



SSA Meeting Minutes: April 8, 2020

ATTENDEES

SSA Commissioners Present: David Maletin, Saima Causevic, Stephanie Fishel, Kareeshma Ali

NRC Staff Present: Thomas Applegate, Alexa Schutz, Dalia Aragon

SSA Commissioners Absent: Andrew Levin, Mark Aistrope

Guests/Public: Carol Maher (resident), Joy Coombes (auditor), Daniella Cornue (business owner)

Meeting called to order at 5:34 pm by the Secretary. **Quorum is achieved.**

- *Reminder that due to the IL Governor's executive order for updates to the Open Meetings Act, we can conduct SSA meetings and achieve quorum virtually during Shelter In Place/COVID-19. We anticipate May and June to be on Zoom, or potentially longer.*

Review & Approval of February Minutes: 1st Fishel, 2nd Maletin; all in favor, approved.

Reminder: March meeting was cancelled due to lack of quorum thus no March minutes.

Review & Approval of February Financials: 1st Fishel, 2nd Ali ; all in favor, approved.

For February financials, Schutz reminded everyone that we start to see levy deposits in late February and this year was no exception. However, DPD anticipates levy shortfall for the second levy installment in summer due to COVID-19, so we envision future budget modifications to account for this in the months ahead. We will continue to run on a leaner budget this year that we set forth in February in order to be responsive to DPD's projection of a shortfall in levy collection for the second installment, annual increases in refunds, and to hit our targeted carryover of roughly \$40-45k at the end of the year.

Review & Approval of March Financials: 1st Fishel, 2nd Maletin; all in favor, approved.

For March financials, Schutz explained we received large deposits in March upwards of \$105k. Due to COVID-19, we are not yet sure what percentage of the \$105k is levy, interest, or refunds but we expect around \$5k being refunds. However we have received all income as budgeted thus far so our cashflow is on track and much healthier than it was in January. Every year, DPD estimates the amount of refunds our SSA should expect which is usually around \$11,000 but we had \$15,000 in refunds, so will continue to monitor this discrepancy and ever-increasing refunds. As our auditor will confirm next on the agenda, we have our official carryover figure which is now reflected on our financials; the 2020 carryover is/was \$19,777.



Modification for 2019 final budget: Per a recommendation from our auditor and DPD staff to ensure our original 2019 budget matches final budget and to avoid any budget variances or audit findings, Schutz requested a budget modification of \$167.00 (which was taken out after a budget modification in the summer) to place it back in SSA Management. This will net out a past modification and return our final budget back to the original budget amounts and avoid any variances. Once approved, this will be our final 2019 budget and the one used in our 2019 audit.

- **Motion to accept the above budget modification for the 2019 final budget by adding \$167.00 back into the budget under SSA Management:**
1st Fishel, 2nd Maletin, all in favor; approved.

2019 Audit Review: Our auditor Joy Coombes from Eilts and Assoc. walked the group through the 2019 audit, and there was discussion. The official carryover for 2020 was calculated at \$19,777 by taking what the SSA had in the bank less its payables at the end of 2019. Based upon SSA guidance by DPD and after a full audit review, all the findings are in compliance with SSA requirements and the audit is clean without findings. Staff advised that while we have been chipping away at our carryover year after year to find the sweet spot, we will strive for a carryover around \$40k for next year to have more cushion for Q1 services and expenses. Schutz will upload the final audit to DPD.

- **Motion to accept the 2019 SSA60 Audit:** 1st Fishel, 2nd Ali, all in favor; approved

COVID19 Response & Impacts:

- NRC & Chamber Staff updates:** Schutz advised that staff continue to work remotely and do extensive outreach both in and outside the SSA. Staff are on several webinars organized by city, county, state, and federal levels covering COVID-19 resources for businesses, community, and more; staff are sharing resources to businesses and nonprofits as well as constantly updating our newly created web pages for business resources, how to support businesses, and social services/community resources. We are brainstorming ways to drive income into businesses who remain open and working with the Small Business Advocacy Council (SBAC) on policies and advocacy that support our businesses for a greater impact; topics include unemployment insurance for business owners/independent contractors, business interruption insurance, marketing, and access to capital. Young businesses (not open for at least a year) do not qualify for many or most programs or grants nor are there resources for landlords, management companies or large property owners. Most programs struggled to have resources in Spanish.
- DPD:** Staff received an email from DPD which stated that they are anticipating more budget modifications this year as they don't expect SSAs to receive all anticipated levy revenue. Reminder to Commissioners to review DPD's email for upcoming deadlines for ethics forms.



- C. **SSA Contracts:** Landscaping still on schedule for late spring, but due to COVID-19 littering is way down yet our litter vendor is out 5 days per week. Due to the lack of public outside, staff recommend reducing our litter service from 5 days/wk to 2 days/wk. The new rate would be \$300/day, so our savings would amount to \$7,500 for mid-April thru June alone. Streets & Sanitation is clearing sidewalk trash bins Monday, Wednesday, and Sunday; if this changes we can always re-evaluate our own contract. With the lack of people out in the district we feel this is an appropriate action to take to apply those saved funds elsewhere. We have a strong relationship with our vendor so they are understanding and accommodating; that said, we are accommodating their workday preference for Tuesdays and Fridays due to their reduced staff. Maletin reminded the group that trash pick up service is provided on a needs-basis. Group agreed that if our contractor is willing to work with us and make those adjustments, we can reduce it to two days and re-evaluate every month, as needed.

- **Motion to adjust litter abatement contract from 5 days to 2 days a week during Shelter In Place:** 1st Fishel, 2nd Maletin, all in favor; approved

D. **Programs:**

- a. *Banners:* COVID19 is impacting the banner sponsorship program and our goal of filling the entire district with banners by the end of 2020. Our banner vendor TFA Signs is a non-essential business, and Schutz acknowledged there are 10 light poles that need banner reprinting or repair but it is on hold.
- b. *Facade Program:* So far, our approved applicants for 2020 projects are still moving forward which accounted for at least \$30k in rebates. However we anticipate that our strong pipeline of interested applicants will now be reduced or delayed. With facade rebates being a big portion of our budget, we will closely monitor interest in the program but we may need to decrease its funding in anticipation of levy shortfall in summer due to COVID.

E. **Events & Marketing:**

- a. Flavors of Albany Park have been postponed to mid-July (or later) and we will need to shift the event model to drive more income directly to businesses. Fishel stated businesses might not be in position to donate samples, consider pushing Flavors to fall, and explore using raffle tickets like at street festivals which can act as a stipend.
- b. Staff are interested in getting a working group to focus on marketing the district and businesses. We are brainstorming creative approaches that will drive money to businesses, especially low-hanging fruit like Takeout Tuesdays campaigns and free ad space from the Chicago Reader. We are mindful of non-food or beverage businesses and/or those deemed non-essential who are missing out on opportunities like takeout/delivery that restaurants are able to use.



2019 Annual Report: This report was mailed to 1500 recipients in the SSA including both property owners and businesses. It was designed by LimeRed. This piece helps provide transparency on how public funds are spent and will be helpful for reconstitution to demonstrate district benefits and impact. An electronic PDF version is also on the website.

Public Input: Causevic disclosed her concerns over the amount of rubber gloves laying everywhere in our district which might end up in sewers. People are still dumping donated items in the Village Discount parking lot and the homeless are congregating there as well. Schutz to follow-up with 33rd Ward Streets and Sanitation Supervisor for monitoring and help. Causevic relayed feedback she has heard from her tenants that they do not qualify for resources because of immigration status. People do not want to apply because of fear that information will be collected and reported at a later date. Fishel suggested we connect with the 33rd Ward office for resources and mutual aid for those undocumented. There was also an update on the homeless individual who has taken shelter at the entryway of Le Village; Schutz to connect Cornue with The Kedzie Center. Causevic to report back if she hears of any resources or programs for large property owners and landlords.

Schutz informed the group that there will be a new business opening at 3300 W Montrose called Kale My Name on Friday, April 17th. There will be a virtual welcome on social media. Please show them support; as an essential business, they are opening during the pandemic for takeout and delivery. They are located within the SSA.

Meeting concluded at 7:40 pm.

The next SSA Commissioner meeting is at 5:30pm on Wednesday, May 13 via Zoom.