

Daily Herald Article

Haymarket drug and alcohol treatment center proposal for Itasca loses more support

By Robert Sanchez

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A second DuPage County Board member has withdrawn support for Haymarket Center's proposal to convert an Itasca hotel into a drug and alcohol treatment center.

Ashley Selmon, an Addison Democrat whose district includes Itasca, removed her name from a list of supporters just a week before village officials are scheduled to begin their review of the proposal.

Selmon was one of three county board members from the area -- among 60 individuals and groups -- who originally supported Haymarket's plan to open a behavioral health clinic in what is now a Holiday Inn to offer comprehensive treatment for substance use disorder and mental health problems to hundreds of patients from DuPage and other collar counties.

But as opposition to the plan mounts, both Selmon and Addison Republican Don Puchalski have backed away.

The third county board member representing Itasca, Republican Sam Tornatore of Roselle, remains on the list of supporters.

Selmon said she originally joined other county and state elected officials in endorsing Chicago-based Haymarket's plan in May because DuPage needs more treatment options to address the opioid crisis.

But on Wednesday, she posted a lengthy message on [her blog](#) explaining why she changed her mind.

"I've decided I no longer agree or have faith in the statements made in the letter of support as a result of what I have learned in the weeks since it was published," she wrote at ashleyselmon.com.

"While we were disappointed to learn of her change of heart, we remain committed to bringing this much-needed treatment facility to DuPage County," Haymarket President and CEO Dan Lustig said in a statement Thursday evening.

Both Selmon and Puchalski say they didn't understand the ramifications of Haymarket's plan to buy the Holiday Inn along Irving Park Road and transform it into a roughly 200-bed facility.

The proposal is facing strong opposition from residents as Itasca prepares for a Wednesday public hearing at Peacock Junior High School, 301 E. North St.

A group calling itself "Concerned Citizens of Itasca" is rallying efforts to block Haymarket and has distributed more than 1,200 "No Haymarket" yard signs -- roughly one for every three residences in the village.

There's also a Facebook group called "No Itasca Haymarket" with more than 1,400 members.

Those opponents cite four primary reasons: Itasca is too small to support such a facility, the project would cost the village tax revenue, the location isn't appropriate, and Haymarket hasn't been transparent.

Selmon said in her blog that she received emails and phone calls from dozens of residents and met with a group last week.

"Very few comments or concerns expressed to me are anything I would describe as 'NIMBY' (not in my backyard)," she wrote. "Rather, they are more substantive, specific objections to the plan itself."

She said she heard from a dad whose daughter had a medical emergency and required an ambulance. She said the father is concerned about potential 911 calls at Haymarket because the Itasca Fire Protection District has only one ambulance.

There also are concerns the project would hurt the village financially because the hotel generates around \$250,000 in annual tax revenue.

Haymarket officials say they would contract a private ambulance service to handle calls and would work with Itasca to pursue grants to make up for lost revenue.

But Selmon said Haymarket hasn't explained how it could address the loss of revenue and expected pressure on Itasca's first responders "in a way I find convincing."

She said she was reluctant to remove her name from the support list so close to Wednesday's public hearing. But she decided to do so after finding problems with an economic impact study for the project.

"Unless Haymarket can answer those questions and persuade Itasca that they would be made whole throughout this process," she said, "I think there's another location that needs to be looked at."