

MANISTEE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES OF WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14TH, 2026
8:30 A.M., WSCC EDUCATION CENTER
400 RIVER STREET, MEETING ROOM B

PRESENT: Ben Crowley, Jamil Alam, Lindsey Swidorski, Sammie Lukaskiewicz, Deanna Marsh, Kyle Mosher

ABSENT: Bill Gambill, Tyler Leppanen

Also Present: Andrew Stafford, Nicole Kaminski, Sara Herberger, Gordon Heinold, Councilmember Grabowski

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting called to order by the Chair at 8:30AM

2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

MOTION by Ben Crowley second by Lindsey Swidorski to accept the agenda as presented. Voice vote—Motion approved.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

4. **2024/2025 AUDIT PRESENTATION - ANDERSON, TACKMAN & Co. PLC**

- a. Ken Talsma from Anderson, Tackman & Co. gave the board an overview of the 2024/2025 Audit.
- b. Overall the audit came up clean for the fiscal year 2024/2025.

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR DECEMBER 10, 2025, MEETING**

MOTION by Ben Crowley, seconded by Deanna Marsh to approve the minutes from the December 10, 2025, regular meeting.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

6. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE SPECIAL DECEMBER 10, 2025, MEETING**

MOTION by Ben Crowley, seconded by Deanna Marsh to approve the minutes from the December 10, 2025, special meeting.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

7. **APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORTS**

- a. December 2025:

- i. The total of the unpaid bills in the packet was **\$39,760.43**
 - 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. Manistee Area Chamber: Economic Development Q1 Fee - \$5,000.00
4. Richards & McDougall: Monthly Accounting Fee - \$425.00

Additional:

1. Spicer Group: Streetscape - \$10,800.00
2. City of Manistee City Service Agreement - \$16,753.76

MOTION by Ben Crowley second by Lindsey Swidorski, to accept the December 2025 financials.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

b. West Shore Bank Account Options:

- i. Ben Crowley will work with staff to review West Shore Bank interest rates and account options to see if there are more beneficial options for the DDA.

8. EXECUTIVE REPORTS – Andrew Stafford

a. December 2025:

- i. Economic Development Contacts
 1. 17 contacts in December; activity was lighter due to the holiday season.
- ii. Downtown Buildings
 1. Currently working with key downtown building owners, including the new owners of the Music Vault building (348 River Street).
 2. The Don Tequila building has deterioration in the top three layers of brick. The owner was advised to consider applying for a Facade Improvement Grant if repairs are needed.
- iii. Streetscape
 1. Coordinating with Spicer to prepare the RFP for the Streetscape project.

9. REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

a. Facade Grant - Andrew Stafford

- a. The grant contract has been voided; the property owner has withdrawn from the grant agreement.
- b. The Golden Stag and The Elks projects will be paid out at next month's meeting.
- c. All Facade Grant funds must be fully disbursed before March to comply with MEDC requirements.

b. Streetscape - Andrew Stafford / Bill Gambill

- a. RFP Release for RAP Grant
 - i. The RFP is currently undergoing an internal review and

- scanning process.
- ii. The RFP is scheduled for release on January 19.
- iii. Contractors will be given two construction window options, with all work required to be completed by the end of the year.
- c. Target Business Committee
 - a. Small Business Attraction Event
 - i. Invite 10–20 small businesses that are ready to expand into Manistee to tour and view a curated selection of available buildings.
 - ii. Take a targeted, intentional approach by focusing on businesses that are well-positioned to thrive in the Manistee market.
 - iii. Prioritize collaboration with regional and local partners to ensure outreach efforts are aligned and do not appear as poaching, but rather as a shared economic development opportunity.
 - d. Events - Andrew Stafford / Bill Gambill
 - a. TJ's Block Party Event Application - September 12, 2026.
 - i. Two signatures are still outstanding from Piping Plover and Riverside Toys.

MOTION by Ben Crowley second by Sammie Lukaskiewicz, to recommend approval of TJ's Block Party Event Application contingent upon receiving the remaining signatures from affected businesses.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

- b. Event Company Proposal
 - i. Both proposals exceeded the DDA Board's expectations, with one proposal totaling \$220,000 and the other approximately \$45,000.
 - ii. Discussion was held on whether to continue pursuing an event coordinator or to establish a committee to develop and implement thoughtful, well-planned events.

10. OLD BUSINESS

- a. Jennifer Flynn SEEDS EcoCorps - Riverwalk Beautification
 - i. Rescheduled; Jennifer was unable to attend this meeting due to weather.
- b. Vacation Mode Promotion Update - Nicole Kaminski
 - i. A total of \$1,325.72 was spent in December 2025. \$265.14 cost per partner.
 - ii. Distribution of cards ended September 21, 2025. This is the final report for this program. Expiration of cards is December 24, 2025.
 - iii. To date: \$12,706.63 spent.
 - iv. As of November 30, 2025: 188 cards handed out, 122 activated/used.

11. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Budget Calendar - Andrew Stafford
 - i. The deadline to get materials to Ed Bradford is March 13.
 - ii. DDA staff will coordinate with the budget committee to get budget meetings organized.
- b. Eagle 101.5 Summary of Campaign
 - i. A total of 24 businesses participated.
 - ii. Discussion was held regarding the future of the DDA's financial commitment to the program, as upcoming streetscape priorities and the increased need for funding may impact support in the next year.

12. PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. None

13. BOARD COMMENT

- a. Deanna Marsh - Frostbite Festival is set for February 21st.

14. ADJOURN

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 11, 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 9:24AM

Nicole Kaminski

Acting Recording Secretary