



**OFFICE OF THE
CITY COUNCIL**

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AD HOC HEMMING PLAZA COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

January 31, 2012

2 p.m.

Location: Conference Room 3112, Ed Ball Building 214 North Hogan Street

In attendance: Chris Quinn, Chris Warren, Dan Macdonald, Jamie Hill, Vikki Wilkins, Parker Hudson, Kelley Boree, Jim Bailey, Steve Rohan, Ava Barrett, Ron Chamblin, Fred Sarkees, Jerry Moran, Karen Nasrallah, Sarah Usherman, Dean Hinson, and Terry Lorince.

Meeting convened: January 25, 3:01 p.m.

Subcommittee Chairman Kelley Boree opened the meeting by stating the focus would be limited to park design and programming. She gave a short presentation showing how Bryant Park in New York City, while much larger than Hemming Plaza, has many similarities. Bryant Park was transformed from a place of crime and drug use to a popular place for families, tourists and city residents. The park was redesigned, removing much of the overgrown bushes and trees that improved sight lines and increased safety.

She suggested similar changes for Hemming Plaza. Because diseased trees need to be removed, a design by HDR shows 60 percent of what a redesigned Hemming Plaza would look like. However, it should be noted that there is currently no funding for this project and that the 60 percent plan is not detailed enough to go out for bid. It suggests a single level plaza that offers better sight lines and removing the fountain on Laura Street.

Boree invited suggestions from those in attendance. They included:

- Adding parking to Monroe Street between Hogan and Laura Streets. Also in that area, the bordering streets should be made available to expand the park for special events when needed.
- Better programming of activities in the park.
- Arrange for food trucks to come to the park regularly to offer a variety of non-competing lunch items.
- As to not offer competition to existing businesses, carts that offer Shaved Ice were suggested.
- Once the park is redesigned, local garden clubs could adopt parts of the park to offer landscaping and upkeep.
- Art in the park on a daily basis was suggested. Local artist could create in the park and give demonstrations and lessons at the same time.
- Allow MOCA to use the park as an annex to display statues and other art.
- Movies in the park.
- Amplified bands should be discouraged from performing at night.
- Look for seasonal events like ice skating.
- The current permanent tables, benches and chairs should be removed.
- Offer something to attract those who go to church downtown to come to the park after services.
- There is a need for increased police presence. Some suggested having JSO in the park from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- Offer the stage for afternoon school band performances (quartets mainly).
- Look to include buskers like jugglers and magicians.
- Bring in Expos for bicycle riders and golfers. Let businesses set up booths to draw interest into the park.
- Events should expose people to the parking on the Southbank and encourage them to ride the Skyway to Hemming Plaza.
- Area offices should be encouraged to hold staff meetings in the park.
- Need to find a revenue-generating source for the park.
- Have Dalton Advertising do PSAs once the programming begins.

The need for a stage was discussed. One would be needed but no consensus was reached as to its size or location. However, it was agreed that if the stage was raised too high it would provide a hiding place for vagrants to break the law undetected. A discussion about permanent restrooms resulted in most of the group agreeing that they would attract vagrants and pose a staffing problem.

Jim Bailey wanted to know who the park is being marketed to. City employees in the area or new people who see the park as a reason to come downtown? During the

weekdays, the market should be those already working downtown. However, after 5 p.m. and weekend programming should attract people from all over the region.

A new use survey needs to be conducted to find out who is using the park and when. What do they want to see in the park? The Chamber of Commerce said it would poll its membership.

It was suggested that weekend programming be emphasized. If there is already a permitted event, then those using megaphones won't be allowed to use the park as its venue.

Meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.