

DRAFT

1. We want to inform the Council that we have been trying to understand why the P and R Committee has decided not to allow us to be part of the investigatory process of filing a fair housing complaint. We have agreed not to be part of the Adjudication process, on the advice of the City Attorney, but have asked the P and R Committee to allow us to remain part of the initial investigation. We have made every attempt to find a middle ground that would satisfy the Committee but to no avail.

At the request of Alderman Ryan, Commissioner Kristin Berg made a study of the surrounding communities and found that at least five, including the City of Chicago, use a panel, which consists of Fair Housing Commission members, as well as others to hear complaints. In all of the communities studied, Commissioners take part in the investigation of complaints in some way.

We have received no explanation from the P and R Committee members as to why they want to take away this power. We ask that the Mayor request an explanation for these actions. We have suggested several compromise wordings to the Ordinance, which we hoped would satisfy the Committee members and which meet with our approval. All of these attempts at conciliation have been rejected, once again with no explanation as to why. We also ask that the Mayor appoint a new liaison to the Fair Housing Commission.

2. In addition, the Committee seeks to take away our ability to conduct studies and disseminate information regarding fair housing issues. They also want to take away our ability "eliminate unlawful real estate practices". It is these portions of the Ordinance, which give us the ability to educate the public regarding fair housing practices and to explain our role as fair housing advocates. Once again, we have heard no explanation as to why these parts of the Ordinance are being struck. We wish to continue to let people know about the law and the existence of recourse in Park Ridge. If the Committee wants different wording that would still allow us to do outreach, we are open to that. But we have heard no discussion on the part of the Committee and have not been allowed to partake in any discussion so that we could reach any consensus.

We can only conclude that the purpose of the changes suggested by the P and R Committee is to reduce the role of the Commission, restrict citizen participation by those trained in fair housing issues, to end our ability to teach the public about fair housing and to prevent the kind of peer review that is the hallmark of other City Commissions.

We hope the City Council will vote to allow us to be part of Fair Housing Investigations so that the City Manager will not be left with full responsibility for the early process of hearing a complaint and so that consistency in the hearing procedure will be maintained. We also ask you to allow us to retain the ability to educate the public regarding fair housing practices.

3. Do we want to try to get interested people to support us at the meeting? Let's discuss whom we might ask to help us?

4. Any other ideas?