

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT THE SENIOR CENTER

Q: What has the Park District done that has caused the Senior Senate to write this letter?

A: Here are some of the things that have happened over the past year or so:

- The Park District stopped working cooperatively with Senior Services, our affiliate who maintains bank accounts for our benefit. In the past Teresa Grodsky and her supervisors worked with us and Senior Services to determine our needs and make purchases to satisfy those needs. The Park District has severed that relationship.
- Park District staff refused to sit down with members of a negotiating committee that we set up to try to work out some of our differences.
- Over our objections, the Park District took our dues checks last year and cashed them. We believe those checks should have been deposited in our accounts.
- The Park District failed despite our repeated requests to appoint a liaison from the Park Board to hear our concerns and help resolve our differences.
- The Park District has decided it will set the amount of membership dues. Since the Senior Center began 30 years ago, the Senior Senate always set the dues and made the rules about membership.
- The Park District is now taking all of our dues. In the past, our dues were deposited into our own accounts held for our benefit.
- The Park District is now taking all profits from our fundraisers (like the Variety Show and the Steak Fry). In the past, these amounts were always given to Senior Services to be spent in accordance with our wishes.
- The Park District believes it is entitled to any bequest to the Senior Center. In the past, bequests to the Senior Center from members who passed away were always deposited into our accounts maintained by Senior Services.
- Senior Services (which has funneled approximately \$2,000,000 to the Park District over the years) and the Senior Senate (which is the elected governing body of the Senior Center) are now forced to pay to hold their private meetings in the 100 S. Western building or any Park District building.
- Park District staff tried to stop us from conducting our Senior Senate meeting, tried to declare some of our prior meetings invalid, and threatened to make us leave the building if we continued.
- The Park District took over the production of our Newsletter, refused to let us have input into renaming it, and no longer seeks input about what we would like included; also the Park District refused to make the Senior Center membership list available to the Senate.

Q: But those things aren't really affecting me. Why should we move? Everything is going along fine.

A: Things have changed at the Senior Center, even if you haven't noticed it yet. The main change is that members no longer have real rights to control what happens at the building. Here are a few hypotheticals: The Park District *could* decide to rent the building to another group on Fridays. This would dislocate all the Friday activities, and members would have to accept that change. In the past, under the contract, that could not happen-- senior center activities were guaranteed during certain times at the building. The Park District could also decide that it no longer would allow non-residents to become members. In the past, it was the Senior Senate which made those membership rules. The Park District can also raise dues as much as it would like, and the Senior Senate would have no input into

that. In the past it was the Senate that had to vote on any increase in dues before it could go into effect.

Q: Is it really possible to "start over" somewhere else? It seems like too much to have to take on.

A: With our dues and fundraisers, along with our current assets, we believe moving to another location is doable. If we were to move, we would bring all of the items which we own that are currently in the 100 S. Western building-- and we own a lot. We hope to obtain the services of people with lots of experience working at the Senior Center in the past to get the new center up and running, and would try to have them assist with the ongoing management of the center. In looking for an alternative location, we will do our best to find space that is reasonably priced with adequate space for our main functions, is easy to access and has adequate parking. It won't be everything we have now, but it would be our own.

The items owned by us in the building include: the Baby Grand Piano, the Ceramic Kiln, two Pool Tables and accessories, two big screen TV Sets, four ping pong tables, all equipment in the kitchen other than the major appliances, projector and laptop computer used for computer club, two digital pianos, banquet tables, library furniture, books and shelving, and TV in library, sound system, microphones, and music stands, all folding chairs used for events (approx. 180) all tables (7 card tables, 12 banquet tables) and chairs (50) in the "Drop-In" area at the center, game tables, and all lobby furniture.

Q: What if I want to keep attending events and activities at 100 S. Western, but I also want you to look into a new location?

A: If you pay your dues this year to the Park District, you will become a member of the "Park Ridge **Park District** Senior Center" which is completely under the control of the Park District. We encourage you to pay those dues if you wish to continue to attend events and activities being held in the building-- and we think you have a right to participate in those activities. You can still ask us to find a new location, and if we do, you can participate at both locations if you like. You would have the choice to be a member in one or both of the senior centers-- one run by the Park District and one run by the Senior Senate and you. Also, if we open a Senior Center at another location, you could still participate in events sponsored by the Park District as a non-member. Many non-members presently participate in these activities.

Q: What is the Kemnitz Lawsuit?

A: In 2008, longtime Senior Center member Betty Kemnitz passed away. In her will, she left 40% of her estate to the Park Ridge Senior Center. Over the years, many people have left money to the Senior Center upon their death. The Kemnitz bequest was a large one-- approximately \$330,000-- but it was not the largest one the Senior Center has received over the years. Betty's bequest, like all of the bequests to the Senior Center over the years, was deposited into the Senior Services, Inc.'s account. Almost two years later, the Park District claimed that it -- not our organization-- was entitled to Betty's bequest, and requested that the money be turned over to it. Both Senior Services and Senior Center said no, and a lawsuit ensued. Senior Services and the Senior Senate have been forced to retain an attorney to defend against the Park District's claim, and that lawsuit is currently pending before Judge Flynn in the Circuit Court of Cook County. The Park District recently submitted a settlement offer in the Kemnitz matter. The terms of that settlement are unacceptable to both the Senior Senate and Senior Services because it involves allowing all of the money to end up invested in Park District-owned property. We are working on a

counteroffer, however. In the event we cannot reach a settlement agreement that is acceptable to us, we are prepared to try the case on the merits. We do not believe the Park District is entitled to any of Betty Kernitz's money

Q: How did the Senior Center get started?

A: The Park Ridge Senior Center was formed almost 31 years ago by former Mayor Marty Butler and other community leaders from local churches, businesses and organizations. Those leaders recognized a need for one community-wide organization to provide a place for seniors to gather and call their own. Until then, senior activities were held in a variety of locations and sponsored by a variety of organizations. After more than a year of planning meetings, these leaders established the Park Ridge Senior Center. The governing body of the Senior Center was designated the "Senior Senate," and the Senate's job was to establish policy, and determine facility usage and programming for the Senior Center. The building at 100 S. Western Avenue was owned by the Park District, who made it available to the Senior Center. Teresa Grodsky was already employed by the Park District at the time the Senior Center was established and was brought over to help run the Senior Center.

It is important to note that while the Park District provided the location for the Senior Center, and staff to help with programming and activities, the Park District did not create the Senior Center, nor did it have any authority over the Senior Senate. The Park Ridge Senior Center always was and still is an independent organization, separate from the Park District.

Q: I keep hearing about "Senior Services." What is that?

A: Senior Services, Inc. or "SSI" is a not-for-profit organization that was created in 1980 to help provide funding and support for the Senior Center. SSI helped raise the funds that were needed to support the senior center initially, and then managed the money that came in to the Senior Center. The money that came to SSI came from a number of sources: from your dues, from the City of Park Ridge and other governmental bodies, from fundraisers, from gifts and donations, and from bequests to the Senior Center from deceased members. Over the years, approximately \$2,000,000 were paid out by SSI to make payments under the contract and pay for capital and non-capital improvements in the building. This includes about \$800,000 which was spent on helping to double the size of the building and adding the stage, installation of air conditioning, renovation of the library, furniture, pool and ping pong tables, musical and sound equipment, televisions, card tables and chairs, kitchen appliances, and much more. About \$1,200,000 was paid over to the Park District to offset costs of running the building and staff costs. The current Board members of SSI are Carla Owen, Dick Roberts, Sandee Main, Miles Valles, Stephan Blandin, Barb Ingolia, Rudy Keil, Jim Lange, Roger Loeffler, Dean Rendina and Chester Rychlewski.

Q: Who are the members of the Senior Senate?

A: The current members of the Senior Senate, in addition to the officers, are:

Jan Fallico	Roger Loeffler
Ed Fennelly	Herb Lorenz
Joe Fetsch	Mac McLendon
Tom Heffernan	Millie O'Brien
Bill Irvine	Barb Sweetman
Julia Kaucich	Miles Valles
Cathy Lanahan	
Pat Limplir	