

**MEETING MINUTES
BERKLEY DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Wednesday, November 8, 2023, 8:15 AM
Berkley Public Safety, 2nd Floor, Conference Room**



- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 8:19 AM with DDA Director Michael McGuinness presiding.
- II. **ROLL CALL:**
- A. Attendance Taken and Quorum Determined**
- Present:* Donna Dirkse
Desiree Dutcher
Justin Findling
Katie Forte
Scott Francis
Chris Gross
Uli Laczkovich
Ashley Poirier
Talia Wittenberg
Brian Zifkin
- Absent:* Tim Barnes – *excused*
Matthew Baumgarten – *excused*
Andy Gilbert – *excused*
Matteo Passalacqua – *excused*
- Also present:* Steve Baker, City Council Liaison
Kathleen Karlis, Chair. Berkley Tree Board
Lisa Kempner, Planning Commission Liaison
Mike McGuinness, DDA Executive Director
Tim Murad, Chamber of Commerce Liaison
Adam Wozniak, Berkley DPW
- III. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**
On motion by Francis and second by Laczkovich, the agenda was unanimously approved by the Board. McGuinness then asked for a motion to remove Section XIV., Closed Session, from the agenda as excused, absent members, wanted additional time for review, so that will take place at the next scheduled meeting in December. Poirier so moved, Dirkse seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board and the agenda successfully amended.
- IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
- A. Regular Meeting of October 11, 2023**
On motion by Dirkse and second by Forte, the minutes of the regular meeting of October 11, 2023 were unanimously approved by the Board.
- V. **TREASURER'S REPORT:**
- A. Financial Report for October, 2023**
Gross reported that no report had been received from the Finance Department for this period, and therefore the report for October was delayed until the December Board meeting. As reported at a previous meeting, the discrepancy regarding payment to Frank's, the flower basket/landscaping

contractor, was in fact due to payment being returned to the City because of a change in their billing address. There were some issues brought up about the City's financial reserves, and Gross asked if those affected the DDA in any way, and McGuinness noted they did not and the financial health of the City is strong.

VI. ACTION ITEMS:

There were no action items for the Board to consider.

VII. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Coolidge Crosswalks Improvement Project Status

McGuinness reported that City funding for its share of the project was coming from their road funding budget, specifically to be used for pedestrian infrastructure. The contractor's schedule called for cement to be poured that day for the sidewalks that had been removed with two businesses affected being closed, but due to inclement weather, pouring of cement was delayed until conditions were favorable. Fall completion is still projected.

Poirier asked about the public education campaign and if it was planned for spring. McGuinness noted that when the project is completed this fall, information will be made publicly available emphasizing safety using the crosswalks but the major campaign will be rolled out in spring when pedestrian traffic will increase.

B. Downtown Landscaping and Tree Replacement Developments

McGuinness has been working with DPW Director Young to plan removal and replacement of downtown trees. Two 12 Mile trees have been removed recently, requiring extensive underground work. They agree that each tree removal and replacement will cost @\$600.00.

He turned discussion over to Kathleen Karlis, Chair of the Berkley Tree Board, who outlined their approach as it relates to the city's tree canopy (also outlined on the City's web site). The city completed an evaluation of the overall city tree canopy, with a goal of achieving 40% and having a diversity of tree species. The downtown environment presents special challenges partly because of the stress of traffic pollution, road salt, and the root constriction of being planted in tree wells. Proper mulching of trees is extremely important to maintaining their health. They are working with and following the State DNR guidelines.

C. BOOKley Season Successfully Completed

McGuinness noted this year is the third for this month-long event, and has proven to be an overwhelming success for all involved, attracting many new volunteers and visitors from out of the city as well as Berkley residents. Bookley event chair Kempner noted the weather cooperated for all the planned activities. She had many new event volunteers this year. Downtown businesses were given a participation sheet with a QR code to sign up for events they wanted to participate in. They were able to streamline tasks that needed to be done for all events. She also noted that for Ghost Chase, whereas last year all the teams were from Berkley, this year only three were from Berkley and the rest came from other metro area communities.

McGuinness then engaged everyone to voice their impressions. Wonziak (DPW) mentioned the only problem he noticed was that residents from Berkley Manor had difficult access, and public safety had to assist them. Other comments were that it gets people fired up, a lot of social engagement, enjoy driving through town to see all the skeletons, the best holiday Berkley has, so much love put into decorating the skeletons, especially for the kids, so family friendly, hearing how people came from all over, it's a destination, maybe consider using ArtSpace where the food truck has been a great draw for the high school students. Everyone agreed that it had filled the downtown with a fun, positive vibe.

One Board member suggested expanding visibility at the entrances to downtown, at 11 Mile and Greenfield, and McGuinness concurred, noting that this year more businesses at the west end of 12

Mile participated in the Trick or Treat stroll. He also reported that this year they had @\$6,500 in sponsorships.

Regarding event costs, Gross noted that she's heard next year the City will be raising fees for services they provide at events such as this that the DDA holds.

D. Holiday Shopping Season Promotional Initiatives

McGuinness noted the Saturday after Thanksgiving is Small Business Saturday, the Holiday Lights Parade takes place the first Saturday in December, and Merry and Bright Shopping Nights on Thursdays, December 7, 14, and 21. The DDA partners with the Library for Santa at the Library and will run the Jolly Trolley on December 9. Holiday lights will be up along 12 Mile and Coolidge and select pocket locations. Some marketing ideas promoted by Poirier are Elf on a Store Shelf and Mensch on a Bench and Berkley Prime shopping (mimicking Amazon, no membership fee and instant gratification).

VIII. LIAISON REPORTS

A. City Council – Steve Baker

Baker congratulated the DDA on a great Bookley season and thanked the City Clerk's department and volunteers for their efforts on the previous day's election. At their next meeting 11/20 Council will give their best wishes to Mike Dooley and welcome new Council person Clarence Black. The Coolidge PUD, which has been approved and sent to Council by the Planning Commission, isn't ready to be on their agenda for approval. They may also consider extensions for the two cannabis businesses that haven't opened yet. The City finances are undergoing the yearly audit, and the Mayor's Academy is continuing.

B. Community Development Planning Commission – Kristen Kapelanski (absent)

C. Planning Commission – Lisa Kempner

Kempner reported that the Planning Commission had approved the plans for the Coolidge PUD with the recommendation to plant more trees in the right of way. The Zoning steering committee is working on landscaping, lighting, and signage. Currently, zoning doesn't deal at all with landscaping, but are considering discouraging tree wells. They are encouraging the PUD developer to work with the DDA on having their waste receptacles and benches be harmonious and consistent. The next Mayor's Academy will be the last in the series and give their final recommendations.

D. Public Works – Ric Chalmers

Wozniak reported that the DPW has begun removing leaves from the roadways.

E. Chamber of Commerce – Tim Murad

Murad reported the annual State of the City had been held at the Collaborative Center and that they would hold the Chamber's holiday party at Republica on December 5. The Berkley Perks card is on sale at the Woodward Corner Market and at the schools, with \$15.00 being donated to the schools if bought there.

IX. STUDENT BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

Findling reported that students have a corn hole tournament going, and students are enjoying decorating the hallways for the holidays, starting with Halloween. Wittenberg reported that students enjoy having the food truck at ArtSpace.

X. BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES:

A. Art & Design Committee – Matteo Passalacqua

- B. Business Development Committee**
- C. Downtown Events Committee**
- D. Marketing Strategies Committee – Ashley Poirier**
- E. Organization Committee – Scott Francis**
- F. West 12-Mile Committee – Brian Zifkin**

Zifkin reported that some of the small bear planter bases have been installed, and none have disappeared yet.

XI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATES

- A.** McGuinness attended the Michigan Municipal League Conference Oct. 18-20
- B.** McGuinness attended the Michigan Downtown Association Conference Downtown Berkley Tour
- C.** McGuinness attended the Michigan Downtown Association Annual Conference

What had been originally planned as a walking tour was changed to a trolley tour instead because of mobility issues for some of the participants. The last part of the tour took place on foot, and some local businesses were visited. McGuinness also reported a topic of discussion about a ballot initiative in Lake Orion to eliminate their DDA that lost at the polls.

XII. BOARD OF DIRECTORS' COMMENTS:

Gross noted that budget amendments are needed for funding changes the Board had approved this year.

Francis reported that work on Hurley Field has begun and will take nine months.

Poirier reported that the high school advisory board she's working on needs mentors, especially in the accounting area.

XIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS: The opportunity for public comment was offered. Gilbert asked that anyone with comments or questions e-mail them to the DDA to be answered within five business days.

There was general discussion about changes in the billing for water/sewer/garbage services with a \$40.00 charge for trash pickup, even for those that pay outside vendors. McGuinness said he could communicate with the City about the lack of clarity for affected businesses, and some of them have suggested the DDA take on the expense of trash pickup downtown. Baker noted the importance of clear communication and urged anyone interested to attend upcoming 2024/25 City budget sessions.

XIV. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 AM on motion by Zifkin and second by Francis.