CITY OF WIXOM
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

This meeting of the Wixom Downtown Development Authority came to order at 6:02 p.m. with the following individuals in attendance:

DDA MEMBERS: Chairperson Jessica Buck; Carissa Osburn (6:35 p.m.), Vice Chairperson; Board Members: Kaitie Guzowski; Darby Hoppenstadt; Russ Meredith; Leslie Payment; Vanessa Willett; Patrick Beagle, Mayor (6:18 p.m.)

ABSENT: Excused: Mark Garmo

STAFF: DDA Staff: Laura Cloutier, DDA Executive Director
City Staff: Steve Brown, City Manager
City Staff: Drew Benson, Assistant City Manager & Director of Economic Development
Mona Freiburger, Recording Secretary

Determination of Quorum:

Quorum was met.

Changes or Additions to the Agenda:

Discussion of drafting mission statement.

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.

Public Comments:

No public comments.

Approval of Minutes:

Approved 5/27/2025

1. DDA Budget Session Minutes, March 19, 2025

Quorum was not met to be corrected.

MOTION by Board Member Willett and second by Board Member Meredith to approve the DDA Budget Session Minutes, March 19, 2025 Meeting Minutes, as amended.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

2. Regular Meeting of the DDA Minutes, March 25, 2025

MOTION by Board Member Meredith and second by Board Member Willett to approve the March 25, 2025, DDA Regular Meeting Minutes, as presented.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

Correspondence:

1. Wixom Vacancy Rate Report

Board Member Willett thought the report was a good baseline particularly in updating the Master Plan with a focus on future development and planning goals. Board Member Guzowski appreciated the data but was curious about the origins of the research request, specifically what had prompted City Council to ask for it. Assistant City Manager Benson speculated that it may have stemmed from discussions during a Planning Commission meeting where a development proposal for Sheetz was under review. That meeting also included substantial conversation about vacancies, which may have influenced City Council interest. He noted that although the original inquiry concerned strip malls, he had expanded the scope of the research to provide a more comprehensive overview.

Board Member Meredith brought attention to a point in the report regarding the rise in demand for small-scale commercial spaces, such as commercial and remote work and increase demand for small scale backyard offices, and inquired how that trend was reflected in Renton's development process. Assistant City Manager Benson confirmed that these issues had been discussed before, highlighting that this trend contributes to challenges in retail development, particularly in the eastern parts of the City. He explained that while downtown has relatively low vacancy rates, traditional strip malls are struggling more significantly. Contributing factors include construction quality and surrounding amenities. He emphasized that the lower average lease rates—such as a market rate of $18 per square foot versus a construction cost of $25—create a real financial gap, which deters new development and is not simply a perception problem.

Board Member Meredith questioned how developers are addressing what he referred to as "blight quality"—the idea of ensuring that both businesses and clientele are aligned with community goals. Assistant City Manager Benson responded that responses vary by property owner. Some

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invest in improvements to combat this perception, though this issue wasn't explored in detail in his summary report. He pointed to an attached larger report that offers more granular data on regional differences and vacancy patterns.

Board Member Willett commented that while the overall vacancy rate may appear high, it is mainly due to a few large anchor stores being vacant, rather than a large number of small spaces. She used the example of the center where Rite Aid is located, noting that most small units are occupied, while larger ones like the former Wing Stop space contribute heavily to vacancy figures. Assistant City Manager Benson confirmed this, stating that while Wing Stop, Rite Aid, and Family Video are not open, the center sits at 76% vacancy due to its larger units. Board Member Willett referenced an average citywide vacancy rate of 29.7%, and Assistant City Manager Benson indicated that large format "Big Box" spaces heavily influence that number. He gave a hypothetical scenario where the loss of a single major retailer like At Home could dramatically spike the citywide vacancy rate, explaining how the size of individual units significantly skews the data.

The conversation shifted to downtown occupancy. Board Member Meredith noted that if the Heath building weren't empty, downtown's vacancy would be minimal. Assistant City Manager Benson responded that the building would still need to receive a certificate of occupancy. Board Member Payment recalled earlier conversations about converting the upper floors to residential use, which Executive Director Cloutier confirmed. She added that permits had been pulled but not picked up due to the property owner being out of the country, and no renovation work had begun. Board Member Payment mentioned seeing people at the building recently, which Chairperson Buck questioned as possible unauthorized occupancy, but Executive Director Cloutier clarified that no one was living there. Chairperson Buck then asked if a smoke shop had been planned for the space. Executive Director Cloutier confirmed that was the original intent, but Assistant City Manager Benson noted that while it could still happen—given that such shops fall under general retail in local zoning—no specific tenant has yet been confirmed.

Overall, the discussion centered on commercial vacancy patterns, developer challenges, and the impact of individual properties on broader metrics, with a focus on refining the city's strategic planning efforts.

Board Member Guzowski acknowledged the value of the report, especially from a downtown-focused perspective. She asked Executive Director Cloutier, Assistant City Manager Benson, and City Manager Brown how they were utilizing the data to inform decisions regarding the Renton property. In response, Assistant City Manager Benson offered a candid explanation, stating that the report had not been presented to the City Council intentionally because the data doesn't necessarily work in their favor. Rather than publicizing the information broadly, they plan to selectively use pieces of it during strategic discussions. He noted that the City Council had already reviewed and approved a proposal at their April 8th meeting, authorizing the City administration to proceed with a purchase agreement for the property. A developer is currently in the process of acquiring it, and Council approval of the proposed layout was essential before moving forward. Assistant City Manager Benson clarified that while the report may not help promote the property to developers—especially since it highlights underperformance in strip retail centers—it could be instrumental in conversations with the MEDC (Michigan Economic Development Corporation), which is already involved. Specifically, the data can help quantify and support claims around construction cost gaps versus lease rates, which is crucial when requesting support or funding.

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Board Member Guzowski agreed with Assistant City Manager Benson's approach, adding that although the information might not be surprising given the broader economic conditions, having more data is still advantageous. Board Member Meredith then asked about the pedestrian-oriented design mentioned in the report's final bullet and whether plans for the West End Commons had influenced developers' interest. Assistant City Manager Benson replied that developers showed greater interest in Mack Park due to its closer proximity to their site. Executive Director Cloutier added that the developers were shown renderings of the West End Commons and reacted positively, viewing it as a strong project. However, they did not feel it would directly enhance the financial prospects of their own development, such as increasing lease rates.

Assistant City Manager Benson supported this, noting that while the West End Commons is seen as a positive, it is unlikely to improve their price-per-square-foot projections, so its practical impact is limited. Board Member Willett added that, from the perspective of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), this information should factor into how negotiations are handled. She emphasized the importance of leveraging the city's role to ensure commitments from the developer in exchange for financial incentives—such as assistance with utility hookups. At a prior budget session, they had discussed possibly allocating around $500,000 in support ($250,000 from two separate sources), which is a significant investment. Board Member Willett stressed that any deal should come with enforceable expectations, such as clear timelines for construction. She cautioned against repeating past mistakes like the East retail project, where valuable downtown property was left undeveloped.

Executive Director Cloutier reinforced the sensitivity of the information contained in the report. She reminded the Board Members that, as part of the DDA, they have access to information that is not widely shared. She echoed Assistant City Manager Benson's earlier comment that the report was deliberately not placed on the City Council agenda or made available to developers. Because of this, she urged Board Members to be cautious when discussing the report in the community, warning that casual remarks could unintentionally jeopardize ongoing negotiations due to the interconnected nature of local relationships.

2. Invitation to the Main Event

Executive Director Cloutier shared an invitation to an event scheduled for June 12th and mentioned it was self-explanatory. She requested a copy of the confirmation email upon registration to facilitate reimbursement for the registration fee. Chairperson Buck noted both she and Board Member Meredith had attended in the past and found it enjoyable. She added that since this is the 25th anniversary of the event, it promises to be even more special, and several award submissions have been made. Assistant City Manager Benson noted a scheduling conflict, pointing out that the employee and volunteer appreciation picnic is set for the same evening, making it difficult to attend both. He mentioned that efforts are being made to potentially adjust the timing of their event.

Executive Director's Report – April, 2025 Report and 2025 1st Quarter Financial Statement

Executive Director Monthly Report for April 2025 is included in the packet. Executive Director Cloutier highlighted her report.

Executive Director Cloutier indicated that she, Assistant City Manager Benson, and Mike Darga had a productive call with HUD, the agency overseeing the federal grant for the West End

Commons project. They received clarity on outstanding questions and feel confident they are now moving in the right direction. The aim is to submit the required materials by the end of May, or by mid-June at the latest. Once submitted, an agreement will need approval from the Board and then from City Council. Board Member Willett inquired whether the sourcing and procurement process could begin in parallel due to its long lead time. Assistant City Manager Benson responded that they cannot begin procurement until the grant agreement is signed because HUD prohibits "choice limiting actions" before that point. Although bidding might not technically qualify, the team doesn't foresee construction beginning this calendar year. They are targeting spring 2026, acknowledging the uncertainty around HUD's processing timeline.

Board Member Willett expressed confidence in HUD's speed, based on her own experience on a HUD board. She emphasized the need for better promotion of the area, as questions continue to arise at Planning Commission meetings about the project's status. She suggested launching a monthly campaign to improve visibility among the community and businesses. Assistant City Manager Benson mentioned a webpage already in development and agreed more promotion could be done. Executive Director Cloutier proposed a presentation to the Planning Commission since most communication so far has been with City Council and the DDA. Assistant City Manager Benson felt that the right time to launch a full promotional push would be once the grant agreement is finalized, expressing caution due to HUD's staffing and administrative uncertainties.

Board Member Willett proposed that the DDA implement a standardized marketing and branding process for all major developments, aligning with new signage and overall communication improvements. Board Member Meredith agreed with the need for public outreach but clarified that the DDA's role is not to operate like a business but to responsibly manage public funds. Board Member Guzowski noted that the perspectives were aligned in essence. She then asked Assistant City Manager Benson whether his concern was HUD's approval or the time it would take; Assistant City Manager Benson confirmed both were concerns, especially potential delays due to HUD staffing issues. Board Member Willett reiterated the need to learn from past missteps, such as inadequate branding of the Junction, and use upcoming summer events as a chance to promote both current and future initiatives.

Board Member Guzowski commented that the group should be doing everything possible to be ready once HUD gives the green light, including promotional efforts and preparing necessary documents for bidding. Executive Director Cloutier confirmed that work on the RFP is already underway.

Executive Director Cloutier shared her experience attending the Main Street NOW Conference in Philadelphia, highlighting that it offered valuable sessions for both DDA directors and board members. One particularly impactful session, "Tune Up Your Board," addressed the distinctions between a working board and an advisory board and clarified committee responsibilities. She noted that she has the slide presentation from this session and will share it. In response to Board Member Guzowski's question about key takeaways, Executive Director Cloutier emphasized the importance of succession planning and disaster preparedness, including where critical documents are stored and how accessible they are. She mentioned that while their materials are on Google Drive, an additional backup would be good, as well. The 2026 conference will be held in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Main Street Oakland County submitted a proposal to host the 2027 conference in Detroit, which looks promising. The team is already brainstorming local side trip ideas for attendees, and Laura is advocating for a multi-community brewery tour including local communities like Milford, Lyon Township, and South Lyon.

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Executive Director Cloutier also reported on the City Council meeting where she presented the budget. She indicated there were minimal comments, though one councilmember asked how they would track metrics from the billboard campaign, and another inquired about sponsor-branded Junction cups. Executive Director Cloutier indicated that the DDA now handles cup purchasing directly, ensuring consistency and better quality.

Executive Director Cloutier indicated all Main Event submissions have been completed, with seven entries submitted. Derby Day preparations are well underway, and vendor applications for the Block Party will open on May 12th. One food vendor has already been booked, and discussions are ongoing with others.

Executive Director Cloutier indicated that Carol, the manager of Wixom Bar, is in the process of purchasing the business from Leonard Gilpatrick. Carol has already started making improvements, including adding two flat-screen TVs for sports viewing. Executive Director Cloutier also praised Board Member Meredith for his outstanding work organizing Derby Day specials this year, noting record participation from 15 businesses. Board Member Meredith added that one of the most unique specials is from Wixom Cleaners, which is offering a 10–20% discount for the whole month to anyone wearing a Derby Day band. Chairperson Buck reminded everyone that wristbands are available to runners and volunteers. Board Member Meredith also suggested listing committee chairs on documentation for clarity, to which Laura responded that she could include them in the committee reports.

Assistant City Manager Benson provided a brief overview of the quarterly budget report, noting that spending is under in two categories: downtown enhancements and site readiness. The underuse in site readiness is expected, as those funds are being held for a future project, with a potential unbudgeted project to be discussed that evening. Most other budget areas are on track or will be by the end of the fiscal year, with recurring costs and contractual overlaps accounting for larger balances that are expected to be spent. The site readiness allocation will roll over, and the budget had planned to draw from the fund balance for capital projects, although that spending has not occurred yet, aligning with the revenue expectations.

A discrepancy was pointed out regarding the "Wednesdays in Wixom" expense, with Executive Director Cloutier clarifying the correct figure and acknowledging the reporting period mistake. Board Member Guzowski raised a concern from the design committee regarding lightweight bistro tables in a proposed alleyway enhancement project, preferring more durable options. This will be discussed under a separate agenda item.

Board Member Guzowski also stressed the importance of using unspent committee funds, particularly from the Promotions Committee, to invest in advertising and social media efforts. She suggested hiring outside help to support promotions for initiatives like the West End Commons, Block Party, and the Junction. Chairperson Buck and City Manager Brown supported the idea, citing recent spending and the upcoming billboard campaign as positive steps. Board Member Guzowski emphasized that resources are available and encouraged the group to be proactive in creatively promoting the downtown area, reinforcing that outside support would relieve pressure from already busy committee members. Executive Director Cloutier agreed to bring the matter back to the Promotions Committee for further discussion.

Old Business:

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1. Wixom Road Landscaping Bids: Recommendation to accept the low bid for Wixom Road Landscaping Services from CQC, Inc., of Romulus, Michigan, Water Tap Services from D'Angelo Brothers, of Farmington Hills, Michigan for the total cost of $48,044.00 from Downtown Enhancements account #248-729-956.006, Approve the Associated Budget Amendments, and Authorize the City Manager to executive the Agreements.

Memorandum to Wixom Downtown Development Authority from Drew Benson, Assistant City Manager & Director of Economic Development; and Laura Cloutier, Executive Director – Wixom DDA dated April 23, 2025; subject: Wixom Road Landscaping Bids is included in the packet.

Assistant City Manager Benson provided an overview of the proposed landscaping project along Wainstock, noting that the DDA had previously given direction and allocated budget for the effort. The project had gone out to bid, and while the bidding process was somewhat complicated by variations in the number and types of plantings proposed by different vendors, all bids were normalized for comparison. CQC Landscaping, based in Romulus was the lowest bidder even after adjustments. In addition to the base landscaping costs, the project requires a new water tap, which will be completed by DeAngelo, the City's contractor for water tapping. CQC will then connect the irrigation system to the new water tap. Assistant City Manager Benson noted that a budget amendment is needed to proceed—specifically, a transfer of $3,000 from the Downtown Site Readiness account to the Downtown Enhancements account, where the project would be charged.

Discussion followed regarding the significant cost discrepancies between bids. Board Member Meredith questioned how CQC's bid could be $14,000 lower than the next bidder and nearly $60,000 lower than the highest, asking if something critical had been missed. Board Member Willett added that the biggest cost variance appeared to be in site preparation. She noted that the site is known to retain water and inquired about the amount of fill dirt each vendor planned to bring in. She expressed concern that some bidders may have planned for more extensive prep work, which might have been necessary. Assistant City Manager Benson responded that all vendors planned to berm the site to some extent to address drainage, and that CQC, in particular, appeared to have considered site conditions thoughtfully. However, specific cubic yardage of fill was not disclosed. He added that the soil on site is relatively new, left over from a past road widening project, and that staff, along with the landscape architect and HRC, felt comfortable with the site plan and bid. There is a five-year warranty on irrigation and a one-year warranty on plantings.

Board Member Guzowski expressed concern about pedestrian access and walkability, emphasizing that while no official sidewalk exists in that area, residents are already using it as a path, as evidenced by worn grass. She cautioned that new landscaping should not worsen flooding in that area and reduce walkability. Assistant City Manager Benson acknowledged that while the original design included a sidewalk, it was removed from the current plan to make the project financially feasible within this fiscal year. Adding a sidewalk would increase the total cost to around $250,000 and require negotiations with CSX and other stakeholders. He agreed it was a long-term goal worth considering during future DDA project prioritization, though likely not within the timeframe of the current plan.

Board Member Meredith asked for clarity on the timing for installing a sidewalk in the future, to which Executive Director Cloutier responded that no timeline currently exists, given the number

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of external parties involved. Board Member Payment asked whether the landscaping portion of the project would be delayed allowing time to consider walkability concerns. Executive Director Cloutier clarified that landscaping installation is planned for mid-June.

Board Member Willett raised additional concerns about plant selection, specifically noting cost differences in items like perennials and ornamental grasses. She also questioned CQC's experience with commercial projects, stating that their online presence was outdated, and their website was not secure, which posed issues for this company's network. Based on online reviews, he noted that CQC appeared to have more experience with residential projects and that past customers cited issues with small plant sizes and poor survival rates. She asked how the DDA would ensure that the plantings provided would be of appropriate size and quality. Board Member Guzowski added that she was focused on ensuring the area remains usable and does not detract from downtown walkability goals. Assistant City Manager Benson reiterated that while occasional flooding may still occur, especially during freeze-thaw periods, the project team was confident the berming and irrigation system would mitigate long-term issues.

Assistant City Manager Benson explained that the project team eventually specified all plant materials, including each type of tree and plant. Initially, the team intended to keep the plant selections open-ended to allow for flexibility and contractor suggestions. However, this approach led to confusion during the bidding process. As a result, when finalizing the bid evaluation and comparing quotes, particularly for CQC, the team standardized the plant list. Though this move helped in establishing consistency, Assistant City Manager Benson admitted that a fully detailed equalization of costs across vendors was not performed—specifically, they did not revisit each vendor to confirm exact pricing on the newly standardized list. Nevertheless, CQC emerged as the lowest bidder in every scenario reviewed. Assistant City Manager Benson added that plant sizes were intended to be specific and verifiable, suggesting an on-site inspection could take place when the plantings are delivered.

Executive Director Cloutier emphasized the importance of approving all plant materials and ensuring they are of substantial size before planting. She cited previous issues with planter boxes where input was not solicited, leading to unsatisfactory results. Board Member Meredith noted that the purpose of the project design was to provide coverage or visual screening. Executive Director Cloutier added a caution about selecting plants too large, which could later require thinning due to overgrowth.

Board Member Willett raised concerns about discrepancies in cost breakdowns among the bidders. Other bidders had listed additional costs ranging from $2,000 to $7,000, while CQC reported none. Board Member Willett questioned whether this indicated CQC had omitted a cost that others had correctly included. Mayor Beagle pointed out that most vendors typically include a 10% overage. Executive Director Cloutier responded that such overages were not reflected in the final totals. Assistant City Manager Benson clarified that no adjustments were made to the figures provided in the first two bid columns—site prep and design—as those were reported directly from the bidders. He noted the proposals were often not thoroughly detailed, and that vendors made assumptions due to a lack of complete information.

Willett expressed concern about avoiding future change orders, to which Benson acknowledged the risk but noted a contingency was built into the budget. Given the modest scale of the project, he remained confident that surprises would be minimal.

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Regarding warranties, Payment inquired about whether CQC offered any advantages with respect to coverage periods, especially noting the five-year irrigation and one-year plantings warranty. Benson replied that warranty terms were generally similar across vendors and that some other bids might have included longer terms, though he would need to verify the details. Payment highlighted the importance of warranty durations as a potential differentiator in competitive bids. Laura concluded by reiterating that, despite early discussions of omitting irrigation, the decision to include it was reinforced by concerns about environmental wear and tear, especially along Wixom Road.

The meeting continued with a detailed discussion of the irrigation system and project execution. Assistant City Manager Benson explained that due to the nature of the bidding process, decisions had to be made during the project's development. Initially, there was consideration of an electrical irrigation system, but the final plan settled on a battery-operated system similar to others already in use in the City. This avoided the need for a new electrical connection through DTE, which would not only increase costs but could also delay the project by up to a year.

Board Member Willett raised a question about the maintenance of the area, particularly the cutting of tall grasses at the end of the season. Executive Director Cloutier confirmed that maintenance is included under the existing downtown beautification budget managed by Director Magee (Parks and Recreation) and handled by a third-party contractor, not the Department of Public Works (DPW). Mayor Beagle asked about CQC's prior experience with the City or with CWA. Assistant City Manager Benson confirmed that neither had worked with CQC before, though CWA representatives appeared comfortable with the proposal.

Mayor Beagle and Board Member Meredith both acknowledged that receiving the lowest bid is not unusual in city projects, though there were concerns about the justification behind it. Board Member Guzowski asked whether the irrigation system would be solar powered, to which Assistant City Manager Benson responded it would run on battery power. Board Member Guzowski followed up with questions about maintenance and potential future options for lighting. Executive Director Cloutier noted that when more permanent infrastructure—like knee walls and benches—is added in later phases, that would be the appropriate time to involve DTE and explore adding electricity for features like lighting.

Board Member Guzowski also asked whether the new landscaping would match the north or south side of Pontiac Trail, but Assistant City Manager Benson and Executive Director Cloutier clarified that it would not replicate either; there would be no hardscape features, just cutouts in the existing concrete. Board Member Willett noted the project would serve to cover up the unattractive concrete and rail currently in place. Assistant City Manager Benson added that the design was inspired by areas around the VCA knee walls, but without including the knee walls themselves.

Concerns then shifted to the project's timeline and approval process. Board Member Guzowski expressed discomfort with voting on the proposal without clear answers regarding flooding, warranties, and plant specifications. She asked about the construction schedule, and Assistant City Manager Benson explained that if approved that evening, the proposal would move to City Council on May 13, with installation targeted for late May or early June. Delaying for more information would push approval to June and construction to late June or early July.

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Board Member Willett suggested approving the plan with contingencies based on pending answers, but Assistant City Manager Benson explained that any such verifications would happen outside the context of a public meeting and therefore could not be formally acted on. The discussion returned to the concern about flooding and whether issues like water pooling or inadequate grading would be covered under warranty. Assistant City Manager Benson reassured the group that he would be directly overseeing the project, and that grading would be adjusted in real-time to ensure water is directed appropriately—ideally west and south toward the street or wetlands. He acknowledged that full control was not possible, especially as the site is within the Road Commission's right-of-way and adjacent to CSX property, limiting the city's authority.

Board Member Guzowski remained hesitant, especially since she lives downtown and values walkability. Board Member Willett tried to reassure her, pointing out that the area in question is unlikely to become a walkable space soon due to the lack of a crosswalk and the volume of traffic. Assistant City Manager Benson confirmed that the area would require a separate, significant project to become pedestrian-friendly, and that previous improvements to Wixom Road had similarly excluded it due to jurisdictional and logistical complications.

Chairperson Buck concluded the discussion with support for moving the project forward, emphasizing the importance of visible progress in the downtown area. She stressed that this project is a small-scale, budgeted beautification effort that could be completed quickly and would enhance the downtown experience for residents and visitors by mid-June, just in time for the summer season.

MOTION by Board Member Willett and second by Board Member Meredith to recommend that the DDA Board move to accept the low bid for Wixom Road Landscaping Services from CQC, Inc., of Romulus, Michigan, Water Tap Services, D'Angelo Brothers, Inc., of Farmington Hills, Michigan, for a total cost of $48,044.00 from Downtown Enhancements Account #248-729-956.006, Approve the Associated Budget Amendment, and Authorize the City Manager to Execute the Agreements.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

New Business:

1. DDA Billboard Campaign: Recommendation for approval to move forward with the proposed digital billboard marketing campaign. As well as the Economic Vitality Committee and Executive Director for additional information such as sample contract, implantation schedule, and design samples from Alluvit Media, owner of the billboards along I-96.

Board Member Willett addressed some misinformation and provided clarification on the proposal. She explained that Executive Director Cloutier had initially reached out to obtain background information and base pricing, which was included in the meeting packet. Board Member Willett indicated that Alluvit does not own the billboards; rather, they lease them from other owners. Alluvit is one of approximately twenty-five companies that lease billboards in the area. Although they are based in Dallas, they operate locally by leasing signage from local owners. Some local businesses also lease these signs.

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Board Member Willett noted that while the proposed spend of up to $50,000 might not seem substantial, it represents a significant investment for the DDA. As such, the intent of the discussion was to confirm the Board's interest in proceeding further by allowing Executive Director Cloutier to obtain additional quotes, perform further research, and bring back at least three proposals for consideration. Pricing structures vary and typically include charges per square foot, a monthly rental fee, and a minimum term—Alluvit, for example, requires at least a three-month commitment. Board Member Willett stressed the need to pursue new advertising strategies, explaining that the billboards located along the freeway could benefit both the DDA and the City as a whole by increasing visibility for events and downtown activities.

Board Member Willett shared that during her conversations with a representative from Alluvit, she learned that they were open to negotiations, including the possibility of changing signage quarterly. Alluvit provides all design work based on logos and messaging provided by the DDA. These would be static, not digital, billboards, which Board Member Willett described as more beneficial because they exclusively display the DDA's message rather than rotating through multiple advertisements. A longer-term contract, such as six months or one year, could include up to two free design packages, which are normally valued at around $2,000 each. The vendor also indicated a willingness to reduce the design rate from $295 to as low as $195 per square foot, depending on the number of changes and the length of the contract. Board Member Willett emphasized that the goal is to select the best option available based on exposure and impact.

Executive Director asked for confirmation about the two free designs being tied to a 12-month contract. Board Member Willett clarified that she was not in formal negotiations but noted that the vendor expressed flexibility and a willingness to work with the DDA. She reiterated the potential benefit of billboard advertising for both downtown development and citywide engagement, citing increased traffic and awareness as potential outcomes. She also emphasized the importance of metrics and suggested the use of QR codes to track engagement and gather data.

Vice Chair Osburn inquired whether there was any feedback available from local businesses who had previously advertised on billboards, such as Volare. Board Member Willett responded that she was unsure if Volare still had a billboard but reiterated that the proposed locations had the highest visibility, with approximately 600,000 touches per month. She added that commuters traveling to and from work could be influenced by the messaging and might be encouraged to stop downtown. She agreed with City Council's request for measurable metrics and stated that vendors could provide monthly reports on traffic and visibility. Board Member Willett suggested using QR codes for engagement tracking, even acknowledging that QR codes may be scanned by passengers rather than drivers. Board Member Guzowski mentioned that some newer vehicles, like Teslas, can scan QR codes, which could make them more effective.

There was further discussion on campaign content. Board Member Willett noted that the billboards should avoid promoting individual businesses to prevent the appearance of favoritism. Executive Director Cloutier echoed this concern. Instead, general event promotions like Restaurant Week or Wednesdays in Wixom could be highlighted. City Manager Brown proposed that, if the campaign is successful, a program could be developed in which businesses pay to be featured, and the results could be tracked for potential ROI. Executive Director Cloutier suggested creating surveys or using QR codes in local businesses to assess the impact. Vice Chair Osburn mentioned that her business already uses intake forms that could be updated to include billboards as a referral source.

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Board Member Willett reiterated the potential to track QR code scans to measure interest from drivers or passengers. Vice Chair Osburn added that some billboards include memorable codes or phrases to aid in tracking. Board Member Willett emphasized the importance of including a call-to-action in all designs. She proposed quarterly updates to the messaging, with flexibility for additional changes if needed.

Assistant City Manager Benson clarified the Board's intent in the motion, which was to provide clear direction to Executive Director Cloutier so she could move forward with gathering bids. He confirmed that the committee's goal was to obtain proposals for both a six-month and a twelve-month campaign for a single static billboard. Board Member Willett agreed and stated that the vendor provides up to three design changes before additional charges apply. Chairperson Buck asked whether a digital billboard was being considered; Board Member Willett and Executive Director Cloutier clarified that the proposal was specifically for static billboards. Assistant City Manager Benson inquired whether the Board had a preference for traffic direction. Board Member Willett confirmed that she selected the westbound billboard because it offered the highest visibility.

The discussion continued with a motion from Board Member Willett to allow Executive Director to gather formal bids and further information so that a vote could be held at a future meeting. The motion would include obtaining at least three quotes for a static billboard with quarterly design changes, covering both six- and twelve-month contract options. The Board agreed that Executive Director Cloutier should proceed with this directive and return with detailed proposals for consideration.

Board Member Guzowski acknowledged that Board Member Willett had raised an important point about the need for project management and oversight as the billboard advertising campaign progresses. She emphasized that managing this initiative would require coordination and possibly treating it like a contractor-led project. Board Member Guzowski also highlighted this effort as a positive example of how the committee structure should function—committees developing ideas, clearly defining expectations for staff like Executive Director Cloutier and Assistant City Manager Benson and then presenting those ideas to the Board for feedback and action.

Board Member Willett expressed concern over the difficulty of recruiting committee members, noting that since all positions are volunteer based, it's becoming increasingly challenging to ask more of them.

Board Member Guzowski responded by recognizing the progress the team has made, stating that the current effort demonstrates significant growth and improved collaboration compared to previous years. She characterized the approach as a major step forward in teamwork and process.

The conversation then shifted to broader organizational implications. It was noted that the financial scale of DDA projects is increasing, and with that growth comes the need for greater accountability and oversight. Assistant City Manager Benson elaborated on this, underscoring the importance of strategic prioritization in managing staff time and resources. He reminded the Board that they provide direction to both him and Executive Director Cloutier and that clearly setting priorities helps staff focus efforts and avoid conflicts, particularly when multiple committees may be generating separate recommendations. He stressed that once a direction is agreed upon at the Board level, it should guide all actions moving forward.

Approved 5/7/2025

Board Member Willett concluded by advocating for a divide-and-conquer approach. She suggested that Executive Director Cloutier should lead the majority of the work, with support from Assistant City Manager Benson as needed, in order to avoid duplication of effort and make better use of staff time. With the volume of work increasing, the Board must be efficient and intentional about who handles what, ensuring both productivity and cost-effectiveness.

MOTION by Board Member Willett and second by Board Member Payment to recommend approval to move forward with the proposed billboard marketing campaign, as well as the Economic Vitality Committee and Executive Director for additional information such as sample contract, implementation schedule, and design samples from Alluvit Media, owner of the billboards along I-96 within the next two Board meetings.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

2. Downtown Alleyway Enhancement Project: Recommendation to approve the proposed Downtown Alleyway Enhancement Project, as presented and allocate funding support through Technical Assistance provided by Main Street Oakland County.

Memorandum to Wixom Downtown Development Authority Board from Laura Cloutier, Executive Director, dated April 23, 2025, subject: Main Street Oakland County Technical Assistance for Downtown Alleyway Enhancement Project is enclosed in the packet.

Executive Director Cloutier indicated that the Design Committee has been working on identifying small-scale projects that could have a meaningful visual and experiential impact on downtown. One long-standing idea has been revitalizing the alleyway, a project discussed for the past four or five years. Recently, following their March meeting, the Board had an opportunity to apply for $2,500 in technical assistance through Main Street Oakland County. Executive Director Cloutier proposed using this grant to support initial steps in the alleyway project, which she assured would remain within a modest budget. She sought the Board's formal approval to allocate up to $2,500 for the project so she could confirm commitment to Main Street Oakland County, even though specific design elements were still in the exploratory phase.

The initial concept includes installing café-style string lighting above the existing alley sidewalk, cleaning and improving maintenance of the weedy river rock area, and adding benches, planter boxes, or public art to enhance the space. While bistro tables were discussed, concerns were raised regarding space limitations. Board Member Guzowski had previously stated potential issues, and Executive Director Cloutier noted that any such ideas were still under review. Board Member Meredith commented based on personal experience, noting that some commercially available bistro sets are heavy and not easily stolen, but the sidewalk's width might still pose challenges.

Suggestions also included mimicking the design of the City's current downtown benches and staggering their placement to optimize the space. Vice Chair Osburn and Board Member Meredith referenced a previous visit to Birmingham, where a similarly transformed alley featured custom-built benches with flower pots. Executive Director Cloutier mentioned that such an approach could be replicated.

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Discussions also touched on lighting logistics. With no electrical outlets in the alleyway, Executive Director Cloutier explained the plan to use solar-powered string lights mounted with the cooperation of building owners. She said the lighting could be strung across with wire support to maintain neat alignment and stability. Executive Director Cloutier also noted that she had reached out to property owners of the buildings from the alley, including the Klebba building and the Wixom Bar, though she was still awaiting responses. However, based on past conversations, she was optimistic about getting the necessary permissions.

Regarding ground maintenance, Board Member Guzowski reiterated the importance of dealing with the overgrown river rock areas. Executive Director Cloutier responded that instead of replacing the rocks, she proposed aggressive weeding followed by application of a landscape adhesive that secures the rocks in place while allowing drainage, thereby helping prevent weed growth.

Board Member Willett suggested a practical financial approach: approve the $2,500 expenditure now and, if the grant is received, reimburse the expense from it later. This idea was supported by Board Member Meredith, who emphasized that the Board's approval should include the understanding that specific design details—benches versus tables, for example—will continue to be worked out. Assistant City Manager Benson further clarified that the Board could have Executive Director Cloutier and the design committee to finalize those details within the approved scope, avoiding unnecessary delays or micromanagement.

Board Member Guzowski expressed strong support for the lighting concept and reaffirmed her trust in the Design Committee to decide on the other elements. She also noted that Wixom Bar's recent participation in the social district could improve the chances of gaining their support for building attachments. Assistant City Manager Benson stated that the project would likely come in under budget and that minor overages at year-end are typically not problematic. He agreed that this was an appropriate task for the Design Committee to manage.

MOTION by Board Member Willett and second by Vice Chair Osburn to approve monies not to exceed $3,000.00 for the Downtown Enhancement of the alleyway beautification project under account #248-729-956-005; the Design Committee will decide the specifics of the project.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

MOTION by Board Member Willett and second by Board Member Meredith to recommend approval the Downtown Alleyway Enhancement support through the technical assistance provided by Main Street Oakland County; we hereby give our blessing to move forward.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

3. Discussion of Mission and Vision Statement

Board Member Payment presented various versions of mission and vision statements. She mentioned that she had attempted to get input from the Board informally but acknowledged that Board members are busy and noted that Board Member Willett had assisted her in refining and shortening some of the content. Board Member Payment emphasized that this document was not final but intended for Board members to review and consider for future discussion, likely at the

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next meeting. She invited anyone who wished to provide input or alternative language to do so, with the goal of eventually selecting a final version from the options presented.

Executive Director Cloutier clarified that the request was simply for Board members to take the document home, read it, and reflect on it. Board Member Guzowski questioned why the outside consultant, POW! Strategies, whom they had hired, was not continuing with this work. Executive Director Cloutier responded that POW! had already provided a mission and vision statement based on a prior brainstorming session, but the Board had voted to reject that version at a previous meeting. At the time, the recommendation was made to form a subcommittee to generate a new statement internally.

Board Member Guzowski expressed concern that the Board may have missed an opportunity to provide feedback to the consultant to refine or improve upon the original suggestion. Chairperson Buck noted that the consultant's draft had been created directly from the group's input during a facilitated session. Executive Director Cloutier added that the Board never discussed or requested further options from POW! Strategies after rejecting the initial draft.

Board Member Willett acknowledged that it was a misstep on the Board's part not to have clearly communicated their expectations or asked for additional revisions from the consultant. Vice Chair Osburn recalled that the group had engaged in a brainstorming process and seemed to support continuing the work internally. Board Member Guzowski reiterated a desire that more feedback could have been provided to the consultant earlier in the process.

Board Member Payment clarified that the consultant had presented one set of mission and vision statements based on the Board's input, and while the Board could have asked for more options at that time, they did not. She asked if there was still an opportunity to revisit that discussion and request more from the consultant. Executive Director Cloutier confirmed that she could reach out to Christina from POW! Strategies and discuss whether additional options could be provided.

Board Member Willett then shared her view that Board Member Payment's work was strong, and that the consultant's submission had felt somewhat generic, perhaps relying on AI-driven phrasing. She expressed confidence in the Board's ability to generate meaningful and authentic statements on their own, given their deep involvement and understanding of the DDA's mission. She also noted that, ultimately, if none of the proposed statements are satisfactory, the Board may opt to retain the existing mission and vision statements.

Executive Director Cloutier encouraged the Board to review the draft statements over the next month, directing any questions to Board Member Payment, and noting that she would coordinate and communicate deadlines for feedback and next steps.

Information:

1) Committee Reports

   A. Design Committee – Meets the 1st Tuesday of every month at Drafting Table Brewing Company – 5:00 p.m.

The Design Committee met and discussed the expansion of the downtown bikes, painting bikes, and identifying locations to put the bikes. Also discussed was the alley project between the

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Klebba building and Wixom Bar. They would like to work on this project this summer. Contact has been made with the owner of the Klebba building and Wixom Bar for approval to attach café lights to their buildings. Other features for the project would be two bistro tables with chairs, and possible flower boxes.

Executive Director Cloutier commented that she had talked about this earlier and did not have anything else to add.

B. Economic Vitality Committee – Meets the 4th Monday of Every month at 5:30 p.m.

The EVC did not meet in March but will have its next meeting on April 28th. The Committee continues to implement the Ambassador program. As it develops, we hope to see increased involvement from business owners not only in events but actively participating in surveys and providing insight into things the Committee and the DDA are doing within the district.

Highlights of the Ambassador Program:

- Development of relationships and awareness with business owners/managers to ensure participation and knowledge of the DDA as a whole. Through this personal relationship, we gain trust with the business owner and, ultimately, gain insight into what is happening with the establishments in our community.
- Increasing the utilization of the Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce (LACC) as a free mentor-protégé opportunity for new and struggling businesses.
- Regular phone calls and drop ins/meetings with the business owners creates consistency and will be more likely to generate a better understanding of needs, struggles, and the health of businesses. The EVC is starting with once per month visits and phone calls.
- Eventually, the EVC is hoping the Ambassadors can act as a single point of contact for the DDA and assist with acting as liaisons for communications from other committees.

In addition, the EVC has discussed and agrees that a billboard marketing campaign is a great way to increase exposure to downtown, with the hopes of bringing more visitors.

Memorandum to Wixom Downtown Development Authority Board from Vanessa Willett, Economic Vitality Committee Chairperson dated April 23, 205, Subject: DDA Billboard Marketing Campaign is included in the packet.

Board Member Willett provided an update on the development of the Business Ambassador Program, noting that Board Member Meredith had initiated the drafting process, and she had contributed to shaping a more structured version. She acknowledged that the draft was still in progress and not yet at the level of detail Board Member Meredith had envisioned. The Economic Vitality Committee plans to review the material, incorporating both Board Member Meredith's draft and input from previous committee discussions, with the intention of allowing the program to evolve over time. Board Member Willett mentioned that the site visits have already begun, with efforts underway to update business contact information and ensure outreach is accurate and inclusive. She emphasized that a mix of communication strategies and the promotion of new DDA initiatives would benefit local businesses.

Board Member Meredith explained that the goal is to formalize the program and bring a clear proposal to the Board, ensuring it represents the DDA as a whole rather than just a committee

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initiative. He suggested convening a meeting of the four committee chairs to review the plan before it is submitted to the full Board, which would then authorize staff members such as Executive Director Cloutier and Assistant City Manager Benson to help implement the program.

Board Member Willett agreed with this process but stressed the importance of avoiding excessive bureaucracy. She noted that while formalization is important, it should not slow down progress or require every decision to pass through multiple levels of approval. She supported a trial period for the program to assess its viability.

Assistant City Manager Benson advocated for creating and approving a formal policy document through the Board to establish clarity and avoid confusion down the line. By having a documented and approved policy, the DDA would have a clear reference point to guide business retention efforts.

Board Member Willett voiced concerns about the potential administrative burden this process could place on volunteers, warning against over-complication. She supported keeping the program simple and efficient to avoid discouraging participation and overburdening business owners during outreach.

Board Member Meredith responded that the program's initial development should remain with the Economic Vitality Committee, which would propose a draft for Board consideration. Once approved, direction would be provided to the Board for implementation. He reiterated the importance of moving the initiative from the committee level to official Board policy, with oversight from the committee chairs and executive leadership.

Executive Director Cloutier agreed that the next step should be for the Economic Vitality Committee to continue discussions and begin putting a concrete framework on paper. Board Member Willett confirmed the intention to present a draft for review, while emphasizing the need for a direct, respectful approach during business visits to avoid frustrating or overwhelming business owners. She also pointed out that if the DDA adopts a formalized approach like this for one program, it could set a precedent requiring all committees to present formal proposals for any initiative, which may require reinstituting regular meetings of committee chairs to coordinate efforts.

The discussion reflected a consensus on the importance of creating a clear and effective Business Ambassador Program but also highlighted differing views on the balance between formal policy development and operational flexibility.

Board Member Guzowski inquired whether the City had an existing business retention visit plan or any documentation that could serve as a model for the DDA's efforts. Assistant City Manager Benson responded that the City's approach is different in structure because it does not involve elected officials. He explained that business retention visits are conducted at his discretion in coordination with the MEDC and Oakland County, and these visits are arranged based on mutual availability. He noted that there is no formal written policy, and unless directed otherwise by City Council, it remains an administrative function. He added that because the DDA involves volunteer committees and decisions flow through the Board, a formal policy and documentation process makes more sense for the DDA than it does at the City level.

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Board Member Guzowski asked whether there was anything Assistant City Manager Benson could think of, either now or in the coming days, that might be useful to replicate in terms of structure or layout. Board Member Willett responded by noting that Board Member Meredith had already provided a draft of a plan, which was longer and more detailed than what is currently needed. However, it contains useful elements that will be incorporated into a simplified version to serve as a starting point. She emphasized the need to begin with a basic framework that could be expanded over time, rather than something overly complicated.

Board Member Guzowski and Chairperson Buck discussed concerns regarding the role of ambassadors. Chairperson Buck expressed that while the idea of engaging businesses is beneficial, she had concerns about the language being used, particularly the suggestion that ambassadors might act as the "single point of contact" for the DDA. Chairperson Buck stressed that Executive Director Cloutier, as the Executive Director and the only paid employee, should remain the central contact for the DDA, especially for matters involving grants or volunteering. She pointed out that Board members are volunteers who rotate, while Executive Director Cloutier provides continuity and has the experience to address business needs effectively.

Board Member Willett clarified that the intent was not to replace Executive Director Cloutier's role, but rather to facilitate better communication with businesses by having a dedicated volunteer assigned to a small group of businesses. She commented that having one consistent contact person from the DDA helps build rapport and trust, and that business owners are more likely to be candid with someone they see as a peer rather than a formal city representative. She reiterated that this setup was intended to complement, not replace, Executive Director Cloutier's role, and that the ambassadors would still report back to her.

Board Member Meredith supported this interpretation and emphasized that the goal is to augment Executive Director Cloutier's work. Since Executive Director Cloutier cannot be everywhere at once, the ambassador system would ensure businesses are still engaged on a regular basis. Each ambassador would coordinate their findings with Executive Director Cloutier, who remains the lead contact and the one who would handle more technical or sensitive issues. She noted that businesses would not be overwhelmed by multiple people from the same committee; rather, they would interact with one designated ambassador per area.

Board Member Guzowski acknowledged Chairperson Buck's concerns and agreed that the language around "single point of contact" might need revision. She reiterated that Executive Director Cloutier should remain the ultimate contact for all DDA matters. She saw the ambassador role as an additional outreach tool and appreciated that volunteers and community members may be more approachable for business owners.

Board Member Willett agreed, noting that many businesses do not return Executive Director Cloutier's calls or emails, but are more receptive when approached by someone local or familiar. She explained that this initiative is an alternative method to improve communication and relationships with business owners.

Board Member Hoppenstadt summarized that ambassadors would be serving as liaisons on behalf of the Executive Director. Board Member Willett confirmed this, adding that the ambassadors would assist in gathering accurate information from the businesses and reporting it back to Executive Director Cloutier so that the DDA can make more informed decisions. Board Member Guzowski added that building these relationships requires the right personalities and

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interpersonal skills, similar to a sales role, and that having community members involved can make a significant difference.

Executive Director Cloutier expressed support for trying the program for six months as a new method to engage with businesses and viewed it as an additional resource. She indicated the importance of ensuring all communication from the ambassadors is reported back to her for continuity and follow-up.

Board Member Payment noted that this kind of outreach is critical to the success of broader DDA efforts, including the master plan and the surveys being conducted. Board Member Willett added that they are already beginning to encounter situations where it is necessary to reach decision-makers directly, and this ambassador program will be important for achieving full participation in those upcoming initiatives.

Board Member Willett said that if the program proves ineffective, it can be discontinued, but it is worth trying something new to achieve better results. Board Member Meredith proposed that the Board vote on whether the Economic Vitality Committee should move forward in developing a structured procedure for the ambassador program. This would include coordinating with the chairs of the other committees to create a unified proposal to bring back to the full Board for consideration and approval.

Board Member Guzowski asked for feedback from members who had not recently been involved in meetings. Vice Chair Osburn stated that, as both a business owner and a Board member, she found the idea promising and was encouraged by the progress being made. Chairperson Buck reiterated her interest in seeing more data on how businesses are responding and whether their concerns are consistent across the board.

Board Member Willett shared her recent experiences, including visiting businesses and requesting to speak directly with owners or decision-makers. She explained that such engagement will be necessary for successful data collection and program implementation. Board Member Payment agreed, noting that whatever it takes to improve outreach and gather meaningful feedback is important to the DDA's mission.

C. Promotions Committee – Meets every other Thursday at Backyard Coney, 8 a.m.

The Promotions Committee met twice this past month. At both meetings, the focus was Derby Day, which will be held on May 3rd. We expect this event to be even bigger than years past as we currently have 314 registered, which is nearly doubt that we had at this point last year. We have ordered medals, bags and T-shirts. We have secured the Emcee, petting farm, coffee, bagels and More Fit for warmups. Russ has worked hard on visiting the downtown businesses, and Laura has been promoting their specials for Derby Day. Check out our social media page and share! We have many volunteers signed up but still need more so any help would be appreciated! We have a blow up of our upcoming projects at the DDA tent for those interested in learning more. Laura and Jess will meet with the police, fire, and DPW next week to get everything set up and organized for Derby Day. We are running a $10 off special for Easter weekend that will likely attract more registrants!

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Block Party planning is ramping up. Vendor applications will open on May 12th. Food vendors have been notified.

Our next meeting is April 24th at 8 a.m. at Backyard Coney Island.

Chairperson Buck reported that the Derby Day event, scheduled for May 3rd, has already seen a significant increase in registrants compared to the previous year. As of this meeting, there were 365 registered participants, surpassing the final total of 352 registrants in 2024. Last year at this same time, there were only 202 signups, indicating strong interest and likely attendance for this year's event. Chairperson Buck emphasized that many registrations typically come in at the last minute, and with all event elements already in place, the turnout is expected to be large.

Executive Director Cloutier shared that she and Chairperson Buck would be meeting with the fire department, Department of Public Works, and police department on Thursday to finalize logistics. Planned attractions include a petting zoo and farm, an emcee, warmups by More Fit, and coffee and bagels for attendees. Board Member Willett inquired about extra T-shirts, and Executive Director Cloutier explained the updated T-shirt distribution process. To prevent last year's confusion, a firm deadline of April 5th was set for guaranteed T-shirt availability. Based on the confirmed registrations by that date, 20 additional shirts were added to each size order, bringing the total to 385 shirts. Registrants who met the deadline will receive their shirts first, with no size exchanges allowed at pickup. After the race, shirts will be distributed to later registrants on a first-come, first-serve basis, with optional size exchanges only after initial distribution.

Chairperson Buck asked for volunteers to help along the race route, noting that with three different races and a large number of participants expected, extra support would be essential. She thanked Board Member Meredith for securing participation from 15 businesses and highlighted how well the event is being promoted online and through participating businesses. She pointed out that Drafting Table and several other businesses will be opening early and offering specials to encourage people to stay downtown after the race. Executive Director Cloutier added that businesses that participated last year were very busy well into the afternoon, and she expects similar results this year.

Board Member Willett asked whether any non-food businesses were participating, and Executive Director Cloutier confirmed that Wixom Cleaners, the comic book store, and Hawaii Fluid Art were among the non-food participants. Board Member Meredith explained that he visited nearly every downtown business and invited them to take part, leaving the decision to them. While he didn't reach out to Volare due to their later hours, he noted that Alex's will be selling pizza by the slice and that Hawaii Fluid Art is offering specials.

Board Member Guzowski suggested leveraging pedestrian traffic data collected during events to support promotion of the Renton property and help offset concerns raised by the current downtown vacancy report. Executive Director Cloutier agreed and mentioned that she pulls those numbers after each event. For last year's Derby Day, pedestrian data showed approximately 1,200 people in the downtown area from the race start until 2 p.m., despite only having 352 race participants, indicating strong family and community involvement.

Chairperson Buck expressed gratitude that the DDA is not being charged to use a downtown parking lot for the petting farm. Executive Director Cloutier clarified that there had been concerns earlier in the year that Mr. Rizzo, the property owner of both east and west retail lots, might charge

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the city or DDA for event use, but this was not the case for Derby Day. She also reminded the group that she would not be present at the event and emphasized the need for additional volunteer support. Board Member Hoppenstadt agreed to coordinate all volunteers, and several board and committee members—including Board Member Payment, Vice Chair Osburn, and Board Member Meredith—have already committed to help. However, four more volunteers are still needed for the race route, with a goal of six to allow for backup coverage.

D. Organization Committee – Meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month at Wixom Station, 6:30 p.m.

The Organization Committee will meet on March 22nd. The Committee is working on Board Member binders, Board Member agreements, and DDA procedures, along with securing volunteers for events.

Board Member Hoppenstadt provided an update on ongoing organizational efforts. She thanked everyone who completed the Google form, noting that the information collected will be included in updated DDA binders. Work is underway to revise these binders, ensuring they are current and comprehensive. Board Member Hoppenstadt also mentioned that the Board member agreement has been reviewed multiple times, and the Committee now has updated language ready to present at the next Board meeting. In addition, preliminary discussions have taken place regarding key performance indicators (KPIs) for the Executive Director's evaluation, and this topic will be revisited at the upcoming meeting. Board Member Hoppenstadt emphasized the ongoing need for additional volunteers and shared that outreach efforts are being extended to the senior center. She noted that some individuals there may be interested in volunteering, particularly if they understand the specific nature of the tasks involved. The Committee plans to establish those connections to encourage more community participation.

2) Downtown Business News/Events

- 2025: May 3rd: Derby Day Races
- 2025: June 5th to August 21st: Summer Concert Series
- 2025: June 12th: City Employee, Boards and Commissioners Picnic
- 2025: June 12th: Main Event 25 Years of Main Street Oakland County
- 2025: June 26th: Lite the Night Fireworks
- 2025: September 20th: Wixom Block Party

Public Comments:

None

Staff Comments:

Executive Director Cloutier expressed her appreciation for the discussion and the dedication of the Board members. She welcomed Board Member Guzowski back and noted it was nice to see her again. Executive Director Cloutier shared that she is proud to serve the Board, work alongside the City, and collaborate with Assistant City Manager Benson, City Manager Brown, and the

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Board. She thanked everyone for their continued support, their commitment to the work being done, and the time they dedicate as volunteers to help move the DDA's efforts forward.

Board Members' Comments:

Vice Chair Osburn expressed her excitement about graduating from the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program. She noted that the experience has already helped her think about how to grow her business. She also thanked the Board for their support and understanding, indicating her mother passed away on the first of the month.

Board Member Meredith followed by recognizing Vice Chair Osburn's contributions and echoed earlier sentiments about the Board's progress. He emphasized the growth in cohesion among the members and acknowledged Executive Director Cloutier and the Board's dedication to advancing their mission.

Board Member Willett brought up a concern regarding the website visuals, noting that many of the images are repetitive and primarily showcase one side of the downtown area, particularly around Alex's and Volare. She suggested that Josh be asked to pull from a broader range of pictures and raised the idea of paying for new photography, if needed. Executive Director Cloutier responded that she had already provided Josh with the best available images of the downtown. Chairperson Buck mentioned that a local photographer, currently working to build his business, would be taking pictures at Derby Day for free, which could help refresh the photo library. Board Member Guzowski and others added that Board Member Meredith has taken high-quality sunset photos and that capturing before-and-after images of downtown improvements could also enhance the visual narrative. Board Member Willett reiterated her request for new images, particularly from different parts of the downtown.

Mayor Beagle apologized for arriving late, explaining a calendar mix-up. He noted that he would remain on the Board for another two years as he is running unopposed. City Manager Brown updated the Board on recent City Council filings. He noted that Mayor Beagle is running unopposed, and that Deputy Mayor Tom Rzeznik has decided not to run again. Of the three council seats up for election, only one incumbent, Tia Gronlund-Fox, filed for re-election. The two new candidates who filed are Jason Kennedy and Veronica Simmons. All candidates are running unopposed, which means the Council will see significant turnover, including three new members—Kennedy, Simmons, and Nicole O'Day, who was recently appointed. He highlighted the positive aspect of increased female representation on the Council.

Executive Director Cloutier noted that the DDA was featured on page 128 of a publication she had just received, adding a positive and timely closing note to the meeting.

Adjournment:

MOTION by Mayor Beagle, second by Board Member Meredith to adjourn the meeting. This meeting of the Wixom Downtown Development Authority was motioned and adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Mona Freiburger
Recording Secretary

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