



**Special Service Area #61
SSA Board of Commissioners Minutes
Tuesday, January 27, 2026
Polsky Exchange North – Jackson Park Room**

Present: S. Karim, A. Marks, C. Newsome, J. Nurss, G. Robnett, M. Rogel, G. Rumsey.

Absent (excused): L. Brown, C. Casey

Also Present: Rod Sawyer (SSA Program Manager), Peter Cassel (MAC Properties), Kenny Newman, Mike McGarry (SECC), Dante Barnes, Naomi Thompson (SECC), Seyi Kuku (HPCC), Diane Burnham, Dr. CJ Mimee,

Chair Rumsey called the meeting of SSA #61 to order at 11:08am with a quorum being present.

Reading/Approval of the Minutes:

The minutes for the December 9th meeting were accepted as presented.

Questions and Comments from Guests:

K. Newman – expressed Nichols Park with a lack of a budget, SSA61 should look more favorably upon the park. Due to the increased traffic on 53rd street, three additional bike racks are needed on the parkway and the SSA should advocate for lights on the tennis courts. Also, Harold Washington Park needs lights as well and the Nichols Park athletic facilities need to be available at all times for the community.

Response - R. Sawyer, Program Manager – SSA boundaries are limited so tax dollars can't be used. Suggests Mr. Newman speak with the park leadership (NPAC).

M. McGarry – Since the TIF expired and the area has the budget, it's the right time to think of long-term planning. Pleased to see the funds in the current budget are being utilized wisely. However, take into consideration long-term projects that were previously discussed but not implemented due to limited funds (2012).

Response – Chair Rumsey – Glad some things have been accomplished, however there is more to do such as lights in the viaduct for safety.



P. Cassel – MAC Properties has purchased the property Vue53 and looks forward to working with SSA61.

SSA Financials – Chair Rumsey, R. Sawyer, Program Manager

Financials were accepted presented.

- 2025 Dec/Year End 2025 P&L Summary
Chair Rumsey questioned why the ‘Due to SECC’ amount was so high. Mike McGarry, SECC Finance Committee Member, offered the following explanation:
2023 - \$5K outstanding
2024 - \$5K – missed payment
SECC accountant wrote these amounts off due to collectability. Commissioner Robnett suggested that the SSA make SECC whole, if it can.
- Tax Disbursement – To date totals \$18K with outstanding expenses of \$23.6K exceeding cash on hand. The estimated tax disbursement for 2025 is \$120k with \$100k expected.
- Tax assessments are expected to go out March/April and the disbursements may be received by the end of May 2026. The budget amendment is pending based on tax disbursements. SSA61 would prefer not to have to do a budget amendment.
- 2025 SSA Audit Season Begins – the audit cannot begin until 2025 disbursements are complete.

Program Committee Report – Commissioner Rogel, Chair

- Pilot Program – Rodent abatement and trash bins – Rod is in discussions with Nichols Park and the vendor regarding these items. Timeline to begin is 2026 and will work with Scott Mosak at UC to coordinate efforts.
- Banners – change from vinyl to mesh. Reviewing the budget as maintenance will exceed current budgeted line item. City has new banner program which may/will limit the number of poles that can be utilized. Commissioner Karim inquired about the stock of banners on hand. Wants to ensure the SSA doesn’t have product that wouldn’t be used and suggest orders be placed as needed. Commissioner Rogel asked is there a way for the City of work with the SSA’s throughout the city and that corporate sponsors that wish to advertise within a business district be on the SSA’s banner.



- Art/Mural Maintenance – Due to the graffiti and pigeons, the artwork would have to be soft power washed no less than twice annually.
- Wayfinding Signage – Nine signs were installed throughout the community resulting in approximately \$100k investment in the area. Those installed within the footprint will be factored into the budget.

SSA Program Manager Report – R. Sawyer

- SSA #61 Officer Positions – accepted by acclamation. Effective March 2026
- Financial Interest Statements for Commissioners – Ethics Statement (County) will be sent to the commissioners soon by the city per our lesson with Jennifer Magallanes. All must attend ECTD training per the directive of the City. The following are due: Eric Valdez, CJ Mimee, Charles Newsome and Suni Karim. The training is approximately an hour in length.
- February Commissioners Meeting – a meeting may be necessary to vote on the budget. Will keep everyone posted.

Chairman Updates – G. Rumsey

Thanked the body for the service of twelve years, six years as Chair. Has one year remaining as a commissioner and will remain active.

Local news – Commissioner Marks shared that Mahari Restaurant received the Best Neighborhood Restaurant Award. Sanders BBQ is slated to occupy the ground floor of the former Promontory venue space. Barnes & Noble is coming to the space just south of Trader Joe's. Commissioner Karim shared the former Ulta Beauty space which is 7,000 sq ft is available and looking for suggestions.

The next Commissioners' meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 24, at 11:00 am. The meeting was adjourned at 12:03pm

Respectfully submitted,
Raymonde Vance, Admin