

Dear members of the Federal and State Affairs Committee of the Kansas House of Representatives:

As long-time Fairway residents, we have always viewed the Shawnee Indian Mission as an oasis of nature and history in the middle of our city.

And we have always anticipated a future in which the Mission retained its recreational and educational emphasis.

Because of HR 2208, the subject of a hearing this Wednesday, January 24, 2024, all that is in jeopardy.

Our concerns are rooted not in a knee-jerk fear of change but in the the reluctance of supporters of the applicable legislation (specifically Chief Barnes and the Shawnee Tribe) to reveal their intentions for the property.

That lack of transparency, combined with an impressive tribal investment in its legal and public relations efforts, is disturbing.

Once ownership is transferred and the Mission becomes part of a sovereign Native American nation, will local citizens and governments have any say at all in the land's use?

Can the public be prohibited from visiting the park? Can it be converted to commercial use, say a retirement community or a casino.? Can it be subdivided into individual home lots? Can the three historic buildings on site — the oldest in the state of Kansas — be razed? Can Mission Road/53rd Street, which transverses the property from east to west, be closed?

What about the enforcement of city codes, zoning and other concerns?

Knowing the answers to these questions would be helpful. Actually, they are ESSENTIAL.

But the silence on the part of the tribe and the devious manner in which this matter has come before our legislators (incredibly, Fairway city officials first heard about the hearing just days before lit was to be held) do not inspire confidence.

Until the mystery over the tribe's intentions is resolved, we must voice our emphatic opposition to these measures.

Respectfully,

Robert and Ellen Butler