

**MEETING MINUTES
BERKLEY DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Wednesday, December 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.
- II. Attendance Taken and Quorum Determined**
Present: Desiree Dutcher
Katie Forte
Scott Francis
Anna Grace
Shawn Heath-Lee
Uli Laczkovich
Matteo Passalacqua
Ashley Poirier
Todd Schaefer
Crystal VanVleck
Brian Zifkin

Absent: Donna Dirkse – *excused*
Justin Findling – *excused*
Chris Gross – *excused*
Talia Wittenberg – *excused*

Also present: 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 Liaison
- III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**
Zifkin moved to approve the agenda, Forte seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.
- IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
A. Regular Meeting of November 13, 2024
On motion by Francis and second by Forte, the minutes of the regular meeting of November 13, 2024 were unanimously approved by the Board.
- V. TREASURER'S REPORT:**
A. Financial Reports for November 2024
In Gross's absence, McGuinness reported that Financial Reports had not been received from the City, although balance statements were sent.

New City Manager Crystal VanVleck was introduced, and she spoke briefly about her work experience in Oak Park, how much she enjoyed living in Berkley, and her goals moving forward as City Manager and working with the DDA. She noted she especially enjoys working on placemaking and infrastructure projects.

- VI. 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.

VII. LIAISON REPORTS

A. City Council

In Baker's absence, VanVleck reported that Council last met on 12/2, and approved the second reading of the revised parklet ordinance. At their next meeting on 12/16, they will discuss the petition submitted to the City dealing with the temporary closure of Dorothea at Coolidge.

B. Community Development

Kapelanski noted she had nothing to report.

C. Planning Commission

Kempner reported that the Commission reviewed the Zoning Ordinance draft, wanted to make several "tweaks" to it, and should have those revisions ready in January.

D. Public Works

Wozniak reported that the Holiday Parade went smoothly, and they're making sure the downtown is cleaned up, especially for holiday shopping nights. They met with DTE about the LED changeover, and he said DTE will address the lights that aren't working.

E. Chamber of Commerce

Murad reported they're preparing for the new year and reviewing their budget, Board positions, and other issues.

VIII. Discussion Items

A. Main Street Annual Evaluation Set for January 16, 2025

McGuinness reported that meetings with the evaluator from Louisiana will take place, and he urged Board members to speak with him, if they have some time available.

MSOC has shared the names of people who might be interested in applying for the soon-to-be vacant DDA Director position.

B. Submitted Resignation of Executive Director Mike McGuinness

Passalacqua thanked McGuinness for all he has done for Berkley during his term and is excited for him about his future in his hometown, Pontiac.

He noted that the next 60 days the Board will be focusing on finding his replacement and developing a matrix of short-term goals during that period and the near-term. There was a roundtable discussion of issues each Board member rates as important in their committee roles and what they see will be coming up soon. This can be presented to the incoming Director when he or she is on board. Poirier noted that no major events are in the planning stages at this point in time. She anticipates that the events calendar will be smaller in McGuinness' absence, but the major events will be retained. She also needs to meet directly with the personnel working on the Web site redesign.

For Dutcher, current pressing priorities are the Dorothea space and next steps, the DDA Strategic Plan, and the future of the Marquee. Passalacqua noted determining the scope of the Strategic Plan and next steps on RAP 2.0, which he believes needs to have the funds spent in 2025 (actually by 2026 per McGuinness), and a draft budget for 2025/26 as soon as possible, showing where approximately \$50,000-\$60,000 in savings can be identified.

Lackovich would like to see efforts to recruit new businesses and attract customers for them continue at the same pace as they have under McGuinness, with the events that bring visitors to

Berkley. VanVleck will continue to learn how to support the DDA in her administrative role and will help to assure that vendors are paid in a timely fashion. Francis noted the Organization Committee needs to take the lead on hiring the next Director, and he asked McGuinness for his help writing the posting for the position (describing the duties, etc.). He can also assist on the particulars of the employment contract. The committee and the city need to decide what is communicated publicly about the upcoming vacancy and who else should be informed.

Forte noted current priorities include the Dorothea location, murals and façade grants (she has a spreadsheet list of the murals), the Strategic Plan, and moving forward with a new director, cohesiveness of the business district (Coolidge and 12 Mile). Grace said communication (to the DDA and Director) needs to be established with a direct phone line. An events calendar could be listed on the DDA web site, and an internal list with contact information for event volunteers be distributed among them.

Poirier added that the dedicated DDA phone line at City Hall needs to be communicated to all downtown businesses as well as informing them of the e-mail address to use to contact the Director. Zifkin questioned the status of the winter landscape barrels, which McGuinness noted could be displayed very soon, and Zifkin said it was also time to evaluate the MOGO relationship. McGuinness noted another timely issue is the landscaping contract for 2025 and additional years.

Passalacqua asked McGuinness for an outline of what comes next: A list of hard-soft deadlines, what are highest priority actions/what order, and points of contact for outstanding priorities. Kempner said she could create a road map for BOOKley season activities.

At @9:10, Passalacqua asked McGuinness and liaisons, if they chose, to leave the meeting so the Board could continue the candid discussion of future steps and important qualities they would be seeking in the next director.

At that point, Passalacqua noted that the Organization Committee would be meeting the following week to discuss next steps in finding a new Director, and the purpose of the Board's current discussion was to better define what qualities Board members considered important to have in the individual chosen to lead the organization.

He noted McGuinness brought presence and personality to the DDA when he took on the job at a time when the position (and organization) lacked some structure. He expected the new Director would work out of City Hall, where he or she would have day-to-day support and coordination. Fundraising skills and brick and mortar (development) skills are important for Passalacqua.

A board member suggested that some set office hours are important although events and meetings will make additional demands on the Director's time. For others, personality would be key, someone who can rally the business community and Berkley as a whole (the social aspect).

Board members are looking for management skills and the ability to delegate time-consuming tasks. A Board member suggested the Director have an assistant to help with those tasks. The Director should be approachable and give a "face" to events and the organization. In her previous position with Oak Park, VanVleck noted they moved from providing resources and information about them to their businesses, to focus more recently on promoting events that benefit their businesses. As part of onboarding for new businesses, information about monetary resources such as grants could be part of a packet presented. Periodic informational meetings for downtown businesses could be revived. Individual committees could be beefed up in terms of organizational structure (setting agendas, etc.).

For Francis, setting the organization's priorities will help guide the Director selection in terms of evaluating a candidate's strengths. Building the DDA's structure, for growth, knowing how to delegate and recognizing strengths in assistants/volunteers and creating a network of volunteers (something the Chamber is working on) are high on his list. It's possible that a paid or unpaid

intern/assistant can be invaluable to raise the level of communication with the community and business people. Zifkin noted they need to do a better job *defining* the position and Board members have to take stronger leads. He also believes they should mandate using the DDA cellphone and could perhaps institute an incentive for fundraising as part of the compensation package.

There needs to be a comprehensive list of how to contact all of Berkley's downtown businesses. Regarding fundraising, Schaefer said there actually are professional fundraisers (compensated according to results).

IX. STUDENT BOARD MEMBER AND COMMITTEE UPDATES:

A. Student Board members were excused, and there was no report.

B. Art & Design Committee

No report.

C. Downtown Events Committee

No report.

D. Marketing Strategies Committee

No report.

E. Organization Committee

No report.

F. West Twelve Mile Committee

No report.

X. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATES

A. Passalacqua asked McGuinness for an update on the Dorothea public space, which has received grant funding for short-term planning. The DDA then asked City Council to authorize closing Dorothea for an indefinite period between Coolidge and the east alley and to then study the impact of the closure. Some limited use and minimal decoration followed. One nearby business owner who disliked the appearance and the proposed use as a public space started a petition to remove the closure and open the road back up to traffic and parking, and got a number of business owners in the vicinity to sign it. That petition was brought to City Council on December 2.

Because of the uncertainty about the future use and status of the road closure, McGuinness was hesitant to make any additional decorative changes to the area (such a lighting, seating, greenery, and so on). Passalacqua noted there are two City Council meetings before the DDA meets again in January. Council is not expected to take any action on the petition at those meetings. VanVleck noted her sense that Council is still in favor of the project over the long term but feels pressure to open the road back up while it appears nothing is actually happening there.

Passalacqua asked if the DDA should to take any action to present to Council before the next Board meeting in January to indicate their support for the longer term use of the space and design plans, grant funded. Kapelanski suggested the DDA present the more detailed *long-term plans* at the January Council meeting and affirm their support for that project.

Kapelanski and VanVleck suggested the DDA make a resolution supporting the long-term plan of creating a public space at Dorothea and Coolidge

Passalacqua moved to communicate to the Berkley City Council the DDA's openness to the short-term opening of Dorothea to vehicular traffic again and reserving the continued partnership for activation and piloting of temporary closures in the coming seasons and is actively reviewing in

partnership with the City the long-term plans for how to best activate Dorothea, Poirier seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

XI. BOARD OF DIRECTORS' COMMENTS:

None.

XII. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 10:14 AM on motion by Zifkin and second by Poirier.