

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

JULY 17, 2023, 3:00 p.m. | Community Room, Kalamazoo City Hall

PRESENT: Mayor David Anderson, Curt Aardema, Jeff Breneman, Carl Brown, Grant Fletcher, Stephanie Hinman, Matt Hollander, Susan Lindemann, Clarence Lloyd

ABSENT:

STAFF: Aaron Leal, Rebekah Kik, Paul Thuringer, Jerri Burdue, Steve Vicenzi, Jaime Marsman

A. CALL TO ORDER

DIRECTOR LINDEMANN CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 3:32 P.M

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mayor David Anderson
Curt Aardema
Jeff Breneman
Carl Brown
Grant Fletcher
Stephanie Hinman
Matt Hollander
Susan Lindemann
Clarence Lloyd

ABSENT:

EXCUSED:

THE JULY 17, 2023, ATTENDANCE INCLUDING EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES ARE RECORDED.

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

DIRECTOR LLOYD MOVED TO ADOPT THE JULY 17, 2023 AGENDA. DIRECTOR BROWN SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was noted that a last name was incorrect on the minutes sent out and that this has already been corrected.

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DIRECTOR HINMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MAY 15, 2023 MINUTES. DIRECTOR AARDEMA SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

D. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Financial Report

Mr. Vicenzi shared the May Financial Report. He noted that this was a straightforward month. Director Breneman requested a report from the Downtown Ambassadors with statistical data showing how much garbage has been picked up, how much graffiti has been removed, etc. Director Lindemann stated that they are expecting a report at the next meeting. She affirmed that regular reports would be desired.

Mayor Anderson asked whether there are any areas in the budget that will not be fully expended by the end of the year. Mr. Vicenzi stated that his team is doing a mid-year review.

DIRECTOR BROWN MOVED TO ACCEPT THE FINANCIAL REPORT AS PRESENTED. DIRECTOR FLETCHER SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

2. Presentation of the annual audit by Maner Costerisan, the DDA and DEGA's external auditor.

Mr. Aaron Stevens from Maner Costerisan presented the audit report. He noted that the same metrics were used for the reports for the DDA Board. The DEGA Board, however, is not in a fund deficit. He reminded the board that the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommends two months of normal operations be maintained in the general fund as a minimum. He noted that the DEGA has a healthy financial situation. Revenues and expenses were reviewed.

DIRECTOR BRENEMAN MOVED TO ACCEPT THE AUDIT AS PRESENTED. DIRECTOR HOLLANDER SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

3. Presentation by Deb Droppers, Kalamazoo Experiential Learning Center (KELC)

Ms. Droppers thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak to the Board. She noted that the purpose of the presentation is to bring the Board up to speed about efforts to encourage the public to activate the public spaces downtown.

Ms. Droppers shared information regarding site selection for events including location, reputation of the success of other events, contract flexibility, services and amenities, etc. She affirmed the work and support of the City's Parks & Rec Department. Ms. Droppers stated that they re-examined the process of how to apply for an event and streamlined the application process, and she shared accomplishments based on this work including a monthly schedule report to track site activations.

Ms. Droppers shared the communications process for event approval. She noted that retailers/business owners need to sign off for events on the mall, Alleys, etc. The City approves events at Bronson and Arcadia Creek Festival Site.

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New festivals in 2023 include: Canadiana Fest, Kalamazoo Promise Senior Signing Day (with 48 collegiate booths), Friday Food Truck Festivals and Latinx Festival. Island Festival and Blues Festival are being considered for 2024.

There was discussion regarding liquor licenses and their regulations in regard to site locations such as Bronson Park and the Arcadia Festival Site. The Arcadia Festival Site is the easiest for events to obtain a one-day liquor license. Attorney Wood noted that the social district law has changed recently and now allows special event permits in a social district. Director Breneman noted that an event can have alcohol, without selling it, as Bronson Park is a part of the social district.

Ms. Droppers spoke about the conditions at the Arcadia Festival site. While the infrastructure at that site is wonderful, there needs to be further discussion on safety concerns. It can be challenging for event creators to envision their event at the Festival Site due to the conditions that exist there on a daily basis.

Ms. Droppers affirmed the great work of the downtown retailers. New events are being organized by downtown retailers who have formed an association and are working to create events that build traffic. Ms. Droppers shared ways that the City's Parks & Rec department are supporting downtown events.

Ms. Droppers recommended that the City of Grand Rapids event management program be examined. This is Event Planning 101 which gives event planners the opportunity to learn how to put an event on. Ms. Droppers stated that KELC, as Kzoo Event Academy, is offering to provide 2-hour workshops on event management addressing the following topics: Event Planning 101, How to Manage a Food Truck, and Event Fine Print (applications, permits, insurance, etc).

Ms. Droppers stated that they also have another program called Kalamazoo Digital Media Meetups which is a program run through KELC. They are offering a series of 3 workshops to plan for holiday marketing.

Ms. Droppers stated that they have put together a Downtown Event Guide, a comprehensive event application program and guidelines on how to apply for an event. There is also a brief description of each downtown event site with a description of amenities.

Director Breneman asked what the DEGA Board should be considering to make downtown sites more attractive. Ms. Droppers stated that they should leverage the special events committee to listen for events being requested, identify barriers, and walk through the process of what needs to be included to make the event more seamless. Also, from a policy perspective determine how to give event planners the framework to be successful. Ms. Droppers noted that there is a competitive landscape for events today and encouraged the Board to leverage the passionate people who wish to do events.

Director Aardema questioned if there was an alternative to the Festival Site. Ms. Droppers stated that there really isn't one. She shared that other cities utilize their social district, supporting their downtown businesses.

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There was discussion surrounding the Event Guide that was shared. The Board stated that they would appreciate further details for a comprehensive guide that could also, potentially, include videos. Ms. Droppers noted that the City's website is comprehensive, and the Event Guide does not attempt to duplicate these efforts but rather covers the items that planners may need more information on. The Board stated that their goal would be a one-stop location where a planner could go to have all of their questions answered. The importance of making the Event Planning Guide accessible and digestible to everyone was agreed upon.

There was discussion that the DEGA should be a conduit of events being produced, not necessarily producing events themselves. Director Hollander stated that he would be interested in looking for folks who would like to create vibrant events but currently do not have the knowledge necessary to host an event.

Ms. Droppers explained the services that are supplied by herself and Parks & Rec to assist planners.

E. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

None.

F. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jessica Thompson, Owner of Bee Joyful: Ms. Thompson spoke about the role of events and their impact on the downtown retailers. She noted that some events distract from the retailers and that is why they formed an association to create events that benefit both the downtown shops and residents.

Heather Holmer, Owner of Rocket Fizz: Ms. Holmer stated that she wondered about the communication needed to close the street.

G. DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

1. Director Hollander acknowledged Mr. Vicenzi's excellent financial statements and thanked him for his great work on this.
2. Director Hinman stated that there is a Parks & Recs survey currently happening.
3. Director Aardema remarked on the amount of new residents downtown. He noted that another role of events is creating a sense of neighborhood for these residents.
4. Director Lloyd stated that Summer Restaurant Week starts on Thursday. He thanked Ms. Droppers and the downtown retailers for their participation in this.
5. Director Brown shared information on the new lighting installation in the extension of Exchange/Bates Alley. He thanked Ms. Kik for her work on this. He also thanked the downtown retailers on their grassroots work to do the things that support their businesses. He affirmed that the DEGA is here to assist.
6. Director Lindemann affirmed Director Brown's comments and affirmed the good work of the downtown retailers.

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H. ADJOURNMENT

DIRECTOR LINDEMANN ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 4:47 P.M.

DRAFT