



**ADA TOWNSHIP DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA)
MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 19, 2025, SPECIAL WORK SESSION, 8:30
A.M.**

A Special Work Session of the Ada Township Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was held on Wednesday, February 19, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. at the Amy Van Anandel Library, Community Room #2, 7215 Headley St SE, Ada, MI.

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 8:32 a.m. by Chair Knapp.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Cloutier, Harrison, Idema, Knapp, Frost, Vogl, Korth, Coe (8:34am), Turan (8:34am)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF AND OFFICIALS PRESENT: Austin, Said, Suchy, Treasurer Moran, Valverde, Wildes

PUBLIC PRESENT: Kim Rantala (ABA), Liz Haan (DiscoverAda)

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Frost, supported by Idema, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

III. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - none

IV. NEW BUSINESS

a. Goals & Objectives Work session #2

Travis Alden, facilitator from The Right Place, started the discussion with a brief overview of the work completed at the last work session involving Objective 3 Beautification and Placemaking. He stated that if there are no additions to this Objective, then he will consider it complete and move on to the Survey Results. In discussing the survey question on reducing DDA activities, Travis noted that there was a good mixture of responses, with some noting that the DDA should reduce coordination and management of events, while many responses approved of the work and activities currently performed by the DDA and township staff. It was noted in survey responses that a Buy/Shop Local campaign was researched and approved last year but was never implemented and that should be a priority of the DDA for this year. This falls in line with the Objective 2 Align and Optimize Promotional Activities.

Kim Rantala advised that she has lots of communication with the local businesses and noted that some businesses are struggling with attracting customers and improving foot traffic despite the growth and vibrancy of the downtown area. She noted that a Support Local Campaign has the ability to positively impact this issue.

Liz Haan stated that they have discovered from their data analysis that Ada Residents do not seem to be frequenting many local businesses as much as they did previously and that a Shop Local campaign, which Discover Ada can assist with, is a positive adjustment towards increasing the use of the downtown by the residents of the township. Liz Haan also noted that for events that Discover and DDA collaborate on, there should be improved early decision making on critical event aspects or features. She believes last minute decision caused friction and stress for collaborators. She understands that municipal decision-making does require added over-sight and longer reaction times, however, she believes this could be improved.

Kim Rantala noted that some of the issue that may have arisen last year could be mitigated by understanding the “bandwidth” of the DDA Director’s position, so as not to over burden the staff to the point where events and projects are negatively affected.

The DDA board acknowledged that they would like to improve/optimize the events and services that are undertaken, compared to implementing multiple sub-par initiatives or events.

Jermey Frost noted that it would be useful to relate memo items and proposal that are received by the DDA, to our specific goals and objectives, to ensure that we stay on mission and on steer towards objectives.

Shelley Cloutier noted that it would be beneficial if the DDA could capitalize on increased exposure and notoriety of the downtown t eventually move towards only permitting and approving events in our DDA spaces instead of actively managing them.

Julius Suchy noted that there has been a lot of comments from stakeholders about the frequency and quantity of events within the downtown and that it may not be as desirable to actively encourage additional event use within the district. He noted that in discussion about Beers at the Bridge (BATB), it is important to note what type of event this is, which has typically been a purpose of providing a celebration or “community party” rather than a commercial or financially driven event. He stated that a lot has changed in the 10 years that BATB has been around and that we should be conscious of that and ensure we continue to evaluate the desire for modifications to the event by all stakeholders.

Kim Rantala noted that there is often collaboration between the entities on events which involves participation on committees, however, ABA or Discover Ada have not been invited to serve on the BATB committee despite it being one of the larger events within the district.

The DDA Board acknowledged that the ABA and Discover Ada should be invited to participate on the BATB committee and that it will foster good collaboration on the event to have them there.

Travis noted that Objective 1 appears to remain relevant to continued operations for the DDA and that he will not modify the language of that objective unless the DDA would like to recommend a revision. Travis further noted that Objective 4 Public Improvement and Maintenance also appears to remain relevant, however, additions could be made to specify projects or initiatives.

There was much discussion regarding parking inventory increases and the desire to improve supply, however, many board members noted that the township and DDA is looking for incremental ways to continue to improve this issue, including investing in a parking plan which is budgeted for this next fiscal year.

DDA Director Austin noted that we should also continue to be intentional about pedestrian infrastructure improvements to ensure that the district retains and increases its walkability and consequently its vibrancy.

The DDA board supported this revision to this objective.

V. BOARD MEMBER COMMENT - None

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

VII. ADJOURN MEETING

Moved by Harrison, supported by Vogel, to adjourn the meeting at 10:54 a.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted:

Dawn Marie Coe, DDA Secretary

rs:eb