

Prepared Statement for May DDA board meeting  
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No surprise at my position on this. I have been outspoken about this issue for quite a long time. My term on DDA will end in July and I have already expressed to the Mayor that I would be willing to serve another term and further my work here on behalf of the downtown. I feel my dissenting point of view is important and hope that I will continue to serve on this board. I'm no fool, however, and realize that my loud and bold comments here today do not make me many friends at City Hall.

Cannot support this resolution for 2 reasons: 1. Lack of open discourse and 2. Giving \$2 million for nothing in return violates the DDA's mission and responsibility to downtown

### **1. Lack of open discourse**

There was an implicit understanding that there would be an open discourse between the DDA and City Council related to a \$2 million mutually beneficial agreement. At the very least, there was an understanding by the DDA board that the Board would have an open discussion about what would constitute a beneficial reason to give \$2million to the city. That understanding is derived from several actions and statements:

- A January 2009 resolution brought forward at Council by Sandi Smith, Margie Teall and Leigh Greden asking for the DDA to "begin discussions for a mutually beneficial financial agreement"
- A March 2009 DDA resolution establishing a COMMITTEE "to conduct discussions with the City". This resolution was supported by the entire Board, with the exception of Russ who was absent that meeting.
- At this same meeting, in responding to comments by Rene Greff about about the city not deliving a clear message as to their intentions over the \$2million, Mayor Hieftje stated that the "process about the \$2 million has been completely open to the public and he has been on the record about this consistently, as well."
- In May of 2009, when pressed at a DDA retreat about why Council had not selected members for their committee, Mayor Hieftje attributed it to bad feelings about committee members Greff and myself.
- On June 15, 2009 Mayor Hieftje nominated Councilmembers Greden, Teall and Hohnke to a "DDA Mutually Beneficial Committee". These members were confirmed by Council on July 7, 2009.
- At every meeting from March 2009 until present, the DDA has had a standing committee report on our agenda for the Mutually Beneficial Committee". Since Council has seated their committee, we have heard

reports from Sandi Smith to the effect of “the committee has not met” and “there is nothing to report”. Once she stated the committee had asked staff some questions and was awaiting answers.

I provide this summary in response to the current portrayal of these committees as “working groups” and the denial of the Chronicle to one of their meetings. Clearly there was an established framework and expectation by this board that there was a committee, with members chosen to represent the DDA in these discussions. There was an expectation that these committees would at the very least report that they had met and update this board on those discussions. Not to mention the expectation that we all have that Council committees be subject to the Open Meetings Act as well as the expectation that we have set for ourselves as a board that our committee meetings will be open.

I do not support this type of conduct. I find it sneaky, underhanded, corrupt, possibly illegal, and in violation of the public trust in government. Obviously not everyone is in agreement with me on this or things would have happened in a different way

... but at the very least you should be able to understand my final point related to this lack of openness ... it results in some of us developing distrust for the proposal that comes out of that process and a distrust for those individuals involved in crafting that outcome. When we lose our trust, we resort to anger and name calling and conspiracy theories. It’s ugly and as my grandmother would say, not very ladylike. But that’s where I find myself today.

Which leads me to my second reason I cannot support this resolution:

## **2. Giving \$2 million for nothing in return violates the DDA’s mission and responsibility to downtown**

The DDA’s mission is to undertake public improvements that have the greatest impact in strengthening the downtown area and attracting new private investments.

There is nothing about this proposal today that even remotely relates to this mission. What we have in front of us today is nothing more than a transfer for \$2million from the DDA to the City for NO REASON.

We have a lot of promises about good faith efforts at reaching some mutually beneficial agreement around enforcement and tree trimming and other things in the future. Certainly these individuals have not earned my faith in them that an agreement that will benefit the DDA can or ever will be worked out. However, if and when it is, I’m happy

to explore the idea of the DDA paying the city for the rights to provide some of these services downtown. But, there is not point in talking about those things today because they aren't on the table. The only thing that is on the table is a \$2 million transfer to the city with no strings attached.

Council asked the DDA to begin discussions in January of 2009. That was nearly 1.5 years ago. DDA expediently named their committee in March of 2009. Council dragged their feet, but still, their committee was named in July of 2009. That was 10 months ago. And the city knew they needed the money for their budget all that time. I have a hard time trusting that some beneficial agreement will be worked out in the next year when the city already has our money this year.

Just 2 months ago, this board cut programs to our budget. I fought for and lost a reduction in the contingency earmarked for the city. Here we are today, ready to sacrifice our future to save the city's current budget.

Furthermore, the \$2million doesn't even begin to plug the hole in the city budget. As I calculate the city needs about \$6 million to plug their hole. So all those that are swayed by the statements at council the other night about this DDA money being the savior of the police and fire and human services money are really just joking yourselves. The city has proposed all those cuts ON TOP of a 1.5 million deficit. So if this money were to go to the city, there would only be about 1/2 million left to do anything with. Maybe save a bit of human services funding ... but even then, there is no promise that our money will be put to that need.