

Devon SSA #43 Commission Meeting
Monday, October 19, 2:30pm
Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81404104228>
Dial in: +1 312 626 6799 meeting ID 814 0410 4228



Commissioners present: Maura Levitt, Rebeca Vasquez, Sanhita Agnihotri
Irshad Khan
Commissioners absent: Avi Bereliani, Jayesh Shewakramani, Pete Valavanis,
Mohammed Junaid
Others present: Cindy Plante & Sandi Price - RPBA
Brady Gott - Cleanslate
Melissa Lagowski - BigBuzz
Mohammed Rameez - pending commissioner

AGENDA

I. Call to Order

Meeting wasn't officially called to order due to lack of quorum, but staff and commissioners shared announcements and non-voting agenda items beginning at 2:37pm.

II. Public comment

Cindy introduced Brady Gott from Cleanslate, our new vendor for sidewalk cleanup. They also recently completed our sidewalk powerwashing - photos from the powerwashing project were sent around to commissioners via email on Friday.

Brady introduced himself and provided background on the company - Cleanslate works with SSAs around the city, beginning with Auburn Gresham, and hires people coming out of poverty and homelessness. They've hired 2 people from the former contractor Cleanstreet and hope to bring in more. Right now there's 3 workers and 2 supervisors working on Devon right now. 2x a day until November, at which point it drops to once a day per the existing contract terms.

Cindy asked if anybody has comments or feedback on sidewalk cleanup or powerwashing.
Nobody did.

Cindy thanked Brady for joining the call.
Brady thanked the group for the invitation and encouraged commissioners to share any feedback with Cleanslate and RPBA.

III. Approval of minutes from the 9/21/2020 & 10/1/2020 meetings

This item was tabled due to lack of quorum.

IV. Old Business

a. DGT Cancellation / Big Buzz contract

Cindy introduced Melissa from BigBuzz, who's joining the call today to discuss with commissioners potential alternative projects to work on in place of Devon's Got Talent, which commissioners voted to cancel for 2020.

Melissa introduced herself and provided additional context on the services BigBuzz offers and offered to assist on other projects for SSA43 this year since we're still covered by the contract signed in January.

Rebeca asked Melissa if she's worked with any other organizations that have done events this year - how have those events been handled?

Melissa spoke about two festivals they've worked on that pivoted to a virtual format, including online sales and curbside pickups. Another client did an educational conference entirely online. They also worked with one area nonprofit on hosting a virtual trivia night online. Lots of webinars and virtual events. People are adapting - they still want to connect and keep life moving forward.

If the top priority for this group is to strengthen businesses on Devon, highlighting and promoting local businesses can be a focus. Suggested using social media and connecting the dots - people don't always know what's available, so it's important to keep information in front of people and remind them that they can order or schedule a time to visit.

Cindy and Sandi had suggested gathering photos of businesses to assist in promotions - Big Buzz did this recently for Lincoln Park in order to generate content for social media promotions, which will also be able to be used for other stuff in the future.

Sandi added that we'd also talked about trying to tag the existing business photos that we have from Sparkfactor. We still need help identifying who's in them so they can be used. Part two could be having Melissa's team follow up to get them appropriately labeled.

Cindy shared the link to the photos in chat for commissioners to take a look and try to tag them.

Rebeca said that one idea that came out of last meeting's discussion on the samosa contest was trying to find ideas to really promote area businesses effectively - people don't know what's open and what's not.

Sanhita suggested inviting businesses to share photos and videos for featuring on social media.

Melissa agreed that it's a good idea, and any photos taken could be repurposed for other promotions in the future.

Sanhita added that festival time starts on the 25th and runs through November 15, which would be a good time for promoting the area. Could sponsor prizes as part of promotions.

Melissa asked which businesses are open currently.

Sanhita said restaurants and food places are generally open but clothing stores have mostly stayed closed.

Melissa said that engaging with businesses has been difficult in the past, asked Sanhita for suggestions on how best to engage and ask people to share their pics and info.

Sanhita said it's important for commissioners to do the outreach, people tend to be shy about participating but will do it if asked by someone they know. People also like to see forms and fliers.

Melissa asked about starting with the holiday and extending beyond that

Cindy shared that we've also been handing out cleaning supplies and PPE to local businesses. The distribution process is another opportunity to update the directory and engage with businesses - we don't have email contacts for most of them.

Melissa said that directory updates and data gathering is another project that Big Buzz has done before for other districts and could do here.

Sanhita said that commissioners divided up the district and would be the best to get or provide contacts for updating the directory. Recommended trying whatsapp. Should have gotten some contact info from prior rounds of PPE distribution.

Cindy agreed - we have the sign-in sheets from last time but they don't include emails, and handwriting was a bit tough to read. Even so, this PPE distribution and the earlier food distribution program was really helpful for getting updated contact info from businesses for following up.

Sanhita added that we haven't been able to do much for grocery stores - suggested using SSA funding to help underwrite sales or discounts at smaller grocery stores and

other retailers that haven't been able to benefit as much from existing programs. Shops are closing down also due to difficulty paying rent. We need to find ways to help. Rebeca agreed, said it sounds like Melissa is amenable to reallocating the money we've already spent to do more outreach and promotion to assist businesses.

Melissa agreed - part of the plan for this year's event was to fund more door to door and direct mail outreach in West Ridge and surrounding areas to promote the event and the business district. We want to still promote what's going on and help businesses connect with customers and keep doors open.

Rebeca asked about next steps - we can't vote on anything yet because we don't have a quorum.

Irshad asked if Melissa can send around a list of potential options.

Melissa said it's possible but their team is open to different things - directory updates, social media, assembling and distributing PPE kits, or anything else.

Maura asked about window art - was one idea mentioned at one point and might be something to consider for Devon. Other parts of the city have done it. Questioned the effectiveness of fliers and banners; people didn't seem into it.

Cindy asked if she's thinking it would be more banners or window paint?

Maura said paint - it's bright and cheerful. Car dealers do it a lot. Could be a neat idea and might be able to stay up for a while.

Rebeca agreed - we want to use the money for something that will stay up or benefit the district for some time. Assembling or distributing PPE kits probably isn't it because we can do that ourselves, but maybe a social media or direct mail campaign could be more impactful.

Irshad takes issue with feeling forced to pick a project rather than just being able to cancel. Either way we don't have a quorum to decide.

Maura agreed, might be easier if they come to us and propose something people can react to.

Irshad asked about timeline and what's been paid so far on the existing contract.

Cindy said the current contract with Big Buzz was \$17,000. We've already paid the first two invoices that were due - the first for \$7000 due at contract signing and the second \$5000 invoice due in May. The final invoice for \$5000 was received on Monday. Irshad suggested scheduling an additional meeting next week for further discussion and for people to vote on items needing quorum.

b. Lights / Mandala install

Cindy shared updates on decorations - mandalas will be installed soon, likely this week or next. Testing of lights ongoing to determine if there's a problem with the light strings or the underlying electrical infrastructure in the poles. Will know more in November.

c. Mural

Cindy asked Irshad if he or Jay had any updates on this since last meeting.

Irshad said no, he and Jay plan to talk soon about potential walls for murals; they're also waiting on Avi to provide measurements for his wall space.

V. New Business

a. Money Dart BIP application (2551 W. Devon)

b. 2021 meeting dates & calendar

These agenda items were tabled due to lack of quorum

VI. Adjournment

Meeting ended at 3:39pm

Next meeting: Monday, November 16, 2020; 2:30pm, Zoom