

Send letters to our editor to:

The Journal
622 Graceland Ave.,
Des Plaines, IL 60016

E-mail: journalnews@mail.com

Fax: 847-298-8549

OPINIONS

The Journal & Topics Newspapers

Gov't Push Tactics Won't Work

Editor, Journal:

A couple of weeks ago the Journal ran a letter from me which responded to a letter by Ald. David Schmidt. I felt that Ald. Schmidt had used a letter purporting to decline interest in becoming Mayor as an excuse for gratuitous vitriol against Ald. Ryan, who had voted to approve the Executive Office Plaza (EOP) redevelopment proposal in its final form. The majority of the Council concurred. Mr. Schmidt responded to my letter by charging that I was attacking him just to further my personal political ambitions. Here I thought I was expressing an opinion on a matter of public concern, but apparently I acted in fear of a Schmidt juggernaut in 2011 which would prevent me from taking his aldermanic seat. Frankly, that hadn't occurred to me. As one of his constituents, I have sent Mr. Schmidt emails on a number of occasions regarding my views on the EOP development and his proposed recall ordinance. But the express message accompanying each of these emails was my concern about his lack of civility in the performance of his aldermanic duties. He has consistently attacked the integrity of anyone who has opposed his opinions, whether alderman or constituent. My emails have demonstrably had no effect. I suppose I'm lucky that the most scurrilous thing he could find to say about me was to opine that I wanted to be an alderman some day. Mr. Schmidt is no Karl Rove or Dick Cheney. However, lacking further ammunition to use on me, he elected to gratuitously

attack a couple of individuals he knows that I respect. Such tactics should be beneath him. Those individuals have long records of selfless civic contributions to Park Ridge which dwarf his own very thin portfolio. Ald. Schmidt has done the entire city a disservice by proclaiming that the Executive Office Plaza redevelopment project was approved on the basis of back room deals, rather than upon its merits. I was present at the City Council meeting when Ald. Ryan carefully explained why he had concluded that the revised version of the EOP redevelopment plan warranted his support. The number of extra units had been slashed from 20 to 8. He enumerated four or five other significant concessions had been made by the developer in response to concerns raised by the city. He further reported that, in consideration of charges raised by Ald. Schmidt regarding the extent of the senior services to be provided, he met with the President of Norwood Builders. Ald. Ryan wanted to assess whether he had a true commitment to that aspect of the project. He found that the partnership with Presbyterian Homes, a highly reputable outfit, was genuine. He concluded that those services, coupled with the specialized facilities to be provided, would be a substantive contribution to the city's housing needs. Not a mere sham, as Mr. Schmidt had claimed. Mr. Schmidt did no actual investigation before he leveled his charges. Mr. Ryan made the effort to determine the facts.

What does this earn Mr. Ryan? Quoting from Ald. Schmidt's letter "...he changed his vote after engaging in behind-the-scenes negotiations with the developer." Mr. Schmidt artfully selected a voluntarily disclosed investigation, and recast it cleverly. Ald. Schmidt has used similar tactics with other aldermen who are guilty only of having disagreed with him. My concern has consistently been the inappropriateness of Ald. Schmidt's lack of civility in the performance of his public duties. Where persuasion and sound argument were called for, he has belittled and cast aspersions. No one deserves vilification for the exercise of personal judgment simply because Ald. Schmidt disagrees. I am one of a number of people, including former aldermen, who have tried to persuade him to exhibit respect for the viewpoints of others when he argues his positions. Washington-style attack politics will so marginalize him that he will become irrelevant on City Council. That would effectively disenfranchise all of us in the 1st ward. I'll try one more time:

David, the Park Ridge quality of life is not based on bricks and mortar. The physical face of the town has changed over time, and will continue to do so. We have a tradition of civil discourse in this town. We listen to each other, and show respect to those who may disagree. We can passionately argue the merits of issues without resorting to personal insults and character assassination. This non-partisan tradition of civility in public affairs is the heart this community. This is what must be preserved.

David Kemerer
Park Ridge