

**MANISTEE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
MEETING MINUTES OF WEDNESDAY, MAY 14TH, 2025  
8:30 A.M., WSCC EDUCATION CENTER  
400 RIVER STREET, MEETING ROOM B**

**PRESENT:** Kyle Mosher, Bruce Allen, Ben Crowley, Deanna Marsh \*arrived 8:35am, left at 9:42am, Tyler Leppanen \*arrived 8:44am, Sammie Lukaskiewicz, Bill Gambill, Karen Goodman, Lindsey Swidorski

**ABSENT:** None

**ALSO PRESENT:** Andrew Stafford, Nicole Kaminski, Carmen Kott, Councilmember Grabowski, Kyle Kotecki, Brandon Jensen, Sara Herberger, Krista Phillips, Dan Wagner, Lucas Porath, Laura Heintzelman, Adam Dontz, Lucas Richardson, Ann Gatrell

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Amendment to the agenda to move the presentations by MDOT and Adam Dontz to the beginning of the meeting, after the public comment section.

*MOTION* by Karen Goodman, second by Ben Crowley to accept the agenda with the amendments stated above.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**4. COLLABORATIVE MARKETING EFFORT - ADAM DONTZ**

- a. Currently have the approval from Contour Air, Blacker Airport, the Chamber, the Economic Development Council, and are now seeking DDA approval/by-in.
  - i. The program aims to increase commerce in the downtown business district.
  - ii. Came out of a concern that travelers fly into Manistee but leave for other areas.
  - iii. \$100 gift card offered to one passenger per inbound flight and will run June through September. There are approximately 242 inbound flights during this period.
  - iv. The “use it or lose it” program has a maximum cost of \$5,000, only incurred if cards are used, and has been approved by the first four organizations.

*MOTION* by Bruce Allen, second by Bill Gambill to commit to \$5,000 for the collaborative marketing effort.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

**5. MDOT 2027/2028 PROJECT**

a. MDOT Presentation 2027/2028 Detour

- i. The project will take approximately two years, from April 15 to October 31 in both 2027 and 2028.
- ii. The south half will be completed in 2027 (Stronach Road to the bridge); the north half in 2028.
- iii. 2027: Southbound traffic detoured via Maple–Merkey; northbound stays on US-31. 2028: Northbound traffic stays on US-31; local detour via Lakeshore, Kott, and Dontz Roads.
- iv. Through traffic during both years will use M-55; Stronach Road may be used for through access.
- v. The DDA Board is concerned with signage; past messaging made it seem like “Manistee was closed.” MDOT is open to improved signage to clearly communicate that businesses remain open.
- vi. The project is fully funded and included in the approved 5-year plan, though minor changes may occur. Additional funding may be needed for infrastructure improvements along detour routes. MDOT is fully committed to the project.
- vii. The project affects 160 properties along the corridor. Plans include new sidewalks, with potential for added crosswalks and lighting.

**6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR APRIL 9, 2025 MEETING**

*MOTION* by Karen Goodman, second by Lindsey Swidorski to approve the minutes from the April 9, 2025, regular meeting.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

**7. APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORTS**

a. **April 2025:**

- i. The total in the unpaid bills was \$51,857.16.
- ii. Expenses this month included:
  1. Richards & McDougall monthly fee
  2. Quickbooks: monthly fee:
  3. Manistee Area Chamber: monthly Executive Director fee
  4. Jim Matthews (Riovista LLC) (334,336,338 River Street): Facade Reimbursement
  5. Spicer Group: Streetscape Work
  6. Weesies Brothers: Spring Flower Baskets and Planters
  7. WSCC: Partnership Contract

*MOTION* by Bruce Allen, second by Ben Crowley to accept the April 2025 financials.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

8. **EXECUTIVE REPORTS** – Andrew Stafford

- a. **Total Contacts Made:** 23 in Downtown, mainly with property owners, re-engaging three priority sites: Music Vault, Wahr Hardware and Jones Dairy Building.

9. **REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**

- a. Facade Grant - Andrew Stafford
  - a. Facade projects have a year to be completed. If the project is not done in a year, they do not receive the funds from the DDA. Certain delays are acceptable under specific conditions.
  - b. Rolling Applications
    - i. The program has been changed to a rolling application to make it more impactful and convenient for property owners.
  - c. 385 River Street Recommendation
    - i. Piping Plover has submitted an application for a \$37,000 facade project, the total project is \$79,000 projects. The sub-committee recommended a \$20,000 commitment from the DDA board.
    - ii. The project is a complete redesign of the exterior of the building restoring the windows of the building that have been covered.

*MOTION* by Bill Gambill, second by Bruce Allen to approve the Piping Plover Facade Application for \$20,000.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

- d. 334, 336, 338 River Street Complete
  - i. Jim Matthews has completed his project. His project included a complete window replacement.
- b. Streetscape - Andrew Stafford / Bill Gambill
  - a. Streetscape Presentation - Brandon Jensen
    - i. The DDA was awarded the RAP Grant.
    - ii. Rightside Design is assisting the subcommittee with project visualization.
    - iii. Project components include the RAP Grant, EDA Riverwalk Grant, River Street Corridor, and Gateway Project.
    - iv. Design will follow a block-by-block approach, emphasizing improved intersections and increased safe pedestrian crossings.
    - v. Dicks Barber Shop parking lot is proposed to be converted into a park/public plaza.
    - vi. Peak capacity for parking downtown is about 35%, and we have enough off-street parking to compensate. Maximum utilization rate is 85%.



- vii. The primary focus is on improving intersections.
- viii. RAP Grant scope:
  - 1. West Plaza (Oaks to Spruce Streets): \$1,513,650 total (\$756,825 Grant, \$200,000 City, \$556,825 DDA)
  - 2. Primary Corridor: \$900,000 – street work scheduled for 2026
  - 3. Future Phases: East Plaza, mid-block sidewalks, and Secondary Corridor to be completed later with alternative funding sources.

c. Gap Financing - Tyler Leppanen / Andrew Stafford

- a. No updates at this time.

d. Target Business - Andrew Stafford

- a. 308 River Street and 415 River Street highlighted as high-potential locations. Pulled a void analysis, highlighted 5 potential businesses. Three key priority properties have also been discussed for redevelopment.

e. Events

- a. 344 River Street Event Application

- i. *Taco Bout It* is proposing doing a karaoke event every Thursday night from 7:00pm - 9:00pm in the Summer. The proposal is to use the sidewalk and not close the street.

*MOTION* by Bruce Allen, second by Ben Crowley, to not recommend DDA support of this event.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

- b. DDA Event Application

- i. The new proposed application would require signatures from your neighbors when looking to host an event.
    - ii. The application would expand to all events occurring in the DDA.
    - iii. Discussion was held on the topic of notifying your neighbors and seeking neighbor approval.

*MOTION* by Karen Goodman to approve the new event application. \*Motion was withdrawn due to further discussion of implementation.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

## 10. **OLD BUSINESS**

- a. Riverwalk - Bill Gambill

- i. South Riverwalk:

- 1. Painting scheduled from June 2 to July 31.
    - 2. Electrical work to be completed by June 30.
    - 3. Landscaping to take place from late May through July.

- ii. North Riverwalk:

1. Bids due back by May 22.

b. Budget Recommendation/Approval - Kyle Mosher

- i. The draft budget was submitted to City Council in March and approved. A public hearing is required, and changes will be approved in June. The budget committee will meet with staff to finalize adjustments.

11. NEW BUSINESS

a. New Planter Liners

*MOTION* by Karen Goodman, second by Bruce Allen to approve the quote provided by DeepStream Designs for new liners for the downtown planters.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

12. PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. Adam Dontz - Thank you to the committee for their efforts on the streetscape project. Suggest considering an alternative use for the East Plaza, such as a food truck plaza, instead of a park. Is there an opportunity to incorporate firepits along the Riverwalk? Recommend exploring a business-focused use for the East Plaza.

13. BOARD COMMENT


- a. Sammie Lukaskiewicz - Thanked Brandon Jensen for his work on the streetscape. She also commended the Chamber on Developer Day.  
b. Bruce Allen - Thanked Brandon Jensen for his work on the streetscape project.  
c. Bill Gambill - Noted on the MDOT Project that there is a transportation alternative program for enhancing the pedestrian feel along the corridor.  
d. Karen Goodman - Noted that she has decided to not reapply for her DDA position. She commended the board on their progress.

14. ADJOURN

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 11, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. in the WSCC Education Center, 400 River Street.

*MOTION* by Ben Crowley, second by Bill Gambill to **adjourn at 9:55 a.m.**

Nicole Kaminski

  
Acting Recording Secretary