

**MEETING MINUTES
BERKLEY DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Wednesday, April 9, 2025, 8:15 AM
Berkley Public Safety, 2nd Floor, Conference Room**



- I. CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 8:15 AM with Chair Matteo Passalacqua presiding.

A. Roll Call Taken and Quorum Determined

Present: Donna Dirkse
Desiree Dutcher
Katie Forte
Scott Francis
Chris Gross
Shawn Heath-Lee
Uli Laczkovich
Matteo Passalacqua
Ashley Poirier
Todd Schaefer

Absent: Justin Findling – *excused*
Anna Grace – *excused*
Crystal VanVleck – *excused*
Talia Wittenberg – *excused*
Brian Zifkin – *excused*

Also present: Steve Baker, City Council Liaison
Janine Braun, The Artsy Umbrella
Jennifer Finney, Interim DDA Executive Director
Katie Goodwin, New Student Board Member
Justin Harlan, Historical Committee
Kristen Kapelanski, Community Development Director
Lisa Kempner, Planning Commission Liaison
Tim Murad, Chamber of Commerce Liaison
Adam Wozniak, Berkley DPW Liaison

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Dirkse moved to approve the Agenda, Francis seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting Minutes of March 12, 2025

Gross moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of March 12, 2025, Schaefer seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

IV. TREASURER REPORT

A. Financial Reports for March 2025

Gross reported year-to-date revenues of @\$438,000, year-to-date expenses of @\$402,000, and an ending fund balance of @\$244,000. Left to spend in fiscal year 2024/25 is @121,000, which she believes is budgeted for the Robina Project.

Francis moved to receive and approve the Treasurer's Report for March 2025, Heath-Lee seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

V. ACTION ITEMS

A. Updated DDA Façade and Parking Lot Enhancement Program/Application

Finney reported that the application was reviewed by the Art and Design Committee and Kapelanski of Community Development. Changes to the application include meeting with Community Development prior to the application going to the full Board. Other changes include work needing to start within 120 days of approval (rather than 60) and work to be completed changed from four to six months from date of approval. The last big change is that DDA reimbursement is contingent upon work being approved by the City inspector when it is completed. A copy of the revised application was included in the Board packet.

Schaefer moved to approve the updated DDA Façade and Parking Lot Enhancement Program Application, Dutcher seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

B. Addendum to Interim Executive Director Finney's Contract

Passalacqua reported that the Organization Committee requested that Finney be allowed to work up to 30 hours per week without prior approval of the Board Chair or City Manager. This change was requested because of the amount of work Finney has done, seamlessly, since she took on the job, with more hours needed as events season begins. He and Francis praised her performance.

Francis moved to approve the Addendum to Interim Executive Director Finney's contract, Forte seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

A. Board Member Reappointment

Finney reported that Passalacqua's four-year term would expire at the end of the DDA's fiscal year, June 30, and he has signaled that he would like to continue on the Board. His reappointment has the support of the rest of the Board, and members offered that he has done an excellent job both as a trustee and as chair since being elected in 2024.

Francis moved to approve the Board Member Reappointment of Matteo Passalacqua for another four-year term, Forte seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

C. Mural – State Farm

Finney had included in the Board's information packet renderings of the mural State Farm wanted to have well-known mural artist Lisa Littell paint on the east facing wall of their building at 3900 Twelve Mile Road. Two mural designs were presented, the Board preferring Option 1, reminiscent of the large mural on the former Tutti & Tallulah's building on 12 Mile near Coolidge. The applicant said the mural cost would be \$5,000, the amount requested in their application.

After some discussion, Francis suggested and Board members agreed on a total award of \$3,000.

Schaefer moved to approve State Farm's mural application with an award of \$3,000.00, Poirier seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

D. Triennial Budget 2025 - 2028

Finney presented a draft budget to the Board aimed at cutting @\$50,000-\$60,000 from the 2024 budget in order to make pursuit of grant funding in the future viable. Total savings of @\$56,700 were presented in her budget with cuts to individual categories detailed in the Board packet.

Board members discussed at length the overall budget and proposed cuts. Some expenses, such as the Trolley, were moved into a separate line item. Finney noted that as the year progresses with a

new Executive Director in place, monies can be shifted between line items as long as the overall budget, approved by the Board and City Council, does not increase.

Several Board members were concerned about reductions in the social media budget that Poirier noted will affect her company's flexibility and response time, which will be slowed to a certain extent. Time will tell how much that changes the public perception of the DDA, its businesses, and Berkley as a whole.

Passalacqua noted that in the future, a bidding system might be a cost-cutting tool that the DDA utilizes to keep expenses under control.

Finney noted that the Main Street Technical Assistance funds can be used to boost the budgeted marketing/social media allocation in her draft budget. There was also a general consensus that funds could be moved from the mural line to the façade enhancement line, partly because there are a good number of murals in the downtown, and façade enhancements are more durable over time.

Dutcher moved to conditionally approve the DDA Draft Triennial Budget, Gross seconded, and the motion was approved by all on the Board, except with Poirier abstaining.

Passalacqua noted that Finney had done an outstanding job putting the budget together.

VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Permanent Executive Director Search Update

Passalacqua noted that the Hiring Committee needs a little more time to work through the specifics of the position; he will keep the Board informed as the process moves forward. The process is taking more time than originally expected. Whoever the new director is, when that person comes in, the DDA will hand him or her a fairly orderly situation, thanks in large part to Finney.

VII. LIAISON REPORTS

A. City Council – Steve Baker

Baker reported that City Council made a proclamation thanking and recognizing all City volunteers, including the DDA Board, with their recognition of April 20 through 27 as Volunteer Week. With a nod to the Historical Committee, he reported that 2026 will be the 100th anniversary of Coolidge being paved, with the law establishing Michigan Downtown Development Authorities being created 50 years prior.

B. Community Development – Kristen Kapelanski

Kapelanski had nothing new to report.

C. Planning Commission – Lisa Kempner

Kempner reported that plans for the Columbia-Coolidge PUD had been revised and presented to the Planning Commission, and she expected them to be presented to Council in May. The section on the south side of Columbia is now planned to be parking and a park-like area.

D. Public Works – Adam Wozniak

Wozniak reported that bistro tables and chairs will be out on the sidewalk soon. The sprinkler system will be checked out in time for flower planting in May.

E. Chamber of Commerce – Tim Murad

Murad reported Chamber is looking for two interns, and Poirier offered to help them find students through her contacts at the High School.

VIII. STUDENT BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

New Student Board Member Katie Goodwin reported that new NHS students are being inducted and need activities for volunteering. Volunteer Clean up for Earth Week is being scheduled for the school garden and neighborhood. The student robotics team did well in State competition and is moving into space at Cana Lutheran Church on Catalpa. The high school will be presenting the musical "The Prom" April 24-27/

Francis will give Baker and the Board information about the teacher contact for NHS to discuss volunteer work they could do in the city.

IX. BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES

A. Art & Design Committee

Finney reported the committee met to review mural applications.

B. Business Development Committee

The Berkley Common restaurant has closed. A new business will be moving into their space.

C. Downtown Events Committee

Poirier reported the Pride working group will meet April 30. May 3 is the first Ladies (Leia's) Day Out. Finney is volunteering to stay on to plan the DDA's participation in Cruise Fest.

D. Marketing Strategies Committee

Finney thanked Poirier and Forte for their work on the new DDA Web site, which is planned to launch on April 18.

E. Organization Committee

No additional report.

F. West 12 Mile Committee

Absent – no report.

X. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATES

No additional report.

XI. BOARD OF DIRECTORS' COMMENTS

None.

XII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Justin Harlan (Historical Committee) reported that they're planning their scavenger hunt around town and will work with Finney on details and business contact information. Janine Braun (Artsy Umbrella and Farmers Market Coordinator) reported she has contacted vendors who have taken part previously and has fielded inquiries from possible new vendors.

The opportunity for public comment was offered, and no additional requests to comment were made at the meeting. Anyone with comments or questions is asked to e-mail them to the DDA to be answered within five business days.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 AM on motion by Poirier and second by Poirier.