



SSA Commissioners Community Meeting

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81407861002>

Dial in: +1 312 626 6799 ; Meeting ID: 814 0786 1002

Tuesday, September 20, 2022 at 2pm

Commissioners Present: Sara Lukens, Chris Bell, Jennifer Clark
Commissioners Absent: none
Others Present: Cindy Plante, RPBA,
Kyle Ryan, 49th ward office
Cecilia Rodriguez, Loyola University
Aileen Gaspari, Balanced Environments

1. Community meeting regarding 2023 SSA Levy

Cindy presented the 2023 budget as approved by commissioners at the July meeting. Because the proposed levy is increasing more than 5% compared to the current year, the City requires that we designate a commissioner meeting as a community meeting to discuss the reasons for the levy hike. We sent notice about this to SSA54 businesses and property owners via email and the meeting agenda and info was posted online.

The proposed increase is actually 57% for two main reasons: 1) we're substantially increasing the budget for our in-house street maintenance team in order to extend coverage and improve worker attraction retention, and 2) because SSA54 is one of the city's smallest in terms of both budget and number of pins, any changes are a larger percentage of the total. Another challenge has been the delay in 2nd installment property tax bills which usually go out in August. With these being delayed, SSAs haven't had revenue coming in as budgeted. We're now hearing that bills may go out in November, but in the meantime RBPA is having to float several SSAs. Because we spent down our carryover on the SSA reconstitution process and had revenue shortfall last year, we don't have reserves to pull from at this time.

There were no questions or comments from commissioners or other attendees.

2. Call to order

Meeting was called to order at 2:05

3. Public comment

Cindy shared that she and Cecilia have been recruiting restaurants for the Loyola Dinner Crawl event on October 4 - we have 9 signed up, most of them in SSA54.

Cecilia added that the university is looking at bringing back events and programming in the CTA plaza beginning in summer 2023.

4. Approve minutes from last meeting

Sara moved approval of the July minutes; Jennifer seconded.
APPROVED Unanimously.

5. Service provider agreement

Cindy forgot to include this on the July agenda alongside the budget - commissioners are being asked to vote on whether to retain RPBA as the service provider for SSA administration.

Jennifer moved to retain RPBA as the service provider.

Sara seconded.

APPROVED unanimously

6. Landscaping update

Cindy introduced Aileen from Balanced Environments, our new landscape vendor for 2023.

Aileen introduced herself - recently toured the area with staff to start planning for 2023.

Sara asked if they grow their own plants or source from outside vendors.

Aileen responded that they source from local growers, particularly Midwest Tropicals. To do so they order plants months in advance and avoid using big-box providers unless it's an emergency or to replace plants that were vandalized.

Sara asked about soil amendments.

Aileen agrees that soil improvements are needed based on what was observed on the recent site visit.

Sara asked if plants were to be planted in November.

Cindy reminded everyone that this contract is for '23 and the winter decorations are still under the current vendor.

Aileen said that they will be ordering growers to start planting in November for plants that they'll be installing in spring. They send clients cut sheets so we can select plants ahead of spring plantings.

Kyle asked if there was any budget availability for parkway improvements, particularly near the building that houses Bulldog Ale House, Bop & Grill and Chipotle.

Cindy responded that the budget is expected to remain tight, and when we've raised this with the landlord previously he was somewhat reluctant to make changes to the parkway area for fear of incurring liability. Whether or not this understanding is accurate, we're willing to reach out to them again about it and see if we can add it on to the 2023 contract or offer a match or something. The current and 2023 landscape contracts do include parkway planting areas on other blocks of the SSA.

7. Holiday lights

Cindy shared that holiday lighting installation is starting early this year - work is already underway on Howard Street and our vendor is planning on starting to put lights up soon on Sheridan, but there's some uncertainty remaining on the budget. The contract price he quoted was \$20,000 for lighting on just the trees, plus another \$6000 for the umbrella lights in the cta plaza. The FY21 budget includes \$21,000 for lights, but we've already spent \$6,000 on end-of-season removal of last year's lights. We also hadn't yet gotten an annual contribution from the university and weren't sure if we weren't sure if we were going to.

Jennifer said that she had received an invoice for the annual contribution and submitted it for payment - it's \$15,000.

Cindy said thanks - this closes the gap and allows us to include the usual scope of both trees and the plaza.

Sara asked about the snowflake lights.

Cindy said that the snowflake lights were installed on fences in the district a few years ago but people weren't impressed and reached out to say that they preferred the lights on the trees. We do still use snowflakes on the fence at Howard and Ashland as part of that SSA's holiday decorating but haven't been including them on Sheridan. Do people want to bring back snowflakes?

There was no interest in bringing back the snowflakes.

8. Commissioner recruitment

Cindy reminded commissioners that we have at least 3 commissioner vacancies to fill following the departures of Nick Anderson, Heather Hill and Tony Fox. We've been in contact with The Lord Companies about having either Keith or Gina apply to join the commission, and Cesar from Tropical Smoothie Cafe has submitted an application. Because our SSA includes residential pins, we are required to have a residential property owner if anybody knows any condo owners that might be interested. Cindy asked if any of the new commercial tenants at Loyola might be interested.

Jennifer and Cecilia suggested reaching out to Roberta at Archie's, or the owners of Giordano's.

9. Adjournment

Chris moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:45pm

Adjourned.