

**JPAC/OPC Committee**  
**Minutes for 23 August 2023**

**In Attendance:** M. Anton, S. Avila, S. Bibb, M. Hopkins, K. Jones, J. Levy, S. Lewis, C. Miller, R. Morris, A. Munson, R. Pike, L. Porter, K. Rawson, M. Shannon-Jones, M. Smith, J. Stanley, G. Stone

**Introductions:**

Meeting called to order and opened with a welcome from co-chairs Russell Pike and Susan Avila. Introductions of those present were made with each person asked to introduce themselves and why they are interested in being a member of this committee.

**Discussion of the Purpose of this Committee:**

This meeting's primary topic was to set an agenda for future meetings, with a particular focus on how to protect, preserve, and enhance Jackson Park. Discussion touched on how best to organize (i.e. subcommittees versus committee of the whole); how to work with other JPAC committees with tangential interests; and to identify a list of specific issues or topics relating to the stated goals of the committee.

No decisions were made concerning working in subcommittees or with other committees. It was generally agreed that more discussion among members was needed first to determine key issues to explore and how to connect with each other as committee members to explore them. Key topics of interest raised included:

- Park Security and protection for Park/Museum users and for existing green spaces and historical sites as the number of visitors and Park users increases;
- Interaction and transition points between OPC (and probably MSI) into park areas;
- Traffic noise and congestion;
- Expansion of in-park amenities such as comfort stations, benches, directional and historical signage;
- Protections and benefits for adjacent and surrounding communities including improved security, parking, traffic calming. Benefits to adjacent community residences, particularly children, on the OPC site and through its programming.

**Concerns Raised:**

Discussion on potential detractions of having the OPC in Jackson Park include:

- Financial costs to the City; Obama Foundation is raising hundreds of millions of dollars, there should be transparency in terms of how it is being used and how it affects City and Park District both during construction and long range, i.e., the types of maintenance the OPC will underwrite.
- Will the closing of Cornell Drive "pay for itself?"
- Relandscaping and OPC parklands ecology, including the replacement of the Women's Garden;
- Impact on neighbors close at hand, including the east end of the Midway and buildings and housing along or near Stony Island. The question was posed: what are they finding as they dig up nearby streets?

**General Comments**

As discussion continued, several members asked where they could find background and current documentation on the history of the project, the agreement with the City, and some specific topics such as OPC fundraising, current construction, site landscaping including the replacement of the Women's Garden, etc. It was noted that many of these documents are public record while others, may be available with the permission of the Obama Foundation. The idea of creating a library of such information was positively received and will be discussed at the next meeting.

**Next Steps:**

Continue discussion on developing a resource center with goal of providing information that exists but acknowledges that information may be "factual truth" to some but not to all.

Prioritize topics for further exploration including information, discussion, and invitations to guest speakers