

Prepared Statement for 5.17.2010 City Council Meeting  
Jennifer S. Hall

I am here tonight to express my support for the Resolution sponsored by Councilmembers Briere and Taylor tonight Regarding the Mutually Beneficial Committee.

Some of you were present and others have no doubt heard about the anger I expressed at the DDA board meeting on May 5<sup>th</sup> when the DDA voted to authorize providing the City with \$2 million in fiscal year 2010/2011. I'm not really sure, however, that everyone really understood why I was so angry ... and if my emotions stood in the way of understanding my argument, then for that I am truly sorry.

I am not and never have been opposed to the DDA providing the city with \$2 million for the general fund budget. I have always been of the opinion that the transfer needs to be provided for a reason that would benefit the downtown AND that a public discussion between the City and the DDA regarding the transfer and the reason for that transfer needed to take place. To date, I don't feel that either of the requirements I set forth for my support of a transfer have taken place and so I voted against the DDA resolution.

In my opinion, there has been a framework in place for such discussions between the City and the DDA for well over a year. It was my expectation as a board member of the DDA and a private citizen that the representatives of the DDA and City Council who were entrusted to have those discussions would do so in a public arena. I had reasons for making that assumption and I outlined those at the DDA board meeting on May 5<sup>th</sup>.

I have heard a response to my concern about the process to date which placed the burden of collecting information back onto me or other members of the public – did I ask about the meetings and the status of the discussions OR if someone wanted to participate in a meeting they could have. It is my belief that I shouldn't have had to ask for this information.

Openness, to me, does not mean that someone provides information to you when asked. It means that the information is there for the taking, should someone choose to want it.

I greatly applaud Councilmembers Briere and Taylor for bringing forward

this resolution which makes very clear to the public that the meetings of the Council's Mutually Beneficial Committee will be noticed to the public, available to the public and that meeting reports will be delivered to Council and the public at Council meetings. This will most definitely ensure that the discussions regarding future transfers of money between the DDA and the City will have adequate public exposure.

I offered a similar resolution last week to the DDA's partnerships committee in an attempt to restore trust to the process going forward. The committee did not support moving my proposal forward the DDA board. I heard a variety of reasons for not supporting my resolution. They ranged from: our discussion is pretty much finished and we don't need a committee any longer to we promised our committee would be public, so isn't this extra resolution redundant.

I think there is great benefit to being very clear about the process moving forward. The mutually beneficial committee of the DDA has not behaved to date like every other DDA committee. No meeting dates and times were ever announced to the board or public. No meeting reports were shared at board meetings. In the week prior to the May 5<sup>th</sup> board meeting, there has been an attempt by some to redefine what the mutually beneficial committee actually is called ... turning it from a committee to a "working group". And then using this new designation as a "working group" to prevent a member of the press from attending this meeting. The resolution I brought forward to Partnerships was an attempt to very clearly define the committee as a committee and outline how it would conduct it's work in the future. I appreciate that my proposal was not the only way to define the operation of the committee and am hopeful that other members of the DDA bring an alternative forward.

Again, I would like to thank Councilmembers Briere and Taylor for their resolution and encourage all of you to support it tonight. Speaking as only one member of the DDA, it greatly restores my trust in the ongoing relationship between the two bodies and their ability to work out a mutually beneficial agreement. Thank you.