

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

May 11, 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,
Jessica Wood (DEGA Legal Counsel) virtual

OTHER: Sergeant Fidel Mireles (Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety), Chief David Boysen (Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety), Cody Aho (Integrated Services of Kalamazoo)

A. CALL TO ORDER

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

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

EXCUSED ABSENCE: None

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE: Stanley Steppes

MAY 11, 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-

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2026, 3 p.m. | City Hall, 241 W. South Street

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.

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

DIRECTOR SUN MOTIONED TO ADOPT THE MAY 11, 2026, DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY AGENDA. DIRECTOR SANDHU SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MAYOR ANDERSON MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM APRIL 20, 2026, DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY MEETING. DIRECTOR SUN SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

D. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

- 1. Financial Report – March 2026 (Meghan Behymer, Downtown Coordinator)**
Behymer reviewed the March 2026 financial report: In March, the Downtown Economic Growth Authority (DEGA) received no revenue. 2026 year-to-date revenues total \$59,210. In March, DEGA expenditures totaled \$229,619. Key expense categories included: Professional and Contractual Services (\$59,974) for Ambassador Program Block by Block Contract (\$35,500) and Bigbelly Waste and Recycling January through March (\$24,474); Solid Waste Disposal (\$1,686); Legal Services (\$3,266); Administrative Fees (\$46,875) for Q1 City of Kalamazoo Service Agreement; Promotion and Advertising (\$10,444) for Branded banners (\$7,730.60), Winter in the Zoo Ice Sculpture (\$2,500) and branded table throw (\$213.22); Community Promotion (\$55,000) for Beats on Bates (\$50,000) and In the Zoo event sponsorship (\$5,000); Notes Payable – Principle (\$45,806) for Mavcon; and Notes Payable – Interest (\$6,568) for Mavcon. 2026 year-to-date expenditures total \$279,145.

DIRECTOR SUN MOTIONED TO ACCEPT THE MARCH 2026 DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY FINANCIAL REPORT. DIRECTOR KIDD SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2026, 3 p.m. | City Hall, 241 W. South Street

2. Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety – Downtown Kalamazoo (Sergeant Fidel Mireles II)

Behymer and Director Aardema introduced Sergeant Mireles to discuss Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) operations and their work downtown. Questions emerged in previous meetings regarding how downtown incidents are reported, where concerns ultimately flow, and how the Downtown Ambassador Program and KDPS intersect operationally.

Sergeant Mireles introduced himself as the Sergeant for the Community Service Team (CST). He explained that downtown falls within zone 1, the City's centralized district, which includes downtown core, adjacent surrounding areas and portions extending toward Bronson and nearby facilities. Zone 1 staffing includes one Sergeant, two Patrol Officers, one Beat Officer, and one Community Police Officer (CPO Brewer).

The Beat Officer serves as the primary officer specifically assigned to the downtown district. Their responsibilities include foot patrol, business interactions, addressing recurring complaints, crime trend response, and community engagement. The areas the Beat Officer heavily focuses on are Kalamazoo Mall, Bronson Park, festival site, parking structures, hotels, Ministry and Mission facilities, Kalamazoo Transportation Center (KTC) and other high traffic service locations. Beat Officers are expected to maintain a visible presence Monday through Friday, on foot patrol especially when there are special events. When needed there is a second Beat Officer and they often use bikes patrols to improve mobility and visibility.

Directors Lloyd and Searing entered the meeting.

The Community Service Team and Co-Responder program focuses specifically on behavioral health calls, mental health crises, unhoused populations, resource coordination, and extended service interactions. The team is comprised of Sergeant Mireles, three officers, and Co-Responder social workers available Monday to Friday 9:00am to midnight. These calls often require more time than standard policing responses typically for 20–45-minute crisis conversations, resource navigation, voluntary treatment discussions, and transportation coordination. The CST allows patrol officers to remain available for criminal enforcement and emergency response. Chief Boysen entered the meeting briefly and noted that Kalamazoo is among a limited number of Michigan pilot agencies utilizing a Co-Responder model pairing social workers with police officers.

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2026, 3 p.m. | City Hall, 241 W. South Street

Downtown Ambassadors currently contact KDPS dispatch directly and follow up concerns are routed to CST. They also attend weekly coordination meetings with CST, ISK, CPED, KTC, Ministry partners, and Mission representatives. Sergeant Mireles stressed that communication remains one of the most important factors in improving outcomes. He encouraged committee members and stakeholders to share concerns early before small issues escalate.

Considerable discussion focused on impacts from recent Ministry with Community policy changes limiting loitering. There have been more reports of unhoused individuals elsewhere downtown, more individuals congregating on Kalamazoo Mall, increased use of building entrances and alleyways, growth in informal encampments. Ambassadors observed sleeping in doorways, increased activity in Bronson Park, greater biohazard cleanup, and more abandoned property. KDPS acknowledges observing these changes and has increased directed patrols in response. The group discussed how displacement often shifts activity geographically rather than resolving underlying causes.

A recurring theme centered on balancing enforcement with supportive intervention. Sergeant Mireles repeatedly emphasized that resource provision occurs before enforcement whenever possible.

Examples requiring eventual enforcement are trespassing, open drug use, repeated littering, property destruction, and aggressive conduct. Discussion acknowledged that many interactions involve repeat individuals. Board members questioned consequences when behaviors repeatedly disrupt businesses and downtown activity. Sergeant Mireles noted that accountability remains difficult but necessary. He explained that trespassing citations are typically misdemeanors, and enforcement outcomes are largely determined through courts as fines or community service. He also conveyed that some individuals openly state incarceration is preferable due to meals, shelter, and predictability.

Mayor Anderson raised questions about whether a “by name list” approach used in other communities might help to track repeat individuals, coordinate interventions, better understand patterns, and target service strategies. Sergeant Mireles noted that informal recognition already occurs, weekly meetings frequently discuss recurring individuals, and approximately 20-25 individuals account for significant downtown interactions. The group suggested future discussions may revisit whether more formal tracking methods are appropriate.

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2026, 3 p.m. | City Hall, 241 W. South Street

Group members raised concerns regarding employees walking to vehicles after work, women feeling unsafe, panhandling, repeat disturbances, and customer interactions. Mireles strongly encouraged immediate reporting, calling dispatch as incidents occur, and avoiding delayed reports to redirect resources appropriately. The Ambassadors often provide safety escorts during operating hours.

Director Lloyd asked why downtown experiences differ from other communities. Discussion centered on concentration of service organizations, accessibility of food and shelter resources, geographic clustering of services, and difficulty motivating long term change. Sergeant Mireles emphasized personal accountability as a central factor. Examples were shared of individuals successfully exiting homelessness after deciding to pursue housing and support systems. Many services already exist but participation remains voluntary.

Director Sun questioned whether additional social workers or outreach workers would help. Suggestions included partnership with universities, graduate social work placements, expanded street outreach models, and more direct field-based engagement. Sergeant Mireles indicated stronger street outreach capacity among existing organizations would be beneficial. He expressed interest in more boots on the ground support, outreach workers following up directly after police interactions, and greater field presence rather than office-based services.

Clarification was provided regarding the proper reporting channels. Dispatch should be used for active incidents, emergencies, immediate concerns, safety threats, ongoing disturbances, and anonymous reporting. CST email is actively monitored by multiple team members and should be used for encampment concerns, follow up issues, trends, and non-urgent patterns.

Sergeant Mireles shared that CST de-escalation training sessions are available for downtown businesses, customer-facing staff, election workers, and City staff. Training topics include mental health crisis interactions, customer conflict management, and verbal de-escalation strategies.

Board members expressed appreciation for KDPS staff and the discussion. Future engagement opportunities were discussed including business focused information sessions, continued Board attendance, and additional

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2026, 3 p.m. | City Hall, 241 W. South Street

communication and training. Officer Brower was identified as the downtown point of contact moving forward.

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

Behymer reviewed the Downtown Report and gave updates including the Park.Shop.Win incentive program which is currently offering \$100 weekly Downtown Dollars through September. The plan is to expand promotion through social media campaigns, business posters/handouts, email communications, and potential media coverage to increase awareness and participation.

Director Lloyd and Behymer shared updates from the Business Recruitment and Retention Committee meeting where they reviewed 2026 priorities informed by recent stakeholder feedback and town hall discussions. The key focus areas identified are vacant storefront campaign strategy, business engagement, incentives, and construction support strategy. The plan is to develop campaigns to attract businesses into empty spaces and explore tools such as QR codes and use community input on desired uses.

To provoke business engagement the plan is to strengthen DDA's role as a liaison and communication channel for downtown businesses and create more structured engagement and outreach opportunities. Discussion centered around incentives supporting recruitment and retention.

Director Lloyd and Behymer explained the whitebox incentives are identified as a potentially valuable attraction and retention tool. Director Lloyd explained how learning from the past "dig downtown" campaign during construction could be useful in this upcoming construction season. There was interest in creating support strategies and funding mechanisms to help businesses during upcoming construction disruptions. Potential collaboration with external funding partners was also discussed.

Behymer gave an update on the Downtown Dollars program reporting total sales of approximately \$3,625 with roughly \$1,000 redeemed across 12 downtown businesses in April. She also shared that there is an upcoming Downtown Town Hall meeting scheduled for July 14 at 2:00. The Ambassador reports continue to be reviewed by the Placemaking Committee before Board review.

Director Searing and Behymer gave updates from the Placemaking Committee formerly Clean and Green Committee, which has recently implemented new

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2026, 3 p.m. | City Hall, 241 W. South Street

governance and membership. Landscape Forms will be meeting with Committee members to conduct a mall walk through to determine final placement for the 2 outdoor furniture donations. Other mall improvement projects that are underway include landscape improvements such as new mulch installation, concrete and tree planter enhancements, and plantings to be completed by May 15. Other projects include irrigation repairs are progressing after prolonged inactivity, and major irrigation breaks. The Board discussed future Placemaking investments and project priorities for next year's budget planning.

Behymer's indicated the Portland Loo site project has been delayed due to unexpected underground utility issues. Board members expressed concern regarding project timelines and downtown appearance ahead of major summer events.

The Wayfinding Study RFP has been officially published with proposals due June 4. Placemaking Committee will guide the process. The focus is on long-term pedestrian wayfinding improvements during ongoing construction periods.

Streets for All project bids opened May 1. The project manager is being finalized. Corridor business meetings are expected to be early to mid-June with construction anticipated after July 4.

Director Kidd detailed that the Events and Marketing Committee convened successfully with strong attendance. Current initiatives include development of a strategic communication strategy around construction, coordination with marketing partners and the City who is conducting a planned audit of collaterals, and the Committee is planning a retreat. Additional work is needed around the brand rollout initiatives, Big Belly sponsorship program, and event support planning.

Behymer and Director Aardema briefed the group on the Executive Committee's focus on parking and the new governance structure.

Behymer gave an update on the Downtown Project Coordinator position that closed with 53 applicants. Top candidates are currently being interviewed. Finalists are likely to return for in-person interviews. The goal is to extend the offer by late May or early June and to have the position filled quickly.

E. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2026, 3 p.m. | City Hall, 241 W. South Street

1. Committee Membership Recommendation

Director Sandhu questioned whether it was appropriate to abstain due to Heather Holmer being his tenant, but the group determined it was unnecessary.

MAYOR ANDERSON MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE HEATHER HOLMER FOR A ONE YEAR TERM ON THE BUSINESS RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION COMMITTEE. DIRECTOR LLOYD SECONDED. MOTION APPROVED.

2. Arcadia Creek Festival Place Season

Behymer explained the motion as allocation of operational support and infrastructure funding designated to Kim Guess for primary day-of contact for event organizers during 3 festivals over 5 days. This support role will be the keyholder, follow the special event process, have identified City contacts, and be responsible for utility operation.

DIRECTOR SUN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE AN ALLOCATON OF UP TO \$3,000 TO SUPPORT 2026 EVENT OPERATIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS AT ARCADIA CREEK FESTIVAL PLACE, INCLUDING EVENT OPERATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES AND SEASONAL IRRIGATION OPERATIONS, WITH THE EVENT OPERATIONAL SUPPORT COMPONENT COMING FORWARD AT THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE EVENTS AND MARKETING COMMITTEE. SUPPORTED BY DIRECTOR SEARING. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION APPROVED.

3. Downtown Kalamazoo Parking

Behymer explained upcoming changes to the downtown parking system based on feedback. The planned changes include:

- First 30 minutes free at all paid on-street spaces
- Increased time limits to 3 hours maximum
- Enforcement ending at 5:00pm systemwide
- Exploration of expanded 5-hour and 10-hour parking areas to accommodate employees and long-term business clients

The signage, kiosk, and enforcement should be updated simultaneously.

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2026, 3 p.m. | City Hall, 241 W. South Street

Ramp improvements that were discussed include security options, quarterly parking data reporting, customer service concerns, and identified technology and gate issues. Director Aardema noted improvements were responsive to business concerns and represented progress toward a more workable system.

F. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

G. DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Director Lloyd raised concerns about the accumulated trash in the Creek and the low water level and added the need for better proactive planning and maintenance. He also discussed the importance of anticipating project impacts, encouraging a service minded organizational culture, and developing measurable success indicators.

Director Sun stated the need for long term planning considerations around Event Center integration, Social District expansion, Public Safety and Ambassador strategies, and creating connections between downtown and the WMU stadiums as an entertainment district.

Director Searing expressed concerns regarding encampments near downtown areas ahead of upcoming festivals and events.

Mayor Anderson shared how a comparable community in North Carolina is successfully addressing the unsheltered homeless problem. The program combines enforcement, ordinance adjustments, and connections to services.

H. ADJOURNMENT

**DIRECTOR LLOYD MOTIONED TO ADJOURN, SUPPORTED BY DIRECTOR SEARING.
MOTION APPROVED WITH NO ONE OPPOSED.**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 P.M.