

**MEETING MINUTES  
BERKLEY DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
Wednesday, May 8, 2024, 8:15 AM  
Berkley Public Safety, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Conference Room**



- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 8:15 AM with Chair Matteo Passalacqua presiding.
- II. **ROLL CALL:**
- A. Attendance Taken and Quorum Determined**
- Present:* Donna Dirkse  
Justin Findling  
Katie Forte  
Scott Francis  
Chris Gross  
Uli Laczkovich  
Matteo Passalacqua  
Ashley Poirier  
Talia Wittenberg  
Brian Zifkin
- Absent:* Desiree Dutcher – *excused*  
Nate Geinzer – *excused*
- Also present:* Steve Baker, City Council Liaison  
Kristen Kapelanski, Community Development Director  
Lisa Kempner, Planning Commission Liaison  
Mike McGuinness, DDA Executive Director (via phone from National Main Street Conference in Birmingham, Alabama)  
Tim Murad, Chamber of Commerce Liaison  
Adam Wozniak, Berkley DPW
- III. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**  
McGuinness had requested prior to the meeting that two action items, treated as one, be added to the agenda: Board approval to apply for grant funding for (1) SEMCOG Planning Funding Grant and (2) Michigan Dept. of Transportation Shared Streets & Spaces Grant. Both have early June deadlines so this Board authorization is needed at this meeting, which means that the entity applying (Berkley DDA) has authorized the application for grant funding. This would be in collaboration with the City, with a match required. (For more detail, see VI., Action Items.) Forte moved to approve the addition to the agenda and the amended agenda, Dirkse seconded, and the amended agenda was unanimously approved by the Board.
- IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
- A. Regular Meeting of April 10, 2024**  
On motion by Dirkse and second by Gross, the minutes of the regular meeting of April 10, 2024 were unanimously approved by the Board.

**V. TREASURER'S REPORT:**

**A. Financial Reports for April 2024**

Gross reported revenues of @\$5,500 in April 2024 and expenses of @\$16,000, with no extraordinary expenses. Year-to-date revenues total @\$422,000 and expenses @\$399,000. The ending fund balance as of April 2024 was @\$312,000. Major budgeted items not spent are for the flower basket program, public art/placemaking, salaries, streetscape improvements (Coolidge street marking), healthcare and retirement costs, and special events.

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

**VI. ACTION ITEMS:**

**A. Board Approval to Apply for SEMCOG Planning Funding Grant and Michigan Dept. of Transportation Shared Streets & Spaces Grant**

McGuinness reported that SEMCOG has planning funds available and if funds are awarded to Berkley, the City will work collaboratively with the DDA to put them to use on downtown improvements. The Dorothea/Coolidge area has been identified as a location to reconfigure as a public space. Because the deadline to apply for these grants comes before the next monthly DDA Board meeting, McGuinness had asked for this vote to be placed before the Board at this meeting.

The SEMCOG Planning Grant would be directed to a long-term transition to public space planning funds: Engineering, architectural, and design. There is a cap of \$50,000.00 with a 20% DDA match. Francis noted that the School District is also investing heavily in the adjacent area.

Regarding the Michigan Dept. of Transportation Shared Streets and Spaces Grant, McGuinness reported the cap is \$200,000.00 and he suggested that Berkley request the funds, if awarded, be used for short-term implementation, such as a request to the City to close Dorothea to traffic, adding barriers, seating, lighting, landscaping, and public art. He also suggested the MOGO bike installation at the Vibe Credit Union be moved there. There is no match required.

Asked about MOGO usage and figures, McGuinness said he would look into that and report back to the Board.

Passalacqua reminded Board members that a yearly commitment to fund ongoing maintenance is a DDA expense embedded in creating these new public spaces.

Zifkin moved to support the DDA, in collaboration with the City, applying for the SEMCOG Planning Grant and Michigan Dept. of Transportation Grant, Poirier seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

**B. Adoption of Berkley Downtown Development Authority Committee Action Plan**

McGuinness included in the Board packet a Committee Action Plan to use as a basis for discussion moving forward, The individual committees are listed with his suggested focus for each in 2024. He asked the Board to provide feedback to him prior to the next meeting in June.

The individual committees are: Art & Design, Business Development, Downtown Events, Marketing Strategies, Organization, and West Twelve Mile.

**C. Mural Program Request from Reware Vintage and Avenue Group Real Estate**

McGuinness noted that Reware Vintage and new business, Avenue Group Real Estate, plan to use their adjacent back patio area for regular musical performances during good weather and other DDA downtown events. Reware currently books musical performers at their store, and the patio area has good visibility due to the large parking area and bank drive-through. They plan to use a well-known mural artist in the metro area, and renderings of the proposed mural were included in the Board's informational packet.

Dirkse moved to approve the Mural Program Request of Reware Vintage and Avenue Group Real Estate in the amount of \$5,000.00, Forte seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

**D. Mural Program Request from Time Travelers Comic Books**

McGuinness reported that Time Travelers had signed a 10-year lease for their new location at the northeast corner of Griffith and 12 Mile, with their mural planned for the western (Griffith) wall, wrapping to the rear of the building. They've engaged a prominent and well-known artist to complete the mural.

The mural request is for \$5,000.00, with the total cost greatly exceeding that. Owners are pursuing crowd funding to help cover the additional cost.

The rendering provided is based on the underlying concept. There was Board discussion about the issue of copyright infringement (comic book characters are shown in the rendering). The concern was the DDA's liability if the copyright owners did not give permission (in writing?) to use images of their characters. No one on the Board is an attorney, or specifically, a copyright attorney. It isn't clear that the ZBA, which has final approval of the mural after the DDA, could render a decision that would protect the DDA from legal action for funding a portion of the mural.

Passalacqua suggested the Board's decision could state they support the mural, but would require reimbursement from Time Travelers should the mural have to be removed because of copyright issues. McGuinness proposed wording from the Board that they approve the mural content contingent upon the artist and business having all necessary authorization of character usage.

Dirkse moved to approve the Mural Program Request of Time Travelers Comic Books in the amount of \$5,000.00 contingent upon the approval of the zoning board of appeals and the applicant providing the necessary documentation pertaining to the use of copyrighted material, Forte seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

**E. Mural Program Request from Mayflower Books**

McGuinness described Mayflower Books as a very interesting long-time Berkley business with the same long-time owner. The mural on the east facing wall of the building has been in existence for well over a decade, and the owner is interested in refreshing it. He has engaged with a local artist, but the concept is fairly amorphous, and McGuinness is recommending the Board deny the application based on vague concept: Needing more clarity in the design/concept.

Zifkin moved to deny the Mural Program Request of Mayflower Books, Forte seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

**VII. Discussion Items**

**A. Ongoing Landscaping Needs and Opportunities in our Downtown – West 12 Mile Planters**

The planting boxes to be installed will be 4-season planters, with greenery in winter seasons and other clusters of displays. Locations for the planters are not "set in stone." Frank's has yet to sign the multi-year contract presented to them. McGuinness didn't yet have a specific flower planting date for 2024, but Passalacqua stressed that the beds really need to be weeded, even if flower planting is delayed a bit. McGuinness will ask them to scale back the tree bed mulching.

**B. Spirit of Main Street Grant Funding Opportunity from Oakland County and Genisys Credit Union**

This is an opportunity for businesses 5 years old or newer, through the County and Genisys Credit Union, offered to Berkley businesses because it's a Main Street Select Community. McGuinness has notified some of the newer businesses of the grant opportunity but urged the Board to connect with others that may be interested.

**C. May the Fourth – Leia’s Day Out in Downton Berkley Recent Promotional Event**

McGuinness reported the event turned out very well, good vibes and great participation, with the added benefit of having the trolley run. Passalacqua suggested finding a way to quantify the responses to these events: How many people rode the trolley, how many spent \$20.00 downtown, an estimate of how many people were downtown. There might be a service the DDA could hire that does that.

**VIII. LIAISON REPORTS**

**City Council – Steve Baker**

Baker reported that Council designated the week as Public Servants Appreciation Week. He praised the May 4 DDA event. The daycare on the south side of Berkley will be able to continue with 1-6 children. They also approved the crosswalk at Coolidge and 12 Mile and discussed the traffic transition from north of 12 Mile to one lane south of 12. Coolidge final striping is out to bid. A new lot will be added just east of Garden Central on 12 Mile, a public-private partnership with the City entering a 5-year leasing agreement. The final annual budget approval will be May 20.

**A. Community Development – Kristen Kapelanski**

Kapelanski reported the City will be targeting other lots along the corridor for similar public-private partnerships. Asked if there had been interest in “parklets,” Kapelanski said Casa Amado was working with them, Berkley Common had expressed interest, and the City is working with the Road Commission on those issues. Mongers had approached them about having outdoor seating on part of the sidewalk. Passalacqua asked if RCOC would be open to lowering the speed limit on parts of downtown 12 Mile, and Kapelanski said they would like to have definitive answers about what Berkley can and can’t do with the road. The current plan is to launch the new social district Art Bash weekend.

**B. Planning Commission – Lisa Kempner**

Kempner reported there’s a full draft of the zoning ordinance rewrite.

**C. Public Works – Ric Chalmers**

Wozniak reported the Director has reached out for answers about lighting.

**D. Chamber of Commerce – Tim Murad**

Murad reported Berkley Has heArt Photography contest is underway with winners to be announced and displayed at the Street Art Fest. The number of artists is maxed out for the Art Bash, and they’re still looking for sponsors. They’ll hold a Yappy Hour with Coffee and Bark this year for the Art Fest.

**IX. STUDENT BOARD MEMBER UPDATES**

Findling reported students are looking forward to Prom on May 16, a Night in Paris, to be held at the Meridian. Wittenberg reported Bombshell Treats is a very popular student lunch stop.

**X. BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES:**

**A. Art & Design Committee – Berkley has heart Photography Contest**

**B. Business Development Committee – New Retailers and New Restaurant News**

Gross reported one of their buildings has been leased to a Berkley resident and Detroit restaurateur with a French-American cuisine there, and he will be starting extensive restorations on the Berkley location. McGuinness reported ribbon cuttings for Bombshell Treat Bar and the law office of Rachel Pinch.

**C. Downtown Events Committee – Next Berkley Pride Planning – May 15**

There has been quite a bit of public and volunteer engagement, larger than previous years.

**D. Marketing Strategies Committee – Royal Oak Leprechauns**

McGuinness reported that the DDA will be advertising the Farmers Market at the ballfield location, Coolidge and 13 Mile.

**E. Organization Committee – New DDA Board Applications Incoming**

Anna Grace, long-time Events Committee volunteer who's worked on other initiatives, has submitted an application for an at-large seat on the Board.

**F. West 12-Mile Committee – DDA Board Applicant Coming from West Twelve Mile; Landscaping Work to Come**

Zifkin reported he has urged the Stamp Shop owner to apply for a Board seat. Once 75 people live in the downtown district, the State will be requiring a downtown resident to be on the Board. The Stamp Shop owner will be moving his residence into his downtown 12 Mile building. Zifkin also talked to his neighbor, Armadillo, about their mural plans.

**XI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATES**

**A. National Main Street Conference Currently Underway in Birmingham, Alabama**

The National Main Street Certification requires its communities to send a representative to the National Conference, and McGuinness is currently attending.

**B. Michigan Downtown Association Summer Workshop May 31 in Harbor Springs**

**C. Successful Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies – Bombshell Treat Bar, Rachel Pinch**

**D. Holiday Lights Parade**

Roseann Nicolai, long-time Chamber organizer, has an organizing role with the Parade committee this year, and they're starting their planning earlier this year.

**E. Creating Pop-up Public Space Next to City Hall**

McGuinness included an image of a possible way to liven up the space.

**XII. BOARD OF DIRECTORS' COMMENTS: None.**

**XIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS:** The opportunity for public comment was offered, and Murad reported he and his partner are planning two blood drives with the Red Cross, one during BOO!kley October. 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 9:30 AM on motion by Zifkin and second by Dirkse.