

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

117 WEST DUVAL STREET, SUITE 425

4TH FLOOR, CITY HALL

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202

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**Special Committee on Hemming Park**

**Meeting Minutes**

**August 10, 2016**

**2:30 p.m.**

**Topic:** Friends of Hemming Park

**Location:** City Council Conference Room A, Suite 425, City Hall – St. James Building, 117 West Duval Street

**In attendance:** Council Members Bill Gulliford (Co-Chair), Danny Becton, Aaron Bowman, John Crescimbeni, Anna Lopez Brosche, Sam Newby (arr. 2:48p), Scott Wilson (arr. 2:36)

**Excused:** Council Member Reginald Gaffney

**Also**: Council President Lori Boyer (arr. 2:51p); Kirk Sherman and Heather Reber – Council Auditor’s Office; Merriane Lahmeur and Peggy Sidman – Office of General Counsel; Yvonne P. Mitchell – Council Research Division; Sam Mousa and Ali Korman Shelton – Mayor’s Office; Mike Weinstein – Finance & Administration Department; Wayne Wood and Bill Prescott – Friends of Hemming Park; Daryl Joseph – Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department

See attached sign-in sheet for additional attendees

**Meeting Convened**: 2:32 p.m.

Council Member Gulliford called the meeting to order and the attendees introduced themselves for the record. Mr. Gulliford stated the meeting was to discuss consideration of how to proceed with the funding for the Friends of Hemming Park.

**FOHP Financial Update**

Council Vice President Crescimbeni inquired about the decline in personnel since the last meeting. Mr. Bill Prescott stated that Friends of Hemming Park (FOHP) currently has 1.5 full-time staff in the office, and 2 full-time and 2 part-time ambassadors. Additionally, it was stated that FOHP operations figure dropped from $75,000 to $58,000. The request at this time is $29, 000 for next two months to finish out the fiscal year. Southwest Airlines will be refunded approximately $85,000 which includes $11,000 from JEA. Mr. Prescott stated all discussions regarding SW commitment has been through PPS, the grant administrator. The allowable expenses from the grant include construction of the kiosk, marketing and event support, and travel.

Heather Reber shared that the proposed chart of accounts received from FOHP was sufficient and provided a clear listing of agency activities.

Mr. Mousa suggested the committee review and approve FOHP’s breakdown of back up expenses provided the committee was considering approval of the $58,000. Motion was made by Council Member Lopez Brosche. Motion died due to lack of a second.

**FOHP Social Services Update**

Mr. Od’Juan Whitfield, Hemming Park Social Services Coordinator, provided a handout listing recommendations, number of contacts and referrals since November 2014. It should be noted that numbers represent in-person contact and does not include phone calls or email contacts. Services have included resume writing, job placement, housing placement, job fairs and game days. A combined 350+ referrals have been made to The Sulzbacher Center, Community Connections, Trinity Rescue Mission, and City Rescue Mission. Mr. Whitfield expressed necessity of a meeting with City Council, JSO, Hemming Park staff and security personnel to address enforcement and consistency in applying ordinances, violations, and sanctions for inappropriate behavior within the park. He also suggested a developing a collaboration with the local shelters to work on better release times and service opportunities in the park. Mr. Whitfield explained that his office is located in the library. According to the initial contract, he had to complete 20 hours of service within the library. Of the 2605 points of contacts since November 2014, Mr. Whitfield believed that 80% of contacts were made in the park. Council VP Crescimbeni requested the breakdown of the points of contacts. He voiced concern about the compensation of services been offered inside the Main Library (City facility) associated to FOHP. Mr. Wayne Wood commented that the usage of office space to provide services in the library was in lieu of payment. The office is in the former Shelby space.

In regards to feedings in the park, it should be noted that within less than a six block radius, homeless population can receive up to five meals a day, during week days; and three meals a day on the weekends. Mr. Whitfield commented church feedings in the park are a detriment to the various shelters that receive funding to offer meals. It was suggested that churches support local shelters to get the maximum benefits. In further discussion, it was determined that the majority of the churches feeding in the park have not acquired the proper permit. Jason Bargy, FOHP Lead Ambassador, provided several incidents with individuals passing out meals. He educates them of the rules and necessity of getting a permit. When asked to leave the park, some will relocate to the sidewalks. In other situations, many return with extra individuals to reduce ratio of meals passed out per person. JSO have been contacted to assist and FOHP ambassadors are told there is nothing that can be done.

In response to Council Member Bowman’s question, Mr. Whitfield stated the two major issues he would like JSO addressed in the park are drinking and smoking. Mr. Jim Webb provided details of a situation in the park that involved use of drugs. The patrons were only issued a trespass warning. Mr. Mousa shared information regarding a recent undercover sting by JSO. It was suggested that the use of undercover cops on-going would greatly assist in making the park more welcoming and safe. Mr. Whitfield stated that park regulations need to be revised. In regards to Council Member Gulliford’s inquiry about a day center, Mr. Whitfield believes that a day center would very beneficial because it would offer various services and an alternative to the park. It should be noted that JSO is a great deterrent of issues in the park; however, there is no consistency or repercussions.

Mr. Wood commented that boundaries needed to be extended to include the sidewalks to prevent individuals with a trespass warning from sitting on boarder of the park. A private security service has been hired to be more aggressive in handling onsite drinking and inappropriate behavior. Mr. Mousa requested clarification regarding officers’ comments about trespass boundaries. Mr. Wood explained that the ledge around the park and the sidewalk are public property; therefore, JSO is unable to enforce.

**Repair work in Kiosk Area**

Mr. Daryl Joseph stated that replacement of the pavers does not require a contractor. However, Public Works Department states due to process of placing pavers, it must be completed by someone with knowledge. Mr. Prescott is attempting to get a contractor to donate the service, and Public Works will do the oversight of the project. The anticipated completion of the project is next week.

**RFP Process Discussion**

Mr. Mousa stated administration was prepared to proceed with the RFP at the will of the committee. After some discussion, it was determined that Council needed to first decide on action for August and September. Additionally, Mr. Mousa explained that the budget included funding for six months of services to allow time for review which would assist in a smooth transition.

**ORD 2016-385 Discussion**

Council Member Lopez Brosche expressed her concern regarding FOHP capacity to be successful when the City isn’t being supportive in efforts to make the park welcoming and safe. Mr. Prescott replied that money raised went to programming and events. He stated FOHP has the momentum in pushing forward with events planned beyond October. The savings from the former president is being used to get security and employing additional ambassadors. Mr. Mousa recommended that in order to secure orderly transition that FOHP is provided the $29,000 for August and September. Council Member Gulliford agreed and further stated the meeting with JSO must be with the Sheriff Williams directly. Council VP Crescimbeni referenced similar situation of committee two months ago and the exact same position now. His concern was the end of September and avoiding the continuous cycle. There was extensive discussion regarding solicitation of interests to operate Hemming Park. This would at least provide information on potential candidates to manage the park. Council VP Crescimbeni confirmed that he was recently contacted by an individual/organization inquiring about Hemming Park.

Council President Boyer revisited a previous question regarding FOHP’s ability to be successful with private security staff considering current circumstances with ordinances and JSO involvement. Mr. Prescott confirmed that FOHP could achieve with private staff. In regards to the RFP, Council President Boyer wants the committee to be involved in the creation of the scope of work to state specifics of what is expected prior to anything being distributed.

Council Member Becton expressed his desire for the committee to move toward reconciliation and become more involved with partners.

Council Member Gulliford asked for the pleasure of the committee with respect to 2016-385. Without any action from the committee, the bill will move back to standing committees for action. Council President Boyer stated that she expected this committee to provide the amendment language pertaining to the appropriation of the $150,000 to include the segregation of the $74,000, and appropriation of $29,000 including the expenditures. Council Member Becton inquired with Council President Boyer whether she would allow the committee to continue with working with FOHP and other stakeholders to resolve issues and move toward more successful plan. Council President Boyer replied that the committee was not created specifically for 2016-385. The charge of the committee was to evaluate, revise and make recommendations on the future of Hemming Park.

Motion/2nd move to approve $29,000 for next two months – Lopez Brosche/Becton

Motion passed 4-2 (Crescimbeni and Wilson)

Mr. Mousa will ensure that a copy of the last RFP is sent to the committee members.

**Public Comment**

Stephen Daze provided his perspective as a resident and business owner. He shared that the process of change takes time and is on support of FOHP.

John Nooney thanked the committee for the opportunity to speak. He believes that every day is OneSpark downtown but the perception makes the difference.

Thaddeus Powell states the park has been groomed to be the way it is. He believes the removal of the standing table added to the issues because now the patrons can fix their own setup which could uninviting to others. Also, the fence and addition of flower pots gives perception of attempting to keep people out.

Council Member Wilson requested information as to what the Parks Department and Special Events could do to assist in this matter.

**Meeting Adjourned**: 4:19 p.m.

Minutes: Yvonne P. Mitchell, Council Research

8.12.16 Posted 7:30 p.m.

Tapes: Special Committee on Hemming Park meeting– LSD

8.10.16

Materials: Special Committee on Hemming Park handouts

8.10.16