



**OFFICE OF THE
CITY COUNCIL**

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**AD HOC COMMITTEE ON HEMMING PLAZA SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES**

February 13, 2012
10:30 a.m.

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

In Attendance: R.B. Bonifacio, JSO; Stacy Murphy, Neighborhoods; Marilyn Allen, City Council; Terry Lorince, DVI; Amy Harrell, DVI; Vikki Wilkins, UPS Store; Parker Hudson, Owner Bryan Building; Ron Chamblin, Owner Chamblins Uptown; Jerry Moran, Owner Le Cena; Karen Nasrallah, JEDC; Sarah Ausherman, Special Events; John J. Jackson, City Council research; David Bugar, City Rescue Mission; Council Member Don Redman, City Council; Jason Teal, OGC.

Meeting convened: 3:05 p.m., February 8, 2012

Chair Kelley Buree called the meeting to order and began by addressing the proposed use survey. Terry Lorince of DVI went over questions that had been used when the Sulzbacher group last did a Hemming Park Survey. These questions were geared for the homeless. It was agreed that the questions should be reworded to apply to any citizen who may be in the park. Questions dealt with park use, duration of stays, activities in the park, where people eat, and what do they do when downtown. It was also suggested that the number of people who refuse to take the survey be included in the findings.

It was suggested that college students conduct the survey as a way to reduce costs and to have an independent party involved. DVI has software ready to tabulate the results.

Once it is determined who will conduct the survey and how much it will cost, the survey will take place. DVI hoped to have these questions answered by the scheduled February 15 meeting of the Ad Hoc Hemming Park Committee.

The discussion then turned to the removal of tables and chairs in the park. While some called for the removal of all the tables, chairs and benches and making Hemming Plaza a passive walk through green space, others felt that would limit park usage. It was agreed that the corner near Laura and Duval Streets was often too densely populated with card players and those watching the games. The number of chairs, tables and benches in such a close proximity made that section of the park loud and a problem area.

Boree explained that the Park and Recreation department could not remove the tables, chairs and benches without the approval and direction of the Mayor's office.

Amy Harrell of DVI proposed that instead of removing benches, that they be moved to the perimeter of the park and face the streets to discourage large groups of people congregating in a small area in the park.

If temporary tables and chairs were to be used as they were in the past, it was estimated that each set of a table and four chairs would cost about \$1,000. When DVI did this in the past, there was no charge and the tables and chairs were available from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. There would also be added expense to clean the tables and chairs daily.

Business owners asked Officer Bonifacio why police assigned to Hemming Plaza cannot get out of the police vehicles and physically walk the park and engage those breaking park rules. Officer Bonifacio explained that the rights of everyone must be protected and that heavy-handed police tactics are not condoned by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. However, he did agree to address having officers out of their vehicles and he'd discuss with his supervisors a "zero tolerance policy" as it concerns park rules.

Jerry Moran suggested that a private security company should be employed to work the park thus giving JSO relief from dedicating so much manpower to the park. He offered that the money to pay for such a service could come from DVI by hiring fewer Downtown Ambassadors.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Dan Macdonald, ECA District 8.