

February 19, 2016

Finance Committee
of the City of Eastlake, Ohio
Councilmember Kim Evers, Committee Chairman
kevers@eastlakeohio.com

Dear Chairman Evers:

In addition to my previous letter dated December 1, 2015 regarding the proposed lease of Central Park to the American-Croatian Lodge, I wish to submit the following remarks and concerns in writing because time for public comment during meetings is extremely limited and often takes place only after business is completed. Your Committee's consideration is especially appreciated.

First, I want to explain why I care, as a resident, very much about this proposed lease. Nearly all of my concerns focus on the fact that this proposed lease would allow **public** land be used for **private** gain. This fact should immediately raise flags with elected officials that have a duty to ensure that public property and resources are not used to enrich private entities. I also question why City officials, if they are committed to leasing this property, have not advertised for bids to determine if one dollar per year is the best offer or if a soccer facility is the best use.

Second, we all must recognize the resources spent by the YMCA and EPAL to maintain **existing** public buildings and **existing** high-value assets in ways that **benefit the public**, and they do so with **no expectation of private gain**. Central Park, on the other hand, is relatively undeveloped and can be improved to benefit residents.

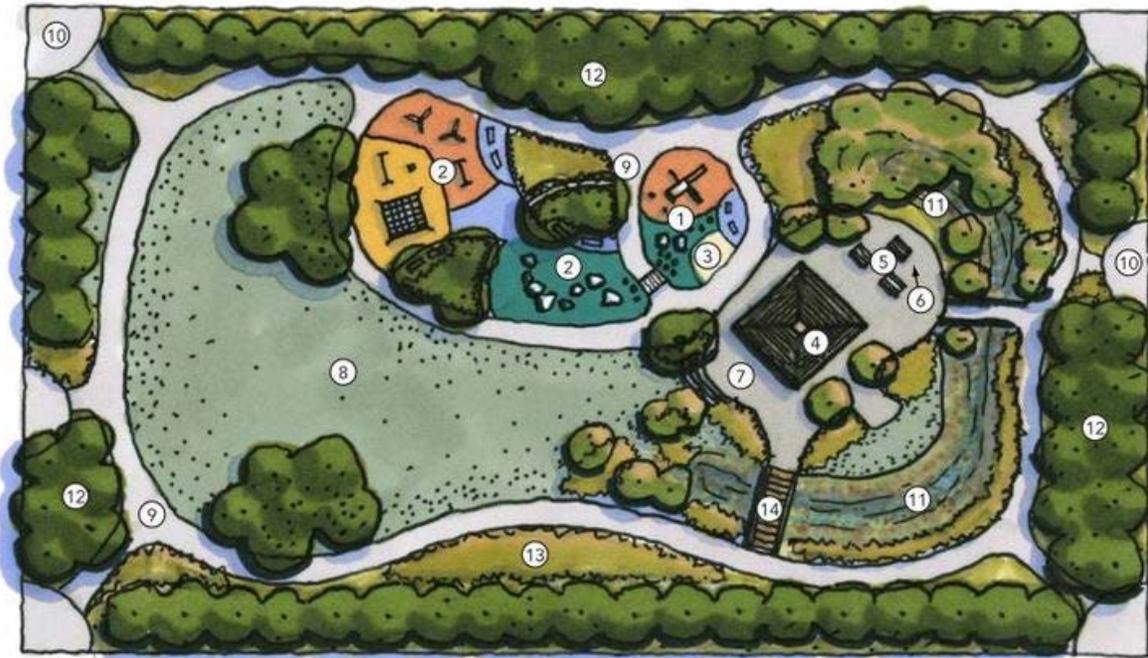
Third, the proposed lease itself is of a questionable quality. I believe it is riddled with grammatical inconsistencies and legal contradictions, and was written by the Lodge's counsel to promote primarily their private interests. The mere fact that the Lodge might (allegedly) spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to build their proposed soccer facility also **does not provide a legitimate reason** to contract away this **public** land for **private** gain. Put simply, the Lodge's investment, of any amount, would not benefit the public. The fact remains that present and future residents would be fenced out of public park land and that the City would receive **negligible** tax revenue or other financial compensation from this agreement, while the Lodge gets nearly seven acres for **essentially free**.

Based on some of the remarks made by the Lodge's representative to Mr. Hoefle's questions, it would appear that the Lodge is also expecting the City trade land with the school district and the City to reimburse the Lodge if the lease is terminated before the Lodge has recovered its investment, but this is not in the contract. Also unexplained is why this proposed lease is with the for-profit Lodge instead of the non-profit Juniors. This negotiating process is simply incomplete.

Even more troubling, however, is the apparent lack of interest shown by elected officials at public meetings in advocating on the City's behalf to ensure that this contract is fairly negotiated and the City's interests are similarly protected. Instead, questions from concerned residents have been immediately dismissed and laughed off in a manner that one would only expect from someone representing the Lodge rather than the public interest. Even more comical is the assertion made by one City official that concerned residents might not know how "blighted" some City property actually is. However, in June, my wife (on crutches one month after ACL surgery) and I visited each and every park in Eastlake, Willowick, and Willoughby, and took about 300 photographs so that together we all might find opportunities to improve our parks.

Further, statements suggesting that the property is "blighted," "not cared for," "in terrible condition," and that the "city is broke," the "city can't afford a park at this time," etc., **do not provide legitimate reasons** to give away public park land that rightfully belongs to all Eastlake residents. The City's proper response to these comments and conditions should have included increased attention and community outreach to clean up and redevelop the park with volunteer efforts. The City has a moral and ethical obligation to hold this land until the necessary resources can be gathered to make a proper park that can be enjoyed by all present and future residents and that respects adjacent property owners.

As only one example, the following illustration shows what Central Park could look like in the near future with the appropriate planning effort. In contrast with the soccer facility proposal, this park plan would allow for the enjoyment of all ages and could easily fit on the Central Park property using existing City playground equipment and outdoor furniture.



- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Children's Play Area (2-5 year olds) | 8. Open Meadow |
| 2. Children's Play Area (5-12 year olds) | 9. Sidewalk |
| 3. Sand and Water Play | 10. Special Entry Paving |
| 4. Gazebo Shade Structure | 11. Rain Garden/ On-site Water Retention |
| 5. Picnic Tables | 12. Tree Grove |
| 6. Barbeque Grills | 13. Colorful Plant Bed |
| 7. Permeable Paving | 14. Pedestrian Bridge |

Finally, should residents be surprised at the condition of our City parks when Council's Recreation Committee and the Park and Shade Tree Commission **have not held meetings in years?** Can anyone say, with a straight face, that any honest effort has been made yet to redevelop Central Park? If all of the time and effort spent these last few months writing and rushing this proposed lease through Council were instead spent on bringing residents and civic-minded businesses together to brainstorm improvements for Central Park, then I imagine that by the end of this year volunteers could have been prepared to begin transforming this public property into something truly valued by residents.

Please give residents a chance to organize and Central Park a chance to improve. Please **vote no** on the proposed lease.

Respectfully submitted,

Angelo Trivisonno
34186 Waldmer Drive