

**MEETING MINUTES
BERKLEY DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Wednesday, August 14, 2024, 8:15 AM
Berkley Public Safety, 2nd Floor, Conference Room**



- I. CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 9:08 AM with Chair Matteo Passalacqua presiding. The meeting start was delayed until quorum was achieved.
- II. ROLL CALL:**
- A. Attendance Taken and Quorum Determined**
- Present:* Donna Dirkse
Desiree Dutcher
Nate Geinzer
Chris Gross
Matteo Passalacqua
Brian Zifkin
- Absent:* Justin Findling – *excused*
Katie Forte – *excused*
Scott Francis – *excused*
Uli Laczkovich – *excused*
Ashley Poirier – *excused*
Talia Wittenberg – *excused*
- Also present:* Kristen Kapelanski, Community Development Director
Shawn Heath-Lee, Co-Owner, Coffee & Bark
Mike McGuinness, DDA Executive Director
Tim Murad, Chamber of Commerce Liaison
Dominic Romano, MEDC
Adam Wozniak, Berkley DPW Liaison
- III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**
Geinzer moved to approve the agenda, Dirkse seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.
- IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
- A. Regular Meeting of July 10, 2024**
On motion by Geinzer and second by Dutcher, the minutes of the regular meeting of July 10, 2024 were unanimously approved by the Board.
- V. TREASURER'S REPORT:**
- A. Financial Reports for July 2024**
Gross reported that last year's expenses went up, as expected, details to come. Revenues of @\$28,000 were received in July 2024 and expenses were @\$49,000 (no unusual expenses for the period, the largest expense being downtown flowers, \$38,000). The ending fund balance as of July 2024 was @\$172,000.
- Geinzer moved to receive and approve the Treasurer's Report, Dirkse seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

VI. ACTION ITEMS:

A. Authorizing Executive Director to Enter Into Oakland County Placemaking Program Agreement in Order to Receive \$83,642.00 in County Matching Funds for Robina Public Space Improvements

McGuinness had sent a copy of the Agreement to the Board prior to the meeting. County funds (40%) are to be matched by Berkley at 60%, or @\$120,000, which has been budgeted for the fiscal year. Grant funds must be expended by the end of 2026. McGuinness noted that some of these funds could be used to maintain the Berkley Theatre Marquee. Although the agreement is mostly boilerplate, it is being reviewed by the Berkley City Attorney before submission to Oakland County.

Geinzer moved to authorize the Executive Director to Enter Into Oakland County Placemaking Program Agreement in Order to Receive \$83,642.00 in County Matching Funds for Robina Public Space Improvements, Dutcher seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

B. Recommending Preference for DTE Energy Downtown Street Lamp Upgrade Design

McGuinness reported that the Art & Design Committee had met and made a recommendation of their preferred design of the three presented to the Board by Wozniak. The replacements will be funded by a grant received by the DPW, which has final approval of the design. These lamps will be used on all light poles that *aren't* goosenecks. The replacement poles should all have electrical outlets.

Dutcher moved to approve submitting to DPW the DDA's preference for the 60-watt acorn design lamp recommended by the Art & Design Committee, Gross seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

C. Authorizing Closure Request Submission to City for Dorothea, Between Coolidge and Alley

McGuinness reported that Berkley had been awarded the \$10,000.00 SEMCOG grant for long-term planning to be applied to developing this space as a public gathering/event area. The closure could be short-term, long-term, or permanent.

Gross moved to approve authorization of submission to the City a request to close Dorothea between Coolidge and the east alley, Dutcher seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

D. Resolution Stating the Importance of Historic Berkley Theatre Marquee Preservation and Affirming the Berkley Downtown Development Authority Prioritization of that Goal for our Downtown

McGuinness passed around a copy and read the resolution he had prepared regarding the DDA's prioritization of preservation of the iconic Berkley Theatre Marquee:

WHEREAS, the historic Berkley Theater and accompanying marquee was an iconic landmark on 12 Mile Road in downtown Berkley from 1941 until closure in 1993, though through citizen action and city collaboration, the marquee was able to remain and serve as a beacon for our downtown; and,

WHEREAS, the iconic theater marquee is synonymous with our downtown, and our Downtown Development Authority incorporates the marquee design and font into much of our downtown marketing and promotional materials because of how interlinked the landmark is with our downtown; and,

WHEREAS, the private property on which the marquee is affixed is currently for sale following the closure of Rite Aid, placing the marquee's future in an uncertain phase and causing great concern throughout the Berkley community and in our downtown about the historic preservation of this landmark; now,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Berkley Downtown Development Authority formally states the high importance of preserving the historic and iconic Berkley Theater marquee for Downtown Berkley, Michigan; and further

RESOLVED, the Berkley Downtown Development Authority affirms the preservation of the marquee as a top priority for advancing Downtown Berkley and, as a result, a top priority for our organization; and further

RESOLVED, we are prepared as an organization to invest our time, resources, advocacy, and insights into future solutions that ensures the marquee is preserved for generations to come, and we will continue to remain engaged to the fullest extent of our capacity in helping to facilitate that positive result.

Geinzer suggested preparing a letter to accompany the Resolution, signed by McGuinness, the Board Chair, and the mayor, and following Zifkin's idea, to ask the property owner/seller for a donation of the marquee. That could begin a conversation between the DDA and the seller, and lets the community know the DDA's position and engagement . The Resolution is symbolic and has no binding effect.

Zifkin moved to approve the Resolution Stating the Importance of Historic Berkley Theatre Marquee Preservation, Dirkse seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

E. Website Redesign Project Firm Selection

McGuinness reported that the firm Civic Clarity was recommended by Main Street OC, and information about them was included in the Board packet. Funds are available (\$7,500) from the Main Street Oakland County technical assistance grant, an amount that resets every year in September. Redesign will be ongoing.

Gross moved to approve using the firm Civic Clarity to redesign the DDA Web site using the \$7,500 funds from Main Street Oakland County's Technical Assistance grant, Dutcher seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

VII. Discussion Items

A. Economic Development Tools and Downtown Projects, Shared by Dominic Romano of Michigan Economic Development Corporation

MEDC representative, Senior Community Development Manager Dominic Romano, summarized ways that his organization might be able to assist Berkley's DDA in their efforts to preserve the Berkley Theatre Marquee. He had been asked to present to the Board the MEDC's available tools.

There are some State incentives available, from a variety of sources, for various kinds of projects, or merely offering technical assistance. They can connect developers to providers offering environmental assessments, with maps available detailing when/whether environmental assessments have been done on certain properties.

Guidance, technical assistance, and/or grant dollars for preserving cultural and historic properties could be routes to pursue. Property ownership is key. Five to ten percent equity in a property is usually required for bank financing.

Romano suggested that the most likely assistance would come from an historic preservation organization. MEDC could assist with connecting prospective developers to the current property owner, the seller. They have a team that can help "package" properties. Passalacqua stressed that the DDA/Berkley may need to move quickly and be willing to take chances. Zifkin suggested approaching the owner or developer and ask if they would be willing to donate the sign section of the marquee structure.

B. Landscape and Lighting

McGuinness reported that DPW Director Young has proposed designating a dedicated DPW staff person whose responsibility will be providing service to the downtown, (DDA) managing contractors providing landscaping related services, and funded by the DDA. That would be the point person for downtown landscaping issues. Geinzer noted there will probably be a shared cost component with the City to pay for that staff person.

McGuinness noted discussions with DPW regarding fall planting of replacement trees.

Dutcher reported that the Art & Design Committee would like to join the discussions about flower planting for the 2025 season.

C. Long-Term Planning for Future Coolidge Reconstruction, Streetscape

McGuinness reported that the DPW Director will attend the September Board meeting to join discussion of the reconstruction of Coolidge in future years and changes to be made to the roadway.

D. Berkley CruiseFest Happening Along Twelve Mile on August 16th

McGuinness reported the event was two days away and that the weather would be dry.

E. BOOKley Season Initiative in our Downtown this Fall

McGuinness reported that planning for the month's events is underway.

VIII. LIAISON REPORTS

A. City Council – Steve Baker

Absent – no report.

B. Community Development – Kristen Kapelanski

Kapelanski reported for her department and the Planning Commission in Kempner's absence. She reported the Commission approved the façade plan for the new Coolidge restaurant. They will work with the Art & Design Committee on planning for the Coolidge/Dorothea public space.

C. Planning Commission – Lisa Kempner

Absent.

D. Public Works – Adam Wozniak

Wozniak reported DPW will be ready for CruiseFest. Barricades will be in place.

E. Chamber of Commerce – Tim Murad

Murad reported the Chamber will be selling CruiseFest T-shirts under the Marquee during the event. The Kit Home tour is planned for this year, but they will skip 2025 and substitute a cemetery tour. Restaurant Weekend will be the last weekend in September.

IX. STUDENT BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

The student Board members are excused during Summer break.

X. BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES:

A. Art & Design Committee

New meeting schedule adopted.

B. Business Development Committee

New Retailers and New Restaurant News for Coolidge

McGuinness will be reaching out to the Michigan Arts and Culture Council.

C. Downtown Events Committee

BOOKley Planning Sessions Underway

D. Marketing Strategies Committee

Website Redesign Initiative

E. Organization Committee

New DDA Board Applicant Interviews, Recommendations.

An applicant for the Coolidge seat, Shawn Heath-Lee of Coffee and Bark, was attending the meeting to get an impression of how the Board works. Next, the Committee will meet, interview candidates, and present their recommendations to the Board.

F. West 12-Mile Committee

Nothing additional to report.

XI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATES

A. Future Changes with Elected Official Role in Neighboring Community

McGuinness reported that the City of Pontiac, where he resides and serves as City Council President, has revised their City Charter and made the Council President position full time. That would go into effect in future years, and it is still yet to be determined in late 2025 whether he would serve a future term on the City Council, and whether he would continue as Council President. He will keep the Board updated as the implications of the new Charter provisions are more clearly known.

B. Michigan Municipal League Conference Participation September 11, 12, 13

McGuinness will be attending the mid-week conference and be out of town.

XII. BOARD OF DIRECTORS' COMMENTS:

None.

XIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS: The opportunity for public comment was offered, and no 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.

XIV. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:46 AM on motion by Geinzer and second by Gross.