



**OFFICE OF THE
CITY COUNCIL**

E. Denise Lee
COUNCIL MEMBER, DISTRICT 8
OFFICE (904) 630-1385
FAX (904) 630-2906

SUITE 425, CITY HALL
117 WEST DUVAL STREET
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202
E-MAIL: EDLEE@COJ.NET

February 27, 2012
11 a.m.

Meeting Minutes for the February 22 Ad Hoc Hemming Plaza Subcommittee

Topic: Hemming Plaza recommendations

Location: Conference Room 3112 on the third floor of the Ed Ball Building, 214 North Hogan Street

In Attendance: Officer Michelle E. Cook, Juliette Williams, Don Robertson, Jamie Hill, Officer Kenny Johns, Ron Chamblin, Amy Harrell, Megan Newton, Vikki Wilkins, Jerry Moran, Council Member Don Redman, Officer Laurie McEwen, Lauren Spencer, Ava Barrett, Karen Nasrallah, Terry Lorince, Parker Hudson, and Chair Kelley Boree.

Meeting convened at 3 p.m. by Amy Harrell of DVI who filled in for Chair Kelley Boree who was detained at another meeting. She began by focusing on the topic of surveys. Two surveys were passed out. The first was set up to be done online so that it can be scored by the Survey Monkey software at DVI. In an effort to get as great a response as possible it was suggested that businesses encourage customers to take the survey as well as city and federal workers, library patrons, ShadCo members, and encourage other media to include the survey link on their websites.

The second survey is set up to be conducted face-to-face in the park over a two to three day period. People would be surveyed in the morning, during lunch and at 3 p.m. This survey has to be short in that each question would take a minute to ask and answer. Besides results from those willing to take the survey, it was decided that the survey results would show the number of people approached who would not take the survey. Both Jacksonville University and the University of North Florida were approached about doing the survey. The cost would be

between \$2,000 and \$3,000 and due to previous commitments could not be conducted until April at the earliest.

At 3:23 p.m. Terry Lorince of DVI arrived and took over as chair. She moved the discussion on to the removal of trees in the park. Don Robertson, Urban Forester, explained that many if the Laurel Oaks in the park are ill and have to be removed as they pose a danger. Two had been removed last year but the project was halted due to complaints by an unnamed city council member. Besides removing diseased trees, taking down trees near the library will facilitate use of its security cameras in the park. Currently, the canopy blocks the view of the park.

Officer Laurie McEwen of JSO offered a list of suggestions. She noted that the installation of cameras and monitoring will be costly. Suggested using small, moveable chairs that aren't overly comfortable. Suggested banning smoking in the park, incorporating trespass violations that include the library and the park.

Officer Kenny Johns, JSO, said covert operations are going on in the park to try to spot serious rules violators like drug dealing, prostitution, gambling and drinking. He also explained how the trespass arrests work. Violators are usually banned for a day on a first or minor offense. Repeat offenders are banned for a year. However, several return before the year is up but usually do not cause problems as not to get caught again and arrested. Ava Barrett of the library said it never bans anyone until they can get a picture so that staff can be made aware of who is no longer allowed in the library.

He went on to explain that the card and domino players are usually gambling. It is hard to infiltrate the games because players have to know a person before they will allow them to play. Those selling drugs will only sell to those that they know as well.

Kelley Boree took over as chair at 3:45 p.m.

She moved the conversation from the homeless and vagrants to the practicality of using cameras to monitor the park. Council Member Don Redman likes the idea of cameras because he believes just the presence of cameras will deter people from breaking the law. Boree reported that almost every camera in other parks has been vandalized or broken.

It was decided to look into the cost of cameras and monitoring, but to wait and see if increased police presence and the removal of trees have any effect on rule breakers. Cameras are seen as a second phase approach.

On the subject of removing tables, chairs and benches, it was estimated that it would cost \$500 to remove each table and chair set and that once removed that they couldn't be used again. Because benches are bolted, they are easier to remove or move to another

part of the park. It should be noted that the permanent tables are reaching the end of their usefulness and may need to be replaced in the next few years anyway.

Lorince estimated that it would cost \$25,000 to purchase portable tables and chairs.

It is recommended that the corner of Laura and Duval Streets be addressed first and see how this works to deter rule breakers. A funding source needs to be found to purchase portable tables and chairs. Benches should be relocated those that are broken should not be replaced.

The planting and maintenance of planters by garden clubs will be investigated by the JEDC.

Liability insurance is a concern when trying to program the park. It was suggested that all programming be done under the auspices of the city so that it can be covered by its already existing insurance policies. Lorince suggested that DVI, Parks and Recreation and Special Events work together to actively seek programming possibilities.

A discussion of security resulted in a recommendation that a Private firm be hired to work closely with JSO and watch the park whenever it is open. It was also suggested that the Sulzbacher Hope team prioritize Hemming Plaza and try to work the park more often.

At the close of the meeting, Lorince suggested that Parks and Recreation consider closing the park for 2 or 3 weeks when the trees, benches, tables and chairs are removed. It will put people on notice that changes are occurring to the park. When reopened, stake holders would be encouraged to recruit at least 50 people a weekday to eat lunch in the park.

The meeting adjourned at 5 p.m.

Included:

- Minutes
- Attendance Sheet
- Meeting Notice
- Two Surveys
- Agenda

