

Howard Street Special Service Area #19
Factory Theater - 1623 W. Howard

Wednesday, June 21, 2023 at 9 am
Meeting Minutes



Members Present: David Skora, Jessie Eisner-Kleyale, Tim Amos,
Charlotte Walters

Members Absent: Renee Labrana

Others Present: Cindy Plante, RPBA; Juliane Allen, A5 branding & digital;
Tony Fuller, A Just Harvest

1. Call to order

Meeting called to order at 9:08 am.

2. Public comment

There was no public comment

3. Ambassador program update

Cindy introduced Tony from A Just Harvest and proposed moving this up on the agenda so he doesn't have to stay for the whole meeting unless he wants to. Tony provided a summary of the program - RPBA has hired A Just Harvest to staff and supervise the program, which is being funded by a grant from the City of Chicago. The ambassadors will be out on Howard Street from 3-10pm on weekdays and two shifts on weekends from noon-5pm and 5-10pm. The service area covers Howard Street from Sheridan to Ridge - each shift will have 4 ambassadors and a supervisor.

Charlotte asked about the job description and qualifications for the ambassadors.

Tony said they wanted to hire local residents that are familiar with the area and comfortable with being out on Howard Street in the evenings for \$20/hr. They also have to attend trainings and be on time for shifts. Their duties include talking with business owners and area visitors and residents, walking around the corridor, and being a friendly presence.

David asked about reporting and connections with the 24th district police.

Cindy will share the reporting form, which was provided to us by the City based on what Uptown used for their program last year. Tony said that interaction with the police has been limited to supervisors and the CAPS office initially. Deescalation is the main focus for the ambassadors.

Jessie said that she's hearing positive feedback from commercial and residential tenants in the area after sharing flyers about the program.

Tony shared his contact number with the commissioners

4. Approval of meeting minutes from May 2023

Jessie moved approval, Tim seconded.
APPROVED

5. Tony Barbanente BIP revision/update

Cindy reminded commissioners that Tony Barbanente was approved for a BIP in late 2021 for the eastern portion of the V-tone building on Jarvis, where he was planning to convert some fitness studio spaces into a restaurant space in order to move Anto across the street. He ended up leasing the space to a grocery delivery company instead and never moved forward on the approved BIP or got any reimbursement. That grocery tenant has since closed and he's got two new tenants lined up for the space, including an African grocery store and a Nigerian restaurant that's moving from Skokie, so he's looking to renew approval of the BIP rebate to update the storefront system to add doors, signage, and a roof over the restaurant's patio space. He's also adding a hood and kitchen equipment, though that's not part of the scope for the facade rebate. Cindy shared architectural drawings of the new storefronts.

Charlotte moved approval, Tim seconded.

APPROVED

Charlotte asked how many BIPs we've approved so far this year - Cindy said this is actually the first facade rebate, though there have been some smaller criminal damage rebates, which come out of the same budget line, which totals about \$20,000 in the 2023 budget.

6. Sol Cafe Criminal Damage Rebate

Cindy added this to the agenda thinking we might have invoices and police reports from Sol Cafe for the window that was destroyed by gunfire again recently. As of now we haven't gotten the supporting documentation so we'll table this for now. The window is currently boarded up.

7. 2024 budget discussion

Cindy shared updates on the draft budget for 2024, which will be on the agenda for approval at the July meeting. We're not making a ton of changes to the budget for next year - the levy will increase from about \$400,000 to \$448,000, mostly to account for cost increases associated with inflation and the return to in-person meetings and office work (printing, utilities, office supplies). We're also increasing the budget for public art based on community feedback we've gotten from the One Howard Street planning project, and projects we're looking to work on next year, including the expansion of the Hello Howard mural at the 1419 Howard building.

Charlotte and David asked about the delayed SSA tax collections from Cook County. Cindy reported that while we have gotten some of the money, we're still behind, not only on the late collections from last year, but the current year as well. The levy for this year was \$400,000, but we've received a fraction of this so far. Second installment property tax bills usually go out in the summer and we're hoping to catch up some more at that point, but we're continuing to keep an eye on it.

8. Chalk Howard Updates

Cindy reminded commissioners that Chalk Howard is coming up on August 26. We've booked most of the same bands and performers that played last year, and have several chalk artists returning. Signups for amateur chalk squares will be going live on the website soon if they haven't already, and this year businesses that sign up for RPBA membership get a square for free if they want to sign up. Vendor applications are open until mid-July - there are about a dozen signed up so far, but we don't currently have any food vendors signed up and are trying to get more. Everybody asked about getting Badou to be a food vendor again. David would like to see more signage directing festival attendees to area businesses.

9. RISE grant / Corridor Plan updates

Cindy reported that work on the corridor plan project is continuing, and there are 4 more in-person focus groups coming up in July for different segments of the corridor. The first will be West of Ridge at the Ann Rainey senior apartments, then the “restaurant row” segment from Ridge to Clark on July 19, and then the “heart of Howard” section near the CTA on July 21. We hope to start sending out invitations later this week for folks to start signing up for these. We’re also working with the Recyclery on a bike tour July 9.

David asked to have ambassadors distribute flyers for the events. Cindy is already planning on it.

David also requested an email with links and dates. Cindy is working on this with the consultant team.

10. Website & social media

Juliane shared top performing posts from social media since the last meeting, including several using the new photography from Sol Cafe, Factory, and Khmai, which was also featured as part of posts for AAPI heritage month alongside P&J footwear. A5 has also brought on a summer intern to assist social media content creation. David would like to see recurring posts about the ambassador program. Cindy will email around a copy of the full report.

11. Adjournment

Cindy reminded commissioners of tonight’s Make Music event at Willye White Park, and RPBA’s Best of Rogers Park event on Thursday night.

Meeting adjourned at 10:11

Next Meeting: July 12, 2023, Factory Theater