



Problems Do Not Go Away We Seek Viable Solutions!

By Wayne A. Strnad

How saddened my heart was the first time I meet with Mr. Fernando Mendez because as he opened the door to his small house, I noted not the physical situation he must deal with every day of this life, for the rest of his life, but the look - a stare if you will - of a soul that needed assistance but didn't know where to turn. In one glance upon his face I saw all the emotions known to mankind, wrapped in a smile that gleamed from ear to ear.

As Fernando and I worked our way toward his kitchen table, I noted two bags hanging from a strolling device, sitting adjacent to his kitchen chair, readying the way for his next injection of medicine. Many bottles of medicine lined the counter top, placed in a sequence or order that they need to be taken.

Fernando called me because he received a copy of a newsletter that is distributed to city employees. He

Where does Fernando work? He works at a building located in Alderman Munoz ward. The exact location is 3200 S. Kedzie. The building houses the Streets and Sanitation garbage trucks and Forestry Department. Next week you'll see the link to another ward, right in your back yard and the potential health problems it poses.

Last year the Illinois Department of Labor, Safety Inspection and Education Division, was called in to investigate this site. There were a multitude of citations written and forwarded to Streets and Sanitation care of Mr. Hollinger and McCue. The powers that be, so to speak, were made aware of the unsanitary work conditions. What do you think they did about it? One word describes it and that word is NOTHING. Sad but true. According to Fernando, "These same conditions exist today."

So, what does the city do in such cases? Ignore the problems because it is probably cheaper to pay some fine than straighten out the problem. As far as human health is concerned, well, that's something expendable in their way of thinking.

Logically, one would expect that the Chicago Board of Health might like to get involved. Forget that idea because they won't touch it. We called the commissioner's office and were told they have no jurisdiction over city facilities. But what about public health? Are not city employees part of the public-at-large whether or not they work for the city? Apparently not, according to their office.

Then who's responsible?

In case you're not aware, we taxpayers pay for a whole slew of committees and one of them is called the Health Committee. The person in charge of this committee is Alderman Ed Smith. Here's the list of other aldermen involved with this committee:

Vice-Chairmen: Walter Burnett Jr. Members: Granato, Tillman, T. Thomas, Coleman, Solis, Wojcik, Matlak, Mell, Austin, O'Connor, Shiller, Moore.

Why list all these elected officials? Well, if they are involved with health issues, which is what one would assume a Health Committee should be involved with, then they should know about problem sites such as 3200 S. Kedzie. Forget the rhetoric that leads off with we can't know about everything. I say just try. There are a finite number of sites you need to look at and if you did one a month, even working part-time as they do, they would cover all the sites in less time than their term in office! Would I put any faith in this committee? Not one iota for if they



Mr. Fernando Mendez, a 27 year city employee, shows some of the puncture wounds he had to endure.

don't take care of the very people that take care of us taxpayers - like the city employees that pick up garbage - then I can't find a single reason to believe they would be concerned about our public health.

This committee needs to get functional because up to now it seems not only dysfunctional but perhaps negligent in doing its job.

Now despite the fact that

Fernando must live with a tracheotomy for the rest of his life, take medicines until he passes, and lives with three life support systems just to sleep, he is willing to go back to work. Go back, say you? Yes, the City of Chicago dismissed him. Put him on medical leave at 40% and then cut off his medical insurance. But this is the city that works. For whom?



liked what he read and made mention of the fact that everyone should know about what goes on with people who work for the City of Chicago. "See this," he says pointing to the hole in his neck and then covering up a plastic tube coming from his neck with his finger just to talk, "I got this because of the facility I work at."

At first I didn't believe him because of my educational training in the "scientific method" but then came a barrage of documentation from people many would consider experts. Yes, doctors affiliated with Northwestern University Medical Center. There are written and signed letters from the experts that state Fernando's condition is caused because of his work environment.

Self-Empowerment!
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Alderman Ed Smith
is the City Council Health Committee Chair
This facility is a danger to human life and is in
Alderman "Rick-y" Ricardo
Munoz Ward
Commissioner Michael McCue
is in charge of General Services
McCue ignored a multitude of
violations via citations from the
Illinois Department of Labor,
Safety Inspection and Education
Division.

Mr. Fernando Mendez
devoted his working
years - 27 of them -
to doing a good job but
had to have a
tracheotomy because of
working at the
3200 S. Kedzie facility.
So say doctors from
Northwestern University
Medical Center.
City doesn't see it.
They put Mr. Mendez on
40% disability after
he wanted to report
**UNSANITARY WORK
CONDITIONS.**

Fernando must live
with this hole in his
neck for the rest
of his life! He sleeps
with 3 life support
systems, always!

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**Who's Responsible? Ald. Smith,
Munoz, and every last alderman
on the Health Committee.
Ignorance of fact is no excuse!
Commissioners Chuck
Hollinger, McCue and Sanchez
should do their job and comply!**