

ANN ARBOR DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 7, 2011

DDA Offices, 150 S. Fifth Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Place: DDA Office, 150 S. Fifth Avenue, Suite 301, Ann Arbor, 48104

Time: Joan Lowenstein called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m.

1.

ROLL CALL

Present: Newcombe Clark, Russ Collins, Leah Gunn, Roger Hewitt, Joan Lowenstein, John Mouat, Nader Nassif, John Splitt

Late Arriving: John Hieftje, Sandi Smith

Absent: Robert Guenzel, Keith Orr

Staff Present: Susan Pollay, Executive Director
Joe Morehouse, Deputy Director
Amber Miller, Planning & Research Specialist
Jada Hahlbrock, Management Assistant

Audience: Dave Askins, *Ann Arbor Chronicle*
Rom Motsinger, IBEW
Tom Yak, UA Local 190
Maura Thomson, Main Street Area Association
Tom Murray, MSAA/ Conor O'Neill's
Josie Parker, Ann Arbor District Library
Jessica Johnston, Falling Water Books
Nancy Cummins, Hutzal Plumbing & Heating Co.
Barbara Logie, Hutzal Plumbing & Heating Co.
Margaret Schenlib, NCPOA
Andrew Cluley, WEMU
Adrian Iraola, PAC
Nick Rau, Moosejaw Moutaineering
Michael Appel, Avalon Housing
John Winchester, Altech Mechanical Services Ann Arbor
Nancy Shore, getDowntown
Jacob Garcia, John E. Green Company
Elaine Selo, Selo/Shevel Gallery
Carol Lopez, Peaceable Kingdom
Vivienne Armentrout, Ann Arbor resident
Peter Allen, Peter Allen & Associates
Lisa Bee, Sweetwater's Coffee & Tea
Ray Detter, Downtown Area CAC
Rob Turner, Turner Electric

2.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Michael Appel, Avalon Housing, said that changes in the State's tax credit program led to delays getting their financing organized for the Near North project. Meanwhile, the DDA grant has sunsetted. They hope to close on the project within the next few weeks, and ask that the DDA reapprove its earlier grant and sign an agreement that could be brought to the closing as proof of DDA funding which wouldn't be released until the end of construction. He said that Avalon had selected a construction manager that is very experienced building affordable housing projects that utilize government grants. Avalon required that this construction manager solicit bids from local firms.

Mr. Hieftje enters.

Tom Yak spoke representing UA Local 190, saying that his organization has over 30,000 members who live, work and play in this community. The UA bring many people and dollars to the Ann Arbor area with its summer meetings and training programs. He presented a list of charitable organizations Local 190 is involved in. He said they support the Near North project, but unfortunately Avalon hired an out of town construction manager who is hiring out of town firms and workers. Using local tradesmen keeps money in the community, and enables them to support all these charitable causes. He said that while he supports the goal of the project he urged the DDA not to support the resolution renewing grant funding to Avalon without some guarantee that the project would use local contractors.

Maura Thomson, Main Street Area Association, said that the MSAA members are very concerned about the parking proposals staff presented to the Bricks & Money Committee. She explained that MSAA members were very active in the focus groups meetings held during the process of assembling the DDA's 2010 Parking & Transportation Demand Management Strategies report. They consistently expressed opposition to parking meter enforcement extending beyond 6pm. She said that if DDA wants to take up that issue, the proposal should include a free parking component, and this component would need to be well-publicized to offset negative public opinion. She said that the fear is that extending the hours of enforcement will have a substantial negative effect on downtown business.

Sandi Smith enters.

Tom Murray, President of the Main Street Area Association and owner of Conor O'Neill's, said that his customers have told him that should parking meter enforcement hours be extended beyond 6pm they will go elsewhere. Also, he reminded the DDA that employees are often customers, too; they work downtown because they love it and they also spend their money downtown. He said that most employers would be willing to encourage their employees to park off street if there were affordable and safe options. Mr. Murray said that a workable plan needs four things; a truly free component, creative ideas for employee parking, changes as a pilot program only, and a public relations component.

Ms. Lowenstein reminded the audience that although all four speaking slots at the beginning of the meeting had been filled, there would time for further public comments at the end of the meeting.

3. REPORTS FROM CITY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Council Mr. Detter said that the CAC continues to support the DDA's Parking & Transportation Demand Management Strategies Plan, and he hoped that in the future the media and DDA would emphasize the public benefits of these strategies, not just the increased revenue. Mr. Detter said the CAC is pleased that the Varsity project developers are working collaboratively with the First Baptist Church to create a walkway from E. Washington to E. Huron. However, Mr. Detter said that he feels the plan doesn't yet address how the building appears from the north. The CAC will attend the Planning Commission meeting on September 20th to express their dissatisfaction. Mr. Detter presented a list of "Principles Essential in the Future Development of the Library Lot" The CAC will use this list to define its public statements as the DDA moves forward in the planning process for public properties downtown.

4. DDA BUSINESS

Ms. Lowenstein noted that the DDA would need to elect a new Chairperson since Gary Boren's term on the DDA had ended. Mr. Hewitt moved and Mr. Splitt seconded the following resolution:

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE SELECTION OF DDA CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011/12

Whereas, The By-Laws of the Ann Arbor DDA set forward that the officers of the Board shall be a Chair, a vice Chair, a treasurer, and a recording secretary;

Whereas, These By-Laws set forward that in the absence of the Chair, or in the event of inability to serve as Chair, the vice Chair shall perform the duties of the Chair and when so acting, shall be subject to all the restrictions of the Chair;

Whereas, The DDA member selected as DDA Chair for Fiscal Year 2011/12 is no longer able to serve, and it is recommended that the following individuals be approved as DDA Chair and Vice Chair for fiscal year 2011/12:

DDA Chair: Bob Guenzel
DDA Vice Chair: Leah Gunn

RESOLVED, The DDA Chair and Vice Chair for 2011/12 are approved as recommended.

A vote on the resolution showed:

AYES: Clark, Collins, Gunn, Hewitt, Hieftje, Lowenstein, Mouat, Nassif, Smith, Splitt

NAYS: none

Absent: Guenzel, Orr

The resolution passed

Mr. Clark said he was concerned that DDA by-laws require the election of DDA officers at the July Annual Meeting, but terms end after this date, thus creating the potential need to revote on officers. He asked that the Executive Committee propose a revision of the DDA by-laws to address this timing mismatch.

Ms. Lowenstein said that she was very grateful to Gary Boren for his eight years of service on the DDA. Mr. Hewitt moved, and Mr. Collins supported, the following resolution:

RESOLUTION THANKING GARY BOREN

Whereas, Gary Boren served with passion and enthusiasm on the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority board since 2003;

Whereas, Gary Boren brought great intelligence and careful deliberation to the discussion of important DDA projects, as well as a firm commitment to the values, purpose and mission of the DDA;

Whereas, Gary Boren brought important perspective to the DDA's work, from his decades as a DDA District resident, from his work as an attorney, and from his travels to places all over the United States and around the world;

Whereas, Gary Boren shared with the DDA a wonderful sense of humor and remarkable dedication to meeting the challenges facing downtown which made working with him a great pleasure;

Whereas, Gary Boren's many contributions have been an important factor in the achievements of the DDA over the past eight years;

RESOLVED, The Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority, on behalf of the downtown and the community, extends its great thanks to Gary Boren for his outstanding service during his years on the DDA.

A vote on the resolution showed:

AYES: Clark, Collins, Gunn, Hewitt, Hieftje, Lowenstein, Mouat, Nassif, Smith, Splitt

NAYS: none

Absent: Guenzel, Orr

The resolution passed.

All applauded. Mr. Boren said that it had been a great pleasure serving as a member of the DDA.

5. MINUTES

Mr. Splitt moved and Ms. Smith seconded approval of the minutes for the July 6, 2011 Regular Meeting, 2011 DDA Annual Meeting, July 27, 2011 DDA Special Meeting and July 27, 2011 Closed Meeting.

A vote on the motion showed:

AYES: Clark, Collins, Gunn, Hewitt, Hieftje, Lowenstein, Mouat, Nassif, Smith, Splitt

NAYS: none

Absent: Guenzel, Orr

The motion carried.

6. PARTNERSHIPS/ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
--

Ms. Smith moved the following resolution, seconded by Mr. Collins:

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE WASHTENAW COUNTY TAX LEVY RENEWAL WHICH PROMOTES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM

Whereas, MCL 46.161 (Public Act 88) was enacted by the Michigan State legislature in 1913 allowing county commissions to levy a property tax of up to 0.5 mills to promote economic development, agriculture, and tourism in individual counties and throughout the State;

Whereas, Pursuant to State law, Washtenaw County has been levying an Act 88 millage equal to 0.043 mills, which is less than 1/10 of the amount allowed under State law;

Whereas, The funds generated by this millage have been supporting a variety of critical economic development activities in Washtenaw County, including:

- SPARK and SPARK East
- Eastern Leaders Group
- Countywide agricultural programs, including 4-H and horticulture
- Food system economic partnership in Washtenaw County
- Heritage tourism in Washtenaw County

Whereas, Because this is a renewable millage, the Washtenaw County Commission must act each year to renew this millage;

Whereas, The Ann Arbor DDA is solidly committed to supporting the County in its economic development efforts, which are essential to our community's future health and vitality;

RESOLVED, The Ann Arbor Downtown Development strongly encourages the renewal of the Washtenaw County Act 88 millage.

Ms. Gunn said that this levy supports important economic development initiatives, and would cost the average homeowner \$5.38 per year.

A vote on the resolution showed:

AYES: Clark, Collins, Gunn, Hewitt, Hieftje, Lowenstein, Mouat, Nassif, Smith, Splitt

NAYS: none

Absent: Guenzel, Orr

The resolution passed.

Ms. Smith moved, and Mr. Mouat seconded the following resolution:

RESOLUTION TO RENEW THE DDA'S GRANT TO AVALON HOUSING CORPORATION FOR ITS NEAR NORTH PROJECT

Whereas, The Ann Arbor DDA 2003 Renewal Plan makes a strong commitment to participating in projects which stimulate new, converted, or renovated housing, with the goal of a diverse and vibrant core area residential base;

Whereas, Avalon Nonprofit Housing Corporation is developing Near North with its for-profit partner Three Oaks as a mixed-used 100% affordable housing development providing 25 apartments affordable to households with incomes \leq 50% of AMI and 14 supportive housing apartments with project-based Section 8 rent subsidies;

Whereas, These 39 new housing units are within the $\frac{1}{4}$ mile radius of the DDA District approved by the DDA as the area within which they might provide DDA Housing Fund support, and it has been determined that many tenants that will reside in these apartments are very likely to work, shop, or use the downtown for recreational and other purposes;

Whereas, The DDA voted to approve a grant in January 2010 in support of this project as follows:

- The DDA would provide \$400,000 from its Housing Fund for this project
- The DDA would provide an additional \$50,000 if the project receives a Silver LEED certification or an additional \$100,000 if the project receives a Gold LEED certification
- The DDA would provide its grant at the time the project receives its Certificate of Occupancy from the City, after all lien waivers have been satisfied, and after a minimal LEED certification is met and affordability established as promised
- As with all DDA grants, this grant would expire at the end of the second fiscal year after approval
- As with other DDA affordable housing grants, the City/County Office of Community Development will manage ongoing income verification for these residential units

Whereas, Per DDA Grant Guidelines this grant to Avalon Housing expired on June 30, 2011, which was the end of the fiscal year after the fiscal year in which the grant had been approved;

Whereas, The DDA's Partnerships/Economic Development/Communication Committee is strongly urging that the DDA renew its 2010 grant to Avalon Housing for the Near North project given the importance of creating new downtown area housing units for downtown workers and downtown individuals who are otherwise very difficult to keep housed;

RESOLVED, The DDA will renew its grant to Avalon Housing as approved in 2010, with a \$400,000 grant and LEED certification incentive funding up to \$100,000, with DDA grant payment upon receipt of a certificate of occupancy, waiver of all liens, and an agreement in place with the Office of Community Development to manage ongoing income verification for all residential units.

Ms. Smith explained that the DDA grant had expired per its Grant Guidelines, and it would need to be reauthorized. The Partnerships/Economic Development Committee was recommending that that this grant be reapproved.

Ms. Gunn asked Mr. Appel to clarify his earlier comments. Mr. Appel explained that he needs written assurance from the DDA for its grant to bring to the closing since its funding would not be available until the end of the project. He understands that the DDA does not generally sign contracts but is hoping it would in this case. Secondly he asked for an extension of the grant through December 2013, since the project could not obtain LEED certification until 7-9 months after the building was occupied.

Ms. Lowenstein asked if delaying the vote would affect the closing; Mr. Appel said that it would. Ms. Lowenstein asked if Mr. Appel would address the issue raised by an audience member regarding out of town contractors; Mr. Appel said that Rockford Construction had been selected to oversee construction, as they have experience building affordable housing and are well versed with the highly regulated bid process that comes with Federal funding. They are based in the Grand Rapids area.

Mr. Clark noted that the documents that Mr. Appel provided contained old data and that although he supported the project, he said he would feel better if he had more recent information and time to review those documents.

Ms. Gunn asked why a signed document was needed, rather than a DDA resolution; Mr. Appel said that because the DDA funds would be distributed at the end of the process the other investors want assurance of that commitment. Mr. Hewitt said that he could not approve anything without first seeing the language of the proposed contract. Mr. Hieftje said that he would trust DDA staff and the Executive Committee to get this done. He said that he felt that the bigger picture of affordable housing should be considered and that Avalon Housing has a great reputation. Mr. Splitt said that he had no problem supporting the creation of this contract. Mr. Mouat said he appreciated the time and work it took to get the project to this place, and it was important to move forward on it.

As the maker of the motion, Ms. Smith put forward the following amendment to the resolution. It was seconded by Mr. Mouat. It was accepted as friendly.

RESOLVED, This grant will expire on December 31, 2013, and has been extended to allow time for LEED certification.

RESOLVED, The DDA Executive Director and Chair are authorized to work with Avalon Housing to create a contract outlining the terms of this resolution.

Mr. Clark asked that the DDA's Attorney review any contract; Ms. Lowenstein agreed, saying that the DDA Attorney would be involved in this process.

Ms. Gunn said that she appreciated the concerns raised earlier in the meeting about encouraging the hiring of local contractors, but a new State law sets forward that local units of government are not allowed to specify who can get a contract. Mr. Hieftje agreed, saying that the City and County's CUB agreements were no longer legal. Making this project even more challenging is the fact that much of its funding comes from Federal Sources, and their bid processes are even more limiting.

Mr. Clark reiterated his desire to slow down and have more time to review everything. Ms. Smith said that the DDA had been trying to use its Housing Funds to meet its Development Plan, and pulling its funding away from Avalon would not be fair given the hard work that had taken place to assemble financing. She requested that if construction wouldn't begin until next spring that Avalon Housing demolish the properties on N. Main Street immediately lest they encourage nuisance behaviors.

Mr. Clark proposed an amendment that would give Avalon Housing up to \$100,000 from the total DDA grant to demolish the existing houses before winter. Ms. Smith said she did not recognize the amendment as friendly. Mr. Mouat said he was afraid this amendment would complicate things and add costs to the project. Given that the motion was not seen as friendly, a vote was taken on the proposed amendment.

A vote on the proposal to provide \$100,000 to Avalon Housing out of the total DDA grant to be used for building demolition showed:

AYES: Clark, Collins

NAYS: Gunn, Hewitt, Hieftje, Lowenstein, Mouat, Nassif, Smith, Splitt

Absent: Guenzel, Orr

The motion did not pass.

Mr. Collins moved to call the question on the resolution as previously amended. Ms. Gunn seconded this motion.

A vote on the motion showed:

AYES: Gunn, Hieftje, Lowenstein, Mouat, Nassif, Smith, Splitt

NAYS: Clark, Collins, Hewitt

Absent: Guenzel, Orr

The motion carried.

Ms. Smith moved and Mr. Hieftje seconded the following resolution:

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE RIVERUP! PROJECT AND THE HURON RIVER WATER TRAIL

WHEREAS, The Huron River is an invaluable resource for the greater Ann Arbor community;

WHEREAS, RiverUp! Is a collaborative effort between the Huron River Watershed Council, the National Wildlife Federation, Michigan League of Conservation Voters, The Wolfpack, Congressman John Dingell and numerous community leaders to:

- * Fix Up! Invest in recreation infrastructure
- * Clean Up! Improve the ecological health of the river
- * Build Up! Turn the face of our communities toward the river and transform the Huron River Corridor into a premiere destination for people throughout Michigan

WHEREAS, DTE has recently joined the effort, with a commitment to environmental remediation and for the creation of a whitewater feature as part of the City's Argo Dam reconstruction;

WHEREAS, The Huron River Water Trail is a 100 mile route that will connect the City of Ann Arbor urban core with 5 adjoining counties, and will foster economic development through interactive recreational, cultural, historical and tourist experiences;

WHEREAS, The Huron River passes within an easily walked half mile of the Downtown Development Authority District, and the River and the parks surrounding it are regularly enjoyed by downtown residents;

BE IT RESOLVED, That the Downtown Development Authority supports the vision of the RiverUp! Project and the Huron River Water Trail; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Downtown Development Authority will assist in wayfinding efforts linking the Huron River Water Trail with the City of Ann Arbor urban core for the benefit of residents, visitors, and users of the Downtown.

Ms. Smith said that the RiverUp! Group is working to create a robust recreational and environmental trail along the Huron River. Given the proximity of the Huron River to downtown Ms. Smith said that she saw this as a worthwhile endeavor to support. Mr. Hieftje said that this is a very exciting project, and Congressman Dingell was actively engaged in the project's evolution. Mr. Mouat said that he supported the goals, but questioned its relevance to the DDA since the Huron River didn't flow through downtown. Ms. Smith said that people living, working and visiting downtown should have access to information about this great resource, and this project could act as a way finding mechanism to help create greater awareness of the proximity of the river. Mr. Clark said that he was concerned that this resolution would obligate staff time. Mr. Collins playfully suggested an amendment blaming Allen and Rumsey for not establishing the downtown right next to the Huron River; all laughed when Ms. Smith said that she wouldn't accept this proposed amendment as friendly.

A vote on the resolution showed:

AYES: Clark, Collins, Gunn, Hewitt, Hieftje, Lowenstein, Mouat, Nassif, Smith, Splitt

NAYS: none

Absent: Guenzel, Orr

The resolution passed.

Planning for lot redevelopment. Ms. Smith explained that this project will build on the planning work that has been done already, using community goals established in other planning processes and working towards those goals. Staff has recommended using a project steering committee that would oversee a technical aspect to the project, and an outreach aspect. Once completed, the project would result in a concept or regulating plan that could be used for future RFPs. She said that Professors Doug Kelbaugh and Kit McCullough made a proposal to the Committee about how they could assist with the creation of the presentation that could be used to engage stakeholders. The Committee has not yet determined whether it will hire a consultant to assist with this project.

Communication. Before being folded into the Partnerships Committee the Economic Development & Communication Committee compiled the first ever State of the Downtown Report

http://www.a2dda.org/downloads/Resources/Benchmarks/A2DDA_2011StateoftheDowntown_WebRes.pdf

and 2011 DDA Annual Report

http://www.a2dda.org/downloads/Resources/Benchmarks/A2DDA_2011AnnualReport_PrintRes.pdf

which are available for viewing on the DDA website. Ms. Lowenstein said that feedback on both reports has been very positive, and she welcomed additional comments.

7. BRICKS/MONEY/TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Financial statements. Mr. Hewitt presented the unaudited financial reports for the fourth quarter. The DDA amended its budget this spring so there were no large variances. TIF capital expenses are under budget both because the 5th & Division project is under budget and because of the State of Michigan grant funds. Parking income is very close to budget, and Parking Maintenance expenses are under budget because certain projects were not undertaken. Mr. Clark asked for confirmation that these projects will be reinstated in the future, particularly if it appeared that there were structural concerns. Mr. Hewitt said that yes, these projects are planned for in the future, and because the DDA has been so diligent with maintenance we are now ahead of the game. Mr. Hewitt explained that the DDA's financial planning had anticipated drawing down the DDA's fund balances to help pay for the projects it is underway with, and fund balances will continue to be drawn down before rebuilding in a couple years.

July 2011 revenues. Mr. Hewitt said that the number of parking patrons was down slightly against July 2010, but parking revenues were up.

2011 Art Fair parking. Mr. Hewitt reported that while Art Fair revenue was down approximately \$5,000 from last year, it was not as bad as might have been expected given the extreme heat and weather conditions experienced during this year's Art Fair. Mr. Mouat asked what is budgeted for Art Fair revenues each year; Mr. Hewitt said that there is no separate Art Fair revenue expectation, rather this is included in general parking revenue estimates.

City Council Work Session. Mr. Hewitt said that with the new City/DDA parking contract in place the DDA can revisit some of the strategies that had been recommended in previous studies and reports. For instance, varying parking rates based on geography as a way of extending demand more effectively throughout the parking system. Mr. Hewitt stressed that this is only the beginning of a process to assemble ideas for a work session with City Council this fall. He said he appreciated the public input provided at today's meeting and will certainly get more public input as the process moves forward.

Fifth & Division. Mr. Splitt reported that the project is completed except for the 300 block of S. Fifth which will take place once site work for the underground structure is in place. Light poles and landscaping will be installed on the 200 block late September. Ms. Smith expressed appreciation for the work done near City Fire Station One, saying that the elements help create a real sense of place. Mr. Splitt agreed, saying that the DDA has received many favorable comments regarding the work.

Underground Garage. Mr. Splitt reported that water proofing is being installed in the dogleg section, and when that work is complete the surface elements will be installed. Columns and surfacing work is

being done in other areas of the facility. Speed ramp footings on the South Fifth side have been completed and walls are being constructed there. The last water main and fire hydrant has been installed at Division Street. With the completion of anticipated work this month on the A1 Level deck, the garage will be at street level on the Division Street side.

Transportation. Mr. Mouat said that a bike parking study was conducted this summer, and there are nearly 1000 bike parking spaces downtown. From this study it appears that the DDA has been doing a good job targeting bike parking locations, as most bike racks were in active use. The new “carrot and fruit” bike racks have been installed at the Farmers Market. Mr. Mouat reported that the Downtown bike map had been updated and is on the DDA website. Mr. Mouat explained that since the Police Department hasn’t had staff available to assist with the removal of abandoned bikes, DDA staff are working with other organizations to find creative solutions to this issue.

Mr. Mouat said that the go!pass has been extremely popular, and this year the getDowntown program ran out of DDA go!pass grant funds and began selling the pass at full price. The getDowntown Advisory board approved increasing the business copay for the go!pass, from \$5 to \$10 in 2011/12. This copay increase was the first increase in a decade.

8. OTHER DDA BUSINESS MATTERS

Mayor Hieftje asked that in the future, calling the question, and thus ending discussion of a DDA resolution, should only be accepted after every DDA member had a chance to speak. He had something to add to a particular motion and did not have a chance to speak. Ms. Lowenstein replied that could certainly be enforced going forward.

9. OTHER AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION
--

Margaret Schenlib said she was a property owner near the Avalon Housing Near North project. She said that she has heard “hope to close in a few weeks” many times in the past and the closing date never seems to get any closer. She thanked Mr. Clark for asking questions that she felt needed to be asked. Ms. Schenlib explained that because of some affordable housing units recently removed on Pauline, the Near North project represents no net gain in affordable housing for the downtown area. The workforce housing will be more costly than traditional workforce housing and only 14 of the units are planned to include supportive services. She said that while some see this project as “progress”, she believes that no real progress is being made. The property is now off of the tax rolls and private companies are making money while the community sees no real benefit. Ms. Schenlib said that she felt the DDA would do better to invest its funds elsewhere.

Ron Mostinger spoke on behalf of IBEW/ UA, saying that he wanted to reiterate what Mr. Yak said earlier about how much Local 190 and the IBEW do for the community. He reminded the DDA about all the dollars their annual summer meeting and training sessions bring to the community. However, despite their skills and community involvement, their members are now experiencing very high unemployment. Many trades’ people face being laid off for 6-9 months at a time. In light of this, he is disappointed in Avalon Housing’s choice of Rockford Construction as its lead contractor, saying that local companies were left out of much of the bidding process, and then only included without adequate time

to prepare bids for such a large project. He said he felt the DDA needs to be certain Rockford will use local contractors before issuing its grant to Avalon. Mr. Mostinger said that he was very disappointed.

Jessica Johnston spoke as the manager of a local bookstore located at 213 South Main Street. Ms. Johnston said that she has a very negative impression of the proposal to make changes to parking rates and meter enforcement hours as was presented in an Ann Arbor.com article. She feels that as a small, locally owned business she has to work hard to compete with larger and online retail establishments. The downtown experience is one thing that a store like hers has going for it and increasing parking prices and extending enforcement hours could force her customers to shop elsewhere. She is afraid that this change could eliminate the downtown dinner crowd completely.

Rob Turner said he was speaking on behalf of himself as the owner of Turner Electric and as a Washtenaw County Commissioner for District 1. Mr. Turner explained that while he is excited about what the Near North project will bring to the community, he is very disappointed with the choice of Rockford Construction as the lead contractor for the project. Mr. Turner said that he felt that there are many skilled contractors in this area who would be very capable of overseeing this project. He said that he felt that Rockford represents an un-responsible, non-local contractor and is therefore the wrong choice. Mr. Turner explained that his company was asked to bid, but contacted with only one week to assemble information before the bids were due. However, the scope of the project and the fact that construction plans were not physically available to view anywhere locally, meant that his company was not given adequate opportunity to prepare a bid. Mr. Turner emphasized that it is not too late to take action, as the contract was not yet done and there may be time for the DDA to require that language regarding the use of local contractors be added.

10.	ADJOURNMENT
------------	--------------------

There being no other business, Ms. Gunn moved and Mr. Mouat seconded the motion to adjourn. Ms. Lowenstein declared the meeting adjourned at 1:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Pollay, Executive Director