

Howard Street Special Service Area #19
The Factory Theater, 1623 W. Howard St., Chicago, IL 60626
Wednesday, February 19, 2020 at 8:30 am



Commissioners Present: Carrie Sullivan, Simone Freeman, and Gale Howard

Commissioners Absent: Charlotte Walters

Staff Present: Sandi Price & Cindy Plante – RPBA Staff

Others Present: Karen Forte – City of Chicago, Carlos Santiago – Chicago Police Department,
Maxine Bailey & Joyce Sylvester - Howard Area Community Center
Elizabeth Neukirch - Silverman Group, Lizzy Kreindler - A5

1. Meeting called to order at 8:35am

2. Welcome & Introductions

Commissioners and visitors went around the room to introduce themselves.

Karen Forte is our liason at the City of Chicago – she oversees 19 SSA's including Howard Street.

Officer Santiago is the new beat officer for Howard Street – Officer Bob is out on medical leave.

Elizabeth is here to speak with the group about the work she does with Silverman Group and how it can help Howard Street.

Maxine and Joyce will be giving an update and background on Howard Area Community Center and presenting a sponsorship request.

Lizzy is here to present updated analytics on social media and website performance and talk about goals and plans for digital marketing.

3. Approval of January minutes

Gail moved approval; Simone seconded. Approved 3-0.

4. Silverman Media & PR next steps

Because Sandi and Elizabeth both need to leave early, so this item is moved up.

Elizabeth gave an overview of the work Silverman does for RPBA – last year their efforts featured over 100 local businesses in the course of promoting festivals, events, and holiday promotions in local media, including hyperlocal publications as well as broadcast and radio.

Simone asked if business promotion or participation was tied to RPBA membership

Elizabeth said it's not tied specifically to membership, but rather participation in events since this is more the focus than featuring individual businesses. For Howard Street, this will include a larger role in PR for the Chalk Howard festival, and any other events that may be of community-wide interest.

Simone asked about getting the word out to businesses in the SSA to let them know about events and PR opportunities, which has been the biggest gap in the past.

Sandi said that while only members can get featured in the email newsletters, social media promotions are open to all.

Lizzy added that 16 businesses participated in the Halloween Trick or Treat event, but getting people involved required in-person visits and calls.

Elizabeth said that they plan out a calendar for the year of which events and topics to promote as part of the RBPA engagement – for maximum effect they tend to focus on 1-2 key things per month, but are interested in hearing about what goals the commissioners have and what events to feature for Howard Street.

Carrie made a pitch for Factory Theater events. Sandi suggested collaborating with other businesses, particularly restaurants and maybe Theo Ubique on a theater week type promotion or other event that features more than one place.

Elizabeth shared that the total contract amount is \$3,000 per month, or \$36k a year for RPBA, but estimates that the number of earned media appearances generated during the year was worth over \$200k, which helps to boost the entire neighborhood by building a more positive narrative.

Cindy asked about media training for area businesses, particularly around how to respond when reporters ask them for on-air quotes during or right after a crime or other emergency.

Elizabeth said that Silverman has done media training with RPBA in the past and could look to do so again, either around this issue or how best to use RPBA resources for marketing and PR. Elizabeth and Sandi have to take off, so on to the next agenda item.

5. Howard Area Community Center updates & sponsorship request

Maxine provided background information on Howard Area Community Center and the work they do in the area, including head start, a food pantry, and English and GED classes. In addition to drawing over 1000 volunteers, 2/3 of their staff live in Rogers Park, including many in the SSA area. The organization is committed to being part of the revitalization of the neighborhood. Although it's being held in Evanston this year, they're seeking sponsorship for their annual fundraiser.

Joyce added that she's also a longtime resident but didn't know about HACC until she started volunteering there two years ago. This year they got funding to work with Molly Costello as artist-in-residence. She's doing a new mural in the lobby that will be unveiled on March 29. They're also including two signed pieces of her artwork as part of the auction at the fundraiser.

Simone thanked Joyce and Maxine for coming to the meeting especially since the SSA is looking to do more collaboration with area nonprofits this year; to that end, we also have a vacant commissioner seat and would love to have someone from HACC become an SSA Commissioner.

Lizzy suggested putting together a Visit Howard Street package for the auction featuring things like restaurant gift cards and theater tickets.

Carrie added that although Factory Theater isn't able to contribute cash right now, they'd be happy to donate tickets.

6. Social Media & Website Maintenance

Lizzy presented an update on social media performance measures over the last few months. The goal was to get 2500 facebook followers by the end of 2019, and we're currently at 2600. Suggested aiming for 3000 this year or maybe 3500. Admittedly there should have been more discussion around goal setting for social media. A5 is open to adjustments on budget, particularly with SEO since Silverman's work will help in that area.

Simone asked about Instagram and what strategies might be useful for boosting follower counts.

Lizzy said they're currently at over 200 followers on Instagram and could attract new followers through use of hashtags and tagging other accounts.

Simone suggested looking into window decals for businesses to promote Howard Street hashtags and help get the word out.

Carrie suggested setting a goal of 300 Instagram followers and asked who counts as a social media influencer.

Simone said someone with 1000-10000 followers; there are some in the area but none are among our current followers. Suggested looking into hiring young people to get involved as brand ambassadors to promote social media, or scheduling account takeovers with local stakeholders. Asked to make sure that Howard Street is following and being followed by area businesses on Facebook.

Carrie asked if there was a motion to move forward on issuing a request for proposals to get more bids for social media. Simone made a motion seconded by Gail – approved 3-0.

7. Old Business & updates

Karen asked commissioners to complete Open Meetings Act Training online and attend the upcoming training on February 25, and asked Cindy to upload photos from last year's events to sharepoint.

Cindy shared that there are new brokers marketing storefronts at the Gateway Center, and that Anixter Center just opened a drop in center in one of the 2nd level storefronts off the parking lot.

Ribbon cuttings have been scheduled for Salerno's (March 4) and Badou (March 14). Hoping to schedule Cally's in April.

Stay tuned for a followup email regarding the social media RFP and the link to complete Open Meetings Act Training.

8. Adjournment

meeting adjourned at 10:42am

Next Meeting: March 19, 2020, 8:30am at Factory Theater 1623 Howard St.