



**VIRTUAL Monthly Meeting of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Board of Directors**

**Downtown Development Authority Meeting**

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2020 @ 8:00 AM**

**[HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/J/87433086472?PWD=NGPOQNJUAWTLSUNRR2JJYWLMMLZWZZ09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87433086472?pwd=NGPOQNJUAWTLSUNRR2JJYWLMMLZWZZ09)**

**PASSWORD: FERNDALE**

**PHONE: 929 205 6099 (TOLL FREE)**

**MEETING ID: 874 3308 6472**

**1. ROLL CALL**

**CALL TO ORDER:** 8:02 am

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jacki Smith of Ferndale, PJ Jacokes of Pleasant Ridge, Nathan Martin of Ferndale, Jerome Raska of Ferndale, Blake Scheer of Ferndale, Mayor Melanie Piana of Ferndale

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Sarah Brown, Janice Semma, Chris Johnston

**STAFF PRESENT:** Lena Stevens, Executive Director; Sommer Realy, Engagement Manager; Reilly Coleman, DDA Administrative Assistant

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

- Joseph Gacioch, City Manager
- Sheryl Stubblefield, Finance Director
- Candice Giles, Finance Manager
- Jenny Marr, Ferndale Library
- Alan Hejl, Marciano Gongora, and Rachel Zaback of the Ferndale Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Commission

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*Motion by Member Blake Scheer, seconded by Member PJ Jacokes to approve the agenda as presented.*

***All ayes, motion carries.***

**3. PRESENTATIONS**

**a. Acknowledgement of Member Blake Scheer's Departure as Board Member**

Executive Director Lena Stevens stated that it was Member Blake Scheer's last meeting as a serving board member for the Ferndale DDA. He has been involved since 2016 and has seen the DDA go through a lot of challenges. Level One Bank was extremely responsive to business customers during the pandemic. Blake has been active throughout this time and the community owes him a great deal. It is bittersweet to see him leave, but his decision for prioritizing his personal time and energy is respected.

Member Scheer stated he has enjoyed the past few years. There are so many great things the DDA has done, like the DPW contract, the holiday lighting, new staffing, new garbage cans, The dot, and so on. The DDA is not the same as it was years ago. A lot has

been learned. It's time for some new visions on this board, but his support and advocacy for the DDA will remain the same.

Mayor Melanie Piana thanked Member Scheer for his service and leadership over the past several years. He has been a huge supporter of the Downtown. Nothing can be done without uplifted voices, and his leadership has been noted.

Members PJ Jacokes and Jerome Raska thanked Member Scheer for his service.

**b. Ferndale Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Commission Business Awards**

Executive Director Lena Stevens introduced representatives from the Ferndale Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Commission (FAIAC) in attendance. There was a previous meeting held with the FAIAC, City Council, and the Community and Economic Development Department to discuss outdoor patio space and transitioning into the winter seasons. City Council asked about accessibility considerations and the FAIAC provided education on this matter. Disability compliance is a relatively low bar and a moving target. An important factor to note is there are disabilities that are both seen and unseen; one may not know how others may deal with a disability if it is not visible. This is an opportunity to recognize those businesses who have gone above and beyond with efforts for disability inclusivity. The reason it is an award, rather than a certification, is because of liability. It is about giving public praise, rather than offering a certification.

Alan Hejl of FAIAC stated the committee has been formed for almost a year. The culture of disability rights has come a long way. There's no excuse for businesses to slip through the cracks of inclusiveness. It takes awareness, and the more businesses that are reached, the better. The mission is for Ferndale to be a place of choice to live and work free of barriers. The FAIAC was able to privately tour The dot and give their feedback about the structure and overall levels of accessibility. The intention of the award is to be proactive with businesses and grant them the opportunity to explain what they're doing. It will help tell stories and draw people to Ferndale. The criteria includes recognition of effort and human impact, encouragement to other businesses, acknowledgement of improvements, and to go beyond ADA requirements. The first award is to be given within the first quarter of 2021.

Marciano Gongora of FAIAC provided an overview of the business nomination form. There are six categories, including digital, environmental accessibility, cognitive, employment, accessibility training and awareness, communications accessibility, and other entries. Examples of each category are listed in the supplemental material.

Rachel Zaback of FAIAC provided an overview of the frequently asked questions. Businesses are able to nominate themselves, as they know their culture better than others. Businesses are also able to persuade others to nominate them. It is also acceptable for businesses to be nominated in more than one category. One business will be awarded per year. Businesses cannot ask their employees if they have a disability but can offer the opportunity for them to self-identify as a disabled person. The goal is not

to highlight people doing the bare minimum, but to recognize those who go above and beyond to help people and recognize solutions of sustainability and impact.

Hejl stated they are in need of help to spread the word. If there is a business that has made improvements, or may need assistance making more, the FAIAC would like to get in touch.

Director Stevens stated now is not the best time for promotion given the holiday events. It is difficult to get attention on new projects. January is a better month to provide outreach for this, especially as businesses will be preparing outdoor spaces for spring. It's also a good idea to generate infographics with inclusiveness and models to take toward businesses.

Member Blake Scheer agreed January is better for kickoff and mentioned a good point of interest is the 9 Mile and Woodward Avenue corridor. A commitment for sidewalk safety and improvements is necessary. Temporarily, ensuring the sidewalks are salted for the holiday season is a good beginning initiative.

Mayor Melanie Piana stated the crosswalks of 9 Mile and Woodward Avenue have decreased since the summer. Two lights cycles have to be completed before someone can finish crossing. A letter was written to the MDOT Director as well as a Twitter post mentioning necessary individuals. Alan Hejl was instrumental in accessibility advocacy on Ferndale's behalf. The power of the FAIAC and advocating for human design and people-focused solutions is where the City will rely on them. This project will bring great awareness and more accessibility to Downtown.

Member PJ Jacokes stated it would be helpful for businesses to have more examples of accessibility or even a checklist to reference.

#### **4. COMMUNITY REPORTS**

*Reports from community organization representatives in attendance, including but not limited to Ferndale Area Chamber of Commerce, Ferndale Area District Library, 8 Mile Boulevard Association, etc.*

- a. Jenny Marr of the Ferndale Area District Library provided an update. The building is still closed. Curbside service, delivery, and free printing are still being offered. The public has shown a lot of initiative in applying for library cards. There is a lot of virtual programming, including story time, podcasts, and live music concerts. They are also providing activity bags with crafts. Four board members have been re-elected. There is currently one vacancy and applications are being accepted right now. There are also a lot of new plans for January to come.

Executive Director Lena Stevens stated she is willing to discuss any additions or modifications for the courtyard as they prepare for the spring season. Outdoor spaces will be very important for the foreseeable future.

## 5. CALL TO AUDIENCE

- a. No call to audience.

## 6. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approval of November Minutes  
*Motion by Member Blake Scheer, seconded by Member PJ Jacokes.*  
**All ayes, motion carries.**

## 7. REGULAR AGENDA

- a. License for Use of Property at 165 E. Nine Mile Road for Outdoor Seating  
Executive Director Lena Stevens stated there is an opportunity to renew the license for the popup park at 9 Mile and Bermuda. There is an overall satisfaction of the use of the space. Having access to the property allowed food trucks to take advantage of the space and let people eat outside. This will be important for the overall health, wellness, and safety of guests. The property owners have been great to work with and very flexible. There have been discussions of renting out the area for very small, socially distant events. More businesses will have access to this space. The proposed contract covers lawn maintenance and licensing services; the property owners will be responsible for snow removal and lawn moving. The DDA is responsible for any items on the property. DPW has agreed to oversee maintenance in their contract. Either party is able to terminate the contract with 30 days written notice. The budget will come from the outdoor activation line item.

Member PJ Jacokes asked if festivals are to be held, can the space be altered without the DDA's permission?

Director Stevens stated this should not be an issue. DPW can remove items ahead of time.

*Motion by Member Blake Scheer, seconded by Member Nathan Martin.*  
**All ayes, motion carries.**

## 8. CALL TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS, BOARD MEMBERS, & STAFF (note more than 3 minutes)

- a. Executive Director Lena Stevens expressed her positive feelings toward the current holiday events. This is the first time the DDA has been involved in virtual advertisements via Google, Facebook, and Instagram. The Unbox the Holidays website currently has between 200 and 600 visitors a day, split 50/50 between ad-directed visitors and organic visitors. The marketing is finalized with the marquee at The Magic Bag. The gift card program is up and running. There is no deadline to participate, any business can register at any time. PPE supplies are still available to businesses via delivery. It has been a very difficult year but the DDA has made great efforts.
- b. City Manager Joseph Gacioch provided an update on The Dot. The elevator inspection is currently underway. There was a limited availability of elevator inspections due to COVID-19. The City had to secure an elevator inspector from Northern Michigan to

complete the project. If the approval passes, opening could take place as soon as Saturday morning. However, the structure cannot open without approval. The patience and efforts everyone have gone through to ensure The dot opens is very appreciated.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

*Motion by Member Blake Scheer, seconded by Member PJ Jacokes to adjourn the meeting at 9:12 A.M.*

***All ayes, motion carries.***