

CITY OF ALPENA, DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MINUTES OF A NORMAL MEETING OF THE AUTHORITY BOARD
APPROVED 4/7/26

Meeting date of Tuesday, February 3, 2026 at 3:00 pm

Meeting was held at City Hall Council Chambers, 208 N. First Ave. with the option for members of the public to join virtually.

Present: Corey Canute, Loren Jackson, Brian Peterson, Rachel Smolinski, Melissa Tolan-Halleck, Matt Wojda, Ben Young, Andrea Yoxsimer

Absent: Todd Britton, Mike Mahler (virtual), Cassandra VanHorn

Staff Present: Anne Gentry

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 3:00 pm by Vice Chairperson Tolan-Halleck.
2. Citizens Appearing before the Authority: None.
3. Approval of the Agenda: It was moved by Smolinski and seconded by Jackson to approve the agenda as presented. All ayes. Motion carries.
4. Review and Adoption of Minutes of Previous Meetings (January 2026): It was moved by Smolinski and seconded by Yoxsimer to approve the minutes from the January 2026 Board Meeting as presented. All ayes. Motion carries.
5. Hearings: None.
6. Executive Director's Report: Gentry reported on the following:
 - Gentry shared ideas to improve the Water Street Commons for 2026, including a proposal for grant funding through Target Alpena.
 - The local team is waiting for feedback from MDOT on how to proceed with the concepts proposed by Toole Design through the Walkability Action Institute. Funding has been renewed for the pilot project, so the team will be receiving more technical assistance in the spring.
 - Gentry submitted two grant requests through the Michigan Arts & Culture Council- one for \$30,000 for a music pavilion at the Water Street Commons and one for \$20,000 to support Fresh Waves. Notifications should go out in late February.
 - The monthly steering committee for the Alpena Food Co-Op has been meeting monthly. The first meeting had 11 attendees across industries and is working on a vision and mission statement. The market study will be conducted in early March.
 - Team members from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) visited and discussed local projects and priority sites with local leadership.
 - Gentry has been working on 2026 planning, including budgeting, Flower Fest, graphic design projects, and office renovations.
 - Gentry reviewed progress on the strategic plan, including 2025 accomplishments and 2026 goals.

Lenny Avery, Target Alpena Executive Director, shared a proposal they submitted to the MEDC to use some of their Small Business Hub grant funding to contribute to additional structures at the Water Street Commons. Businesses renting the new structures would participate in the mentorship program through Target and the Chamber. Target is waiting to hear back from the MEDC on this proposal.

7. Correspondences: None to share.

8. Review and Acceptance on Monthly Financial Reports (January 2026): It was moved by Smolinski and seconded by Canute to receive and file the financial reports from January 2026. All ayes. Motion carries.

9. Committee Reports:

- a. Budget/ Finance: Tolan-Halleck shared that the committee met and reviewed a draft of the budget, which will be reviewed later on the agenda.
- b. Education & Promotion: Tolan-Halleck reported that Fresh Waves applications are open; locations are due February 15 and artists are due March 15. The committee also discussed the cocoa crawl begin organized by downtown merchants, the upcoming Ice Festival on February 21st, a potential new spring event, and ideas for Flower Festival.
- c. Design & Beautification: Jackson reported on signage options for the Water Street Commons and design ideas for new summer banners. The committee also reviewed the strategic plan; priorities for 2026 will include La Marre Park, marina amenities, and walkability initiatives.
- d. Economic Development: The committee reviewed parameters for the Activation Grant program and improvements for the Water Street Commons for 2026.
- e. Personnel Committee: Mahler shared that the committee needs to meet and prepare the annual evaluation for the Executive Director for April. Tolan-Halleck and Wojda volunteered; the committee still needs a leader. Gentry will follow-up with members that were not in attendance to see who is willing.

10. Report from the City of Alpena: Smolinski reported on the following:

- At the most recent City Council meeting, Council officially created the Sestercentennial Committee to coordinate local plans for the country's 250th anniversary and the 50th anniversary of the Alpena Bi-Path. The committee has representatives from the library, Thunder Bay Arts, Besser Museum, DDA, Alpena Community College, and the Chamber.
- Instead of a volunteer appreciation luncheon, the committee is planning a celebration that will be open to the public. The date is June 17th with a rain date of June 24th.
- Smolinski has been busy with budget meetings across departments.
- Huron Pines is finalizing plans for the River Street parking lot and the DDA office budget as part of their grant funded projects.
- Culligan Restrooms are now closed overnight due to recent vandalism.

11. Unfinished Business: None.

12. New Business:

- DDA Budget Draft: Gentry reviewed the draft budget for the remainder of FY25-26, FY26-27, and FY27-28. It was moved by Smolinski and supported by Tolan-Halleck to recommend the draft budget to the City for approval. All ayes. Motion carries.
- Match on Main Funding Round: Gentry shared that there is a Match on Main Funding Round that is open for applications March 1 through April 20. The DDA can submit up to

two grant applications to the MEDC for consideration. Gentry will put out a call for applications and bring any received to the Board for consideration at the April Board Meeting.

13. Adjournment: There being no other business, it was moved by Smolinski and seconded by Peterson to adjourn the meeting at 3:50 pm.

Minutes prepared and submitted by Anne Gentry.