



DDA Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 | 8:00AM

Farmington City Hall | Conference Room

23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, MI 48335

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Todd Craft at 8:02 am.

1. Roll Call:

Present: Todd Craft, Donovan Singleton, Claire Perko, James McLaughlan, Karlyn Cassidy, Sean Murphy

Absent: Shawn Kavanagh, Johnna Balk, and Tom Pascaris

Others Present: Chris Halas, Jenny Gray, Jess Westendorf

2. Approval of Consent Agenda

a. Minutes for June 4, 2025 DDA Board Meeting

Motion by Singleton, Seconded by Perko to approve the items on the consent agenda. The motion passes unanimously.

3. Approval of Regular Agenda

Motion by Perko, seconded by McLaughlan to approve the items on the regular agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Public Comment

Opened and closed by Todd Craft at 8:04am.

5. Great American Main Street (GAMSA) Video Preview

Jess Westendorf provided a setup for the GAMSA video, explaining that Farmington was a national semifinalist last year and aims to win this year. The application is due on Friday July 11th, and an optional (but highly encouraged) video submission is part of it. **Chris Halas** has dedicated significant time and professional resources to creating the video, and emphasized that the video was a massive team effort, showcasing the passion and investment of Farmington residents and aiming to

convey that Farmington is a "cool place" whose residents are deeply invested in their town and deserve to win.

The video was then previewed by the board and well received.

6. Executive Director Update (Jess Westendorf)

- **Summertime Wins:** Celebration of the **placemaking award** for Mason's Corner and Kate Knight's recognition as Main Street Director of the Year for the county in June.
- **Staffing:** Welcomed Jenny, who has quickly integrated into her role, including researching bands for **Harvest Moon**. Jenny brings a background in interior design, small business management, and volunteer coordination.
- **GAMSA Application:** The application is due this week, requiring significant effort to compile narratives, photography, and spreadsheets. Letters of support are being collected from businesses, City Council, and the DDA Board. A letter from MML regarding their choice to host their local economies cohort in Farmington was also noted as a valuable addition, highlighting a successful June workshop that brought almost 70 economic development professionals to the city for a walking tour.
- **Construction Updates:**
 - **Thomas Street Reconstruction:** Dust is flying, and the reconstruction of Thomas Street (part of the hillside towns project) is underway. Jess Westendorf personally tracked down matching pavers for the project, ensuring the right inventory is available.
 - **Art Park Promenade:** Bid documents are going out today or tomorrow. OHM has worked with Noah and Fraus on the bid documents following DDA Board, Design Committee, and Planning Commission meetings. Bids will be sent directly to preferred contractors and publicly posted.
- **Public Art:** New sculptures are arriving this week (Thursday or Friday) for Riley Park. The Public Art Committee met last month to suggest installations, which were then coordinated with the artist for suitable fits. This installation is a shorter subscription, intended to be followed by more art in the Art Park Promenade next fall as part of a larger project.
- **Founders Festival:** Next week marks the 61st year of the festival, featuring music, beer, and festivities. 360 Event Productions is producing this festival for the city.
- **Downtown Beautification:** Bill Wilson and his crew are undertaking a large-scale weeding sweep on Farmington Road and parts of Grand River to prepare for the

festival, replacing winter-damaged plant material and addressing trip hazards from pavers. The goal is to complete this before an estimated 70,000 people visit next week.

- **New Businesses:**

- **Sante** is opening next week.
- **Lone Light Spirits** is close to opening, aiming for July, with beautiful windows expected soon.

7. Swing Farmington and Event Calendar Amendment

Jess Westendorf reported on **Swing Farmington**, an unofficial weekly swing dance event held in Riley Park by DJ Robert Layton. Previously run under the city's umbrella, it ceased during COVID-19, but Layton revived it. While popular (attracting ~150 kids weekly), it has been operating "illegally" due to city policy limiting Riley Park to city- or DDA-led events to manage liability and avoid setting precedents for undesirable private events. To address this, the DDA is **adopting Swing Farmington onto its official event calendar**. This requires no sponsorship or significant staff time beyond existing support (e.g., light issues). This amendment allows the event to operate legally and enables the DDA to promote it, ensuring continued vibrancy downtown.

Motion by Perko, seconded by Singleton to approve the 2025 Event Calendar as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

8. LED Tre Lighting Proposal

Jess Westendorf presented the proposal for the **LED tree lighting refurbishment**. As the existing lights age and tree canopies grow, sections of the downtown lights are dimming or out (some due to box truck damage). This proposal is for the next phase of a four-year plan, covering approximately 16 trees from the crosswalk at Canal down to Starbucks. The current cost is **\$11,326**, higher than the previous section due to larger tree canopies. This cost covers relighting and minor canopy trimming. Discussions are ongoing for a larger budget requirement to light Farmington Road in the next three to four years, potentially as a **Harvest Moon** budget item.

Motion by Singleton, seconded by Murphy that the DDA Board authorize payment of \$11,326.00 from account 248-000.00-801.006 (Seasonal Decorations) to Faith Lawn & Property Management upon completion of the 2025 LED tree lighting refurbishment along

Grand River Avenue, as outlined in the attached proposal. Motion passes unanimously via roll call.

Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: 6; Singleton, Murphy, Perko, McLaughlan, Craft, Cassidy.

Nays: 0

Absent: 3; Pascaris, Kavanagh, Balk

Committee Updates:

- **Promotions Committee:** Has not met but is actively working with the "How do you Farmington" banner for content creation. Social media contractor Aleks Heidi is creating reels, and committee members are taking shifts to capture content at events. It was also noted that a new volunteer, referred by Chris Halas, will be dedicating ~20 hours/week through September to launch a TikTok presence, creating content and a plan for review, with the goal of reaching a new audience and cross-promoting on other platforms.
- **Business Development Committee:** Has not met. **Donovan Singleton** committed to scheduling a meeting soon, aiming for the last week of July (July 28th) to allow time for brainstorming and planning.
- **Design Committee:** Has not met this month but met frequently the month prior. Focus is on the Art Promenade and vegetation maintenance.
- **Public Art Committee:** Met before the last board meeting to discuss the Ken Thompson sculpture subscription, with installation expected this week.
- **Organization Committee:** Welcomed Jenny, the new staff member, who has already sent out the email blast for the **Volunteer Appreciation event** on July 29th at 6 PM (Heights Brewing confirmed as vendor). Currently, 90 people have signed up, exceeding last year's attendance.
 - **Mary Martin Service Award:** Nominations are being sought for this award. It was noted that board members are not eligible, making it challenging to find new recipients as many deserving individuals have already been honored. Board members were encouraged to submit nominations.
- **Harvest Moon Committee:** Bands have been booked for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. **Blue Water Kings** (a nine-piece band) is booked for Saturday. **Main Street Soul** (a "proven winner") will return on Friday, and **Full Tilt Boogie** (successful at the

Farmers Market) will play on Thursday. Work is ongoing to secure food vendors and sponsors.

9. Other Business

Farmington Fit: James McLaughlan reported increased engagement and attendance this year, largely due to moving sessions to Monday nights. Attendance ranges from 30-40 on the low end to 70-80 on the high end. While most pre-register, 5-10 people register on-site. The show-up rate for registered participants is high (90%+).

10. Board Comment

Todd Craft welcomed Jenny to the team, acknowledging the high bar set but commending her for quickly jumping in and taking charge during Jess's transition. He thanked Jess for her significant efforts in handling both roles during the transition period and praised her excellent performance.

Claire Perko echoed the sentiments, specifically mentioning the GAMSAs application efforts and hoping for a win.

Jess Westendorf mentioned the GAMSAs marking the calendar for April 13-15, 2026, in Tulsa. **Donovan Singleton** and **Todd Craft** briefly discussed the experience of attending the national Main Street event in Philadelphia, noting the multitude of sessions and the overall positive experience.

11. Adjournment

Motion by Singleton, seconded by McLaughlan to adjourn. Motion passes unanimously.