

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Berkley Downtown Development Authority**  
**Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees**  
**Berkley Public Safety Building, 2nd Floor Conference Room**  
**Wednesday, April 23, 2008**

I. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 6:47 PM with Chair Alan Semonian presiding.

II. **DETERMINATION OF ATTENDANCE:**

*Present:* Jane Bais-DiSessa  
John Barbuscak  
Lawrence Gallagher  
Robert Liss  
John McGovern  
Alan Semonian  
Aleta Young

*Absent:* Allen Dyer – *excused*  
James Esshaki  
Diane Farrington  
Karen Koerber – *excused*  
Keith Logsdon – *excused*  
Michael Pesendorfer – *excused*

*Also Present:* Roy Bell  
Dale GoodCourage, City Council  
Bruce Jerome, DPW Director  
Michael Matthews-Pennanen, City Council Liaison  
Jennifer Mlutkowski, DDA Downtown Manager

III. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** The agenda was approved unanimously upon a motion by Liss and a second by Gallagher.

IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**A. Regular Meeting of April 9, 2008:** Gallagher moved to approve the minutes and Young seconded. Barbuscak asked for discussion. Two versions were supplied: the shorter version contained action items only, while the longer version (distributed to the Board only, as “Notes”) went into greater detail of the discussions at the meeting. Barbuscak said after reading both versions, he thought that the content could certainly be tailored. He felt that discussion preceding actions taken needed to be included in the minutes and therefore recommended that the 4/9 version of the minutes distributed as “notes” be adopted as “revised minutes.” He suggested that in the future, Board members should indicate that they are speaking “for the record.”

Bais-DiSessa had indicated earlier that she preferred to see only action items and that the minutes were more detailed than they needed to be. McGovern said he agreed with Barbuscak in that the purpose is to cover important points and in the future, when someone wants to be sure their comments are included, they should say “for the record” when they’re speaking on an issue. McGovern said he would move to use the unabridged, longer version of the 4/9 minutes as the official minutes. Bais-DiSessa clarified that the language used to go on record would be “I would like the minutes to reflect” when issues are being discussed to insure that those comments are included in the minutes. Young noted that once the roll is called and the meeting is in session, they *are* on the record, unless they go into closed session. Liss suggested if there is discussion with a lot of back-and-forth that a Board member or the chair summarize the discussion, and that summary should be recorded. Barbuscak noted that when Council meets, sometimes a Councilperson will say “I’m going to take this stand and here is the reason.” He asked if that was recorded, and Bais-DiSessa said not in the minutes but on the tape of the minutes.

On motion by Bais-DiSessa and a second by Young, the revised, unabridged minutes (the “notes”) were unanimously approved by the Board.

Barbuscak asked if the Board would always have to approve the minutes of the regular meeting at the special meeting held on the fourth Wednesday. Semonian said they could wait, especially if there was no quorum and no business could be conducted, but he would like to progress and not have a backlog of minutes to approve.

**V. PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None.

**VI. CHAIRPERSON'S UPDATE:** Semonian noted the meeting they were holding was the first extra meeting each month called to deal with specific topics that are either time sensitive or might need extra discussion time. The focus of this meeting was planting and parking, with Mlutkowski talking briefly about potential promotions and priorities for her as downtown manager. Semonian added he wanted to discuss Board members' "passions" as well.

**VII. NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. Potential Promotions: Jennifer Mlutkowski:** During the previous two weeks, Mlutkowski met with people in the city to come up with ideas about promotions. She started an "idea binder" to file all the information in one place. She noted that events and promotions take a long time to plan, so larger events would probably have to be put off for later in the year or 2009. She suggested aiming for smaller events later this year, and in general limit promotions to four really good events per year as a target. She listed some of her ideas: A quarterly window display contest (that would encourage retailers to change their displays) with the community voting for the winner. The DDA could pay for an ad in one of the local papers promoting the winner. She also suggested a poster contest/fundraiser with a local photographer taking residents' pictures in front of a landmark like the Berkley Theater. The kind of contest could be varied each year to bring the community together and generate interest in the downtown. Mlutkowski asked the Board for their ideas and gave out a form for each member to list two ideas. She also reported talking to City Style, noting they want more events and promotions and more of a DDA presence downtown.

She also met with Julie Melrose of the Chamber, who would like to work with the DDA to promote new businesses. If the DDA is going to start doing promotions, Mlutkowski would like to start a roundtable meeting with retailers within the next month or two to gauge their level of interest in participating. She wondered if she needed to ask the Board's permission to do so. Liss suggested sending businesses a questionnaire first, outlining her plans and asking for input. Barbuscak suggested she talk to the Chamber about their lack of success with that kind of event. Mlutkowski said she was going to the Chamber meeting Wednesday. She said the roundtables could be on different topics every quarter. Liss suggested making a certain number of personal calls on the businesses every week. Mlutkowski said that once she got her business cards, she planned on going around and introducing herself. She added that to plan a large event, such as a sale with a lot of participating businesses, she would need more input to gauge whether or not it would work, and that the point of the DDA is to get the downtown working together. Liss said he still thought it would be necessary to entice them to come with some inducement like an after-business hours buffet. Young suggested getting one of the local vendors to host the party at their site. The DDA could pay for that kind of promotion.

Bais-DiSessa recommended that the Board members fill out their forms before planning a get-together for businesses. She said in her experience it would be hard to get the business community together. Mlutkowski agreed it will be tough, but they need to try. Bais-DiSessa asked if the Board agreed with her suggestion to look at their individual input first. Young noted that Southfield has a business networking event on the fourth Thursday of each month, hosted by the DDA at a different location each time. There were just a few vendors at first, but it's grown quite large now. She says they need to make business owners talk to each other. Semonian asked Mlutkowski to send a reminder e-mail about the form to the whole Board a few days before the next DDA meeting and to e-mail the form to Board members not at the meeting.

**B. Priorities for Downtown Manager:** Mlutkowski noted she is trying to learn her role and what the ongoing projects are. She would like a better idea of what the top DDA priorities are and how the

Board wants her to work. She reported meeting with Rick Axe, the realtor who compiles the available property in Berkley. She wondered if she can get directly involved in meeting with business people interested in Berkley, or does she have to wait for Board approval. Semonian said he had discussed this with Mlutkowski and wanted the Board's input on how much leeway they felt comfortable giving her. Mlutkowski said she also met with Brenda Cole about the Web site and what Geinzer planned to do on it. She noted that she would bring any proposed Web site changes to the Board for approval. She asked the Board to direct her on their priorities.

Young responded that for her the development plan is the top priority, and when the plan is finished that will determine priorities. Bais-DiSessa reported that she just received an e-mail from Miller-Canfield. They reviewed the plan and made some remarks about changes to be made. She will forward the e-mail to Mlutkowski so she can make the changes and finish. Semonian concurred with Young that the plan was the top priority. Barbuscak asked if the Board would have a chance to see Miller-Canfield's changes. Bais-DiSessa said Mlutkowski would present that to the Board for approval and then there would be public hearings. Parts of the plan need to state certain things that Miller-Canfield highlighted.

Barbuscak noted that the development plan is one of the DDA's highest priorities, and anything the DDA wants to accomplish has to be in the plan, so it has to be all-inclusive. He suggested meeting with Christina Sheppard-Decius in Ferndale (Berkley's Main Street mentor) to have her also look at the plan and see if the needed flexibility is there. It would cost nothing to have her read it. Barbuscak volunteered to go with Mlutkowski to see Sheppard-Decius. Bais-DiSessa responded that they have done that with Miller-Canfield, and it wasn't necessary to work with Ferndale because when they worked on the plan, they made sure it was general and allowed for flexibility. Barbuscak asked her if there was a reason not to have Sheppard-Decius look at the plan, and she said it would take more time. Semonian also volunteered to go with Mlutkowski and recommended doing so because of Ferndale's experience. It would also help Mlutkowski establish a strong rapport with Sheppard-Decius. He hoped to get that feedback prior to the next Board meeting.

Bais-DiSessa said she had discussed Board actions with Mlutkowski, who will start coming to Bais-DiSessa with a memorandum regarding Board actions to put on the agenda for Council consideration. Then she will appear before Council with the Board's recommendation. Barbuscak asked Bais-DiSessa to clarify whether she was talking about presenting information about DDA action or asking for approval of DDA action. Bais-DiSessa said it was both. Barbuscak asked that the issue be put on the DDA agenda quickly, because he felt it was not in the bylaws or charter that Council had to approve every action the DDA takes. They do approve the budget. He believed a clear understanding was needed of specifically what things required Council approval and what did not. Bais-DiSessa responded that they only take items to Council that require Council approval, such as an expenditure over a certain dollar amount. She said that every Board has to do that. Council always approves what the DDA presents. It is just a way of letting them know what the DDA is doing and why they're doing it. It's not a hindrance.

Barbuscak reiterated that he would like to get the issue settled. Semonian asked if he could be more specific. Barbuscak said clarifying what the bylaws, charter, and state law say requires Council approval. Bais-DiSessa repeated that Council needed to approve expenditures over a certain amount. Barbuscak noted there is a distinction between other Boards and advisory groups and the DDA. Council has to approve the budget and who's appointed to the Board. Liss said he agreed with Barbuscak. Bais-DiSessa emphasized that they were dealing with tax dollars. Semonian said they were all speaking from lack of knowledge on the issue. Young noted that in her prior experience with the City of Pontiac, expenditures/contracts over \$25,000 needed Council approval. Barbuscak reiterated that the Board's attorney was experienced in DDA law, and he wanted to have his opinion. Liss asked Bais-DiSessa if there was something from the City that the Board could read. She said it was in the charter. He asked her to bring the wording to the next meeting. She said it was on the Web site. She also said she would be happy to bring it to the next meeting. She said she wants everyone to know what the City is spending its money on and the bidders they use.

Gallagher asked her if under the charter there were thresholds that required a bid process. She said there were. He said then that he agreed that the Board just needed to act within the purchasing guidelines and according to the budget approved by Council. Bais-DiSessa countered that Council needs to be informed about what the DDA is doing, as well as residents of the city, since meetings are televised.

Semonian said he saw two issues. One is defining what the threshold is for getting Council approval, required or not, so the Board knows the requirement. He added that making a public display at a Council meeting is good CYA as far getting officially on the record. Bais-DiSessa said she doesn't think the Council will say no, and that they want to see what the DDA is doing. Semonian recommended getting the information about the defined threshold for the next meeting. Barbuscak asked that it be put on the next meeting's agenda. Liss asked Bais-DiSessa to bring the written wording about approvals to the next Board meeting. Bais-DiSessa reminded everyone about past joint meetings on the issue. She said it had been clearly indicated that they are following the rules and procedures. She said it was not necessary to re-ask the same questions of the attorney. She also said she never recalled the attorney being appointed as the "DDA attorney." Barbuscak said he had to answer Bais-DiSessa. The joint meeting was called for that purpose, but the meeting before it ran long, and the DDA lost the chair and other DDA board members. The attorney the DDA hired had many disagreements with the City Attorney. The discussion wasn't finished and the issue wasn't resolved.

Bais-DiSessa stated that she wanted to stay on issue. Young said she wanted to impress upon the Board that they need to start doing something in the city and get to work. The funds are allocated and the Board needs to take action or they would not be living up to their obligations. She said Council would approve what the DDA presented.

Getting back to the agenda and priorities of the manager, McGovern suggested if Mlutkowski had any question about what she can do, she should ask Semonian. Semonian said he was only concerned, based on past experience, that the full Board may not agree with his decision. Bais-DiSessa said she believed the Board gave Semonian that authority at the last meeting.

#### **VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**A. Downtown Esthetics: Flower Planting and Banners in the 12 Mile Streetscape Area:** Bruce Jerome brought half of a sample planter to show Board members. He also reported that the Junior Women's Club was meeting and that they had set aside money for planting flowers in the city. Jerome had asked the planter vendor for a proposal, and he was unhappy to hear it would take 12 to 14 weeks to get the planters if the Board wanted them (August of 2008). Semonian asked if there was another vendor, and Jerome said possibly. The planter he brought was the larger of two sizes offered. The larger planter is 31.4 inches in diameter, and the smaller 23.6. He suggested they would need a mix of the two sizes. The smaller planter would be appropriate for places where the light poles are closer to the street. The cost of the larger planter is \$688.00. Jerome estimated that counting 53-57 light poles in the streetscape area, the total cost for planters would be @\$36,000, not including the flowers themselves. Jerome suggested that if they continue to have banners on the poles, they could alternate planters between poles to save money. He apologized for the planters being unavailable until later in summer. Liss asked him about the cost of planting flowers, and Jerome said the cost from the contractor was \$105.00 per planter. The Berkley Junior Women's Club is another potential planting source. A flat of flowers generally costs \$12-\$15. There is a reservoir in the bottom of the planter that holds about two gallons of water. The Junior Women's Club had offered to maintain and water the flowers. Jerome said the number of planters could be cut down to 21-22, or 30 including the intersection. Semonian asked him if he knew of other alternatives to the design. Jerome said there are probably other sources. Barbuscak said that Clawson uses flower baskets. Jerome responded that the mast arms on Berkley's poles won't support weight. They would need to be retrofit. Barbuscak thought the bottom of the planter might hang too low, and Jerome said the manual of traffic control devices requires the bottom edge of a sign be no less than seven feet from the curb. Liss noted that the planters would be a maintenance problem as well as being expensive. He suggested having a beautiful banner to hang across street in various places, pole to

pole. Bais-DiSessa suggested having more banners or new banners, on Coolidge as well as 12 Mile. Barbuscak said they're already on Coolidge. The banners from 1996 are starting to break down. Bais-DiSessa said the tulips look really nice and suggested having flowers in more places. Semonian said he'd rather have more flowers on the ground.

Liss moved to dispense with the planters, Young seconded, and the Board approved the motion unanimously.

Semonian proposed pursuing more plentiful plantings. Bais-DiSessa said she'd like to work with Jerome on flowers. He suggested revisiting the contract for maintenance in the fall to see if the Board wants to continue with the current contractor. Liss suggested Jerome come back to the next meeting with a way to add more flowers. Bais-DiSessa said the Beautification Committee was coming up with ideas about beautifying the whole city. Liss suggested approaching the Junior Women's Club with a proposal about adding flowers and let them cover the cost. Jerome noted two areas with opportunities to plant: Coolidge at Dorothea and Robina at 12. Bais-DiSessa said Jerome should come back and make recommendations to the Board about adding more flowers.

**B. DDA Streetscape Parking Plan** – No report or discussion.

**C. Board Members' Individual "Passions": Alan Semonian** – No report or discussion.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM on motion by Liss and second by Young.