ahead of the February 10 JPAC meeting – at 5:30 p.m. Harris Community Action partnership for listening, learning, and community engagement and action in the park continues to be set up and defined through meetings and on-site tours. Xibai Ren, a student at the Harris School of Public Policy gave more details including updating and expanding our outreach and relationship-building to families and university students, identifying and surveying park users, and creating a more robust youth green team of volunteers. The PAC will have to manage and do the work. Several members expressed interest in participating in the committee.

Ken Dunn, The Resource Center, presented his initiative to create viable, best-practices recycling and composting/urban farming on a local scale, in place of what he called the city’s dismal failure and renege on these matters. He also called for reestablishment of the Chicago Department of Environment.

McCurry reminded us of the year’s standing programs, the first one being One Earth Film Festival March 14, and workdays starting in March. OEFF Poster choice preferences were given.

Moved to adjourn- Fran Vandervoort. Next regular meeting February 10, Monday, 7:30 p.m.

Gary M. Ossewaarde, Secretary
Minutes of the February 10, 2020 Jackson Park Advisory Council Meeting

Louise McCurry convened the meeting and distributed the agenda at 7:10 p.m., with a quorum present and a total attendance of 23. Minutes of the January meeting were accepted as presented.

Treasurer’s Report. Dwight Powell. Beginning balance for January was $4,662.72, end balance was $4,282.44. Deposits were $100, expenditures $580.27 -- $230.27 to Discount School Supplies for the day camp small kids table and chairs and $350 for film rental for the March 14 One Earth Film Fest. We are expecting a generous gift of $250 and made an expenditure of $100 both of which should appear on the next balance.

New initiatives. Proposed service event. Dwight Powell and Mary Anton announced planning underway for a Feed the Hungry in the Park Dinner for the Thursday before next Thanksgiving. We have the supervisor’s approval, donation commitments from food suppliers (more in progress) and cash donations, and we have secured the services of a major chef in the food industry. We will include residents of senior and low income buildings in Woodlawn as well homeless who can be located and invited. Members agreed we should serve the community in need and assented to the project.

Drowning-Swimming-Safety Study and programs. JPAC proposes to collaborate with Lurie Children’s Hospital and the Red Cross to fill a major data and programming gap around near-drownings. Members were especially alarmed that there may be significant underreporting by life and safety personnel of non-injury and non-fatal incidents. There also appears to be low access to swimming opportunities and classes and low ability to swim and be safe whether in pools or greatly varied beach and other natural settings. The Park District designated Jackson as the focus locale on the South Side to get at these issues.

Discussed from the pre-meeting earlier in the evening, a set of JPAC members shared with a team from the project (led by Michelle Macy, MD, MS and Amy Hill at Lurie Children’s Hospital) our life experience with swimming and water safety and how swimming adds to both health and confidence, especially for kids. We set out a suite of needs and actions—surveys and beach/pool observations for the Study and planning for citywide and Jackson Park needs and facilities, and a set swimming and water safety lessons and demonstrations.

Suggested was that although there are several pools within a couple of miles radius, some are too small or too much in demand and that access for learning and swimming tends to be restricted or proprietary resulting in poor hours for families--so general community access is limited, especially where the pools are shared between a school and a park. And there are only limited programs at the beaches. It seemed that existing facilities are not satisfactorily serving our kids. (Initiatives by the boating clubs were gratefully acknowledged.) And it’s too often assumed that since so many people in our communities don’t swim, they don’t need pools or beach programs. Those with experience in other cities and countries cited programs and
equipment used there but not in Chicago to create widespread water literacy. This includes portable pools.

The JPAC officers said that for several reasons they have come to the conclusion that our long-asked-for new fieldhouse needs to have a major swimming pool, and now the Lurie program gives us the opportunity to get the data and make the case. Members volunteered for the Study and water/bike safety programs this summer.

Fieldhouse and park program. Fran Vandervoort asked that we revisit the furniture that we bought for the pre-school class, noting that it will grow because it includes a focus on physical skills that lead into the tumbling program. She moved that buying up to two more sets of tables and chairs. Seconded by Dwight and approved.

Bears. Louise led a shout-out for lead recreation instructors/coaches Erika Robinson and Pierre Nealon, who were sent all expenses paid to SuperBowl LIV by the Chicago Bears as part of Jackson Park and JPAC’s winning grant application showing “why recreation is important for our youth.” Andria and Pierre were given a big sendoff to the game by staff and JPAC. The prize also includes equipment for the Junior Bears program.

An Iowa Building committee was established to plan for and oversee that portion of the $625,000 state grant.

OPC landscape. Robert Rock (of Living Habitats) gave an in depth update on multi-perspective planning for the Obama Center site (summarized as an appendix document below).

After announcements the meeting was adjourned. Next meeting March 9 7 p.m. Gary Ossewaarde ######

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OBAMA PRESIDENTIAL CENTER: Reinforcing LANDSCAPE ECOLOGY

Rev/Ed report on Robert Rock’s presentation and questions at Feb. 10 JPAC Meeting. Gary M. Ossewaarde

At the February 10, 2020 JPAC meeting Robert Rock, PLA, ASLA, Principal at Living Habitats, a Chicago firm that is part of the Obama Presidential Center Landscape Design team led by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, gave a presentation and answered questions about the OPC landscape planning. An overview sheet was handed out that has been utilized for some of the detail below. Rock emphasized that the planning is very much a work in progress; a formal prospectus will be issued in the near future.

The research and planning focus, he said, is creation of a functioning landscape that can sustainably adapt through time, changing climate and other conditions and re-connects a now-isolated site into the park, not one that is de novo or stands apart. It seeks to bring Olmsted’s principles and vision forward using modern research and experience plus challenges, such as climate change to make a beautiful landscape and a valuable habitat that will thrive over the
next 100 years. They aim to create a national model. The design guidelines cover Stormwater Management, Tree and Soil Ecology, Bird Habitat, and Biodiversity.

The Stormwater plan is intended to capture, cleanse, and keep most stormwater onsite—up to 2 million gallons a year—so it infiltrates on the site rather than, as at present runs off into the city sewers and the lagoons. In addressing stormwater impacts on the site, the team is addressing both the 100-year and the relevant percentile events referenced in sustainable guidelines for LEED & SITES certification. The existing low point on the project site is the Perennial Garden/Women’s Garden and as we are reestablishing this low point, stormwater will still flow across the surface to it. As a part of the OPC design, the Women’s Garden is to be reestablished in the same location, using the existing stones, incorporating accessible pathways, and extending the perennial garden palette as well as the canopy trees.

Trees, Plants, and Soil Ecology. The tree and shrub plan combines preserving healthy legacy trees near the comfort station and retaining valuable soil biology with a more diverse planting palette at all levels of vegetation. There are currently 326 trees slated for removal with about 500 to be planted in the proposed design. The final planting palette and exact numbers and palette will continue to be refined.

Two major tree surveys were done. The traditional survey by Bartlett looked at the age and health of each tree and how to manage it. The other tree survey by ELM examined the ecological value of the trees and the soil employing the services of arborists, mycologists, and ecologists. The qualitative ELM tree survey took into account each tree’s generational age, condition, ecological value, and aesthetic value. The object was to provide an ecology-based evaluation of the existing vegetation. Within the limits of the future OPC site the tree surveys identified a relative few trees that potentially could have been planted during the timeframe of Olmsted Sr.’s influence on Jackson Park. Many of the current trees would have been within the footprints of the World’s Columbian Exposition building. Nearly 50 percent of the trees on the project site are of three genera- Maple, HoneyLocust, and Ash. In addition the tree survey indicated that nearly 40% of the existing trees on the OPC site are unhealthy, in decline, or undesirable. There is a general lack of diversity within the vegetation on the existing site—65% of the ground plane is lawn or athletic field, 5% is perennial plantings (at the Women’s Garden) and the rest is pavement. The current design reduces the amount of lawn to approximately 15% of the site and the design goal is to diversify the tree canopy such that the palette includes a range of species and not a domination by a handful of genera.

Soils. An innovative study was performed to evaluate the potential re-purposing of the existing soil biology. The soils have co-evolved with the trees and the goal is to retain resident soil biology, protect a select portion of it throughout construction, and redistribute it within the new site to support the new vegetation. Also, where possible select existing trees will be repurposed as nurse logs, similar to fallen trees in natural woodlands, where the resulting decomposition builds the soil ecosystem and serves the new vegetation. The goal is to support a natural nutrient cycling capacity in the landscape as opposed to supplementing plants with an abundance of commercial fertilizer. Harvested soil biology, re-purposed as inoculants, and the nurse logs will carry forward a piece of the site’s heritage and as a more natural
supplementation strategy, will assist with plant establishment and support sustainability efforts.

**Bird-friendly Habitat and Biodiversity.** The planting palette (still being refined) is intended to support the human uses in the park while also supporting the ecosystem function. The design provides a boost to overall biodiversity, supports migratory bird populations that frequent the park and is intended to be integral with the rest of the park. The design goals for the planting palette target a mixture of vegetation where no more than 10% will be of the same genera. The design anticipates the reestablishment of the now-missing middle layer of vegetation. The planting palette will take account of creating natural plant communities as well as how it will look and how it will last or 100 years. They will consider plants most likely to adapt to scenarios of complex climate change (especially for more extremes) including physical and behavioral responses of both plants and wildlife.

Bird and pollinator habitat and safety are especially important. The accommodations needed for them (food, water, shelter, pairings) and for host plants are multifaceted. Design of the project for bird-friendly measures have been in discussion, with conversations about building features, lighting, and plantings to avoid dangers.

Members questions:
Q (Jerry Levy) How green are the green roofs atop some of the buildings? A- They will be full-profile, not thin-soil landscapes, not what one sees on a lot of high-rise “green” roofs. Also, most of the buildings are embedded down into the landscape, and the roofs are part of the groundline.
Q (Jerry Levy) Where does the project stop along Cornell Dr. and the lagoons, and will the emergent wetland plants put by GLFER in the west lagoon be changed or affected? A- We are not changing the GLFER project, our project stops at the limit of the GLFER project. In some ways using the same palette from the GLFER project would not be appropriate because we are essentially transitioning between the emergent plantings and the upland plantings.
Q (Robin Kaufman) Will old trees be saved and which? A- The large sycamores by the English Comfort Station will stay. While there are other large old trees, like the old oak at the north end of the site that are being removed. In the particular case of that old oak, the mycologist identified a pathogenic fungi in its roots that we would not want to retain.
Q (Gary Ossewaarde) Is water from Jackson and the site migrating into the Midway east panel? A- That’s mostly from the landforms west of Stony Island and other adjacent contributing sub-watersheds. In heavy rains Stony floods from all sides; our stormwater strategy is aimed at retaining stormwater on the OPC site. (Members suggested a kiosk on site explaining the evolution and changes in the soils and plantings and for development of other educational opportunities and resources.)
Minutes - March 9, 2020 Jackson Park Advisory Council Meeting

Louise McCurry convened the meeting at the fieldhouse and distributed the agenda at 7 p.m., with a quorum present and a total attendance of 21. Minutes of the February meeting were approved as presented.

Treasurer Dwight Powell reported a balance of $4,152.44 at the end of February. We received generous gifts [thanks Hyde Park Bank/Wintrust and Fran Vandervoort] and membership renewal of $35 [from Lakeside Lawn Bowling]. [Expenditures were for the second set of preschool furniture and treats for the February 22 event.]

February 22 Black Heroes of Jackson Park kids program. Louise thanked the presenters Andy Carter, Candice Washington, Stephanie Jefferson, and Jamie Claire Flaherty and their organizations. Scavenger hunts, stories, and painting projects helped the kids engage and create. JPAC members assisted. A box of books was given. Members said there is lots of information but you often have to search for it.

Member Pat Harper, President of the Jackson Park Golf Association, described the gala JPGA and women golfer associations held at DuSable Museum February 16 to celebrate Black golf pioneers such as Ted Rose and Walter Stevie. The first Evan Scholarship went to a Jackson Park caddie. The organizations have summer classes for youth golfers and caddies. A video about the pioneers and their struggles is called “Uneven Lies.” She noted that women golfers still face an income disparity. The next program, March 18 at DuSable, will celebrate women golfers, especially African American women golf pioneers. JPGA will hold its invitational September 19 at Jackson Park golf course. Caddie recruitment is underway including in schools in Woodlawn.

Louise noted the energetic Woodlawn Summit March 7, where JPAC had a table in the resource fair. Two dozen took the swimming survey written by the Lurie Drowning Prevention Study. Also there was a large model of the OPC and community programming in the buildings. Blacks in Green and Com Ed promoted solar panels (including for rent) and energy-saving lights and controls. Among speakers, Sen. Durbin announced inter alia convening of area and Great Lakes officials to work on the erosion and resiliency issues.

Increasing lakefront damage all along the South Side was described and discussed by several members. At suggestion of Robin Kaufman, members are asked to go out and take pictures and forward to Louise to submit to officials and agencies; Robin will send some she has. Gary Ossewaarde asked, with Dwight Powell moving and Trish Morse seconding, that JPAC will draft and send to officials and media a letter with resolution urging short and long term action on the shoreline issue. Approved. (The letter as sent is appended.)

Upcoming events, actions, call for volunteers. March 13, Friday- Annual Clarence Darrow readings and wreath toss, east of Darrow Bridge. March 14, Saturday- JPAC’s part in One Earth Film Festival--members (since to be rescheduled). March 21, annual PAC Conference at Malcolm X (since to be rescheduled).
Swim needs and programs - The Lurie-written survey asks about attitudes and experience related to swimming, availability of lessons, and whether a pool would be of value in a new fieldhouse (respondents so far have been unanimous in support for the latter). We will circulate these as we can given the COVID-19 situation.

Trina Hollingsworth, Ed.D., shared information and spurred discussion of various kinds of swim and water safety programs, including CPS and CPD. Examples include Kids in the Pool introductory program June 13 at Ellis Park fieldhouse. It was noted that a problem is that many pools are small or in high demand with limited hours (and are tempted to act “territorially”) or are too expensive for local kids. Swimming scholarships often go begging because there is not enough knowledge or understanding of its value.

Louise said one approach we should do this summer is have swim and bike safety clinics at the beaches. Trish Morse suggested and moved that we sponsor three swimming scholarships at a CPD pool this summer. It was estimated about $600 would be needed. This was seconded by Andy Carter and approved. Louise will investigate accomplishing this with the Park District. It was noted that Ald. Hairston might be interested in promoting or supporting as she was a champion swimmer at Lab School and does triathlons.

New business. Robin Kaufman asked we investigate a way that persons who have reasons they cannot attend meetings can participate via a conference call.

Announcements. Lanita Ross of the 5th Ward Office encouraged attendance at a meeting hosted by Ald. Hairston on the proposed Woodlawn Preservation of Housing Ordinance March 10 6 p.m. at Hyde Park High School, and a kickoff meeting for the Census to be hosted March 12 at 6 by Congresswoman Robin Kelly at The Quarry Event Space 2423 E. 75th St. 
(census.gov. Jobs? visit census.gov/jobs or usa.jobs.)

Adjourned by consensus. Next meeting April 13 7 p.m. at the fieldhouse [MAY BE CANCELLED- C-19 VIRUS]

Resolution on Lake Shore Erosion/Damage approved March 9 is on the next page.
JPAC RESOLUTION ON LAKE SHORE EROSION/ DAMAGE EMERGENCY (text as sent to officials, media)

Jackson Park Advisory Council unanimously adopted this Resolution at its March 9, 2020 general meeting:

JPAC supports urgent emergency and continuing action to address severe destruction of the lake shore in Jackson Park, the South Side and the rest of Chicago, and elsewhere in Illinois and the Great Lakes related to unusual high lake levels, storms, and wave action.

In historic Jackson Park, a National Register Property, our Council supplies ongoing documentation of this destruction, which threatens public safety and historic public assets including federal roadways, harbors and piers, bike and pedestrian trails, historic and other structures, beaches, and golf and other recreational fields, and a children’s hospital and which interferes with public access to the public’s waters and with park and regional circulation.

JPAC acknowledges and supports the already undertaken initiatives, task forces, disaster declarations, and search for funding to address the situation in a coordinated way, short term and long term, and for study and action for Great Lakes Shoreline Resiliency.