

**FARMINGTON CITY COUNCIL  
AND  
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
JOINT MEETING**

A joint meeting of the Farmington City Council with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Board was held on Saturday, November 22, 2008 in Council Chambers, 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan. Notice of the meeting was posted in compliance with Public Act 267-1976.

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 a.m. by Mayor Knol.

**COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:** Buck, Knol, McShane, Wiggins, Wright.

**COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:** None.

**CITY ADMINISTRATION:** City Clerk Halberstadt, City Manager Pastue.

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY MEMBERS AND STAFF  
PRESENT:**

Cornwell, Cowley (President), Higgins, Jakacki, Knowles (Director), Kuiken (arrived at 10:20 a.m.), Mazzoni (left at 11:05 a.m.), Pastue (Manager), Rock, Schneemann, and Ziegler.

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY MEMBER ABSENT:** Freeman

**REVIEW OF DDA MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS**

Director Knowles identified some of the major achievements achieved by the DDA over the past year. She discussed the significant impact of the renewed TIF Plan. She stated renewal of the Plan at a 100% capture demonstrates Council's commitment and support for the DDA.

After a review of the DDA Mission and Vision statements, the DDA Board and City Council concurred no changes were necessary.

**REVIEW OF DDA CORE THEMES AND OBJECTIVES**

Director Knowles stated the following core themes were developed at last year's joint meeting: walkability, Downtown Farmington as a destination, and increase commercial (non-retail) jobs.

**Core Theme: Walkability**

Knowles reviewed the objectives, sample tasks and marketability of the walkability core theme. She read comments from DDA board member, Scott Freeman, who was unable

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to attend the meeting. His comments included: more seating in the downtown; continuing discussion on walkability; creating places for pedestrians with a focus on safety and comfort; and creating outdoor retail displays, kiosks, etc.

Knowles asked for feedback on the viability of the walkability theme and any changes to its supporting objectives.

Discussion followed regarding the need to implement the crosswalk on Farmington Road at State Street; connecting neighborhoods to the downtown; and parking.

Responding to a question, Knowles stated each committee develops its work plans and timelines to achieve the objectives of the core theme. She stated the DDA Board reviews plans and timelines at their annual retreat in March.

Discussion continued regarding implementation of recommendations made by the Walkability Committee and the challenge of prioritizing based on cost and need.

Discussion followed regarding marketing Farmington as a friendly, walkable community.

DDA Boardmember Higgins advised the DDA is developing an extensive Streetscape communication plan. He stated all forms of media will be used to publicize this project on an ongoing basis during construction. He further stated once the construction is complete a second plan will be implemented to promote the downtown, including a recruitment package.

DDA President Cowley stated the retreat in March will result in specific tasks, ownership and deliverables based on budget.

Councilmember Buck pointed out that placing connectors into the City is not just a DDA project, but a City-wide one. He emphasized the need to promote the future of Farmington and what it is becoming.

Discussion followed regarding the impact of small incremental changes that can be made at very little cost such as the crosswalks on Grand River. These types of changes send a very positive message to the community.

Discussion continued regarding the types of business Farmington would like to attract such as owner operated destination type enterprises.

DDA Boardmember Jakacki stressed the importance of redeveloping the City's parking lots. She noted visitors come to Farmington in cars before they walk.

The DDA Board and City Council concurred to make no changes to the core theme of walkability and related objectives.

**Core Theme: Destination**

Knowles reviewed the objectives and sample tasks of destination as a core theme. She

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noted action has already been taken on some of the objectives. She discussed implementation of the results of the IDeA project.

Cowley discussed the frustration of meeting the requirements of franchises or big box stores. He stated parking is one of the main issues for new businesses looking at Farmington. He noted businesses will not invest in the downtown unless the infrastructure is there.

Discussion followed regarding parking in the downtown and the results of a parking study. It was noted the results of the study indicated the downtown had sufficient parking, but was not managed properly. Discussion continued regarding an overall parking strategy.

Mayor Knol discussed the different categories of businesses and noted the City needs to understand the types of businesses it can attract.

Discussion followed regarding attracting franchises to the City once it has reached a certain threshold of activity. Cornwell noted the DDA needs a viable and sustainable retention and recruitment program.

Discussion continued regarding parking improvements in the downtown. Cowley noted the ER Committee will develop a comprehensive parking strategy proposal.

Board member Kuiken stressed the need to define what the City can offer businesses in the short term such as signage, surface improvements, etc.

Cowley stated the Board has agreed to the concurrent goals of making the downtown a destination while improving infrastructure. He advised the funds necessary to improve infrastructure will be generated through redevelopment that will grow the TIF.

Knowles agreed the recruitment packet needs to be done and the DDA needs to begin knocking on doors.

The DDA Board and City Council concurred to make no changes to the core theme of destination and related objectives.

**Core Theme: Jobs**

Knowles reviewed the objectives and sample tasks of Jobs as a core theme. She stated at the meeting last year it was agreed to focus on non-retail jobs. She spoke about two pieces of legislation recently passed which allows a DDA to: 1) create a revolving loan fund and 2) own and operate a business incubator.

Discussion followed regarding the benefits of this new legislation and reinvestment in the downtown.

Knowles noted the City of Plymouth DDA budget has increased 50% over the last 5 years due to a significant increase in TIF as a result of redevelopment.

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In looking at peer communities, Buck requested the DDA review other measurables such as average rental rates or sales per square foot.

Discussion followed regarding starting the implementation of small projects that would grow the TIF. Kuiken noted significant progress has already been made by the DDA.

Discussion continued regarding the opportunities available to downtown property owners and possible joint ventures with the DDA and City.

In wrapping up discussion, Knowles acknowledged using the term employment rather than jobs would be better suited for the core theme.

Wright stated there needs to be more focus on short term goals rather than long term strategy. He stressed there needs to be a real effort to communicate all of the successes realized in the downtown and greater community.

Knowles confirmed no significant changes to the core themes were made. She stated this information would go back to committees who will continue to develop work plans. She encouraged everyone to get involved in areas where they would like to see improvements.

Discussion followed regarding support of the DDA and recognition of its accomplishments. Knol recognized the efforts of the DDA and the time and effort that went into the Streetscape Project on the part of DDA.

Kuiken advised against public discussion about the City's "parking problems." He stressed promotion of the positive aspects of the community.

McShane expressed appreciation for the effort put forth by the DDA Board. She discussed the declining economy and predicted trends. She provided suggestions for developing and promoting the downtown including: creating an advertising campaign that runs 52 weeks a year; creating a business improvement district; conducting commercial real estate information tours and roundtables semiannually; and associate with people who can help the DDA achieve results such as contracting with Farmington Hills ER Department.

She stated economic development should be the number one priority. She advised the City should reach out and get the professional help it needs. She expressed concern the DDA's responsibility for the Founders Festival could take them off focus and drain staff time.

Discussion followed regarding the importance of attracting Farmington Hills residents to the downtown.

Discussion continued regarding resource allocation and priorities including helping existing businesses through business assistance teams and commercial familiarization tours for agents.

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Buck discussed the abundance of opportunities available and the importance of the City and DDA working together as a team.

Cowley spoke about the importance of the Founders Festival to the community. He discussed the integration of local businesses and upgrading the Festival that would provide a level of return. He stated the Festival provides a unique opportunity to enhance the image, product, destination and financial stability of the DDA. He advised Director Knowles has developed a promising strategy to execute the Festival.

McShane encouraged DDA Committees to periodically provide an update before Council.

Discussion followed regarding providing assistance to the Downtown Merchants Association. Discussion continued regarding the development of a base of volunteers for major downtown events.

Responding to a question from Councilmember Wiggins, Pastue stated the stumbling block to the implementation of a past consolidated parking project was the difficulty in convincing private property owners to sign a lease with the City for the parking lots.

Discussion followed regarding options to address downtown parking concerns.

Discussion continued regarding the problem of employee parking.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

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Valerie S. Knol, Mayor

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Annette Knowles, DDA Director

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Susan K. Halberstadt, City Clerk