

**MEETING MINUTES
BERKLEY DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Wednesday, July 10, 2024, 8:15 AM
Berkley Public Safety, 2nd Floor, Conference Room**



I. CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 8:17 AM with Chair Matteo Passalacqua presiding.

II. ROLL CALL:

A. Attendance Taken and Quorum Determined

Present: Donna Dirkse
Desiree Dutcher
Katie Forte
Scott Francis
Nate Geinzer
Chris Gross
Uli Laczkovich
Matteo Passalacqua
Ashley Poirier
Brian Zifkin

Absent: Justin Findling – *excused*
Talia Wittenberg – *excused*

Also present: Kristen Kapelanski, Community Development Director
Lisa Kempner, Planning Commission Liaison
Mike McGuinness, DDA Executive Director
Tim Murad, Chamber of Commerce Liaison
Todd Schaefer, America's Stamp Shop, Board Trustee Applicant
Adam Wozniak, Berkley DPW Liaison

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Passalacqua asked to add a Discussion Item to the Agenda, Landscaping and Lighting, and Zifkin moved to approve the amended agenda. Poirier seconded, and the agenda was unanimously approved by the Board.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting of June 12, 2024

On motion by Francis and second by Gross, the minutes of the regular meeting of June 12, 2024 were unanimously approved by the Board.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT:

A. Financial Reports for June 2024

Gross reported revenues of @\$2,000 in June 2024 and expenses of @\$39,000 (no unusual expenses for the period). Year-to-date revenues total @\$428,000 and expenses @\$509,000. The ending fund balance as of June 2024 was @\$209,000. There is catch-up still to be done as fiscal year 2023/24 ends. Year-to-date Budget to Actual, \$463,000 revenue was budgeted and \$428,000 actual revenue was received, but additional revenue for the year might yet be received. Expenses (employee benefits) are @\$20,000 under the amount budgeted. Holiday Lights expenses are under budget by @\$11,000; Marketing and Advertising are currently @\$6,000 under budget, and

Streetscape and Design, over budget, is offset by Flower Basket and Public Art. Overall, the DDA is under-budget by @\$119,000, with final accounting still be done.

Laczkovich moved to receive and approve the Treasurer's Report, Dirkse seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

VI. ACTION ITEMS:

A. Annual Election of Board Officers (7/1/14 to 6/30/23)

1. Chair

Poirier nominated Matteo Passalacqua to the position (which he currently holds as Interim Chair), Dirkse seconded, Passalacqua accepted the nomination, and the Board voted unanimously in favor.

2. Vice Chair

Gross nominated Desiree Dutcher to the position (which she currently holds as Interim Vice Chair), Dirkse seconded, Dutcher was not present to accept the nomination, and the Board voted unanimously in favor.

3. Secretary

Gross nominated Nate Geinzer to the position, Poirier seconded, and Geinzer was not present to accept the nomination. The City Manager is always the de facto Secretary of the Board. The Board voted unanimously in favor.

4. Treasurer

Poirier nominated Chris Gross to the position for another term, Dirkse seconded, Gross accepted the nomination, and the Board voted unanimously in favor.

B. Guidance on Technical Assistance Grant Utilization; Website Redesign Proposed

McGuinness reported that as a Main Street Oakland County Select Community, every year Berkley receives a Technical Assistance grant from Main Street, \$7,500.00 again this year. He proposed using those funds to redesign the DDA Web site, which he described as basic and dated. If updated, it can be more comprehensive and informative. If the Board agrees with this direction, he can proceed to get estimates from Web site design firms. Passalacqua suggested one improvement would be to include data about how the DDA's funds have been used to enhance specific downtown areas and DDA events.

McGuinness noted that the DPW Director will be attending the September Board meeting to discuss the timeline for restructuring the Coolidge roadway, and Main Street Technical Assistance funds for 2024/25 can be applied to conceptual designs for that restructuring.

Poirier moved to approve using the Technical Assistance funds to redesign the DDA Website, Forte seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

VII. Discussion Items

A. Ullman's Health and Beauty Won \$10,000 Backing Small Business Grant from American Express!

McGuinness reported that Ullman's Health and Beauty had been awarded a \$10,000.00 American Express Small Business Grant, a national award. All present congratulated Laczkovich, who noted she had been surprised and delighted when she found out the news.

B. Preserving Berkley Theatre Marquee and Next Steps with Building Currently Occupied by Rite Aid

The Berkley Rite Aid pharmacy/drug store at Robina/Wakefield and 12 Mile, one of the largest footprints in the downtown district, will be closing soon as Rite Aid nationally goes out of business. This is a major concern for the City, not only losing the business but also probably the large mural on

the west side of the building and the iconic Berkley Theatre Marquee. There was detailed discussion of what happens in the future and how to save this iconic feature of the downtown.

The building is privately owned by an individual who lives out of the country and has listed it for sale through his local representative, who has had discussions with Community Development Director Kapelanski. The City had leased the marquee space from Rite Aid. The owner is entertaining several inquiries from individuals interested in acquiring the property. The Board's discussion centered around what incentives, if any, could be offered to developers, what possible ways could the City save the marquee, and what costs are involved to maintain the marquee on a yearly basis. The neon repair, which has to be done fairly regularly, requires workers with a special skill, and they are dying off and not being replaced. Structural repair to the marquee and converting to LED is estimated to be @\$220,000.

Passalacqua noted that they haven't found any protection in place that saves the building from being demolished. Even though it was originally part of the agreement with Perry Drugs (before Rite Aid), there's no written record of protection for the marquee. He believes the DDA needs to be part of any discussion of how the site will be utilized, and Board members should start thinking about possibilities now.

The large mural that covers the west wall of the building originated with a partnership between the building owner, the DIA, the DDA, and the City. Kapelanski reported some of the interest she's fielded have specific ideas about possible use and others are just asking her for direction about what *can* be done. Can Berkley offer any incentives to the new owner/developer? There is consensus that the DDA get involved in saving the marquee. Passalacqua noted that a special meeting of the Board may be called quickly if/when monetary decisions have to be made. Geinzer mentioned that there are State incentives that could be in play for development of the site, and the Chair asked if he could bring more details about that to the August meeting.

Passalacqua also asked for clarification of what the DDA Board can do by itself and what will need Council agreement. He stressed that this is a once-in-a-lifetime legacy project. Passalacqua issued a belated thank you to McGuinness for insuring that last year the marquee was fully lit.

The Chair also asked that the Board start considering the potential for debt service, bonded debt, for funding a brick and mortar project that could take several years of payments. Realistically, what could the DDA comfortably afford yearly on debt service? Geinzer also noted that with continued planned private development, DDA's revenues will be rising, and having a strategic plan can guide their direction and help target projects long term. They could get estimates from the City's bond agent. Passalacqua also suggested finding out what planning services Main Street Oakland County can offer. Gross noted that it appears normal operational expenses versus income break even.

C. Successful Third Annual Berkley Pride Block Party Held in June

McGuinness thanked all the volunteers who worked to make this third year block party a great success, especially Poirier, the event organizer. He also praised the work of the DPW and Public Safety, and noted all the new City department informational booths.

D. Downtown Berkley Farmers Market Season Launched, Strong Trends

McGuinness noted that the market is attracting more vendors and more variety. The theme for the July markets will be "Barkley Dog Days of Summer," with additional dog-theme offerings.

E. Berkley Chamber Presents Street Art Fest this Saturday, July 13th

The DDA is offering more financial support to the event this year, as well as tents, tables, and chairs. Murad noted the increased number of Berkley volunteers for these downtown events.

F. Next Ladies Night Out on August 1st with Mrs. Roper Romp, Hippie Fest Tie-Ins

To capitalize on the Three's Company character, Mrs. Roper, theme, Mrs. Roper wigs will be worn during the event. Hours for the Thursday Farmers Market will be extended, and the trolley will be running. Passalacqua suggested getting a count of how many trolley riders there are. Forte reported that automatic counters are available that can be placed in the trolley doorway.

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

The DDA has been informed the footprint and features of this year's CruiseFest will proceed the same as it has in recent years on the third Friday in August. The main logistical change is that the City will no longer be buying t-shirts to be offered for sale by community organization volunteers, due to cost and staffing challenges.

H. Irish Fest Not Taking Place This Year, per Organizers

Organizers aren't equipped to stage the event this year due to health issues.

I. BOOKley Season Initiatives in our Downtown this Fall

This will be Berkley's fourth season for the month-long festivities. Added this year, during the month there will be a vampire themed blood drive and a Pub "Creepy Crawl." Main volunteer Lisa Kempner reported that a Zombie Run may be added. Volunteer meetings are being organized.

J. Landscape and Lighting

Passalacqua suggested collaborating with the DPW to coordinate and solidify who does what regarding landscaping and would like to finalize that before the next Board meeting. Tree replacements are under discussion. Passalacqua stressed that the landscape beds in ArtSpace need weeding, and Frank's contract needs to be checked to see if they are supposed to be doing that.

Re: lighting, Wozniak passed around DTE printouts of the three styles of pole heads under consideration with the lighting specs and costs for each. All pole lights will be converted to LED, at a large money savings to run (\$30,000 yearly). Lower K outputs have a "warmer" look. It wasn't clear whether the DPW or DDA will make the final style choice. All poles *should* have an electrical outlet.

The Art & Design Committee will be meeting at the end of July and will bring their aesthetic recommendation back to the Board in August.

VIII. LIAISON REPORTS

A. City Council – Steve Baker

In Baker's absence, Geinzer reported Council is finalizing the city's position on overnight on-street parking. For a yearly pass, residents would have to establish that prohibiting them from parking on their street overnight would constitute a hardship. Parking tickets would increase from \$10 to \$50. He noted that in spite of what's been on social media, CruiseFest 2024 *will go on* like previous years, with the same footprint. The City Manager opening has been posted, and they are receiving applications from quality candidates.

B. Community Development – Kristen Kapelanski

Kapelanski reported the Coolidge-Columbia PUD plan was approved by City Council. 24 Seconds received Social District approval from the State. Berkley was awarded the Planning Grant for the Dorothea mini-plaza road closure.

C. Planning Commission – Lisa Kempner

Kempner reported that the Commission met with City Council to discuss the revised Zoning Ordinance draft, which is available online to review, and that lighting is addressed in the revised ordinance.

D. Public Works – Adam Wozniak

Wozniak reported the DPW is planning for the Street Fest on July 13. Geinzer insisted that Wozniak announce his promotion to full time status.

E. Chamber of Commerce – Tim Murad

Murad reported the Chamber is busy planning for the Street Art Fest and the August CruiseFest.

IX. STUDENT BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

The student Board members are excused during Summer break.

X. BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES:

A. Art & Design Committee

Berkley has heART Photography Contest: Judging was currently going on. Art & Design committee will meet the last week in July.

B. Business Development Committee

New Retailers and New Restaurant News for Coolidge

The biggest news is the Rite Aid closing, previously discussed.

C. Downtown Events Committee

Berkley Pride Volunteer Appreciation, BOOkley Initial Planning Session

D. Marketing Strategies Committee

Website Redesign Prospect, Depending on Board Feedback

See Action Item II.

E. Organization Committee

New DDA Board Applications Incoming for Review, Recommendations

Todd Schafer and Anna Grace have submitted their applications, and an applicant needs to be recruited to fill the open Coolidge seat. Next, the Committee will meet and review all applications.

F. West 12-Mile Committee

New DDA Board Application Received from West Twelve Business

The new flower barrel planters and flowers are in place.

XI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATES

A. No Final Word from Oakland County Yet on Placemaking Funding Approval

XII. BOARD OF DIRECTORS' COMMENTS:

None.

XIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS: The opportunity for public comment was offered, Board applicant Todd Schafer, suggested that the Berkley Theater Marquee could be saved by moving it to a different location. No other 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 9:48 AM on motion by Poirier and second by Forte.