

**MEETING MINUTES
BERKLEY DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Wednesday, October 9, 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
Justin Findling
Katie Forte
Scott Francis
Nate Geinzer
Chris Gross
Uli Laczkovich
Matteo Passalacqua
Ashley Poirier
Talia Wittenberg

Absent: Brian Zifkin – *excused*

Also present: Steve Baker, City Council Liaison
Anna Grace, Resident
Shawn Heath-Lee, Co-Owner, Coffee & Bark
Kristen Kapelanski, Community Development Director
Lisa Kempner, Planning Commission Liaison
Mike McGuinness, DDA Executive Director
Todd Schaefer, Owner, America's Stamp Stop

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

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

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting of September 11, 2024

On motion by Dutcher and second by Dirkse, the minutes of the regular meeting of September 11, 2024 were unanimously approved by the Board.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT:

A. Financial Reports for September 2024

Financial Reports from the City Treasurer were not available to the Board at meeting time.

VI. ACTION ITEMS:

A. Recommending Appointments to the Berkley Board of Directors

1. Anna Grace (At-Large Seat)
2. Shawn Heath-Lee (Coolidge Seat)
3. Todd Schaefer (Twelve Mile Seat)

McGuinness reported that the Organization Committee had reviewed applications to join the Board and conducted interviews with the applicants, and the three applicants had all attended some of the earlier Board meetings. The Organization Committee was now highly recommending the above three be approved by the Board and their names submitted to City Council for final approval. Francis said their enthusiasm for the opportunity to serve made them stand out.

Grace noted she was happy to be at the Board meeting, and Heath-Lee said he was looking forward to helping grow the downtown area.

Dirkse moved to recommend that Council approve all three nominees at their next meeting, Francis seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

B. Façade Improvement Matching Grant Determination for 3180 Coolidge

McGuinness reported the new owners of the building at 3180 Coolidge plan to open a restaurant featuring “American comfort food” at the long-vacant auto parts facility building and were asking for a matching grant in the full amount, \$10,000.00. He noted they are established Metro Detroit food and hospitality professionals. The building renovations were enthusiastically received by the Art and Design Committee, and McGuinness noted the scope of work involved in renovations will greatly exceed the value of the DDA matching grant. Owners have also applied for a redevelopment liquor license.

Board member Gross has an ownership stake in the property and will abstain from any Board votes dealing with the proposed new restaurant.

Gross noted owners hope to open in spring 2025. McGuinness said he would check the grant guidelines to see if there is any time limit for recipients to make the renovations and apply the grant funds.

Forte moved to award a \$10,000.00 matching Façade Improvement grant to the owners of the property at 3180 Coolidge, Laczkovich seconded, and Gross abstaining, the motion was otherwise unanimously approved by the Board.

VII. Discussion Items

A. Review of Berkley Downtown Development Authority Strategic Plan

Passalacqua noted past discussion about the DDA taking on larger projects, beyond its current financial abilities, which ties in to reviewing the 2017 DDA Strategic Plan, and a link to that document was sent to the Board. To pursue bonding, the DDA needs a “business plan,” the Strategic Plan filling that purpose.

To decide on the next steps, his questions were:

1. Who should prepare the plan
2. What guidance can be found in the recently completed Master Plan, Downtown Plan, Zoning Ordinance revisions, and Downtown Design Guidelines
3. What’s the expense of hiring a consultant to work with the Board on Strategic Plan revisions
4. What’s the timeline for completion

Passalacqua noted a lot of the goals in the 2017 plan were tackled and accomplished in the intervening period. The 2017 plan lacked specifics about brick and mortar projects. Goals that were accomplished or in process can be removed from the revised plan, as well as goals that currently appear unachievable. Market analysis and resources available to downtown businesses from outside entities are items that can be outsourced or presented on the DDA web site, the DDA serving as an access point.

Kapelanski reported her department is developing a marketing plan and economic development strategy, which may be completed in about six months. McGuinness noted the multiple available

resources through Oakland County that don't need to be duplicated, just listed with a link and provided to businesses.

A roundtable discussion of what could be in the Strategic Plan and goals that could be included can be summarized as follows:

The framework is great.

Bring Coolidge and Twelve Mile together.

Keep the plan to 1-2 pages total; list the priority projects for the next 4-5 years.

Reprioritize goals (align with vision for next 5 years).

Baker noted other Berkley City departments write strategic plans. He also supported finding out who needs to review it (County, State, etc.)

The Master Plan steering committee and Zoning Board steering committee might have good suggestions.

How much work is involved? Don't go nine months without progress.

Grace mentioned that her company just did their strategic plan and that gives her some insight into the process.

Passalacqua will give him some other firm names.

Framework is pretty solid; why not just a simple one-page addendum? Just the things you want to add on, or will supersede the things to adapt.

What does the enabling legislation call for?

The current plan is not "expired," just most recent.

Passalacqua noted the only thing "hot" is the marquee, and the City may get involved. The firm where he works, Carlisle Wortman, is not currently involved in anything Berkley. McGuinness could contact them and other firms whose names Passalacqua will pass along to him.

Baker is familiar with the rules about conflict of interest because of his employment with DTE; you just have to abstain from any votes involving the employer, but you can take part in discussions.

For the next step, Passalacqua urged finding out how much a consulting firm would cost to help craft the plan, and McGuinness agreed. This time, the Board doesn't need to hold workshops or extra meetings. They do need buy-in from stakeholders (Council, City departments, businesses, and residents). According to Passalacqua, they *do* need the stamp of a certified professional group, or they will lose validity in the bonding world. For the November meeting, McGuinness will bring back to the Board what he's found about the approximate cost of using a consultant to help craft the plan.

B. Future Coolidge Reconstruction Next Steps

McGuinness, recalling the DPW Director's presentation in September, Coolidge is on its last legs, and needs repair in the next five or so years. Should the DDA assist in expanding the scope to include landscaping, sidewalk repairs, bump-outs? No decision is needed immediately. He asked Board members to look at the Design Guidelines. By August, the DPW has to start to pursue funding. Passalacqua noted whatever is done, keep in mind they have to maintain. There will be

\$7,500.00 from MSOC that can be used for conceptual work. To pursue grants, a concept will be needed.

C. Future Bonding Capacity and Debt Service for DDA Organization

Geinzer's research on debt service as it relates to bonding reveals that a 15-20 term on a bond requires @\$50,000 a year for a \$570,000-675,000 bond, or @\$200,000/year on 15-20 year \$2.3-2.8 million bond. A review of the budget shows a deficit of @\$10,000-20,000. Passalacqua asked McGuinness to see where to cut \$50,000-60,000 from the budget.

Geinzer noted bond money must be spent within three years. He also noted the TIF plan must be beyond the bond period. If the TIF is amended, all entities can change their amounts, and the DDA is currently capturing 100%. Geinzer suggested the right place to start is revision of the Strategic Plan to list achievable goals.

D. BOOKley Season Initiatives in our Downtown this Fall

McGuinness thanked all who helped get it going. Witches Night Out will run Thursday 10/10 and "Fright Night" Farmers Market will go later to celebrate that. Kempner reported that @30-40 families showed up to the skeleton DIY event. Dutcher ensured that the giant skeletons were put in place around downtown. The Ghost Chase on 10/18 sold out in less than a week. The Trick or Treat Stroll and Monster Mash will take place later in the month. There will be a dog adoption area, dog treats, an artist doing caricatures, with trick or treating beforehand. Kempner noted they've asked DPW to close off Dorothea at Coolidge.

VIII. STUDENT BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

A. Findling reported that the high school recently held Homecoming and has a pickleball tournament coming up. The girls' swim and dive team had a charity event racing the boys' soccer team. Passalacqua asked if there were organized student groups that might be interested in doing DDA volunteer work, and Findling said NHS students, who need volunteer hours, might get involved. Francis said he would get the contact information to McGuinness and Passalacqua.

IX. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATES

A. Next Berkley City Manager Determination

McGuinness turned the floor over to Councilperson Baker, who reported that with the assistance of a consultant hired by the City, Council had narrowed their search down to three finalists. Televised interviews with those three were presented for the public, and then Council deliberated and made their decision the following week. Crystal VanVlek, currently working as assistant City Manager in the City of Oak Park, was the top choice of all Council members and the mayor. She is also a resident of Berkley and has ten years' municipal experience.

Baker reported contract negotiations are underway, and he expects that contract to be brought for Council's approval vote at their next upcoming meeting. Her anticipated start date is December 2. Geinzer said she will need support and urged the Board to reach out to her.

Geinzer noted work will begin on replacing the turf at Hurley Field, with natural turf.

X. BOARD OF DIRECTORS' COMMENTS:

None.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENTS: 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.

XII. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:46 AM on motion by Poirier and second by Forte.