

**MEETING MINUTES  
BERKLEY DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
Wednesday, March 12, 2025, 8:15 AM  
Berkley Public Safety, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Conference Room**



- I. CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 8:16 AM with Chair Matteo Passalacqua presiding.

**A. Roll Call Taken and Quorum Determined**

*Present:* Desiree Dutcher  
Justin Findling  
Katie Forte  
Scott Francis  
Anna Grace  
Chris Gross  
Shawn Heath-Lee  
Matteo Passalacqua  
Ashley Poirier  
Todd Schaefer  
Crystal VanVleck  
Talia Wittenberg  
Brian Zifkin

*Absent:* Donna Dirkse – *excused*  
Uli Laczkovich – *excused*

*Also present:* Steve Baker, City Council Liaison  
Janine Braun, The Artsy Umbrella  
Jennifer Finney, Interim DDA Executive Director  
Kristen Kapelanski, Community Development Director  
Tim Murad, Chamber of Commerce Liaison  
Adam Wozniak, Berkley DPW Liaison

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Passalacqua moved to add Approval of Final Payment to Mike McGuinness to Item V. Action Items., Poirier seconded, and the amended motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A. Regular Meeting of February 12, 2025**

On motion by Francis and second by Poirier, the minutes of the regular meeting of February 12, 2025 were unanimously approved by the Board.

**IV. TREASURER'S REPORT:**

**A. Financial Reports for February 2025**

Gross reported year-to-date revenues of @\$438,000, expected property taxes having been credited, year-to-date expenses of @\$382,000, with Holiday Lights expenditures higher than budgeted, and an ending fund balance of @\$265,000. Left to spend in fiscal year 2024/25 is @\$120,000, part of which she believes is budgeted for the Robina Project.

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

**V. ACTION ITEMS**

**A. Approval of Final Payment to Michael McGuinness with PTO and Vacation**

Poirier moved to approve the final payment to Michael McGuinness in the amount of \$7,107.91, Grace seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

**B. Strategy of 2025 DDA Events**

Before he left, McGuinness and Kempner had met with Finney to discuss the 2025 DDA event schedule, especially signature events such as BOOKley and Pride, both of which have strong volunteer support and event leadership in Kempner and Poirier. That support doesn't exist yet for Ladies Nights Out and shopping days/nights during MerriMonth, and Finney hopes for a lead volunteer from the Board, by mid-April, willing to coordinate those and recruit volunteers. Another possibility is partnering with another Berkley entity like Parks and Recreation or the Chamber, to support the event.

Finney proposed setting up a contract to pay a set amount for the Farmers Market coordinator, who in previous years has been Janine Braun of the Artsy Umbrella. Grace volunteered to lead the Ladies Nights Out initiative.

Poirier suggested using the Main Street Technical Assistance funds to set up a volunteer database to help with all DDA events. Passalacqua asked if those funds could be used in support of the Farmers Market; Finney will have to check. That ended the discussion of the 2025 Events Strategy, and no vote was taken.

**C. 2025-2006 Annual Budget First Reading and Spending Priorities**

Finney included the draft budget McGuinness prepared before he left, showing her revisions in red, with spending priorities to be considered for 2025. This budget year all City Departments have been asked to present budgets/draft budgets for this and the next two years.

Passalacqua proposed a roundtable discussion for Board members to express their individual priorities to give Finney the background information she needs to formulate the draft budget to be presented to the Board in April. Starting with administration, Passalacqua noted there will be some savings based on the way current benefits are structured.

Board members listed areas where the budget could be reduced, including minor events, murals, marketing, social media, landscaping. Others noted marketing and social media are important especially in the business community and with the younger demographic. Zifkin stressed that visually impactful DDA contributions to the downtown such as Holiday Lights and landscaping (that the public can see) are important to sustain the public's perception of the DDA.

Poirier, who has a contract with the DDA to do social media/marketing, presented the Board with a handout outlining the services her firm provides to the DDA. This is the DDA's main outreach to the public and the downtown businesses' customers outside of individual businesses' marketing efforts. They also re-share businesses' contacts. In her handout Poirier listed some reductions that could be made in their activities but couldn't at the time detail what dollar savings those reductions would generate.

Finally, Passalacqua noted he believes there are administrative savings to be had with the City and also the ultimate goal in reducing the budget is to put the DDA in the position of being able to pursue a bond and have funds to pay back the yearly costs over 15 years.

Wozniak just asked that for events, advance planning so that all supplies needed are noted for them ahead of time would cut down the time they need to support the event, and if there are any things learned from prior years that event planners weren't satisfied about, they would be more than happy to improve.

No vote on the budget was made at this month's meeting.

#### **D. Updated DDA Mural Program and Application**

Passalacqua had asked Finney to make some minor changes to the program and application for a DDA mural award, and she presented those to the Board after consultation with the Art and Design Committee and Community Development Director Kapelanski. A "red-lined" version of the application was included in the Board's packet.

A major revision to the application will be capping the amount of time for completing the mural at 12 months, or one year, from the date of DDA approval. The Board agreed that after that, the business will be required to re-apply for the award. There will also be notice of Community Development review in the revised application.

Forte moved to approve the Updated DDA Mural Program and Application, Heath-Lee seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

#### **E. Main Street Technical Funds**

Finney reminded the Board that each year, as part of Main Street Oakland County, Berkley receives a Technical Assistance grant, increased to @\$10,000.00 this year, which in previous years has supported a rebranding campaign, the Robina placemaking design concept, and the current Web site revisions. The application for the funds is due March 31. A final allocation of the \$10,000.00 can be decided later.

Zifkin moved to approve the DDA Director to pursue the \$10,000.00 Technical Assistance funding for eligible, appropriate programs, Forte seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

### **VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

#### **A. New DDA Website**

Finney presented a quick view of the changes being made to the Web site but noted it will probably be ready to launch in late May or June. It will contain a Business Directory, Poirier noting that will take a considerable amount of time to keep that portion updated. It was noted that anyone looking for vacant/available business property in Berkley would most likely work with a local realtor.

#### **B. Robina Placemaking Update**

The DDA has committed to spending @\$125,000 for their match as part of the project. Design concepts were viewed and approved by the Board at a previous date. Included in the packet were options that can be currently pursued. Some aspects can be downsized because of cost increases in the interim, and the DPW Director has weighed in on minor changes to the plan, such as using stained concrete rather than stamped. Passalacqua will get Finney contact information for the contractor, PEA, so she can work directly with them about doing the project in phases and scaling back on some of the original concept.

#### **C. Special Meeting Work Session 2/24 Update**

VanVleck reported that there will be a \$4,000.00 lease agreement with the current owners of the Marquee property to keep the Marquee lit through March, and then the lights will be turned off, coinciding with the approved structural work on the Marquee. The public needs to be fully updated about the current situation as well as the history behind the structure. Most residents probably don't realize that the City doesn't own the Marquee. A long-term solution can't be settled until the building sale is completed.

**D. Permanent Executive Director Search Update**

Passalacqua reported the Director search committee (Organization Committee) has entered into negotiations with their preferred candidate, and more information will be provided at the next Board meeting.

**VII. LIAISON REPORTS**

**A. City Council**

Baker reported that Council recognized McGuinness for his contributions and expressed its appreciation to Finney for stepping up to fill the interim position. The City has activated its new Web site, [berkleymi.gov](http://berkleymi.gov), and he encouraged everyone to check it out. Council reviewed its decision about the residential daycare business in Berkley that wants to expand from six to 12 children attendees. The Historical Committee met the previous night, and they're planning October activities that could coordinate with the DDA's October events.

**B. Community Development**

Kapelanski reported that Council approved the first reading of the revised Zoning Ordinance. The second reading will be March 17, and the ordinance becomes effective one month later. The developer of the proposed PUD on Columbia and Coolidge has revised the plan, with one building on the north side of Columbia and the parcel closest to 11 Mile becoming expanded parking and a larger park area. That revised plan will go before the Planning Commission at their next meeting.

**C. Planning Commission**

Absent – no additional report.

**D. Public Works**

Wozniak reported the irrigation in the landscape/tree beds was turned off for winter, the old mulch will be cleared out, and the water turned back on to test the system. Asked about designating one staff member to oversee downtown landscaping, especially the trees, Wozniak said they have someone in mind who has the right background and experience. They have a sign at the yard that was damaged some time ago (near 11 Mile) that they don't know how to handle, and Finney said to get in touch with her about sign issues.

**Chamber of Commerce**

Murad reported they would like to form a joint committee with the DDA to recruit event volunteers.

**VIII. STUDENT BOARD MEMBER UPDATES:**

New student board members will be attending April's meeting. Findling reported Charity Week is coming up, and they've selected Focus Hope to support with any funds their events raise. Wittenberg reported that during Spirit Week they hold a Junior/Senior volleyball game fundraiser. The student parking section of the parking lot will be downsized. A multi-purpose cafeteria is being built at Angell Elementary School.

**IX. BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES:**

**A. Art & Design Committee**

Finney reported she will bring two new mural applications to the next meeting.

**B. Business Development**

No report.

**C. Downtown Events Committee**

No report.

**D. Marketing Strategies Committee**

Poirier reported Web site construction is still underway. They are trying to finish soon and get the new site launched.

**E. Organization Committee**

No additional report.

**F. West Twelve Mile Committee**

Zifkin reported the winter barrels have been removed. Art and Design may take over planning for the flower beds and hanging baskets.

**X. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATES**

Finney reported the Dorothea Pilot Pocket Park Working Group will meet at Coffee & Bark – March 13, 5:30 pm

**XI. BOARD OF DIRECTORS' COMMENTS:**

Forte had put together a remembrance book, going-away present for McGuinness that she passed around for meeting attendees to sign. City Hall staff had an earlier opportunity to sign. A going-away get-together for him is planned for March 22 at Mixology on 12 Mile.

DPW will help getting the bistro tables from storage and set up downtown.

Board members praised Finney's efforts filling in for a permanent Executive Director.

**XII. PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Justin from the Historical Commission would like to coordinate with the DDA about Fall events to see if they can collaborate and to eliminate any date conflicts. Berkley Days will be held October 4 weekend. 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 9:55 AM on motion by Zifkin and second by Gross.