

Sobchak Offers Grass, Authorities Refuse

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Sobchack stands with the grass she brought for city authorities.

Socialite and opposition figure Kseniya Sobchak offered authorities 100 square meters of grass to compensate the city for damage done by long-term demonstrators at Chistiye Prudy, but authorities refused to accept it.

Sobchak, together with online television station Dozhd, planned to give the city the grass, which had been used during Saturday's Night at the Museum event.

"They didn't take our grass," Sobchak wrote Tuesday on Twitter. "City authorities haven't answered our letter. And the grass will go bad soon."

The head of the city district that oversees the park at Chistiye Prudy, Vladimir Mariupolsky, did meet with Sobchak. He refused to accept the grass, saying it wasn't appropriate for the park in central Moscow.

"I'm not a big specialist, but it seems to me this grass wouldn't go well here," Mariupolsky

said, LifeNews.ru reported.

He also said he was not the right official to solve the problem, but that he would pass Sobchak's letter to the correct person.

City authorities initially put the total cost of the 2,000 square meters of damaged grass at 1 million rubles (\$32,000), but later raised the figure to 20.4 million (\$660,000), Interfax reported.

Opposition figures criticized the numbers, presenting information that showed the costs were inflated.

"This sum can only be called bewildering," Solidarity activist Ilya Yashin told Kommersant. "It must be some kind of golden grass."

Echo Moskvyy editor Alexei Venediktov wrote on Twitter that the most expensive grass available costs only 220 rubles per square meter, and taking into account all installation expenses, the cost of replacement would only reach 2,100 rubles per square meter.

With the figures given by authorities, the total cost per square meter would be 10,200 rubles.

City Hall has also initiated an investigation of violations of city codes banning "illegal destruction of green spaces," which carry a maximum fine of 4,500 rubles and reimbursement for damages.

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