

Park Ridge Now Neutral on O'Hare Expansion

By Ames Boykin Daily Herald Staff Writer

5/8/2004

Park Ridge on Friday officially became neutral on O'Hare International Airport expansion for the first time.

At a monthly meeting, O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission members welcomed the community that once vigorously fought against O'Hare expansion.

Park Ridge aldermen voted last year to leave the anti-expansion Suburban O'Hare Commission, which then-Mayor Marty Butler helped form more than two decades ago.

Park Ridge officials last July voted against paying \$64,000 in annual dues to the Suburban O'Hare Commission because the fight was beginning to cost too much, and they wanted to work with Chicago officials to improve their quality of life.

The city of Chicago founded the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission to help provide communities around the airport with soundproofing. The commission takes no stance on expansion, though expansion foes say it's a puppet group for Mayor Richard Daley, who is shepherding plans to expand the airport.

Once the commission approved the city's membership at the Friday meeting in Rosemont, Park Ridge Alderman Dawn Disher took her seat at the table.

She was well aware of the symbolism.

"It is a historical day for Park Ridge to be sitting at this table," Disher said.

Arlington Heights Mayor Arlene Mulder, chairwoman of the commission, welcomed Park Ridge.

U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, who told communities she was committed to keeping federal soundproofing dollars in their court, also congratulated Park Ridge.

"It's really a great day for me to be here when Park Ridge takes its seat," said Schakowsky, an Evanston Democrat.

Former Suburban O'Hare Commission member Des Plaines decided to join the O'Hare Noise Compatibility Commission in 2001. The most active Suburban O'Hare Commission members are Bensenville and Elk Grove Village, which would both lose property if O'Hare is expanded.