

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

Wednesday, October 18, 2023 at 9 am
Meeting Minutes



Members Present: David Skora, Jessie Eisner-Kleyle,
Tim Amos

Members Absent: Charlotte Walters, Renee Labrana

Others Present: Cindy Plante & Sandi Price, RPBA; Kyle Ryan, 49th ward office

1. Call to order

Meeting called to order at 9:01 am.

2. Public comment

Jessie shared that Becovic is having a grand opening event for their office on Howard Street in the Elevation Lofts building on November 13 - everybody is invited. This is part of RPBA's day of ribbon cuttings event also.

3. Approval of meeting minutes from September 2023

Jessie moved approval, Tim seconded.

APPROVED 3-0

4. 2023 financial/budget update

Cindy presented SSA financial figures as of late September - we've taken in a total of \$190,839 so far this year from property tax revenue - our annual levy was around \$400,000, so less than half. Also, \$61,000 of that total was actually late collections from the previous year where tax bills were delayed, so there's still a pretty substantial shortfall between the approved levy and actual collections. This is combined with this year's delay in second installment tax bills to put SSA19 in debt to RPBA, which has been paying for SSA19 expenses. This is why we haven't replaced light pole banners and narrowed the scope of holiday lighting installation.

David asked if there's any way we can find out who isn't paying for whatever reason - he noted several Howard Street properties that appeared on the tax sale list last year.

Cindy isn't aware of a public list of tax delinquencies other than the tax sale list once that's posted. Even if we had the information, we're not tax collectors.

David acknowledges this, but wants us to use these lists to try and forecast shortfalls in advance and adjust accordingly.

5. 2023-24 holiday lights update

Cindy reported that based on the conversation about lights at the last meeting, the compromise that was reached was to do 50% of the trees between Sheridan and Greenview, partly because a new african restaurant opened in the former Athena Board Games space. We're also not doing the snowflakes on the fences at Howard and Ashland. Installation should be starting soon if it hasn't already.

David wants to have A5 do a post or two about the lights on the Howard facebook and instagram once the lights are up. Cindy will try to get pictures and ask A5 to add this to the content calendar.

6. Rise grant/One Howard update

Cindy shared that the One Howard plan work is wrapping up and the consultants have shared a draft report with the project team. It doesn't yet include appendices or implementation matrix yet as we're still waiting on comments from DPD, but the final steering committee meeting is scheduled for next week on the 25th at Palmhouse on the Evanston side of the street, where the plan will be presented, and the invitation will also be shared with SSA commissioners. Jessie said she will remind Sal Becovic of the date and encourage him to attend.

David asked about plan recommendations around branding and marketing. Cindy said the plan does have a section about corridor identity that touches on some of this, and noted that the City of Evanston's Evanston Thrives retail plan also includes recommendations for Howard Street that include using our established logo, branding, and web presence. There's also some additional recommendations in the plan that will be on the agenda for the SSA, including standardizing our BIP rebate program to match what Evanston offers on their side of the street, and sites for additional murals, including another one on the west elevation of the Howard Theater building and also the parking garage at Howard and Sheridan.

Jessie has been in contact with management at Becovic and the artist that did the existing mural on the garage - their original intention was to extend that mural around to the front of the building, but it's proven to be difficult to navigate given the many windows and historic terra cotta features on the facade, so they're looking at doing something with a different wall on the same building. Sal is a fan of murals and is also interested in doing something on the theater building wall identified in the plan document.

Kyle cautioned against moving too quickly on that particular wall because the Howard CTA station is slated for renovations in the next phase of the RPM plan - there aren't designs or renderings yet because it's too early but it's entirely possible that the new station design might mean this wall isn't visible from the station anymore.

7. Storefront Activation Grant 2023-24

Cindy reported that the city is offering storefront activation program funding again and RPBA submitted an application last week requesting the maximum grant award to bring back the makers studio pop up for December and all of 2024. Tim and Jessie mentioned that there's a stockpile of chairs in the shared basement of the theater building that they're looking to have removed - Cindy is interested in using them to furnish the makers studio if we get this grant. Otherwise, the program guidelines require that we rent furniture, which we did last year.

8. Chalk Howard Street 2024

Cindy reported that total costs for Chalk Howard Street 2023 are pretty close to what we spent in 2022 so far, with both years coming in below what was spent on the event in 2019. There's a general consensus that everybody wants to do the event again next year, but we have to plan for it with the knowledge that finances are probably going to still be weird due to shifting property tax dates and payment shortfalls. We're looking at the end of August again for 2024. This will be a discussion item at the January meeting, so commissioners are encouraged to think about priorities and goals for the event next year with these limitations in mind.

9. November 2023 meeting

Cindy reported that the next scheduled commissioners meeting is on the calendar for November 15, but Cindy and Sandi are both out of town for the Illinois Main Streets conference that day. Do we want to reschedule or cancel the November meeting?

Jessie moved to cancel. Tim seconded. Approved.

10. 2024 meeting schedule

This was the one agenda item that would have needed a vote in November, but since we're not meeting we'll do it now - Cindy asked if commissioners want to stick with meetings at 9am on the 3rd Wednesday of the month.

Jessie moved approval, Tim seconded. Approved 3-0.

11. Adjournment

Cindy reminded attendees that the required community meeting regarding the 2024 levy increase is scheduled to take place immediately following the conclusion of this meeting at 10.

Jessie moved to adjourn at 10:01.