

JPAC leads tour to show goals for park, golf course

By MARC MELTZER
Contributing writer

A grand tour of Jackson Park, led by Jackson Park Advisory Council President Louise McCurry, drew the attendance last Wednesday of about 10 supporters of McCurry's vision for the park.

One special guest was State Sen. Robert Peters (13th), who when asked by the Herald if he supported the controversial proposed restoration of the Jackson Park and South Shore golf courses replied that he was undecided though he added that he found the tour to be educational and informative.

The rest of the group heartily endorsed the plan, however, as proposed by the Chicago Park District which would combine the 9-hole South Shore and 18-hole Jackson Park courses into a single Professional Golfers Association-level course designed by golf superstar Tiger Woods. Cost of the project has been estimated between \$30 million and \$60 million, depending on the degree of infrastructure projects that ultimately become a part of the plan.

Besides the dominant golf course issue, McCurry's vision for the park includes:

- The importance of Jackson Park to the South Side;
- Increased path and busy highway underpass accessibility;
- Repairs to breakwaters to prevent flooding and damage to golf courses, beaches, high rises, roadways and natural areas;
- Restoring the historic 67th Street Beach;
- The planned revitalization of the Japanese Gardens;
- The proposal of a new field house with high school contest, regulation size swimming pool

and a rooftop deck design;

- Developing youth golf teams, using the new course.

"I am very much in favor of that plan," Cassandra Curry, board member of the Jackson Park Golf Association, said concerning the golf course restoration. "A lot of the people who are having issues will not have issues going forward. . . ."

Media coverage of the plan has been too negative, she said. "I'm appalled for one reason because I think that this story regarding the golf courses has not been adequately covered by Chicago's press. They have allowed too many naysayers to bend their ear. . . . There have very few stories that are more on the positive end. . . . There's been so much negative press coming from the few who have their own personal agendas going about this whole restoration project.

"I think going forward it's going to work. The golfers will be happy and the way that I think the golf course is going to be designed is far more community-friendly than it is currently.

She added, "I think the design that's on the table is really well done and well thought about. The golfers who have played the course - we cannot wait until that new course has been built. We are just so excited about the possibility. We love Jackson Park. We all play Jackson Park. I've been playing Jackson Park for 40 years. And I know people who have been playing Jackson Park 50 and 60 years. We are so excited about the possibility of what that course can look like on the South Side of Chicago on the lakefront. The thought of it is just something to behold."

Regarding McCurry's overall vision for the park, Curry said



Gary Ossewaarde (Left to Right), Edward Kibblewhite, Louise McCurry, Sen. Robert Peters, Ronald Norris, Brian Hogan, Cassandra Curry, Tracy Roule, and Joseph Roule.

(Photo courtesy of Jackson Park Advisory Council)

"everything she talks about will make that park so beautiful. The possibilities are so phenomenal. To bring the park back to its glory, it will have a positive effect on the South Shore area."

Tracy L. Raoul said, "For me the most intriguing aspect of the tour is always the erosion of the shoreline along the South Side and the fact that if nothing is done the (nature sanctuary) will likely be gone due to Lake Michigan reclaiming its shoreline. Currently, the nature sanctuary serves nefarious assignments, such as drug transactions and illicit sex, not to mention the dumping of waste.

"Louise does an excellent job pointing out the former Lake Shore Drive roadway that was dumped in the lake on the South Side. It begs to question, 'Why has the South Side been seemingly treated so unfairly and ignored for so long?' I don't see these eyesores north.

"The vision for the park highlights the glaring differences along the shoreline from south to north and countless residents in the area think it's time to re-

store the southern end of Lake Michigan and revitalize the community.

"As for the golf courses, my immediate family are all golfers, and we've played both Jackson and South Shore for years - my aunt and uncle have been golfing there for 40+ years. We welcome the restoration because we understand improvements are needed to help sustain a course.

Raoul added, "My children play courses around Chicago. We travel as far as 1.5 hours from Chicago because those courses are conducive to junior tournaments. . . . and we welcome the opportunity to educate others as to why Chicago needs this restoration.

"These courses are over 100 years old and are in need of upgrades. Currently, organizations like the Illinois Junior Golf Association don't host tournaments at Jackson Park because the course isn't challenging or long enough for juniors. The new course design promises to offer a more challenging course, but not so much so that average golfers can't play it."

Bill Colgan, an employee of the Billy Casper Golf Course management company, said he's in favor of the course restoration.

"I support the Chicago Park District in their efforts to renovate the existing golf course footprint, resulting in a world class golf facility in Jackson Park. The golf facility will be the envy of every major city in the U.S. and provide opportunities for youth engagement and family activities.

"Coupled with the South Lakefront Plan, it will provide pedestrian corridors to the lakefront and establish/expand natural areas, supporting migratory birds and butterflies."

Judith S. McCue said after the tour that "I don't think I had fully appreciated what an exceptional public resource we have right here on our doorstep. At the same time, I was shocked at the extent of the on-going environmental damage to our South Side lakeshore caused by neglect and erosion. It has been out of sight and out of mind of the city for way too long."

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