

MANISTEE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES OF WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12TH, 2025
8:30 A.M., WSCC EDUCATION CENTER
400 RIVER STREET, MEETING ROOM B

PRESENT: Bill Gambill, Ben Crowley, Jamil Alam, Lindsey Swidorski, Tyler Leppanen, Sammie Lukaskiewicz

ABSENT: Bruce Allen, Kyle Mosher, Deanna Marsh

ALSO PRESENT: Andrew Stafford, Nicole Kaminski, Councilmember Grabowski, Kyle Kotecki, Sara Herberger, Gordon Heinold, Debbie Chase

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting called to order by the City Manager at 8:34 AM

2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

MOTION by Ben Crowley, second by Sammie Lukaskiewicz, to accept the agenda as presented.
Voice vote—Motion approved.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Gordon Heinold: Native Plant Gardens - looking for collaboration, purchasing, and partnership opportunities. Maintenance on native plants is lower than for conventional gardens, but still requires some care. Met with SEEDS EcoCorps, an environmental nonprofit that provides crews for forest services, parks, and similar projects, to discuss a potential collaboration on the gardens. Pending funding, they could provide a crew in the spring and a couple of people once a week throughout the summer.

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR OCTOBER 15, 2025, MEETING**

MOTION by Sammie Lukaskiewicz, seconded by Lindsey Swidorski to approve the minutes from the October 15, 2025, regular meeting.
Voice vote—Motion approved.

5. **APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORTS**

a. October 2025:

- i. The total of the unpaid bills in the packet was \$68,022.39.
- ii. Expenses this month included:

Recurring:

1. Quickbooks: Monthly Fee: This is taken out as an ACH payment. - \$115
2. Manistee Area Chamber: Monthly Executive Director Fee - \$6,666.67
3. Richards & McDougall: Monthly Accounting Fee - \$425

Additional:

1. Eagle 101.5: July 2025 Downtown Promotion - \$500.00
2. Andy McQuillen - Fall Festival Music - \$225.00 (Paid by Fall Festival Raised Funds)
3. Anita Shaffer - Fall Festival Reimbursement - \$574.75 (Paid by Fall Festival Raised Funds)

4. Denver Leigh Phillips - Fall Festival Website/Marketing - \$476.00 (Paid by Fall Festival Raised Funds)
5. Orchard Market - Fall Festival Pumpkins, Cornstalks, Gourds, etc. - \$361.97 (Paid by DDA as a donation to Fall Festival)
6. Spicer Group: Streetscape - \$13,750.00
7. Theresa Buckingham Photography - Fall Festival Pictures - \$125.00 (Paid by Fall Festival Raised Funds)
8. Vogue Theatre - Fall Festival Popcorn - \$68.00 (Paid by Fall Festival Raised Funds)
9. Wellnested LLC - MEDC Facade Grant Reimbursement - \$44,735.00

MOTION by Sammie Lukaskiewicz second by Ben Crowley, to accept the October 2025 financials.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

6. EXECUTIVE REPORTS – Andrew Stafford

a. October 2025:

- i. Total Contacts: 20
- ii. Vacancies: 14 key vacancies already dedicated to new businesses; approximately 12 additional vacancies remain available for potential projects.
- iii. Big Win: Fricano's City Council meeting – reached an agreement with Ted Fricano for the property beneath the deck. A suitable property swap will need to be identified to grant him a clean title.
- iv. New Business Contacts: 3 total - one professional business outside Manistee and two within Manistee.
- v. Wahr Hardware Project: Fell through due to high land acquisition and demolition costs, making the project financially unfeasible.

7. REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

a. Facade Grant - Andrew Stafford

a. Reimbursement – 429 River Street (Wellnested):

- i. This project has been added under the MEDC grant.
- ii. All work outlined in the application has been completed.

b. MEDC Funds:

- i. Currently working with Bluefish to encourage additional project work.
- ii. Approximately \$35,000 remains in the grant.
- iii. One new application was submitted yesterday.
- iv. Confident that the remaining funds will be utilized before March.

b. Streetscape - Andrew Stafford / Bill Gambill

- a. Met with the Community Foundation regarding their property near the RAP grant location.
- b. Discussed rethinking the site design for a longer-term vision to

- position the property for larger-scale public facility use.
- c. Spicer will need to complete additional work to accommodate the redesign.
- d. The redesign will increase project costs by \$8,500.
- e. Goal: position the project for potential future Community Foundation buy-in.

MOTION by Ben Crowley second by Sammie Lukaskiewicz, to accept the proposal from Spicer Group for the redesign on the RAP Grant.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

- c. Target Business - Andrew Stafford
 - a. Met once with a main focus on identifying end users for vacant commercial spaces, including 141 Washington Street.
- d. Events
 - a. Event Coordinator
 - i. The event coordinator companies have requested more information on scope of events to be able to provide an accurate quote.

8. OLD BUSINESS

- a. Social District - Andrew Stafford
 - i. Signage
 - 1. City Council requested new Social District signage at the US-31 crossing to direct visitors to the Riverwalk, as crossing the highway with an alcoholic beverage is not permitted. We are still working on this. Rightside Design's services are required.
- b. Vacation Mode Promotion Update - Nicole Kaminski
 - i. Vacation Mode Promotion Update - Nicole Kaminski
 - ii. A total of \$748.28 was spent in October 2025. \$149.66 cost per partner.
 - iii. Distribution of cards ended September 21, 2025. We will still see reports on this program through December 2025. Expiration of cards is December 24, 2025.
 - iv. To date: \$9,699.01 spent.
 - v. As of October 31, 2025: 188 cards handed out, 100 activated/used.

9. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Riverwalk Beautification Effort
 - i. Gauge Beautification Efforts: Focus on enhancing areas in and around the Riverwalk.
 - ii. ECO-CORE Partnership:
 - 1. They can provide services beyond the Riverwalk if contracted.
 - 2. Need to determine the monetary cost for their services.

- 3. ECO-CORE also offers native plant assistance.
- iii. Board Consensus: Agreed to proceed with exploring this partnership.
- iv. Gordon: Seeking maintenance of existing garden beds and design work; requesting a maintenance proposal.

10. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- a. Debbie Chase: Suggested incorporating WSCC students into the riverwalk beautification native plant project.
- b. James Grabowski: Noted that the red boards in the windows of one downtown building have been reinstalled and are unsightly; the issue should be addressed.

11. **BOARD COMMENT**

- a. Sammie Lukaskiewicz: Thanked everyone who attended the Tourism Annual meeting. Reported 13.3% growth, the second highest in the state.
- b. Bill Gambill: Noted that Sleighbell is approaching quickly; volunteer signup will be sent out soon. Commended the strong downtown engagement.
- c. Ben Crowley: Complimented Sammie Lukaskiewicz on the Tourism Annual Meeting, and also called the tribute to Bruce Allen a class act, wanting to find a way to acknowledge his dedication to the DDA.
- d. Jamil Alam: Emphasized acknowledging Bruce Allen and his dedicated service to the board.

12. **ADJOURN**

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 10, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. in the WSCC Education Center, 400 River Street. This regular meeting will be followed by a special meeting of the DDA for review.

MOTION by Ben Crowley, second by Lindsey Swidorski, to adjourn at 9:07 AM

Nicole Kaminski



Acting Recording Secretary