**Remarks Concerning Gifting Public Land for the Lucas Museum**

Good afternoon members of the Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners.

My name is Tom Tresser and I consider myself a Public Defender who has been working for good government and grassroots democracy in Chicago for over 25 years.

I was an organizer of Protect Our Parks in 2008 which sued the Park District to stop the Latin School Land Grab. You wanted to gift priceless public land to a wealthy and well endowed private entity. You overstepped your bounds. We sued you and both the Cook County court and the Illinois Appellate courts agreed with us and the deal was voided.

In 2009 I was an organizer for No Games Chicago – a group of volunteers without an office or phone – who opposed the city’s bid for the 2016 Olympics. The Park District board agreed to turn over a number of public parks to be destroyed, mutilated and privatized for the games. Once again you overstepped your bounds and tried to give away that which does NOT belong to you.

Chicago did NOT get the games and now, even the former bid-booster, The Chicago Tribune, editorialized that we dodged a cannon ball.

Will we ever learn?

Apparently not.   
  
Now the Chicago Park District wants to give two large tracts of public land to billionaires.

George Lucas is one of America’s most successful entertainment moguls. He is worth $4.8 billion.

The University of Chicago's endowment finished 2013 with a market value of $6.7 billion. They made $447 million from their investments in 2013. In addition, the University owns vast tracts of land adjacent to Washington Park. Let them build what they want on land they already own.

George Lucas is not broke. The University of Chicago is not broke. They can open their wallets for projects that serve their interests.

To them and I say “Hands off our public lands.”

To the commissioners of the Chicago Park District – you are stewards not salesmen and although the mayor appointed you – you SHOULD answer to the people of Chicago whose precious parks you hold in your hands. Stop trading away public land to private interests. EXPAND the parks and open lands, please do not DIMINISH them. And do NOT give them to billionaires.

Thank you.

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