

**MEETING MINUTES
BERKLEY DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Wednesday, September 11, 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.
- A. Moment of Silence in Memory of September 11, 2001 Attack Victims**
Those present observed a moment of silence to honor the memory of all those lost on Sept. 11, 2001.
- B. 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
Brian Zifkin
- Absent:* Justin Findling – *excused*
- Also present:* 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
Tim Murad, Chamber of Commerce Liaison
Shawn Young, Berkley DPW Director
Todd Schaefer, Owner, America's Stamp Stop
- II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**
Dirkse moved to approve the agenda, Zifkin seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
- A. Regular Meeting of August 14, 2024**
On motion by Gross and second by Dirkse, the minutes of the regular meeting of August 14, 2024 were unanimously approved by the Board.
- IV. TREASURER'S REPORT:**
- A. Financial Reports for August 2024**
Gross reported year-end from 2023/24 changed, as expected, revenues increased by \$55,000 and expenses also increased, by \$30,000, for a new additional net revenue figure of \$25,000. The new ending fund balance for 2023/24 is \$233,000. Revenues of @\$84,000 were received in July and

August 2024 and expenses were @\$86,000 (no unusual expenses for the period). The ending fund balance as of August 2024 was @\$231,000.

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

V. ACTION ITEMS:

None.

VI. Discussion Items

A. Dorothea Road Closure Request for Seasonal Public Space

McGuinness noted that the Board had authorized application to City Council for an indefinite road closure of Dorothea at Coolidge, which is up for Council approval at their next meeting, 9/16/24. He had sent the Board a copy of the request presented to Council. Berkley has been awarded a \$10,000.00 SEMCOG grant for long term planning to develop this space. Improvements to lighting, landscaping, and more attractive "road closure" cement barriers/landscaping planters are anticipated. DPW Director Young can advise the work group, a subcommittee of the Art & Design Committee that will collaborate with the Events committee to flesh out ideas for the space. The area will be activated for events this year, including during BOOKley and MerriMonth. The Downtown Master Plan offers guidance moving forward.

Francis noted that the School District will soon start work on their adjacent property (starting in spring of 2025), creating opportunities for collaborating with the DDA. They are planning a 60-yard indoor/outdoor fieldhouse with a weight room/training facility. Adjacent will be a 120-yard turf field with lighting. Francis noted it will be open from 7:00 AM to 10:00 PM. A lockable gate will provide access to the Dorothea public space as well.

B. BOOKley Season Planning Underway, Upcoming Activities

Kempner, major contributor to planning and implementation for the month-long event, reported that skeletons are being adopted and picked up, and can be "dressed" on or off site. Downtown display will begin the following Thursday. Flyers will go to all the downtown businesses with a scannable QR code where the business can sign up to participate in the various events.

In addition to the DDA events, the Chamber will put on its Pub Crawl, and there will be a Red Cross Vampire Blood Drive 10/29, a scavenger hunt held at the Library, and activities presented by the high school, maybe continuing food truck Fridays at Art Space. Farmers Markets during October will have a Halloween theme. Residents who want to decorate their property can sign up for the best haunted house contest on the Downtown Berkley web page. On Witches Night Out people can vote for their favorite decorated downtown storefront.

C. Berkley Theater Marquee Preservation Latest Updates

McGuinness reported that Rite Aid is now closed. He has been in touch with the City of Farmington and learned that their Civic Theatre is owned by the city. They've invited Berkley on a field trip to their theatre, which opened the same year as the Berkley Theatre.

Kapelanski has talked to the property owner's agent who's communicating to interested parties the historic importance of the marquee to the community. The City and DDA will make a formal request to the owner or developer to donate the marquee to Berkley, and Kapelanski noted that they could in turn then be offered incentives and scored higher if they were willing to do so. Passalacqua asked the Director if he could work on a draft of the donation letter before the next meeting, and McGuinness said he would to that.

D. Status of Downtown Berkley Strategic Planning Documents

McGuinness reported that TIF renewal for Berkley's DDA will need to be done again in @2044, or 30 years from the last one. Berkley's 5-year strategic plan is due for revision or re-adoption as is. They

may engage the same firm that last worked with the DDA on the plan, or as suggested by Kempner, the Board may want to engage the firm that worked with them on the Master Plan and Zoning ordinance revisions. Passalacqua noted that a strategic plan is critical to discussions about pursuing bonding for any major projects. McGuinness stated he would circulate a copy of the plan adopted in 2017 so Board members could review it over the next month and note revisions and additions they would like to have made. Discussion will continue on this topic at all future monthly Board meetings.

E. Future Bonding Capacity and Debt Service for DDA Organization

McGuinness reported discussions he's had with neighboring DDAs about how they finance their major projects. Some have actually mortgaged property, some have bonded on their own, some have bonded in partnership with their municipalities. Geinzer suggested getting in touch with Berkley's bond counsel and financial advisor and having a specific project to be financed, as once bonded there is a time limit to spend the funds. He also counseled against "bonding to the max" in terms of time and the life of proposed projects.

Geinzer suggested next steps are to identify the priority project and determine what monthly payments the DDA can actually afford. Generally, no public vote is required, but public notice is, and during that period there is a possibility someone could call for a referendum. Identifying strategic priorities is also one of the important first steps, in his opinion, and may reveal other possible funding sources rather than bonding, such as grant dollars. In a development agreement with the purchaser, incentives could be offered in exchange for donation of the marquee to Berkley or Berkley could reimburse the developer for some costs, over a period of perhaps 10-15 years.

F. Landscaping Enhancement Opportunities for our Downtown

DPW Director Young noted replacement tree planting is coming up, and the trees will be larger than what's usually planted in residential areas because they have a better chance of surviving in a challenging environment. Asked about trash at Art Space, he reported Tringali Sanitation picks it up two times a week. For the Dorothea space, the owner of Bombshell Treats reported they have contracted for their own trash pick-ups because of the high volume their business creates. Passalacqua stressed that the area always needs weeding, and Francis suggested student volunteers could help with that task.

G. Discussion with Public Works Director Shawn Young on Coolidge's Future

Director Young noted that Coolidge's useful life is coming to an end. The bare minimum repair is mill-and-fill, with it ending up looking like it is now, and no aesthetic enhancements. He said the public would undoubtedly appreciate upgrades such as better landscaping and bump-outs. When he drives up and down the road, there's nothing "inviting" about it to encourage you to stop. The road doesn't have to be uniform the entire mile from 11 to 12 Mile Roads.

McGuinness reported that another \$7,500.00 Technical Assistance grant could be used for planning/conceptualizing what Coolidge can be. Young suggested August of 2025 should be the target date for having a plan in place so funding can be pursued, but the sooner the better so that they can get cost estimates. Passalacqua asked the Board to look at the Master Plan, the Downtown Plan, Design Guidelines, and Zoning Ordinance revisions to familiarize themselves about what is suggested for Coolidge in the future.

VII. LIAISON REPORTS

A. City Council – Steve Baker

Baker was attending the MML Conference in Lansing, so Geinzer gave the City report. They have a full agenda on 9/16. City Manager candidates to be interviewed are currently being informed of that and will be formally announced when they are all notified. Also on the agenda are short term rentals, financial updates, solid waste, and Berkley Days.

B. Community Development – Kristen Kapelanski

Kapelanski reported the application to open a gun shop on Coolidge where Vitrine was located has been withdrawn. The empty building on 12 Mile and Cumberland is being converted into a dental office.

C. Planning Commission – Lisa Kempner

Kempner reported they had no meeting.

D. Public Works – Shawn Young

Young reported the new parking lot next to Garden Central is ready to open. McGuinness congratulated Young for his department's work during Cruise Fest.

E. Chamber of Commerce – Tim Murad

Murad reported the Chamber's Kit Home Tour is set to go with six homes on the tour, five new and one repeat. Also scheduled are the Pub Crawl and the State of the City presentation on 10/23. Volunteers are needed for the Pub Crawl and Kit Home Tour, with a free tour for volunteers working a 3-hour shift.

VIII. STUDENT BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

Wittenberg reported Homecoming is coming up Sept. 28.

IX. BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES:

A. Art & Design Committee

1. Met September 4; next meeting set for October 2. Two Façade Grant applications have been received.

B. Business Development Committee

1. Little Lou's Hot Chicken Redevelopment Liquor License State Approval
They are pursuing a redevelopment license.
2. There is a pending request for a Redevelopment Liquor License for 3180 Coolidge Site (renovation ongoing from its former use to a restaurant.)
3. Sale of Former VITRINE Space
4. Council Resale Expansion (into the space formerly occupied by Time Travelers)
5. Time Travelers Comic Books Relocation, Expansion
6. Tubby's Submarines Closure, Site Renovations
The adjacent parking lot is undergoing renovation.

C. Downtown Events Committee

No additional reports.

D. Marketing Strategies Committee

1. Website Redesign Project (underway)

E. Organization Committee

1. Conducting interviews this week with Board applicants
Anna Grace, a 3-year resident and applicant for the at-large position and Events Committee volunteer, spoke about her love for the City and hope to serve it in some way.

Shawn Heath-Lee, Coffee and Bark Co-Owner, is excited and hopes to be part of the group.

Todd Schaefer, Owner, America's Stamp Stop, is enjoying the meetings, learning, and wants to contribute.

F. West 12-Mile Committee

Nothing to report.

X. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATES

A. Michigan Municipal League Conference Participation September 11-13, 2024

McGuinness reported he will be attending, leaving after the Board meeting.

B. Main Street Oakland County Presentation on Reaccreditation at September 16 City Council Meeting

McGuinness noted Board members are encouraged to attend.

XI. BOARD OF DIRECTORS' COMMENTS:

Geinzer noted in addition to funding opportunities mentioned, Council could vote for a special assessment.

XII. 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.

XIII. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 AM on motion by Poirier and second by Geinzer.