February 11, 2013

12 p.m.

**Meeting Minutes for the February 7, 2013 Metro and Urban Parks Ad Hoc Committee**

**Topic:** Organizational meeting

**Location:** Conference Room A, Suite 425, City Hall, 117 West Duval Street

**In Attendance:** Chair CM E. Denise Lee, CM Don Redman, CM Dr. Johnny Gaffney, CM Lori Boyer, Kelley Boree; Parks & Recreation director, R.S. Pace, EQD; Kevin Meerschaert, WJCT; J. Richardson, EPB; Ginny Myrick, Myrick Policy Group; Jeannine Balanky, citizen; Paige Johnson, OGC; Vince Seibold, EQD; Jeff Clements, Council Research; Ricky Anderson, ECA, District 1 At-Large; Steve Patterson, Times-Union; Tonisha Gaines, Special Events manager; Scott Wilson, ECA District 4; Leeann Summerford, ECA District 4 At-Large; and Janice Billy, CAO.

Meeting convened at 11:10 a.m. The committee was present except for Council Member Bill Gulliford who arrived at the very end of the meeting due to a scheduling conflict.

Chair E. Denise Lee read the memo from Council President Bill Bishop that formed the Ad Hoc Committee on Metropolitan Park. She noted that the ad hoc committee’s goal is to find ways to alleviate sound complaints from the St. Nicholas and surrounding neighborhoods while at the same time finding ways to make Metropolitan Park and other such outdoor facilities more useful as to be enjoyed by the greatest amount of people.

Chair Lee asked if there was a trust fund established for Metropolitan Park. Janice Billy of the Council Auditor’s Office confirmed that there was such a fund and that it currently has an available balance of $448,571. Chair Lee asked that Ms. Billy create a history of this fund, explaining how it has been funded and used over the years.

CM Lori Boyer asked of these funds could be used to employ someone to monitor sound levels across the river. Paige Johnson of the Office of General Counsel answered in the affirmative.

Council Member Don Redman explained why he filed **2013-08** saying it was an attempt to bring promoters, sound engineers and other interested parties to the table to discuss how to reduce volume levels and contain amplified profanity spoken by performers.

Chair Lee said that rules are in the books but maybe they need to be reviewed and brought up to date to create an environment that is conducive to everyone concerned.

St. Nicholas resident and former City Council Member Ginny Myrick prepared a white paper on the topic that was distributed to the group (and is included in this minutes package). She began by saying she lives just off the river and enjoys the ambiance of downtown activity like fireworks and noise from the stadium. She wants to see Metro Park used even more, if the noise and curfew concerns can be addressed.

In her report, she suggested that the committee look at the rules drafted for the operation of Chastain Park in Atlanta and Central Park in New York City. She noted that at a recent Bruce Springsteen concert in Central Park the sound equipment was turned off when the show ran past curfew.

She suggested that the city certify companies to monitor sound and allow promoters to hire a certified company of its choice to monitor sound levels throughout a performance.

Dr. Johnny Gaffney was concerned that this cost may be prohibitive for non-profits wanting to conduct a show or event in the park.

Ms. Myrick also suggested that $1 surcharge be added to ticket prices as well as a percentage of parking fees and concessions be collected to help the Metropolitan Park Trust Fund.

At the end of her presentation she suggested:

* SMG operate the park because it has experience putting on shows and events.
* Raise the current rents to monetize the trust fund.
* Invite the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra to use the Metropolitan Park facility more often.
* Institute fees on tickets and parking to be applied to the Trust Fund.

CM Redman thanked Ms. Myrick for her work. He wanted to explore making fines contractually binding when hiring bands to prevent excess noise and profanity.

Dr. Gaffney said while in favor of investigating that premise, that the city had to be careful not to be so punitive that promoters will take their shows elsewhere like St. Augustine. Chair Lee agreed with is sentiment. Because the St. Augustine Amphitheater is in a neighborhood setting, Dr. Gaffney wanted to know about its operating rules concerning time limits and volume.

Tenisha Gaines offered that at every ticketed event there is at least one person from her office on site to handle complaints. Also, her office has met with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra about resuming the Starry Night series and the Symphony is open to performing concerts at Metropolitan Park but wants the city to pay it $17,500 per concert. Per parking, if the city uses SMG lots for a Metropolitan Park event, SMG gets the parking fees.

South Shores resident Jeannine Balanky said that during some concerts the noise, particularly the bass and drums, are so loud that people cannot enjoy their balconies. She too emphasized that she doesn’t want to shut down events at Metropolitan Park. She wished that the Jazz Festival was still held there. The residents share this opinion and are only asking that hours and volume be addressed. She complained that when there are no events at the park, it is difficult to find parking other than in the WJCT parking lot.

Chair Lee asked Jeff Clements to look into noise and curfew rules at 10 similar facilities around the nation. She also wants to know:

* How is the sound monitored?
* Who pays and how much is paid for monitoring?
* How long have these facilities been in existence?
* Are these facilities limited by the number of ticketed concerts that can be held each year?
* What are the rental rates at these facilities?
* How much money does the city get from ticket sales?
* What are the penalties for breaking noise ordinance rules?
* How are repeat offenders handled?

CM Redman asked about vulgar language. He said such language is not allowed at City Council meetings. There are also rules against foul language in city parks.

Chair Lee asked that the condition of the park be investigated as part of the committee’s work.

* She wants to know if renovations have been made, if so, when?
* Does the canopy need to be replaced?
* Can special sound barriers be constructed?
* She would like experts to discuss sound repression alternatives at concerts

Chair Lee invited Ms. Myrick and Ms. Balanky to be part of the committee.

The committee will meet every other Thursday (first and third weeks) at 11 a.m.

CM Bill Gulliford arrived at 12:35 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Included:

Minutes

Attendance Sheet

Meeting Notice

Report presented by Ginny Myrick and Myrick Policy Group

Agenda