

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

January 12, 2026, 3 p.m. | City Hall, 241 W. South Street

PRESENT: Curt Aardema, Mayor David Anderson, Trisha Kidd, Clarence Lloyd, Rick Searing, Jessica Thompson, Cheng Kidd Sun, John Harris, Ben Schulman

STAFF: Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator), Maria Smith (Community Investment Administrative Assistant), Jessica Wood (Attorney), Bobby Boyd (Economic Development Supervisor)

A. CALL TO ORDER

DIRECTOR AARDEMA CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 3:06 P.M.

PRESENT: Curt Aardema, Mayor David Anderson, Trisha Kidd, Clarence Lloyd, Rick Searing, Jessica Thompson, Cheng Kidd Sun

EXCUSED ABSENCE: Jeff Breneman, Stanley Steppes

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE: None

THE JANUARY 12, 2026, ATTENDANCE, INCLUDING EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES, IS RECORDED.

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

DIRECTOR THOMPSON MOTIONED TO ADOPT THE JANUARY 12, 2026, DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY AGENDA AS AMENDED. DIRECTOR AARDEMA SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

DIRECTOR LLOYD MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE DECEMBER 15, 2025, DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY MEETING. DIRECTOR SEARING SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

Director Thompson entered the meeting at 3:07pm.

D. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

a. Downtown Branding Presentation (a5 Branding & Digital)

Downtown Coordinator Meghan Behymer introduced Ben Schulman and John Harris with A5 to speak about the rollout of the newly approved Downtown Brand. She noted that there is an approved budget of \$65,000 for marketing and

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brand execution. Schulman gave an overview of the Downtown branding rollout schedule highlighting that there are 2 phases: now through March 2026, and April 2026 through year end. Schulman detailed the brand collateral, budget, schedule, and next steps.

Jessica Wood entered the meeting at 3:16pm.

The Board discussion included details of the brand launch party; physical location, limiting invitations to Board members, business leaders, plus City and County leaders. Aardema introduced the idea of being intentional about purchasing supplies from local City vendors, preferably creating a policy for using downtown businesses.

The Board discussed how parking changes should be communicated during construction and that the brand should echo the City's message to the public.

The Board emphasized the importance of hardscapes and utilizing the signage to catch people's attention and periodic reveals that build excitement for what's to come. Examples for potential spots for this concept are construction fencing, murals, windows of vacant storefronts, and utilizing non-downtown locations for promotion such as the airport and WMU campus.

Mayor Anderson joined the meeting at 3:38pm.

b. Financial Report – November 2025

Behymer reviewed the November 2025 financial report: In November, the Downtown Economic Growth Authority (DEGA) received no revenue, leaving the year-to-date revenues to \$928,887. November expenses totaled \$69,917. Key expense categories included: Operating Supplies (\$152) for Portland Loo supplies; Professional and Contractual Services (\$56,658) for Bigbelly (\$8,158) and October Ambassador Services (\$48,500); Solid Waste (\$565); Consulting Services and Fees (\$9,676.25) for a5 Branding & Digital agreement; Legal Services (\$2,714); and Promotion and Advertising (\$151) for Business Recruitment Marketing printing. 2025 year-to-date expenses total \$640,177.

Mayor Anderson requested the budget page be added into the financial report even when there aren't expenditures. Behymer agreed to include it moving forward.

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DIRECTOR LLOYD MOTIONED TO ACCEPT THE NOVEMBER 2025 DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY FINANCIAL REPORT. DIRECTOR THOMPSON SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

c. Imagine Kalamazoo 2035

Behymer provided an update on the Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 citywide planning process. She detailed the strategic vision framework and draft.

The board gave suggestions for looking at other cities to gain insight into what they're doing, that is working, creating a downtown neighborhood association, and implementation of the feedback from the community survey.

The board suggested having meetings with City leadership and would like to be present at other neighborhood meetings, submit input directly and align key goals and plans.

d. Downtown Report

Behymer gave updates about Downtown including the upcoming Downtown Townhall meeting, parking kiosk and signage changes, Kalamazoo Avenue construction, first quarter Consumers Energy gas project, and the installation of a second Portland Loo.

Behymer provided an Events and Marketing Committee report highlighting that the applicants for quarter one has been reviewed and the awardees will be contacted. The second quarter application deadline is January 15 and reminders have been sent. She reminded the Board that the Downtown brand rollout is coming this month.

Behymer's other updates include the Clean and Green Committee, which will meet in February and follow up on the approved Food Packaging Institute MOU and finalize the contract. Business Recruitment and Retention committee will meet at the end of January about a retail consultation opportunity. Executive Committee has a focus on their vacancy and support staff performance review process.

Behymer explained that Festival Place is undergoing testing and environmental analysis initially and will be conducting contractor bidding, preparing for demolition in late February, and fundraising for other phases. She explained the festival site's construction fencing will be utilized to highlight and celebrate

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previous events. Behymer mentioned there is an outstanding MOU for Rose Street Plaza and Farmers Alley construction. The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority public hearing is Thursday related to the Peregrine Peninsula Loft project.

Behymer's reviewed the Ambassador Program report, noting this month focuses were snow removal, Portland Loo repair, and graffiti. The Board is concerned and would like priority put on investigating the graffiti. Director Lloyd suggested an easy way, like texting to give feedback on the Ambassadors.

E. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

a. Downtown Authorities Debt Overview (Jessica Wood, legal counsel)

Director Aardema gave a background summary of what led to the MavCon agreement. He explained that it stems from lingering disagreements on some of the payments and incentives for a block of blighted buildings on Michigan Avenue Downtown that were redeveloped by the firm MavCon.

Wood discussed the financial collaboration between Downtown Tomorrow Inc., City Foundation, Kalamazoo Community Foundation, the City, DEA, DEGA, MavCon, Metropolitan Center LLC, Development Financial Inc., and others related to this agreement. The parties came together to agree to settle the debt.

Behymer explained the MavCon payment schedule. The board discussed the possibilities of paying the debt off sooner and adding a special tax assessment formula.

b. 2025 Budget Amendment

Behymer introduced a 2025 budget amendment related to increased revenue from the Peregrine-Huff Foundation grant and expenditure from the newly introduced Downtown Holiday Lighting Grant Program. Behymer explained that about half of the funds were awarded for the Holiday Lighting Grant program and she will be reviewing the program with Peregrine-Huff for future ideas.

DIRECTOR SUN MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY 2025 BUDGET AMENDMENT. DIRECTOR SEARING SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

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F. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

G. DIRECTOR COMMENTS

None.

H. ADJOURNMENT

DIRECTOR SUN MOTIONED TO ADJOURN, SUPPORTED BY DIRECTOR LLOYD. MOTION APPROVED WITH NONE OPPOSED.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 P.M.