

Howard Street & Jarvis Square Special Service Area #19
Factory Theater -1623 W. Howard St
Wednesday, May 21, 2025 at 9 am

Commissioners present: Tim Amos, Dave Skora, Charlotte Walters, Jenni Smith

Others present: Sandi Price & Cindy Plante, RPBA
Shenicka Hohenkirk, 49th Ward

1. Call to order

Meeting was called to order at 9:06am

2. Public Comment

Shenicka and commissioners introduced themselves. Shenicka is ward director in the 49th ward office; Kyle Ryan is no longer working there, so Shenicka will be attending these meetings while they hire and onboard a new person.

Cindy congratulated Jenni on her official appointment as an SSA commissioner as of last week.

3. Approve meeting minutes from April 2025

Tim moved approval, Jenni seconded.

Approved 4-0

4. 2025 YTD financials update

Cindy presented YTD financials as of April 30. SSA19 currently has a bank balance of about \$50,000. Since the first of the year, SSA19 has taken in \$123,743 and paid over \$89,000 in bills, including recurring expenses like landscaping, trash pickup, and snow. One-time expenses reflected here include the bill for replacing the light pole banners and maintenance work on the SSA's outdoor security cameras, plus annual audit. The levy was \$473,955, so we've gotten about 26% of the total levy amount for the year. We've also been informed that the second installment tax bills that are usually paid in August are being delayed again so we're not sure when we're going to get the rest or how much of the levy we're actually going to get, which is frustrating and makes it difficult to plan or execute on projects that are included in this year's budget. This is why we're not doing Chalk Howard this year or taking on any new projects. For now we're only paying existing contracts like landscaping, dumpsters, and cleanup crew payroll.

A5 hasn't billed us the last few months and we're in the process of negotiating a new, lower contract with them.

Charlotte would still like to find a new, more affordable marketing company to handle website and socials, and praised the 24th district police commander because she's noticed increased police presence on Howard in recent weeks, something that businesses have been asking for for years.

Shenicka added that she and the alderwoman have been meeting with the police commander regarding safety plans for summer. Charlotte asked about a rumor that the 49th ward office is moving to Howard Street. Shenicka said that the office isn't moving, but they have rented a storefront in the building next to the currency exchange to facilitate summer programming on Howard - they're working with A Just Harvest and the Northpoint Tenants association to use it for some food distribution and community programming, and they're looking to work with other neighborhood organizations to do additional events and programs there for the summer.

5. One Howard Street Updates

Cindy shared updates on implementation of the One Howard Street plan; artists have been selected for the two murals at Seven Star and Fish Keg being funded by the MacArthur grant, and they're going to start painting this summer. We're also meeting with Muse later today to start the design process for intersection stamps at the Paulina and Rogers/Greenview intersections. There will be a community survey to pick designs once we have some concept drawings, probably sometime this summer, after which we'll start on the permitting process to hopefully install in 2026. Evanston is still working with the consultant they've brought in to work on designing improved viaduct lighting - another community meeting is expected later this year. David asked about the Callan Plaza project on the Evanston side - he'd heard it was no longer happening.

Cindy reported that it is still moving forward but is no longer planned to be a permanent street closure due to concerns from residents (including the new 8th ward alder) about the loss of

on-street parking. Rather than permanently close the street, they'll have moveable bollards or barricades to do temporary closures for events or weekends. They are still planning to do the placemaking elements like lighting and murals.

Cindy reported that Evanston is also ordering wayfinding kiosks for all their business districts, including Howard. We're planning to buy one or two of the same ones for our side of Howard using grant funding, but have to talk to CDOT about installation, as we were originally told that these would be able to be surface-mounted, but the drawings we got have them being dug into the ground, which we're usually not allowed to do for streetscape elements like this.

Charlotte asked if we could surface-mount them anyway. Cindy is reluctant to do so given our experience with surface-mounted kiosks on Jarvis - one of which was knocked over by a vehicle soon after installation.

Dave and Jenni asked about refurbishment of the pylon sign on Jarvis, which was discussed at a previous meeting. Cindy hasn't moved on getting quotes for this yet due to finances and questions about ownership of the structure. Funding for this would have to come from the SSA since the grant funding can only be used on Howard, but the scope of work isn't expected to cost much, as it only includes fresh paint and new signage inserts. Jenni requested that it include a district map on one side with space on the other side for event posters.

6. Criminal Damage Repair Rebates -

Howard-Paulina Currency Exchange and Bestow Vape & Smoke:

Cindy presented the two rebate requests. Both requests were for window replacement - the currency exchange had a window damaged during a recent shooting, and the vape store had a break-in. Both applicants submitted the required paperwork, including police reports.

Charlotte moved approval of both. Tim seconded.

APPROVED.

7. Preliminary 2026 budget discussion

Cindy reminded commissioners that although the meeting to approve the annual budget isn't until July 9, the city requires service provider agencies to submit a draft budget on June 6, so

she's already starting work on the budget and wanted to discuss it with commissioners early in the process. Is there anything commissioners want to add or change for FY26?

Charlotte said that canceling Chalk Fest was the right move as she felt like attendance and quality fell off last year. Dave agreed and feels that this year is a good year to take a pause due to the overcrowded street festival market in the area - people are getting tired of street fairs. Both are hesitant to continue including it in the budget for 2026 and are interested in possibly pursuing different events. Cindy recommended continuing to include funding for it in the budget given the difference between the approved budget and levy vs. how much money the SSA receives. The special events budget for this year was about \$100,000, but we're not actually using that much because of the revenue shortfall. If we hadn't kept it in the budget this year, we would have had to make cuts in other parts of the budget.

Charlotte would like to see the SSA fund more business attraction efforts.

Cindy pointed out that this year's budget does include some funding for this, and business attraction efforts so far have included maintaining the available properties listing on the website as well as hosting business attraction open house events that rotate between business districts - we just had one on Clark Street a few weeks ago and we're due to have another one soon on Howard. Dave asked about doing more signage or temporary murals on windows of vacant storefronts. Cindy agrees that this is a good idea and something she'd like to do, but most of the vacant storefronts are owned by a single landlord who we've had trouble getting ahold of lately. Shenicka agrees that their efforts to connect with the property owner have been similarly hit-or-miss. Cindy added that both she and Shenicka have been in contact with one of the remaining businesses on Howard whose building was sold to this company recently, and they're doubling the rent on the remaining businesses in the building, so they may be forced out, resulting in even more vacancies on the block. The business has been referred for technical assistance and provided the list of other available spaces in the area, but at this point most are under control of the same building owner that's currently trying to push him out with this rent increase. We have recommended that he talk to the few other remaining building owners in the

area that have commercial vacancies and may refer him to an attorney to assist with lease negotiations.

Jenni added that she's concerned Jarvis Grill may also be closing soon based on erratic operating hours and other observations she and other neighbors have made. Cindy has been hearing this too and attempted to reach out, but they haven't been very receptive.

8. Adjournment

Charlotte shared that she was recently visited by reporters and photographers working on a story for the Trib about secondhand and vintage shops gaining popularity due to the tariffs and increasing interest in clothing made from natural fibers.

Cindy asked her to share the link when it gets posted so we can share it on Howard Street socials. Block Club had an article this morning about the Howard Street rezoning that also talked about the One Howard plan and development proposal for the Howard/Paulina site.

Shenicka said the developers are expecting to hear from the state about their funding sometime in June and hoping to break ground later this year or early 2026.

Shenicka asked Cindy to forward her a digital copy of the flyers Jenni made for Willye White park programs. Cindy will forward it when she's back in the office.

Meeting adjourned at 10:06

Next SSA Commissioners Meeting: June 18, 2025