



SSA 54 Commission Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 19 at 8:30 am

Commissioners Present: Heather Hill (chair), Jennifer Clark, Sara Lukens,

Commissioners Absent: Tony Fox, Chris Bell

Staff Present: Cindy Plante, Sandi Price, Ana Bermudez, RPBA Staff

Others Present: Nick Andersen, pending commissioner; Elizabeth Neukirch, The Silverman Group

1. The chair called the meeting to order at 8:41am

2. Approval January 2020 Meeting Minutes

Sara moved approval of the minutes; Jen seconded. APPROVED 3-0.

3. Silverman Group PR

Elizabeth from The Silverman Group provided a summary of the PR work done last year for RPBA and area businesses. Examples of earned media exposure include TV appearances for the GROW/PROGRESANDO program and TV and radio interviews around Live, Love, Shop and Small Business Saturday. The Silverman team works with RPBA to plan out an annual calendar of which events, promotions, and programs to focus on at different times throughout the year, focusing on events or promotions that feature the neighborhood as a whole rather than one or two specific businesses. For Sheridan Road this might include Summer on the Plaza events and holiday shopping promotions like Small Business Saturday and Live Love Shop.

Sara asked what they're doing or proposing to do during the coronavirus emergency to support area businesses.

Elizabeth shared that Silverman had a call with RPBA staff earlier in the week to make plans on how to promote and support the businesses that remain open through local media, including both hyperlocal publications like Block Club and RogersEdge reporter as well as larger outlets like Eater Chicago and the Trib. There's also an email newsletter in the works.

Cindy asked Elizabeth if they have any suggestions or ideas for how to continue promoting businesses during this crisis.

Elizabeth said that reporters are actively searching for positive stories to feature about businesses helping each other or the community during the emergency.

Ana offered examples of media coverage of a restaurant in Andersonville giving out unused food, and a recent story about a local family painting rocks for people to find while walking outside.

Nick shared that the hotel lost over 450 room night reservations so far, but hasn't started seeing as many cancellations for May and June yet.

Jennifer said that this may be because Loyola hasn't yet made a decision on whether to cancel commencement; if it's canceled that will probably lead to more May cancellations. Jen asked what can be done specific to SSA 54.

Ana reminded the group that PR in this case is separate from marketing in that the focus here is on earned media - getting featured as part of news articles or broadcast appearances rather than buying ads. The intention is to draw positive attention to the neighborhood throughout the year.

Heather agreed that now is an important time to support this in order to get that online and media exposure

Sara asked about the specific dollar amount being requested from SSA54

Sandi reminded the group that at the last meeting commissioners voted to approve up to \$2500 toward the RPBA contract with Silverman. SSA 19 and SSA24 approved \$6000. The request today is for Sheridan Road to approve up to \$6000.

Sara moved approval to increase SSA54's contribution for PR from \$2,500 to \$6,000 (an additional \$3,500). Jennifer seconded. Approved 3-0.

4. Review Landscaping Proposals for FY 2020

Cindy provided a summary of the 4 landscaping proposals that were submitted in response to the RFP, which were sent around to SSA Commissioners last week - TSI was the low bid, followed by Brightview. Proposals from Christy Weber and Vivant were significantly higher to the point of being beyond our budget capacity for this year. We invited Patch and City Grange to submit proposals but Patch didn't respond and City Grange said they didn't have the capacity to take on another SSA this year.

Sandi added that RPBA hasn't ever worked with TSI in the past, and noted that their proposal submission didn't include much in the way of graphics or visuals on proposed plant lists and arrangements, which was requested in the RFP. Brightview currently provides landscaping services for all of RPBA's other SSAs.

Jennifer moved approval of Brightview's proposal; Sara seconded. Approved 3-0.

5. Bella Wrap & SSA Renewal Update

Cindy shared that we're still in the process of finalizing paperwork to move forward with the BellaWrap installation for the poles and utility box at the intersection of Sheridan and North Shore that was approved last year. We've been given a draft legal agreement and asked to provide some additional documentation to CDOT; once the agreement is finalized they give us a project number and instructions to apply for the permit for installation, which can't be done until the weather warms up.

SSA renewal work is continuing behind the scenes; we haven't been able to schedule our 2nd renewal advisory committee meeting because we're waiting on the PIN list dataset from Cook County - the Teska team needs this in order to prepare budget scenarios for discussion at that second meeting, because we need to include the proposed tax cap information on the forms we'll be asking property owners to sign. Once we have the info we'll be reaching out about scheduling.

Nick asked what the tax cap is currently. Cindy replied that the tax cap is currently 0.41% though this year's budget resulted in an actual rate of around 0.37%. You're always free to adopt a budget that results in a lower rate, but you can't adopt a budget that would result in a

rate greater than the tax cap. Whatever tax cap is decided during this process would be in place for 15 years.

Nick expressed support for increasing the cap given that whatever is decided now remains in place for 15 years. Jen agreed.

Cindy asked Heather to weigh in since she's a resident and condo unit owner within the district.

Heather is somewhat comfortable with an increase in the cap but wouldn't want to max it out (state statute allows for a maximum SSA tax cap of 2 or 3%)

Cindy will reach back out to the group about scheduling the next renewal meeting once we get what we need from Cook County; we'll also be doing a needs assessment survey as part of the process and will need help getting the word out about this.

6. Live Love Shop Recap

Cindy presented data from the 2019 Live Love Shop holiday rebate program. Participants submitted receipts for over \$30,000 in spending at RP businesses between Small Business Saturday and New Years Eve. Third Coast Comics, Twisted Tapas, and Onward were among the top SSA 54 businesses by sales. The top referral source (how people heard about the program) was the Live Love Shop postcards that were distributed to businesses to give to customers.

Nick asked if it would be possible to shift toward a neighborhood gift card program or shared loyalty program.

Sandi shared that RPBA had attempted this before some years ago but it didn't gain much traction and was difficult to administer. The company powering the rewards system actually went out of business.

7. Audit update

Cindy shared that the next regularly-scheduled commissioners meeting is May 14, but we'll need to convene the commissioners at some point before then to review and approve the annual audit, which has to be submitted to the city by May 1. Ideally, we'll be able to combine this with the second, yet-to-be-scheduled SSA renewal advisory meeting sometime in April.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 am.

Upcoming Commission #54 Meeting Dates

Next Meeting – SSA renewal advisory committee TBD (April?)

SSA Commissioners meeting May 14