

**Village of Baldwin  
Downtown Development Authority  
November 21, 2024, Minutes  
Regular Meeting  
(approved)**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**Roll Call:** Jane Allison called the Meeting to order at 3:02 PM with board members:

**Present:** Jane Allison, Debbie Smith-Olson, Andy Gremel, Josh Johnson, Tony Gagliardo, Harold Nichols (newly elected as the Village President, thus succeeding Jim Truxton on this board)

**Absent:** Seth Wenger, Darci Maldonado, vacancy

**Staff:** Robert Toland, DDA Director (absent); Joni Luce, Recording Secretary

**Acknowledgment of Visitors:** Meredith Gremel with the Pure Markette; Jodi Nichols w/LCEDA; Quran Griffin, with District Health #10; Kelley Zoellmen, Village of Baldwin trustee.

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

- A. **Approval of Agenda:** A motion was made by Andy Gremel to approve the agenda, supported by Tony Gagliardo. Motion carried.
  
- B. **Approval of Minutes:** Andy Gremel noted the minutes were missing his recommendation that the Project Ranking should be based off the Vision Plan, as much time was spent getting community input on what they wanted the board to work toward. A motion to approve the **October 17, 2024, regular** meeting minutes with this correction was made by Debbie Smith-Olson, and supported by Andy Gremel. Motion carried.
  
- C. **Treasurers' Report:** Debbie Smith-Olson presented the Treasurer's report through November 21, 2024, indicating a general fund balance of \$400,617.50, with disbursements totaling \$6,809.00, and total income of \$96,408.55. Income includes TIF payment from the Village of Baldwin (\$68,949.50), SOM Local Community Stabilization Auth for Pleasant Plains Twp (\$16,741.49) and Webber Twp (\$10,704.42) and interest (\$13.14). Deb noted that these are the last revenue scheduled to be received until next April, but revenue was higher than the projected budget and that there is a healthy balance now.

The following bills were presented for payment:

Consumers Energy	\$ 385.98 (streetlights)
Robert Toland Consulting	\$ 850.00 (retainer & meeting fee, less absence on 11/21)
Vans Mechanical Contractors	\$ 500.00 (backflow testing)
<u>Village of Baldwin</u>	<u>\$ 935.14 (water bills)</u>
Total bills	\$ 2,671.12

Donations in the amount of \$3,500.00 designated for seasonal decorations are still being held.

Space has been reserved for an ad in the Michigan Trails magazine, no cost yet. Notation was made on the report of bonds paid in 2024 and those coming due in 2025.

A motion to approve the treasurer's report, was made by Andy Gremel and supported by Tony Gagliardo. Motion carried.

A motion to pay the bills, was made by Andy Gremel and supported by Tony Gagliardo. Motion unanimously carried by roll call vote.

**D. Committee reports:** Andy Gremel met with MDOT on the traffic calming/streetscape project and reviewed their pedestrian crossing document. Suggestion was made by MDOT for a mid-block crossing on the two main blocks as many people are crossing at those points anyway. It was suggested that a meeting be held with stakeholders. The corner crosswalks need to be painted as well. Harold questioned why crosswalks were a DDA issue – it was a top priority in the Visionary Plan by the community. MDOT should provide for the basic corner crosswalks, but the mid-block crossings are desirable and, with a more artistic design than just the white crossing marks, would be paid by the DDA. Quran Griffin volunteered to work with Andy on getting costs.

Subcommittee members Debbie, Jane, Seth, Jim, Jodi and Meredith met 10/24/24 at 3:00 p.m. to discuss next year's Pure Markette. The Markette will remain as a subcommittee to the DDA Board and meet monthly prior to the DDA meeting so a report can be made. Information was provided for the 2024 audit, with the exception of a few invoices that will be given to Deb. Partnered with District Health Dept. #10 for a new program in 2025, underwritten by the REACH grant; they hope to get private donations as well. They are developing a 2025 budget; continue to look for new vendors and sponsors; looking into website improvement; and will be applying for the SNAP program when it becomes available. Jane noted the need to replace Jim Truxton on the subcommittee, Harold Nichols agreed to join the board. Andy asked that in conjunction with the website development that the accounting could be automated; Deb will look into that possibility.

**E. Acknowledge Communications:** None

**PUBLIC COMMENT** – Jodi Nichols gave an update on the RAP Grant opportunity. A project over \$500,000.00 would be better off having their own application, but any costing less could be a subgrant from The Right Place. Need to have a project ready to apply, available each year.

The Match on Main" 50% matching grant for development ready projects will open on January 20, 2025. The Village can take letters of interest from downtown businesses applying for up to \$25,000.00 for improvement/expansion/or start-up. A start-up business would have to already own the property. The Village Board will choose two (2) businesses to receive the matching grant. Jodi suggested that since this is the first time participating in the grant, a letter explaining the program be designed and taken personally to each of the downtown businesses to get as many applicants as possible. The board agreed this was a good approach and several are willing to talk to the business owners.

Kelley Zoellmen is trying to connect with Julia regarding the Village website, The Pure Markette will be a part of that website.

**BOARD COMMENTS:** None

## OLD BUSINESS

- A. Trees, Flowerboxes & Irrigation System:** Jane Allison reports that Isenhart Electric replaced the receptacles, GFI boxes and covers approved last month, will be getting the invoice soon.
- B. 8<sup>th</sup> Street Upgrade:** Harold is getting information to move this project along. Jim is currently the only one with full knowledge of available MDOT money. Sidewalk, curb and light poles all included in the diagram submitted. Work is supposed to begin in the spring. Noted this is a Village project, the DDA is in advisory position only. Project is getting traction. Jim Truxton personally owns the land the dam is on and will continue to work with the parties involved in any decision to remove the dam, per Deb. Harold lives downstream and he believes the hold up on the project is partly due to deciding where the fish weir will be located.
- C. Discussion of Bylaws – membership, semiannual meeting:** Jane handed out a copy of the by-laws and the DDA member list that includes the term they are serving. Deb noted that poor record keeping in the past regarding when members terms ended resulted in proposing this list as a do-over so the terms will still be staggered and not all end in the same year. This list will be presented to the Village Council for approval as they appoint the members. The Fiscal Year coincides with the Village Board – March to February. Due to the required semi-annual informational meeting being left out of the proposed by-laws, and the suggestion that it be added to Article VI between sections 1 and 2, no action will be taken until next month. Motion made by Deb, seconded by Jane to table the action, motion carried. Howard asked if Bob Toland's contract was with the Village or the DDA, would like to see a copy of it.
- D. Ideas for Next Project:** Deb went over the projected DDA budget handout, noting that the first line item carry-over estimate was high, it should be about \$4,000.00 lower than stated in the 2024-2025 budget. The November projections are pretty accurate as the numbers are actual, but Bob hasn't had a chance to finalize them; the seasonal decorations projected expenses line item was left blank, as expenses already incurred have not been submitted for payment yet. Estimated excess funds from this fiscal year are \$59,241.00; legal fees in the past really hurt the DDA's cash flow, in a much better position now. Suggested that only \$320,000.00 of the \$379,241 surplus from fiscal year ending February 2025 be spent on projects to make sure the Board can meet all expenses including Bond and interest payments due in April and October of 2025.

The \$7,193.00 projected for January maintenance and repairs is for one light pole replacement that we had already received insurance proceeds for; at least three (3) are needed; Insurance Company is expected to pay for another one, have a quote for \$6,185.00 to replace one pole. Also need to consider installing permanent banner poles; have a quote from last year – Gerber declined to quote, waiting to hear from other companies, should allow \$40,000.00 for that project, poles only. Organizations wanting to put up banner would provide the banner.

The Proposed Development Project list came from the Capital Improvement list, not all items shown would be a DDA concern; some are projects that the Village plans to accomplish with SPARK grant, such as the two Hollister Park projects, the West Side

Improvements are already finished, and the RV Campground was not meant to be paid for by the DDA, Jim was just informing the Board of the project. Andy noted that #2 in the Visioning Plan was for public access to the river, and that the 8<sup>th</sup> Street sidewalk plan with a walking loop to Rails to Trails is for that purpose. Jane noted that the Friends of the Pere Marquette Trail were looking to pave the trail in segments—the first one being from the trout sculpture to the river.

Jane suggested starting with the Traffic Calming project as a short-term project; Andy will get actual quotes. Quran says there is potential funding of \$5,000.00 to dedicate to that project. Jane also read the list of people's top four (4) long-term projects on Visionary Plan - #1 is a Community Gathering/Music Venue location. Andy gave a reminder that Jodi mentioned significant grants that come along but the trick is to be have the project far enough along to be grant-ready; have a plan, estimates, and pledges from private foundations to use for matching funds. Jodi stated that a rough draft with estimates be ready for a December grant request, with more details provided in January. She suggested having two (2) shovel-ready projects for the next available grant opportunity as we have had to pass on a couple already. Jane noted that since the DDA already owns 902 Michigan, perhaps a smaller venue be planned for that land, Harold wondered about the possibility for a long-term lease from the DNR for the property just north of 902, perhaps putting the music venue there. Also held a discussion on buying the neighboring property for \$120,000.00 as the matching funds required. A letter of intent with at least a rough site plan, for a pavilion or something that could be repurposed if a bigger project for that area comes along later, should be drawn up to be ready for a grant. Application must show four (4) seasons of use for the project. Suggested using budget funds for landscaping, benches, etc, rather than grant funds.

Meredith noted that the \$5,000.00 budget for promotion and marketing needs to be more robust to accomplish anything that would be effective, including creation of a website. Deb voiced concerns that the 902 project could create a place for the homeless to occupy as they do the Wenger Pavillion. Also concerned that buying the commercial property would remove it from the tax rolls, would it be better to sell 902 than buy the adjoining property, keep it as an asset and use as an incubator business site with non-permanent landscaping such as picnic tables and benches, or try to sell it to a private entity for a project that fits within the Vision Plan.

Andy suggested that with having a new Village President (Harold) just learning about the projects along with two (2) DDA members and Bob being absent, that a decision on long-term projects be postponed to another meeting. Andy Gremel made a motion to approve pursuing a short-term project of 902 greenspace, traffic calming estimates and developing a budget for branding and website developments. Supported by Harold Nichols, motion carried.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Harold, as a Village Board member, noted that the Blessing of the Bikes organization is asking to use property that the Village doesn't own (DNR, private) and coordinates with Chamber of Commerce, who receives approximately \$15,000.00 in vendor fees. Currently there is little to no regulation of the vendors, Harold is wondering if the DDA wants to take on that role, he will approach the Chamber as well. Currently, the event costs the Village approximately \$10,000.00. Questions arose as to who is responsible if someone gets hurt in the vendor areas. Will revisit this question later, asked members to give it some thought.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

A motion to adjourn was offered by Tony Gagliardo and supported by Jane Allison. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 4:58 PM.

Meeting Schedule: The next regular DDA meeting will be held December 19, 2024, at the Village office at 3:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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