Downtown Management Board & Downtown Development Authority Regular Meeting

Wednesday, May 13th, 2026

301 Washington Ave. Bay City, MI 48708 Room 317 8:05 AM

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

DMB

Jeff Hildebrant ✓

Scott Nemode **ex.**

Howie Diefenbach ✓

Avram Golden ✓

Jennifer Stasser ✓

Cassidy Bouchard ✓

Tricia Coonan **ex.**

Alex Weiss ✓

Lucas Chaddah **x**

Ruben Rivera ✓

Rob Clark ✓

Sara Dimitroff ✓

DDA

John Neeb ✓

Jesse Kendall ✓

Paul Wiese ✓

Chris Girard ✓

Nick Schwall ✓

Daniel Dimitroff ✓

Jean Ann DeShano ✓

Terry Moultane ✓

Also in attendance: Dana Muscott, Magen Samyn, Sara Parker, Shelby Munsey, Kellie Rupp

2. Approval of the Agenda

DDA agenda approved by motion: J. DeShano / N. Schwall

DMB agenda approved by motion: A. Weiss / C. Bouchard

3. Review and Approval of Minutes

April 2026 DDA minutes approved with changes: P. Wiese / J. DeShano

April 2026 DMB minutes approved with changes: J. Stasser / C. Bouchard

DDA financials: motion to table to June meeting by J. DeShano / J. Kendall

DMB financials: motion to table to June meeting by A. Weiss / J. Stasser

4. Public Input

No public input.

5. Director & Committee Reports

Reports were presented and approved. Motion to accept committee reports:

DDA: J. DeShano / P. Wiese

DMB: A. Weiss / J. Stasser

Committee reports included:

1. Rupp Report
2. Parker Report
3. Events Committee Report
4. Parking Committee Report
5. Marketing Committee Report
6. Beautification Committee Report
7. Michigan Main Street Report

6. Action Items

i. DDA Accounts Payable: motion to table until June 2026 meeting by P. Wiese / J. DeShano

ii. DMB Liquor License Application (Saturday, October 3rd): motion to approve by A. Weiss / H. Diefenbach, approved unanimously

7. City District Updates

T. Moultane: Draft ordinance will be posted on the city planning section of the website for review.

S. Dimitroff: Seven applications received for MEDC Match on Main; two forwarded (Artigiano and Lumberman's Mercantile on Midland St.).

C. Girard: Top four city manager candidates will be announced; public meet and greet scheduled for May 26.

8. Roundtable Updates

- J. Stasser: Farmers Market opens June 4 at Pere Marquette Parking Place, 2:00–7:00 PM, running Thursdays through October 1.
- M. Samyn: EOB scheduled for May 15 focusing on housing and its impact on Bay County. The June 12th Eye Opener will be about Summer fun in Bay County
- Rob C.: New office at 812 N. Water St. for Tri-Star submitted architectural designs and will host an open house.

9. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:56 AM.

a.) Rupp Report

Office Move
The move to our new office went really well! I'm really enjoying being in our new space at 101 First St. and getting settled in.

Day of Caring
On April 24, we participated in the United Way Day of Caring. We had about 10 volunteers from Berkshire Hathaway, along with Adam from Bay Landscaping, help plant new perennials around the Saginaw/5th and Washington/6th parking lots. The areas look really nice and were a great refresh.

Pure Michigan Governor's Conference on Tourism
April 7 through 9, I attended the Pure Michigan Governor's Conference on Tourism in Traverse City. It was a great conference with lots of helpful ideas and trends related to travel and tourism.

One exciting moment was getting to meet Jase from Josh & Jase, the two guys from Britain who visited Michigan last summer and recently announced they'll be returning this summer. It sounds like they may be looking for paid partnerships during their trip. I was able to give him my contact information and encouraged them to make a stop on the east side while they're in Michigan.

A few interesting takeaways from the conference:

- Paranormal tourism is currently one of the fastest-growing tourism segments, with haunted and history-based experiences gaining popularity.
- Travelers are increasingly trusting organic content first, AI-generated recommendations second, and sponsored posts the least due to concerns about bias.
- Food-focused travel continues to grow, especially curated experiences that make it easy for visitors to try multiple places or explore walkable food routes.
- Visitors remember experiences more than logistics. The focus should be on how people feel, feeling welcomed, and creating unexpected moments of delight. There was a lot of mention of nostalgia.

There was also a lot of discussion around AI and tourism marketing, including:

- Conducting high-level online audits to see how destinations appear across the internet and in AI search results.
- Looking at reviews for patterns and opportunities for improvement.
- Building story-based content and "bundles" of experiences rather than promoting things individually.
- Creating content efficiently through creator collaborations and co-op filming opportunities.

I also gathered several helpful contacts and resources for future tourism opportunities, training, newsletters, and travel center displays.

Leadership Bay County
On May 6, I presented to the Leadership Bay County class, sharing information about upcoming summer events and providing attendees with a shortened version of the summer booklet.

Bay Metro Local Advisory Committee
I was invited to join Bay Metro's Local Advisory Committee. We held our first meeting last week and are beginning discussions on the committee's role and how it will function moving forward.

Michigan with Kids

An Instagram page called Michigan with Kids reached out about potentially featuring things to do in Downtown Bay City during the summer for families. They currently have 33.1K followers, with much of their audience based in Metro Detroit. I have a call scheduled with them on Friday to learn more and see what opportunities may be available.

Business Updates

- The Polar Lab will be moving into 401 Center Avenue alongside the arcade and Little Pastry Shop. The business is being opened by the son of Mama Lupo's owners. While Mama has retired, her son and daughter-in-law were not quite ready to be done yet and will be making and serving ice cream inside City Market.
- Sunrise Pedal Trolley is expanding its main hub on Washington Avenue and adding another trolley to its fleet.
- Ferne Boutique will be shifting more focus toward growing its e-commerce business. The Bay City storefront will remain open regular retail hours through May 30. After that, the location will serve as the shipping and fulfillment hub for online sales while still participating in pop-ups, special events, and appointment shopping.
- The anticipated opening date for North Peak is now May 28.

b.) Parker Report

Operational Updates

The DDA/DMB operations have officially moved into the new office space at 101 First Street, Suite 101**.** The transition went smoothly, and we are already seeing the benefits of being located in the same building as the Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, Bay Future, Inc., and the Downtown Management Board. This shared space is improving communication, coordination, and day-to-day collaboration.

Downtown Maintenance & Infrastructure

Several downtown maintenance items are currently in progress. The investigation into recent tree vandalism has begun, with the insurance company contacted and a police report underway. At this time, we are still determining whether an insurance claim will be necessary or if any of the damaged trees can be salvaged.

The speed bump on Water Street, across from the Jennison Parking Lot, will be installed permanently. Work is also underway on the Third Street Water Fountain. The water has been turned on, and the waterfall will operate daily from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. on an automatic schedule.

Parking Updates

The parking report has been completed with updated information. Moving forward, monthly one-on-one meetings will be held with Parking Ambassadors to support communication, accountability, and continued operational improvements.

Parking ticket verbiage has also been updated to include the new phone number, new address, and cashless payment options. A QR code has been added to make payment easier and more accessible.

Administrative & Financial Progress

Weiss Property Management invoices related to the 2025 Leadership Bay County tree project have been closed out. Preliminary research has also begun on work order software that could help prioritize brick repairs, landscape improvements, and other downtown maintenance needs.

Overall understanding of DDA/DMB financials, operations, and day-to-day processes continues to grow, allowing for stronger oversight, better organization, and more efficient follow-through.

Michigan Main Street

I am serving as the point person for the Michigan Main Street application process and continue to move the work forward in coordination with MEDC. This includes tracking required action items, preparing materials, organizing committee structure and training information, and maintaining regular checkpoints to support a smooth and complete application process.

c.) Events Committee Report

Next Events Meeting: May 19th 9:00 AM, DMB Office

In Attendance: Jeff Hildebrant, Kathy LaLonde, Kym Kram, Rick Windt, Cassidy Bouchard, Kellie Rupp.

1. **Three of a Kind Recap - Saturday April 18th**
    a. Merchants in attendance said the event was a lot of fun and there was a lot of foot traffic. There were 149 entries that got a Three of a Kind.

2. **Summer Events Calendar QC**

- Wellness Weekends, Health & Wellness Classes (Free):
    - Every Saturday & Sunday (except July 4 & 5), June 6 - August 30, 9:00 AM, Wenonah Park
- Bay Area Farmers Market:
    - Thursdays, June 4 - October 1, 2:00 - 7:00 PM, Pere Market Depot Parking Plaza
- Riverside Art Festival:
    - June 13 & 14
- Young People's Summer Series:
    - June 17 - August 12, 11:15 AM - 12:30 PM, Wenonah Park Pavilion, free lunch and entertainment for kids
- Wednesdays in the Park:
    - June 17 - September 9, opener at 6:30 PM, main act at 7:00 PM
- Fridays at the Falls:
    - Every Friday in July & August, 6:00 PM, 3rd St. Waterfall Park, free local musicians
- Meet Up, Eat Up & Read Up:
    - Every Tuesday & Thursday, June 9 - August 6, 12:00 - 12:45 PM, Wirt Library lawn, free lunch and books for kids and teens (ages 0-18)

3. Downtown Scavenger Hunt
    a. Kym of Third Street Thrift and Kathy LaLonde of Little House are working on organizing a scavenger hunt in Downtown on Saturday, June 6th. Photos will be taken of an item in participating businesses and guests will go around and have to put the name of the establishment on their card.

d.) Parking/Finance Committee Report

Next Parking Meeting: June 2nd, 2026

In Attendance: Paul Wiese, Jean Ann DeShano, Chris Girard, Sara Parker, Kellie Rupp.

- The Parking & Finance Committee reviewed the current financial reports, including accounts payable, balance sheet, and income statement. The committee discussed the financial position of the DMB/DDA and continued to review regular financial activity to support transparency and informed decision-making.
- The parking report was also reviewed. Parking Ambassadors have now moved into their new space at 101 First Street, Suite 101, Bay City, MI 48708. In addition, parking ticket verbiage has been updated to reflect that cash payments are no longer accepted. A QR code has also been added to the ticket to provide a more convenient payment option. One-on-ones scheduled with parking ambassadors.
- The committee also discussed prior parking studies from 2005 and 2011. These studies will be shared with committee members for review and future discussion as the board continues evaluating downtown parking needs and opportunities, as well as hiring an outside company to conduct a comprehensive parking study.
- A resident of the Jennison Condominiums provided an update regarding an ongoing leak in the parking structure. An estimate was also submitted to update the fencing around the Jennison lot so it is consistent with the appearance of the structure.

e.) Marketing Committee Report

Next Marketing Meeting: June 4th, 2026

In Attendance: Alex Weiss, Kellie Rupp, Jeff Hildebrant, Rob Clark

	January 2026	February 2026	March 2026	April 2025	April 2026
Facebook Content Interactions	2,400	1,700	9,800	1,500	1,600
Facebook Followers	32,549	32,591	33,101	30,634	33,182
Facebook Post Reach	260,500	236,000	803,300	59,900	99,860
Facebook Video Watch Time	2h 34m	2h 7m	1d 13h	16h	2h 48m
Instagram Followers	9,227	9,234	9,266	8,848	9,316
Newsletter Open Rate	35%	37%	36%	39%	34%%
Constant Contact Subscribers	9,730	9,709	9,695	9857	9,688

1. **Summer Celebration Booklet QC**
   The group reviewed the layout of the 2026 Summer Celebration Booklet. Final ad submissions are due by Monday, May 11, to be included in the publication.
2. **Downtown Map QC**
   The group reviewed the latest proof of the downtown handheld map. Minor consistency updates were found, but overall the map is in good shape and expected to be ready for summer.
3. **Business Spotlight Videos**
   The group discussed continuing short promotional videos featuring downtown businesses. Upcoming businesses identified for filming include Little Builders Play Yard, Barney's Bakery, and a combined feature for Crazy Quarters, Polar Lab, and Little Pastry Shop. Kellie will coordinate with business owners to schedule filming dates.
4. **Thursdays on Third**
   The group discussed highlighting a different business, event, or downtown feature each week throughout the summer as part of Thursdays on Third.
5. **Downtown Storytelling / Social Media Features**
   The group discussed creating social media content focused on Downtown Bay City's

“hidden gems.” Ideas included features similar to the storytelling style and engagement seen with Joe Spencer at GT Homestead, as well as spotlighting lunch deals, local history, notable figures such as Annie Edson, and other unique downtown stories. With Rob’s journalism background and Jeff’s photography skills, the group discussed the potential for strong visual and editorial content, potentially under the name “MI Downtown Bay City.”

f.) Beautification Committee Report

Next Beautification Meeting: May 28th, 2026

In Attendance: Jeff Hildebrant, Jean Ann DeShano, John Neeb, Kellie Rupp, Jesse Kendall

1. **Adopt-a-Pot**
   We currently have 15 Adopt-a-Pot commitments. For $135, businesses receive a fully planted pot that will be maintained and watered throughout the season in front of their location. A reminder was sent out yesterday.
2. **Center & Saginaw Planters**
   A few years ago, Begick's installed six black planters at the corner of Center and Saginaw. They have proposed adding six more so that all four corners are consistent. The Beautification Committee has approved the request and plans to move forward.
3. **Watering Washington/6th & Saginaw/5th**
   The new plantings installed during Day of Caring look great! Bay Landscaping has recommended watering at least once per week. Mike Schingeck will be providing a quote to maintain these beds throughout the summer.
4. **Dart Project Update**
   The Dart project continues to progress smoothly. The next step is completing a bore sample, which will require an encroachment permit. Once the soil sample is complete, the architect will be able to finalize the base plans.
5. **Downtown Bay City Sign**
   Begick's has provided the technical drawings for the proposed Downtown Bay City sign at the base of Veterans Bridge. The plans will be submitted to MDOT for approval. Pricing will be determined following approval. Insurance is expected to cover a significant portion of the cost, and the Bay City Lions Club has also expressed willingness to assist if needed.
6. **Brick Repair Priorities**
   Sara and Kellie will be conducting a walkthrough to identify and prioritize areas in need of brick repair this summer.
7. **Waterfall Park Improvements**
   Russ from Pool Tech is completing prep work and will begin epoxy and material repairs once weather conditions allow.

<u>Maintenance Tracking System</u>
Sara and Kellie met with Mike Schingeck and talked about a potential maintenance ticketing system. Turns out that Schingeck already has an app in place, that is $10/mo per user. The system includes a downtown map and allows for photo uploads, which could improve tracking and response to maintenance needs.

<u>Third Street Waterfall Park Feature Idea</u>
An additional feature was discussed for Third Street Waterfall Park: a barrel photo opportunity inspired by Annie Edson Taylor, the first person to survive going over Niagara Falls in a barrel. Her barrel was made by the West Bay City Cooperage, making this a meaningful local connection. While signage and historical information already exist, adding an interactive photo element could enhance the space and visitor experience.

Water St. & Center Ave. Repaint

Discussion also included repainting the street artwork at the intersection of Water Street and Center Avenue, directly in front of the park.

g.) Michigan Main Street Report

- The Michigan Main Street application process remains an active priority. Since the last update, the committee structure has been finalized and is ready to be shared with the board, along with training information and supporting links. This structure was developed to align as closely as possible with existing DDA and DMB committees, while still meeting Michigan Main Street expectations. At this time, the only pillar that may require an additional committee is Economic Vitality.
- With Lily West officially relocated to Petoskey, the Bay Area Chamber team will continue leading the next steps of this initiative. Staff will continue working through action items and maintaining checkpoints with MEDC to keep the application process organized and on track. Committee structure details and training links will be distributed to the full board for review.
- The next meeting will be held on June 22nd at 3:00 p.m. The calendar invitation will come from Leigh Young with MEDC. Full board engagement is encouraged.