



SSA Commissioners Meeting
Tropical Smoothie Cafe, 6448 N. Sheridan
Tuesday, April 29, 2025

Commissioners Present: Jennifer Clark, Sara Lukens, Cesar Coronado (by phone),

Others Present: Kyle Ryan, 49th Ward

Sandi Price & Cindy Plante, RPBA

Joy Coombes, Almanza & Coombes

Stefanie Roti, Wintrust Bank (prospective commissioner)

1. Call to order

Meeting was called to order at 2:10

2. Public comment

Kyle encouraged everyone to participate in tomorrow night's community meeting about proposed residential redevelopment of the Leona's site at Morse and Sheridan. The meeting will be on zoom at 6:30pm.

3. Approve minutes from previous meeting

Sara moved approval, Jennifer seconded.

Approved.

4. 2025 YTD financials

Cesar asked about the budget vs. actual sheet, which shows figures in the actuals column but has all zeros in the 2025 budget column.

Cindy acknowledged that our CPA hasn't yet loaded the 2025 budget numbers into the reporting spreadsheet due to work on the 2024 annual audit, but will fix this by the July meeting.

5. **2024 Annual Audit**

Joy introduced herself and presented a summary of the 2024 annual audit report for SSA54. This SSA ended 2024 with about \$50,000 in the bank and \$16,000 in payables, leaving about \$32,000 to carry over in reserve - a big improvement from the previous year where there was \$0 going to reserve. SSA54 took in \$190,000 last year and spent a total of \$153,000. The audit does note that there were related party transactions because SSA54 reimburses RPBA for expenses shared with other SSAs. There were two findings in the report; the first was that we were over budget in the personnel category by \$1,000, and the second was that SSA54 owed RPBA some money at the end of 2024. These are findings under the city's specific rules for SSAs and not findings under the AICPA accounting standards. Overall this is a fabulous audit.

Cindy noted that part of our success in building up the reserve was due to receiving a grant to fund last year's First Friday event series, which otherwise would have been paid out of the SSA budget. This year we are funding First Fridays using SSA funding as planned.

Jennifer moved approval of the audit report. Sara seconded.

Approved.

6. **Cafe Nova BIP application (sign)**

Cindy provided a summary of the request from Cafe Nova for new signage. Drawings of the proposed signage were provided to SSA commissioners via email. Both of the submitted quotes exceeded \$10,000, so the applicant is requesting the maximum rebate amount of \$5,000. Cindy pointed out that since she started working with SSA19 in 2019, we've only had one other BIP project in this SSA, which was awnings at Khmai. replacement last year.

Jennifer moved approval. Sara seconded.

Approved.

7. **Preliminary 2026 budget discussion**

Cindy reminded commissioners that the July 8 meeting is scheduled to be our budget adoption meeting, in compliance with the City's requirement that all SSA's meet to do budget approval in the first half of July. We don't expect to make many changes in next year's budget, which we haven't yet started writing. The largest items in the budget other than admin/personnel are always landscaping and holiday decorations. Before beginning the process, we wanted to ask if there are any changes or additions that the commissioners would like to make for 2026.

Jennifer is really interested in doing murals, which has been discussed in previous meetings.

Cindy noted that this year's budget does include a funding line item for public art, but the bottleneck on murals in particular has been due to the need for building owners to sign on to participate. Cindy would love to pursue a mural on the side of Belarmine Hall which overlooks the former Bulldog patio.

Jennifer agrees that this would be a priority mural wall, but she's been unable to find out who at the university has the ultimate authority to sign off on such a project. Every department she's reached out to about it so far says it's not theirs, so she's continuing to escalate it to higher levels of the administration. She added that whichever university administrator is the final decision maker, they will probably want to see a draft design before signing off.

Sandi asked about the building across the street from Bulldog, which has a multi-story south-facing wall overlooking a parking lot that could be used for a mural.

Cindy reported that she's attempted to make contact with the owner or property manager of this building in the past for SSA reconstitution and holiday lights, leaving messages at their publicly-posted contact number, but has never gotten a response. It isn't one of the building owners or property managers that we have an existing relationship with.

Cindy said that if we can't move forward on murals due to lack of willing property owners, we could still pursue sculpture installations through the Chicago Sculpture Exhibit. This

organization allows SSAs to sponsor installation of an outdoor sculpture on the public way and takes care of all the permitting and insurance. Sculptures stay out for 1-2 years, and it costs \$4,000 to sponsor each sculpture. Several other RP SSAs are participating this year, including SSA 19 and 24. They typically start sign ups in November.

Commissioners are generally interested in pursuing this later this year for 2026 installations. Cindy will include it in the budget.

8. First Friday music series updates

Cindy reminded commissioners that the first First Friday of the season is coming up this Friday from 6-8. We'll have live music at Sister Jean Plaza as well as Cafe Nova and Great Wall. The June 6 date will expand to include Giordano's and possibly Raising Cane's.

Cesar offered to provide smoothie samples for distribution at Sister Jean Plaza. Cindy will follow up with him regarding details. Wintrust will also be giving out promotional items.

Sandi reminded Cindy that we also still have cardboard fans to hand out that were purchased last year - we intentionally didn't include dates so they could be used in subsequent years and asked about costs per date.

Cindy reported that so far costs for each date are about \$1,100, nearly all of which is for payments to performers. This is consistent with last year. June is mostly booked, and there's no First Friday in July because it falls on the 4th. There were no plans to do August or September but these may be added back to the calendar due to strong interest from businesses and performers.

9. 2025 key dates

Cindy reminded commissioners that annual ethics filings for City and County are due May 1, and there are daily fines for each day you're late beyond this deadline.

Our next scheduled meeting for SSA54 is the budget meeting scheduled for July 8,

followed by the fall meeting on October 14 and all-SSA annual meeting on December 11, which will be hosted at a location in SSA43 this year.

Stefanie offered to host the next meeting in the conference room at Wintrust, which will be quieter and more spacious. Cindy agreed and thanked her; we'll update the calendar invites to not the new location.

Joy asked about the all-SSA annual meeting.

Cindy clarified that it's all the Rogers Park SSAs, not citywide. SSA54 hosted it last year at the Hampton Inn - breakfast is served and we present a slide deck of what each SSA has done during the year, new business openings, and plans for next year. We haven't confirmed the location yet, but it will be on Devon Avenue and Cindy has a few leads on a venue.

10. Adjournment

Cindy thanked Joy and everyone for coming and being flexible on the date.

Meeting adjourned at 2:38

Next meeting: Budget meeting July 8, 2025 at Wintrust