

**MANISTEE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**MEETING MINUTES OF WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9TH, 2025**  
**8:30 A.M., WSCC EDUCATION CENTER**  
**400 RIVER STREET, MEETING ROOM B**

PRESENT: Kyle Mosher, Bruce Allen, Ben Crowley, Deanna Marsh, Tyler Leppanen, Sammie Lukaskiewicz, Bill Gambill

ABSENT: Lindsey Swidorski, Karen Goodman

ALSO PRESENT: Andrew Stafford, Nicole Kaminski, Councilmember Grabowski

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting called to order by the Chair at 8:30 a.m.

2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Sammie Lukaskiewicz noted changing the meeting minutes attachment listed in the agenda from November to March.

*MOTION* by Ben Crowley, second by Sammie Lukaskiewicz to accept the agenda with the corrections stated above.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR MARCH 12, 2025 MEETING**

*MOTION* by Bruce Allen, second by Deanna Marsh to approve the minutes from the March 12, 2025, regular meeting.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

5. **APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORTS**

a. **March 2025:**

- i. The unpaid bills report shows a value of \$19,033.26
- ii. Expenses include the Quarter 3 City Service Agreement payment, the Economic Development and Executive Director fee paid to the Chamber, and the monthly Richards & McDougall fee.
- iii. Other activities included a payment to Great American Insurance and a deposit for a vendor permit from The Ideal Kitchen.

*MOTION* by Bruce Allen, second by Bill Gambill to accept the March 2025 financials.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

## 6. EXECUTIVE REPORTS – Andrew Stafford

### a. **Total Contacts Made: 28**

This includes a mix of prospective business inquiries, property discussions, and stakeholder check-ins.

### b. **Vacant Commercial Space Inventory:**

A full listing of currently vacant commercial spaces is included in the report for reference and follow-up.

### c. **Inactive Second-Story Square Footage:**

Over 40,000 square feet of inactive second-story space was identified along River Street, highlighting significant redevelopment potential.

### d. **New Business Engagements:**

Initiated contact with 5 new business prospects. Each represents ongoing dialogue, with multiple communications and follow-ups to support their potential entry or expansion in the area.

### e. **Property Owner Outreach:**

Proactively engaging with building owners to better understand the current status and future intentions for key properties. These conversations are part of a broader effort to assess development opportunities and align support as needed.

## 7. REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

### a. Facade Grant - Andrew Stafford

- a. *Purple Paintbrush / Clean Lines:* The facade improvement work is largely complete. We're currently awaiting the completion of a few non-facade-related items before final receipts are submitted for reimbursement.

### b. Streetscape - Andrew Stafford / Bill Gambill

#### a. **RightSide Design Update:**

Awaiting updated renderings from RightSide Design to present to the board. These will support next steps in project planning and visualization.

#### b. **MEDC RAP Grant Status:**

The grant decision timeline has been extended by approximately six weeks. The application is currently in its third round of review, with final determinations expected in the coming weeks.

### c. Gap Financing - Tyler Leppanen / Andrew Stafford

- a. The application is complete. Andrew Stafford has proactively connected with building owners who have expressed interest in future projects, helping to strengthen and shape the direction of this initiative. A review meeting with Ed Bradford was also held to ensure the application is well-prepared, relevant, and aligned with program requirements.

## 8. OLD BUSINESS

- a. Riverwalk - Bill Gambill
  - i. Active progress continues on-site work and structural repairs. Structural replacements are currently underway on the Dick's Barber Shop portion of the Riverwalk. Site work has also begun near Butterfly Park, including the creation of a new access point in that area. In addition, painting has started on railings and light poles to enhance overall aesthetics and cohesion.
- b. Banners - Sammie Lukaskiewicz
  - i. In addition to exploring potential new banners, Sammie is working toward a comprehensive signage package for the City of Manistee, with a focus on creating uniformity across public spaces. This includes the development of a cohesive informational signage series specifically for the Riverwalk area.
  - ii. Tourism has also rebranded its visual identity to align more closely with the Rising Tide initiative. New logo options have been created and presented, reflecting this refreshed direction.
  - iii. At the next meeting, banner design recommendations and supporting files will be shared for review and discussion.
- c. Construction fee of \$10/week for construction trucks downtown
  - i. Ed Bradford followed the DDA's recommendation and increased to \$50/week.

## 9. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Commercial / Residential Vacancies
  - i. A detailed sheet has been created highlighting both vacant commercial properties and underutilized second-story space throughout the district. Of the identified vacant commercial properties, eight are considered significant redevelopment opportunities, requiring substantial investment and rehabilitation to return to active use.
- b. Target Business Sub-Committee
  - i. We're taking a more intentional approach to identifying the types of businesses we want to attract to the downtown district. To support this effort, a sub-committee is being formed to gather input and strategic direction from the board. Ben Crowley and Deanna Marsh have expressed interest in serving on this sub-committee.
- c. Outdoor Seating - Available May 1, 2025
  - i. This is a one-time fee of \$25 that allows businesses to set up outdoor seating directly in front of their storefronts.
- d. Eagle 101.5 Agreement



- i. In 2024, 20 businesses are participating in the Eagle 101.5 partnership. There is a general consensus that, as long as businesses continue to utilize and value the opportunity, the program should be continued in future seasons.

*MOTION* by Deanna Marsh, second by Sammie Lukaskiewicz to approve the Eagle 101.5 Agreement  
Voice vote—Motion approved.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. None

11. BOARD COMMENT

- a. **Ben Crowley** expressed his appreciation for the efforts Andrew Stafford has put into advancing the economic development initiatives.
- b. **Bill Gambill** thanked Sammie Lukaskiewicz for her hard work on the banner and signage package, recognizing her contributions to the project's progress.
- c. **Kyle Mosher** provided an update on the budget subcommittee meeting and shared that recommendations will be presented at the next meeting.
- d. **Andrew Stafford** mentioned that the City Council has received a draft of the DDA budget and has the entire month of April to review and provide feedback.

12. ADJOURN

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 14, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. in the WSCC Education Center, 400 River Street.

*MOTION* by Ben Crowley, second by Sammie Lukaskiewicz **to adjourn at 9:05 a.m.**

Nicole Kaminski

*Nicole Kaminski*

Acting Recording Secretary