

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

October 21, 2024, 3 p.m. | Community Planning & Economic Development, 245 N Rose Street

PRESENT: Mayor David Anderson, Curt Aardema, Stephanie Hinman, Susan Lindemann, Jessica Thompson, Jeff Breneman, Clarence Lloyd, Matt Hollander

ABSENT: Kwame Gyimah

STAFF: Erin Hahn, Meghan Behymer

OTHER: Phil Doorlag – Wightman and Associates

A. CALL TO ORDER

DIRECTOR LINDEMANN CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 3:02 P.M.

PRESENT: Mayor David Anderson
Curt Aardema
Stephanie Hinman
Susan Lindemann
Jessica Thompson
Jeff Breneman
Clarence Lloyd
Matt Hollander

ABSENT: Kwame Gyimah

EXCUSED:

THE OCTOBER 21, 2024, ATTENDANCE INCLUDING EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES ARE RECORDED.

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

Director Lindemann announced that item 2, Michigan Avenue Redesign, would come before item 1, the Financial Report, to accommodate the guest presenter, Phil Doorlag of Wightman and Associates.

**DIRECTOR THOMPSON MOVED TO ADOPT THE OCTOBER 21, 2024 AGENDA AS AMENDED.
DIRECTOR LLOYD SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.**

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

DIRECTOR AARDEMA MOVED TO APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 16, 2024 MINUTES. DIRECTOR THOMPSON SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

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D. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Michigan Avenue Redesign

Phil Doorlag of Wightman and Associates presented to the Board about the Michigan Avenue Redesign, highlighting several engagement and feedback opportunities. Engagement efforts have included Town Hall sessions, a table at Sounds of the Zoo, two Walk and Roll sessions, a bike audit, and many meetings with stakeholders to gather input. The next opportunities for engagement are the Town Hall on Thursday, November 7 at 5:30 pm, and the Open House on Thursday, December 5 at 5:30 pm, at the Kalamazoo Nonprofit Advocacy Coalition.

Some key themes that were present in the community's feedback were support for local businesses, improved loading zones, more on-street parking, slowing down traffic, and making downtown more accessible, with a focus on inclusivity in travel options and improved navigation. Mr. Doorlag stated that all feedback is helpful and critical to moving forward with the project. Next steps for the project are to continue stakeholder engagement and feedback collection through upcoming events, and to analyze the feedback to guide design decisions, ensuring community needs are met while also supporting local businesses.

Director Lloyd stated that small business support is a top priority in the feedback thus far, meaning that people want to support businesses during the construction season and make sure the design is business-friendly as well. Director Hollander asked how street design can support local businesses. Mr. Doorlag said it could look different in any community. Director Aardema stated that street parking being a part of the street design will be critical in supporting local businesses and that a welcoming and productive parking system is needed.

Mr. Doorlag guided the Board through an exercise that divided Michigan Avenue into three segments and presented 2 pre-made design ideas to spark conversation and gather feedback. Mr. Doorlag noted that the design of Michigan Avenue is not predetermined and that the pre-made design ideas are provided to illustrate how different design elements work together. Board member feedback will be combined with other inputs to guide decision-making in the design process moving forward.

During the activity, there were discussions about lane width, types of parking spaces, appropriate places for bike lanes, bike route connectivity to Michigan Ave, the need to slow down traffic, the number of lanes needed, outdoor dining locations, and wayfinding.

2. Presentation of the Financial Report - Meghan Behymer

City of Kalamazoo Downtown Coordinator Meghan Behymer presented the August 2024 Financial Report. Ms. Behymer noted that previous discrepancies regarding the legal services and fees line item have been addressed. Formerly, all legal fees were incorrectly reflected under the Downtown Development Authority, but this has been resolved, and the correct categorization will be reflected in the upcoming financial report.

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Ms. Behymer also noted that community promotion expenses have been updated, as they were previously being mis-categorized under professional and contractual services. Ms. Behymer also noted that a transfer in for mall maintenance is expected in the next financial report.

There was discussion about the \$102,000 pending for sponsorships, in which Ms. Behymer explained that the funding from the Irving S. Gilmore foundation will now go through Parks and Recreation for holiday lighting and activities.

DIRECTOR AARDEMA MOTIONED TO ACCEPT THE AUGUST 2024 DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY FINANCIAL REPORT AS PRESENTED. DIRECTOR BRENEMAN SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

3. Committee Reports

A. Events and Marketing Committee

Ms. Behymer noted that the marketing RFP will be published in November and that the committee is working on a photography plan to utilize the remaining \$3,000 in the Maestro contract by the end of 2024.

B. Ambassador Program Committee

Ms. Behymer stated that she is involved in ongoing conversations with City staff about festival place maintenance, that she met with the downtown business council to get feedback and suggestions, and that she would like to do walkthroughs of the ambassador maintenance area with board members to discuss the board's perspective on the ambassador program. The committee will continue its outreach to business owners and property owners moving forward.

C. Finance Committee

Ms. Behymer stated that the committee is working with DEGA legal counsel to bring a revised draft of the debt repayment agreement to the finance committee on November 5. The goal is to have the agreement in place by the end of the year.

D. Business Recruitment and Retention Committee

Ms. Behymer stated that the committee is working on finalizing the content of the downtown Kalamazoo one-pager, and plan to share it with local brokers in early to mid-November at a meeting to gather feedback/suggestions.

E. Executive Committee

Director Lindemann stated that the purchase of the Arcadia Creek Parcels was completed on October 10, 2024.

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4. Downtown Report

Ms. Behymer shared the Downtown Report. Several board members expressed their concerns about aggressive ticketing on the Kalamazoo Mall as well as meters being present on inactive streets, discouraging visitors to downtown.

E. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

There were no discussion/action items.

F. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

G. DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Director Hollander shared that a good example of a well-designed and maintained public restroom can be found in the Manistee, Michigan downtown shopping district.

Director Lloyd shared that the Southwest Michigan First Chamber will be opening participation in the Winter Restaurant Week to restaurants throughout the entire county, and that it will take place from February 20 to March 1, 2025. Summer Restaurant Week will continue to be a downtown feature.

H. STAFF COMMENTS

Ms. Behymer shared that she will be attending the Michigan Downtown Association's annual conference on November 6-8.

I. ADJOURNMENT

DIRECTOR LINDEMANN ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 5:02 P.M.