

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

April 20, 2026, 3 p.m. | City Hall, 241 W. South Street

PRESENT: Curt Aardema, Mayor David Anderson, Harvin Sandhu, Trisha Kidd, Clarence Lloyd, Rick Searing, Cheng Kidd Sun, Connor Sampson

STAFF: Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator),
Bobby Boyd (Economic Development Supervisor) (virtual),
Maria Smith (Community Investment Administrative Assistant),
Christina Anderson (Deputy Director of Community Planning & Economic Development/City Planner), Jessica Wood (DEGA Legal Counsel)

OTHER: Rob Peterson, Matt Smilanich, Ron Smilanich, Michelle Johnson

A. CALL TO ORDER

DIRECTOR AARDEMA CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 3:01 P.M.

PRESENT: Curt Aardema, Mayor David Anderson, Harvin Sandhu, Trisha Kidd, Clarence Lloyd, Rick Searing, Cheng Kidd Sun, Connor Sampson

EXCUSED ABSENCE: Stanley Steppes

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE: None

THE APRIL 20, 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

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that exists between the façade and the common space, and the common space that provides access to and through the district.

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

Director Aardema made a recommendation to amend the agenda to move item D.1(Financial Report) to D.3, add E.1(Conflict of Interest form), and update E.6(Downtown Kalamazoo Website) motion language.

DIRECTOR LLOYD MOTIONED TO ADOPT THE APRIL 20, 2026, DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY AGENDA AS AMENDED. DIRECTOR SEARING SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

Director Aardema welcomed the new board members. Connor Sampson of Treystar a longtime downtown worker, and Harvin Sandhu of Five Rivers Developments, a downtown property owner and resident, gave their introductions.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

DIRECTOR SUN MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM MARCH 16, 2026, DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY MEETING. DIRECTOR LLOYD SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

D. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Presentation – Institute of Public Scholarship (Dr. Michelle Johnson, Executive Director of Institute for Public Scholarship)

Dr. Michelle Johnson presented an overview of the Institute of Public Scholarship and highlighted interdisciplinary programs in arts, humanities, and sciences. The institute emphasizes wellness, creative engagement, and community empowerment.

Key initiatives include arts and youth programming, open mic, writing/art studios, air quality monitoring, and “From This Place” oral history project. One of the projects being currently planned is a series of cultural artifact sidewalk wells and engraved bricks on the 300 block of North Burdick called “Paving the Past on Which We Stand” for which they are seeking grant funding and support.

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Mayor Anderson led a discussion about potential collaboration with the Northside Cultural Business District Authority Board for historical preservation.

2. Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 – Downtown Engagement (Christina Anderson)

Christina Anderson presented an overview of Imagine Kalamazoo 2035, a citywide strategic planning effort. This program includes a 3-phase series of sessions and events designed for community engagement and feedback over an 18-month period expected to end June 2026. The last phase of engagement is a series of neighborhood meetings with topics such as housing, transportation and environmental goals.

The next neighborhood session will be held downtown starting Tuesday April 28th where there will be a week-long event tailored to those that visit, live and work downtown. This is meant to be a celebration of previous and upcoming plans and projects with workshops, simulations, tours, activities, and presentations. They will also be having a discussion panel, fireside chat, and walking audits. The key focus areas are mobility, wayfinding, infrastructure, downtown vitality, economic activity, young professional retention, and arts and culture integration.

The Board discussed ways to coordinate existing engagement efforts, parking and construction impacts, and opportunities for Board participation. Anderson will come back to the Board with a follow-up presentation later this year, likely July.

3. Financial Report – February 2026 (Meghan Behymer, Downtown Coordinator)

Behymer reviewed the February 2026 financial report: In February, the Downtown Economic Growth Authority (DEGA) received \$59,210 in revenue from Contributions from City of Kalamazoo related to Mall Maintenance. 2026 year-to-date revenues total \$59,210.

In February, DEGA expenditures totaled \$49,527. Key expense categories included: Professional and Contractual Services (\$35,500) for Block-by-Block Ambassador Program Services; Consulting Services and Fees (\$8,925) for a5 Branding & Digital agreement; Promotion and Advertising (\$2,677) for Brand launch materials; and Community Promotion (\$2,475) for brand launch event. 2026 year-to-date expenditures total \$49,527.

The Board discussed the lower expenses due to delayed hiring.

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DIRECTOR SEARING MOTIONED TO ACCEPT THE FEBRUARY 2026 DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY FINANCIAL REPORT. MAYOR ANDERSON SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

4. Downtown Report – April 2026 (Meghan Behymer, Downtown Coordinator)

Behymer reviewed the Downtown Report and gave updates including the Match on Main grant program. The City has selected and submitted grant applications on behalf of The Grazing Table and Sit and Stay Winery.

Behymer detailed that the Downtown Dollars program had over \$1,500 dollars purchased and \$1,500 dollars redeemed at 16 Downtown businesses in March. Almost 50% of businesses have benefited from the program in 2026.

Director Lloyd shared details about the launch of a business support initiative called Retail Growth Lab starting in May. The goal is to help support the storefront business community.

Behymer has continued to meet with City departments regarding strengthening Downtown project coordination. Wolverine is contracted to do spring plantings and fall upkeep on the Kalamazoo Mall and landscaping on Bates Alley. Five additional BigBelly trash units are scheduled for installation on May 14.

Behymer explained that with warmer weather the Ambassadors have had increased activity conducting cleanup from graffiti, installing parking signage, continued coordination with public safety, and outreach efforts.

Behymer's other updates included Landscape Forums proposal for a pilot program. Downtown Social District expansion is under review. The second Portland Loo's construction is in progress and there are temporary bathrooms available. The Wayfinding RFP is in development. Downtown construction communication planning is underway. The Kalamazoo Marathon is returning to downtown. The Downtown Projects Coordinator position is posted.

E. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

1. Conflict of Interest Form (Jessica Wood, Attorney)

Jessica Wood reviewed the annual conflict of interest disclosure process with the Board and instructed members to complete conflict of interest forms. Legal

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counsel and staff will review the forms and reach out with any follow-up as needed.

2. Committee Governance Model

DIRECTOR SUN MADE A MOTION TO ADOPT THE COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE POLICY, INCLUDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMITTEE APPLICATION PROCESS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION FRAMEWORK FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP, AND TO ESTABLISH THE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AS PRESENTED. SUPPORTED BY DIRECTOR SEARING. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION APPROVED.

3. Committee Membership Recommendations

Meghan Behymer presented the following committee members and term lengths for approval:

- **Events and Marketing Committee:** Sarah Olszowy (2028), Dana Wagner (2028), Kim Guess (2027), and Channon Russette Mondoux (2027) as external members; Connor Sampson as board member representative.
- **Business Recruitment and Retention Committee:** Tim Rayman (2028) as external member.
- **Placemaking Committee:** Jennifer Hudson Prenkert (2028) as external member.

DIRECTOR SUN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS AS PRESENTED. SUPPORTED BY DIRECTOR LLOYD. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION APPROVED.

4. Bates Alley Parklet Recommendation

DIRECTOR SANDHU LEFT THE ROOM IN ABSTENTION DUE TO CONFLICT OF INTEREST.

DIRECTOR LLOYD MADE A MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY TO ENTER A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE CITY OF KALAMAZOO TO COMPLETE ONE-TIME

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REPAIRS TO THE BATES ALLEY PARKLETS, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$10,000, AND TO FORMALLY EXIT ANY FUTURE OWNERSHIP, MAINTENANCE, OR OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES UPON COMPLETION OF THOSE REPAIRS. DIRECTOR SUN SECONDED. DIRECTOR SANDHU ABSTAINED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION APPROVED.

5. Landscape Forms South Kalamazoo Mall Proposal

DIRECTOR SUN MOTIONED TO APPROVE ACCEPTANCE OF AN IN-KIND DONATION OF SITE FURNISHINGS FROM LANDSCAPE FORMS, VALUED AT UP TO \$100,000, FOR INSTALLATION ON THE SOUTH KALAMAZOO MALL; TO AUTHORIZE THE PLACEMAKING COMMITTEE TO FINALIZE PRODUCT SPECIFICATIONS, INSTALLATION LOCATIONS, AND INSTALLATION APPROACH; AND TO AUTHORIZE THE BOARD CHAIR TO EXECUTE ANY NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION, IN CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL, TO IMPLEMENT THE PROJECT, WITH ANY DECISIONS CARRYING BUDGET IMPLICATIONS TO BE BROUGHT BACK TO THE BOARD FOR APPROVAL. DIRECTOR LLOYD SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

6. Downtown Kalamazoo Website

DIRECTOR LLOYD MOTIONED TO AUTHORIZE CONTINUATION OF WEBSITE HOSTING AND MAINTENANCE SERVICES WITH MAESTRO THROUGH JUNE 30 OF 2026 IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$2,500 AND TO AUTHORIZE THE BOARD CHAIR TO SIGN ANY RELEVANT AGREEMENTS AUTHORIZING THIS ACTION IN CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL. DIRECTOR SEARING SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION PASSED.

F. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Matt Smilanich owner of Bimbo's Pizza downtown along with his father Ron Smilanich downtown real estate owner raised concerns about recent parking changes that eliminated short term parking flexibility. They explained the negative impact on their customers and their primarily takeout business and presented data from an independent study showing high short-term parking demand on the 300 block of East Michigan Avenue. Other concerns were parking enforcement and customer deterrence from coming downtown.

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The Board acknowledged the Smilanich's concerns and explained parking decisions are outside Board authority. Continued dialogue and engagement were encouraged.

G. DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Director Lloyd expressed gratitude to Meghan Behymer and Christina Anderson as City staff for their responsiveness to a downtown business's concern regarding front door access amidst active construction. He requested improved City coordination with Chamber town halls to foster dialogue.

H. ADJOURNMENT

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

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