



Village of Burr Ridge

Mayor Gary Grasso

September 16, 2022

Governor Pritzker:

Your September 15th response, although addressed to me, was forwarded to me from a local Patch reporter who had received it directly from your press secretary last evening. I only received the letter late this morning from your staff. Upon reading the letter, had it ended where it began – with appreciation of my commitment to be welcoming to the refugees and your apology for your office’s “inadvertent delay” in contacting the Village – I would have accepted them as sincere, and moved on. But the rest of your letter contained a different tone. So, here are a few replies:

- The IDHS employee who has continually been present and engaging on site this morning (during my third visit to the hotel since Saturday to check on the refugees) volunteered, without prompting, that the Village really “came through” in welcoming the refugees; so it’s apparent that your comments about us not having welcomed the refugees is wrong – I can produce a volume of emails (not to mention a list of callers) who have offered food, clothing and jobs to the refugees without hesitation;
- Of course, as we discovered the hotel had a contract with the State that was the apparent reason it had agreed to house the refugees for the State for at least 30 days, I emphatically told the hotel that long-term housing of refugees should be cleared with the Village and Board and I want to know the basic information your office wanted to know about them in order to inform the residents and make decisions based on that information – long term housing of refugees for the State is not customary hotel business, as you no doubt know;
- You state this action was done “... while my team was scrambling to find a place for these 64 people – mostly women and children – to sleep...” through a contract with the hotel “... to provide emergency rooms”. The State should not be scrambling and should have had a plan to handle a few hundred intermittently received refugees – it’s an emergency because there was no plan;
- Of course, my initial questions – after learning they were already checked into the hotel - included their legal status – I learned of their asylum status only then – being here legally is a fundamental, initial piece of important information to anyone in my position;
- The two calls you mention came only after I discovered from a friend in the DuPage Board of Health that there was a conference call of state, county, and city officials – but again, not including my staff at which I made my displeasure with the process abundantly clear.


Finally, I too note for the record that your press secretary has not apologized for the disparaging characterization of our community. Given your heritage (not too dissimilar to mine) – such a comment should never be lodged against a community, and here quickly retracted.

Governor, I wish you the best in a difficult time, but must state in closing that the significant responsibilities you mention that the State has to the refugees cannot eclipse the rights of the municipal communities and citizens of Illinois who are your first priority.

Sincerely,


Gary Grasso, Mayor

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