



March 29, 2013

Mr. James Keblas
Director
Office of Film + Music
City of Seattle Office of Economic Development
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 5752
Seattle, Washington 98104

Dear Mr. Keblas,

Thank you for initiating a meeting between the organizers of Hempfest and the Downtown Seattle Association/Metropolitan Improvement District Downtown Communications & Marketing Committee last month to discuss concerns about the festival, and ideas for minimizing its negative impacts to the neighborhood and surrounding areas.

The committee appreciated the opportunity to discuss issues associated with the festival, and was impressed with the spirit and intent of the organizers to produce a quality event which provides a benefit to Downtown, rather than a detriment.

Unfortunately, we believe that our concerns – as well as those of the Belltown Business Association and Uptown Alliance – regarding the festival continue to outweigh (both in significance and in number) the benefit to Downtown. Our committee's concerns include the following:

- **Event Size** – At 4.8 acres, and an estimated attendance of 250,000+ people over three days, the event has outgrown Myrtle Edwards Park as a safe and appropriate venue – particularly given limited entry and exit points (as a result of Elliott Bay bordering the park to the west and the railroad tracks bordering the park to the east) for emergency vehicles, as well as quick exit points for attendees in case of emergency. In comparison, other large multi-day events such as the Northwest Folklife Festival (275,000) and Bumbershoot (118,000) require a much larger venue such as the 74-acre Seattle Center.
- **Business Impact** – Given the size of the event, customer access to Waterfront businesses – particularly those closest to the park – is virtually halted for the mid-August weekend which is at the heart of the critical tourist season – the equivalent to the important holiday season for the Retail Core. This loss of business is particularly disturbing this year given the expected impacts resulting from the construction disruption impacts of the seawall replacement project, at the same time as the ongoing Hwy. 99 tunnel construction.
- **Residential Impact** – Belltown and the Waterfront are also residential neighborhoods as much as they are business districts and tourist destinations. The noise, trash and traffic congestion resulting from an event of this size – over three days – has a direct negative impact on the thousands of residents who live within a ½ mile radius.

- **Traffic Congestion** – As with all large-scale events, traffic congestion is an issue – but will be compounded this year (and subsequent years) with the seawall replacement project, Hwy. 99 tunnel project and a variety of road construction projects.
- **Trash Removal** – The organizers indicated that they leave the park in spotless condition at the conclusion of the event, however the DSA, MID, Belltown Community Council and the Uptown Alliance have heard from numerous businesses and residents for several years that trash is often left on the park grounds, and is even a bigger problem for the multiple blocks in every direction given that the crowds of people have to park so far away from the event venue.

It is our opinion this festival has outgrown the current venue. As a result of these significant concerns we ask that the city not approve a Myrtle Edwards Park permit for Hempfest, and that a larger venue be identified which is more appropriate for an event of this size and duration – unless the following conditions can be met:

- **Attendance** – Identify the park’s capacity in consultation with Seattle Parks & Recreation, Seattle Police Department and Seattle Fire Department, and limit attendance to that capacity.
- **Event Duration** – Permit the festival as a one-day event to minimize the negative impacts, compounded this year for Waterfront businesses as a result of the seawall replacement and Hwy. 99 tunnel projects.
- **Infrastructure** – Adhere to recommendations for improvement that we discussed with the event organizers including improved communications with area businesses and residents; additional traffic control, parking enforcement and off-duty police patrols; as well as additional resources for trash pick-up and removal both in the park and a half-mile radius outside of the park.

The DSA/MID appreciated the opportunity to meet directly with the festival organizers, and to share our concerns which are shared by the Belltown Business Association and Uptown Alliance. Thank you for considering our comments and recommendations.

Sincerely,



Cary Clark
Co-Chair
Communications & Marketing Committee



Natalie Price
Co-Chair
Communications & Marketing Committee



James Miller
President
Belltown Business Association



John Coney
Co-Chair
The Uptown Alliance

c: Charlie Cuniff
Randy Hurlow