

SSA Meeting Minutes: June 3, 2020

ATTENDEES

SSA Commissioners present: Saima Causevic, Mark Aistrope, Kareeshma Ali, Stephanie Fishel, David Maletin, Daniella Cornue, Andrew Levin

Staff present: Alexa Schutz, Thomas Applegate, Dalia Aragon

SSA Commissioners absent: n/a

Guest: Carol Maher (resident)

Meeting called to order at 5:35pm by Chair, Mark Aistrope.

Approval of minutes: 1st Maletin, 2nd Ali; all in favor with a spelling correction to "Fishel."

Approval of financials: 1st Fishel, 2nd Ali; all in favor.

From a comparison and year-to-date perspective, Schutz advised that we have not spent as much as we would in a normal year due to COVID-19's impacts, especially on summer events and reduced days of trash collection. We are still closely monitoring expenditures as the budgeted levy collection for the second bill in summer is anticipated to be lower due to COVID. Overall, we are in good standing, running lean, keeping on pace for a \$40k carryover for 2021, plus several facade rebates to be cut in weeks ahead. Applegate explained that the May financials are preliminary, not accounting for the effects of the pandemic nor NRC's PPP funds; NRC's May invoice to be paid in the following months. Group agreed that more guidance is needed for PPP loan forgiveness and coaching for businesses.

2021 Draft Budget: line-by-line, Schutz went over the proposed final draft due June 5th. \$40,000 budgeted carryover for 2021 compared to our past carryovers of \$69,000 which allows us to allocate \$29k to other SSA services as \$40k is substantial to get us through Q1 2021 expenses.

Discussion on rightsizing our contracts, for example litter abatement (remove/reduce lower-impact services like leaf removal) and snow removal (moving away a large contract to paying per occurrence) all of which saves funds and allows us to allocate to new or other services/projects. Thus, the total 2021 budget has slightly decreased in comparison to 2020.

The following rough dollar amounts were proposed for the categories from the levy, carryover, and collections:

- **Customer Attraction - \$32k**
 - \$20k for special events, continue the banner program to results in banners/brackets on every SSA light pole by mid 2021, holiday ribbons on trees, swag and district branding opportunities.
- **Public Way Aesthetics - \$217k**
 - Continue 2 seasons of landscaping/new planters, facade rebates set at \$85k, public art increased to \$15k, snow removal per occurrence at 2" threshold at \$22k, \$56k in litter abatement.
 - Sidewalk Maintenance: after much discussion, the group concluded that 5 days for summer trash pickup, 3 days in winter.
 - Snow Removal: shift to paying per occurrence (not contract) at 2" threshold which is around 8 cleanings and 1 emergency de-icer.



o We have identified expenditures in the budget, like Wayfinding, that may need to be reserved for carryover for FY2022

• Sustainability and Public Places - \$15k

- o Continue adding limited street amenities like garbage cans, benches, bike racks
- o \$5k to remove tree grates and mulching (verse tree grate expansion/cuts proposed by CDOT).
- o NEW: Sidewalk Patio Cafe Rebate for \$3,600 in \$600 rebates for patio fees; this will encourage new and renewing businesses to apply for outdoor seating.

• Economic and Business Development - \$76k

- o Site Marketing includes design, branding, marketing, community/business district advertisement, photography, video, general PR at \$11k; preferred vendor is LimeRed Studio (who did our district banners, brand guidelines).
- o SSA Designation at \$45k for reconstitution/expansion; SB Friedman is preferred vendor.
- o We have identified expenditures in the budget, like Strategic Planning, that may need to be reserved for carryover for FY2022

• Safety Programs - \$4k

- o Rebates for security cameras at 75% of costs with a cap of \$1k rebate

• SSA Management - \$28k

- o Most administration costs are allocated at 28% to SSA against total NRC costs.

• Personnel - \$83k

- o Thomas 20%, Alexa 60%, Dalia 40% allocated to SSA; calculated at 27.6% of the possible 30% cap limitation for SSA management and personnel categories.

Snapshot of proposed FY2021 SSA60 budget:

Total 2021 Budget: \$457,712
Total 2020 Levy: \$404,144
Estimated Tax Rate: 0.3723%
SSA Admin Funds: 27.63% (cap 30%)

Motion to approve SSA 2021 budget draft submission due June 5 (until new EAVs posted):

1st by Ali , 2nd Causevic by; all in favor, no abstentions.

Motion to approve SSA60 services outlined above and North River Commission as the Service Provider for SSA 60 for 2021:

1st by Fishel, 2nd Maletin by; all in favor, no abstentions.

Business Safety Updates: Aragon informed the group that staff were out in the district after the initial night of civil unrest to survey any damaged businesses due to looting. All in all, there were no more than a dozen businesses damaged, mostly chains like Walgreens and TMobile stores across NRC’s service area. In the SSA, there were a total of 5 businesses looted, 3 of which were small businesses. Staff have been in communication with the 17th District Chicago Police Department and their Business Liaison Officer Ricciardi, and encouraged all businesses to report any suspicious activity, submit police reports, and follow the City’s curfew for their safety and the safety of their staff.



New SSA Rebate Programs:

1. Emergency Board Up Grant Program

Aragon informed the group that due to the civil unrest taking place across the city and some incidents in our district, staff have decided and been advised by DPD to take immediate action and support businesses who are interested in boarding up their storefronts to prevent and protect their businesses from damage. This grant will cover labor and materials up to \$1,000 to any business who applies and meets eligibility requirements, including taking down of boards before receiving a reimbursement. Funds will come from Facade line item due to a decrease in interest in the facade program and funds for investments post-COVID.

2. Sidewalk Cafe Permit Fee Rebate Program

Aragon shared with the group that staff have launched this new program to encourage businesses within the SSA to apply for sidewalk cafe permits. The SSA will reimburse businesses the permit fee which at the moment remains at \$600 but might be reduced in the near future by the city. Staff hope that this will provide some support to eligible businesses impacted by COVID-19 and encourage the community to get back into the district as businesses slowly reopen.

COVID-19 and Other Updates:

- The City is moving forward with Phase 3, therefore outdoor dining/patios are allowed.
- Curfew is still in place so businesses should be closed by 9 pm, 11 pm once curfew is lifted.
- Honore Storage has also offered up their side wall for a mural to the SSA. Staff to review available funds for this opportunity at a key location in our community.
- Window art is still in process, and we are hoping to have the clings up by mid July.
- The City is also creating a permit called Expanded Outdoor Dining which we would like to explore throughout the SSA district. Staff recommend starting with a parking lot which is a quicker, easier approach compared to shutting down a street. Staff would love support from the Commission in identifying ideal lots in the district that can be pursued, for example, Surge's parking lot, Noon O Kabab's lot(s), Salam's strip mall. Causevic recommended trying CTA's parking lot. Applegate explained that staff is looking to start the conversation and learn from businesses what is needed and what would work best. Schutz to pursue this opportunity and find targeted locations.

Public Input:

- Maher had a question on SSA funds being moved around to accommodate for PPP forgiveness. Applegate explained that the City has been advising on this matter and will work with us. Staff advised that Emergency Board Up funds are coming from facade line and any leftover security camera rebate funds. Staff advised that one of the former owners of Tortuga's has a new partner for the new Pisco Peruvian restaurant.
- Fishel advised that at Kedzie and Belle Plaine a planter has a tree growing out of it. Requested staff to ask Arun's Thai to trim.
- Cornue and Fishel asked if there is any way that the city can remove the bench at Irving Park and Kedzie to avoid the homeless from planting camp at Le Village.
- Applegate informed the group about a grant that will be announced soon, Bridge to Rebuilding. This aims to help our businesses to rebuild, it will be a lottery.