

**CITY OF WIXOM  
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2022**

This meeting of the Wixom Downtown Development Authority came to order at 6:05 p.m. with the following individuals in attendance:

**DDA MEMBERS:** Chairperson V. Willett, Vice Chairperson K. Rzeznik, J. Buck, K. Guzowski, R. Meredith, C. Osburn,

**ABSENT:** Excused: Mayor Patrick Beagle  
Unexcused: M. Cheney, M. Garmo

**STAFF:** Steve Brown (City Manager) {absent}, Drew Benson (Assistant City Manager and Economic Development Director), Laura Cloutier (Executive Director) and Catherine Buck (City Clerk)

**Determination of a Quorum:**

A quorum of the Downtown Development Authority was present for this meeting.

**Reading of Mission and Vision Statement:**

**Mission Statement:** The Mission of the Wixom DDA is to coordinate the efforts of businesses and residents to promote the growth of the downtown area for the community's benefit.

**Vision Statement:** The Wixom Downtown Development Authority is to provide a friendly, welcoming downtown which will enhance and honor our history while promoting cultural, business and recreational opportunity that attract businesses and residents.

**Approval of Agenda:**

**MOTION** and second by Vice Chairperson Rzeznik and Board Member Meredith to approve the October 19, 2022 Meeting Agenda.

**VOTE:**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**Public Comments:**

None.

**Approval of Minutes:**

None.

**Correspondence:**

None.

**Executive Director's Report:**

None.

**Old Business:**

None.

**New Business:**

## A. DDA Strategic Planning Meeting

Chairperson Willett indicated that the purpose of this special meeting was to look to the future and preplan. The City preplans many years ahead of their improvements and major projects. Some of the things on the DDA budget are small and will stay the same, but we will focus on some of the bigger projects that we may have coming in the future. We will pick and choose which ones we think we want to go for because those are going to take several years of planning and funding.

Executive Director Cloutier hoped that we would come out of this meeting with a prioritized list of the projects. All agreed. It was decided to start with three or four projects because of the funding required for a lot of these projects.

Board Member Buck asked if the three budgeted items were a done deal. Chairperson Willett replied no. They have to be voted on by the Board. She thought we would prioritize the list that was developed tonight and vote on it at Tuesday's regular meeting.

Assistant City Manager Benson explained that the budget for the first three projects (the barn feasibility study, the Pontiac Trail sidewalk and the Civic Center playground project) was approved by the DDA Board and the City Council.

Chairperson Willett wanted to discuss the sample of projects tonight and then vote on them in front of the entire Board on Tuesday. We have to decide soon so staff can start looking into estimates for next year's budget process.

Board Member Guzowski asked if we could talk about how much money we have in those pots for next year. Assistant City Manager Benson said that we may need to if costs are different than we think. It won't matter if the DDA Board votes tonight or next Tuesday because the Board approves the entire budget.

Chairperson Willett thought that was the process we needed to go through. It is October and the Board doesn't meet in December. We have to give the staff direction on what projects to move forward on so when it comes to March, the budget is very easy. It will be easier for staff and it will be easier for the Board to vote on.

Board Member Meredith agreed that we should have a list for the October meeting of what we want to move forward with. If we are taking a look at the Renton area, the Pontiac Trail streetscape and powerlines, these are things that we are not paying for in one year. It may be several years out and we will have to work with the City on getting the funding for this.

Chairperson Willett said that the City may take over some of these open options themselves if the DDA chooses not to follow them. We will need to let them know what we are looking at.

Assistant City Manager Benson showed the Board a spreadsheet of what they have budgeted for thus far. After working on Business Development grants and getting close to a final product, the City Attorney mentioned to us that because direct subsidies for development were not in the DDA Plan, it would be difficult for us to do that. He said that didn't mean that we can't use those monies to facilitate development. We just have to be creative and target that toward public improvements.

Vice Chairperson Rzeznik asked if we weren't even talking about the east retail anymore. Assistant City Manager Benson said that we don't control the part of the east retail that needs to be done. If they needed

parking or streetscaping, we could talk about those. He said he has regular conversations with them. Vice Chairperson Rzeznik commented that when we have these discussions, it has always been something that everybody wants to see.

Assistant City Manager Benson said that the DDA does not have to do anything to reallocate the Business Development grant funds at this moment. If they aren't used, they will roll over into the Fund Balance. If a project comes along, it is easy to do a budget amendment to move that across. It would have to be approved by the Council. For the purpose of discussion, he said that the Board can take the \$100,000 and reallocate it. We talked about the five years remaining on the DDA Plan and that will come into play. He explained that the green light on his chart, which was the total for Special Studies, was referenced in a single line in the DDA's budget. We put more than one project in there. Currently, the entire \$30,000 is for the barn study. There may be other projects that are relevant, so we may want to add or subtract from that. There was also three years for the Klebba sidewalk project that will take place this year. The City will front the funds and the DDA will repay it. The Civic Center Park has \$250,000 budgeted next year. He said there will be three examples brought back to the Board. That was a future project, so it was really about making sure that the dollars are there at that time.

Chairperson Willett said that these numbers are placeholders so we can use it for different things. She guessed that the barn study would be between \$6,500 and \$8,000. Assistant City Manager Benson said that it would depend entirely on the scope.

Executive Director Cloutier added that we have started the scope of work. We are expanding the three paragraphs. She and Assistant City Manager Benson had a discussion with the gentleman who did the Request for Developer Qualifications for the City of Farmington just to get some feedback from him. Assistant City Manager Benson commented that the firm is Place + Main Advisors in Birmingham and they do that for commercial developments. He wanted to talk to them in relation to the Renton property.

Assistant City Manager Benson said he didn't know if there was much to discuss regarding the items at the top of the list, specifically the playground and the Klebba sidewalk. He thought that was pretty well discussed.

Beginning with the Renton project, Assistant City Manager Benson said he was excited about this project. He hoped this would be his primary focus in the next couple of months. He said we are looking into partnering or purchasing the two properties (the Memic building and the AFP Sound building) that we don't own so we would have the entire area. We have done site tours inside and inspections to see the condition of those properties. The property owners are open to selling. We should have specific clarity within the next month or two. They have existing leases that we will have to work with, but this was a very real opportunity. This was a significant priority to the City Council. He added that the storm water detention would be handled in the northwest corner. The building is about 17,000 square feet and 135 parking spaces, five of which are handicap.

Chairperson Willett asked what we thought would go in this building and how we build it. Assistant City Manager Benson said it would ultimately depend on what a developer was looking for. It is supposed to be two stories, but he has come to learn more about our VCA ordinance. True two stories might not be feasible. Half of the west retail is a faux façade. That will most likely be what will happen because we won't be able to fit enough parking. The parking requirements for 17,000 square feet of pure retail space would be 68, but he thought we would need about 130 spaces.

Chairperson Willett asked about the turnaround time for purchase, build and development. Assistant City Manager Benson said that we would like to take this through the same fashion that Farmington and other communities have used. Place + Main has been a preferred provider through the Redevelopment Ready

Community (RRC) program. We are not RRC certified yet, so we are not eligible for the subsidized version of this. Once we are certified, we have plenty of other needs in the community so we can use the subsidized version of that somewhere else. We are interested in moving this quickly. He mentioned that the timeline for the packet from Place + Main, which includes visioning, working with all relevant boards and committees, was between \$30,000 and \$50,000 depending on how big of a project it was.

Chairperson Willett thought this would probably happen in 2023/2024 for the \$50,000 and in 2025/2026 we would have the implementation start on the property.

Assistant City Manager Benson replied that they have told us that if we were to specifically engage with Place + Main, and we get confirmation to them in November, we could start working on the process in January. We would have an RFQ on the street for developers in the summer of 2023 and construction starting in the spring of 2024.

Chairperson Willett asked if we could use part of the \$100,000 that we have in the business grant area to fund the \$30,000 to \$50,000, and Assistant City Manager Benson replied yes.

He continued by saying that the City Council was not looking to the DDA to participate in any of the acquisition costs. It was their hope and expectation that the DDA would work with the City on site prep and packaging. There will be costs associated with demolishing those buildings and opportunities to subsidize in relation to having a portion of that parking lot dedicated for City access. There is an opportunity to take say \$100,000 to buy permanent access to the parking lot for Mack Park and the Trail. That was an example of something that would work.

Chairperson Willett was sure that the City Council would want as much towards that as possible, which she understood. Based on this overview, she asked where the utility lines were located on the property. Assistant City Manager Benson replied that we know where the water and sewer are located; they are on the street side. The only onsite issue he thought they would run into would be the power and telephone lines. They run along the railroad tracks and they don't need to be moved or buried. There was one pole next to AFP Sound that would have to be moved.

Chairperson Willett noted that DTE was behind by about nine or ten months on moving poles. That was why she was asking. Assistant City Manager Benson said that we can start acting on some of those things well in advance of when they are laying concrete for the foundation. He said the other telephone line runs across where Renton currently exists and those would just be moved because burying them was very expensive.

Board Member Meredith asked what the Planning Commission's expectation was for that property. Assistant City Manager Benson said that he had not had a formal discussion with them. He said that they care about design and to a certain degree use. He wasn't sure how comfortable they were with the idea that this would likely be a pedestrian-oriented strip center. That was what developers liked to build; they don't build stand alone structures. This process will take us through the ideas of something that the Planning Commission can approve and something that was buildable. We know that it costs roughly \$200 a square foot to build right now. Lease rates are \$25-\$30 a square foot. The average lease rate for retail in the City of Wixom right now is \$17 a square foot.

Chairperson Willett commented that with the economy where it was, it will probably cost less per square foot when we go to build. They will want long-term lease agreements, she assumed.

Executive Director Cloutier said that most property owners were looking for people to sign ten-year leases. Chairman Willett didn't think that would happen unless it was an established business. She

thought phase one was that we agree we are interested in doing this. Phase two was the DDA along with the City, was assisting in finding businesses to fill the space, which has been a problem on a five-year lease with Rizzo. She asked what his thoughts were on how we could do it different in order to facilitate this. She said she liked this and she thought this brought some room for not only just retail and shopping, but some type of activity, to help push that end of the street that has struggled with traffic.

Assistant City Manager Benson said that there was some degree of help we can try to do in filling the spaces, but it really was a real estate function. The expectation was whoever agrees to do this gets ownership of the property and we negotiate a package that encourages them to fill it. Chairperson Willett said we could encourage them to fill it with what the community wants. Executive Director Cloutier said that was not up to the City. We can tell them what we would like to see there, but if they have a willing tenant, they will fill their space. Chairperson Willett said that has been the problem with the east retail. There has been no push and now we have vacant space. We have vacant space on Wixom Road. In an effort to help them, maybe we continue our research internally as the DDA to find out what the community was looking for and assist with funding.

Board Member Meredith said we can build that trough and we can bring the horse there, but the horse is going to drink when it wants to. Whoever builds it will fill it with whoever will rent it.

Chairperson Willett stated that it was a thought to assist the developer further down the road. We would tell them what kinds of things the DDA was looking for and help fund additional things through grants.

Assistant City Manager Benson said that this document will also include a thorough gap analysis of our current retail trade area. That was what would guide this more than anything. A developer could look at it and determine in a one, three or five mile radius, there was a clear lack of urgent cares, for example. We would also have to look at it to determine if those were the kinds of uses that we wanted to see. The selling point to developers was to say if you build this, you will be able to fill it.

Vice Chairperson Rzeznik liked this project because it would also provide parking for the Mack Park area, the Trailhead, etc.

Executive Director Cloutier indicated that the house behind the Memic Building was probably in the best shape of all the buildings. We can use the house as a public restroom.

Board Member Buck asked if the City has addressed the traffic or the crosswalk in that area. There was no crosswalk or light there and it was so dangerous. Executive Director Cloutier said that the City has addressed the School District for multiple years and they aren't interested. Board Member Buck said that if we are putting businesses on the Renton Property, pedestrians have to walk all the way down to the corner to cross at the light.

Board Member Meredith indicated that there would be a Hawk Light at the Trail crossing.

Chairperson Willett thought that everyone liked this. She suggested that the Board start grading these on a one to five scale.

Assistant City Manager Benson's final thought on that was that we don't exactly know how this will shape out there. We hope that if the DDA likes this project, we will figure out the best way to procure quotes to bring to the DDA.

Chairperson Willett said that we already have budgeted funds for this type of project. We would just need to get approval from the City Council.

Assistant City Manager Benson said some of the costs could be this fiscal year, but more likely it will be next fiscal year. We will have more information by March to incorporate. We aren't doing 100% budgeting tonight; this was more about priorities.

Chairperson Willett asked if there had been an environmental study done on the property. Executive Director Cloutier said that we haven't gotten that far. We have just toured the building. The building was built in the 1940s.

Board Member Buck asked if this project would be done around the same time as the barn. It seemed this project was similar of building retail and public restrooms. Assistant City Manager Benson said it was a good question. The order of operations matter. We can do the barn study and the planning of the Renton property at the same time.

Board Member Meredith commented that the barn would not be a retail facility.

Executive Director Cloutier stated that the barn study will tell us what was feasible to do with the barn, whether to keep it where it is, if it can be moved, is it savable, etc. Assistant City Manager Benson said that process would be intended to help the DDA gain some momentum and support. Currently, the barn was not a priority for the City Council or the Parks & Recreation Commission. Chairperson Willett said it was a negotiation if we are willing to work on other projects as well. It was playing nice in the sandbox type of deal. The barn has been there a long time. The DDA has a responsibility to try to save historical properties in the downtown. We have to understand the cost associated and the availability for that. She said she did like Renton.

Board Member Meredith hoped this was the last time we would talk about the barn. He thought the Renton property was a good use for the \$100,000 we had before. It allows us to get into the concept of developing the downtown, putting infrastructure in. We will have the Mack Park Trailhead; we just don't have the parking lot. The plan would produce that parking lot because it would allow for easy access to the east and west commercial areas. He was in favor of getting the feasibility study started.

Executive Director Cloutier asked how much the Board wanted to dedicate to Renton of the \$100,000. Chairperson Willett thought that would be a discussion at the meeting on Tuesday.

Assistant City Manager Benson said that we can worry about the cost when we get there. Chairperson Willett said that we need to get the Board a ballpark figure. Assistant City Manager Benson said that we can also see if there was a way to do both projects at the same time.

Moving on to the electric vehicle charging stations, Executive Director Cloutier said that some of this can be wrapped into the Renton project. Board Member Meredith said we could make some of those parking spots charging stations. Chairperson Willett said we could also use some of that money to put some in at City Hall or other areas around the City.

Assistant City Manager Benson had an update on that. He has been actively pursuing this on the City's and DDA's behalf. The programming around installing electric vehicle charging stations is not there. Everyone is talking about doing this but the funding initiatives to make it happen (i.e., grants) are not going to be available for us to take advantage of. Right now, State funding is surrounding the interstates. They are trying to build a network so you can drive on freeways. They are not focusing on downtown areas. He said he has talked to various other communities who have installed some and they are relatively expensive. He noted that Wixom has a few, too. We need to probably come up with a plan as to where we would like to see them.

Chairman Willett said we can put this down the road a little bit, like a year from now. Some of the funding will be spent already.

Board Member Meredith said he would still like to see some of them incorporated into the Renton project. The problem with these was once you put it in, it is dedicated just to that. If you put one at City Hall, you must subtract one parking spot for anything that was not electric. That was why you would put it in a future parking lot, near a bike trail, which he suspected we would see a few people with electric cars with a bike on the rack. More can be installed a couple of years down the road.

Vice Chairperson Rzeznik asked if the City has received any complaints about not having charging stations. She said that the Drafting Table hasn't heard one peep.

Board Member Guzowski said that Mark Helsom was very interested in charging stations downtown. A couple of her neighbors have asked about them, too. She wondered how much they cost.

Assistant City Manager Benson said that there were a lot of ways to do it. He was on a webinar with Oakland County's Chief Sustainability Officer on this very topic. Oakland County was making their sweeping plan for the County and that should be announced in the first quarter of 2023. Help for local units of government don't exist yet, like group bidding. Oakland County doesn't bid these out and then allow us to source through them. Sometimes you can do public/private partnerships with companies who will say they'll install them for free but they get all the revenue from them. Those programs are not well-defined.

Chairperson Willett said that she has bid a couple of these out of state. She thought it depended more so on the freeway and the rest areas. It also depended on how many units that you do. You have to excavate, you have to put in electrical. For a home, it is about \$1,500 to run a line in your home if you have room on your electrical panel. She indicated that Tesla has a program where they will do a rebate if you do their brand name charging stations. They are expensive. Most people are just passing through. They will go home and charge because you can get about 237 miles on a charge.

Assistant City Manager Benson said that this was a project that we needed to do but we need more information. Perhaps it is something that waits for the 2023/2024 timeline.

Chairperson Willett commented that all of these programs haven't been developed yet. The grid can't handle the electric pull. It was like 15 refrigerators on one circuit. It takes 22 minutes to charge and she didn't think it would replace gas stations.

Executive Director Cloutier thought that we could wrap this into the study of the property. She knew there were two or three units on the Wainstock parking lot behind Auto One. The School District did put in a couple of units at Wixom Elementary. There are some charging stations in the downtown.

Chairperson Willett said that if we do the barn as part of the feasibility study, we could pull in additional electrical for spots at the end of the parking lot near the Library.

Assistant City Manager Benson thought it would be a good starting point when we get to that point. We would need a committee to map out where we would like to see them and then we would figure out how we were going to do it.

Board Member Guzowski said she would like to see a number or feasibility for plumbing the entire parking lot for electrical. Maybe in the future we will get to the point where it is not just an electrical car

spot. We don't have to put in plugs at the surface level. Chairperson Willett said they would run access, but not the line.

She continued with the next item, which was the discussion of the Pontiac Trail power lines.

Board Member Meredith said that in 2003, we were looking at \$4 million. Now that it is 2022, we are looking at \$8 million plus. He thought that we might not be able to do all of it, but he did think the section between PNC Bank and Chambers Road could be streetscaped. The money we had for that was about \$700,000 and that would finish the rest of Pontiac Trail through the downtown area making all of the streetscape identical. It would get the wires out of the way. He suspected there would be a cost because those buildings are coming off upper wires so we may have to be involved in paying for that. He thought it would take care of the part that we were most concerned with.

Executive Director Cloutier said it would also make a huge visual impact in the downtown.

Chairperson Willett said she was not worried about visual; she wanted to know how that affected the businesses. What was the benefit to the businesses for having the power lines underground. She indicated that the DDA was really here for the businesses. It was not going to change their property values.

Vice Chairperson Rzeznik said it would help with widening the sidewalk, making it more pedestrian-friendly. She was worried about how long the businesses would be down.

Chairperson Willett said she was not against widening the sidewalk but she wondered where the value was. Executive Director Cloutier replied that the value was that the DDA was reinvesting the TIF dollars into the infrastructure of the downtown, making it an aesthetically pleasing downtown.

Board Member Guzowski said she agreed with the aesthetic benefit. That was more word of mouth.

Chairperson Willett said that per linear foot, for the dollar value that it is, she wanted to know how that money would help the businesses on that side of the street and keep people downtown.

Board Member Meredith said he walks this area all the time and that area was the worse area to walk. The only thing worse was if you pass someone. The sidewalks are narrow and they flood. He commented that there were two entrances to the parking lot there and they would close only one entrance at a time.

Assistant City Manager Benson said that we would be making an investment in the future layout of that area.

Chairperson Willett said she was not a big fan of this because it was a lot of money to spend over a lot of years for aesthetics.

Vice Chairperson Rzeznik said that it wasn't just the aesthetics. It was also the repair and safety issues, as well as power outages.

Chairperson Willett said that we would only be burying a small area of power lines. If the power goes out, chances are it will go out in other areas. She wondered if anyone had talked to the business owners and if they were agreeable to this. Assistant City Manager Benson commented that we needed to get the buy-in of the DDA first. He said we would be making an investment in the streetscape to help facilitate future development. In the long run of downtown Wixom, Wixom Liquor was not a facility that matched the vision for the district, nor was PNC Bank. We can't control what those private property owners do and

how long they exist, but we can build the infrastructure to support what those are supposed to look like. It may incentivize the development to move in that direction.

Chairperson Willett asked if we could postpone it until we update the DDA Plan in hopes that the cost went down. Assistant City Manager Benson commented that as Board Member Meredith indicated earlier, the cost doubled in the last 20 years. He didn't think the cost would come down.

Board Member Osburn wondered about FEMA grants. Assistant City Manager Benson commented that there are grant opportunities but we aren't going to factor that into the numbers because he couldn't guarantee we would get them. There are all sorts of grants to make projects like this available. He added that we are using a TAP grant for the Air Line Trail right now.

Board Member Meredith thought it made the downtown Wixom uniform from the Post Office to the Drafting Table, not just the wires but the sidewalks.

Board Member Guzowski liked this project. For her, she would rank the Renton Property higher and probably put the Pontiac Trail electrical wires as number 3 because she felt something else would come in as a 2 for her.

Chairperson Willett said that we are talking a long-term significant investment of which we only have a certain amount of money to spend right now because we are still paying off other debts. If we were to do that, it would cost about \$700,000. That was a big chunk of our available funds that we are already trying to allocate to other projects and events. She wanted them to keep in mind that was a big investment, which was why it hasn't been done.

Board Member Buck thought there had to be liability concerns. People can sue the City for a crack in the sidewalk over three inches. Assistant City Manager Benson said that it would depend on who owned them. We would be required to fix anything that needed repair like that.

Board Member Meredith thought that making the City look uniform, even though it will cost us, that was what the DDA was here for. If we put it off a couple more years, it is going to be that much more money. He has been here long enough to see enough things get kicked down the road.

Chairperson Willett mentioned that the DDA was not responsible for everything in this City. The City was also responsible. Executive Director Cloutier stated that the DDA was responsible for the infrastructure of the downtown per the DDA Plan.

Assistant City Manager Benson said that the City would not do this project. That was why they created the DDA Plan. The City contributes \$560,000.

Chairperson Willett said that the DDA was also doing other things that were helping the City, which she felt was part of the City's responsibility. We are trying to work together as a team. We can help with other areas, like Renton, and invest hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Assistant City Manager Benson said that if we buy all of those properties, we will have over \$1 million in property and we won't get that back. It will not sell for \$1 million.

Chairperson Willett felt that the DDA and the City were supposed to be partnering on things and helping out where we can. The DDA can't do everything on the list in five years or even ten years.

Executive Director Cloutier didn't think the City expected the DDA to do everything on the list. The DDA was created to capture money to invest into the building of the downtown. As an organization, their responsibility to use the funds that the City set up to be used.

Chairperson Willett said not just for infrastructure, but other things as well.

Board Member Guzowski said she would put this as a 3. She liked it, but it was not a 1 or a 2.

Vice Chairperson Rzeznik said she understood why we wanted to do it but it was really expensive.

Assistant City Manager Benson said that we haven't even started with the basics of the design and really working through what the cost would look like, similar to the way the Klebba sidewalk was designed three years ago. It may make sense for the DDA to say we are interested in it and let's throw a couple dollars of having a design made.

Vice Chairperson Rzeznik asked if a bike lane was ever explored along Pontiac Trail. There was a sidewalk for pedestrian traffic and there was a bike lane for any bike traffic with bollards to protect the bikers. From her prospective, the safety of the pedestrians and the bikers was very important, as well as the visual. The safety was her biggest issue.

Chairperson Willett said that if we go ahead with the burying of the electrical wires, it would be a good time to design a bike lane. Vice Chairperson Rzeznik thought this might be a cheaper way.

Assistant City Manager Benson said that we would have to get the Road Commission to do it.

Board Member Osburn wondered if we did this, would it put us in a better position for anything else. Assistant City Manager Benson replied that by adding a bike lane, it would be a good checkmark on a grant application. As far as burying the electrical lines, he indicated that DTE wouldn't even contribute to the cost.

Vice Chairperson Rzeznik commented that since one of our concerns was safety, maybe this was a way to get around paying this crazy dollar amount.

Executive Director Cloutier said that if the DDA decided this was a project that they want to focus on two or three years down the line, the cost would be crazy.

Board Member Osburn said she was trying to figure out why we would do the electric lines. In her research, she found safety was an issue. As for the power outages, if the power is going to go out, it is going to go out. There aren't any big trees in that area. She was trying to figure out why she should fight for this. There could be another way to provide some beautification to that area. If we have to put this off because of the cost, she understood that.

Executive Director Cloutier thought it might be something to budget for some design work and some renderings with some basic cost. Then we could think about it more.

Vice Chairperson Rzeznik asked if the \$218,000 to bury the power lines was just on the north side of Pontiac Trail. Assistant City Manager Benson said that was just for the three poles. Vice Chairperson Rzeznik asked if we were concerned about the power lines on the south side of Pontiac Trail. Executive Director Cloutier replied that those were buried. Vice Chairperson Rzeznik asked if there was a way we could make that side pretty with wider sidewalks. Executive Director Cloutier said that some of that property was the railroad property. Assistant City Manager Benson said that it was also a phased

approach. You do a section at a time. He added that there was no crosswalk on the south side of Pontiac Trail. He said that we can't make any realistic improvements to the walkway or even the bike lane. There was not the space unless those lines go.

Board Member Osburn asked if anyone had spoken to those businesses about power outages or safety concerns. Executive Director Cloutier said no, but she has received complaints from people in the community walking about how dangerous it is.

Board Member Buck said that if you can't cross at the crosswalk on the Wixom Station side, and to get from the Drafting Table from City Hall, you have to go down the scary, narrow path where you can't pull a stroller, wagon or bike. It is a huge thing to connect the two parts of downtown.

Board Member Meredith said that for safety and aesthetic reasons, he thought we could at least get more information on it. Assistant City Manager Benson said that we would budget this year to start the design work and then two fiscal years from now, we may bid it out.

In regard to the wayfinding signage downtown, Vice Chairperson Rzeznik wondered if that was to change out the VCA sign to the downtown. She said she could see us doing that at the same time as other things. It wasn't a big project.

Executive Director Cloutier thought we could do some new streetscaping. Vice Chairperson Rzeznik said this made her think about the intersection of Wixom Road and Old Wixom Road. That was the entrance to our City. That might be a great opportunity to have something visual there to slow people down. That was another huge concern of everybody in the community. Cars go very fast there and it is 25 mph, especially with the increased biking and pedestrian traffic we will have in that area. Vice Chairperson Rzeznik said that it would be interesting to her if that became a larger project where it was streetscaping at that intersection, even rounding Wixom Road going north to slow people down.

Executive Director Cloutier explained that as part of the RRC process to get certified, we've been sitting on a task force for marketing. Hopefully signage will come from that. Assistant City Manager Benson added that it was not visually clear where the boundaries are and if those signs are reflective of what the City is today. This wayfinding discussion was not for the City as a whole, but rather just in the downtown. It was starting the conversation about the VCA signs, signage along the Trail directs people, gateway signage, social district signage, etc. We would have to figure out what that would look like and it was probably lower on the priority list.

In regard to finishing the light poles in the downtown, Executive Director Cloutier explained that there are no light poles in the area that was just discussed. This is part of the streetscaping, but there are other sections in downtown, like North Wixom Road. Light poles are in front of Genisys and Wixom Baptist Church, but not in front of the townhomes.

Vice Chairperson Rzeznik saw this project in conjunction with the burying electrical wires. We aren't going to touch those unless we do the power poles.

Executive Director Cloutier said that goes back to prioritizing the phases of burying the power lines. Those power lines may never get buried purely because of cost, but she wanted to include this so it was on the DDA's radar. She has had conversations with Councilmembers about when we would be finishing the light poles in the downtown area. It was decided that the DDA was interested, but it was part of a larger project.

Next, the DDA discussed the west end social district. Chairperson Willett said that she sat in on the Design Committee meeting. They discussed the build out by Auto One. Executive Director Cloutier stated that at the last Design Committee meeting, it was discussed that part of the social district was that we have to have common areas to take their beverages. We have Sibley Park, the Fountain and the west side common area. It was the hope of the Design Committee to see that outfitted with furnishings and more possibly. She indicated that she and Assistant City Manager Benson had a Zoom call with the landscape architect from Carlisle Wortman (our new planning firm), Mike Darga from HRC, and Deanna Magee. The Parks & Recreation Commission would have to be included in the discussions with the west end common area because the Council would probably want to designate that as a park officially.

Chairperson Willett asked what the benefit was of a designated park there. Assistant City Manager Benson replied that the City owns that property and historically it has been designated for development purposes. He indicated that it was undevelopable and it was a proactive effort on our part to get them in the loop earlier. We are getting a number from Carlisle Wortman for renderings. We are also looking to get some confirmations and documentations from HRC to talk about what was possible there since there was a 24-inch sewer main that runs down the middle of it, along with water. There are limits to how permanent of structures you can put there. We can do things like a concrete pad. The plan was to bring all of that information back to the Board to discuss. The outfitting would probably come next fiscal year. The cost will depend on the scope of what the DDA wants to do.

Executive Director Cloutier said there were two grants that she felt would be good for a project like this. There was one through National Main Street for \$50,000 for placemaking. There was also a \$250,000 grant through Consumers Energy for projects like these. Depending on the scope of work and the cost associated with it, we could offset a lot of our cost by applying for a grant. Grants are not guaranteed but she hoped we would at least get one of these.

Board Member Buck asked if the Board could vote on this with a contingency clause. Vice Chairperson Rzeznik said that we would have the grand plan, but we would have pieces. Some we could do this year; some we could do next year. It would be similar to how we are doing the Civic Center area.

Board Member Guzowski wanted to go back to the park idea. She asked if there were any grant benefits for it to be designated as a park. Assistant City Manager Benson said that we could call it a park on a grant application.

The Board reviewed the map of this area outlining the right-of-way, the sanitary pipe, the manholes, and the storm pipes. This was why the property was not suitable for development and HRC confirmed. Executive Director Cloutier explained that there was one power line on this property that would require us to move, depending on the scope of the project. It was roughly just over 10,000 square feet, about a quarter of an acre. She said she took the wish list that was discussed at the last Design Committee meeting and plugged it in to see what could fit in that space. They will be putting a quote together for us with renderings and they will be presented at the DDA's November meeting. She said we have budgeted \$10,000 for the Junction. We want to save a couple thousand dollars because if El Camino gets their liquor license, they want to join the Junction. She wanted to continue the incentive of reimbursing the businesses for their first round of cups and their permit.

Chairperson Willett asked if there was money for more bike racks. Executive Director Cloutier replied that she has already ordered the bike racks.

Board Member Meredith asked who was responsible for taking care of this area once we build it. Executive Director Cloutier said that if it was designated as a park, it would probably fall to the DPW.

The capacity of the DPW was limited. She wondered if the DDA might work with the City on contracting out some of those services.

Vice Chairperson Rzeznik said that a big concern of hers was the maintenance and cleanliness around the downtown (picking up garbage, emptying the garbage cans, snow removal, salting, etc.). She wanted to put that on our radar and have that be its own budget. Assistant City Manager Benson thought that was a great conversation to have for this kind of meeting. We are talking about capital projects mostly, but operating expenses are just as important.

Chairperson Willett said that we did just implement a bunch of funding toward operating expenses and contributing toward traditionally City-paid items. Maybe we add to that based on certain things. The City has funding to handle certain things already and has budgeted money every year for that. We don't want to start paying for everything in the downtown area.

Vice Chairperson Rzeznik thought that was one of the DDA's jobs. We are the downtown.

Chairperson Willett said that there was not enough money in the budget to pay for every park, every upgrade, every concert, etc. We will have to work together with the City.

Assistant City Manager Benson said that if we look at the downtown and how it has been maintained, there hasn't been a significant downtown project in fifteen years. It was because the City didn't have the money to do the project. The only reason anything happens now was because the DDA was in a position to do that. This was a problem that we are working on, our capacity to keep up with the maintenance needs that we have. The DDA does contribute to the City. The net contribution from the DDA back to the City was \$200,000 less than it was for the last five years. The City is not in a great position to significantly improve the level of service provided downtown.

Vice Chairperson Rzeznik said her number one thing would be maintaining what we have and making it look clean. Even just walking around in the summer, there are weeds growing in the cracks of the sidewalks. It looks trashy. Let's elevate that.

Executive Director Cloutier thought we were getting to the point where we do need to look into contracting it out. It was not uncommon for DDAs to pay for those services.

Board Member Meredith asked if we were discussing hiring an independent contractor. Executive Director Cloutier said that we either contribute more to the City for designated worker for the downtown area with specific maintenance needs, or it is contracted out for those needs.

Chairperson Willett said she would suggest trying to get an all-inclusive contract since we get flowers in the summer. A lot of those companies also do snow removal in the winter. We could get a deal on a multi-service contract for certain areas of the downtown. It would relieve the City of that responsibility but it would have to be defined by who was responsible for what, as opposed to putting more money in the City fund which we don't have a lot of control over.

Chairperson Willett asked about the Heath building. Assistant City Manager Benson said that we are looking at a process that was not all that dissimilar from Renton. He indicated that they get more calls about that property. The main ways to incentivize that don't need money; it was tax abatements or TIF funding through a brownfield. We will figure those things out as we go, but the Council has expressed that was less than a priority. We are going to lose money on any of these projects. He noted that the DDA would get the benefit of the taxable increases.

Chairperson Willett said that it was a benefit to the City as a whole. Also, we are investing in the sidewalk in front of the Heath building to make it safe and more attractive.

Board Member Guzowski asked why the City would want to resell the Renton property after it was developed. Executive Director Cloutier replied that the City was not in the business of renting property. Assistant City Manager Benson added that if the City owns the property, it is not taxable. We would want to avoid the liability of owning and operating that property. Board Member Guzowski said she really like the document for the City of Farmington.

Executive Director Cloutier explained that we would tell them what we want, and they would do the same thing for the City of Wixom.

Vice Chairperson Rzeznik said that during the next fiscal year budget process, she wanted to make sure we have nice budgets for our events. Also, with all of these projects, we might need to look at having a full-time person. She thought we needed someone just to manage the events and someone to oversee that. The whole City has seen how nice our downtown is and they come back because of our events. She felt the events have put the DDA on the map. She added that the Board was all volunteers and we need more manpower. Executive Director Cloutier added that it was not unusual for DDA Directors to have a part time staff person. She said there were other DDAs that they could reach out to for more information.

Board Member Osburn wanted to entertain the idea of looking into internships. She had a little insight on that and she had a little bit of hope. Assistant City Manager Benson said that we may be able to look into that.

Chairperson Willett said it would be a hard sell to City Council. She said she had a hard time getting a \$5,000 increase for Executive Director Cloutier and she had to battle for it.

Executive Director Cloutier said that as much as she would like to be full-time with a part-time person, she didn't think that was foreseeable for the next contract phase because of the City Council. She thought if the DDA started working on some of these bigger projects and showing what we were investing back to the City, it would help build the case.

Chairperson Willett said she would almost rather see us step into a co-teacher. Every business has an operations side and an administration side. We have events, social media planning side, operations side, maintenance contracts, managing projects, both 25-30 hour a week employees.

Executive Director Cloutier thought this discussion was for another day. Assistant City Manager Benson said that it fits into this discussion. Collectively we will decide on the extension of the DDA and what that funding will look like. You will lose some portion to the County; that is unavoidable. When we get to establish what the next 25 years of the DDA looks like, he thought the DDA would be in a better position of understanding what administration capacities are and what the expectations are.

Chairperson Willett thought we also needed the opportunity to discuss our opinions and views with City Councilmembers, not just at meetings but privately as well. She said she has asked flat out on whether the City wants to continue to the DDA. From the Mayor's point of view, they do. She said she has felt mixed vibes, so we will see what happens. It is inevitable that the City will have to go that route or they will never have the funding for a lot of the larger projects and the opportunities for additional funding through the State and County.

Executive Director Cloutier thought the takeaways from the meetings was the Renton property first, the maintenance in the downtown second, the west end third and the streetscape was fourth.

Assistant City Manager Benson showed a five-year scenario that with zero dollars in fund balance. You would expend everything that you would collect through the life of the plan. The Klebba sidewalk gets done currently as planned, \$250,000 is spent on the Civic Center park, the streetscape in front of PNC Bank to Chambers is spread out over three years, the barn restoration is done at \$15,000, \$150,000 is allocated toward Renton, and \$50,000 is allocated toward the west end common area. All of those things can happen within the timeframe and the dollars that we project the DDA to have.

Board Member Meredith suggested that the DDA pay for the barn feasibility study, the City owns the barn, and we are done. We don't care what the City does with it. He didn't see the DDA spending a lot of time and money on it because it is simply an old barn.

Chairperson Willett said we would go to battle over that on another day.

Discussion was held regarding the ranking of the projects. Board Member Meredith thought the maintenance of the downtown would be first, the Renton property would be second, the streetscape/power line burial would be third and the west end would be fourth.

Chairman Willett thought the west end of useable. We do events that include the west end; it helps the businesses in the area. She was not a fan of the poles, although she was a fan of the streetscape.

It was decided that the Renton property, the cleanliness of the downtown, the streetscapes/power line burial and west end were the top four priorities.

**Information:**

- A. Downtown Business News/Events
- 2022: October 26<sup>th</sup> – Sip n Stroll Ladies Night Out – Halloween Edition
  - 2022: October 29<sup>th</sup> – Spooktacular Downtown Treat Hunt

**Public Comments:**

None.

**Executive Director's Comments:**

None.

**Board Members' Comments:**

None.

**Adjournment:**

This meeting of the Wixom Downtown Development Authority was motioned and adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Catherine Buck  
City Clerk