



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 29, 2011

Appeal Challenging Park District Land Sale Dismissed

LA GRANGE, IL – The Park District of La Grange won another round in its legal battle to sell 2.82 acres of Gordon Park last week. On March 18, 2011, the Illinois appellate court dismissed Orlando Coryell’s challenge to the sale which was brought in Circuit Court. While Mr. Coryell may still ask the court to reconsider, absent new information, last week’s decision effectively quiets one of the two claims challenging the Park District of La Grange’s authority to sell land. The Park District is looking for the right buyer for the property, to generate revenue for long-sought amenities and improvements to flooding conditions in the remaining 14.75 acres of Gordon Park; one of La Grange’s largest parks.

Voters overwhelmingly approved the sale of the land for the Gordon Park improvements in a 2008 referendum. However, La Grange resident Orlando Coryell filed suit in Cook County Circuit Court arguing, among other things, that a sale to Atlantic Realty Partners (ARP) would not satisfy the “public sale” requirement of the Park District Code. Judge Leroy Martin agreed ruling that zoning granted by the Village of La Grange was preferential to ARP leaving competing bidders at a disadvantage.

While these arguments continued on appeal, The Park District filed an application to sell the land under the Park Commissioners Land Sale Act. A small group of residents attacked the application, but after a lengthy trial, Judge Susan Fox Gillis found in favor of the Park District ruling that the park district met its burden showing that the sale was in the public interest by any standard to be applied. The objectors in this case have filed an appeal, but were denied a stay on the sale when they were unable to post the surety bond required by the appeals court.

Park District Executive Director Dean Bissias expressed optimism that the Park District would find a buyer to fund new facilities for Gordon Park, including a splash pad, walking path, and improved athletic fields, which are presently subject to regular flooding. The litigation has been expensive and a significant distraction to the regular operations of the district. “I am relieved that I am now able to refocus my attention on more than just Gordon Park and litigation” said Bissias.

The Park District is free to pursue a buyer and renovations for Gordon Park.