

## **Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes**

September 15, 2025, 3 p.m. | Community Planning & Economic Development, 245 N Rose Street

**PRESENT:** Curt Aardema, Mayor David Anderson, Jeff Breneman, Trisha Kidd, Clarence Lloyd, Rick Searing

**EXCUSED:** Jessica Thompson

**ABSENT:** Stanley Steppes, Kwame Gyimah

**STAFF:** Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator), Erin Hahn (Community Investment Administrative Assistant), Jessica Wood (Attorney)

### **OTHER:**

#### **A. CALL TO ORDER**

**DIRECTOR AARDEMA CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 3:07 P.M.**

**PRESENT:** Curt Aardema, Mayor David Anderson, Jeff Breneman, Trisha Kidd, Clarence Lloyd, Rick Searing

**EXCUSED:** Jessica Thompson

**ABSENT:** Stanley Steppes, Kwame Gyimah

**THE SEPTEMBER 15, 2025, ATTENDANCE, INCLUDING EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES, IS RECORDED.**

#### **B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA**

**DIRECTOR LLOYD MOTIONED TO ADOPT THE AGENDA. DIRECTOR SEARING SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.**

#### **C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**DIRECTOR BRENEMAN MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING ON AUGUST 18, 2025. DIRECTOR LLOYD SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED**

#### **D. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

- 1. Financial Report – July 2025**

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Meghan Behymer, Downtown Coordinator, presented the July 2025 financial report. In July 2025, the Downtown Economic Growth Authority (DEGA) received \$12,850 in revenue, bringing year-to-date revenues to \$928,887. Monthly expenses totaled \$63,976, driven by the Ambassador Program, audit fees, consulting services, and a sponsorship for the Caribbean Festival. Year-to-date expenses stand at \$373,393.

**MAYOR ANDERSON MOTIONED TO ACCEPT THE JULY FINANCIAL REPORT.  
DIRECTOR SEARING SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.**

### 2. Downtown Report – September 2025

Ms. Behymer presented the September 2025 downtown report, sharing a new format that reinforces the board’s operational framework and aligns the information with its strategic pillars.

#### ***Built for Business***

In August, efforts to strengthen downtown’s business environment included preparations for the launch of a new business-facing newsletter in September, with future alignment to downtown branding. The Business Recruitment & Retention Committee advanced key initiatives by reviewing the September 2025 Economic Vitality Study presentation, refining a Business Welcome Letter, and finalizing plans for a recruitment marketing piece. Meanwhile, Downtown Dollars saw strong activity, with \$12,255 in major purchases and \$4,220 redeemed across 23 downtown businesses.

#### ***Clean, Safe, & Welcoming***

Downtown’s cleanliness and safety efforts advanced on several fronts. The new Ambassador Program contract begins October 1, 2025, with adjusted 2026 operating hours for peak and off-peak seasons. The board discussed ensuring sufficient holiday coverage, and Director Aardema confirmed Block by Block’s flexibility to expand hours during special events as needed. The Bigbelly expansion is nearly complete, enhancing waste management as Ambassadors can now separately track trash and recycling with the retirement of older units. The Clean & Green Committee continued reviewing progress on the “Clean, Safe & Welcoming” and “Streetwise & Connected” workplans, while also beginning

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work with City partners to modernize the Mall Maintenance Agreement. Additionally, Ambassadors reported challenges with handbills being placed on public infrastructure, which violates City ordinance.

### ***Place with Purpose***

Placemaking initiatives continue to move forward with a focus on both existing and future downtown spaces. The Executive Committee conducted a walkthrough of Bates Alley to assess maintenance needs. Design and construction progress also advanced for the Rose Street Plaza and Farmer's Alley projects. Additionally, the Brush the Block mural festival, held September 2–7, brought vibrant new energy to downtown as seven acclaimed muralists transformed six building facades with large-scale public art.

### ***Streetwise & Connected***

Ambassadors are working on mapping public realm assets, including electrical outlets, benches, and tables. They have completed the mapping of all light pole banners and Bigbelly stations. Next to map will be the bike racks, wayfinding signs, and planters.

The board discussed proposed changes to downtown parking, particularly converting free street parking on Michigan Avenue, South Street, and Lovell Street to paid parking. The board recommended pausing the rollout of new paid parking until major downtown changes—such as the event center opening and street conversions—are complete, while supporting updates like replacing aging meters with kiosks and removing meters from low-demand areas.

Clear communication and accountability were emphasized as critical. The board will maintain regular quarterly meetings with city and parking staff to share business input and assess parking needs. The board highlighted the importance of a holistic parking strategy that balances enforcement with visitor experience, prioritizing free 90-minute street parking for retail access, and implementing changes based on real-time demand and future downtown developments. After a thorough discussion, the board agreed that maintaining flexibility in communication with city staff was important. To ensure timely input from the

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board on parking decisions, a motion was proposed to authorize the chair to act on the board's behalf.

**DIRECTOR BRENEMAN MOTIONED TO AUTHORIZE THE BOARD CHAIR TO SEND A LETTER ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD IF NEEDED. DIRECTOR LLOYD SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.**

### *Vibrant & Visible*

The Events and Marketing Committee reviewed an initial round of design options for the new downtown branding, with a second round of options expected in October. The committee plans to bring a recommendation to the board in November, and Director Kidd requested that the initial design presentation be shared with the full board. Upcoming events include the final Beats on Bates on September 24, the Canadiana Festival on September 20, Sounds of the Zoo from September 22–28, and 269 FEST from September 20–27.

### *Strong & Sustainable*

The Executive Committee reviewed the September board agenda and content, reviewed 2026 draft budgets for DDA and DEGA, and discussed the potential for additional staff to support the work of DDA/DEGA.

### *Additional Updates*

Behymer stated that Cheng Kidd Sun's nomination is up for approval at the City Commission meeting tonight, and if approved, he would join at the October 20 meeting.

### 3. **Downtown Economic Vitality Study**

Board members discussed moving the Economic Vitality Study to the DDA meeting agenda.

**DIRECTOR BRENEMAN MOTIONED TO TABLE THE ECONOMIC VITALITY STUDY PRESENTATION. DIRECTOR LLOYD SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.**

## E. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

### 1. **2026 DEGA Budget**

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Behymer stated that there are still some budget items to be worked through before bringing the budget to the board for approval. The budget is expected to be finalized at the October 20 meeting.

### 2. **Ambassador Program – Q4 2025 Recommendation**

Behymer stated that the Clean & Green Committee requested board approval to allocate a \$39,064 Ambassador Program budget variance to expand services in Q4 2025. The variance resulted from a delayed start of the new Block by Block contract, and applying the funds now would enhance coverage during the busy holiday season while maintaining continuity before the 2026 program scope begins.

**MAYOR ANDERSON MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE ALLOCATION OF THE \$39,064 BUDGET VARIANCE TO EXPAND AMBASSADOR PROGRAM SERVICES DURING OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2025 UNDER THE NEW BLOCK BY BLOCK CONTRACT. DIRECTOR BRENEMAN SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.**

### 3. **Michigan Talent Partnership Program – Letter of Support**

Behymer presented a letter to be signed by the Chair on behalf of the board. The letter emphasizes the importance of Arcadia Creek Festival Place as a central downtown venue, driving visitors and supporting local businesses, while noting its need for reinvestment due to aging infrastructure. The project aligns with the DDA/DEGA 2025–2027 Strategic Plan goals of creating a purposeful, welcoming, and economically vibrant downtown, and its timing is considered urgent with upcoming street improvements and the new Event Center.

**DIRECTOR SEARING MOTIONED TO AUTHORIZE THE BOARD CHAIR TO SUBMIT A LETTER OF SUPPORT ON BEHALF OF THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY FOR THE CITY OF KALAMAZOO’S GRANT APPLICATION TO THE MICHIGAN TALENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM. DIRECTOR LLOYD SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.**

## F. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

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### **G. DIRECTOR COMMENTS**

Mayor Anderson updated the board on changes at the Kalamazoo Gospel Ministries regarding occupancy and programming. The mission, which aims to provide more than shelter—including employment support, permanent housing, mental health, and substance use services—has seen many individuals using it only for overnight stays, creating unsafe conditions and limiting program capacity.

Starting October 6, emergency overnight shelter will be capped at 140 beds (80 men, 60 women). Individuals who wish to stay must participate in basic programming with social work staff, including creating and following a personal plan. A lottery determined who retains emergency shelter access, leaving approximately 133 people excluded unless they join programs. Daytime services, such as meals, remain available to all. The mayor noted uncertainty about impacts downtown and downtown ambassadors have been informed.

### **H. ADJOURNMENT**

**DIRECTOR LLOYD MOTIONED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT TIME. DIRECTOR SEARING SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.**