

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

March 16, 2026, 3 p.m. | City Hall, 241 W. South Street

PRESENT: Curt Aardema, Mayor David Anderson, Jeff Breneman (virtual), Trisha Kidd, Rick Searing, Cheng Kidd Sun, Jessica Thompson, Harvin Sandhu

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

A. CALL TO ORDER

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

PRESENT: Curt Aardema, Mayor David Anderson, Jeff Breneman (virtual), Trisha Kidd, Rick Searing, Cheng Kidd Sun, Jessica Thompson

EXCUSED ABSENCE: Clarence Lloyd, Stanley Steppes

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE: None

THE MARCH 16, 2026, ATTENDANCE, INCLUDING EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES, IS RECORDED.

1. Purpose Statement:

The purpose of this Downtown Development Authority is to halt property value deterioration and promote economic growth within its business district, to increase property value.

The purpose of this Downtown Economic Growth Authority is to correct and prevent deterioration in residential, commercial, and industrial areas, to authorize the acquisition and disposal of interests in real and personal property; to authorize the creation and implementation of development plans and development areas.

The Kalamazoo DDA and DEGA, acting in concert, have set forth the strategic objective of focusing its resources on improving “The First 16 Feet”, a three-dimensional volume of space including buildings ground floor façade, the frontage that exists between the façade and the common space, and the common space that provides access to and through the district.

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B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

Director Aardema made a recommendation to amend the agenda to add item D.2, the Downtown Report.

DIRECTOR KIDD SUN MOTIONED TO ADOPT THE MARCH 16, 2026, DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY AGENDA AS AMENDED. DIRECTOR SEARING SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MAYOR ANDERSON MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 16, 2026, DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY MEETING. DIRECTOR KIDD SUN SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

D. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Financial Report – January 2026 (Meghan Behymer, Downtown Coordinator)

Behymer reviewed the January 2026 financial report: In January, the Downtown Economic Growth Authority (DEGA) received no revenue. 2026 year-to-date revenues total \$0. In January, DEGA had no expenditures. 2026 year-to-date expenditures total \$0.

DIRECTOR SEARING MOTIONED TO ACCEPT THE JANUARY 2026 DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY FINANCIAL REPORT. DIRECTOR THOMPSON SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

2. Downtown Report – March 2026

Behymer reviewed the Downtown Report and gave updates including the Match on Main grant program which has opened applications and the City may submit up to 2 businesses. The deadline is March 27 with the selection announcement on April 10. The MEDC application is due April 20 and business selection is in July.

The Economic Development Division Salesforce Database is being updated to ensure there are accurate business contacts for communication ahead of upcoming construction projects.

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Behymer detailed that the Downtown Dollars program had over \$3,000 purchased and \$2,300 redeemed at 11 Downtown businesses in February. The boost was driven by Downtown Dollars purchased for attendees of a downtown conference. The Bigbelly sponsorship program is being developed by the Events & Marketing Committee while the Food Service Packaging MOU is being finalized.

Behymer has been holding Downtown Maintenance meetings with several City departments to identify key focus areas. The February meeting with Public Services and Parks and Recreation focused on Kalamazoo Mall and Bates alley spring beautification including brick repairs planned in July, bridge inspections, and repair or replacement of road closure planters.

Behymer explained that the Ambassadors participated in cleanup from vandalism damage and conducted outreach to the affected businesses. The Board sent letters of acknowledgement to those 8 businesses. There has been interest expressed in expanding the Ambassador's service areas.

Behymer will be meeting next week regarding downtown design guidelines specifically focused on South Kalamazoo Mall site furnishing concepts.

Behymer shared a major update regarding the Arcadia Creek Festival Place construction timeline which has been adjusted to allow up to four festivals in 2026. The goal is to minimize disruption by reducing the events closure from two summers to one summer. There is ongoing coordination with event organizers and the City, while media communications are being driven by the City Manager's office.

The Clean and Green Committee is developing the wayfinding draft RFP with a timeline and goals being defined at the upcoming meeting. Kalamazoo Ave roadwork is expected to start post July 4. The communication outreach strategy is targeting those who are affected daily, downtown businesses, and the public.

Behymer's other major updates about Downtown included installation of parking kiosks this week, and activation of the system on April 1 with a 2-week grace period. There will be accessibility improvements and a promotional campaign. The Board expressed concerns about the low visibility of the meters at the curb which could cause damaged car doors.

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Events & marketing Committee approved \$18,500 in sponsorship support, being awarded for 6 events. There is a \$1,000 sponsorship tier available for applications received after the deadline. Beats on Bates returns June 3 with the new Downtown branding incorporated into the logo.

Behymer expressed that one of her top priorities is hiring the Downtown Support position. The position is approved but has been delayed because HR is reviewing the union classification. The Board expressed concerns about the hiring delay, timeline, and not being involved in the discussions or decisions.

E. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

1. Arts Council contribution to Beats on Bates

DIRECTOR SEARING MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT A \$1500 CONTRIBUTION FROM THE ARTS COUNCIL OF GREATER KALAMAZOO TO SUPPORT BEATS ON BATES PROGRAMMING. SUPPORTED BY DIRECTOR KIDD SUN. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION APPROVED.

2. Beats on Bates Agreement Amendment

DIRECTOR SEARING MADE A MOTION TO AMEND THE 2026 BEATS ON BATES AGREEMENT WITH GUESS WHO'S DANCING FITNESS TO INCREASE THE CONTRACT AMOUNT BY \$1500 TO SUPPORT MARKETING OF THE BEATS ON BATES PROGRAMMING, BRINGING THE TOTAL CONTRACT AMOUNT TO \$51,500. SUPPORTED BY DIRECTOR KIDD SUN. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION APPROVED.

3. Budget Amendment

MAYOR ANDERSON MADE A MOTION TO AMEND THE DEGA BUDGET TO RECOGNIZE \$50,000 IN AMBASSADOR PROGRAM FUNDING FROM THE IRVING S. GILMORE FOUNDATION AND \$1500 IN BEATS ON BATES MARKETING SUPPORT FROM THE ARTS COUNCIL OF GREATER KALAMAZOO, AND TO AUTHORIZE A \$1500 EXPENDITURE INCREASE TO THE BEATS ON BATES

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AGREEMENT WITH GUESS WHO'S DANCING FITNESS AND A \$6500 EXPENDITURE INCREASE FOR CONCRETE PAD POURING WITH EARLEY AND ASSOCIATES. DIRECTOR THOMPSON SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION APPROVED.

- 4. Motion to amend 2026 beats on bates agreement with guess who's dancing fitness \$5000 total \$56500.**

MAYOR ANDERSON MOTIONED TO AMEND THE 2026 BEATS ON BATES AGREEMENT WITH GUESS WHO'S DANCING FITNESS TO INCREASE THE CONTRACT AMOUNT BY \$5,000 TO SUPPORT MARKETING OF THE BEATS ON BATES PROGRAMMING, BRINGING THE TOTAL CONTRACT AMOUNT TO \$56,500. DIRECTOR KIDD SUN SECONDED. DIRECTOR THOMPSON ABSTAINED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

- 5. 2026-2027 Slate of Officers**

The Executive Committee recommends the following slate of officers for the 2026–2027 term:

- Chair: Curt Aardema
- Vice-Chair: Clarence Lloyd
- Treasurer: Rick Searing
- Secretary: Trisha Kidd

MAYOR ANDERSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE SLATE OF OFFICERS. SUPPORTED BY DIRECTOR THOMPSON. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION APPROVED.

- 6. 2026-2027 Committees**

Harvin Sandhu is being added to the Business Recruitment and Retention and Placemaking Committees.

MAYOR ANDERSON MADE A MOTION TO ADOPT THE RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE 2026-2027 COMMITTEES AS AMENDED, ADDING HARVIN AND APPOINTING COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS AND MEMBERS AS PRESENTED. DIRECTOR THOMPSON SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION APPROVED.

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7. City of Kalamazoo Request for Letter of Commitment

MAYOR ANDERSON MADE A MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE BOARD CHAIR TO SIGN A LETTER OF COMMITMENT INDICATING THAT DEGA'S INTENT IS TO PROVIDE UP TO \$78,640 AS A LOCAL MATCH FOR PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE REPAIRS ALONG ARCADIA PROMENADE AS PART OF THE CITY OF KALAMAZOO'S CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED SPENDING GRANT APPLICATION, CONTINGENT UPON THE GRANT BEING AWARDED, WITH THE CONTRIBUTION ANTICIPATED TO BE INCORPORATED INTO THE 2027 DEGA BUDGET. DIRECTOR THOMPSON SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION APPROVED.

F. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

G. DIRECTOR COMMENTS

None.

H. ADJOURNMENT

DIRECTOR SEARING MOTIONED TO ADJOURN, SUPPORTED BY DIRECTOR KIDD SUN. MOTION APPROVED WITH NOONE OPPOSED.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:06 P.M.