

**Village of Bellaire  
Downtown Development Authority  
Minutes  
July 26, 2023**

**Call to Order:**

Meeting called to order by Taylor Sutherland at 9:01 am.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Attendance:**

Members present: Dan Bennett, Michelle Dayton, Dave Gajda, Don Hoyt, Tracy Lareau, Doreen McGuire, Taylor Sutherland

Members absent: Michael Belanger, Cindi Place

Public present via Zoom: None

Public present: Jean Bedell, Janet Koch, Shana Minish,

**Consent Agenda:**

Tracy Muscat offered a few grammatical issues to the minutes of June 23, 2023.

Motion by Dave Gajda to approve consent agenda. Second, Don Hoyt. Motion approved by unanimous vote.

**Public Comment on Agenda Items:**

None

**Unfinished Business:**

Buy Local Update

Shelly Dayton, the group did not have a meeting in July so there is no update.

Village Update

Dan Bennett shared that the Village's sewer problem is more about what to pay for the examination, the write up for what needs to be taken care of etc. I feel quite good and the staff has been on top of things and we did not get a single fine. For the amount they had to do for evaluate everything, the price was good and the biggest take-away is that the Village

was not fined. The ball fields are coming along. Don Hoyt asked if the Village has changed any of the safeguards after the sewers? Learned about improvements but that we are doing everything we need to be doing and were not fined.

### Public Wi-Fi

Don Hoyt shared that there are no updates and shared that he has secured the best pricing we can. Cindi has been tracking on the grants and when ready, Cindi will let us know. Muscat thanked C. Place for sharing the reports for the Robyn funds for public comment.

### DDA Parking Committee

Taylor Sutherland shared that he has connected with Gourdie Fraser, Inc. about future needs for parking and grant opportunities and the vendor shared that the budget should be increased from \$7,500 to \$10,000 and could help us along the way. Taylor asked if the DDA should work with the Village and ask if they would like to collaborate in working with a civil engineer. Dan Bennett shared that he does not believe they will be favorable.

Don Hoyt shared that the majority of downtown business continue to have parking as a primary concern and feedback has been that the parking survey will help us to understand if this is a real or perceived problem and that a survey will assist us if we are looking at grants down the road. The quote from Gourdie Fraser, Inc. is the lowest and we have worked with them before. We will need to go to the Village related to the budget and need to go to Gourdie Fraser about timing of the survey and most likely in the summer when parking is at its peak. Doreen McGuire shared that she knows there is a concern about parking but how much is education about where to park because people want to park directly in front of the businesses they want to shop at. What about wayfinding and education? Shelly Dayton agreed to an extent that signage is huge and the second thing that is an issue is that businesses employees are parking on the street and bands performing and taking up the spots. From her perspective, Dayton believes that we have a plan A and B if we can't do the full \$10,000 if we don't get the approval or find the funds.

Don Hoyt asked Dave Gajda about the amount and if we have it. Gajda said that we do have the funds if we want to do it this year, we could. But if summer is the correct time, then it would be the next budget cycle. In addition, Gajda shared that he has been a part of other surveys like this and it is reasonable as long as it gets our objectives achieved.

Shelly Dayton shared that there are unusual circumstances this summer so waiting until next summer is good. Don Hoyt agreed about waiting and also acknowledged Doreen McGuire's comments about signage and that people do not read—even at the County parking when they read the signs but still drive away and not park. Hoyt suggested that we are all so close to the parking issue and the Village, that it will be helpful to have others come lend their expertise.

Michelle Dayton talked about not have lines on the street parking and people don't really know where to park on the street and is one of the issues but it is a MDOT issue since it is M88. Don Hoyt recalled a conversation with Bradley at the Village and we would actually lose a large number of spots if lines were painted. Hoyt also shared there appears to have slanted spots on Broad street and believes that there are many little things that if we bring in someone with more knowledge, we can come up with short term and long term objectives and really understand if parking is a problem or not.

Tracy Muscat shared that she feels that we have been talking about this for the last four years and that unless we get a survey, we are just talking about things we should do. She feels that we need to do the survey so that we continue to support prior DDA decisions about the parking survey and that the Village has talked to MDOT, the DDA has talked to MDOT about the cross walk, etc. and she committed to following up with MDOT. She encouraged the DDA to please continue to move forward and that if parking is not a problem, then we need education on two fold—to businesses about parking and then with individuals.

Taylor Sutherland said that even if parking is not an issue now, it could be in five years. Michelle Dayton commented on the crosswalk and that people are just walking however they like and that this should be addressed.

Tracy Muscat shared that \$7,500 now will be helpful for grants in the future and will most likely cover itself in the future. Don Hoyt said that we really need to start with this is what the downtown businesses are saying is their biggest problem and supported Sutherland's comments about if parking is not an issue now, it will be in the future as we grow.

Dan Bennett asked Janet Koch of Antrim County if there are any plans to use the property the Village gave to the County for parking. Koch said that it is still in progress but any parking at that area would still be a distance from town but doesn't mean that people couldn't park there but that there are lots of steps to get there.

Don Hoyt asked Taylor Sutherland the scope of work and Gourdie Fraser's recent response about costs and to ask them about their timeline and then the Parking Committee can meet to discuss. Janet Koch shared that if you do a parking study now, it will be cheaper in the future if the DDA adds to it.

### Outdoor Art

Doreen McGuire shared that people are enjoying it and that people have been taking selfie's in front of the Lion and that Mary Gillet wrote an article about the arts in Northern Michigan and it included a photo of the Culver Exhibition. McGuire shared that we are planning to do something special to thank Caren Culver and it will take place at the end of the exhibition.

The added \$1,000 in grant money did come in. We still have \$750 that will come in from the grant after the final grant report is submitted and that overall, we still have a working budget of approximately \$3,400 to use towards marketing and other expenditures. Conversation with McGuire, Michelle Dayton and Dave Gajda about upcoming adds in the *Express* and the *Review*. Dayton shared that she has had numerous people are aware of the exhibition when they come in the store, good vibes about it, and a mix of people who knew about Charles Culver and did not. McGuire is going to resend the exhibition information to the Senior Centers and tv stations for a great fall experience.

Tracy Muscat asked if the committee could be Grants Committee with a project being outdoor art. She went on to say that the Committee did send a simple survey to business owners to get their feedback about the exhibition. Dayton sent 50 – 55 surveys and will send it again with a reminder to please take the survey August 31. Muscat shared that we have received three responses and this information will be included in the final report along with the financials. Cindi Place has been providing the number of people going to the exhibition's landing page.

Dayton shared that she has been amazed that people seem to know how to use the QR code and have talked about the audio.

Tracy Muscat shared that the Grants Committee is ready for submission the next mini grant as previously approved by the DDA and the Village and it will be reviewed this summer. Mary Gillet who is the grantor and she is reviewing the draft grant and budget this week and will provide feedback later today but shared that she is confident in our application and it will be submitted on/before the August 3 deadline. We should be notified in September and help us to move forward for next year if monies are awarded. Muscat will trigger Sutherland if he needs to sign assurances for the grant.

Muscat shared that the Grants Committee will also begin to look at possible grants for activities like a family outdoor movie night.

**New Business:**

None

**Miscellaneous Business of the Authority Board:**

None

**Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items:**

Janet Koch of the County handed out the latest bulletin for the construction and believes that the remainder of the fencing will go up by the end of August. She has requested fencing go up after Rubber Ducky. She shared information about the pre-trial motions going on at the Courthouse but that parking was not an issue but that is a pre-cursor to what is to come. The Clerk's office is moving today around the corner.

Dayton thanked Koch for allowing the DDA to put the temporary parking signs up.

Muscat acknowledged Koch for her time in meeting with each business to share the information about the construction. Koch said it took her about three hours and some people knew all about it and then some people had no idea. Dayton said that the communication is helpful, including the maps Koch provided.

**Adjourn:**

Motion by Shelly Dayton to adjourn meeting. Second by Doreen McGuire. Meeting adjourned by T. Sutherland at 9:42 am.

Next meeting will be Wednesday, August 30, 2023 at 9 am.

Approved: August 30, 2023

Meeting minutes compiled by T. Lareau