



**ADA TOWNSHIP DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MINUTES OF MARCH 10, 2025, REGULAR MEETING, 8:00 A.M.**

A regular meeting of the Ada Township Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was held on Monday, March 10, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. at the Ada Township Hall, Assembly Room, 7330 Thornapple River Drive, Ada MI.

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Chair Knapp.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Cloutier, Coe, Frost, Harrison, Idema, Knapp, Korth, Turan, Vogl

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: none

STAFF AND OFFICIALS PRESENT: DDA Director Austin, Planning Director Said, Township Manager Suchy, Farmers Market Coordinator Valverde, Chief Murray, Clerk DeMarco

PUBLIC PRESENT: 6 members of the public

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Harrison, supported by Vogl, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 10, 2025, REGULAR MEETING

Moved by Harrison, supported by Coe, to approve the February 10, 2025, Regular Meeting minutes. Motion carried.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 19, 2025, SPECIAL WORK SESSION

Moved by Harrison, supported by Coe, to approve the February 19, 2025, Special Work Session minutes. Motion carried.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - none

VI. NEW BUSINESS

a. Tinsel, Treats, and Trolleys Partnership Proposal (ABA)

i. John Conkling and Kim Rantala represented the Ada Business Association

Mr. Conkling introduced himself and spoke on behalf of the ABA explaining they are a non-profit organization that focus on actively supporting the businesses in Ada by engaging members to collaborate, learn and grow through their ABA membership connection and various activities. He referred to the power point presentation and went over the different events the ABA hosts (Extravaganza, Pumpkin Prowl, and T3-Tinsel, Treats, and Trolleys), as well as other member events. He shared details on the ABA growth and strengthened collaborations over the past several years.

Mr. Conkling said the Tinsel, Treats, and Trolleys event is the ABA's largest event and they hope to continue enhancing the collaboration opportunities we all have (ABA, DDA, Ada Township, DiscoverAda) within the village. He said the DDA has been a great sponsor of the T3 event the past few years providing \$2,500 contribution and the ABA is requesting the DDA consider a "Title Sponsorship" level of \$10,000 this year. The increase in funding the event will allow ABA improved collaboration with the DDA for the use of visitation analytics through Placer AI, traffic barrier equipment, and electronic communication equipment, to help with assessing the traffic and enhanced safety measure

DDA Director Austin summarized the staff memo and said the DDA has the financial capacity to consider increasing its contribution for the T3 event given recent adjustments to the DDA budget and the of elimination of two other events: Brats and Bonfires (\$3,000 contribution) and Progressive Tastings (\$16,900 budget outlay).

Austin noted this request appears to align with Objective 2: Align and Optimize Promotional Activities of the DDA's objectives and goals. By supporting the growth of "Tinsel, Treats, and Trolleys," the DDA would be contributing to the promotion of the downtown area and supporting local businesses. The data from Placer AI would provide the necessary insights to optimize future promotional activities, while the event itself serves as an effective tool for driving foot traffic and promoting the downtown district during the holiday season.

Austin concluded, the DDA Board is encouraged to review and deliberate on this request, weighing the potential benefits for the community and local businesses, as well as the available financial resources.

Following brief DDA discussion, it was moved by Korth, supported by Vogl, to approve sponsorship of the ABA's Tinsel, Treats, and Trolleys in the amount of \$10,000. Motion carried.

b. Beers at the Bridge Date Reduction Request

Austin informed the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Board that a formal request from community stakeholders has been made to modify the standard operations for our Beers at The Bridge (BATB) Concert Series to better accommodate the growth and activity of our downtown district. It has been requested that the DDA consider reducing the number of event dates by one, holding two total dates this year. It is further requested that the DDA remain open to conversations about removing physical barriers in the forthcoming 2026 BATB event season, and that collaboration is improved to better incorporate the neighboring businesses into the event operation.

Austin said that following the conclusion of the 2024 event season, there was additional feedback from community partners (Baton Collective and Ada Business Association) of possible modifications to the event. It has been expressed that the current and growing slate of events may begin to create some negative externalities within the downtown district as it relates to patron traffic, commercial disruption, and safety.

Austin explained that business and development representatives have noted that the commercial stretch along River Street is entering its first season having been relatively built-out and operational, with many remnants of construction operations being removed. Stakeholders have noted that the events create 7 total road closures and disruptions, with the township events accounting for 4 of the 7 (BATB and 4th of July). Representatives express that the challenges posed by these events and closures include parking availability and temporary reductions to the flow of customers.

Austin noted that the BATB committee did have the opportunity to discuss this request prior to it being presented to the DDA. Acknowledging the concerns and opinions of the stakeholders, the committee felt that it would be feasible to reduce the BATB concert Series to 2 dates by eliminating the currently scheduled July 18, 2025, date. Feedback from current staff and some board members indicate that the July date has historically drawn fewer attendees. The DDA could re-orient this event to serve as valuable "bookends" to

the summer, with a vibrant celebration in June and August. Austin provided information on the financial impact to an overall 1/3 reduction.

Austin concluded that the DDA Board is encouraged to review this request thoughtfully, considering the perspectives of all relevant parties, and evaluate the requested modification, which seeks to balance community tradition with the continued vitality of downtown businesses.

There was extended DDA Board discussion regarding the stakeholder and partnership concerns, attendance being lower at July BATB event (especially when the 4th of July event is a large one), removing/relocating the barriers/fencing and conflict of the ability to serve alcohol, and overall complications with the area of River Street that is considered a private road. DDA members voiced opinions whether to eliminate the one event or not.

Liz Haan, DiscoverAda, shared feedback received from the BATB event. She said the barriers create a unique event and keep everyone close, as well as following the MLCC rules, however, the negative impact of the barriers for the business owners is that it drops the attendance of shoppers/visitors. She said she will continue to work with the ABA and others to help minimize the effects of closing River Street.

Township Manager Suchy explained for clarification that the matter is before the DDA for discussion because the private property owner has made the request. Suchy has been in contact with the private property owner for months regarding conflict with the barriers for the businesses and patrons. Suchy said the Township will continue to have conversations and evaluate. The elimination of one event was essentially the compromise to their request.

Moved by Harrison, supported by Cloutier, to reduce the BATB concert series to a total of 2 dates from the original three dates, by eliminating the July 18 BATB date. Roll Call: Yes-6 (Cloutier, Vogl, Harrison, Knapp, Frost, Coe); No-3 (Idema, Korth, Turan); Absent-0. Motion carried.

c. Review and Discuss Proposed 2025-2026 Fiscal Year Budget Draft #3

Austin went over the updated changes to the third draft of the budget: Revenues – no changes; Expenditures - Fall Festival removed, increase contribution to Tinsel, Treats, and Trolleys event, increased Operating Supplies and Farmers Market Supplies, Streetscape allocation \$70,000. Austin will make revisions to the BATB portion of the budget to reflect numbers from the eliminated event, prior to the DDA budget going to the Township Board at their March 24th meeting.

Moved by Korth, supported by Frost, to approve the FY 25-26 DDA Fund Budget and 2025-31 Capital Improvements with necessary revisions to be made by the DDA Director, and recommend approval by the Township Board. Motion carried.

d. Farmers Market Consulting Proposal **i. DDA Director and Tara Heerspink**

Austin referred to the staff memo and recapped that our Farmers Market Manager, Raquel Valverde, is endorsing that we utilize Tara Heerspink services for a strategic community engagement initiative that she put together during the off-season. This type of initiative is supported by vendors and the Farmer's Market Committee, who expressed that the DDA should invest in methods of increasing exposure and foot traffic.

Tara Heerspink said she worked with Raquel last season as consultant with the farmers market social media. Tara explained that her proposal for this season is to launch a strategic community engagement initiative designed to enhance market awareness and cultivate stronger relationships with local businesses and schools. She went over details on enhancing community engagement and education, action items and the timeline as per her proposal.

Moved by Vogl, supported by Turan, to approve the contract for professional strategic community engagement services for the Ada Farmers Market with Tara Heerspink for the period of April 1, 2025, through May 31, 2025, at a monthly rate of \$600, not to exceed \$1200 over 2 months and authorize the DDA Director to execute the contract with Tara Heerspink. Motion carried.

e. DDA Meeting Date Change Proposal

Austin explained that the DDA Board and the Township Board (TB) both currently convene on the 2nd Monday of every month. This requires that materials for each body be prepared simultaneously. Often, both bodies receive some of the same reports and materials, meaning that timely dispersal of a prepared packet is often reliant on the construction of the other bodies packet.

Austin said he has had conversations with Township Manager Suchy and we would like to request the DDA consider/evaluate a change to its regular meeting schedule, specifically moving meeting dates from the second Monday of each month at 8AM to the third Monday of each month. The change is sought to provide operational and administrative benefits for the staff and the township decision makers.

Austin referred to the staff memo with rationale for the change and the proposed meeting dates.

Following brief DDA discussion, it was moved by Idema, supported by Turan, to approve the revised meeting schedule for the Downtown Development Authority Board of Directors for FY 25-26. Motion carried.

VII. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

a. Social District Resolution 022425-2

Austin referred to the revised resolution from Jan. 22, 2024 that expanded the social district hours to 7 days a week from 12pm to 10pm. He said it was discovered that the date of expiration, that was added to the Township Board Resolution 012224-0, had passed without awareness due to the transition in the DDA Director position and lack of correspondence on the impending date. Thus, it was essential to evaluate and pass another resolution to extend the Social District date of expiration to ensure that no businesses operate against or outside of Township Resolutions on the Social District.

Austin informed that Resolution 022425-02 (see attached) was presented to the Township Board during the February 24, 2025, meeting date and was subsequently passed. The resolution stipulates that the Social District will operate 7 days a week from 12pm to 10pm from January 31, 2025, **indefinitely**.

b. Farmers Market Manager Report – Raquel Valverde

Valverde updated that she attended a Food Assistance Sign-Up event and should have SNAP applications by the end of March.

There was a Farmers Market Committee Meeting on February 25th which focused on CCF Marketing Workshop, vendor application process, new vendor application process, and the Ada Family Dental construction layout (the head of the construction project will attend the next committee meeting with construction updates).

Valverde noted that she completed the Farmers Market Manager Certification and plans to attend the Farmers Market Annual Conference. She briefed on the updated Marketing plans as discussed earlier in this meeting.

c. DDA Director Report

Austin noted items in his report:

Streetscape: he will be working on site assessments for proper placement of refuse and recycle units as well as additional benches.

Strategic Planning session: Travis Alden has provided a revised draft for the updated Key Objectives. He will review the document and schedule a Final Strategic Planning work session later this month.

Support Local Campaign: upcoming Business Roundtable discussion on March 26th.

d. DDA Financial Report, February 28, 2025 – no additional comments

e. Township Department Head Staff Reports – no additional comments

VIII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Harrison thanked fellow board members and community partners for their time and efforts.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chip Clark, representing the Ada Arts Council, gave a formal introduction to a placemaking proposal that was recently submitted to the Township and the DDA Director. The goal of that is to address some perceived deficits in arts and culture within the township. They are looking to reposition the Ada Arts Council to better serve the community and look forward to your feedback and input.

X. ADJOURN MEETING

Moved by Knapp, supported by Harrison, to adjourn the meeting at 9:39 a.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted:

Dawn Marie Coe, DDA Secretary

rs:eb