

**MEETING MINUTES
BERKLEY DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Wednesday, November 13, 2024, 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.

II. Attendance Taken and Quorum Determined

Present: Donna Dirkse
Desiree Dutcher
Katie Forte
Scott Francis
Nate Geinzer
Anna Grace
Chris Gross
Shawn Heath-Lee
Uli Laczkovich
Matteo Passalacqua
Ashley Poirier
Todd Schaefer
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
Adam Wozniak, Berkley DPW Liaison

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Laczkovich moved to approve the agenda, Dirkse seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting of October 9, 2024

On motion by Dirkse and second by Grace, the minutes of the regular meeting of October 9, 2024 were unanimously approved by the Board.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT:

A. Financial Reports for September and October 2024

Gross reported that the Finance Department gave her profit and loss statements, not balance sheets, so the balances she's reporting are her calculations. A new Assistant Finance Director will begin the job shortly. The budget was amended by the City after year end, with revenues at @\$498,000, expenses at @\$578,000, and an ending fund balance of @\$153,000. For the period ending 10/31, revenues of @\$620.00 were received, and expenses were @\$78,000 (no unusual expenses for the period). Year-to-date revenues were @\$84,000, expenses @\$164,000, and the ending fund balance as of October 2024 was @\$153,000. No benefits have been recorded, so catch-up there is expected.

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

VI. Discussion Items

A. Review of Berkley Downtown Development Authority Strategic Plan

McGuinness reported receiving estimates of from @\$2,000 to @\$30,000 from the four firms he contacted to assist the DDA in putting together their strategic plan. He will work with Passalacqua to refine and develop the scope of the plan and see if that helps get a more accurate estimate from planning firms. They will bring that back to the Board for the December meeting. Passalacqua would like to have a representative of the firm chosen attend a Board meeting to have a relevant conversation with the trustees.

B. Future Coolidge Reconstruction Next Steps, Design Elements Feedback

McGuinness reported that with VanVleck coming on board December 2, the DDA can utilize her experience with road projects (9 Mile) in Oak Park. He has been meeting with the DPW to settle on the time frame for them (DPW) to apply for a grant to fund Coolidge reconstruction. Passalacqua urged Board members to review Berkley's Design Guidelines and the Master Plan as the discussion continues about what additions to the road rebuild they want to explore.

C. Preserving Berkley Theater Marquee, Any News on Site's Future

Kapelanski reported that she's continuing to field calls from interested developers, with a variety of uses proposed to her. They are working with the owner to finalize a short term lease with the City, at no cost, for continued use of the marquee.

D. Future Bonding Capacity and Debt Service for DDA Organization

McGuinness noted the two potential large projects to be considered in respect to pursuing a future bond are the Theatre Marquee preservation and Coolidge enhancements to accompany reconstruction. As discussed at the prior meeting, there would be a need to cut @\$50,000-\$60,000 from the budget to fund yearly bond payments. He proposed spending @\$10,000-\$20,000 less on advertising/marketing, @\$5,000 less on events, and the balance from streetscape improvements. Passalacqua noted the revised Strategic Plan will help guide budget priorities. The actual percentage of TIF funds currently captured is being verified.

E. Recently Concluded BOOkley Season Initiatives

McGuinness thanked all who contributed to this year's BOO!kley season activities, especially committee chair, volunteer Kempner, who reported this year's events were a great success. She noted the Ghost Chase can be bigger, and the Monster Mash and the Ladies (Witches) Night Out worked well, especially with the Thursday Farmers Market going late. The DDA now has storage containers for the event's components. Grace noted businesses reported it was their busiest time; it's great to see that growth.

F. Dorothea Public Space Latest Activity, Next Steps

Dorothea will be closed, for at least a year, from Coolidge to the alley. Kapelanski reported that the Art & Design Committee had a chance to meet with the Carlisle Wortman firm to discuss concepts for the location, envisioning a multi-function, year-round space that draws in younger people and families as well as people using the School District's new fieldhouse. McGuinness met with the owners of Bombshell Treats and discussed the improvements planned for the space, including better lighting and landscaping. The MOGO installation will be moved from its current location at Vibe Credit Union to Dorothea. Speed bumps for the adjacent alley are being discussed.

G. MerriMonth Season Downtown Initiatives

1. Buy in Berkley (modeled on Amazon Prime Days) is a MerriMonth social media promotion.
2. A pop-up artist market on Small Business Saturday (Nov. 30) is planned.

3. Elf on a Shelf will continue through MerriMonth at downtown businesses.
4. Santa will visit Bombshell Treats on 12/1 and 12/8.
5. The trolley will run downtown on Merry & Bright Shopping Nights, 12/5, 12/12, and 12/19, and Passalacqua suggested posting *regular* stops. Kempner also suggested using a “tracker” to pinpoint the trolley’s location.
6. The Holiday Lights Parade will take place on 12/7, and there was discussion of putting the trolley *in* the Parade with a DDA banner on it.
7. Santa will be visiting the Library to see visitors on December 15.

VII. LIAISON REPORTS

A. City Council

Absent. Geinzer reported new City Manager Van Vleck will start her position on Dec. 2. The Deputy Finance Director starts Monday, Nov. 18.

B. Community Development

Kapelanski reported Council will be considering amending the parklet ordinance to allow year-round parklets. She also reported working with surrounding Oakland County communities on the Safe Streets for All plan, with Berkley showing up well on vehicle and pedestrian safety. Work on the revised Zoning Ordinance is almost done.

C. Planning Commission

Kempner reported there will be a public hearing on the revised Zoning Ordinance. Heath-Lee offered the use of his business space for meetings.

D. Public Works

Wozniak reported there were no issues during BOOkley events, and the department is insuring that downtown is cleaned up for all shopping nights.

E. Chamber of Commerce

Absent. McGuinness reported that Murad’s sister had passed away recently.

VIII. BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES:

A. Art & Design Committee

Met on Dorothea Next Steps

B. Downtown Events Committee

Thanked all and Debriefed with BOOkley Volunteers

C. Marketing Strategies Committee

Due to Meet on Website Redesign Soon

D. Organization Committee

Council acted on the three Board Appointments; Passalacqua and Dirkse’s terms are next up for renewal in 2025.

E. West Twelve Mile Committee

Zifkin asked about decorative barrels on West Twelve Mile, and McGuinness said he’s been talking with Frank’s about filling them with seasonal greenery. DTE may move the light that was knocked down at 12 Mile and Greenfield back from the road.

IX. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATES

- A.** McGuinness attended the Michigan Downtown Association Annual Conference

X. BOARD OF DIRECTORS’ COMMENTS:

None.

- XI. 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.

- XII. Adjournment:**
The meeting was adjourned at 9:34 AM on motion by Poirier and second by Forte.