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November 12, 2014

Elmhurst Park District Board of Park Commissioners
375 W. First Street
Elmhurst, IL 60126

Dear President Ubriaco, Members of the Park Board and Executive Director Rogers:

The purpose of this letter is to respectfully request that the Park District reconsider use of the east lobe of York Commons Park (currently a baseball and soccer field) as a dual-purpose facility to provide flood-reduction benefits for affected residents. Based on your October 29, 2014 letter, we understand that the Park Board unanimously voted to allow the western portion of York Commons Park to be used for flood storage. We are asking that the Park Board officially vote on using the east lobe of York Commons Park, in addition to the west lobe, as a dual-purpose facility. In support of this request, we would like you to consider the information provided in this letter.

As outlined in the October 29, 2014 letter and communicated numerous times during our stormwater coordination meetings, we understand that the Park District used these three criteria in its decision making:

- 1) Try to help the City meet stormwater needs if possible
- 2) Ensure that the park sites, if used for detention, retain their playability
- 3) Not adversely impact residents living in proximity to the park

Over the last year, City staff, Park District staff, and their engineering consultants (Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd. and V3 Companies) have worked diligently to achieve a dual-purpose facility design that would be mutually beneficial to all stakeholders and would also satisfy the Park District's three objectives outlined above. As originally conceived, the York Commons Park project (both east and west lobes) would provide a 100-year level of flood protection for 38 homes in the Crescent Avenue area and would provide valuable flood reduction benefits to the residents located in the two downstream flood problem areas (Washington Street and Swain Avenue/Vallette Street), with an additional 14 homes removed from the 100-year inundation area. The conceptual cost of the proposed project, including park amenities, was estimated at \$3.2M, or approximately \$16,400 per home that receives some flood-reduction benefits from the proposed project (195 affected homes in the Crescent Avenue, Washington Street and Swain Avenue/Vallette Street flood problem areas).

To maximize the playability of the park fields, storm events less than or equal to a 5-year recurrence interval would be bypassed around the site. To put that in perspective, a 5-year,

1-hour storm event has a rainfall depth of 1.79 inches and a 5-year, 24-hour storm event has a rainfall depth of 3.80 inches. Storm events of this magnitude will not access the proposed flood storage area. In addition, the playing field portion of the site will be elevated above the bottom of the facility and underdrains will be installed beneath the playing surface to further enhance drainage. As currently designed, the total drawdown time for the playing fields would be less than 24 hours following a 100-year magnitude storm event.

Based on our meetings with the Cayuga Avenue residents, it is evident that the park is poorly-drained in its current condition and there is standing water in the park for even frequent storm events. Based on the drainage components included in the proposed design of the facility (bypass storm sewers, elevated playing surface, underdrains), it is our opinion that the playability of the fields would improve as a result of this project.

To avoid negatively impacting homes along Cayuga Avenue, an emergency overflow path will be constructed along the southern property boundary to safely convey stormwater flows to the west during extreme storm events (greater than a 100-year magnitude storm event). This would protect the adjacent homes along Cayuga and maintain the current direction of stormwater flow in this area. The Park District's own engineering consultant (V3 Companies) agreed that the proposed York Commons Park, as currently designed, would not adversely impact the surrounding residences.

If just the west lobe of York Commons Park is used for stormwater storage, a minimal amount of volume would be available to mitigate the flooding on Crescent Avenue. No flood reduction benefits would be provided for the two downstream problem areas (Washington Street and Swain Avenue/Vallette Street). There also would be no opportunity to improve the existing drainage problems along Cayuga Avenue. The conceptual cost of the west lobe project (including the construction of one basketball court and two sand volleyball courts) is estimated at \$1.4M, or approximately \$36,800 per home that receives flood-reduction benefits from the project (38 homes on Crescent Avenue).

As stated at our coordination meetings and the numerous public flood meetings, the York Commons Park project will not solve the flooding in Southwest Elmhurst. The York Commons Park project is just one piece of an overall plan to alleviate the flooding experienced by so many residents throughout Elmhurst. As part of its stormwater project prioritization plan, the City committed to provide a 100-year level of flood protection for as many affected residents as possible. Because only a limited volume of flood storage is feasible in the open space within the City and proximate to the low-lying flooding areas, infrastructure upgrades must also be implemented in conjunction with these projects to achieve the target level of flood protection. The infrastructure upgrades would involve improvements to the existing drainage system, which include:

- Upgrading the pump stations along Salt Creek to increase pumping capacity.
- Increasing the sizes of the storm sewers between the flood problem areas and the stormwater pumping stations.
- Providing compensatory storage to mitigate the increased flow in Salt Creek.

As detailed in the Comprehensive Flood Plan, the pump station upgrades are significantly more costly than the projects that create flood storage in open space. For example, Alternative #2A for Southwest Elmhurst (Page 21 of the Comprehensive Flood Plan) involved pump station upgrades that benefitted 167 homes in the Washington Street and the Saylor Avenue/Jackson Avenue flood problem areas at a conceptual cost of \$19.2M (not including the cost of compensatory storage), or approximately \$115,000 per home. The expensive price tag is mainly due to the locations of the flood problem areas in relation to the pumping stations. The Washington Street flood problem area, for example, is approximately 4,400 feet upstream of the Berkley and Adams stormwater pumping station. Therefore, 4,400 feet of storm sewer improvements, in conjunction with pump station upgrades and the creation of offsite compensatory storage, would be necessary to achieve a 100-year level of flood protection for Washington Street residents.

Without the York Commons Park project, there would be more stormwater in the flood problem areas, which would in turn result in the need for larger storm sewers, a higher pump station capacity, and an increase in the volume of offsite compensatory storage. Since the availability of open land to create compensatory storage is at a premium, it is imperative that the required volumes are kept to a minimum so that the feasibility of other stormwater projects is not compromised. There are other flood problem areas within the City that do not receive perceptible flood-reduction benefits from the school and park projects, and the drainage improvements for these areas hinge on the availability of offsite compensatory storage.

Utilizing both lobes of York Commons Park allows the City to provide the most cost-effective and timely solution to flooding. Additional flood storage volume provided in the park reduces the cost of additional infrastructure improvements and promotes the feasibility of stormwater projects for other affected areas of the City. That is why we are respectfully requesting the Park District to reconsider using the east lobe of York Commons Park as a dual-purpose facility.

As stated previously, we truly appreciate the support provided by the Park District staff throughout this process, and look forward to continued cooperation in the future.

Sincerely,



Steven M. Morley, Mayor



James A. Grabowski, City Manager