

## New group moves forward against Latin soccer field

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A new group, the Committee to Keep Lincoln Park Public, was established last week to take action against the contract between Latin School, 59 W. North Blvd., and the Chicago Park District to build a soccer field in the south end of Lincoln Park.

The contract, which was signed late last fall and calls for the private Latin to pay \$2 million towards the field, was completed without community input. Alderman Vi Daley, 43rd, says she had no knowledge of the project before it was approved. Five years ago, the concept drew strong opposition from both the alderman and the community and at that time, the plan was scrapped.

At a Nov. 28 meeting held on the Gold Coast and attended by about a dozen opponents of the project—which is already under construction—the ad hoc group was formed. The group met for a second time on Dec. 3. That night, the group took action on several matters including:

- Looking into filing a temporary injunction to stop construction.
- Establishing a Web site at [www.cklpp.org](http://www.cklpp.org) and a Google group to communicate with members, interested parties.

- Drafting a letter to Alderman Mary Ann Smith, 48th, requesting the Committee on Parks and Recreation, which Smith chairs, holding a hearing on the Latin/Chicago Park District lease agreement, and putting the text of the letter on the Web site.

- Establishing an online petition.

- Opening a bank account and establishing a PayPal account.

- Sending representatives to upcoming public meetings.

- Going door-to-door with flyers stating the case and asking people to go to the Web site to sign up/sign petition, etc.

Additionally, a newly-formed, grassroots watchdog group, Greater Lincoln Park Democracy for America, decided to take on Latin as its first issue. Attending both meetings was Tom Tresser, the group's chairman and a teacher at the Art Institute, who said his organization opposed the "land grab" for many reasons. The deal was done in private; four acres in Lincoln Park were privatized; the deal changes the nature of public space and cedes large amounts of prime time to a private and elite institution; that Latin has a right to sell advertising signage; and, that the Park District and people of Chicago are getting little out of the deal.

Tresser said he also is "very worried about the trend of privatization," and is seeking donations for a legal fund. He said the deal epitomizes "bad politics, bad process and bad pricing."

"This is an outright grab and it's something that should be available to everybody," he said.

After sending a blanket e-mail to group members and allies spelling out objections, Tresser said he received a phone call from both Chicago Park District Superintendent Tim Mitchell, and also its director of intergovernmental affairs, Tim King.

Both men—in two separate calls—informed Tresser that an aspect of his e-mail was incorrect, as Tresser had stated that Latin would have 2,200 hours of prime time annually on the field when actually, they said, the hours of Latin's use would be less than 800 a year. Tresser said that is still, "almost 100 percent of the prime time hours."

Many community members and leaders have asked how such a controversial project could be pushed through so quickly, without community input, and without the support of Alderman Daley.

"I don't see how this happened," said Peter Zelchenko, a candidate in the last 43rd Ward aldermanic race. "It's incumbent upon somebody to see this through and make a statement. Unless people make it clear this is not acceptable, it'll happen again."