

ACTION RIDGE: SEPTEMBER 9, 2026 GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

Guest Speaker: ACLU Attorney Melissa Staas

1. CALL TO ORDER

- The meeting was called to order at **7:00 PM**.
 - **Attendance:** 32 members
- Guest Speaker:** Melissa Staas, ACLU attorney

2. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Direct Action / Get Out the Vote Event:** Liz Swanson announced that the Direct Action group—the team that helps organize rallies—is planning a rally and **Get Out the Vote event for Saturday, October 17**. For more information about how to support this event, please contact actionridge2017@gmail.com.
- Action Ridge Membership:** Kate Kerin reminded attendees to sign up for Action Ridge membership.
- Theater Field Trip:** Nan Parson is organizing a field trip to see *The Humanities*, written by Zayd Ayers Dohrn, with performances running September 10–October 4. The play explores the consequences experienced by faculty and students after listening to a controversial speaker. Val Halston suggested this field trip. For more information, RSVP to Nan.
- Single-Use Plastics Ban:** Pat Lofthouse reminded attendees that Park Ridge's single-use plastics ban will take effect January 1, 2027.

3. ACTION STEPS

- Get Out the Vote Postcards:** Chris Parson asked members to write 25 *Get Out the Vote postcards* to voters in Texas, Georgia, Michigan, and Wisconsin who do not consistently vote in midterm elections.
 - All available postcards were distributed; additional postcards will be available soon.
 - A postcard-writing party is being planned; the date is to be determined.
- Land Acknowledgment:** A land acknowledgment was read recognizing the Council of the Three Fires.

4. PRESENTATION: ACLU ATTORNEY MELISSA STAAS: Melissa Staas, a Park Ridge resident, discussed the non-partisan organization's advocacy and litigation efforts. She emphasized the importance of both advocacy and elections, stating that while advocacy can put "*sand in the gears*" in the short term, elections are necessary to bring about broader change.

- Overview of ACLU of Illinois Priorities:** The Illinois affiliate is primarily focused on issues related to free speech, church-state separation, police practices, discrimination, immigration and ICE enforcement, LGBTQIA+ rights, and disability rights, among other issues.
- Current Litigation and Advocacy**
 - **Operation Midway Blitz:** Staas discussed ACLU litigation concerning alleged ICE violations. She reported that approximately 500 people were released during the litigation.
 - **Chicago Headline Club Case:** Staas discussed litigation concerning the use of tear gas by ICE against crowds, including incidents near schools; this litigation has significantly reduced this activity. She also discussed the Illinois Attorney General's use of the case in arguments concerning the deployment of the National Guard in Chicago.
 - **Broadview Detention Facility conditions:** Staas reported that the facility was cleared during the litigation, but is now in use again, although individuals held are now permitted contact with attorneys.

- **Election Protection:** Staas said there has been relatively little election-protection activity required in Illinois because state officials are actively addressing these issues. She encouraged continued vigilance and emphasized that **“action is the antidote to anxiety.”** She also recommended submitting mail-in ballots well before election day.

- **Flock Cameras:** The Action Ridge interest area, Policing & Criminal Justice group, has been studying the issue.

- **ACLU Concerns and Proposed Legislation:** Staas indicated the ACLU has concerns about 1) the cameras’ effectiveness in improving public safety, 2) their potential use for mass surveillance, and 3) the privacy implications of collecting and sharing license-plate data. The ACLU is advocating for state legislation governing ALPR systems. *Illinois House Bill 5151* would establish requirements and restrictions related to ALPR use, including how data is collected, retained, accessed, shared, and protected.

- **Park Ridge Flock Contract:** Staas discussed the Park Ridge City Council’s recent decision to renew its Flock contract. Staas continued that she read about the Park Ridge City Council meeting that voted to renew the Flock contract; Erik Olijnk and Action Ridge were at the meeting. In addition, Staas learned that Council members received information about the cameras primarily from the police chief and may not have been fully aware of the broader surveillance and privacy concerns. Staas said there is now an effort to reconsider the contract; she has also asked an ACLU lobbyist to speak with Council members about concerns related to Flock surveillance.

- **Flock Camera at the Post Office:** A member asked about a new Flock camera at the post office. A member of Action Ridge’s Flock team noted that Flock cameras may sometimes be installed beyond the number specified in a contract. **Follow-up:** Confirm who made this statement and verify the status of the camera at the post office.

5. **Question and Answer period:** There were many questions about the use of Flock Cameras. Melissa Staas said she has expressed her concerns in a conversation with Joseph Steinfels, alderperson for the 5th ward.

6. **Next Meeting**

The next Action Ridge general meeting will be 11/11

7. **Adjournment**

The meeting concluded at 8:25 PM.

Minutes submitted by Susan Greenwood