

Greater Ravenswood SSA #31
Minutes of Commissioners Meeting
Thursday, February 28th, 2013
1802 W. Berteau Avenue, Suite 102

Attending:

Diane Walch
Dr. Andrea Stein
Paul Karchestke
Stephanie Spiegel
David Berger
Ross Outten

Absent:

Vince Saverino
Cleetus Freedman
Bill Helm

Staff:

Charles Daas
Cecilia Diaz

Guest:

Jacob Blanton

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 2:05p.m. Introductions were made around the room for Jacob since he is intending to join SSA#31 as a new commissioner.

January Minutes

January 16th meeting minutes were reviewed. Changes recommended for 2013 meeting schedule meeting at 1:00pm but will be changed to **2:00pm** unless otherwise approved.

Review Sidewalk Cleaning Bids

Charles provided a spreadsheet with comparison of vendors and cost for all members to review. Consideration to have additional public garbage pick-up since now the 47th Ward is under the grid trash system. Both the City of Chicago (and Alderman Pawar) requested SSAs assist with public garbage removal.

- 1) Commissioners inquired whether we need to arrange for public garbage pickup in certain areas (e.g. last Fall, it was Damen, Lawrence and Montrose), or the entire SSA footprint?

2) Should Neumann Family Services be retained or do we opt for a new vendor?

Charles said that the SSA#31 budget (\$48,000 a year for sidewalk cleaning) could cover the sidewalk cleaning and public garbage pick-up under the Cleanstreet proposal, as well as the purchase of 10 garbage cans. Diane requested that we find additional funds in the budget to purchase 20 cans and asked if the additional trash cans would be picked up by city; Charles indicated yes. Cost of can tabled.

Commissioners discussed renewing Neumann but acknowledged the difficulty of public garbage pick-up with their core disabled staff. Another factor was the \$1,568 per week cost, a significant difference with the \$1,050 estimate from Cleanstreet. Commissioners discussed the possibility of obtaining another vendor to do the public garbage pickup and retaining Neumann, or just retaining one vendor to do it all. David suggested asking Neumann to lower their cost to \$1,100 to be competitive with Cleanstreet. Ross mentioned the need for trash pickup on the south section of Winnemac Park (the northern border of the SSA) and recommended a partnership with the Winnemac Park Advisory Council to share in the cost. Diane recommended that this should be an RCC task. Commissioners unanimously approved subcontract with Cleanstreet.

Budget Variance/Cash Flow

Charles shared the cash flow and budget variance for the commissioners to review. We have a current cash balance \$221,005.95. Charles reported minimal activity for the month. Only significant expense was Tovar Snow Removal for \$13,750. We had a discussion about future snow removal – to inquire about flat fee or per occurrence, especially given the warmer winters. Tovar is in its 3rd and last year of its contract. Diane would like to add the service of salting sidewalks as part of a snow removal contract.

Retail Study

Charles mentioned that this was originally budgeted for 2013. SSA#31 would like to deal with commercial vacancy, likely a result of the 2007-2008 Recession, and the large supply of small mixed-use retail spaces (e.g. Lawrence and Clark Street) which are inadequate for modern retailers. On a citywide basis, Chicago has an oversupply of commercial inventory (estimated at 30%). Future projects which may impact Ravenswood's commercial vacancy are Mariano's Supermarket on Lawrence Ave and the Lycee (French School) on Damen and Wilson in the old Ravenswood Hospital site. SSA#31 retail study will directly address the vacancy, and examine the underlying reasons that led to the vacancy. One strategy to attract more retailers would be to promote the macro purchasing power of Ravenswood to attract businesses to the area.

Dr. Stein recalled that Melanie Kahl had received a grant to conduct a study of the retail areas. Charles also mentioned that the city conducted a study along Lawrence and this will serve as a baseline for our study. One initial effort is to develop a vacancy database list to share with prospective tenants or developers. Another strategy is the concept of installing "pop-up stores" in vacant spaces. Ross shared how Brew Camp (on Damen Avenue) got its start as a pop-up store. Commissioners acknowledged that we need to collect information before a strategy can be fully formed. The timeline is about a year to

complete the study. Ross mentioned that he would like to see a study on retaining businesses in the area as well.

Paul and David noted that our first test area could be along Clark Street since there are challenges with wholesale merchants on that street. Little information is available about the largely absentee property owners of these buildings. Given the number of small storefronts, commissioners inquired whether there was adequate room for an anchor development. David said it was hard to attract business in that area. Paul added that “more restaurants and coffee shops are needed.” All agreed this is a good effort.

Garbage Cans

Charles shared pictures of proposed cans from Accurate Perforating. The can features an opening on the side for easy retrieval and rubberized coating to prevent rust. It can be any color but standardized with a uniform image or name like Ravenswood or SSA#31. The can design would tie in with our banners and bike racks. For an additional \$250, it can bear the name of businesses. At about \$1,200 each, Charles discussed getting 10 cans to be distributed around Ravenswood. Diane inquired if the name of businesses on cans would be ideal.

Bike Parking

Charles negotiated with Michael Prince of Beyond Design to design the racks pro-bono. They would use a local metal shop called D+J Metal Craft for fabrication. Each rack would have its own history plate correlating to where it would be placed. RCC would provide a map of current bike racks and proposed locations. We will also be working with Pat Butler of Lakeview Ravenswood Historical Society for that information. Charles announced that RCC would conduct a historical walk with American Planning Association participants in April. Diane asked if cost would go down on racks if there would be an increase on the volume ordered. Charles will have to confirm.

2012 Audit

Charles provided a copy of the audit service from Eilts and Associates. Diane asked if same vendor can be Auditor and bookkeeper and there is no conflict of interest. Charles will follow-up with this with Tony Guillen. Commissioners approved Eilts and Associates for the 2012 Audit.

New Business

Dr. Stein asked about the next SSA event for the quarter. We discussed the possibility of a wine stroll, pop-up art show or a kick-off event for the retail study that would use the old City Provisions space to promote commercial vacancies. We need an updated list of vacant spaces in the area.

The meeting was adjourned by motion of Diane Walch at 3:15 p.m.

Recorder: Cecilia Diaz