

Clark Street SSA #23 Annual Meeting Minutes – Wednesday April 11, 2007
Lincoln Park Chamber of Commerce, 1925 N. Clybourn, Suite 301

Present: Commissioners: Doug Schuberth, Steve Quick, Bruce Longanecker, Simpson Gold, Julia Bienias
Absent: Phil Auerbach, Bob Berliner, David Schmeissing, Cathy Gallanis
LPCC Staff: Kate Knudsen, Kim Schilf

Call to Order

- I. Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 4:10 p.m. by Schuberth.

Approval of Minutes

- II. Approval of 2/7/07 meeting minutes

Motion by Longanecker to approve 2/7/07 meeting minutes. Motion seconded by Quick. Bienias abstained.
Motion approved.

Public Forum

Reports

- III. Financial – *Knudsen*
 - a. Commission reviewed YTD Balance Sheet and the 2007 Budget vs. Actual.

Special Orders

- IV. Election of Officers
 - a. Commissioners reviewed the 2006 slate of officers; discussed the respective duties outlined in the bylaws, and who would be willing to act in each role.
 - b. Slate of officers for 2007
 - Douglas Schuberth – Chair
 - Bruce Longanecker – First Vice Chair/Treasurer
 - Julia Bienias – Second Vice Chair
 - Steve Quick – Third Vice Chair/Secretary

Motion by Gold to elect the 2007 slate of officers. Motion seconded by Bienias. Unanimously approved.

- V. Commissioner Vacancies
 - a. Knudsen mentioned that commissioner terms are up in June. Gallanis and Auerbach have decided not to continue their volunteer service. Schmeissing will be resigning. Berliner expressed his willingness to be involved for another term, though his work has been taking him out of town frequently. Berliner asked that the other commissioners evaluate whether his continued participation is in the SSA's best interest given his time constraints.
 - b. Knudsen asked the commissioners to think of other potential nominees. She also contacted the Alderman's office for suggestions. She will be soliciting nominees to fill the slots by the June meeting.

Old Business

- VI. Banner/Landscaping Update – *Knudsen*
 - a. Banners – New seasonal designs are being discussed with the graphic designer. Knudsen has been in communication with the City about banner hardware.

- b. Landscaping – Brickman has removed basket liners from hanging baskets and is growing flowers. Baskets will be installed May 25. Knudsen has confirmed with the Alderman’s office that the final phase of streetscape landscaping (32 baskets from Belden – Armitage) is underway for the remaining hanging baskets.

- VII. Phase III Construction Update – *Knudsen*
 - a. At the end of February, all meters between Armitage and Diversey were changed to provide one half hour of time for each quarter with a two hour limit. They installed at least one flashing zone (2 car lengths - 15 minutes) on each block. Signs were installed for morning rush hour restrictions (west side of Clark only), corner clearances and snow routes to areas that were still missing those signs.

- VIII. SSA Expansion – *Schilf*
 - a. Schilf explained that the preparation work for expansion needs to take place soon in order to put the request before the city council in the fall. The DPD still has not been able to provide the SSA with the necessary information from the county. Schilf and Knudsen will discuss with DPD how to best proceed.

- IX. Annual Letter – *Knudsen*
 - a. Knudsen has written a rough draft of an annual letter. Once the Commissioners confirm the 2007 agenda and action items she will revise and send out to Commissioners for approval prior to mass mailing. Knudsen stated that along with the annual letter she will mail a letter about becoming an SSA Commissioner, and a survey soliciting constituent feedback. The commissioners reviewed the 2007 work plan and the annual letter.
 - b. Knudsen asked the commissioners about event dates.
 - i. Commissioners discussed last year’s events: how much they cost versus the benefits to merchants and residents derived from the events. It was generally agreed that the large scale events are not the direction the commission wishes to go in 2007. They expressed interest in smaller scale, merchant organized events. They allowed for the possibility of revisiting the large events in the future.

- IX. Etching – *Knudsen*
 - a. Knudsen showed the commissioners a flyer she created containing information about acid etching and vendors who repair and prevent etching. She will distribute the flyers along Clark. She also briefly described the graffiti program that SSA #8 has created.

- X. Pressure Washing – *Knudsen*
 - a. Commissioners reviewed pressure washing bids and discussed the process from the previous year. They recalled that Ace of Spray did a good job last year. The vendor did a good job of accommodating pedestrians, and the sidewalks looked good. They agreed that Ace of Spray did a good job for a fair price. They suggested that the first week in May is a good time to schedule the pressure washing.

Motion by Bienias to approve Ace of Spray as the vendor to pressure wash Clark Street. Motion seconded by Quick. Unanimously approved.

New Business

- XI. 2007 Vision and Action Plan for Clark - *Knudsen*
 - a. Knudsen distributed the 2007 Scope of Services for the Clark Street SSA as a reference for the discussion. Commissioners took a moment to review the work plan.

- b. Commissioners discussed Clark Street challenges. Some commissioners think that Clark needs more every day type businesses to attract more residents to the street. Some think Clark Street businesses do not advertise and promote appropriately to area residents.
- c. A commissioner stressed the importance of reaching out to residents to ask them what businesses they would like to see on Clark, and why they do, or do not shop on Clark. Though a survey may not yield a high number of responses at least some responses could be indicators of residents' opinions and ideas about the retail district.
- d. It was agreed that residents and business owners are generally happy with the services being provided by the SSA (street sweeping, snow removal, etc).
- e. There was some disagreement about whether Clark lacks retailers that cater to every day needs or lacks specialty retailers that attract shoppers from the immediate area as well as greater Chicagoland.

XII. Economic Development/Vacancies - *Quick*

- a. Quick described a meeting he, Knudsen and Schilf attended that was organized by Alderman Daley. The meeting was attended by a select group of community members brought together to discuss the high number of vacancies on Clark Street. The meeting provided some perspective on the challenge of filling existing retail space on Clark. The loss of anchor tenants like Tower Records, Blockbuster, Express; the absentee landlord; zoning; the small square footage of available storefronts; the lack of parking; these issues were discussed at great length. The group also talked about economic development and the role of the SSA. The group expressed keen interest in having the SSA research and create economic development materials that could be distributed to commercial real estate agents to aid in the effort to attract new tenants to the street.
- b. The commission generally agreed that Clark Street does not have the same cache that other retail districts in Chicago have. Many of the wealthy residents do not shop Clark; they leave the area to do their shopping on the Gold Coast, or Armitage, or out of town. The commissioners questioned whether that can change. They also discussed that Clark Street residents comprise a wide variety of ages and income levels. They are a heterogeneous group which is hard to define. Some commissioners see an older demographic in their stores while some see a younger demographic, but everyone agreed it is a fairly diverse population.
- c. Whether economic development activities would aid in filling vacancies is questioned. Each property owner is not concerned with retail mix on the street but whether the specific tenant would be financially stable. This is market driven and outside the control of anything the SSA could do.
- d. Schilf mentioned that economic development activities are in the work plan and suggested to the commission that they determine how to move forward with this task.
- e. Some commissioners think that the marketing element should come first.
- f. The marketing and branding studies completed by Dreaming Tree for the SSA contain much of the information that would be included in the economic development materials. The SSA could provide this to the group assembled by the Alderman.
- g. The commissioners think that the SSA has made positive changes on Clark. And that the other group perhaps might best contribute to Clark Street's vitality by undertaking activities like pressing the alderman to approve more sidewalk cafes.

XIII. Marketing and Advertising - *Knudsen*

- a. Knudsen has gathered information about a specialized Money Mailer and created a mock newsletter for commissioners to review.

- Printing costs for 10,000 4 page 8 ½ x 11 black & white newsletters (folded in half for mailing) is about \$1300.
 - Money Mailer: what Belmont put together cost each business about \$120. We could partially subsidize ads in regular mailing if we put our logo on it. We could also do a specialty mailing - maybe. Not much more expensive than regular. Would have to send this out in the fall due to their schedule. We would likely only be interested in mailing to a single zone or 10,000 residential households.
- b. Commissioners discussed what could be in the newsletter. They would like to use the piece to promote small events. Merchants along the street partner up to host an event or host their own event. This could be anything from a running club to a cooking class to a wine tasting. The first event could be a partnership between Steve Quick Jewelers and Basil Leaf Café or Sage, “Dinner and Diamonds”. The event could include champagne and appetizers at Basil Leaf or Sage – in each glass Quick could place a gem and one of them would be real. People would eat at Basil Leaf or Sage and then do something at Quick’s shop. Other merchants subsequently would create events of their own. This would foster a sense of community and bring residents to the street. The first few events would have to be lead by more sophisticated merchants who would be able to create and host events that would generate a lot of excitement. Then the other merchants would have a better understanding of the sort of events they could host. Perhaps the events could take place one block at a time to make sure the entire SSA is covered. The merchants, not the SSA program manager, would be the organizers and implementers of the events. The SSA would promote and assist.
 - c. The newsletters would be mailed out four times per year. Stores could also have them on display at checkout counters. They could also be in the lobbies of high rise buildings. If fifty percent of residents take a look at it and 5 percent participate that could make a big impact on the businesses along Clark.
 - d. The commissioners would like to pursue both the quarterly newsletter and the Clark by the Park by the Park branded Money Mailer. The Money Mailer promotes a sense of community identity by having the specialized branding on the envelope and being exclusive to Clark Street businesses.
 - e. The commissioners agreed that it is important to qualify what can be included in the newsletter. Sales and coupons exclusively would not foster a sense of community. Knudsen and Schilf will put together a list of criteria that will frame and define the type of marketing/promotional piece the newsletter will be.
 - Community news, updates, short articles from merchants, street cleaning info, how to become a commissioner, etc.
 - f. Commissioners think the newsletter should be priority one over any economic development activities.
 - g. Commissioners reached a general consensus that many different avenues of outreach should be tried.
 - h. Knudsen will get quotes on the design and production of a color four page 8 ½ x 11 newsletter. She will obtain samples for commissioner review. She will define newsletter criteria. She will also pursue the branded Money Mailer.

Motion by Schuberth to pursue the production of a community newsletter to be distributed in July as first priority, stipulating that the second priority is economic development activities. Motion seconded by Bienias. Unanimously approved.

XIV. Holiday Decorations

- a. Schuberth brought up the idea of distributing holiday lights, bought with SSA funds, to

merchants along Clark. This would encourage merchant participation in holiday season decorating, would promote a sense of unified community, and would promote the street as a holiday shopping destination. The commissioners agreed that this is a good idea. Perhaps Longanecker could purchase the lights wholesale. We should measure and then distribute.

XV. Community Bulletin Boards – *Longanecker*

- a. Resuming the conversation about community bulletin boards from the past two meetings, the commissioners would like to go ahead with this initiative. The SSA would procure the corkboard, frame it and put a Clark by the Park logo and SSA #23/LPCC. We would need to figure out where they would be placed, the dimensions of each bulletin board, and who would install them.

XVI. Tracking Effectiveness of Branding/Marketing - *Schiff*

- a. This discussion was tabled at last two meetings. How do we want to do this? We currently track the vacancy rate. What other measurements should we be using? We need some sort of metrics to monitor the street.
- b. Some suggestions:
 - o Survey after each event
 - o Questionnaire in the newsletter – i.e. “We’d love your suggestions. What do you think of what the SSA is doing?” “What sort of events would bring you out?” “What do you want to see on Clark?”
 - o An online version of a questionnaire.

XVI. 2007 Events

- a. Commissioners brainstormed about other possible events on Clark.
 - A bicycle club
 - o Flamenco night at Emilio’s (already is happening – we could promote)
 - o Find out what each business is already doing – Knudsen will go out and talk to each business about this, plant the seed about small events in merchants’ minds, get them excited.
 - o Bars are always looking to bring people out on Tuesday and Wednesday nights
 - o Coffee shops – there are a few independent ones who might want to do something
 - o Cooking class idea is nice, for example, at an Indian restaurant.
- b. Bienias noted that we want to be sure to have outreach at the north end of our coverage area. That area captures a different demographic and there are some new businesses, as well as older businesses, that might want to get more involved.
- c. Quick offered to donate his time to help business owners who would like to participate but may not have experience with marketing or events.

Next Meeting

June 14 at 4 p.m.

Motion by Bienias to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 p.m. Motion seconded by Quick. Unanimously approved.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kate Knudsen.