

# Devon SSA #43 Commission Meeting

Wednesday, June 5, 2024 12pm

Republic Bank - 2720 W. Devon Ave.



## MEETING MINUTES

**Commissioners Present:** Pete Valavanis, Sanhita Agnihotri, Robert Taylor  
Richard Trumbo, Irshad Khan (arrived late)

**Commissioners Absent:** Mohammed Junaid,

**Others Present:** Cindy Plante & Hiba Zakai, RPBA;  
Ald. Debra Silverstein & Keith Sokolowski, 50th ward  
Asha Rao, The Chicago Kasam  
Joanna Alexis, Agents of Hope  
Sneh Sukhadia, prospective commissioner

### I. **Call to order**

Meeting was called to order at 12:15 pm

### II. **Public comment**

There was no public comment

### III. **Approval of meeting minutes from April 2024**

Robert moved approval, Pete 2nded.

APPROVED

### IV. **YTD financials update**

Cindy gave an update on YTD spending and balance sheet, which was provided to commissioners via email on Monday. The SSA still has a bank balance of over \$1m, but we're hoping to commit some of those funds to restoration of the intersection stamps. Cindy is also working on a draft budget which will be shared via email soon; the current draft calls for little to no increase in the annual levy.

### V. **Mural Sponsorship - The Chicago Kasam**

Cindy proposed moving this item up because Asha from Chicago Kasam has to get to another meeting after this.

Asha introduced herself and her organization, the Chicago Kasam, a nonprofit with a mission of fostering unity between and among communities in the South Asian diaspora and other groups with similar experiences. In honor of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the South Asian community on Devon with the opening of Patel Bros in 1974, they're planning a cultural showcase event in October and commissioning a mural on the side of Annapurna at Devon and Rockwell, and have been in contact with the building owner. Asha shared color renderings of the proposed art, which features mango lassi per the request of the property owner and features 4 key figures from the South Asian community in Chicago - Mafat Patel from Patel Bros, Ranjana Bhargava from Apna Ghar, Hema Rajagopalan from Natya Dance Theater, and Priya Shah from The Simple Good.

Pete asked if the artwork is final. Asha says they're finalizing portraits of the honorees being featured in the artwork.

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Hiba asked how these particular people were chosen. Asha says they were chosen based on research and stakeholder interviews in the community that identified them as having an outsized impact in multiple realms, including business, charity, and the arts not just on Devon but in the South Asian community throughout the Chicago area.

Richard asked if the honorees are contributing funding to the project. Asha says they've been approached but they're waiting on responses.

Richard pointed out that there were several small sari shops on Devon when he opened in 1977 and is concerned that those early South Asian businesses aren't being represented or included.

Sanhita pointed out that Apna Ghar isn't currently located on Devon and was originally set up elsewhere.

Sneh also feels like a lot of people and businesses are being left out and questioned the prominence of the mango lassi in the artwork.

Asha said that the property owner specifically wanted to include the mango lassi and other foods in the artwork.

Robert asked about the total project budget presented and whether there are other sponsors. Asha said that the total project budget is \$20,000 before any sponsorships.

On the whole, the commissioners present all had serious reservations about including specific people in the artwork due to concerns about representation, inclusion, and diversity and potential for controversy. Commissioners prefer that the mural instead focus on more abstract but inclusive representations of the community on Devon.

Asha asked about the possibility of reworking the artwork to incorporate this feedback and eliminate the specific portraits. Commissioners present agreed. Asha asked if the commissioners had any additional feedback.

Sanhita suggested including dance or drumming. Hiba suggested textiles and cloth. Pete would like to see more color and likes the inclusion of flags in the earlier draft artwork that was sent around. Hiba agrees about acknowledging more countries. Cindy and others suggested food since Devon is known for restaurants and groceries. Sneh suggested dance.

Pete moved to move this item to the July 10 meeting in order to allow for edits to the art.

Maura seconded.

APPROVED.

### VI. Storefront Rebate Requests

#### a. Jewelry & Watch repair camera rebate

Cindy presented the camera rebate request from Jewelry & Watch Repair. This business was awarded a BIP rebate for signage a few years back. That doesn't block eligibility for camera rebate funding. The business has provided quotes from two different companies for installation of high definition cameras with night vision on the exterior of the building, both of which were around \$5,000, so he's seeking the maximum rebate allowed, \$2,000.

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Sanhita asked about changes to the camera rebate program and for a copy of the application form. Cindy will email around the application form again, and it's also posted on the website. The program was brought back based on discussion at commissioner meetings in 2023, recent changes made aimed to bring it more in line with what other SSAs in the city offer, as well as the camera rebate program OEMC had been offering before the funding was exhausted. Commissioners had asked about making it a 100% rebate as OEMC had been, but DPD has instructed us that this isn't allowed for SSA's.

Maura moved approval, Robert seconded.  
APPROVED.

### b. **sign removal at Caravan Travel**

Cindy shared information about the sign removal request from Caravan Travel on Fairfield; the SSA is allowed to cover sign removal costs at 100% because they're generally pretty inexpensive. In this case, the two quotes provided were \$850 and \$500, so we'll move forward on the lower of the two.

Maura moved approval, Robert seconded.  
APPROVED.

## VII. **Event Sponsorship Requests**

### a. **JNDC Summer Lot Party**

Cindy reported that they weren't ready to move forward and will either move this to a future meeting or withdraw it.

### b. **Agents of Hope Parade & festival of nations**

Joanna from Agents of Hope introduced herself and her organization, a behavioral health nonprofit with offices and a food pantry on Devon in the SSA. they're looking to hold a parade and festival in August, but plans aren't fully fleshed out. They had been looking at using the parking lot at Loyola and Misericordia across from their office, or Warren Park, but learned that neither location is within the SSA and would thus be ineligible for funding.

Ald. Silverstein encouraged the organization to reach out to her office regarding the event, particularly for permits and safety.

Robert suggested using the bank parking lot as other organizations have been doing, and offered to connect with her offline.

Cindy added that CPD is being really strict this year in signing off on special event permits, particularly during the month of August due to staffing concerns during the democratic convention - they may want to look at shifting to a September date. Other long-running events like the Indian and Pakistan Independence Day parades have also been asked to shift their dates because of this.

## VIII. **Public way projects**

Service Provider: Rogers Park Business Alliance 1448 W. Morse Ave. Chicago, IL 60626  
Office: 773.508.5885 ssa43@rpba.org

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### a. Intersection stamp restoration & benches

Cindy is working on confirming a meeting next week with CDOT about the intersection stamps and several other projects. For those that weren't here last time, the existing intersection art on Devon at Leavitt, Rockwell, and Sacramento was installed when streetscape was done in 2015-16 and has deteriorated. When these are done now, a different more durable product is used that's inlaid into the asphalt, which requires milling down and repaving that portion of the street, so they cost \$120,000 and up, but SSA43 has funding available for this even at the higher price point, we just need to coordinate with CDOT on next steps to move it forward.

Several commissioners asked if the updated intersection stamps might be able to include additional colors beyond just white. Cindy says yes, ideally we'd be able to incorporate colors from our brand standards, salmon and purple. An intersection stamp installed last year at Clark and Chase includes both white and salmon/pink.

Richard mentioned that one of the benches near Music House was damaged by a vehicle and asked about repairing or replacing it. Cindy's not sure if this one is in her list of benches needing replacement and asked him to send a picture of it to add to the list.

### b. Supplemental Landscaping

Cindy is meeting with the owner of Patch Landscaping on Devon tomorrow afternoon to walk around and identify in-ground beds for extra plantings. They're also going to be doing weeding starting next week and summer planting installation later this month.

Sanhita has been unimpressed with the planter pots so far this season compared to last year - they look sparse.

Robert added that we should discontinue use of planter items that are easily removed or stolen - people have been pulling out the decorative sticks that were installed with the spring plantings and they're littering the sidewalk and parking areas.

Sneh asked if we use the same company for snow and landscaping.

Cindy said no - Patch is landscaping, and we've been using Piersa for snow. We've sent Patch the snow RFP but they usually decline to bid for snow - they haven't been taking new snow customers.

Pete asked if the Piersa contract is a flat retainer for the season or per-occurrence.

Cindy said the last few years we've done a retainer but she's reached out to them to ask for per-occurrence pricing for next season.

Commissioners present would like to shift to per-occurrence pricing for the upcoming season.

### c. CitiBins

Keith from Ald. Silverstein's office talked about CitiBins garbage receptacles - the Lakeview Roscoe SSA is the first in Chicago to start using them but they're

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already widespread in NYC. The bins are rat-proof and have slanted tops on them to prevent rain from getting into the can liners and discourage people from putting residential trash bags on top of the can. They don't have any mechanical or electrical parts to break down like the Bigbelly cans that were tested and have since been removed. Keith and Cindy met with Robert at Lakeview-Roscoe to visit and see the bins that they've had installed so far and they passed around photos. The bins can be installed with vinyl wraps with custom district branding and wayfinding signage. The 50th ward is interested in working with the SSA on a pilot of the CitiBins at 4 intersections on Devon. They have data on which intersections have the most litter and rat complaints that could be used to pick sites. Keith is waiting for guidance from CDOT as to whether this works with the existing streetscape plan.

Robert asked about costs and product warranty and expected lifespan. Keith says they have a 2-year warranty from the manufacturer. Lakeview-Roscoe paid \$24,000 to install double trash/recycling bins at several locations in their district. We'd probably stick with single cans which would be a lower price point. Other than the initial cost of installation, they would have to be emptied by Cleanslate as part of their contract because Streets and San only empties the standard city receptacles. Cindy will follow up with Cleanslate on pricing to add this.

Sanhita asked about the current scope of trash removal work for Cleanslate. Cindy replied that our current contract with Cleanslate has them out 7 days a week, and they're here twice a day on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from May-October. We had gone down to 6 days a week during the pandemic but ramped it back up as people started going out more. Even with litter cleanup service 7 days a week, litter and rat activity is still one of the most frequent complaints received by SSA staff and the ward office.

Sneh agreed that litter is a big concern and suggested organizing neighborhood litter pickup events.

Ald. Silverstein said the ward office does this several times a year and people do participate.

Keith said education is needed, maybe signage telling people no dumping, no residential trash in sidewalk cans.

Sneh said he's seen businesses try to put out their own signage for this. He's also frustrated with fly dumping behind businesses. People dispose of bulk items like mattresses or sofas behind businesses and then he has to pay the fines and disposal fees.

Maura and Sanhita asked about designating bulk pickup days for people to put furniture out like they do in the suburbs.

Cindy will look into this, but in the meantime asked if commissioners want to include a budget for a CitiBin pilot in the 2025 budget. Commissioners present agreed.

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**IX. Adjournment**

Richard asked about contacting CDOT regarding the frequent crashes on his corner. Keith said the ward office is working with CDOT on a traffic study for this and will follow up.  
Meeting adjourned at 1:40

Next Meeting: Wednesday, July 10 at Republic Bank at noon.