**CITY OF WIXOM**
**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**
**49045 PONTIAC TRAIL**
**TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2026**

This meeting of the Wixom Downtown Development Authority came to order at 7:30 a.m. with the following individuals in attendance:

**DDA MEMBERS:** Chairperson Jessica Buck; Carissa Osburn, Vice Chairperson; Board Members: Mark Garmo; Darby Hoppenstedt; Cara McLauchlin; Russ Meredith; Leslie Payment; Vanessa Willett

**ABSENT:** Excused: Mayor Beagle

**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.

**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 Board Member Meredith and second by Board Member Willett to approve the Meeting Agenda.

**VOTE: MOTION CARRIED**

All in favor.
None opposed.

**Public Comments:**

No public comments.

**Approval of Minutes:**

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**MOTION** by Board Member Meredith and second by Board Member Hoppenstedt to approve the April 9, 2026, DDA Special Meeting Minutes, as amended.

**VOTE: MOTION CARRIED**

**Correspondence:**

None

**Executive Director's Report: April, 2026 Report**

Executive Director Cloutier reported that the pre-bid meeting for the West End Commons project was held with nine contractors in attendance. She stated that the RFPs and project scope had been reviewed and that approval of the contractor was included as the second agenda item for Board consideration.

Executive Director Cloutier stated that Derby Day registrations had increased to 467 participants since her report was written, bringing the event close to its goal of 500 runners. She noted that a volunteer meeting would be held via Zoom on Thursday at 5 p.m. and that packet pickup would take place Friday afternoon in Council Chambers due to connectivity issues experienced outdoors. She added that volunteer coverage was in good shape, although a few openings remained.

Executive Director Cloutier reported that the steering committee for the Phase Two barn project met on April 16th. She noted that she was unable to attend the meeting and thanked Chairperson Buck and Board Member Willett for serving on the committee.

Executive Director Cloutier reported that she attended the Main Street Now Conference in Tulsa, Oklahoma during the week of April 12th. She stated that she explored the history of Route 66, visited surrounding communities, and attended several educational sessions. She noted that Tulsa and the surrounding communities demonstrated strong downtown aesthetics, including clean streetscapes, extensive lighting, café lighting, and creative design elements that provided inspiration for ideas that could potentially be adapted in Wixom. Executive Director Cloutier also shared that a tornado struck approximately ten miles from the hotel during the conference, requiring attendees to shelter in the hotel basement.

Executive Director Cloutier congratulated downtown Farmington on receiving the Great American Main Street Award (GAMSA), the highest honor presented by Main Street America. She stated that Farmington was one of eight semifinalists and one of three communities nationwide to receive the award. She added that Farmington is also one of three Oakland County communities to have earned the recognition and expressed hope that Wixom could achieve similar recognition in the future.

Executive Director Cloutier reported that she recently met with the graphic design program at OSTC regarding the creation of the 10th Annual Derby Day poster. She explained that she had been working with the lead teacher over the past several months and presented information to the students about Block Party and the goals for the poster design. She stated that the students immediately began sketching concepts and that their creativity and talent were impressive.

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Executive Director Cloutier noted that submissions were expected by the end of the following week, after which the Promotions Committee would review the entries and narrow the selection to approximately five finalists. She stated that the finalists would be posted online for public voting through social media and that the selected designs would be displayed throughout local businesses.

Executive Director Cloutier indicated that she attended the City Council budget session and stated that the meeting went well from the DDA's perspective. She noted that only minor questions were raised and that no adjustments were made to the proposed DDA budget, which would move forward as submitted within the overall City budget.

Executive Director Cloutier informed the Board that the owner of Alex's Pizza and Volare announced on social media that Alex's Pizzeria would be renamed Piazza Bar and Grill. She stated that new signage for the business was expected in the near future.

Executive Director Cloutier stated that she had recently received several inquiries regarding the Heath Building from individuals interested in whether the property was for sale, ownership information, and potential uses for the building. She noted that she referred the inquiries to the property contact and stated that, to her knowledge, the building was not currently on the market.

Assistant City Manager Benson commented that he believed the property may be available for lease and stated that a broker had contacted the City regarding the building and was working on a potential opportunity.

Executive Director Cloutier stated that inquiries had also been made regarding downtown signage requirements and the sign ordinance. She noted that the planner provided the requested information and added that she was unsure whether the inquiries related to a specific sign proposal or future tenant preparations.

Board Member Payment asked about the outcome of the St. Patrick's Day Shamrock Contest mentioned in the sponsorship outreach materials. Executive Director Cloutier responded that the contest did not receive any participant submissions and stated that the DDA may try the contest again next year.

**Old Business:**

None

**New Business:**

1. Recommendation to discuss the concept plans presented by the Ferlito Group and provide comments in advance of City Council's Consideration of a draft purchase agreement in May.

Memorandum to Wixom Downtown Development Authority from Drew Benson, Assistant City Manager & Director of Economic Development; Laura Cloutier, Executive Director – Wixom DDA dated April 28, 2026 regarding Conceptual Development Discussion, Renton Redevelopment Area and Ferlito Group, which includes Administrative Summary and Recommendation. Also

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included is a Memorandum to Drew Benson, Assistant City Manager from Matteo Passalacqua, Community Planners dated February 23, 2026 regarding Renton Concept Site Plan.

**MOTION** by Board Member Meredith and second by Board Member Willett to discuss recommendation the concept plans presented by the Ferlito Group and provide comments in advance of City Council's Consideration of a draft purchase agreement in May.

Assistant City Manager Benson stated that the City, in coordination with the DDA, had been engaged in discussions with the Ferlito, Walters, and Bonner Groups regarding a purchase agreement for the Renton Redevelopment area. He noted that the development groups had been cooperative and receptive to feedback provided by the City and DDA throughout the process. Assistant City Manager Benson stated that the parties anticipated bringing a purchase agreement before City Council in May.

Assistant City Manager Benson explained that, prior to formal consideration of the agreement, the developers and City staff wanted to present the development concept to the Planning Commission, DDA, and eventually City Council to ensure alignment regarding the proposed redevelopment. He noted that this alignment would also be important in relation to future development incentives and the potential involvement of the DDA.

Assistant City Manager Benson stated that the purpose of the presentation was to allow the development team to share the concept plan, receive questions, and gather feedback for consideration as the project moves forward. He emphasized that the materials presented represented a conceptual plan rather than a finalized site plan and noted that significant additional work would still be required, including formal site plan approval by the Planning Commission following approval of the purchase agreement.

Mr. Matt Walters, Walters Group, introduced himself and thanked everyone for the opportunity to speak. Mr. Walters noted that the development team includes Mr. Mike Ferlito of the Ferlito Group and Mr. Luke Bonner of the Bonner Advisory Group.

Mr. Walters explained that the Walters Group, Ferlito Group, and Bonner Advisory Group are equal partners on the proposed project and several other developments throughout Southeast Michigan, including projects in Ferndale, Plymouth, and Dexter. Mr. Walters stated that the group is excited about the potential development in Wixom,

Mr. Walters reviewed the project concept and site master plan, explaining that the development would include 75 multi-family residential units on the north side of the site and approximately 10,000 square feet of commercial space, with the potential for future expansion depending on leasing demand. Mr. Walters stated that the project team intends to complement the downtown Wixom aesthetic through the use of brick, masonry, and historic architectural elements reflective of Southeast Michigan downtowns.

Mr. Walters explained that the development would include approximately 125 surface and on-street parking spaces, along with approximately 75 parking spaces located beneath the building within a podium structure. Mr. Walters stated that the building would consist of one podium level with three floors of wood-frame construction above, with all residential units located on the second, third, and fourth floors. The first floor would contain parking, lobby space, and resident

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amenities, with no first-floor apartments. Mr. Walters noted that the parking layout would allow adequate parking for both the residential and commercial portions of the site.

Mr. Walters reviewed additional renderings of the proposed multi-family and commercial buildings, noting that the commercial building currently includes a faux second floor intended to maintain the downtown character and appearance, while development efforts are presently focused on first-floor commercial space due to the cost of constructing a functional second floor.

Mr. Ferlito discussed the commercial component of the project, stating that the development team is seeking a local or Southeast Michigan-based restaurant tenant to serve as an anchor for the site, potentially including a rooftop bar. Mr. Ferlito stated that once the City approves and executes the purchase agreement, the team plans to begin marketing the commercial space for lease. He noted that the team is targeting a mix of restaurant, quick-service retail, and service-oriented tenants, such as dental, medical, or veterinary uses, to support downtown walkability and neighborhood activity.

Mr. Ferlito explained that the project is designed to activate the frontage along the adjacent trail and bike path, encouraging pedestrian and cyclist activity near the retail spaces. He stated that the development team views the trail connection as a significant amenity that will help attract residents, visitors, and commercial tenants. Mr. Ferlito referenced a similar project in Dexter located near the Huron Waterway Trail and noted that public amenities and trail access are important components in mixed-use developments.

Mr. Ferlito emphasized the importance of maintaining parking near the front of the retail spaces to support the success of commercial tenants, noting that the roadway is not a major retail corridor and convenient parking will be necessary to attract customers. He added that discussions with the Road Commission regarding parking configuration are anticipated.

Mr. Walters provided a parking breakdown for the project, stating that the development would include 122 residential parking spaces and 54 retail parking spaces, for a total of 176 spaces. Mr. Walters noted that approximately 75 spaces would be located beneath the podium structure, with the remaining spaces provided as surface parking.

Board Member Willett asked whether the 75 parking spaces located beneath the building podium would correspond to one space per apartment unit and questioned how the project would satisfy the City's parking requirements. Assistant City Manager Benson responded that the zoning ordinance contains parking calculations, although the Planning Commission has the authority to grant parking waivers. Mr. Walters stated that the project exceeds the zoning code parking requirement by approximately 20 spaces.

Board Member Willett asked whether the project would seek Brownfield redevelopment certification. Mr. Walters clarified that the project would utilize the MSHDA Housing TIF program, which differs from a traditional Brownfield TIF. Assistant City Manager Benson explained that the Housing TIF program falls under Brownfield legislation but does not require contamination or environmental cleanup to qualify. Assistant City Manager Benson noted that Phase I environmental assessments have been completed for portions of the property acquired more recently and explained that the Housing TIF is intended to support housing affordability rather than environmental remediation.

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Board Member Willett asked about the anticipated rental rates for the proposed residential units. Mr. Ferlito stated that studio apartments are anticipated to rent for approximately $1,600 per month, one-bedroom units for approximately $1,700 per month, and two-bedroom units for approximately $2,400 per month. Mr. Ferlito noted that the majority of the units would fall within approximately 100% to 120% of Area Median Income (AMI).

Board Member Willett commented that she would like to see additional depth and character incorporated into the commercial building design and expressed concern regarding the long-term success and retention of downtown commercial tenants. Board Member Willett noted that the City has experienced challenges maintaining retail occupancy in the downtown area and cautioned that the Road Commission may oppose front parking due to traffic conditions along Wixom Road.

Mr. Walters acknowledged that retail viability is a priority for the project and stated that the development team reduced the amount of proposed retail space from approximately 15,000 square feet to better align with market conditions. Mr. Walters stated that the team plans to aggressively pursue pre-leasing opportunities once the purchase agreement is finalized.

Mr. Ferlito stated that the development team intends to keep costs as low as possible for commercial tenants through incentives, grants, tax abatements, and TIF-related financing programs. Mr. Ferlito referenced nearby development activity, including the Rizzo Building, and noted that the goal is to create conditions that make it easier for retailers to locate and succeed within the project. Mr. Ferlito reiterated that convenient front parking is critical to supporting retail tenant success.

Board Member Garmo asked for the size of the two proposed buildings. Mr. Walters confirmed that the commercial building is approximately 10,000 square feet.

Mr. Ferlito added that the team intends to test the market and engage a broker to evaluate leasing interest.

Board Member Garmo raised concerns about parking along Wixom Road, stating that it would be difficult and potentially unsafe for vehicles to back out onto the roadway during peak traffic periods. Board Member Garmo suggested relocating the building closer to the street and placing all parking in the rear of the site to improve circulation and safety.

Board Member Willett suggested considering a shift to more parallel parking, acknowledging that it would reduce the total number of spaces but could improve the streetscape and functionality.

Mr. Walters responded that on-street parking is preferred from the development team’s perspective because the project is focused on attracting retail tenants and parking configuration is an important factor in tenant decision-making. Mr. Walters stated that the team’s goal is to structure the site in a way that is most attractive to potential retailers.

Assistant City Manager Benson stated that the west retail portion of the development is fully leased and noted that all units are currently occupied. Assistant City Manager Benson explained that the primary challenge is financing the construction of additional retail space, as rental rates do not currently offset construction costs without incentives and other financial tools, which would be further discussed later in the process.

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Assistant City Manager Benson also stated that the question of on-street parking is an important policy discussion for both the Planning Commission and City Council. He noted that the Road Commission has indicated it does not recommend or maintain on-street parking, although similar arrangements have been allowed in other locations when properly designed. Assistant City Manager Benson added that while there are arguments for both angled and parallel parking configurations, many downtowns in Oakland County with higher traffic volumes, including Rochester, Oxford, and Ferndale, successfully incorporate on-street parking. He stated that Wixom Road traffic levels should not automatically preclude such a design but acknowledged it would change traffic behavior and potentially slow vehicle speeds, which he viewed as a positive outcome.

Executive Director Cloutier noted that the removal of the nearby school would reduce morning and afternoon congestion in the area.

Board Member Payment suggested that eliminating some front parking and extending space for a wider bike path or trail connection could be considered, while maintaining attractiveness for retail tenants. Board Member Payment also expressed concern about potential safety conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians or cyclists in a shared frontage area.

Mr. Walters clarified that the intended design includes a sequence of patio space, green space, a bike path, and angled parking, with additional separation and space provided.

Board Member Meredith noted that similar combined sidewalk and bike path configurations exist in downtown areas, typically at approximately 15 feet in width, and emphasized the importance of adequate width for safety and usability.

Mr. Walters stated that the development team's approach is collaborative and flexible, citing their experience with projects in Ferndale and other Southeast Michigan communities. Mr. Walters emphasized that the team works with municipalities, DDAs, and planning bodies rather than taking a rigid position on design elements. He added that if retailers indicate that they do not require front parking, the project can be adjusted accordingly.

Board Member Meredith agreed with the collaborative approach and reiterated that any shared bike path and sidewalk should be designed with sufficient width to ensure safety and functionality.

Mr. Ferlito stated that based on conversations with brokers, the project is unlikely to lease successfully without front-facing parking. He emphasized that if the goal is to create a vibrant downtown retail environment, accessibility and convenience must be prioritized for tenants and customers. Mr. Ferlito shared examples from personal experience, noting that businesses without visible or convenient parking are often avoided by customers. He further stated that successful downtown retail areas, including Birmingham and Royal Oak, rely on a combination of parking availability and high traffic to support tenant success. Mr. Ferlito reiterated that making the site easy for customers is essential for attracting and retaining quality retail tenants.

Vice Chair Osburn stated that, from a retailer's perspective, having parking directly in front of a business is beneficial because customers often assume that visible parking is the only available option and may not realize additional parking exists behind buildings.

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Mr. Ferlito added that visibility and convenience are critical factors for retailers, noting that many successful downtowns provide accessible parking along with active storefront environments. He emphasized that without front parking, leasing the retail space would be significantly more difficult and reiterated that tenant feedback consistently supports the need for convenient parking.

Board Member Hoppenstedt agreed, referencing downtown Northville as an example where on-street parking supports local businesses despite the presence of rear parking. She also cited Farmington as another example where parking access contributes to long-term retail success.

Mr. Ferlito stated that leasing discussions will continue and emphasized that the process will remain collaborative, with feedback shared transparently between the development team and the City. He noted that securing construction financing will depend on achieving pre-leasing commitments from tenants.

Vice Chair Osburn asked about the unit mix, specifically why the development includes fewer two-bedroom units compared to one-bedroom units.

Mr. Walters explained that two-bedroom units are more difficult to lease, noting that market preferences have shifted over time. He stated that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, studios were more common, but demand has since shifted toward one-bedroom units. Mr. Walters added that two-bedroom units are less attractive due to higher rental costs and lifestyle preferences, as they often require roommates and are generally harder to fill compared to one-bedroom units.

City Manager Brown stated that the proposal is market-driven and emphasized that the development team is working to make the project viable, not to hinder its success. City Manager Brown noted that the developers understand retail requirements, including on-street parking, and referenced examples in other higher-traffic areas where similar configurations have been successful. City Manager Brown stated that if the goal is to attract retail tenants, parking in front of the buildings is necessary, and encouraged the Board to remain open-minded rather than dismissing the concept based on assumptions about Wixom Road traffic. City Manager Brown further emphasized that the development team is proposing what they believe will work in the market and align with the City's goals for successful retail and apartment occupancy.

Board Member Payment asked about the likelihood of City approval given the traffic conditions on Wixom Road.

Assistant City Manager Benson responded that the Planning Commission has already been engaged in discussions regarding the proposal and has generally been open to the concept of on-street parking. Assistant City Manager Benson referenced prior discussions related to on-street parking along Pontiac Trail, noting that similar concerns were raised in the past, but the configuration ultimately functioned as intended once implemented. Assistant City Manager Benson stated that the intent of early discussions is to provide City Council with sufficient information and input from multiple stakeholders before making a final decision. He added that while there are differing opinions, the shared goal is to support viable retail development, and flexibility in design may be necessary given past challenges in achieving successful retail outcomes.

Mr. Walters stated that the development team is conducting market studies for both residential and commercial components and is working with brokers to identify potential tenants. Mr. Walters

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emphasized that the project will be guided by data and market feedback and that decisions will be made collaboratively with the City throughout the process. He noted that because the site is City-owned, ongoing coordination and transparency are essential.

Board Member Willett raised concern regarding lease-up risk prior to construction, referencing prior challenges with other developments where tenants were not secured in advance. Board Member Willett asked whether contractual provisions would require development timelines or commitments to prevent long-term vacancy if leasing targets are not met.

Mr. Walters responded that the development team does not yet own the property and stated that the purchase has not been finalized.

Assistant City Manager Benson explained that the purchase agreement is structured to provide both the City and the development team protections while allowing the developers an extended due diligence period to obtain site plan approval, secure entitlements, work through incentive approvals, and pursue pre-leasing. Assistant City Manager Benson stated that the agreement includes mutual exit provisions, and that finalization of the project would not occur until construction financing is secured, at which point lenders would take priority over other contractual provisions. He noted that this type of structure is common in similar developments and is intended to allow the project to move forward while maintaining appropriate safeguards for both parties.

Board Member Willett stated that the City's intent is not to acquire property for speculative purposes, but rather to ensure development occurs as part of an approved project. She emphasized that the City is only interested in selling the site if a viable project is in place and noted that financing is typically contingent on securing pre-leasing commitments from tenants.

Chairperson Buck requested additional discussion regarding on-site parking and emphasized the importance of evaluating safety impacts, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists using the Air Line Trail. Chairperson Buck stated that traffic safety and potential accident impacts should be reviewed in addition to retail considerations and requested that formal traffic studies be conducted to assess the proposed configuration.

Board Member Willett noted that traffic studies have likely been completed for the corridor previously.

Assistant City Manager Benson responded that the project is currently in the entitlement process and that additional detailed plans, including trail and circulation design, will be provided as the project advances. He stated that more comprehensive information will be available in future stages of review.

Mr. Walters stated that a traffic study focused specifically on the proposed development would be appropriate and confirmed the team's willingness to provide data-driven analysis in a transparent manner as part of the review process.

Mr. Ferlito reiterated the importance of on-street parking for the success of the retail component, explaining that the site layout eliminates the traditional front-loaded parking configuration found in many retail developments. He stated that on-street parking is critical to support visibility and accessibility for tenants, particularly for restaurant uses.

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Chairperson Buck sought clarification regarding residential parking supply. Mr. Walters confirmed that the revised plan includes approximately 50 spaces under the residential building. Chairperson Buck noted that this would not provide one space per unit and asked where additional residential parking would be accommodated. Mr. Walters responded that additional parking would be located on-site in designated areas reserved for residents only, with signage to restrict public use.

Chairperson Buck stated that the revised plan appears to provide even less parking behind the building and expressed concern about whether the overall supply would be sufficient. Chairperson Buck noted the project includes 10,000 square feet of retail and 75 residential units and stated her expectation that two-bedroom units would typically require two parking spaces. She asked for clarification on the total residential parking ratio and questioned whether the plan would meet demand given the apparent reduction in spaces.

Mr. Walters responded that all residential units would be allocated approximately one parking space per unit, with some units potentially receiving 1.5 spaces. Chairperson Buck clarified the proposed breakdown and questioned whether the project would still be short on available parking. Mr. Walters responded that the project exceeds the City's zoning requirements by approximately 20 parking spaces, stating that the development includes a total of 176 parking spaces and that it meets and exceeds the ordinance calculations based on square footage requirements.

Chairperson Buck asked how many parking spaces exist at Country Corners for comparison. Assistant City Manager Benson responded that he did not have an exact figure but indicated that it likely has a similar amount of open-area parking and not a large surplus.

Board Member Willett stated that as long as the project meets zoning requirements, the City does not dictate additional parking beyond what is required. She added that parking is intended to support access to retail rather than function as an oversized parking lot.

Assistant City Manager Benson added that the zoning district is intentionally designed to avoid maximum parking requirements and instead encourage reduced parking and shared parking strategies to support a more dense, walkable downtown environment. He stated that the goal is to create a pedestrian-oriented district that differs from traditional suburban strip retail. Assistant City Manager Benson noted that the City is still building out its downtown infrastructure and that while additional public parking is available on the south side of Pontiac Trail, it is limited and the area is expected to become more self-sustaining over time.

Board Member Hoppenstedt asked about the capacity of other public parking areas in the city and noted that in other downtowns, visitors typically expect to walk from available parking to their destination.

Assistant City Manager Benson responded that the City does have public parking on the south side of Pontiac Trail, though limited. He stated that the downtown is still developing its parking network and does not yet have the level of centralized public parking found in more established downtowns such as Northville. Assistant City Manager Benson added that while walking between parking areas and destinations may occur during events, most day-to-day use would rely on more localized parking solutions within the district.

Board Member Meredith asked for clarification regarding the "proposed HMA 10-foot trail" shown on the plan, specifically what HMA stands for. City Manager Brown responded that it refers to

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asphalt material. Assistant City Manager Benson explained that the rendering is layered over a previous site plan and that the trail depiction is part of the underlying plan context rather than a new standalone drawing.

Board Member Payment stated that the overall proposal aligns with the City's long-term vision for a walkable downtown and noted that developments such as West End Commons and surrounding projects support a pedestrian-oriented environment. Board Member Payment stated that visitors to downtown retail should expect to walk from parking areas rather than park directly in front of each business and expressed support for increased activity on the west end of the district.

Assistant City Manager Benson agreed and explained that the proposed on-street parking and trail improvements are part of a broader effort to obtain additional right-of-way width and enhance connectivity. He noted that similar improvements already exist on the opposite side of the street in front of Genesys and suggested that future phases could include on-street parking on both sides of the corridor to create a more balanced streetscape. Assistant City Manager Benson added that there are opportunities to expand parking over time as the area develops.

Board Member Payment stated that while concerns about traffic and congestion are valid, the proposal supports the City's broader downtown goals and should be considered in that context.

Board Member Meredith stated that he supports the concept but emphasized the importance of increasing the width of the bike path and ensuring safe separation between pedestrians, cyclists, and parked vehicles. He suggested a configuration where a sidewalk is positioned adjacent to parking, allowing safe pedestrian access before entering the bike path and roadway area. Board Member Meredith referenced other downtown examples where combined pedestrian and bike paths are approximately 15 feet wide with additional separation buffers. He stated that safety improvements and adequate width are essential for successful implementation and added that, overall, he views the proposal favorably.

Mr. Ferlito asked for clarification on the width of the comparable trail section referenced. Board Member Meredith responded that the example near Drafting Table is approximately 15 feet wide with an additional buffer area separating the path from the roadway, including landscaping elements.

Assistant City Manager Benson stated that he could provide detailed specifications for that existing configuration for further review.

Mr. Ferlito noted that there may be flexibility to adjust building placement slightly to accommodate design refinements.

Board Member Meredith concluded that, aside from the noted design considerations, he views the proposal as a strong project.

Board Member Willett asked for clarification regarding the tax increment financing structure, specifically whether the City would be giving up TIF revenue for 12 years or over the full duration of the project.

Assistant City Manager Benson responded that the project includes multiple financial components. He explained that the developers are requesting public infrastructure assistance

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through the DDA, including potential funding for Air Line Trail relocation, installation of on-street parking, and related streetscape improvements. Assistant City Manager Benson noted that these types of investments have been previously discussed by the DDA Board and would be brought forward as a separate proposal and agreement. He stated that such funding would likely be structured with a combination of upfront contributions and additional payments tied to project completion. Assistant City Manager Benson further explained that a separate MSHDA Housing TIF component would require the City to opt into the program, allowing the developer to capture incremental tax value under that structure.

Board Member Willett asked for the anticipated annual value of the TIF. Assistant City Manager Benson responded that he had not recently reviewed the figures.

Mr. Bonner stated that the overall TIF request is approximately $13 million over a roughly 25-year capture period. He explained that the project relies on multiple funding mechanisms, including upfront infrastructure support and the MSHDA Housing TIF, in order to address financing gaps created by below-market rents. Mr. Bonner stated that the development team has been transparent with City staff regarding financial projections, including rent assumptions, construction costs, and the role of incentive programs in making the project feasible. He added that removing any of these components would negatively impact the project's financial viability.

Mr. Walters stated that the current condition of the property generates no tax revenue for the City and emphasized the importance of evaluating the project based on a before-and-after tax comparison, noting that the development would generate new taxable value compared to existing conditions.

Chairperson Buck expressed concern that the proposal would require the City to provide infrastructure funding and tax incentives while giving up future TIF revenue potential. Mr. Walters responded that the site currently generates no tax revenue and stated that future revenue would depend on development occurring on the property.

Assistant City Manager Benson clarified that the TIF structure would primarily apply to the residential component and noted that the project may also pursue commercial tax abatements under PA 255 or PA 210, which could reduce commercial property taxes for up to 12 years if state authorization is renewed. Assistant City Manager Benson stated that the overall intent of the incentive package is not primarily to maximize new tax revenue but to enable redevelopment that has been difficult to achieve over a long period of time. He emphasized that the City is evaluating a combination of tools to encourage viable commercial and residential development in the downtown.

Chairperson Buck reiterated that while the City currently receives no revenue from the site, future development would rely on redirecting TIF revenues and City investment to fund infrastructure improvements. She stated that this effectively uses future tax growth from other areas to support the project site.

Executive Director Cloutier stated that the use of TIF funding for infrastructure is common among downtown development authorities and consistent with the City's DDA plan, which allows funding for infrastructure improvements. Executive Director Cloutier added that supporting higher density and retail development in the downtown may justify the use of incentives in order to achieve long-term community goals, even if it involves foregoing some potential revenue capture.

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Boardmember Willett stated that upon initially reviewing the proposal packet, she was not supportive of the project and acknowledged the difficult position the City is in regarding redevelopment of the site. She noted that, from a development perspective, interest in the property has been limited and expressed the belief that the City will need to be flexible and provide necessary incentives in order for the project to move forward, emphasizing that achieving development on the site may require compromise.

Mr. Walters responded that development often requires trade-offs and incentives, referencing examples from other communities, including the use of DDA financing tools and public-private partnerships in large-scale projects such as arena and downtown redevelopment efforts. Mr. Walters stated that successful placemaking projects typically require some level of public participation or incentive support, particularly in challenging market conditions with high construction costs and interest rates. He noted that similar incentive structures are being utilized in other Southeast Michigan projects the team is involved in, including Ferndale, Plymouth, and Dexter, to make development financially feasible.

Mr. Ferlito reiterated that construction costs are significantly impacting feasibility, citing approximate per-square-foot costs for both residential and commercial components, and explained that additional tenant improvements further increase overall project expenses. He stated that multiple layers of financing, including TIFs, PILOTs, and other incentive tools, are often necessary to make projects viable in the current market. Mr. Ferlito emphasized that partnering with municipalities is essential to moving such developments forward.

Board Member Payment acknowledged concerns regarding public expenditure and expressed caution regarding financial commitments.

Chairperson Buck asked whether the City or the DDA would be providing funding. Mr. Walters responded that most development incentives typically come through the DDA rather than general City funds, as DDAs are the primary mechanism used for reinvestment in downtown areas. He clarified that general fund revenues are not typically used for private development projects.

Board Member Willett noted that the City is already financially invested in the project.

Assistant City Manager Benson responded that the City's primary contribution is the sale of assembled land at a price below acquisition cost, effectively representing a financial investment in the project. He stated that this contribution, along with potential foregone tax increment revenue, constitutes the City's primary financial participation.

Executive Director Cloutier explained that DDAs were established specifically to enable municipalities to support infrastructure and redevelopment projects that could not be funded through general operating budgets. She stated that this mechanism is commonly used to facilitate private investment in downtown areas.

Board Member Willett asked what would happen if the DDA were not renewed. Assistant City Manager Benson responded that it would not materially affect the current project, as any infrastructure assistance would occur prior to the expiration of the existing DDA TIF period. He added that the current DDA plan does not yet authorize broader redevelopment financing tools, though future amendments could expand those capabilities.

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Board Member Willett noted that the current DDA plan is set to expire at the end of fiscal year 2028–2029.

Mr. Ferlito stated that the development team's goal is to begin construction early next year, with retail leasing occurring first as required under the agreement. He added that the project is structured to require pre-leasing of approximately 60% of the building within a 6-to-8-month period before residential construction can commence, with an anticipated leasing target timeline around April.

Board Member Willett asked what length of tenant leases the development team was targeting. Mr. Ferlito responded that leases would typically be in the 5-to-10-year range. He explained that once approximately 60 percent of the project is pre-leased, a local bank would be willing to finance the smaller retail building, while the larger residential component would be financed separately through a HUD loan process, which could take approximately one year. He stated that the financing and leasing processes are already underway.

Board Member Meredith stated that he believes the project has strong potential to be a positive addition to downtown and expressed support for the development concept.

Assistant City Manager Benson provided additional context, noting that prior developments in the area, including Country Corners, were supported through Brownfield financing structures and extended tax increment financing agreements. He stated that historically, downtown projects in this area have required significant public incentives and that similar approaches are being used in the current proposal. Assistant City Manager Benson emphasized that this is consistent with past redevelopment efforts rather than an unusual circumstance.

Board Member Hoppenstedt expressed appreciation to the development team for their interest and investment in the downtown and thanked them for presenting the proposal.

Mr. Walters thanked the Commission and stated that the development team has had a positive experience working with the City. He added that he has personal ties to the area and appreciation for the opportunity to be involved in the project.

Assistant City Manager Benson introduced Mr. Dan Jacobs as the realtor working with the City.

Mr. Jacobs provided his professional background in retail development and stated that successful urban retail environments require multiple aligned factors, including municipal participation, walkability, and supporting uses such as institutional anchors, hospitals, universities, or tourism. He explained that developments with parking located in front of buildings tend to perform better than those without visible parking access, particularly along busy corridors. Mr. Jacobs emphasized that on-street parking can significantly improve retail visibility and customer behavior by signaling activity and encouraging stops. He added that even when parking is not immediately visible, customers are more likely to engage with a retail area if they perceive it as active and accessible.

Mr. Jacobs discussed broader market conditions, noting that high construction costs—often exceeding $300 per square foot for mixed-use developments—have made projects more difficult to finance. He stated that required retail rents often range from $40 to $50 per square foot for new construction, which can be challenging in certain markets. He explained that increasing

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construction and operating costs, including taxes and common area expenses, have further constrained retail feasibility.

Mr. Jacobs concluded that there has been limited developer interest in similar projects due to current market conditions and commended the development team for their willingness to work creatively with the City and pursue multiple strategies to make the project viable.

2. Recommendation to Award the bid for West End Commons Construction to DA Contracting LLC of Southfield, MI for the Construction Cost Including Contingency and Furnishings of $1,118,802 and Authorize a Proposal for Construction Engineering Services from Hubbel, Roth, and Clark for $180,000 for the Total Project Budget Not-to Exceed $1,298,802 to be Paid from West End Commons Capital Account #401-751-971.547 and recommend approval to City Council.

Memorandum to Wixom Downtown Development Authority from Drew Benson, Assistant City Manager & Director of Economic Development; Laura Cloutier, Executive Director, Wixom DDA dated April 28, 2026 regarding Recommendation to Award the Bid for West End Commons Construction to DA Contracting LLC of Southfield, MI for a Construction Cost including Contingency and Furnishings of $1,118,802 and Authorize a Proposal for Construction Engineering Services from Hubbell, Roth, and Clark for $180,000 for a Total Project Budget Not-to-Exceed $1,298,802 to be Paid from West End Commons Capital Account #401-751-971.547 and recommend approval to the City Council.

**MOTION** by Board Member Willett and second by Board Member Meredith to discuss the recommendation to award the bid for West End Commons Construction to DA Contracting LLC of Southfield, MI for the Construction Cost including Contingency and Furnishings of $1,118,802 and Authorize a Proposal for Construction Engineering Services from Hubbel, Roth, and Clark for $180,000 for the Total Project Budget Not to Exceed $1,298,802 to be Paid from West End Commons Capital Account #401-751-971.547 and recommend approval to City Council.

Assistant City Manager Benson explained the structure of the recommended motion, stating that DA Contracting was the second-lowest bidder with a total bid of approximately $1.137 million. He noted that this amount included sewer lining work estimated at $118,000, which was originally added by engineers for efficiency during construction but would be removed from the project scope and funded separately through sewer funds. Assistant City Manager Benson also explained that additional costs include engineering services and approximately $20,293 for furnishings, which are being funded through a combination of grant sources and local funds. He stated that the budget structure was designed to maximize the use of available grant funding, including federal community project funding, which requires a 20 percent local match. Assistant City Manager Benson added that, overall, the project came in under budget, which he characterized as a positive outcome.

Board Member Willett stated that she was generally comfortable with the financial figures but asked whether the City follows a lowest qualified bidder process and whether the selected contractor is bonded for the project. Assistant City Manager Benson confirmed that bonding is required but did not recall the exact amount at the time. Board Member Willett asked whether the project was strictly awarded based on lowest bid or whether negotiation was considered and questioned the significant difference between bids and how the $118,000 sewer lining adjustment

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was applied across bidders. She requested clarification on how the selected contractor was determined to be the most qualified.

Assistant City Manager Benson responded that the selection process begins with the lowest bidder and then proceeds upward if necessary to determine who meets all bid specifications and qualifications. He explained that the City initially reviewed Haney General Contracting but identified concerns related to bid completeness, including issues with bathroom pricing and responsiveness. Assistant City Manager Benson stated that the City then moved to DA Contracting, reviewed their references and past work, and ultimately determined they were qualified and met the required specifications. He emphasized that the process follows a lowest responsible and responsive bidder standard, rather than negotiation-based selection.

Board Member Willett expressed concern that the selected contractor appeared, based on public information, to function primarily as a single LLC that subcontracts most of its work. She stated that she was trying to understand the decision-making process and emphasized that selecting the lowest-cost bidder is not always the best approach. Board Member Willett referenced a prior project where installation issues required significant corrective work, noting that cost savings upfront can sometimes lead to higher long-term expenses.

Assistant City Manager Benson responded that the City's objective is to complete the project at the lowest responsible cost, particularly given the multiple funding sources involved. He stated that while higher bids could be considered, doing so would require justification for why additional expenditures would be necessary when lower-cost options meet specifications. Board Member Benson acknowledged that past projects have experienced quality issues but reiterated that the City is required to follow a competitive bidding process and present the lowest responsible and responsive bid that meets requirements. He added that while the process can be difficult, the bid tab is structured to standardize comparisons as much as possible.

Board Member Willett asked whether other bidders, such as Schonschek or Uniland Corporation, had included additional scope items or higher-quality components that were not reflected in the selected bid. Assistant City Manager Benson responded that differences between bids generally relate to how contractors allocate costs, overhead, and line items rather than differences in scope. He stated that while the City attempts to normalize bids for comparison, variations in pricing structure make direct comparisons challenging. Assistant City Manager Benson reiterated that competitive bidding inherently functions as a "race to the bottom" in terms of cost.

Chairperson Buck asked about the burying of the electrical lines, specifically referencing overhead power lines shown in the project area and a line-item payment to DTE for new electric service. Assistant City Manager Benson explained that the payment to DTE is for installation of new electrical service and confirmed that undergrounding the existing overhead lines is technically possible but not part of the current project scope. He stated that burying those lines would be extremely costly and complicated due to the density of existing underground utilities, including sewer, water, and storm infrastructure, and would likely require coordination outside the scope of this project. Assistant City Manager Benson added that future relocation or burial of the lines could potentially occur in a different phase or location but is not being pursued as part of this development.

Executive Director Cloutier added that utility burial would be cost-prohibitive at present and not feasible within the current budget.

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Board Member Willett stated that while the overhead lines are visible in renderings, they are unlikely to be as noticeable in person once the area is developed and occupied. She added that concerns about their visual impact may diminish once the project is complete and in use.

Chairperson Buck stated that, based on her personal experience living in downtown and having experienced multiple power outages and a fire incident involving overhead lines, she had concerns about the proximity of the proposed power lines to café lighting and other electrical infrastructure. She asked whether there was any safety issues associated with the overhead lines being located so close to the proposed improvements.

Assistant City Manager Benson responded that while the configuration is not ideal, relocating or burying the lines is not feasible within the current project budget.

City Manager Brown added that undergrounding the lines would significantly increase project costs, referencing an alternative bid that would have been approximately $250,000 higher. City Manager Brown stated that the City must rely on a competitive bidding process and select options that align with available funding, noting that higher-cost alternatives would require additional funding sources not currently identified.

Board Member Payment asked whether the City had concerns regarding the wide variation in bid amounts among contractors, particularly where certain line items, such as electrical work, showed significant differences between bidders. Board Member Payment questioned whether such discrepancies could indicate potential issues with quality or completeness of work.

Assistant City Manager Benson responded that bid variations are not uncommon due to differences in how contractors interpret and allocate costs. He explained that the City's engineering consultant, HRC, prepares a detailed bid tab to standardize and compare proposals as consistently as possible. Assistant City Manager Benson noted that the bidding documents are extensive and include detailed technical specifications intended to ensure bidders are working from the same scope. He added that while the City does not independently verify every subcontractor assumption or cost breakdown due to time constraints, the documentation is designed to minimize ambiguity.

Board Member Payment stated that the large discrepancies in certain bid line items were concerning.

Assistant City Manager Benson responded that it is not unusual for bids to vary widely, particularly when some contractors may assume they are competing against fewer bidders and adjust pricing accordingly.

Board Member Willett added that lower bids can sometimes lead to increased costs through change orders during construction. She stated that the City attempts to mitigate this risk by using a leveled bid tab process prepared by HRC, which allows for standardized comparison of line items across bidders.

City Manager Brown added that the bid evaluation process includes background review of contractors, including prior experience with similar projects as referenced in their submissions.

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**MOTION** by Board Member Willett and second by Board Member Meredith to recommend approval that the DDA Board Award the Bid for West End Commons Construction to DA Contracting LLC of Southfield, MI for a Construction Cost Including Contingency and Furnishings of $1,118,802 and Authorize a Proposal for Construction Engineering Services from Hubbell, Roth, and Clark for $180,000 for a Total Project Budget Not-to-Exceed $1,298,802 to be Paid from West End Commons Capital Account #401-751-97.547 and recommend approval to the City Council.

**VOTE: MOTION CARRIED**

3. Recommend approval of CQC, Inc., to provide additional landscaping enhancements along N. Wixom Road, including the installation of mulch, tree fertilizer spikes, and cut-in-edging at total cost of $6,851.25 from Downtown Enhancement Account #248-729-956.006.

Memorandum to Wixom Downtown Development Authority from Laura Cloutier, Executive Director, Wixom DDA dated April 28, 2026 regarding Recommend approval of CQC, Inc., to provide additional landscaping enhancements along N. Wixom Road, including the installation of mulch, tree fertilizer spikes, and cut-in edging, at a total cost of $6,851.25 from the Downtown Enhancement Account #248-729-956.0012; including Administrative Summary and Recommendation.

**MOTION** by Board Member Willett and second by Board Member Hoppenstedt to open discussion to Recommend approval of CQC, Inc., to provide additional landscaping enhancements along N. Wixom Road, including the installation of mulch, tree fertilizer spikes, and cut-in edging, at a total cost of $6,851.25 from the Downtown Enhancement Account #248-729-956.0012; including Administrative Summary and Recommendation.

Executive Director Cloutier reported on landscaping maintenance along North Wixom Road completed by CQC, noting that the contractor has been actively monitoring plant health and maintaining the site since installation. She stated that one tree was damaged when struck by a railroad vehicle, with the railroad having already reimbursed the City for its replacement. She also noted that one pine tree was lost over the winter, likely due to harsh seasonal conditions affecting stress levels in the plants.

Executive Director Cloutier explained that CQC is recommending additional maintenance measures, including a top dressing of mulch to improve appearance and weed control, as well as the installation of eleven fertilized tree spikes to support the health and survival of existing trees. She also noted a request for cutting and edging along the landscaped area to further assist with maintenance and weed management. The total cost for the proposed additional work is $6,851.25. She added that several shrubs that were stolen shortly after installation will be replaced by the contractor at no additional cost to the City.

Assistant City Manager Benson stated that they strongly recommend the tree spikes and edging components, noting that edging was not included in the original scope but is now considered beneficial. He added that there are ongoing discussions regarding the frequency and necessity of annual mulch applications and that staff is presenting the options for Commission discretion.

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Executive Director Cloutier added that the new mulch application would also assist with weed control and noted that a new contractor will be providing broader weed maintenance services throughout the downtown and other City areas.

Chairperson Buck stated that she is supportive of the contractor based on their responsiveness and willingness to replace stolen plantings at no cost. She expressed support for the proposed mulch and maintenance work, stating that the improvements appear reasonable and beneficial for the appearance and upkeep of the landscaping.

**MOTION** by Board Member Willett and second by Hoppenstedt to approve CQC, Inc., to provide additional landscaping enhancements along N. Wixom Road, including the installation of mulch, tree fertilizer spikes, and cut-in edging, at a total cost of $6,851.25 from the Downtown Enhancement Account #248-729-956.0006.

**VOTE: MOTION CARRIED**

**Information:**

1) Committee Reports

A. Design Committee

Executive Director Cloutier provided an update from the Design Committee, stating that the planned downtown cleanup event scheduled for the following day would be postponed due to rain and rescheduled to the rain date of May 6. She also announced a “Paint the Bike” event scheduled for May 16, during which bikes will be collected, cleaned, repainted, and later reinstalled once dry. Executive Director Cloutier invited volunteers to participate and indicated that a sign-up link would be distributed, noting that additional help would be beneficial.

Chairperson Buck stated that a resident from the Weir House Museum had contacted her regarding a bike in need of repainting and asked whether it could be included in the upcoming project.

Executive Director responded that the bike referenced is not part of the current program. She explained that, under the prior agreement with the Historical Society, the City assisted in painting bikes after the Society provided them, but future maintenance responsibilities were assigned to the Historical Society.

Chairperson Buck acknowledged the clarification and stated he would relay the information to the resident.

B. Economic Vitality Committee

Board Member Willett stated that she was unable to attend the budget session but noted that one of the key priorities discussed for the future of downtown is identifying and securing an anchor grocery store. She emphasized that he believes a grocery component is essential for a walkable downtown, especially with new residential development coming online. Board Member Willett acknowledged that previous discussions with staff, including Assistant City Manager Benson, and

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he indicated that attracting a grocery tenant would be very challenging, but he reiterated that it remains an important goal for downtown viability.

Assistant City Manager Benson responded that the proposed Ferlito development could potentially provide an opportunity for such a use.

Board Member Willett suggested the possibility of incorporating a grocery component into a future development, including the idea of a smaller-format or multi-level grocery use combined with other amenities such as a café. She reiterated that providing everyday retail services is important for supporting residents who are choosing to live downtown. Board Member Willett also noted that Wixom Market is not frequently used and does not currently function as a strong anchor retail destination.

Assistant City Manager Benson acknowledged the concern and noted that while Wixom Market functions as a supermarket, its appearance and marketing may limit its draw.

Chairperson Buck agreed, stating that while some interior improvements appear to be occurring, the exterior presence remains a concern.

Board Member Willett reiterated that the current grocery option is not sufficiently attractive for downtown residents and stated that many people would likely choose larger regional grocery stores such as Meijer, particularly if transportation options are available.

Executive Director Cloutier added that increasing residential development in the downtown will further elevate the need for convenient grocery access.

C. Promotions Committee

Chairperson Buck stated that volunteers are needed for Derby Day and noted that the event has a record number of participants, with additional sign-ups continuing daily. She encouraged Board members and others to assist if possible and added that, regardless of participation levels, the event is expected to be successful.

D. Organization Committee

Board Member Hoppenstedt stated the Committee did not meet this month but some of the members of the Committee are working this week to help support Derby Day.

2) Downtown Business News/Events

2026: May 2nd: Derby Day Races – 10-year Anniversary
2026: June 11th: The Main Event
2026: September 19th: Wixom Block Party – 10-year Anniversary

**Public Comments:**

No public comments.

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**Executive Director's Comments:**

Executive Director Cloutier reported that she recently spoke with iHeartMedia regarding potential advertising opportunities through stations including 95.5 and 100.3 WNIC. She stated that the discussion was productive and that she expects to receive a formal proposal for review, which she anticipates bringing back to the Board in the near future.

Assistant City Manager Benson provided an update on liquor license activity, noting that there have been several recent transfers. He stated that the liquor license for Alex's has been approved and that an additional transfer request has been received for Wixom Station under new ownership, which is expected to be presented to City Council in May.

Executive Director Cloutier added that Alex's has also been approved for participation in the City's social district program.

Assistant City Manager Benson noted that Wixom Station appears to be continuing operations under similar use based on the current application, though some changes may occur under new ownership.

Chairperson Buck asked about upcoming ribbon cutting events. Assistant City Manager Benson responded that no ribbon cuttings are currently scheduled but noted that staff recently met with the Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce to discuss coordinating future events and indicated that updates would be provided as they become available.

**Board Members' Comments:**

Chairperson Buck thanked participants for the discussion and noted that the meeting packet was extensive, particularly due to the inclusion of site plans, which she found difficult to review digitally. She suggested that printed packets may be helpful for members when reviewing large or detailed plan sets and asked whether printing costs could be incorporated into the budget, noting that other boards may already utilize printed materials.

Assistant City Manager Benson responded that staff could explore options to support printing needs and suggested providing access to a printer for staff support to improve production of hard copies when necessary.

Board Member Willett provided two comments. First, she highlighted the upcoming World Disc Golf Championship at Kensington in August and noted that Discraft, a Wixom-based company, is a major sponsor. She emphasized that the event is expected to draw significant attendance and suggested that the City should pursue marketing opportunities to encourage visitors to spend time in downtown Wixom, noting the proximity between Kensington and Wixom.

Board Member Willett also expressed concern regarding the flow of information to Board and Commission members, stating that she feels important project information is sometimes shared late in the process. She emphasized that earlier access to information would allow members to be better prepared for discussions and more effective in their roles. Board Member Willett added that she believes DDA-funded projects are significant community investments and should be discussed transparently. She also expressed frustration regarding comments about the potential

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non-renewal of the DDA, stating that such remarks are discouraging to volunteer board members who are working to responsibly manage public funds.

City Manager Brown responded that the intent is not to withhold information, but rather to bring forward proposals once they are confirmed to comply with applicable ordinances and standards before formal presentation.

**Adjournment:**

This meeting of the Wixom Downtown Development Authority was motioned and adjourned at 9:20 a.m.

Mona Freiburger
Recording Secretary

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