

**Special Service Area #61  
SSA Board of Commissioners Meeting**

**Minutes, September 21, 2016  
Chicago Innovation Exchange  
1462 E 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, Chicago, IL**

**Present:** Greg Guttman, Allison Hartman, Mary Rogel, George Rumsey, Brian Tijan

**Attended by Conference Call:** Jacqueline Jackson (dialed in at 11:38)

**Absent:** James Hanson, James Hennessy, Michael McGarry, Charles Newsome

**Also Present:** Eric Reaves, Wendy Williams

The meeting was called to order at 11:13 a.m. by Vice Chair Rumsey, who presided because Chair McGarry was out of town. A quorum was not present.

**Minutes.** Minutes for the August 17, 2016, meeting were approved with one correction. Under *Financial Report*, line 4, “these payments” is changed to “the payments.” Minutes for the June 15 meeting were approved as circulated.

**Financial Report.** Treasurer Guttman reported that \$122,000 was received shortly after the August meeting, which is the latest we have begun to receive tax revenues. Currently we have approximately \$97,000 in the bank, and we have enough funds to cover budgeted expenses through the end of the year. It is expected that we will not receive more than \$267,000 total in tax revenues.

So that we will have a better understanding of how to budget Special Events, which is a category we overspent this year, Chair McGarry and Treasurer Guttman have requested a breakdown of expenses for each Special Event that we funded, plus a budget forecast. This report is already being prepared, and it will be presented annually at the October meeting.

Director Reaves reported that we spent \$1000 more than we budgeted for the Silver Room Block Party. He is projecting a little carryover for the entire budget. He also reported that there is a segregated bank account for the Farmers Market. The surplus so far from the Market is \$4090. The University is paying for the music at the Market, and it is expected to do so again next year via a contribution to the Vitality Committee.

**Updates.**

**Farmers Market.** Director Reaves reported that the average number of vendors at the market this year has been 16, compared with 13 last year. The farmers are happy with the

coupon program. A total of 303 coupons were redeemed, for a value of \$2084. There were 686 page “likes” on the website for the coupon program. He also reported that the Hyde Park Herald would like us to advertise in the paper at a cost of \$900 for a ½ page ad. While we would like to support our local newspaper, advertising there brings little return. For example, for the coupon program at the Farmers Market, most of the coupons redeemed were those that were handed out on cards. The next most frequently redeemed coupons were those printed out from the website. Those clipped from the Herald were the smallest category of redemptions.

A discussion ensued about the tendency of shoppers to shop in only one leg of the market. The market appears small and spread out to people entering, so there appears to be little to entice them to explore. It is a lot of walking for little apparent gain. The market cannot be consolidated in one leg because the University has placed restrictions on where vendors may place tents. Commissioner Hartman requested that the University make a presentation to the Commissioners about market restrictions so that we can have better information when making decisions about the market.

***Service Provider Contract.*** Vice Chair Rumsey announced that we will need to renew the Service Provider contract next month.

***Industry Award for DTHP.*** Director Reaves announced that Otherwise was named as one of the top 100 entries in a competition sponsored by The Society of Typographic Arts for its development of the Downtown Hyde Park logo. We will be sending a press release to the Herald, and the New York Times will carry a story about it.

***Flower Baskets.*** Director Reaves reported that Brickman was purchased by Bright Star, who is providing 75% less service. The dead flowers have been removed and what remains now are only the grasses. Director Reaves is looking for a remedy, since we have a 2-year contract with them. Secretary Rogel suggested that the winter evergreens could be put in early if the weather is cool enough and if they are watered until the weather turns cold.

***Jazz Fest.*** The Jazz Fest is this weekend at multiple locations throughout Hyde Park.

***Website.*** Director Reaves reported that the website analytics are showing that people are looking for information about events first and about businesses second. Vice Chair Rumsey examined the analytics and made some corrections. For example, the national average for the bounce rate, which is the number of people who come to the site and do not look at any page beyond the home page, is 60%. Our average is 5.97%, which is unbelievably low. Several reasons were suggested during the ensuing discussion. People may be coming to the website for specific information and stay to find it. A high bounce rate is often the result of poor design so that people cannot find what they want. Our website is performing really well. The Commissioners expressed an interest in getting more information from the web analytics for the end of the year since the information is available.

***Summer Concert Series.*** The summer concert series at Nichols Park ended on September 10. We did not support the series this year to the same extent as we did last year, but

Director Reaves is expecting that the outcomes will be similar. He will report statistics when they are available.

***Aesthetics at Nichols Park.*** Vue53 has now taken down their scaffolding, and we can begin thinking about beautifying the area. In the discussion that followed, Commissioners expressed their concern about the vivid contrast between the east and west ends of the SSA District on 53<sup>rd</sup> Street. The area around Nichols Park is particularly a mess and will remain so until spring because of people walking through the mud to get to their cars and to cross the street. We have funds in next year's budget to work on this area, but it may be necessary to ask Commissioner Hanson to do something temporary this year that we will repay. The Commissioners like the idea of pavers from the sidewalk to the street rather than plantings because of the high foot traffic in the area. Options will be considered by a committee consisting of Director Reaves, Vice Chair Rumsey, and Commissioners Hartman and Hanson.

***Service Businesses.*** Now that summer and most of its activities are over, Director Reaves is scheduled to start talking again with the service businesses in the District starting Monday, September 25. He will talk with them about what we are, what we do, and how to get in touch with us; and he will distribute the round blue badges that identify businesses in the SSA District.

***Macy's.*** Macy's headquarters in Cincinnati has given the green light for a small Macy's to open on 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, but the Macy's manager on the ground has dropped the ball. The space is being held for them, but a new liaison is needed to move this project forward. Macy's brick and mortar stores are suffering, which is why they have agreed to pilot a different type of store in the neighborhood. It would be a place, for example, where customers could come to pick up orders that they had placed on line.

***Announcements.*** Secretary Rogel called attention to the large "lake" that forms under the 53<sup>rd</sup> Street viaduct roadway when it rains. The "lake" is growing in size and now encompasses the westbound lanes as well as the eastbound lanes. Director Reaves will report it to the City.

A question was raised as to whether the Farmers Market could be extended another month, into November.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:13 p.m. Because of the problems we have been having with double booking at the Hyatt, all future meetings are scheduled for the Chicago Innovation Exchange (CIE), 1462 E 53rd Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Jackson Park Room. Our next meeting will be October 19 at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary J. Rogel, Secretary, SSA 61