

Devon SSA #43 Commission Meeting
Monday, July 11, 2022 2:30pm
Devon Bank, 6445 N. Western Ave. 2nd fl.
Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87341468102>
call-in: 312-626-6799 Meeting ID: 87341468102



MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Irshad Khan, Maura Levit, Mohammed Rameez, Sanhita Agnihotri,
Pete Valavanis

Others Present: Sandi Price & Cindy Plante, RPBA;
Debra Silverstein - 50th Ward Alderman.
Ellen Doppelt - JNDC

I. **Call to order**

Meeting was called to order at 2:44

II. **Public comment**

Pete asked about the mural proposal for the Croatian Cultural Center.

Cindy reported that she received an estimate from the organization and their artist for about \$14,000 late Friday, but the agenda had already gone out by then, so we can't really vote on it today, but happy to discuss. They don't have draft art yet for this but did share a series of mood board images they're looking to for inspirations, most of which feature seaside cityscapes Croatia is known for.

Commissioners are interested in seeing more detail here, and it will be included on the September agenda.

III. **Approval of July meeting minutes**

Maura moved approval, Pete 2nded.
APPROVED unanimously.

IV. **Event Sponsorship Request from Mandala Arts**

Cindy introduced Pranita Nayar - executive director of Mandala Arts to present to commissioners.

Pranita explained that Mandala Arts is a performing arts organization focused on traditional Indian music and dance - they're expanding programming around Devon, including a pop-up performance in June at Devon and Talman, the Mandala Makers Fest in June at Indian Boundary Park, plus a senior dance/movement program and a youth drumming program both being held at Indo American Center. They're planning a series of quarterly performing arts events at IAC and around Devon, and are seeking sponsorship of \$2,500 per event.

Irshad asked if there are dates on the calendar yet for the upcoming events.

Pranita said the first one is scheduled for early November, followed by a musical in February, and return of the maker fest in June.

Pete asked about the possibility of more events if more funding is available.

Pranita indicated that this may be a possibility.

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Sandi and Irshad asked how events are promoted and how sponsors are recognized. Pranita shared that events are marketed on social media as well as via flyers, and they also work with a PR company for earned media. Sponsors would be listed on event programs and promotional materials.

Rameez asked about expected expenses for the events. Pranita listed artist fees and travel plus marketing expenses. Indo-American center donates the space.

Irshad asked about attendance estimates and capacity at IAC.

Pranita estimated about 100 attendees per event, and that they averaged 100 people per hour for the maker fest event at Indian Boundary. The space at the Indo-American Center is estimated to have a capacity of around 200. Past attendees and participants tend to come back for performances and sometimes to take classes.

Pete expressed an interest in combining the November event with additional programming to try to bring even more foot traffic to the area.

Irshad asked for more information and to keep this on the agenda for September. Cindy will send an email to commissioners with the presentation slides and links to the organization's website and social media.

V. Service Provider Agreement

Cindy said that this was supposed to be a separate vote going along with the annual budget approval, but we forgot to put it on the agenda - what's needed is a vote as to whether the commissioners want to retain RPBA as the SSA service provider.

Pete moved approval of Rogers Park Business Alliance as the Sole Service Provider for Devon SSA #43, Maura seconded.
APPROVED unanimously.

VI. Tree pit weeds & additional plantings

Cindy has continued getting complaints from businesses and property owners about weeds in parkway tree pits. We had some success last year having the City add lava rocks but Sandi suggested looking into adding additional flowering plants and perennials to the tree pits in an effort to crowd out weeds.

Pete is in favor of adding more plants, and said the existing planter pots have been looking better recently.

Sandi added that the tree pits along Campbell are among those that might be a good fit for additional plantings. Irshad agrees.

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Cindy will reach out to the landscape contractor we're using for 2023 about getting quotes for some additional planting and weeding on the tree pits.

VII. Light pole decorations -

Cindy had a call recently with Ellen at CDOT regarding the feasibility of metal light pole banners as discussed at the previous meeting. Although many of our poles are believed to have the physical/weight capacity for these, the cost and timeline requirements are pretty significant. Fabrication and installation can run up to \$10,000 for each one, as it has to go through the city's design process and contracts for design and installation. This SSA is in a better financial position to take that on than most, but it is likely to be a long and expensive process.

Ramee and Irshad asked about how other SSAs that have them were able to get them done - who they used, how much they paid, etc.

Sandi suggested reaching out to Lakeview and Lincoln Square on this, but noted that typically these are installed as part of larger streetscape projects, which Devon has already had done pretty recently.

Cindy shared that the long-awaited decorative lights that were approved and ordered last year have finally arrived and the contractor plans to begin installation within the next 2 weeks.

VIII. Tuktuk updates

Cindy shared that although artists are currently working on the statutes, we still don't have a date certain for the installation and unveiling because we're still waiting for permit approval from the City.

Rameez asked about other outdoor events on Devon in the next few weeks/months. He suggested looking into sports programming, either on Devon or in Warren Park - cricket, tennis, basketball could be a draw.

Ald. Silverstein added that there's also a big pickleball scene at Warren Park. Pete suggested a ping pong tournament - rent equipment and run it in the bank parking lot on a weekend.

Sandi said we can discuss this with event companies - we'd need to get a handle around the logistics of something like this - renting equipment, signing up volunteers, signing up teams, getting refs, etc. Things like an outdoor movie night are much easier to run because there's fewer moving parts - just securing rights, setting up equipment, and promoting the event.

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Rameez volunteered to be involved in organizing, and also suggested pop up play events for kids since there aren't any playgrounds directly on or adjacent to the Devon corridor. He would really like to see a food festival type event.

Cindy agrees, and pointed out that we haven't ruled out doing a Samosa Stroll modeled on the Clark Street Taco Crawl - we already have a playbook for how to run something like this, it doesn't cost much to put on, and it's been really successful at bringing new customers to existing restaurants without having to deal with street closures or permitting.

Sandi pointed out that street closures are very unlikely to get approved for Devon itself, and that when the West Ridge Chamber hosted their Dance, Dine Devon event in June they did it on a side street instead. Did anybody else attend the event?

Pete went but wasn't impressed - although it was well advertised it didn't seem like it was super well-attended.

Sandi encouraged commissioners to keep in mind the goal of any events that we do - we want to bring people to the district and get them to eat and shop at Devon businesses.

Rameez really wants to do a food-based event, possibly paired with something else like an outdoor movie or performance.

Irshad suggested creating a list for commissioners to brainstorm between now and the next meeting so we can continue the discussion around events next time.
Cindy agreed and will send around a followup email.

Cindy asked if anybody went to the India or Pakistan Independence Day Parades? We tried to promote these but couldn't find flyers or links anywhere online with information.

Rameez said that they were both well-attended but agreed that the organizers don't have much online presence - most of the promotion has been flyers (which he printed) and word of mouth.

Cindy will send around followup emails regarding Mandala Arts and event brainstorming between now and the next meeting.

IX. Adjournment

Rameez moved to adjourn.
Meeting adjourned at 3:49pm

Next Meeting: Sept. 19, 2022, 2:30 pm

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