

**MANISTEE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**MEETING MINUTES OF WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11TH, 2026**  
**8:30 A.M., WSCC EDUCATION CENTER**  
**400 RIVER STREET, MEETING ROOM B**

PRESENT: Ben Crowley, Jamil Alam, Lindsey Swidorski, Deanna Marsh, Kyle Mosher, Bill Gambill, Brandon Ohman, Sammie Lukaskiewicz

ABSENT:

Also Present: Andrew Stafford, Nicole Kaminski, Jackie Gutowski, Kyle Kotecki, Alex Michellini, Councilmember Grabowski, Matt Schwach, Sara Herberger, Dennis

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

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**

a. None.

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR FEBRUARY 11, 2026, MEETING**

*MOTION* by Deanna Marsh, seconded by Lindsey Swidorski to approve the minutes from the February 11, 2026, regular meeting.  
Voice vote—Motion approved.

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE SPECIAL FEBRUARY 11, 2026, MEETING**

*MOTION* by Ben Crowley, seconded by Bill Gambill to approve the minutes from the February 11, 2026, special meeting.  
Voice vote—Motion approved.

6. **APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORTS**

a. February 2026:

- i. MIClass Account: \$706,186.55
- ii. The total of the unpaid bills in the packet was **\$85,739.51**
- iii. 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. The Ramsdell Inn & TJ's Pub: Facade Reimbursement - \$47,069.50
2. Blue Fish Kitchen + Bar: Facade Reimbursement - \$31,463.35

*MOTION* by Sammie Lukaskiewicz second by Jamil Alam to accept the February 2026 financials.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

7. EXECUTIVE REPORTS – Andrew Stafford

a. **Board Update**

Tyler Leppanen has resigned from the DDA Board. Heather Pefley will release the notice in the paper. The open seat must be filled by someone with a **financial interest in the DDA district**, such as owning property or operating a business.

b. **January 2026 Updates**

- i. **Match on Main:** Met with several businesses about potential projects. Two will be selected for submission based on competitiveness.
- ii. **Downtown Buildings:** Two businesses are exploring relocation to Downtown Manistee.
- iii. **Development:** A Lansing developer has been connected regarding the Dairy Jones property; discussions are in early stages.
- iv. **Music Vault Building:** Discussions with the owner continue; designs have been submitted to the City.
- v. **PNC Bank Building:** Conversations are ongoing with the property owners.

8. REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

a. Facade Grant - Andrew Stafford

a. Blue Fish Kitchen + Bar MEDC Reimbursement

- i. The invoices have been received and the project can be paid out.

b. The Ramsdell Inn & TJ's Pub MEDC Reimbursement

- i. Once invoices are received the check will be delivered and the project fully paid out.

c. 350 River Street Application

- i. The facade committee recommends awarding the full \$15,000.00 request.

*MOTION* by Bill Gambill second by Lindsey Swidorski to approve the 350 River Street Application grant application for \$15,000.00

Voice vote—Motion approved.

- d. 142 Washington Street Application.
  - i. Requested \$15,000. However, the application included several expenses that are not eligible under the façade grant guidelines.
  - ii. The committee recommends not approving the application due to the building not being in blighted condition and not needing immediate attention.

*MOTION* by Ben Crowley second by Deanna Marsh to deny the 142 Washington Street Application grant application for \$15,000.00  
Voice vote—Motion approved.

- b. Streetscape - Andrew Stafford / Bill Gambill
  - a. City Council approved signing construction contracts. The City committed **\$303,000**, and a **Community Foundation grant** was also received.
  - b. The DDA match must increase by **\$114,000**, bringing the total contribution to **\$609,000** (up from \$495,000).

*MOTION* by Bill Gambill second by Jamil Alam to approve the ear-marking of \$114,000.  
Voice vote—Motion approved.

- c. Spicer Group - Owner’s Work Directive Change
  - i. Approval allows Spicer Group to proceed with the engineering necessary to move the project forward and confirms the DDA will cover required engineering fees related to construction changes.

*MOTION* by Ben Crowley second by **Sammie Lukaskiewicz** to approve construction services outlined in the contract.  
Voice vote—Motion approved.

- c. Events - Andrew Stafford / Bill Gambill
  - a. No reports or updates at this time.

9. **OLD BUSINESS**

- a. Budget - 2026/2027
  - i. Updates include revising the 25/26 façade line item to reflect the remaining balance from the current fiscal year, earmarking funds for the Streetscape project, and adjusting line items that require interest rate input from the City of Manistee.

*MOTION* by **Sammie Lukaskiewicz** second by Ben Crowley to approve the 2026/2027 fiscal year budget

- b. Vice - President Appointment

*MOTION* by Deanna Marsh second by Bill Gambill, to nominate Ben Crowley as Vice Chairperson. No other nominations were made.

Voice Vote - motion approved.

Yes: Kyle Mosher, Sammie Lukaskiewicz, Jamil Alam, Lindsey Swidorski, Deanna Marsh, Brandon Ohman, Bill Gambill

No: None

Recused: Ben Crowley

10. **NEW BUSINESS**

- a. 471 Water Street OPRA District
  - i. A tax abatement of up to 12 years is being considered. City Council has requested a recommendation from the DDA.
  - ii. Under the abatement, the DDA would not capture the tax increase, but would continue to receive taxes based on the current taxable value. The project includes over \$300,000 in investment into a currently vacant building.

*MOTION* by Ben Crowley second by Deanna Marsh to recommend approval to City Council for the creation of the OPRA District and approval of the certificate designation.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

- b. Redevelopment Ready Liquor License (343 & 345 River Street)
  - i. This program allows businesses that have made a significant investment in the downtown district to apply for a liquor license when the local quota has been reached.
  - ii. To qualify, the business must invest over \$75,000 into the property and demonstrate they have attempted to obtain a license from escrow. A \$20,000 fee is paid by the business to the Liquor Control Commission.
  - iii. The DDA provides a recommendation to City Council. The license would be non-transferable and tied specifically to the property.
  - iv. At this time no action needs to be taken by the DDA Board, this information is presented to educate and inform the board on what a Redevelopment Ready Liquor License entails.

- c. Spring Flowers
  - i. Weesies Quote

1. Spring flowers and planters for the 2026 year.

*MOTION* by Bill Gambill, second by Ben Crowley to approve the Spring flowers quote from Weesies.

Voice vote—Motion approved.

11. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- a. Jackie Gutowski - Wanted to introduce herself to the board and touched on the project she has in the works within the DDA district.

12. **BOARD COMMENT**

- a. Nicole Kaminski: Shared information about Manistee County Restaurant Week, March 15–21, 2026. Details available at ManisteeChamber.com.
- b. Andrew Stafford: Provided an update on Match on Main Grant, he will be working through that in March with applications due to MEDC in April.

- c. Deanna Marsh: Discussed events and event planning, and reminded attendees about downtown parking guidelines.
- d. Sammie Lukaskiewicz : Reported that the International Fly Fishing Film Festival brought in about 200 attendees and raised \$4,000 for the Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts. Expressed excitement for the Streetscape Project and noted Downtown Manistee as the #1 destination in Manistee County.
- e. Lindsey Swidorski: Thanked the board for its support of her application in the Façade Grant Program.
- f. Kyle Mosher: Thanked the Community Foundation, City of Manistee, Spicer Group, and streetscape committee members for their work on the Streetscape Project.

13. **ADJOURN**

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

*MOTION* by Ben Crowley second by Sammie Lukaskiewicz to adjourn at 9:26AM

Nicole Kaminski

Acting Recording Secretary