

SSA Commission Meeting/ Special Service Area #60
Wednesday, November 5, 2014
5:00 p.m.
North River Commission Office
3403 W. Lawrence Ave Ste. 201
Chicago, IL 60625

Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

SSA Commissioners Present:

Andrew Levin, Frank Kern, Jim Karagianes, Saima Causevic, Mir Naghavi, Stephanie Fishel, John Tunnell, David Maletin

North River Commission Staff Present:

Melissa McDaniel, Duka Dabovic

Other Attendees:

Jacquelyn Prattipati (for web site RFP), Roya Mehrnoosh (West River Park Neighborhood Assn), Tom Guagliardo (TRIP, Tano's Pizzeria), Anissa Wanat (citizen)

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 p.m. by Andrew Levin.

Item: Minutes

Saima moves to approve; David seconds. All voted in favor of approving.

Item: Financials

Angela moves to approve financials; Jimmy seconds. All voted in favor of approving.

Item: Old Business

a. RFP Approval: website

Frank put the RFP together with the help of his former business partner, Jacquelyn Prattipati. Should be simple experience, no more than ten pages. Should be mobile-optimized? Possibly. No transactions. Also asking for a Content Management system so Duka can update the content on his own.

February seems like a good time to deliver, but we can be flexible about this.

Melissa asks: what might this cost? Frank says, we budgeted \$2500.

Problem: City requires that all vendors have a million dollars in liability insurance.

Question: who will have this? No single freelancers, that's for sure. Jacquelyn wonders if even big companies will have this. She doubts it.

Jimmy works with a company who charges a flat rate every month to design and manage web site and all social media. No setup fee, just the monthly cost.

Duka to inquire with the city whether we can get an exception to the insurance rule. Otherwise, we'll probably have to figure out which vendors already work with the city. He will also ask other SSAs who has done their websites and how they have gone about this.

Duka shows the website from West Town SSA as an example.

Frank moves to approve RFP; Jimmy seconds. All in favor.

b. Business Beautification Recap

Melissa reports:

There was a great meeting, including 3 commissioners: Jimmy, Saima, and Andrew. Anissa and Roya were also present along with maybe eight businesses, some of whom were interested in applying.

- reimbursement vs. match
- eligibility
- timelines for applying

Preferences: All agreed that preference should be given to businesses with a lot of foot traffic or central location, to maximize impact. Review committee will have the ability to assess which businesses will have more of an impact. Anissa had brought up the idea of a scoring system to maximize transparency and objectivity. She has developed a sample rubric. Everyone in the room thought that would be great.

Eligibility:

- All agreed there should be no exclusions about who can apply. Homeowners should be eligible as well as businesses.
- Also, don't exclude the top part of a building for the sake of focusing on street level. You want the whole front of a building to look good. You don't want the tuckpointing to stop at second floor, for example.
- Agreed that all business types are eligible, whether a liquor store, psychic, national chains, etc. May give preference to certain types of retail, but that can be worked out later.
- No occupancy requirement: vacant buildings would also be allowed to apply as a way to attract new tenants.
- Window dressings? Paying for window dressings would be harder to manage as a private program. But Melissa thinks there should be a clause in which we make certain stipulations about window dressings (for example, no more than 10% signage).

How many rounds? Melissa suggests we just do one round of applicants, rather than divide into two rounds.

Stephanie asks: what if we have just one round but there are not enough applicants and we don't give all the money away? Melissa says: after that round is over, we continue to promote the program, it's first-come, first-serve.

Frank asks about corner buildings where one facade is on a non-SSA street. Duka says, no, this isn't a problem, because every SSA extends to the alley off a corner.

Back to Melissa's presentation.

She notes that all of the SSAs except for Wicker Park/Bucktown does this program every year, rather than make applicants wait for five years. She encourages us to allow applicants to re-apply every year as an incentive to invest in their business. The commission had previously said you would have to wait for five years; she encourages us to change this.

John asks for clarification about the areas of preference (train stations, etc.) Melissa says that they didn't get very specific yet about what those preferences would be. Everyone present thought this was a good idea. Stephanie asks, who was present at the meeting? Were they all people who would benefit from this kind of priority? Melissa recounts the attendees, but it sounds like it was quite a spread of people, not necessarily those who would benefit. She says that they didn't establish what the priorities would be, only that we'd have the right to establish priorities.

Stephanie wonders: can we prohibit strobe lights and light strings, etc? She thinks they look trashy. Discussion about how you would enforce this. It'd be hard to enforce, and building owners would also have to work with their tenants. You could certainly make a recommendation.

Mir wonders about repeat applicants within five years. Not opposed, but you'd want to have guidelines or work out a way to maybe give preference to people who haven't yet applied. Want to encourage people to apply.

Melissa: the meeting members were evenly divided about whether you reimburse the applicant for 50% after he/she has paid the entire cost, or pay the vendors directly. The latter is less burdensome for applicants, since they don't have to come up with so much cash up front. It might discourage people. However, the latter is *more* burdensome for the SSA, as paying vendors is a complicated business.

She has since discussed it with Duka. They think that paying vendors directly would be logistically too difficult, especially in the first year. So she suggests reimbursement in the first year. We can modify later.

Andrew says: are there banks that would give small loans to applicants to help them cover the upfront cost? Melissa: maybe, yes.

Stephanie: (a) how soon would we reimburse? (b) Also, would we give very clear guidelines for how to submit their paperwork? Melissa: (a) We could aim for three or four weeks, maybe even sooner. (b) Yes. Duka: we could give them all kinds of clear guidelines and checklists.

Andrew recaps recommendations. What do we need to do now? Melissa: wants a vote on the recommendations.

Andrew calls for a move to approve the scoring system and the other recommendations from Melissa.

Angela moves to approve. Mir seconds. All approve except Jimmy, who has left the meeting.

Item: New Business

a. CleanSlate service increase

Andrew: the city will not guarantee in writing that we could roll over any more than 25%. So we want to make sure that we spend enough money this year that we don't lose money at the end of the year. Recommends that for November we increase the CleanSlate service from the planned two days a week to three days a week. Or we could consider keeping up the four-day-a week schedule that we have in the earlier months.

Andrew is very concerned about forfeiting this money. For example, it's also possible that we wouldn't spend the money on the auditor before the end of the year, so that's another risk. Wants to be careful. He recommends we keep up the four-day schedule for November. December costs won't be paid until January. David is in favor of restoring the service to October levels, because he has noticed an increase in the trash since the decrease in service.

Andrew asks us to vote on November: increase from two days to four days?

David moves, Frank seconds. All are in favor except Jimmy, who is absent.

Discussion of how much money we're talking about, how it will affect next year. The issue is we collected more tax money than expected. Andrew asks us to vote for December, increasing from two days to three days. Saima moves, Frank seconds. All in favor except Jimmy (absent).

b. Banner Removal

Duka proposes that we spend \$500 to remove old and tattered UNITE banners, which are mostly on Montrose. Angela moves in favor. John seconds. All in favor except Jimmy (absent).

Public Input

None.

Adjournment:

Andrew adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.