



MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Irshad Khan, Robert Taylor, Maura Levitt, Richard Trumbo

Commissioners Absent: Pete Valavanis, Sanhita Agnihotri

Others present: Cindy Plante & Hiba Zakai, Rogers Park Business Alliance

Keith Solokowski, 50th ward office

Zia Iftikhar, Ali Nihari

Javaid Khan, Cesco LLP 2637 W. Devon

I. **Call to order**

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 12:07 pm.

II. **Public comment**

Attendees and commissioners introduced themselves

Javed Khan is visiting from CESCO which has an office on Devon.

Zia's father owns Ali Nihari near Rockwell & Devon and he's here to present rebate applications for the business.

III. **Approval of minutes from the last meeting**

Robert moved approval; Richard seconded.

4-0 Approved

IV. **2025 YTD financials update**

Cindy provided a summary of the financials, which were emailed to commissioners ahead of the meeting.

V. **BIP applications**

a. **3109 Quetta Farms**

Cindy passed around the drawing of new signage proposed for Quetta Farms - this is a new business applying for a sign; the same owner has also submitted applications for two other businesses, Quetta Sajji House and Mazhar Jewellers. He previously participated in the sign removal program to remove old blade sign hardware from the facade at the 3109 space.

Some commissioners had questions about the big difference between the two quotes; Cindy acknowledged that she had the same question as the Creative LED signs estimate was \$18,000 and TFA's quote was only \$8,000. Cindy and Hiba reached out to the applicant to ask for clarification and encouraged him to attend today's meeting, but he is currently out of the country.

Irshad asked if the business has a business license yet for this location?



Keith will look into this.

Robert moved to approve a sign rebate on the condition that the business is properly licensed.

Maura seconded.

Approved 4-0

b. 2114 W. Devon - Quetta Sajji house

Cindy reminded commissioners that the proposed sign is one of the two drawings provided on the TFA quote, the other being the proposed sign for Quetta Farms. Here again, there appears to be a big difference in price between the two quotes despite the scope of work appearing to be roughly the same.

Robert moved to approve it based on the lower of the two quotes.

Maura seconded.

Approved 4-0

c. 2553 W. Devon - Mazhar Jewellers

Robert asked if the proposal was for an additional sign or replacement of the current signage at the business? The current sign isn't bad looking and seems pretty new.

Maura and others preferred the current sign over the proposed one and asked for clarification on whether the proposed sign is being added to the facade or if it is intended to replace the existing signage.

Because the applicant was unable to attend the meeting and couldn't be contacted, commissioners mutually agreed to postpone a vote on this request to the next meeting in order to ask the applicant for clarification.

d. Universal Electronics update

This applicant presented his application at the last meeting and was approved for up to \$4,000 in funding based on the quotes provided. At the time, commissioners had remarked on the low prices quoted for the project, which includes two signs on the corner storefront. The applicant later realized that the previously submitted quotes included only one of the proposed signs, and has requested approval up to the maximum rebate amount of the updated quote based on the price basically doubling.

Maura asked to see a rendering of the proposed signs since she wasn't here last time.

Hiba and Cindy were unable to find the rendering in the file, though they and several commissioners had clear recollections of the colors and designs of the sign, and that it was a vast improvement over the current signage at the business.



This is most likely because the applicant showed everyone the picture when he attended the meeting, but hadn't sent the attachment.

Irshad asked Cindy to forward everyone the updated quotes, she did.

Hiba shared one quote that included hand-drawn drafts of the new signage and Maura looked up google streetview images of the current sign, which is faded temporary vinyl.

Maura moved to approve the request.

Robert seconded

Approved 4-0

Irshad asked if there were any updates on 2800 W Devon at the corner of Devon and California, which has been vacant for several years - there are broken windows and trash.

Keith will check in with Marlene as to whether there are any updates on the property - the building owner has been ticketed for violations in the past.

Irshad would like to prioritize this before trying to pursue a pavement mural at this intersection.

e. 2448 W. Devon - Ali Nihari

Zia provided a summary of his proposed project - Ali Nihari is expanding into the adjacent storefront and redoing the entire front facade, adding operable windows and new tile. They're applying for both the facade project and outdoor cameras, though as of today he only has quotes for the proposed cameras and is awaiting facade drawings and quotes from his architect.

Irshad asked how many cameras are being included and asked Cindy about the program requirements. Cindy reported that the program provides up to a \$2000 rebate for outdoor camera installations, which may include the alley side of the building; cameras must record in at least 1080p. Zia says the proposal is for 4 cameras, and technical specs are compliant and are provided on the quotes

Robert moved approval; Maura seconded

Approved 4-0

f. Cell Choice & Choice Cafe

Hiba shared these two proposals with commissioners via email earlier today.

Both were submitted by the same applicant.

Cell Choice already exists at 2247 W. Devon. The owners are planning to also open a coffee shop at 2252 next to Usmania, which hasn't opened yet.

Cindy pointed out that none of the quotes provided include drawings of the

Devon SSA #43 Commission Meeting
Wednesday, September 10, 2025 noon
Republic Bank - 2720 W. Devon Ave.



proposed signs, and wasn't able to be included on the agenda due to the late submission, so it will have to wait until the next meeting either way.

this item was postponed to the next meeting pending submission of drawings for both storefronts.

VI. Arts on Devon event debrief

Cindy thanked several commissioners for attending the event. Some of the feedback received so far has been that turnout was better than the pre-pandemic Devon's Got Talent events.

Irshad added that he and others would like to see more vendors and activities next year, including food if at all possible. Or can we have someone run delivery orders back and forth from restaurants?

Cindy acknowledged that we were somewhat limited by the quick turnaround time on launching the event this year, but hope to start earlier in 2026 and pursue a permit to close a portion of Washtenaw to expand the festival footprint to add things like food vendors, a bouncy house, and more artists.

Robert also suggested having the chalk artists inside the fence rather than on the sidewalk to maximize visibility.

Cindy added that the trolleys were also seeing a lot of use. There were three in order to minimize wait times due to the length of the route, including a stop at the Warren Park lot on Western. Robert suggested adding "free rides" to the trolley signage next year.

Maura and Richard asked for more details on whether the restaurants got a lot of orders. Cindy can't say since we were sending people directly to the businesses and not able to collect any real time sales data. Irshad reported that when he went to Halal Smashburger at Devon and California after visiting the festival they had a big crowd and long waits.

Irshad asked about total spend on the event.

Cindy is still getting invoices from subcontractors but put in \$19,000 for payment today for artists and performers plus subcontractors for things like equipment rental, porta potties, and sound engineering. Adding in our contract with Big Buzz, putting us at a little over \$50,000.



Irshad asked if we really need to include BigBuzz next year - he's skeptical that the postcards and poster distribution were really necessary - would like to focus more on social and web next year.

Cindy will ask about adjusting the marketing scope for next year, but cautioned that while marketing one of the more visible things BigBuzz does, it represents only a fraction of the full scope of services for producing the event - much more important is booking and managing all the subcontractors and performers, plus day-of staff to set up, take down, and staff the event, which Cindy doesn't have the capacity to do alone.

Richard would like to revisit having a competitive selection process for event production next year.

VII. Mural location

Cindy shared photos of the participatory mural from the festival, which is currently in storage. We had previously talked about finding it a permanent installation location in the district, but at the time we didn't realize it was being painted on canvas rather than a hard surface like plywood, so we're not not sure it's durable enough for long-term display outdoors.

Maura suggested making it a seasonal display like tuktuks. Irshad suggested displaying it at the festival next year; for permanent murals he'd like something more representative of the area's culture and history.

VIII. Public Way project updates

a. CitiBins

Keith proposed installing additional CitiBins to Devon. Maura asked how much they cost last year.

Cindy pulled up the previous invoices - it was about \$15,000 to install receptacles at four locations.

Irshad called the ward superintendent to ask if he has any recommendations as to where to add new CitiBins. He responded to say that he'd consult with the ward office on a list of proposed locations that have the most issues with litter complaints.

Keith will map out locations that currently have the black corner baskets that could benefit from replacement.

Hiba mentioned that several businesses have also asked to have receptacles installed near their locations, including Spinzer.

Irshad pointed out that part of the area's litter problem is that there are businesses on Devon that aren't paying for their own dumpster service and are using city receptacles



and fly dumping. Cindy acknowledged that there's definitely an issue with people doing this and encouraged people to report this on 311 when they become aware of it. Irshad suggested prioritizing the Oakley corner, as there's always a big problem there with styrofoam cups littering the street. Cindy agreed and would prefer to have some located on both sides of Western, and pointed out that part of the value of the CitiBins is not only in the improved litter containment, but in the custom branding and wayfinding graphics that we've been able to include on the sides of each receptacle. Cindy will request quotes for 4-6 additional cans, and Keith will connect with the superintendent about additional locations for inclusion.

b. intersection stamps

Cindy has been getting positive feedback on the three intersection stamps installed this summer, and submitted the invoice for payment this morning. Irshad would like to select additional locations and is particularly interested in California, Artesian, and at least one east of western - possibly Oakley or Bell. Maura asked about Western Avenue. Cindy reported that CDOT most likely wouldn't allow this due to the size of the intersection and the fact that it's actually a county road. Cindy will reach out to Gallagher and CDOT about California and options east of Western. Irshad and Robert are also interested in the decorative red brick crosswalk material. Cindy will ask about this too.

c. Pigeon Abatement

Cindy is waiting on invoices for the initial round which included Croatian center and the building at Devon and Richmond. Irshad pointed out that there's been a lot of pigeons on Oakley. Cindy asked if the bank is interested in being part of a future round of pigeon abatement, noting that there were large flocks of pigeons in and around the parking lot during setup for the festival on Sunday. Robert acknowledged this and said people have been feeding the birds in the parking lot; he's trying to get them to stop. Cindy encouraged reporting it to the ward superintendent and taking pictures.

IX. Adjournment

Irshad and Robert suggested adding an October meeting to the calendar in order to handle the BIP requests without delaying people's projects. Cindy agreed and will update the calendar.

Meeting adjourned at 1:09 pm

Devon SSA #43 Commission Meeting
Wednesday, September 10, 2025 noon
Republic Bank - 2720 W. Devon Ave.



Next Meeting: October 7 (if needed), otherwise
November 12, 2025, Republic Bank (noon)