



Chicago Park District

Legislation Text

File #: 20-1202-0909, Version: 1

REQUEST TO OFFICIALLY REMOVE THE NAME OF STEPHEN DOUGLAS FROM PARK NO. 218

To the Honorable Board of Commissioners of the Chicago Park District

I. Recommendation

It is recommended that an order be entered authorizing the General Superintendent or his designee to officially remove the name of Stephen Douglas from Park No. 218.

Proposed Park or feature: Stephen Douglas Park

Location: 1401 S. Sacramento Drive

Community Area: Douglas Community

Wards: 12 and 24

Proposed Name: Park 218

II. Explanation

The Chicago Park District naming and renaming procedures allow for the naming of parks. The renaming of parks is addressed in the Chicago Park District Code - Chapter 7, E.3. There is no Chicago Park District precedent for removing a name from a park. From time to time, current circumstances or sensibilities may warrant a reconsideration of a previously-approved park or park feature name. In such cases, any new or additional information or historical background that may not have been previously considered should be weighed along with the original naming criteria. That is the case with Stephen Douglas Park.

In 1869, the West Park Commission named the southernmost park in their jurisdiction in honor of Stephen Douglas (1813-1861). Douglas was a United State Senator who was largely instrumental in bringing the railroad to Illinois and Chicago. However, Douglas' wife had inherited a slave plantation from her father, from which Douglas profited. In consideration of current acknowledgement of the moral outrage engendered by slavery, it is appropriate that the name Stephen Douglas be removed from Park No. 218. This proposal has strong community support.

III. Park Naming Procedures

Pursuant to Chapter VII, Section E (1) of the Code of the Chicago Park District, this request to remove the name Stephen Douglas from Park 218 was forwarded to the Secretary of the Chicago Park District, who filed a copy of this request with the Committee on Programs and Recreation and initiated a notice period to solicit public input. Notices were posted in parks and sent to advisory councils located within a one-mile radius of the park site. Elected officials were also notified of the proposal, including the alderman of the wards in which the park is located.

The notice period of forty-five (45) days soliciting public input regarding the naming proposal was initiated on July 23, 2020. There has been positive support for this proposal from community members. Staff recommends that the Board approve the request to remove the name of Stephen Douglas from Park No. 218.