

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

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

Others present: Cindy Plante & Sandi Price, RPBA
Zach Joseph, 49th Ward

1. Call to order

Meeting was called to order at 9:10am

2. Public Comment

Cindy shared that she's been in contact with Chicago Sculpture Exhibit about swapping the two sculpture locations on Howard Street due to the complaints made about the statue at Howard & Paulina. We haven't been given a specific date for this.

Sandi shared that Around the Clock has a new owner. The former US Housewares space across the street has reportedly been leased to American Islamic College. Burlington is also going to be opening at Gateway Center in the former Marshalls space, though we don't have an opening date yet.

Cindy shared some updates on One Howard projects; the mural at Fish Keg has been finished and is getting positive feedback. The mural at Seven Star Banquets has been delayed because the building owner has changed her mind about the artwork. Sandi has been working to contact her, but we're also looking at alternative sites because we have a contract with the artist even if this building owner backs out.

Cindy is meeting with CDOT this afternoon regarding intersection stamps at Rogers/Greenview and at Paulina; will share draft artwork with commissioners soon via email.

Cindy is also meeting with the Park Supervisor, Park Advisory Council, and representatives from several other North-of-Howard organizations on putting together a community celebration honoring the 25th anniversary of the installation of Willye White Park to be held on August 23, which would have been the date for Chalk Howard Street. This group will be meeting again on Friday to firm up specifics; Cindy asked Jenni if she'd be willing to make a poster for this and Jenni agreed. Cindy will send event details next week.

Charlotte asked about the cancellation of the long-running Pride North event on Glenwood. Is this something that could move to Howard or Jarvis in the future?

Sandi reported that the business that has historically sponsored the event neglected to renew their state liquor license and also failed to turn in paperwork required for the special event permit despite numerous offers of assistance from both RPBA and the ward office.

Jenni suggested that if the sponsoring business closes or opts not to continue, she'd be willing to expand Pride events on Jarvis.

3. Approve meeting minutes from June 2025

Tim moved approval, Jenni seconded.

Approved 4-0

4. 2025 YTD financials update

Cindy and Sandi presented financials as of June 30. We have gotten some SSA money in and the bank account balance is in positive territory. That being said, we made a list of all the recurring monthly and annual contracts that we're still paying on and the total of those bills for the rest of the year does exceed the amount of our current bank balance, and we don't know what's happening with the timing of 2nd installment property taxes. The City of Chicago is still telling us it's going to be on time in August, but our contacts in Evanston are telling us they were told it's expected to be delayed until October. In either case, we can't pay bills with money we don't have, so we need to be cautious about taking on any new expenses. Ideally we'll get the rest of our levy at some point later this year, (and maybe even some of what we were shorted last year), which will fix this problem, but we don't know when or whether this will happen.

5. 2026 SSA budget and service provider agreement

Given the current financial situation, Cindy's draft budget for 2026 is calling for a levy increase of about 1% compared to this year's budget. Cindy wanted to aim for the 5% community meeting cap since we know we probably won't receive the entire levy amount, but we can't go much higher because we're getting close to the tax cap of .83%. Based on last year's EAV, the levy proposed in this budget would yield an estimated tax rate of about 0.81%; the city hasn't

yet given us the updated EAV for 2026 budgets yet. If the new EAV goes down, we may have to cut back even more in order to stay under the tax cap. We won't know for sure until we get the new EAV numbers from the City sometime later this summer.

The second page provided to commissioners is the executive summary, which calls out any budget category where the amount is changing +/- 20% compared to the current year. This includes:

- Professional services costs for annual audit have gone up, even though we have gotten proposals from multiple accountants for this project and will most likely be changing audit firms
- Monthly costs for dumpster service have also gone up, even after we collected bids from multiple providers at the end of 2024.
- The budget for the annual Live Love Shop holiday rebate campaign is increasing across all SSA's due to increased participation and increased marketing expenses
- Bank account fees is a new category this year and was added because RPBA has had to add positive pay to all our accounts due to multiple fraud incidents in which checks for our vendors and contractors were stolen from the mail. We have been trying to encourage our vendors to implement online payment options and many have done so, but there are often fees for paying online, and many smaller companies and independent contractors still need checks. In these situations we've been asking them to pick up checks from our office.

Dave suggested that Cindy add a few bullet points to the 2025 accomplishments section of the executive summary, including updated banners and collaboration with Evanston on One Howard Street implementation. Charlotte suggested also adding something about repairing the clock. Cindy will make these changes before submitting the budget to the city.

Charlotte asked about planning for a mural under the CTA viaduct; the area needs something positive after several years of negative attention. She frequently hears from customers and visitors that they're avoiding the Howard station all together and getting off the train at Jarvis

instead. Cindy asked for more detail about what specific wall she's envisioning for this, and noted that CTA has historically been somewhat difficult to work with regarding public art installations on station property and viaducts, though RPBA has gotten projects approved through CTA in the past. Cindy asked Sandi about the window decor under the Lunt entrance to the Morse stop.

Sandi said that this was possible because RPBA leased the empty storefront to use for storage, and the Art Institute installs the vinyl window art. Getting the lease approved for this and the storage took over 8 months, but maybe we can get something moving now for next year or 2027. Cindy will add this to the agenda for our next meeting with the 49th ward office.

Charlotte moved approval of the 2026 budget and retention of RPBA as SSA service provider
Dave seconded.

Approved 4-0.

6. H statue restoration

Cindy reported that Ana looked into this and got estimates that it would cost about \$1000 to restore and repaint the H statue at Howard and Greenview; more if we want to include more design elements on the panels.

Charlotte moved approval; Dave seconded.

Approved 4-0

7. Recyclery BIP application

Cindy shared a summary of the request - Recyclery is seeking a BIP rebate to replace their front door that no longer locks properly and surrounding windows. The quotes submitted were both over \$10,000, so they're requesting the maximum rebate of \$5000.

Sandi added that there is some history of approving the BIP for a lower amount like \$2500 for now and let them know that if we get the rest of our tax proceeds this year we'll give them the other \$2500.

Dave feels that there should be more signage on the Recyclery storefront and suggested lettering on the glass.

Charlotte asked if Recyclery had applied for the 14th district security grant for the door. Cindy said they weren't eligible since the shop is a nonprofit - the grant was limited to for-profit businesses.

Dave moved to approve the request for \$2500 with the possibility of a full \$5000 if we get the revenue later this year. Tim seconded.

Approved 4-0

8. GameStop Criminal Damage Repair Rebates -

This was left on the agenda after some questions were raised about it at the last meeting. Cindy has reached out to the applicant for clarification as to store ownership - it is corporate-owned and not a franchise. The BIP rebate limits eligibility for chain businesses, though there is some leeway for franchise businesses if there's a local owner with fewer than 5 or 10 locations. The program document for Criminal Damage rebates doesn't include language excluding chains, so it's on the agenda and the decision is ultimately up to the discretion of the SSA commissioners. Tim moved to decline the Gamestop request on the grounds that they're a corporate chain and funding is limited. Dave seconded.

Approved 4-0.

9. Adjournment

Cindy reminded the group that the next meeting is scheduled for August 20 and the annual SSA breakfast is scheduled for December 11 and will be held in Devon Ave SSA43 this year. .

Meeting adjourned at 10:09 AM.

Next SSA Commissioners Meeting: August 20, 2025