

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2025, 3 p.m. | Community Planning & Economic Development, 245 N Rose Street

PRESENT: Susan Lindemann, Jessica Thompson, Matt Hollander, Curt Aardema, David Anderson, Clarence Lloyd

ABSENT: Stephanie Hinman, Kwame Gyimah, Jeff Breneman

STAFF: Meghan Behymer, Erin Hahn, Nathan Ekola

OTHER: Rick Searing, Jessica Wood (virtual)

A. CALL TO ORDER

DIRECTOR LINDEMANN CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 3:00 P.M.

PRESENT: Susan Lindemann, Jessica Thompson, Matt Hollander, Curt Aardema, David Anderson, Clarence Lloyd

ABSENT: Stephanie Hinman, Kwame Gyimah

EXCUSED: Jeff Breneman

THE FEBRUARY 17, 2025 ATTENDANCE INCLUDING EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES IS RECORDED.

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

DIRECTOR HOLLANDER MOTIONED TO ADOPT THE FEBRUARY 17, 2025 AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

DIRECTOR AARDEMA SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

DIRECTOR AARDEMA MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY BOARD ON JANUARY 27, 2025. DIRECTOR HOLLANDER SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

DIRECTOR AARDEMA MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY BOARD ON JANUARY 24, 2025. MAYOR ANDERSON SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

D. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

a. Financial Report – December 2024

Meghan Behymer, Downtown Coordinator, presented the financial report, stating that in December, the Downtown Economic Growth Authority (DEGA) received \$122,000 in

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revenue, comprised of the City of Kalamazoo Solid Waste Fund contribution to the Ambassador Program (\$32,000), Parking System contribution (\$20,000), Irving S. Gilmore Foundation grant for the Ambassador Program (\$50,000), and the Hall Foundation contribution to the Downtown Waste and Recycling Program (\$20,000). This brought year-to-date revenues to \$788,000, which is \$26,200 over budget.

Ms. Behymer stated that December expenses totaled \$122,870, with key expense categories including Professional and Contractual Services, Legal Services and Fees, Garbage Disposal, Community Promotion, and the Quarterly City Service Agreement. Year-to-date expenses totaled \$647,778, under revenues by \$140,422.

DIRECTOR HOLLANDER MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER 2024 FINANCIAL REPORT. DIRECTOR LLOYD SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

b. Committee Reports

Ms. Behymer stated that the **Events and Marketing Committee** meeting on February 3 was repurposed as a meeting of the Marketing RFP Evaluation Committee to discuss and review four proposals. The committee invited two of the proposers for interviews.

Ms. Behymer stated that the **Business Recruitment and Retention Committee** meetings are paused until after march to align with key developments. She stated that in the interim, the committee will continue finalizing the marketing piece, developing an outreach list of regional brokers, and conducting outreach with downtown retailers to gather valuable insights.

Ms. Behymer stated that the **Clean and Green Committee** met on January 29 to discuss the timeline of the Ambassador Program RFP and the membership of the RFP Evaluation Committee.

Ms. Behymer stated that the **Executive and Finance Committee** met on February 10 to review the February agenda packets and address key action items, including the 2025 audit approach and legal services agreement. She stated that the committee also interviewed prospective board members and is recommending the nominations and reappointments listed on today's agenda.

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c. **Downtown Report**

Ms. Behymer presented the **Downtown Report**, noting that she had just received the second quarterly report from the WMU Economic Vitality Study. Director Aardema asked if the results from the survey could be sent out to the Board.

Ms. Behymer also mentioned the City's work on a Memorandum of Understanding for the Rose Street Plaza improvements, which she hopes to bring before the Board in March.

Ms. Behymer stated that the total number of downtown dollars in circulation is \$137,645, and that there are 53 participating merchants. Erin Hahn, Community Investment Administrative Assistant stated that she is working with Community Investment Manager Chelsie Downs-Hubbard to develop a marketing plan and sponsorship program that will encourage the growth and future success of the program. Director Lloyd asked if there was an update on the wheel-spinning issue on the post-purchase screen of the Downtown Dollars webpage. Ms. Hahn said that she reached out to Conpoto to ask, but had not received a response yet and would follow up for an answer.

Ms. Behymer stated that the Executive Committee plans to meet with the Bigbelly sales representative to discuss the expansion and terms of the contract and hopes to have an update to share at the March Board meeting.

Ms. Behymer presented the **Ambassador Program Report**, highlighting the Ambassador's snow removal efforts throughout the month of December. Director Lindemann asked if there were any concerns from the Ambassadors about property owners not taking care of their own areas of snow removal and trash clean-up. Ms. Behymer stated that she has not heard of any instances of this, but would ask Adam Charette at their next weekly meeting.

E. **DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS**

a. **Approval of Director Curt Aardema as Secretary of the Downtown Economic Growth Authority**

Director Lindemann stated that Director Hollander needs to step down from his position as Board Secretary, and that Director Aardema has agreed to step up and serve for the

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remainder of the term. Director Lindemann stated that in March, the Executive Committee will be looking at the slate of officers for the Executive Committee for the next year.

DIRECTOR HOLLANDER MOTIONED TO APPROVE DIRECTOR CURT AARDEMA AS SECRETARY OF THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY. DIRECTOR LLOYD SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

b. Authorize Board Chair to execute legal services extension agreement with Dickinson Wright PLLC through February 2028

Ms. Behymer stated that the current legal counsel agreement with Dickinson-Wright for both DDA and DEGA was entered into in 2019 and has not been revisited since.

Dickinson-Wright proposed an hourly rate increase from \$190 to \$230, which will result in a moderate increase in legal expenses, but no budget amendment is currently required.

Ms. Behymer stated that the Executive Committee's recommendation is to continue with the current legal counsel due to their deep institutional knowledge and legal expertise with corridor improvement authorities.

DIRECTOR AARDEMA MOTIONED TO AUTHORIZE THE BOARD CHAIR TO EXECUTE LEGAL SERVICES EXTENSION AGREEMENT WITH DICKINSON WRIGHT PLLC THROUGH FEBRUARY 2028. DIRECTOR THOMPSON SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

c. Recommendation of DEGA Board Member Nomination to Mayor and City Commission

Ms. Behymer stated that the Executive Committee is recommending three new appointments to the Downtown Economic Growth Authority Board: Rick Searing, Trisha Kidd, and Stanley Steppes. Ms. Behymer stated that Rick Searing and Trisha Kidd are nominated for full terms expiring on March 31, 2029, while Stanley Steppes is recommended for a partial term expiring on March 31, 2028, filling Director Hollander's seat.

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Ms. Behymer stated that three candidates were interviewed for the three available seats, and none currently serve on other city boards, commissions, or committees. Rick Searing and Stanley Steppes reside downtown, while Tricia Kidd works in the district. All would be serving their first term and would be eligible for reappointment, with Stanley Steppes able to pursue a full term after his partial appointment.

Ms. Behymer highlighted that the candidates bring valuable experience, skills, and diversity to the board. Their engagement in downtown—whether as residents, employees, or through development work—aligns with the Authority’s mission. Their contributions are expected to support the continued growth of the downtown district.

Director Aardema stated that all three candidates were well-prepared and are clearly engaged in the work of downtown already, so their contributions to the board will be helpful and valuable.

Director Lindemann stated that Ms. Behymer and herself have been unable to reach Director Gyimah to ask if he is interested in serving another term.

Mayor Anderson asked who will be responsible for facilitating Board member orientation and what that process will look like. Director Lindemann stated that the Board has not had a formal orientation process for a few years, but that one is needed, along with a repository of documents for Board members to access. Mayor Anderson expressed the importance of having Attorney Wood involved in Board member orientation. Attorney Wood stated that she would be able to help with the orientation process.

DIRECTOR AARDEMA MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE DEGA BOARD MEMBER NOMINATION TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION. DIRECTOR THOMPSON SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

F. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Rick Searing stated that he resides on the North Kalamazoo Mall and works as a teacher at Portage Northern High School. He shared that he intentionally sought out a walkable urban environment like those in Europe and loves living downtown. He expressed enthusiasm about the opportunity to join the board if approved by the City Commission.

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G. DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Director Aardema expressed his condolences for the loss of Dean Hauck, owner of Michigan News Agency, who was an icon and advocate for downtown.

H. ADJOURNMENT

DIRECTOR LINDEMANN ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 3:40 P.M.