

**Village of Baldwin
Downtown Development Authority
January 9, 2025, Minutes
Special Meeting
(approved)**

CALL TO ORDER

Roll Call: Jane Allison called the Meeting to order at 4:03 PM with board members:

Present: Jane Allison, Debbie Smith-Olson, Andy Gremel, Seth Wenger, Darci Maldonado, Harold Nichols

Absent: Josh Johnson, Tony Gagliardo, vacancy

Staff: Robert Toland, DDA Director; Joni Luce, Recording Secretary

Acknowledgment of Visitors: Jodi Nichols w/LCEDA

GENERAL BUSINESS

A. **Ideas for Projects:** Spreadsheet of Action Items, ranked by the DDA board members, was handed out. The top ranked item is the Pure Markette events; Jane noted that the Markette committee meeting had just finished, it went very well. Jodi suggested that the website for the Markette be done first as it is more time sensitive than the Village website and a less complicated project, making sure that it is designed such that it could later be inserted as a page on the Village website when that is completed.

Andy gave a report on the traffic calming project, ranked number two on the list. He, Harold, Jodi and others met with MDOT; they are in favor of the mid-block pedestrian crossing between 7th and 8th streets, from Shoey's to the south side of Jone's driveway. Although this does lose a parking space in front of Shoey's, the owners are in favor as their customers will have better access to public parking across the street. There seems to be a mixed message from MDOT on whether an overhead "pedestrian crossing" sign could be used over M37, but the board is not sure they would want one, perhaps use a movable sign in crosswalk to bring attention to it while it is new. MDOT estimate for creating the bump-outs and wheelchair curb cuts for new crosswalk is \$70,000 - \$100,000.00, but it is believed that this would include a brick crosswalk and other items that are not desired. Estimate would most likely be \$40,000.00 - \$50,000.00.

A REACH grant was submitted to District Health Dept #10 for an initial \$5,000.00, followed by \$3,000.00 each year for four years, to cover the cost of painting the mid-block crossing and repainting of existing crosswalks every year or two. MDOT is scheduled to repaint the existing crosswalks in 2026, but only repaint them every seven years when they need it every one to two years. The grant will help pay for keeping them repainted between the MDOT schedule. The Village has an annually renewed permit with MDOT to be able to do such projects as painting with approval thru an e-mail request.

B. **2025-2026 Budget:** Discussion was held on the proposed DDA budget for 2025-2026. The following items were specifically mentioned with recommendations being put in the proposed

budget for action taken at the DDA meeting scheduled for January 16, 2025:

- Seth noted that a new Gerber bid for banner pole replacements was \$7,000.00 less than last year.
- Revenue line item "Series 2022 Construction Bond" should be eliminated
- Revenue line items for Markette and Lake County Artist Collective income should be set at \$0; there may be grants available but should not count on them for budgeting process.
- More discussion on the 902 Michigan property, Andy suggested that portable wooden "shops" could be used for seasonal vendors, such as Grand Rapids had for Christmas. This, along with benches, would fit with previous discussions about not making permanent changes to the lot until the long-term use can be determined. He suggested budgeting around \$10,000.00 for this project.
- The traffic calming proposed budget of \$50,000.00 should be adequate.
- The current maintenance and repair line item is at \$40,000.00 but it should include the light poles that need to be replaced, added \$90,000.00 for a total budget of \$130,000.00.
- Harold was asked if the Village plans on updating the website this year, he is not sure and suggests that the DDA doesn't plan on it going forward in time for the Markette. He believes that if the website is going to be interactive, people should be able to pay their bills on it, which slows down the website building process. Jodi suggested that an on-line payment ability would be beneficial for securing grants. She suggests that \$15,000.00 should be enough for the Markette website and promotion, and that it should be designed to be transferrable to the Village website in the future. A grant may be available to help pay for the Markette website, so it could come in under budget.
- The 8th street improvement, number five on the list, is somewhat restricted as the DDA does not have authority over two blocks on the south side. Harold says the Village is planning on street improvements and lighting in 2025, but it may not include sidewalks; perhaps the DDA would want to do the sidewalk on one side of the road down to the river in conjunction with that project. Andy suggested they talk with the business owners on that block, perhaps they would be interested in paying for sidewalks in front of their businesses. Jane will get estimates and bring to next meeting so they can be added to the budget.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Jodi Nichols participated in budget discussion in regards to the Markette.

BOARD COMMENTS: Jane was asked about submitting a bill for the maintenance of the downtown benches. She had taken them apart, sanded and repainted the boards, and put them back together. She said this became necessary as there is no water access to power wash the benches where they sit, they are in good condition but were very grimy. She has submitted some of the costs for materials but was donating labor and other material this time.

Harold asked how the Action Item list was prioritized as he is new to the board, wanted to make sure it aligned with the Vision Plan and community survey. Board members ranked the projects with the Vision Plan and survey in mind and it does align fairly closely.

Harold noted that the Railroad said there was a large renewed interest in liquid petroleum from east to west, hinting that they may want to rebuild a rail line to the Hersey potash plant. Ferrell Gas has also indicated a desire to increase the size of their operations at the railhead. The DNR has also mentioned that the RR bridge they are re-doing as part of the dam project may be made to RR specifications. This would be a large project and may not happen, but if it does it would impact the plans the DDA has around the right-of-way.

It was explained to Harold that the DDA lost out on a \$2 million dollar grant opportunity involving 902 & 904 Michigan Avenue parcels because 904 Michigan was not for sale at that time; it is for sale now and he suggested that acquiring the land could be their big project so that they can apply for the large grant again. Jane suggested they could acquire the Baldwin Business Center building, tear it down and build the music venue there, reselling unneeded lots for commercial use. Andy suggested maybe a private company would build a brewery or other project there. Harold noted that there is not a lot of land left in the village for new businesses to buy and increase the tax base, that should be considered before commercial property is purchased and transferred to a public use that does not pay taxes. The 902 property by itself is not large enough to do much with, if 904 were purchased more options would be available. Debbie noted that commercial sites and housing are being pushed by the State, downtown housing could get grant money. The Baldwin Business Center building there has a strong enough foundation to build up and put housing over the commercial businesses on street level.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS: None

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was offered by Jane Allison and supported by Darci Maldonado. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 5:27 PM.

Meeting Schedule: The next regular DDA meeting will be held January 16,2025, at the Village office at 3:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Joni Luce, Recording Secretary
for
Deborah Smith-Olson, Secretary/Treasurer