



# THE PACT:

## THE PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL TRIBUTE NEWSLETTER

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## NICHOLS PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL: HISTORY & PAC ADVICE

**Nichols Park, 1355 E 53rd St.** Phone interview between Nicole Machuca and Stephanie Franklin, President of Nichols Park Advisory Council (PAC).

### NM: What brought you to your PAC?

SF: Ah, okay. This is going into Nichols Park history. In 1986, the north end of the park at that time, between 55th and 54th street, was in the Urban Renewal Plan for Hyde Park. What remained was the section between 54th and 53rd, and I didn't know at the time, but we called it Murray Park and it was a lot. It turns out that in 1985 the city did a study of all the vacant land and the city did a deal, since the lot had been set aside for Murray school, so the city traded land by Hyde Park High School for Murray park. And then the city met with a group called the Hyde Park Development Corporation and hired a consultant, and the consultant came up with the idea that the city should buy the building just west and add it to Murray lot to develop it, and that was the plan that was being discussed. One of the people who lived in that building found out about the plan and that they wanted to take down his building, so he rounded up people who lived around there and we said, "Oh no, that land should be added to the park," because people were already using it as a park; it had a community garden on it and since the city thought they owned it, the school thought the owned it, and the Park District thought they owned it, so everyone mowed it and it was a well-kept space, not like a normal vacant lot. But when the news came up about the city and the Hyde Park Development Corporation, we formed the Nichols Park Advisory Council. Jackson PAC was already formed and I knew Nancy Hayes who was part of the



Above: Nichols Park Field House dedication, 2005. Pictured: Stephanie Franklin (left). Photo by George Rums

and we won six years later. It was really one of the important crises in Hyde Park because people still remember it, and why we have a lot of support is because people remember it. And when it did become part of the park, we got a lot of volunteers to do planting and hands-on labor, and a lot of people really look at it as their park because they helped build it, they really feel like it's theirs. People really feel like they have ownership when they contribute to it.

### NM: What does the PAC view as its role?

SF: The PAC's role is to be a liaison between the community and the Chicago Park District. And that's really mostly what it's done. We don't really get involved in programming. We pay a lot attention to landscaping and repairs and field comments and concerns from neighbors; we make sure that the neighborhood is included. We round up a wider community audience and get people involved for discussion for upcoming plans. Right now we have a plumbing problem, and we have worked with the supervisor, and the supervisor has told us that the plumbers said they can't fix it, so this is something we're working on right now. Generally we make sure that maintenance is the way it should be, but we have a small park so we're lucky that we can do that. And depending on the leadership of the Park District, we have been through various administrations and superintendents, they vary on animosity with PACs, so sometimes we have really good relationships and we've never really had a bad relationship, but it depends on the administration at the time as to how responsive they are to us. Right now though, it doesn't seem to be a two-way street; we communicate to them but they don't communicate to us. But it's also because the park supervisor isn't even told everything that is happening. So the problem we have right now is that there seems there's no communication, and CPD wants us to follow chain of command, and that would be fine if that happened the other way around too. And it's hard on the supervisor too, because people come to her too and she doesn't know, and that's not in the spirit of what communication should be between CPD and the PACs, but like I said that's because it depends on the leadership. In fact that's something we're working right now, is writing the area manager to get notification.

### NM: What are some final thoughts you would like to share with other PACs?

SF: PACs are supposed to (continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1) be advocates for their parks. That's the whole point of them. They're supposed to be the eyes and ears for the Park District, to collect community opinion to tell CPD what they want and to advocate for park needs. I think it's part of the PAC's responsibility to know their park well. There's this thing that local parks are supposed to be used by people who live in the three block radius, whereas lakefront parks are used by people from the whole region, but that's what makes lakefront PACs a whole other kettle of fish, and the smaller parks tend to not be as noticeable as the lakefront PACs. So it's up to the PAC to take on the important function to advocate for the park. Because left to their own devices, they don't get a lot of attention, especially ones that don't have a field house. Like, sometimes the supervisor is in another park and is supposed to watch the park and put in work orders, but that may or may not happen. That's what PACs are for, to help the park because they are little spots of green that we need in our lives. One thing that helps is to develop a good relationship with the Park District, the supervisor, the area and regional managers, and be persistent. Go the budget hearings. Because that's how stuff gets done, through persistence. That's how we won Nichols Park. It's the same process and the PAC needs to persist on an issue until it finally is. *For more info visit [www.hydepark.org/parks/nichols.htm](http://www.hydepark.org/parks/nichols.htm).*

## RESOURCES: FREE GRANT LIBRARY

Forefront (formerly Donors Forum) has accumulated one of the largest library collections of philanthropic and non-profit management resources, including grant and foundation directories. According to their website, "The Library is open to the public, and provides access to prospect research databases, including Research Point for individual prospects, and Foundation Directory Online for foundation and corporate grants and sponsorships. It also holds more than 3,000 volumes on grantmaking, fundraising, nonprofit management, and governance. It is a special, self-help library with a public face, staffed by a small group of librarians dedicated to helping and teaching patrons how to do research and access information." Find more info here: <https://myforefront.org/library>.

## FOTP ARCHIVES: THE PAC NETWORK & NON-PROFIT VOCABULARY



In 2009, Friends of the Parks began to create a Park Advisory Council (PAC) Network to build capacity of the residents who volunteer and advocate for their parks by providing quarterly networking workshops featuring expert panels and guest speakers, which has included former Chicago Park District Board President Dr. Bryan Traubert. In 2016, FOTP decided to link the quarterly meetings into series, and then announced its first series, "The Empowerment of PACs." This past August, we kicked off our new PAC Networking Meeting series "Alphabet Soup 101" with our partners at the Community Law Project (CLP). At the summer meeting, Jody Adler, Director of the CLP, outlined the process for becoming a 501c3 and defined some key (and often confusing) vocabulary:

**Not-for-Profit:** What is created when you file Articles of Incorporation with the State. Designation is approved by the state government. This status does not make you exempt.

**Tax exemption:** There are different kinds of tax-exemptions, e.g. income tax, sales tax and real estate tax.

**501(c)(3):** One of over 20 different 501(c) classifications that are exempt from some federal income taxes. The 501(c)(3) designation is for not-for-profits organized and operated for an exempt purpose, like for charity, education, religious, etc. Contributions are tax-deductible and pay no federal or state income tax on related income. Designation is approved by the federal government. Assets accumulated are for the benefit of the public, and if a 501c3 dissolves, those assets must be distributed to other 501c3s. 501c3s are either private foundations, private operating foundations, or public charities. 501c3s may engage in advocacy, but are limited to how much lobbying they can do. 501c3s cannot engage in any political campaign activity, meaning they may not endorse or oppose a candidate for political office or appear to do so.

**Private Foundation vs. Charity:** A private foundation is a not-for-profit organization that receives its funding from a few different sources or a single source and generally does not operate in programming but funds other organizations that operate activities. A charity is a not-for-profit organization that generates its funds through support from multiple sources public and provides services to the public.

**Lobbying vs. Advocacy:** Lobbying can be a part of an advocacy strategy, but advocacy is not interchangeable with lobbying. Advocacy can generally be described as activism or education on behalf of an issue, while lobbying has a very specific definition and may be direct lobbying or grassroots lobbying. Direct lobbying is (a) a communication with elected officials or their staffs or with government officials who will participate in formulating the legislation, (b) about specific legislation, and expressing a view on the specific legislation. Grassroots lobbying is (a) communicating with the general public, (b) about specific legislation, (c) expressing a view on the legislation, and (d) encouraging the public to contact elected officials, their staff or other government officials who will participate in formulating the legislation (e.g. a park advisory council requests that their local alderman pass a proposed ordinance, a PAC sends an email to its members urging them to contact their alderman to support a proposed ordinance). This is a very complicated area and organizations that engage in lobbying must also be aware that there are city, county, state and federal lobbying registration requirements that may apply.

**Fiscal Sponsorship:** This is a formal arrangement in which a 501(c)(3) public charity sponsors a "project" that may lack exempt status. This allows projects that do not have exempt status to seek grants and solicit tax-deductible donations under the sponsor's federal exempt status. This arrangement does not make the group or project a 501c3 or not-for-profit. In this arrangement, funds that are donated to progress the project are funds donated for the benefit of the charity.

**Join us October 16th for our next PAC meeting on FOIAs, with a special guest presenter from the Office of the Illinois Attorney General.**