

VILLAGE

Austin publicly endorses District 86 referendum

Mike Ellis

Clarendon Hills village president Len Austin is publicly endorsing the \$139.8 million District 86 referendum question that will appear on the ballot on April 2.

Austin declared his support for the referendum through the following message conveyed by the D86 Vote Yes campaign the week of Jan. 28.

“Hi my name is Len Austin. I am the Village President of Clarendon Hills. I was elected to this position in 2015 as a write-in candidate. I mention this because I want to acknowledge that our slate was successful because of the support of the CITIZENS of Clarendon Hills. My use of “citizens” is not to be confused with the mailings and constant contact emails you receive from a group named Citizens for Clarendon Hills, “C4CH.” This group, to my knowledge, is ONE person. This person does NOT represent our community as a whole.

“Recently a friend from Hinsdale approached me, asking me why Clarendon Hills residents are so opposed to the referendum. He and many others have been fooled into thinking that this group represents our town. Please be clear, that is not the case.

“The village of Clarendon Hills is embarking on a downtown revitalization plan including a new train station. I believe in capital reinvestment in our community as a whole and this INCLUDES our schools. I back the D86 referendum.”

Austin is not the first vil-

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Clarendon Hills village manager Kevin Barr on village president Len Austin’s public endorsement of the District 86 referendum

lage president to take a public position on this or another District 86 referendum question.

Hinsdale village president Tom Cauley has expressed his support for the current referendum question, while former Burr Ridge mayor Mickey Straub opposed the November referendum in an e-mail transmission.

Yvonne Mayer of Burr Ridge, a candidate for the District 86 Board of Education, questioned Straub’s right to take a public position on the referendum question as mayor, but Straub said he received an opinion from the Village of Burr Ridge’s attorney that he possessed a legal right to do so.

Austin said the Clarendon Hills village attorney is also backing his right to endorse the referendum.

“I do not make this statement as a position of the board, and will not be asking our board or staff to support my position,” he said. “My support of the D86 referendum is not an official action as village president.”

Village manager Kevin Barr said the village itself “does not have a position” on the referendum or Austin’s endorsement.

“I am aware of the endorsement, and it is clear to me that

Len’s statement was made as a private citizen,” Barr said.

Ed Corcoran, president of Citizens for Clarendon Hills (C4CH), which was identified in Austin’s message, released a statement in response.

“C4CH is run by a committee of long-term residents with fiscally conservative and socially responsible viewpoints who oppose the overspending and overtaxing by the village president and other elected officials,” Corcoran said in the statement.

Corcoran denied that C4CH is “one person,” adding that the organization consists of “teachers, parents, environmental experts, financial analysts, engineers and retirees.”

“C4CH committee members have a widespread following and a passion for preserving CH property values, while supporting the schools and charming village we all love,” he said in the statement. “There is no single person or group which represents the whole of our charming village.

“Our village president does not represent CH regarding school matters, and we believe his approach, whether ego-driven or well-intentioned, greatly damages property values.”



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