

Howard Street Special Service Area #19  
Google Hangouts  
Wednesday, March 18, 2020 at 8:30 am



**Commissioners Present:** Carrie Sullivan, Simone Freeman,  
**Commissioners Absent:** Charlotte Walters, Gale Howard  
**Staff Present:** Sandi Price & Cindy Plante – RPBA Staff  
**Others Present:** Daniel from City Bureau

**1. Meeting called to order at 8:35am**

**2. Welcome & Introductions**

Commissioners, staff and visitors went around the room to introduce themselves. Daniel is a reporter from City Bureau that lives in the area and is looking into how public bodies are coping with virtual meetings.

Cindy shared that she spoke to Gale and she won't be able to join the call until after 9am due to an earlier meeting. No word from Charlotte (Sandi texted her). This means we don't have a quorum and can't vote on approval of the minutes or reviewing proposals from social media/website providers.

**3. Approval of February minutes**

(tabled due to lack of quorum)

**4. Live Love Shop Rebate**

Cindy provided a recap on how the Live Love Shop rebate program works and presented some graphs of the program's impact on Howard Street businesses during the holiday shopping season. Howard has historically lagged behind other business districts. Among people turning in receipts from Howard Street, most cited the Live Love Shop postcards as their referral source, though this was the case across all districts.

Simone thanked staff for the information but said it's difficult to concentrate on in the midst of the current emergency. Important to try and identify ways to help businesses that are struggling now due to closures.

Cindy agreed, and wanted to keep this on the agenda to see if there was any interest in replicating this rebate program or something similar to try to drive traffic to the businesses that are still doing giftcards or staying open for takeout and delivery. We know of at least one other area chamber than has launched an emergency rebate promotion.

Simone outlined the challenges and concerns she and other businesses are facing due to the state's prohibition on dine-in service at restaurants due to COVID19. They're afraid of not being able to make rent or payroll. She pointed to the Support Chicago Restaurants T-shirt drive being promoted by Stock Mfg Co that a bunch of area restaurants are participating in. They say they've raised about \$60,000 selling t-shirts. Maybe the SSAs could sponsor a Rogers Park specific version of this, or just a general donation page.

Sandi shared that there is money in the SSA bank account which we may be able to access by submitting a budget revision to use more carryover to fund additional marketing or assistance measures for area businesses, but will need to seek guidance from the City as to what's allowed.

Carrie also expressed an interest in whether the SSA can provide direct funding to businesses; everything out there so far from the state and federal government is loans, which they're hesitant to take on if the reality is such that they may be forced to close. Ditto with gift cards - it would feel weird to sell gift cards and then still have to close. Unlike restaurants and retailers, Factory doesn't have the option to stay open for delivery or takeout; they've had to cancel all their performances. There's also some concern about donor fatigue - it seems like every restaurant is doing a virtual tip jar or gofundme for laid off staff right now, but there's only so much money to go around.

## **5. Social Media & Website Maintenance**

Cindy shared that we received 3 proposals in response to the social media and website RFP that was authorized at the last meeting and asked if anybody had a chance to review them or any interest in discussing.

Simone shared that Charlotte texted her and said she could call in if needed in order to take a vote, but would prefer to table it - now isn't a good time to be entering into new contracts; we should be putting as much money as possible into assisting businesses and directing customers to support those that are remaining open.

Carrie agreed.

Sandi will reach out to Karen and Mark at the City to find out what's possible.

Cindy shared that RPBA staff is calling businesses to create and update a master list of everyone still open for takeout and delivery so we can promote it. We're working with Silverman Group to promote this on social media. With so many people working from home, there's likely to be an uptick in the amount of time folks are spending on social media, so sort of a captive audience. SSA54 will be doing a virtual meeting tomorrow and will probably be having some similar discussions.

We'll also continue working with our team at Teska on preparing to submit for the SSA renewal; as of now the deadline hasn't been moved, but we haven't received the needed data from Cook County to prepare budget forecasts and schedule the next advisory committee meeting. Stay tuned for updates.

## **6. Adjournment**

meeting adjourned at 10:30am

Next Meeting: April 15, 2020, 8:30am at Factory Theater 1623 Howard St.