



Some Kind of Razzmatazz

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Even if [Chicago 2016](#) had resurrected Frank Sinatra from the grave to sing “2016, Chicago is” at the end of “My Kind of Town” that was playing on the sound system before the start of Monday’s community meeting for 39th and 40th Ward residents, it still wouldn’t have convinced the packed house at [North Park University’s](#) Hamming Hall that the whole idea of the city hosting the summer Olympics wasn’t some kind of razzmatazz.



No Games Chicago members picket the 2016 Chicago community meeting for 39th and 40th Ward residents.

[No Games Chicago](#) members aside, a tax watchdog group that heckled, hacked and hectoring Chicago 2016 representations during the presentation of the Olympic bid financials, judging from the applause after the audience’s pointed questions and the city’s history of blowing budgets big time, there didn’t appear to be a whole lot of support for the city hosting the 2016 Summer Olympics.

The mayoral-ordered community meeting on Monday, the first one to be held on the city’s North Side, is one of several being scheduled at breakneck speed for some fancy back-peddling after Mayor Daley signed off on the hosting contract in Switzerland last month after vowing not to, that would potentially leave Chicago taxpayers holding the bag should the games suffer huge financial losses.

“How about a referendum, Pat,” some yelled at Pat Ryan, chairman and CEO of 2016 Chicago, after he finished his pitch.

With just 80 days left to convince the International Olympic Committee that Chicagoans really, really want this, Ryan touted some of the benefits of hosting the summer games in Chicago: 31,000 jobs over the next 10 years, \$10 million for work force development, \$1 billion in federal money for repairing Chicago’s mass transit system, new sports and recreational facilities to be turned over to city parks, and a lasting legacy for the children.

Ryan estimated that operating the games would \$3.8 billion, but would generate about \$3.8 billion from ticket sales and corporate sponsorships. Further, all host cities for the summer games since 1972 have made an average operating surplus of \$745 million.



“We need to demonstrate to the IOC their passion for bringing the games to Chicago,” Ryan said. “Competition is fierce. We cannot win without your support.”

Pat Ryan, chairman and CEO, 2016 Chicago

Then it came time for the audience q-and-a. A member of No Games Chicago challenged Ryan on the committee’s surplus figures experienced by host cities. Vancouver and London have already exceeded the government tab for the 2010 and

2012 Olympics by billions, and forget about Montreal. Montreal finally paid a \$1.47 billion debt for hosting the 1976 Summer Games in 2006.

“I don’t think your facts are right,” Ryan said, stating that many of Chicago’s proposed Olympic venues take advantage of existing facilities, such as McCormick Place and Soldier Field. “Cities have gone over budget on infrastructure. We’re taking a different approach. Come up afterward and we’ll demonstrate.”

A local union carpenter scolded Ryan for not answering his question at the 11th Ward meeting. “What guarantee will you give us that jobs won’t go to Mayor Daley’s cronies?”

A vast majority of the jobs created by hosting the Olympics are bound by a memorandum of understanding guaranteeing city residents’ rights to compete for jobs, 2016 Chicago President Lori Healy said.

A woman from a local park advisory council questioned the loss of fees and massive disruption in city parks preparing them for the games. “Who is going to run these new sports and recreational facilities after the Olympics are over?” she asked. “And will there still be operating funds left to operate them after the city goes broke?”

Rendering of a Chicago 2016 Olympic venue.



Like bullets in a drive-by shooting, the audience peppered the panel with questions about traffic, security, dust and parking during the games.

The answers provided by the Chicago 2016 panel were sincere, if not stock.

Disruptions in park services will be kept to a minimum. Mass transit and traffic never ran better during the Los Angeles and Atlanta games – ask them. Vancouver grossly underestimated its Olympic budget against the advice of experts. None of the venues provide parking,

thus requiring visitors to use the city’s rehabbed train and bus systems. We’ll restore the parks even better than we found them.

Asked what guidelines the 2016 Chicago bid team put in place to ensure against corruption, Ryan responded: “Our board members are very responsible people, they’re very strong in government, the private sector and not-for-profits. We’re regulated by the Illinois Attorney General and the IRS. We have strong ethics and discipline in place. These are responsible people who only want to do the best for Chicago.”

“Bernie Madoff was regulated by the SEC,” someone called out.

Reportedly, No Games Chicago has been dogging 2016 Chicago at the ward meetings like groupies following the Rolling Stones. Whether its members and the other residents who spoke up Monday are a true reflection of the sentiments of the Chicago region, 2016 Chicago can always claim the “silent majority” of the 1,222,701 who’ve clicked their support for hosting the games in Chicago – or at least signed up to receive e-mail – on its Web site.

The IOC, a 2016 media representative told us, is definitely watching.

“They’re paying attention to what is going on here in the media,” she said. “They’re looking at both sides.”

If Monday’s 39th and 40th Ward meeting is any indication, wait until 2016 Chicago appears before the city’s north lakefront wards, in which case, representatives better bring their flak jackets.

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