

**CITY OF WIXOM  
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
(ZOOM MEETING)  
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2020**

This meeting of the Wixom Downtown Development Authority came to order at 7:34 a.m. with the following individuals in attendance:

**DDA MEMBERS:** Chairperson Caleb Sheng, Vice-Chairperson Kristin Rzeznik, Amanda Habbouche, Melanie Klebba-Cheney, John Smith, Wes Umlor, Vanessa Willett and Patrick Beagle, Mayor

**ABSENT:** Excused: Members Fine and Grossi

**STAFF:** Steve Brown, City Manager, Sheryl Lucas, Administrative Assistant to City Manager, Laura Cloutier, Assistant to Director of Economic and Community Development, and Mona Freiburger, Recording Secretary

**Determination of Quorum:**

Quorum is met.

**Reading of Vision and Mission 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** by Mayor Beagle and second by Board Member Willett to approve the Meeting Agenda.

**VOTE:                      MOTION CARRIED**

**Public Comments:**

None

**Approval of Minutes:**

**MOTION** by Board Member Klebba-Cheney and second by Mayor Beagle to approve the June 10, 2020, DDA Regular Meeting Minutes.

**VOTE:**                      **MOTION CARRIED**

**MOTION** by Board Member Klebba-Cheney and second by Mayor Beagle to approve June 23, 2020, DDA Regular Meeting Minutes.

**VOTE:**                      **MOTION CARRIED**

**Correspondence:**

None

**Old Business:**

- Committee: Economic Vitality

Board Member Willett indicated they did not raise as much as they hoped with the Crowdfunding Campaign but they did raise close to \$8,000 to receive the full amount from Oakland County. She stated her and Ms. Cloutier sent out a form to all of the businesses. There were nine responses. They scored and weighed the questions and came up with a formula. Those funds would be distributed to the businesses as soon as the remaining funds are received from Oakland County. The businesses will be listed on the website and FB pages. The dollar values were \$1,000, \$900, \$800 and \$750 to the businesses.

Board Member Willett stated they have been doing business visits throughout the last six weeks with different Economic Vitality members. The businesses are doing okay; they are not doing great but okay. The Committee hopes to move forward with additional ideas for some programs to continue to help, not just financially but possibly through some additional promotions, etc. to get more people to visit downtown again.

Board Member Willett indicated the members of the Economic Vitality Committee have been doing a great job.

- Committee: Design

Vice Chair Rzeznik indicated the Design Committee has been working on getting quotes for the bike racks to be placed throughout the downtown area; and also have started the initial exploration of signage on the Airline Trail. Ms. Klebba Cheney received quotes for the bike racks. The total for the bike racks is \$4,296.18 for six in total. After the order is made for the bike racks, the lead

time would be approximately 7 to 8 weeks. A meeting needs to be set up with the City and DPW for surveying the locations of the bike racks.

City Manager Brown indicated he sent a reminder to DPW and with the Wixom PD to see if they had any feedback for the perspective locations and for the best spots.

Ms. Cloutier commented on signage. The Committee is doing exploratory research. A few of the Design Committee members have reached out to a few companies to get some initial design ideas and initial quotes.

The signage is more throughout the downtown area, and at the end of the trail, to get people into downtown. We do not have authority on the trail but at the end of the trail it is city property, to show people that there are other things off of the trail, i.e., grab a beer, and/or burger.

City Manager Brown stated he had a trail meeting today to revisit the conversation and make sure we are on the same page.

- Event: Block Party

Ms. Cloutier indicated she and Board Member Fine were planning Block Party as the DDA members had voted to move forward. While on a call with Main Street Oakland County last month with the DDA Managers throughout Oakland County, Ms. Cloutier indicated a couple of managers mentioned they could not hold events due to their insurance company would not cover them for liability during COVID-19 and the risk factor of an outbreak occurring at a larger gathering. Ms. Cloutier brought this to City Manager Brown's attention. In the packet, she included City Manager Brown's email regarding this issue. The DDA falls under the City's insurance and it is advised that DDA events along with City events could not happen.

City Manager Brown indicated they were "dragging their feet" on cancellations, purposely. A lot of places proactively cancelled all of their events all the way through the summer. The City was taking a month by month approach, hoping that sooner or later something would break loose and we would get some relief and be able to proceed. With the insurance news, and the fact that things aren't changing, the City went ahead and cancelled events throughout the summer season. It is unfortunate.

Ms. Cloutier stated it is unfortunate but it is keeping our community safe and everyone healthy. Ms. Cloutier and Board Member Fine were not receiving great responses from vendors and/or downtown businesses that wanted to participate in Block Party. Prior year's volunteers were not comfortable attending and volunteering.

Chair Sheng commented the DDA had talked before, that the DDA demonstrate in a write up to them that we tried to be more careful than a lot of other communities, we tried to take it on a month to month approach versus flat out cancelling everything at the top of the summer. We were responsible, we are very detailed and we value their contribution and want to find a way to



to opt in, that would tell us how many businesses would even be available for an event like this. Then there would have to be coaching for the businesses to ensure that they are meeting all of the checklists and requirements. However, you have to make them sign a waiver that tells them that by coordinating them for an event like this or any coaching that is offered, any resources that are given, we are not taking on any of the liability, and they retain all of the liability that they, currently, hold under the executive orders and under the law; we are, basically, an event coordinator. We want to ensure that we know which businesses are participating and they understand that they are still responsible. We want to make sure that we are completely removed from any sort of transfer of claim liability.

Mayor Beagle indicated he agreed with Board Member Willett's on one point that it hurts as a city to have all of these signature events cancelled, it doesn't bode well but our residents understand. Mayor Beagle's concern is if one or two businesses are fully, participants are walking around, it turns out that the event wasn't very organized, etc. We have to be on the safe side, do what we have done with every other event in the City, we don't have to make a decision today, let's see what the Governor says and let's see what the numbers come out and go from there. We do not need to cancel today. This is something we need to think about to keep our residents, our participants and businesses safe.

Vice Chair Rzeznik asked Ms. Cloutier if she did a survey with the businesses to see who would be interested. Ms. Cloutier answered no, she was going out on her business visits and many of them asked the DDA was planning to do Ladies Night Out.

Vice Chair Rzeznik suggested to check the interest, explaining the pros and cons; the cons would be the liability and then understanding this. If we find out within the next week that they are not interested, and there is extreme hesitation, then we could cancel this event. Board Member Klebba-Cheney suggested while talking to the business owners that they are aware that on their insurance policy that there is specific inclusion for the virus and they would have no coverage.

Chair Sheng asked Ms. Cloutier to send the DDA members a copy of the survey draft as he was against including the word "liability" because what we are asking them to do is absolutely no different than any other visitors that come in for businesses choosing to open their doors for one customer, and they are already incurring all of the odds of an event that could occur. If "liability" is included, we make it sound like this is a different, exceptional liability, which is not true and it is very scary as well. They are supposed to remain compliant with executive orders within the list, and visitor populations.

City Manager Brown indicated the event would, basically, be doing some marketing for them to bring people into their doors. It is their decision to let them in the door, it is their decision as to what they have to do to enter the door. He agreed with Chair Sheng's comments because you have to be careful in making sure that they are aware that they are responsible but at the same time, he was not looking to put out a form saying they would accept all liability. The businesses should know they are letting people into their business, they are responsible for complying with the executive orders as a business owner.

Ms. Cloutier indicated Downtown Farmington had their Ladies Night Out and they called it, Ladies Night Outside. They are a little unique because they have more retail. Every store brought product out onto the sidewalk, so it was more of a sidewalk sale atmosphere but they had a very good turnout. People were excited, different restaurants had different specials going on. It can be done, we have to be imaginative on how it is done.

Last year, this event was held on the first Wednesday in October from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Ms. Cloutier indicated the event could be pushed back a week. People attended last year while it rained the entire evening.

Board Member Smith asked about the promotional timeframe, if the event were to be delayed. Time would be needed to invite people and get people interested in attending. Vice Chair Rzeznik stated Facebook was a huge motivator last year and the primary way that people heard about Ladies Night Out. Facebook is instant. Ms. Cloutier indicated we did hang banners up in the downtown for Ladies Night Out which brought attention to the event but Facebook was the primary motivator and promotional aspect.

Ms. Cloutier commented if we were to hold the event, participants could pre-register free of charge to have an idea of how many participants and also limit the participants. We could limit to the first 200 people. Board Member Willett suggested to put a timeframe on there where we slate 50 participants per hour or something like that.

Ms. Cloutier indicated she did not think we would be able to bring in pop-up shops because of the capacity limitations due to the executive orders. This event would be more traditional, visit the event, have appetizers and drinks at one place, go to another place, etc., and actually spend their money into the businesses versus the pop-up shops. Chair Sheng indicated if we have pre-registration, we could, confidently, give numbers to the businesses so they could set aside spaces as well. Ms. Cloutier stated in the feedback survey last year after the event, one of the main focuses that came up, if there was a way to give the restaurants and businesses some preliminary numbers. Mayor Beagle suggested to possibly have an incentive for pre-registration such as a special card to receive 10% off of an appetizer.

Vice Chair Rzeznik suggested, if the business is small, they could have somebody on the outside greeting people, if they are at capacity. If a business does not have the manpower to do that, a shout out could be made to the DDA members for volunteers to help at specific businesses with handling the Ladies Night Out.

### **New Business:**

- Event: Downtown Dazzle

Ms. Cloutier stated she received a quote from Zoro's, the vendor they used last year to light up the pine trees at the entrance of Old Wixom/Wixom Road and to expand the light up to the other side of Old Wixom Road with six additional trees. This year, the ongoing cost to relight the six

trees was already approved for \$1,200. If we were to have them light up the original six trees and an additional six trees on the other side of the road, the total cost would be \$3,672. The original cost of \$1,200 is included in the \$3,672. The installation and lighting of the six trees would add to the ambience of the entrance. Ms. Cloutier indicated Zoro's was afraid they were going to be shut down again because of the pandemic, so they want to set up the trees on September 9, 2020, but to turn on the lights approximately Thanksgiving.

Vice Chair Rzeznik inquired about the funds for Downtown Dazzle. She indicated Drafting Table was a sponsor for Derby Day and they chose to move their \$500 from Derby Day to Downtown Dazzle this year. She asked if there were additional funds that needed to be moved from another event. Ms. Cloutier indicated there was approximately \$3,500. Next year, the total cost to install the lights for the 12 trees would be \$2,400 total. Ms. Cloutier stated she would check the account balance for this event.

Approval from City Council would be needed for approval for expenditures over \$3,000. City Manager Brown was going to add this approval requirement to the City Council Agenda for tonight's meeting.

**MOTION** by Vice Chair Rzeznik and second by Mayor Beagle to approve \$3,672 to light up 12 trees at the intersection of Old Wixom Road and Wixom Road pending City Council approval.

**VOTE:**

**MOTION CARRIED**

- Executive Director Review

Chair Sheng stated it has been six months since Ms. Cloutier was appointed Director for the DDA. Her salary was approved for \$50K a year, part time position for Executive Director. Ms. Cloutier started the position at \$45K which the DDA was very grateful back at the beginning of March. On day one, she was faced with the pandemic, and the executive orders closing a lot of businesses for the first time. Chair Sheng proposed that the DDA members review her performance and approve to bring her salary up to the original proposal of \$50K per year. The salary of \$50K has been budgeted from the City. Ms. Cloutier's weekly reports are available as well. She had worked a lot more time than the roughly 25 hours the DDA had anticipated the DDA Director would work. Vice Chair Rzeznik indicated the DDA members needed to go through and prepare their performance review.

Ms. Cloutier thanked the DDA members for bringing the performance review to the table. She indicated it has been a challenging start for the job with COVID and the obstacles everyone faced. Ms. Cloutier stated it has been a real learning experience and there is a lot more to learn. She indicated she had included an overall synopsis of some of the highlights she accomplished as Director. Her average hours bi-weekly is 67 hours.

City manager Brown commented that the DDA members needed a plan for the performance review and then proceed. Chair Sheng indicated the DDA members would have to vote to

approve the raise, it is an expenditure, even though it was prior approved. Although it makes sense there should be an open period where the members could inspect the weekly reports, ask questions to Ms. Cloutier, have Ms. Cloutier explain, if there are any questions. Then close the period, have a short justification written up for the raise and then present it to the DDA members for vote. After that, the next payment would reflect the increase in salary.

City Manager Brown commented he would like a brief conversation with Ms. Cloutier on a couple of issues on how to spread the payment adjustments over a period of time.

Chair Sheng asked AMs. Cloutier to include her weekly performance reports, her employment agreement into its own drive folder and then share the link with the DDA members. Make sure that it is set so that it is viewer privileges only and only invitees could view. Chair Sheng suggested to set a seven day period or similar for the DDA members to make comments.

Chair Sheng thanked Ms. Cloutier for all of her extra work performed, and all of the learning on her feet while the pace was changing every day.

**Information:**

- Wixom Business Forums (7:30 a.m.)

City Manager Brown commented Board Member Klebba-Cheney, originally, was going to host one of the next forums but it was cancelled due to the pandemic. There needs to be clarity on the number of people in a group per the executive orders. City Manager Brown indicated he was going to contact Board Member Klebba-Cheney to find out her availability for another period of time to re-establish the forums. City Hall was reopened to the public as of this week, formally, so things have started to change in a couple of different areas. City Manager Brown stated he was going to reach out to people to reestablish their interest and availability for the forums.

Board Member Cheney stated she was a part of the Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce which held an outdoor meeting in the park behind the Chamber of Commerce office. If the forum was held outdoors, there would be more flexibility and good to get everyone together.

- Downtown Business/News/Events

Ms. Cloutier commented she had a few businesses reach out to her indicating their hours would be changing due to their children going back to school and classes being held online. Some of the business owners are staying home with their children and may not be available all of the time.

**Public Comments:**

None

**Executive Director's Comments:**

Ms. Cloutier thanked everybody for their patience during the past six months during the pandemic. It has been a learning experience for everyone. She stated she was very excited for the businesses to receive the Crowdfunding monies. Oakland County put the check in the mail. Ms. Cloutier indicated as soon as they receive the monies, she would work with City Manager Brown and the finance department to execute those funds to the downtown businesses.

**Board Members' Comments:**

Board Member Willett suggested to the other committee chairs to reach out to their committee members to help and assist more which they had done on the Economic Vitality Committee and has been very successful. They have had an overwhelming response from their committee members.

Vice Chair Rzeznik indicated the Design Committee has fully stepped up. She thanked the awesome ladies who have helped out.

Chairman Sheng stated our committee members have been really great. A lot of them are continuing to do more which is appreciated.

**Adjournment:**

**MOTION by** Mayor Beagle to adjourn the meeting, second by Vice Chair Rzeznik. This meeting of the Wixom Downtown Development Authority was motioned and adjourned at 8:30 a.m.

Mona Freiburger  
Recording Secretary