



**Special Service Area #61
SSA Board of Commissioners Minutes
Tuesday, April 28, 2026
Polsky Exchange North – Jackson Park Room**

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

Absent: L. Brown and C. Casey

Also Present: Rod Sawyer (SSA Program Manager), Diane Burnham (SECC), CJ Mimee (pending commissioner), Peter Cassel (MAC Properties), Veronica Markham (pending commissioner/MAC), Eric Valdez (pending commissioner/HPB), Kenny Newman, Naomi Thompson (SECC), and Carol Moy

Chair Newsome 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 March 24th meeting were approved with the necessary corrections.

Questions and Comments from Guests: *(limited to 3 minutes due to length of agenda)*

K. Newman – feels the University has a lack of leadership on the community level and feels the Obama Presidential Center (OPC) will not be the economic driver for the community everyone expects it to be. Due to the increase in visitors to the area, four (4) additional bike racks are needed on the west end by Nichols Park and east of the Metra tracks on 55th street and hopefully this body will address the matter. Also, would like the commissioners to send a letter of support for increased lighting on the tennis court in Nichols Park. **Response** – *Mr. Sawyer informed Mr. Newman that is not within the scope of authority for this body and the issue must be addressed with the Chicago Park District.* It was suggested that Mr. Newman provide a letter to the body (SSA 61 Commissioners) and the South East Chicago Commission (SECC).

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

Financials were accepted presented. Going forward the program manager has requested the accountant be present at all meetings to present the financials.



- Budget Tracker – accepted as presented
- 2025 Audit – The audit deadline has been extended due to the delay in the county reports. \$74k has been incurred and will hopefully be classified as late by the county and funds can be used this year.
- 2027 Workplan – Program Committee is in the process of determining projects and working on a preliminary workplan for the 2027 projects. The target date for the draft workplan is June; vote on a final workplan by July 15th.

Program Committee Report – Commissioner Rogel, Chair

- Accepting recommendations/suggestions for projects, particularly multi-year projects are welcomed.

For the record: Chair Newsome stated he was okay with pending commissioners providing feedback/comments – Markham, Mimee, and Valdez

- Request for Proposals (RFP's)– Artist Services and Landscape Services:
 - **Lake Park Median RFP** – The commissioners did not reach a decision on the proposal because they needed additional information. Commissioner Rogel asked why the names of the competing companies were not being disclosed. Commissioner Karim questioned the variance between the price ranges. The body was informed that Company A responded with more detail to the RFP than Company B, which didn't fully respond to the RFP in total. Questions posed – (1) with the budget at \$200K, would the committee have the authority to move forward in approving the agreement/contract once the program committee has done its due diligence? Commissioner Rogel, Program Committee Chair, stated with the present quote it would be difficult to make an informed decision. Rod suggested the companies make a presentation to the commissioners. (2) What exactly wasn't responded to by the RFP? (3) Is this the same RFP as before? **Yes** (4) Can the companies present at the monthly meeting in May? **Rod will provide answers to those questions.**
 - **Artist Call for Services RFP** – Approved to move forward for the mural project.



- **Proposals – Flower Baskets, Sidewalk Power Washing and Utility Art Box:**
 - **Landscape Proposal for Flower Baskets RFP** – This proposal was not placed out for a bid in 2026; however, will be subjected to the bid process for 2027. The Commissioners previously agreed to place some contracts/agreements for bid in one year and others in alternate years. These will include the labor cost increase for 2026 and require approval since the contracts/agreements amounted over the \$5k threshold. Moved and seconded by Commissioners Marks and Nurss respectively and the motion passed unanimously.
 - **Powerwashing RFP** – The City has scheduled cleanings but will also respond to special requests. Procedures are in place to ensure areas are neither overlooked nor overwashed. The Spring and Fall 2026 proposals were moved and seconded by Commissioners Rogel and Marks, respectively, and the motion passed unanimously.
 - **Utility Art Box** – Program Committee will review and present to the Commissioners for knowledge basis. SSA61 will be the caretaker for the art and Chair Newsome encouraged the body to share their thoughts.

SSA Program Manager Report – R. Sawyer

- **SSA61 Q1 Results** – There was not much activity this quarter. Department of Planning and Development (DPD) has requested the 2027 Workplan be submitted. A deliverable of this process is to meet with the Alders (4th and 5th wards) and once reviewed/approved by the appropriate persons, the workplan is to be signed by the Chair.
- **Hyde Park Farmers Market** – Summer market season begins on Sunday, June 7th, 10am-3pm. A new manager has been hired and began about a week ago. Encourage all to attend and opening day details are forthcoming.
- **4th on 53rd** – Logistics are in place, there will be a float, and we would like to have many of the Commissioners in attendance.



Chairman Updates – C. Newsome

Going forward we will monitor projects more closely and to “bring your thinking caps” for we have a lot to do. We want to be impactful in our work and make long-term positive differences. Commissioner Rogel supported the comment by encouraging ongoing feedback from each person and invited them to attend the Program Committee meetings to get in depth information on projects. Announced that Commissioner Nurss is now on the committee and thinks his addition is great.

Rod shared this was the SECC Intern, Naomi Thompson’s last meeting as her internship concludes at the close of the week and all wished her well in her future endeavors.

Local news - Commissioner Marks reminded all the Summer Music Festival will begin in June as well as Jazz in the Court.

The next Commissioners’ meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 26th, at 11:00 am. The meeting was adjourned at 12:10pm

Respectfully submitted,
Raymonde Vance, Admin