

Devon SSA #43 Commission Meeting

Tuesday, February 10, 2026 noon

Republic Bank - 2720 W. Devon Ave.



MINUTES

Members present: Maura Nemes, Pete Valavanis, Robert Taylor, Sanhita Agnihotri, Richard Trumbo

Members absent: Irshad Khan, Mohammed Junaid

Others present: Cindy Plante & Hiba Zakai, RPBA
Keith Sokolowski, 50th ward office,
Munizarees from Munz Stitch,
Muzaffer Shaik from Cell Choice/choice Cafe.
Nana Ahmed from Agents of Hope.

I. **Call to order**

Meeting called to order at 12:04 pm

II. **Public comment**

Richard shared that the Music House's 75th anniversary is this year on July 17. They're looking to build capacity in order to potentially buy a building. The High Ridge Y building is for sale and he's reached out to Ald. Silverstein about that possibility. The High Ridge coalition is no longer planning to reopen the Y due to environmental issues with underground tanks found on the property. In the meantime, Music House is also looking for venues in the area for theater performances; they've been performing at ChiArts but this is no longer an option now that the school has been taken over by CPS. Nana suggested the Croatian Center. Richard says they've considered it but it lacks the necessary sound and lighting equipment and the stage is too small. Maura asked how many shows or events they need space for and might have a connection in the suburbs if that's an option. Richard says they do 8 productions a year plus 2 dance recitals. They would prefer to keep it in the city so participating kids and families can get there easily. Cindy will follow up separately about other potential spaces, and suggested looking into Rhapsody Theater.

Nana shared multilingual flyers for a cancer screening event at Agents of Hope.

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

Pete moved to approve the minutes; Maura seconded
approved 4-0

IV. **2025 financials update**

Cindy provided a summary of the financials, which were shared with the commissioners via email. Our accountant is still in the process of closing the books on 2025 and getting ready to start the annual audit. We're using a new audit firm this year. The balance sheet reflects that we've already been invoiced by the City for installation of the blinking crosswalk signs, which is our most expensive SSA project in recent memory.

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Robert asked for a reminder as to which intersections are getting the blinking crosswalk signage.

Keith said that they're being installed at Whipple, Oakley, and Campbell. Blinky crosswalk construction is expected to begin this spring or summer and includes underground electrical, which is why it's so expensive.

V. Public Way Improvement updates

a. CitiBins

Cindy is still working on permit documentation for Western and Rockwell with the idea that each intersection would get two of the new receptacles.

Robert asked if there's a specific goal of how many we want to install total for the district?

Cindy said that we haven't identified a specific number; these are meant to supplement rather than replace the existing City trash cans, since the City doesn't empty the new ones; they're being maintained and emptied by Cleanslate as part of our street cleaning contract with them.

Keith added that it's ultimately up to the commissioners how many to purchase and install; locations were chosen because these were corners where we were getting the most complaints about litter.

Richard asked how we're evaluating success or effectiveness on the new cans?

Keith said that the identified sites for the first four were based on complaint frequency, so we could compare before and after numbers of 311 requests for rat abatement and overflowing trash. Keith doesn't have specific numbers on hand but says that he feels like there's been a reduction in the number of rat and litter complaints there, and feedback about the receptacles themselves has been positive.

Cindy noted that each of the new receptacles also serves as wayfinding signage and district branding because of the included vinyl wraps; installing wayfinding features like this independently can be costly so it's nice that we're able to get both trash receptacles and wayfinding signage for one price and set of permits.

Richard asked about the cost for maintaining each can from Cleanslate. Cindy doesn't have numbers for the cost per can but can check the contract and follow up with the vendor if needed.

b. Intersection Stamps

Cindy has found drawings that were prepared for an intersection stamp at California Avenue by the city many years ago as part of the streetscape project, though it was never actually installed. This should make it easier and quicker to add one at this intersection to match the three that were installed last year.

VI. BIP & Camera rebate applications

a. Munz Stitch criminal damage repair rebate

Hiba introduced Munzarees from Munz Stitch to present documentation for a criminal damage repair rebate. He returned from a trip to find that someone damaged the glass on the store's front door. He has submitted a police report and a quote for replacing the damaged pane of glass for \$685.

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Sanhita mentioned this type of vandalism has been happening more frequently - there's a guy that's walking around damaging glass windows and doors; he's believed to be mentally ill. She has pictures of him doing this and says has been arrested for these activities previously but is quickly released and resumes breaking stuff - can anything be done?.

Cindy suggested sharing this info with the 24th district CAPS team. Keith suggested calling 911 if you see him actively doing it; the ward office can look into getting the department of family & support services involved.

Robert moved to approve the criminal damage repair rebate. Pete seconded. Approved 5-0.

b. **Munz Stitch Camera rebate**

Munzarees has also submitted two quotes for camera installation at the business, which were shared with commissioners.

Cindy asked about specific locations of where they're being placed?

Munzarees says the quotes include 6 cameras on the front and side of the building facing the streets.

Pete asked about minimum requirements of cameras. Cindy replied that the program guidelines specify they have to be at least 1080p; the maximum rebate is 50% of project cost, up to \$2000. The estimates submitted were \$4800 and \$3900 for the six cameras.

Richard asked if they're including cameras on the alley side.

Munzarees hadn't previously considered it and wasn't clear on if this would be allowed but will ask at install if they can move one back there.

Pete moved approval, Robert seconded. Approved 5-0.

c. **Cell Choice & Choice Cafe**

Hiba introduced the applicant, Muzaffer Shaikh and reminded the group that he had submitted an application at the end of 2025 that was put on hold because his submission didn't include drawings of the proposed signage. Drawings have now been submitted and shared with commissioners.

Robert asked where the cafe is located. 2052 W Devon - Mr. Shaikh said it's next to Usmania. Pete asked if they're going to have coffee since there aren't many places to get coffee on this block of Devon and Mr. Shaikh said yes. Choice cafe is a new business and he's hoping to have it open in the next month or two. Cell Choice has been open for a while and is next door to Cary's Lounge.

Cindy noted that the rendering shows the neon signs and advertisements in the windows of the business that was in this space previously and asked if this additional signage has been or will be removed. Mr. Shaikh said that it has already been removed.

Cindy asked what the quoted amounts were.

Hiba passed around three estimates: RAAF signs for \$18,000, Sign America for

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\$17,850, and Star Tech for \$18,882 so they're all pretty close together. Since the signs for the two locations are so similar, the amounts quoted are the same for both stores. Due to the amount of the quotes, each store is eligible for the maximum rebate amount of \$8,000.

Robert moved approval. Pete seconded.
Approved 5-0.

VII. 2026 Events

a. Arts on Devon Sep 27, 2026

Cindy shared that we're planning to work with BigBuzz again and have identified September 27th as the date for this year, which avoids overlap with other events and will give us more time to plan than last year, potentially allowing us to add a partial street closure on Washtenaw, and hopefully some food vendors based on feedback we heard about last year's event.

Richard and Robert are concerned that there aren't multiple bids for the event production company and would like to have the West Ridge chamber submit a bid for this year. Cindy will talk to Sandi about this; because of the expanded scope we will need to start planning earlier, and it's important to us to use an experienced event company that has established relationships with subcontractors and deep knowledge of city permitting. Would it be possible to submit a bid package by the 3/10 meeting?

Richard and Robert will follow up with the West Ridge Chamber about preparing a proposal.

b. Parades

Sanhita shared that the India Independence Day Parade is being planned for August 15 this year. Nobody has heard anything about a date for the Pakistan Parade, though it's usually either the weekend before or after.

c. Outdoor movies/ other event ideas

Cindy and the commissioner agreed to postpone this discussion to a future meeting because it's already after 1:00 and several people need to leave.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:11 pm.

Next Meeting: Tuesday March 10, 2026, Republic Bank (noon)