

**MANISTEE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**MEETING MINUTES OF WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10TH, 2025**  
**8:30 A.M., WSCC EDUCATION CENTER**  
**400 RIVER STREET, MEETING ROOM B**

PRESENT: Bill Gambill, Ben Crowley, Jamil Alam, Lindsey Swidorski, Sammie Lukaskiewicz, Deanna Marsh (at 8:37am)

ABSENT: Tyler Leppanen, Kyle Mosher

Also Present: Andrew Stafford, Nicole Kaminski, Carmen Kott, Sara Herberger, Gordon Heinold

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting called to order by the City Manager at 8:32AM

2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*MOTION* by Bill Gambill, second by Sammie Lukaskiewicz, to move the Facade line item under after the event sub-committee line item and accept the agenda as presented.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

*MOTION* by Ben Crowley, seconded by Lindsey Swidorski to approve the minutes from the November 12, 2025, regular meeting.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

5. **APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORTS**

a. November 2025:

i. The total of the unpaid bills in the packet was **\$21,328.66**.

ii. Expenses this month included:

**Recurring:**

1. Quickbooks: Monthly Fee: This is taken out as an ACH payment. - \$115.00
2. Manistee Area Chamber: Monthly Executive Director Fee - \$6,666.66
3. Richards & McDougall: Monthly Accounting Fee - \$425.00

**Additional:**

1. Shine: Lights Repair by Manistee Marina - \$646.00
2. Spicer Group: Streetscape - \$8,700.00
3. Calvin Lutz Farms: Downtown Garland and Bows - \$4,776.00

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

Voice vote—Motion approved.

6. EXECUTIVE REPORTS – Andrew Stafford

a. November 2025:

i. Economic Development Contacts

1. Total of 21 business contacts completed.
2. Feedback from business owners was mixed — some reported strong numbers, while others saw flat or slightly lower activity.
3. Noted comments about reduced foot traffic but stable gains from fewer transactions.

ii. Vacancies

1. 14 total vacant buildings.
2. 2 properties already spoken for and expected to be filled by spring.
3. 3 vacancies are move-in ready.
4. 9 properties require redevelopment.

iii. 141 Washington Street

1. Construction is progressing as planned.
2. Ongoing, active communication to help identify end users.
3. No major changes to timeline; estimated completion remains mid to late summer 2026.

7. REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

a. Facade Grant - Andrew Stafford - Moved to under events

a. 443 Water Street – Facade Grant Status

- i. Proposed project would utilize the remaining MEDC Facade Program funds along with the DDA matching funds associated with that program.
- ii. Awarded a facade grant in Fall 2024, with project completion required within one year of the signed agreement.
- iii. No progress has been made on the project, and multiple outreach attempts have gone unanswered.
- iv. Preparing to issue one final notice before formally revoking the grant agreement.

b. 399 River Street – Facade Grant

- i. Proposed project would utilize the remaining MEDC Facade Program funds along with the DDA matching funds associated with that program.

MOTION by Ben Crowley second by Sammie Lukaskiewicz, to approve 399 River Street Facade Grant application

Voice vote—Motion approved.

Lindsey Swidorski recused herself from the vote.

- b. Streetscape - Andrew Stafford / Bill Gambill
  - a. Held multiple meetings with Spicer Group and the project sub-committee.
  - b. Presented the project update at the joint meeting with City Council and the Planning Commission.
  - c. Bid package is scheduled to be released very soon.
  - d. New streetlights have been installed on Maple Street, matching the River Street style.
- c. Events - Andrew Stafford / Bill Gambill
  - a. The event committee met in November to finalize key details so an event company can prepare an accurate quote.

#### 8. **OLD BUSINESS**

- a. Vacation Mode Promotion Update - Nicole Kaminski
  - i. A total of \$746.90 was spent in November 2025. \$149.38 cost per partner.
  - ii. 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. The final reports will be in the January 14, 2026 DDA meeting.
  - iii. To date: \$10,445.91 spent.
  - iv. As of November 30, 2025: 188 cards handed out, 109 activated/used.
- b. Shine - Andrew Stafford
  - i. Marina tree repairs were completed earlier this month, ahead of Sleighbell Weekend.
- c. SEEDS EcoCorp Proposal - Andrew Stafford
  - i. DPW and the Parks Commission are fully on board with the proposal.
  - ii. Ongoing communication with the Community Foundation, which has expressed support.
  - iii. Recommendation to draw from multiple funding sources rather than relying solely on the DDA.
  - iv. Requesting support to pursue a grant; while the budget can cover the cost, the goal is to strengthen partnerships and involve additional community entities.

MOTION by Bill Gambill second by Lindsey Swidorski, to seek a grant from the Manistee Community Foundation in support of this proposal.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

#### 9. **NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Mapme Software
  - i. Businesses have expressed a desire for a centralized, accurate listing of business hours.
  - ii. The proposed software appears to duplicate the functionality of Google Maps.
  - iii. Cost is \$600 per year, but it still relies on businesses to manually update their hours—something many are not currently doing on Google.

- iv. Essentially, it serves as a more visually appealing version of Google Maps, yet still requires business owner maintenance.

10. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- a. None

11. **BOARD COMMENT**

- a. Ben Crowley – Felt the joint meeting went well; offered kudos to Andrew.
- b. Sammie Lukaskiewicz – Noted that Sleighbell appeared to have fewer attendees overall, but businesses that actively participated likely saw steady or increased traffic. Mentioned the Hampton was sold out with a long waitlist.
- c. Deanna Marsh – Praised the downtown signage and shared kudos with Sammie. Inquired about the open board seat; shared that it will be posted soon and that there is no legislative timeline for filling it. Asked about the vice president role—discussion planned for January.
- d. Bill Gambill – Asked about the snow removal policy, specifically regarding snow removal on the Riverwalk.

12. **ADJOURN**

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 14, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. in the WSCC Education Center, 400 River Street.

*MOTION* by Ben Crowley, second by Deanna Marsh, to adjourn at 9:14AM

Nicole Kaminski

Acting Recording Secretary