



Downtown Development Authority

City of Ecorse, Michigan

Minutes - APPROVED

Ecorse Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Board Meeting
Thursday, February 11, 2021 – 8:30 am via Zoom
Zoom ID: 3886354369, password: 1234 or call in at 312-626-6799 ID: 3886354369

1. Meeting Call to Order at 8:32 a.m.

2. Roll Call:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Johnny Gewarges, Chairman	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Darcel Brown, Mayor-Pro Tem
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kosta Callis, Vice-Chairman	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dan Brown
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jackie Brown, Secretary	<input type="checkbox"/> Bob Reed
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lamar Tidwell, Mayor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kelly Rose
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Richard Marsh, City Administrator	

Also Present: John Jackson, McKenna; Laura Haw, McKenna; Sally Hodges, McKenna; Stephanie Peña, McKenna; Larry Steckelberg, Michigan Treasury; Carolyn Harris; Marilyn O.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Major Tidwell and seconded by Chairman Gewarges to approve the agenda for the DDA Board regular meeting of February 11, 2021. Ayes all.

4. Approval of the Minutes of the January 7, 2021 DDA Meeting

Moved by Darcel Brown and seconded by Chairman Gewarges to approve the minutes for the DDA Board regular meeting of January 7, 2021. Ayes all.

5. Introduction of DDA Member Dan Brown, General Manager, U.S. Steel

6. Presentation and Consideration of the West Jefferson Avenue Development Plan and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Plan:

a. Review and discuss the West Jefferson Avenue Development and TIF Plan

McKenna recommends several edits to the Draft Plan, including adding a sentence regarding maximum amount of bonded indebtedness on page 32; in Table 2 change WCTA/SMART to WCTA; in Table 4 change SMART to WCTA; and select a new photograph for the Plan cover.

Sally Hodges clarified the processes of accruing expected tax increment revenues. Sally Hodges introduced Larry Steckelberg, thanking him for his continued dedication of time and funds to make the current planning processes possible.

Member Jackie Brown asked for clarification on potential tax increases. Sally Hodges and Larry Steckelberg clarified that any increase value in property would be captured by the DDA TIF.

Member Jackie Brown also asked about the placement of Marketing projects in Phase 3, should it be moved to Phase 1 to ensure buildings are inhabited. Laura Haw clarified that Blight Reduction projects within Phase 1 will address the concerns presented. Laura Haw also clarified that the presented projects are to be flexible. John Jackson also clarified that Marketing is deemed as an ongoing project.

Member Darcel Brown asked for clarification on any potential tax increases on businesses as a result of the proposed Plan. Sally Hodges clarified that the Plan does not propose any tax increases, but any future assessments could potentially raise property values and taxes. Kelly Rose spoke to how she plans to explain the Plan and impact on property values and taxes to her condo association. Sally Hodges clarified that the ideal situation is that all values are increased in the City and millages are then reduced. Larry Steckelberg clarified that under **Proposal A, City tax assessments and increases are capped under the rate of inflation.**

Member Darcel Brown also mentioned the importance of increasing public safety presence along the Jefferson Corridor.

Member Darcel Brown asked how local businesses and residents are informed about the TIF Plan. Laura Haw clarified that required by the Act, postings and notifications will be shared with the public. Sally Haw added that a mailing will go to the entire DDA. Brown asked for further information regarding if the DDA has communicated with relevant taxing jurisdictions within the DDA. Hodges clarified that they were notified of the current planning process and no one opted out.

Member Darcel Brown asked if any specific months, dates, or information regarding the proposed timeline were determined. Laura Haw clarified that the recommendation is for the Ecorse DDA to prioritize the projects listed in the proposed timeline. Sally Hodges added that the proposed project list values over \$20M of projects but the tax increment projections amount to only \$2M – the projects should not be expected to be covered fully by the TIF dollars captured, the DDA will need to apply for additional funds.

Member Darcel Brown asked if Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) monies can be directed to beautification projects or DDA projects. John Jackson spoke to the importance of leveraging various funds to make improvements within the Development Area, so it is all used together. Richard Marsh, as a past DDA Executive Director, experienced leveraging CDBG monies for streetscape, safety, and marketing projects.

Member Jackie Brown asked how soon the DDA can pursue grant monies or potentially start a Go-Fund-Me to start DDA projects. Laura Haw clarified that the collection and spending of TIF monies could not start until after the Plan was adopted, but pursuing grant monies could start sooner. Richard Marsh spoke to the short-term projects the DDA would like to accomplish and the need to apply to the next round of CDBG applications. Richard Marsh recommended these funding entities be invited to DDA meetings, such as the MEDC's Mainstreet program officers, to discuss resources. Larry Steckelberg is open to bringing together multiple agencies as he accomplished for the Mill Street. Steckelberg suggested these agencies and resources should be brought together at a joint River Rouge-Ecorse-Wyandotte meeting. Richard Marsh asked Steckelberg to present information, potential resources, and potential funding sources to the DDA soon to begin accomplishing tasks. Marsh suggested the short-term wins could be achieved by creating a

smaller committee tasked with beginning to attract dollars. Sally Hodges recommends that the whole group addresses the task at the next meeting agenda.

Member Kostas Callis asked how much of the revenue assessments are reliant on the U.S. Steel Mill. Sally Hodges clarified that only a small portion of U.S. Steel is included, the front offices and vacant land. Therefore, loss of value if the Mills close, should not affect the base tax values. Sally Hodges clarified that there is no negative tax capture.

- b. Adopt the West Jefferson Avenue Development and TIF Plan, with any revisions, and submit the Plan to City Council, and request City Council set the date for a public hearing for the Plan for April 6, 2021 (*draft motion enclosed*)

Moved by Darcel Brown and seconded by Richard Marsh to approve the West Jefferson Development and TIF Plan, as amended, and submit the Plan to City Council, and request City Council set the date for a public hearing for the Plan on April 6, 2021. Ayes all.

Next steps: Sally walked the DDA Board, specifically Treasurer Jackie Brown, through the next steps in getting the Plan reviewed and approved by the City. Sally suggested the DDA be present at the February 23 City Council Meeting.

Larry Steckelberg reached out to MEDC during the meeting and recommended that someone from the Economic Development space be present at the meeting the DDA would like to meet with MEDC.

Richard Marsh would like to ensure that the next agenda include fundraising strategy.

7. Public Comments

Chairman Gewarges opened for public comment. No comments made.

8. Board Member Comments

Member Darcel Brown recognizes Richard March for his dedication to the City of Ecorse as he will no longer be City Administrator. Chairman Gewarges shares words of acknowledgment of Richard Marsh's efforts in founding the DDA. Jackie Brown also thanks Richard March in his dedication for the City of Ecorse.

Chairman Gewarges comments on his excitement for moving the DDA Board forward.

9. Next Regular Meeting - March 4, 2021

10. Adjournment

Moved by Member Darcel Brown and seconded by Mayor Tidwell to adjourn the meeting at 9:43 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

_____, DDA Director