

Devon SSA #43 Commission Meeting
Monday, September 21, 2:30pm
Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81404104228>
Dial in: +1 312 626 6799 meeting ID 814 0410 4228



MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Maura Levitt, Mohammed Junaid, Avi Bereliani
Irshad Khan, Jay Shewakramani, Pete Valavanis
Commissioners Absent: Rebeca Vasquez, Sanhita Agnihotri
Others present: Cindy Plante & Sandi Price - RPBA,
Ald. Debra Silverstein's staff Marlene Raddatz,
Ashok Selvam - Eater Chicago

I. Call to Order

There was no quorum present until 3:14, at which point the meeting was called to order

II. Public comment

Ashok Selvam, editor of Eater Chicago introduced himself. He's hoping to reach out to Devon Ave restaurant owners for upcoming stories on the impact of the pandemic on local businesses and how they're working to address safety concerns and bring visitors back to the area. He provided his contact information.

Junaid thanked him for the most recent feature on Devon restaurants, which made an impact in traffic, and agreed that we need to get the word out about the steps businesses are taking around cleaning, PPE usage, and other covid precautions.

Ashok suggested a future photoshoot featuring area businesses and what steps they're taking on safety - something like 4-5 food and hospitality establishments could be scheduled in the near future to be part of an upcoming feature.

Junaid suggested coordinating with Jay and suggested including Bundoo Khan, Annapurna, Ghareeb Nawaz, and others. Will follow up about scheduling on Thursday or Friday.

Ashok asked about the Viceroy space. Junaid said they're closed and the space remains vacant. Asked if media coverage might help with getting vacancies filled.

Ashok agreed that it might help. There was one story last year about the Mall of India development in Naperville, where one of the partners was quoted saying that they're looking to compete with Devon as a destination. The Korean community has had similar challenges as businesses have moved to the suburbs, and Chinatown also had problems with people avoiding the area due to concerns about Covid.

Avi said that he's not seeing indication that the Jewish community is avoiding the area because of Covid but recognizes that other groups may be and welcomes positive media coverage.

Pete also supports these efforts but in a more low key way because his business doesn't have a food license and is thus limited to only outdoor seating right now.

Ashok asked if Cary's is the only bar on Devon.

Pete said there's also Casey's and Smilin' Jim's in the SSA district, and maybe one other bar. Would be interested in seeing if he might be able to get a food license in order to bring back some indoor seating capacity - would it be possible?

Cindy asked Sandi if any other tavern owners have done so successfully - The Glenwood had tried applying based on a proposal to add a pizza oven or panini press - did it get approved?

Sandi said she's not aware of it being approved, but we know anecdotally of establishments doing it anyway and flying under the radar, which isn't encouraged.

Junaid said that the impact of city licensing and regulations during the pandemic might also be a story idea.

Ashok asked if Devon has its own delivery system - Chinatown launched their own Chowbus program to offer restaurants delivery support at a lower cost than grubhub and other 3rd party players.

Commissioners shared that there's no such program on Devon currently. Cindy added that several of the grocery stores on Devon are using Mercato for delivery service but it's not part of an organized effort on the part of the SSA.

Ashok asked what the City's response has been like for Devon businesses.

Avi felt that there' hasn't been much specific attention paid to the district, but there also hasn't been any issues with city services.

Cindy shared that based on the data she's seen so far, Devon businesses seem to be underrepresented among recipients of state and city funding, particularly the City's Together Now fund and the prior round of the state's Business Interruption Grants. The state just opened a 2nd round of BIG funding on Thursday and Devon businesses will be getting an email reminder about this soon if they haven't already.

Ashok asked if it might be helpful to include coverage of business funding programs

Cindy said it couldn't hurt - lots of restaurant owners and workers read and follow Eater Chicago, and may be helped by seeing it there rather than in emails that tend to get lost or buried.

III. Approval of minutes from the August 2020 meeting

Maura moved approval of last month's minutes. Pete 2nded. APPROVED.

IV. Old Business

a. Camera update

Sandi shared that camera installation has been approved and paid for, and installation should begin on 9/28, with installation expected to take about a week. There was a bit of delay when it was discovered that some of the poles needed electrical upgrades, but this has been done and installation will proceed.

b. Sidewalk powerwashing

Cindy shared that we got 3 bids on powerwashing, which commissioners decided to pursue at last month's meeting. The scope of work this year includes sidewalks and crosswalks between California and Bell, including around corners up to alley entrances, and use of drain maintainer. The low bid was Cleanslate, at \$3700. The other two bidders didn't read the RFP instructions and bid the whole district rather than just the California-to-Bell area. They also both came in at over \$30,000.

Commissioners were surprised by the large difference in pricing between firms even with the mismatch on scope of work. Cindy agreed that it was a big gap and reached out to the low bidder to make sure it wasn't a typo - it's not; in addition to other bidders not following the directions in the RFP, Cleanslate also uses smaller crews and does the work over several days, compared to the others that use much larger teams and do the entire project in a day or two.

Work is expected to be scheduled in the next week or two. Cindy will let commissioners know when work will be going on so people can weigh in on performance and whether we want to do more powerwashing in the future.

c. Covid response / PPE distribution

Cindy reminded commissioners that at the last meeting there was some discussion about doing another round of bulk PPE distribution for businesses in October.

Commissioners generally agreed about wanting to do another round and would like to make sure that we're prioritizing restaurants and doing a better job of making sure that deliveries are more organized based on our existing directory of businesses. Avi and Pete specifically requested more masks and gloves this time.

Avi provided a quote of \$70 per case of gloves at webstaurant; restaurant depot is higher. Junaid will also reach out to Popular Electronics about pricing since they're in the district. Avi asked about including hand sanitizer again. Pete said the gallon jugs ordered previously were nice but the sanitizer itself was a bit sticky.

Sandi said that the last order we did was 1000 gloves for \$70 last time through Restaurant Depot, which seems to be the same as what Avi is quoting now.

Junaid shared that Popular Electronics is willing to price match on masks.

Avi wants us to do a better job on distribution last time - several businesses didn't get anything, including Pete and Sanhita.

Cindy agreed and will provide an updated list from Memberzone as well as additional fliers/info sheets for distribution with packets. We've got about 400 businesses in Memberzone right now for the district but they're not separated out into categories in the spreadsheet.

Sandi said we spent \$6,000 last round (commissioners had approved up to \$10,000) and still have some funds available.

Avi calculated that using the current quotes we'll be spending about \$40 per business times 400 businesses for a total of \$12,000. Since we've got \$4000 left from the last time, moved approval of \$8,000 for this round.

Junaid seconded.

APPROVED.

Junaid asked about timing. Pete and Avi suggested the 1st week of October. Cindy is available to assist with packaging and delivery now that other projects have been completed.

d. Repair/replace lights

Cindy provided an update on the status of the lights - our vendor is working on connecting with CDOT to gain access to the control panel to see if it needs to be reset. If that's all that needs to be done, it's an easy fix; if not, we'll need to get an electrician out, and they'll also need to coordinate with CDOT on panel access.

Mandala decorations should be going up in the next few weeks - they're waiting on delivery of some of the hardware.

e. DGT cancellation - alternatives

Cindy shared that staff has been in contact with the vendor to let them know of the commissioners' decision to cancel Devon's Got Talent for 2020. The contract that was signed in January doesn't allow for cancellation on our part and the vendor wasn't willing to allow us to roll it over to next year. Instead they've asked if there are any other projects or campaigns that we'd like to have them work on instead. Suggestions include social media or marketing campaigns or administrative projects like directory updates and cleanup, or maybe coordination of another round of business district photos, since the ones we have currently aren't labeled, making them difficult to use for social media.

Commissioners asked how much the original contract was from January. Cindy reported that this particular contract was \$17,000, which we've already paid at least \$7,000 which was due at contract signing. They have already done work on this event, including updates to the website and social media pages as well as outreach to potential vendors and performers.

Commissioners asked for a more detailed accounting of what work has been done so far.

Sandi had to leave early, but asked commissioners to take some time and look through the existing photos to help us identify subjects so we can make better use of them moving forward. Cindy will share the link to the photo folder for commissioners to review and comment.

Avi says we should just roll this over to next year. Pete agrees. Cindy said we've already proposed this and they're not willing to allow us to do this - we're still on the hook for the 2020 contract and they've asked us to find something else for them to do instead of the event.

Irshad asked that we invite them to the October meeting to explain and sort this out. Cindy will reach out and include it on next month's agenda.

f. Mural

Cindy reminded commissioners that murals were discussed at the last meeting; Jay and Irshad were going to drive through and suggest potential locations for installation. Irshad says this hasn't been done yet but will coordinate with Jay to do it soon. Avi asked about his wall - it could be a good gateway location for the district. Cindy asked if he has measurements for the wall in question. He'll check.

V. New Business

a. Sidewalk cleaning & landscaping - new service provider

Cindy shared that our current sidewalk cleaning provider Cleanstreet has notified us that they're restructuring and will no longer be doing sidewalk cleanup - they're transferring existing contracts to a new vendor, Cleanslate to finish out 2020. Cleanslate takes over in October. This is the same vendor that just won our powerwashing bid. We'll need to issue a new RFP for sidewalk services for 2021, so now is the time to discuss whether we want to make any changes to the scope of work or service frequency for 2021.

Irshad suggested reducing the frequency of litter pickup for the 2021 contract because of reduced foot traffic.

Pete disagrees, says it should stay the same at minimum; there have been lots of litter issues on his block this year.

Avi has no complaints about litter or current garbage service. Suggested maybe increasing or maintaining frequency in blocks that have more litter rather than the whole district.

Irshad suggested walking the area to see how it goes and asked Cindy to invite a representative from Cleanslate to the October meeting. Cindy agreed.

b. Italian Express BIP request

Cindy shared the application submitted for Italian Express, which includes new storefront glass and front doors. Based on the estimates submitted, they're requesting the \$5000 maximum rebate.

Commissioners asked if they'd provided renderings or drawings of the new storefront system being proposed. Cindy said no drawings were provided but will reach out and ask. Irshad added that he's moving from Pete's block closer to Campbell.

Avi moved approval of \$5,000. Junaid 2nded. APPROVED.

VI. Adjournment

Avi moved to adjourn at 4:23.

Next meeting: Monday, October 19, 2020; 2:30pm, Zoom