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A Lerner Community Newspaper

Mell: Get your chairs off the streets already!

By **PATRICK BUTLER**

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It's time for people to start picking up the chairs they used to stake out the parking places they had cleared for themselves during the Blizzard of '99, said Ald. Richard Mell (33rd).

Speaking first at a Thursday, Jan. 21, Kedzie/Elston Business and Industrial Council (KEBIC) luncheon at the Abbey Pub, 3420 W. Grace St., and later that day at the 33rd Ward Advisory Council at Horner Park, Mell said the furniture is impeding snow removal efforts.

"If this keeps up, I'm going to go into the antique business," Mell quipped during his wide-ranging "State of the Ward" remarks at the KEBIC meeting.

"We'll give them a couple more days, then we'll go after them," Mell said.

Aldermanic aide Jaime Andrade said after the Advisory Council session that, while there has long been an "unwritten law" allowing residents to put old chairs in any parking spaces they cleared in front of their house, "It's time to stop."

While both Andrade and Mell praised the street-clearing work of both city Streets and Sanitation and "our (precinct) captains who shoveled senior citizens' walks," they also chided some residents and businesses for not doing their part.

"It's not right for your neighbor to clean his sidewalk and (for you to) leave your own unshoveled," Mell said.

Turning to other business:

ú Mell told the KEBIC members that while the St. Vincent DePaul Day Care Center has signed a deal to buy 5 acres of the former International Paper Co. property at Addison Street and Kimball Avenue, a buyer still hasn't been found for the remaining 6 acres.

"They're talking to a few people," but nothing is definite yet, said Mell, adding that the city has apparently dropped an earlier proposal to put a new Albany Park (17th) District police station on part of that site.

Mell noted, that while no location has been decided on yet, he is hopeful next year's city budget will include the money needed to replace the "woefully inadequate" WPA-era station at 4461 N. Pulaski Road.

By then, he said, the redevelopment of the north side of the 3100 block of West Irving Park Road should be completed -- allowing the neighborhood to focus on other locations in need of improvement.

One such spot, he said, is the corner of Kedzie Avenue and Addison Street where, "Wag's and several other places have come and gone in the past few years.

"I'd like to see someone come in and stabilize that corner," said Mell, who said his goals for the coming year also include "streamlining" the city business-license process.

"Right now, there are times when you have to apply for as many as five different business licenses," said Mell, adding, "You can't blame some guys for wanting to move their operations to the suburbs."

ú Another continuing priority, he added, will be to force the now-illegal corn vendors to either get licensed (and comply with health regulations) or "stop their operations."

Mell emphasized that he is "not really trying to stop anyone from making a living. But if someone gets sick, you know who they'll come and blame. They'll want to know why I didn't do something about it."

Unfortunately, previous proposals made by Mell have been put on hold by the city Law Department, citing "constitutional concerns," and the Health Department has not yet come up with any of the guidelines it had promised to help make it easier to regulate the controversial vendors, Andrade said later.

ú While auto traffic continues to be a problem in the ward, Mell said some small relief might come with the return of the Kedzie Avenue bus route to serve the new high school opening on Bryn Mawr this coming fall.

But unlike in many North Side wards, Mell said, he's not inclined to support "zoned (permit) parking. Nor does he favor keeping a bike lane on Elston Avenue.

"It's too dangerous," said Mell, adding that while he "applauds Mayor (Richard) Daley's efforts to promote bike riding, it's well to remember that even the mayor got hurt pretty bad in a bike accident not long ago."

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