

City of Ypsilanti
Downtown Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Virtual Meeting
Thursday, April 16th, 2020- 8:30 a.m.

The **Mission** of the Ypsilanti Downtown Development Authority (YDDA) is to undertake district-wide improvements that have the greatest impact in strengthening the downtown areas and attracting new business. The primary goal of the YDDA is to implement positive economic, physical, aesthetic, and community changes in each of our four districts.

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call

Beth Bashert	P	Ylondia Portis	P
Kayia Hinton	P	Athena Johnson	A
Andy French	P	Danielle Milner (C)	P
Dieter Otto	P	Ben Harrington	P
Paul Ajlouny	P	Jen Eastridge	P
Patton Doyle	P	Brian Jones Chance	P

● **Introductions**

Listing off the attendees currently in the zoom call- Daryl Hunter, Corinne Sikorski, Jo Jeffries, Mark Swanson, Ron Stevens, Susanne Parell and Shawn Cool.

● **Approval of Agenda (X*)**

Otto, Harrington

● **Approval of February 20th, 2020 Minutes (X*)**

Otto, French

● **Public Comment (3 minutes each)**

Christopher Jacobs described the raise hand function for zoom.

Ron Stevens- Spoke about the work done at Michigan Small Business Development Center.

● **Staff Report/Financial Report (X)**

Two major grant projects are receiving their façade grants today. 101 W. Michigan will be receiving \$75,000 and 209 Pearl Street will be receiving \$100,000.

Staff has been working at home, updating a restaurant list of who is still open. Staff is reaching out to business owners and navigating all the resources that are out there. Staff asked for prioritization of staff resources.

Staff is discussing reallocation of funds from the façade program, to a relief fund for our businesses.

● **Standing Committee Reports**

● **Operations and Finance Committee**

Operations and Finance did not hold a meeting this month.

At the last meeting they discussed the dumpster enclosure at N. Adams. Motion to pass the bid for the camera. IGA agreement over the Maple Street parking agreement. That was also approved through the committee. The summer movie series was also discussed.

● **New Business**

● **COVID-19 Discussion**

This agenda item is to be an open discussion.

Beth Bashert is interested in hearing from the guests about how other communities are navigating COVID-19.

- Susanne Perell – Small business program manager MEDC along with Paula Holtz spoke about ways to support the business community in creative ways. Recommends looking at Main Street America as a resource. Mainstreet.org. She spoke about crowdfunding, and live capital fundraising as well. She recommends one on one connection with businesses, to develop tools to help support the business community.
- Ylondia Portis updated the group about weekly DAY zoom meetings.
- Ron Stevens- SBDC has updated that EIDL has run out of money.
- Paul Ajlouny reported that the PPP has also depleted.
- Daryl Hunter Division administrator unemployment insurance- 25% of Michigan’s workforce is unemployed. There is federal help, so Michigan businesses won’t have to bear the heaviest of the weight. Spoke about the apportionment button to spread payments. We have a program called Work Share. It’s an unemployment program that lets you keep your workforce. Employer File Claims program. Employer can file a claim instead of the employees doing it.
- Representative Ronnie Peterson- Spoke about challenges the Ypsilanti businesses will face and offered assistance to the business community. He recommended making a list of challenges that the businesses are facing.
- Danielle Milner asked how far out we should be thinking about the DDA businesses and how long they will be impacted. Representative Peterson said places will likely be closed until June, and there will be a 2-3-year impact of this.
- Andy French thanked Representative Peterson for advocating for Ypsilanti as soon as possible. He mentioned that businesses are in dire need of working capital.
- MEDC has a partnership with Northern Initiatives which has loans for working capital. They are not taking applications until mid-May. The MEDC recommends also looking at the Capital Access program on michiganbusiness.org/covid19.
- Kirk Profit spoke about budgets and impact.
- Patton Doyle stated that a list of needs in the DDA should be of highest priority.
- Mary Kerr spoke about Ypsi Real serving as a conduit of information. Ypsireal.com has a business toolkit for COVID-19.

- **Old Business**

We are not taking any action right now on any of the items.

Beth Bashert wants to make sure we don’t fully stop progress on old business.

Christopher Jacobs assured the board that things were still in the works in the background.

Ylondia spoke about the mail not getting delivered to businesses, and if this is a concern of the DDA.

Christopher Jacobs stated that businesses should be able to contact the post office and have their mail forwarded.

Patton Doyle said that the post office was holding his mail without request and recommended that staff mention that to business owners when reaching out to them.

- **Staff Updates**

- **Public Comment (3 minutes each)**

Mark Swanson was hoping the DDA would put a public address to the businesses and was not asking staff to be couriers.

- **Announcements/Comments**

- Jen Eastridge stated that making the district alive, vibrant and welcoming through holiday

lighting may be more important than ever. She asked where the conversation was last left.

- There was reluctance to spend substantial amounts of money on holiday lights. There was a real concern about the cost.
- Beth Bashert agrees that it is vital to have decorations. What are alternatives, what are assurances we can make to make sure we can have the decorations. Holiday time will be an important time for recovery for our retail businesses.
- Brian Jones-Chance suggested to find ways to support businesses with selling online, deliveries, or building websites.
- Danielle Milner invited all board members to the operations and finance committee meeting.
- Patton Doyle asked for information regarding the impact of the last recession on the DDA.
- Elize Jekabson updated the board about First Fridays Ypsilanti. There was a livestream for the season kick-off that featured some DDA businesses including 734 brewery, Brick and Mortar Modern General Store, and Dolores. If any businesses want to participate in May's First First Friday, to please contact them.
- Brian Jones-Chance spoke about reaching out to existing building owners and landlords to figure out how to bridge a gap for valuations and deferrals that could be passed on to the tenants.
- Ylondia Portis wanted to make a point about the importance of decorations for the holiday season. We need to be innovative of how we light up the city.
- Danielle Milner restated that we need to go over our strategic plan given the new reality.
- Ann Arbor Spark and MEDC had a small business fund. Has anyone heard of anyone in Ypsilanti that received it? No not yet. This data is great to know to see where we as the DDA can fill in the gaps.

Next Meeting: May 21st, 8:30 a.m., SPARK EAST

- I. Key: (*) = items requiring Board action (X) = documents attached in board packet