

**MEETING MINUTES
BERKLEY DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Wednesday, April 10, 2024, 8:15 AM
Berkley Public Safety, 2nd Floor, Conference Room**



I. CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 8:18 AM with Chair Matteo Passalacqua presiding.

II. ROLL CALL:

A. Attendance Taken and Quorum Determined

Present: Matthew Baumgarten
Donna Dirkse
Desiree Dutcher
Katie Forte
Chris Gross
Matteo Passalacqua
Ashley Poirier
Brian Zifkin

Absent: Justin Findling – *excused*
Scott Francis – *excused*
Uli Laczkovich – *excused*
Talia Wittenberg – *excused*

Also present: Nate Geinzer, Interim City Manager
Kristen Kapelanski, Community Development Director
Lisa Kempner, Planning Commission Liaison
Mike McGuinness, DDA Executive Director
Tim Murad, Chamber of Commerce Liaison
Adam Wozniak, Berkley DPW

B. Quorum Balance Needed and Recent Departures

Passalacqua noted that with ten currently active Board members, six are needed for a meeting quorum, and asked that he or McGuinness be notified as soon as a member knows they will be absent. There are three Board vacancies to be filled.

C. Welcoming New Interim City Manager Nate Geinzer

Geinzer is no stranger to Berkley and has known retiring Manager Baumgarten for a long time. He also served for a short period as the DDA Manager very early in his career and is looking forward to continuing the momentum Baumgarten has set in place.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Dirkse moved to approve the agenda, and Gross seconded. For this meeting and going forward, Passalacqua proposed there be a time limit of three minutes per speaker during Public Comments. To accommodate the Chair's schedule, agenda item discussions will generally be limited and noted on the agenda as well, to the extent possible. On motion by Dirkse and second by Gross, the amended agenda and Public Comments time limit was unanimously approved by the Board.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting of March 13, 2024

On motion by Poirier and second by Dutcher, the minutes of the regular meeting of March 13, 2024 were unanimously approved by the Board.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT:

A. Financial Reports for February and March 2024

Gross reported @\$7,700 revenues for February and \$0.00 for March. Expenses for February and March were @\$38,000 and @\$12,000, respectively, noting no expenses out of the ordinary. Year-to-date revenues total @\$415,000 and expenses @\$373,000. The ending fund balance as of March 31 was @\$332,000.

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

VI. ACTION ITEMS:

A. Resolution of Appreciation for Matthew Baumgarten's Years of Service on the DDA Board of Directors

McGuinness reported that after eight years in the position, Matthew Baumgarten was stepping down as City Manager as of April 19, 2024. He had included in the Board's Information Packet a proposed Resolution of Appreciation for Matthew Baumgarten's years of service on the DDA Board of Directors. The resolution reads as follows:

RESOLUTION

**ACKNOWLEDGING AND THANKING MR. MATTHEW BAUMGARTEN
FOR HIS YEARS OF EFFECTIVE SERVICE ON THE DDA BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

WHEREAS, for eight years Berkley City Manager Matthew Baumgarten has been a catalyst for progress in our downtown; and,

WHEREAS, Mr. Baumgarten has been a strong advocate for advancing the City of Berkley and, as City Manager, held a seat on our Downtown Development Authority Board of Directors; and

WHEREAS, he has served for eight years on the DDA Board, made a substantial difference, and fostered an era of collaboration and open communication between City government and our DDA; and

WHEREAS, he has decided the time has come to conclude his time as Berkley City Manager and, as a result his tenure on the Berkley DDA Board will be concluding; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, the Berkley Downtown Development Authority formally acknowledges, thanks, and celebrates the many years of strong service by Mr. Matthew Baumgarten as Berkley City Manager and as a Board Member for the Berkley DDA; and further

RESOLVED, we wish him the very best as a continued strong part of our downtown community and we resoundingly say "thank you."

ADOPTED: April 10, 2024

Baumgarten responded, noting the DDA is a fantastic tool for the community, he strongly supports the direction they are pursuing, and the Downtown Master Plan. The work of the Board is one of the reasons people love their community want to live and work here. "This Board is solid."

McGuinness thanked him, personally and professionally, and especially appreciates the collaboration Baumgarten fostered with the DDA. He should be rightfully proud of his time in office.

Zifkin moved to adopt the Resolution of Appreciation for Matthew Baumgarten's Years of Service on the DDA Board of Directors, Dutcher seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board. At meeting's end, Board members signed a copy of the Resolution to be presented to Baumgarten by McGuinness.

B. Updated Oakland County Placemaking Grant Funding Application

Since last month's meeting McGuinness received final guidance from Oakland County about what projects can be funded with any grant money and also heard that one of the other communities has dropped out.

He was seeking Board approval regarding how to proceed on the Revitalization and Placemaking grant application. He had revised the application to include a 10% contingency and noted the total grant request would be in the amount of \$209,105, with Oakland County contributing \$83,642 and the DDA contributing the remainder, \$125,463. The DDA will be contributing all monies for Berkley's share. These are not necessarily final numbers.

The County had indicated that the Robina North and South areas should be the only focus for any grant monies awarded, the Dorothea location and City Hall having been removed. A breakdown of how the total would be allocated was included in the Board packet. He also noted that he expected to have an agreement from the County by May 30.

Forte moved to support the direction outlined by McGuinness and the line-by-line breakdown he submitted, Dutcher seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

C. Revisiting of Perch Façade Grant Withdrawn Application from 2021

In August 2021, Perch filled out a façade grant application for the extensive improvements they planned to make at the former Disabled American Veterans building at 2717 Coolidge. At that time, the Board needed to approve the plan before the applicant could move on making renovations, and the applicant put aside plans to pursue the grant because of urgency to make changes necessary to open their business. At the time, the maximum grant award was \$5,000.00.

The owners have now asked that their original \$5,000.00 application be reconsidered. All current improvements have been completed. They are not currently asking for more money to make additional façade improvements.

The timeline for DDA approval has since changed in terms of when work can actually start, and application need only be made for a grant to be considered.

Board members' original concerns, about the precedent that would be set if a grant was awarded so long after completion of the renovations, were discussed at length. That precedent could open a can of words in that awarding the grant at this time might precipitate other owners who've made improvements without prior DDA approval to approach the Board with grant requests. However, there was strong Board consensus that the improvements the owners made to their building's façade are substantial and positive enhancements to the Downtown Berkley streetscape.

Baumgarten moved to deny the application for reconsideration, based on the age of it, Zifkin seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

VII. Discussion Items

A. Landscaping Enhancement Opportunities for our Downtown

McGuinness reported that Frank's, the DDA's landscaper, is reviewing the contract for services, expanded from more than one season and working on ways to include the 12 Mile West Arts District/Gateway area and enhancements to Robina North and South.

VIII. LIAISON REPORTS

A. City Council – Steve Baker

Baker reported that Council read a proclamation recognizing the City's volunteers and declaring Volunteer Week, including the DDA Board. Much of the meeting dealt with City government business items, including purchasing needed equipment and approving maintenance contracts. DDA events were also approved. Geinzer was hired as Interim City Manager, and the firm GovHR was hired to do a nationwide search for the next full-time City Manager.

There will be a resolution of appreciation for Matt Baumgarten's years of service to the city on the Council's next agenda. Council will be approving provisions regarding parklets and how to set one up with a neighboring business in case the space in front of your own business is not suitable for a parklet.

Council will conduct budget hearings on April 16 and 17.

B. Community Development – Kristen Kapelanski

Kapelanski reported the zoning ordinance is almost complete. The special land use request for the former Vitrine space on Coolidge was denied. Prohibiting first floor "offices" in the downtown district (Coolidge from Catalpa to 12 Mile and 12 Mile to Buckingham) is under consideration for the zoning revisions. The draft zoning ordinance will be out for review soon. The PUD developer for the Coolidge/Columbia property has submitted revised plans, splitting the development into two separate buildings and eliminating the "bridge" that spanned the road.

C. Planning Commission – Lisa Kempner

Kempner reported they will address some zoning ordinance questions that haven't been resolved. Meeting with some Council members, she noted one issue they brought up is what is the DDA plan for when a business closes: How to recruit successors and what kinds of businesses they would target. She also noted that planning for downtown events is made more difficult when there are "office gaps" between retail businesses that people would want to visit.

Zifkin asked about existing office tenants in the downtown district if that's prohibited in the new zoning ordinance. Kapelanski said they would be "non-conforming" and could continue but not expand. If that business moved out and the space was vacant for six months or more, the owner could not have another "office" business move in.

D. Public Works – Ric Chalmers

Wozniak reported DPW thinks the crosswalk lights are now working correctly. Passalacqua asked what City department is working with DTE about the street lights, and McGuinness noted it was DPW. Passalacqua would like to make sure the DDA is kept apprised of those conversations.

E. Chamber of Commerce – Tim Murad

Murad reported the Chamber has received 160-170 applications for Art Bash. Art Fest plans are continuing. With Katie Forte's help the Chamber is launching the program, Berkley Has HeART, a photo contest for pictures of anything in Berkley with a public vote on the winner during the Street Art Fest. The next Chamber Chat is at Berkley Eyewear on April 19, and they're restarting Chamber Blenders in the evening, two or three this year.

IX. STUDENT BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

Absent.

X. BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES:

A. Art & Design Committee

1. Incoming Mural Program Submissions

McGuinness reported that six different businesses are in various stages of submission or expressing interest in applying: Time Travelers, Mayflower Books, Coffee and Bark, Armadillo, Magic Alterations, and Reware Vintage, on its rear wall, where they want to start having musical performances.

2. Berkley has HeART Initiative, Chamber Collaboration

Forte is preparing a map of murals for the Berkley Has HeART campaign that will be included in the booklet and also be available digitally.

B. Business Development Committee

1. Bombshell Treat Bar Ribbon Cutting April 19

2. Law Office of Rachel Pinch Ribbon Cutting May 2

3. Time Travelers Comic Books Relocation, Expansion

McGuinness has spoken to Time Travelers about the DDA's desire to see expanded window visibility and display, since the new corner location is very prominent. Council Thrift, which is expanding into their old space next door, is open to ideas about beautifying their exterior

McGuinness has had discussions with Gross and Forte about holding strategy sessions for business development with multiple Berkley stakeholders.

C. Downtown Events Committee

1. Berkley Pride Planning Meeting April 17, 7:00 PM, City Hall. Council approved street closures for Farmers Market, Pride, and Monster Mash.

Kempner asked where the B.O.S.S. program currently stands, as it seemed like it had gotten lost. Kapelanski reported that they're working on the launch, with three businesses set to go and others in the application stage. It's been suggested to partner with the Chamber and tie in to one of the planned events.

D. Marketing Strategies Committee

1. April Fool's Day Social Media Post Engagement

The Downtown Berkley social media post on April Fool's Day jokingly declared that the speed limit and traffic lanes on Coolidge would be drastically reduced. The social media post generated a large amount of engagement from the community, even more than last year's April Fool's Day prank of announcing the downtown would be officially renamed Downtown BOO!kley.

E. Organization Committee – Scott Francis

1. Accepting Applications for 12 Mile, Coolidge Board Seats

McGuinness noted candidates are under consideration. For informational purposes, he reported the committee had received an FOIA request from a resident to receive a copy of the Director's recent evaluation.

F. West 12-Mile Committee – Brian Zifkin

Zifkin reported he has a business associate who wants to buy and move into a Berkley DDA district building. He's looking at @4,000 sq. ft. Zifkin said he is very serious and is a professional watchmaker with several additional watchmakers on staff. Passalacqua suggested he contact Rick Ax of Farbman, who has worked with several Berkley properties. Gross also mentioned a Coolidge building that she has for sale or lease.

XI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATES

A. National Main Street Conference May 6-8 in Birmingham, Alabama

The National Main Street Certification requires its communities to send a representative to the National Conference. McGuinness reported he would be attending and would miss the May Berkley DDA Board meeting. Main Street Oakland County subsidizes most of the expenses.

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

McGuinness invited all to attend the Summer Workshop with him.

XII. BOARD OF DIRECTORS' COMMENTS:

Baumgarten reported that the Library's Youth Librarian, Rebecca Stout, has decorated the Young Adults Room, above the stacks, with very good photographs of all the city's murals.

Someone asked about the former Smokers Island space on Coolidge and what was moving there. Kapelanski said a retail women's clothing store would be moving in.

XIII. 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.

XIV. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 AM on motion by Zifkin and second by Forte.