

Here's your solution to Hemming Park, Mayor Curry and City Council

I heard a Hemming Park employee say you are looking for a solution to all the homeless people who hang out here all day.

As an individual who is homeless and sees the reasons for this, I thought I would share some thoughts with you and the citizens of Jacksonville.

The primary reason there is such a large homeless population in Hemming Park is the practice of booting them out the doors of the shelters as early as possible in the morning. Typically between 6 and 7 am, those that chose to stay overnight are given a meal and shown the door, regardless of the weather conditions, with no where to go but Hemming Park.

Many used to spend their time at the Jacksonville Day Resource Center. This facility helped many people with showers, computer and phone access, housing assistance and many other social services. Sadly, it was shut down by this city's government after only 2 years of operation. So, where are the homeless supposed to go, Mayor Curry?

Perhaps a better solution to the homeless population sitting at City Halls doors would be to give back the funding for the JDRC, at seven days a week, and help the charitable organizations here in Jacksonville get more funding to get our homeless off the streets.

The fact that the City of Jacksonville would rather spend money altering a historic landmark than find more viable options to help the homeless at their doorstep truly tarnishes my faith in this great city I call home. I have seen over the past two years the steady alteration of Hemming Plaza in attempts to remove the homeless and, of course, it hasn't worked.

Out of sight, out of mind is not a solution to homelessness, it is actually trying to do something real to help those of us who are living in the streets. Please don't destroy anymore of this beautiful park to get rid of us. Look out the front windows of City Hall and see the human beings who are just trying to survive and hoping for something better.

I think it's time for a better solution and maybe if you came on out here and talked to some of us you would see and hear more than just the police and security reports. We are not all criminals, many have very serious mental illnesses with no one to advocate for their much needed housing and psychiatric assistance.

A city council that will vote for and enforce new, stricter laws to primarily remove the homeless from all areas within sight of City Hall should be ashamed of themselves. You all walk by us everyday and try to look the other way like you don't notice how many homeless are in the park. Has anyone in your family ever fallen on hard times? Did you or another family member help them with money, a roof over their head, a hand to get back up?

What we need is not more laws and landscaping to push us away from view, we need some human compassion and empathy.

We need a Mayor and a City Council to stand up for ALL the citizens of Jacksonville, including the ones who need the most help.

We need the good people of Jacksonville to stand up and say, "What can we do to help our poorest people?"

Stop pushing us away and help us.

Wendy Jenkins

Homeless

Downtown Jacksonville