



Downtown Racine Business Improvement District #1

Wednesday, March 18 at 5:30pm | Hotel Verdant | 500 Main St. | Racine
In attendance: Amanda Paffrath, Chris Hefel, Ebony Cunningham, Michael Godfrey, Heather Novotny, Angela Downs, Kelly Kruse, Walter Williams

Guests: Yolanda Coleman, Ann Brennan

MINUTES

- I. Call to Order** – 5:30 PM- Amanda Paffrath, Chair 5:33pm
- II. Approval of Agenda** - Amanda Paffrath, Chair, Chris 1st, M. Godfrey 2nd, all approve
- III. Approval of Feb 18 Minutes** - Amanda Paffrath, Chris 1st, Amanda 2nd, all approved
- IV. Baker Tilly Audit Review** – Special Guest Wendi Unger
 - a. Auditor is ill; move to next meeting
- V. Fourth Fest Collaboration**
 - a. Quote for flag brackets:
 - i. DPW will install the brackets.
 - ii. Graves bid \$435 for 29 brackets.
 - iii. Amanda would like to extend to sixth street to be more inclusive of BID district.
 - iv. Need to make sure the bracket quoted is working with the flag poles.
 - v. DPW will put the flags up every year for the 4th of July. Walt will investigate whether DPW can take care of the other events through the year.
 - vi. Kelly will ask Joe or Eddy to count the poles on Sixth and check the other poles on Fourth and Fifth Street.
 - vii. Amanda makes a motion to approve up to \$1000 for flag pole brackets to be purchased by the BID, to be installed by DPW, as requested by Anna. Chris seconds. All agree, no opposed
 - viii. Ebony asks about the time-frame. Could we do something for the Juneteenth? All agree to see whether we can get Juneteenth coordinated as well.
- VI. Flowerpot Options**
 - a. Contract

- i. Flowers – Kelly talked to Milaeger’s (but couldn’t get a hold of Steins), Godfrey spoke with David Frank, Amanda talked to Sebert, and self-watering via the street sweeper was considered. Sebert provided a quote for watering only.
- ii. Kelly negotiated a discount from Milaeger’s by 2500; however, Sebert’s watering is still cheaper. Could we order through Milaeger’s and water with Sebert? Would save potentially 4,000. Amanda motions to move forward with the flowers from Milaeger’s and water with Sebert. M. Godfrey suggests we move forward with Milaeger’s this year and revisit quotes in the next year.
- iii. Heather motions that we sign the flower contract with Milaeger’s and attempt to negotiate the water to match Sebert’s bid for water. If Milaeger’s doesn’t negotiate on the water, then we will sign with Sebert. Rationale is that we had an exit of residential funding from the BID budget, so we are operating with much lower funds than initially projected. Ebony seconds. Motion passes / none opposed
- b. Spring “adopt-a-pot’
 - i. After several rounds of counting, we have 68 large concrete planters in the downtown
 - ii. The DRC board had an idea for the planters – Could a business plant flowers in a pot if it’s in front of their business. Would we offer a stipend for a business to take care of some pots? Alternatively, is there something more “evergreen” that we could plan for future springs, like public art, e.g. metal flowers by the Gateway welding students? Chris suggests tabling the discussion for next spring as there is a lot to consider, but we can start discussing in November.

VII. Marketing Review for 2025 and Planning for 2026

- a. Breakdown by category from 2025: \$43,390.19
 - i. Includes social media advertising, other digital advertising, downtown visitor’s guide, email and text messaging, incentives, website hosting and miscellaneous.
- b. Ideas for 2026 spend
 - i. DRC will take on the cost for the tourism guide for 2026
 - ii. Placements and content, Kelly shared options from the past: Chicago Gallery, TMJ4 Morning Glen, Midwest Living, Racine County Eyes, Shepherd Express, Varitay Express (take shots at local businesses), Reservoir video
 - iii. Kelly shared a map updated from the restaurant map that includes restaurants on one side retail on the other with QR codes; Amanda recommends adding the Lake as an anchor. Kelly suggests the option of including the card in a plastic stand that businesses keep at their main desk
 - iv. Amanda mentioned that the website is currently challenging to navigate. Kelly said the day trips are being updated now; waiting for committee member feedback. Updating the website is a discussion we will continue in the future.
 - v. Angela mentions getting videos/photographs/content for social media. Recommends positively produced content by reservoir or Varitay to offset recent negative media.
 - vi. Amanda suggests Wind Point magazine
 - vii. Motion: Amanda motions to move forward with the retail/restaurant double sided 6x9 and get that printed. Chris seconds, All agreed.

- viii. Godfrey asks what will our ads be geared towards for the BID? What does marketing for downtown look like? What is the BID's responsibility vs the tourism board, etc. We need a narrative to be told about what downtown Racine is.
- ix. Amanda suggests reaching out to someone for Klario to help us focus on direction
- x. Do we want to create a sub-committee for marketing. (let's discuss next month)
- xi. *Action item:* Everyone should send Kelly marketing/content ideas in the next two weeks and she will bring quotes to our next meeting. Add a few sentences of what does advertising for the BID look like for you?

VIII. Unlocking Capital Grant Update

- a. Collab with UW Milwaukee. Kelly has been meeting with new businesses. We need to get more survey responses. The students will create an updated resource guide. There will be a flow chart. Working with City of Racine and RCEDC
- b. City of Racine – forgivable loan fund: \$200,000 PLUS \$200,000 revolving loan from RCEDC. There is a list of what it can do. Kelly's applied for \$50,000 of pre-development funding which will go straight to the BID district
 - i. All must be first floor retail, open for 32 hours per week
 - ii. Already owning a business will help.
- c. DRC hired Cari Grieving as a contractor to help recruit new businesses.
- d. G: what can the BID do to help get the word out and aid the DRC with this?
 - i. Action: Encourage more participation for the survey.
 - ii. Let's get the information out there. Funding for marketing the grants and loans
 - iii. 2-4 weeks max before funding starts rolling out.

IX. Security Update

- a. Kelly met with Draves and Manke. Willing to do off-duty for events at the same price as last year. The chief also put aside some extra people for First Fridays. Lt. Lupke and Draves – different ideas about cameras etc. Will come back to the next meeting with ideas and quotes.
- b. FLOCK cameras can track people's license plates.
- c. *Consider:* Should we remind the merchants about the camera rebate?
- d. *Consider:* Lighting for security – consider an option to set up a grant fund for lighting improvements.

X. Financial Report – Michael Godfrey, Treasurer

- a. Review of February 2026 Financials: Old budget needs to be updated to the new budget. We need receive the BID assessment of \$251,000. We did already spend some money – like employees and the DRC contract. We are on track and in good shape. A couple of changes will need to be made – we have plenty of cash, but we need to figure out what to spend it on. FILED.
- b. *Action:* May be good to revisit the capital projects in November.

XI. BID Manager's Report – Kelly Kruse

- a. Merchant outreach and additional communication
 - i. Team has started on the task for a massive spreadsheet. 170 businesses on the spreadsheet. Made 30 random stop-in's, which has been a positive experience
- b. Business development update
 - i. ambitious vibes candle open by May
 - ii. T-bird Wings on Wisconsin Ave. – will get more info
 - iii. Ins company opening next to Chit Chaat.

XII. Alder Update- Malik Frazier

- a. Verdant Spa's liquor license was approved by the Common Council last night!
- b. Discussions have begun surrounding parking with the Finance Director and some of the city's top leadership. Malik will have an update next month.
- c. The use of FLOCK cameras has come to his attention, and Malik is discussing this with Ofc. E. Draves and Chief.
- d. Bars and bar incidents have become a common trend that has become a hot topic at Public Safety & Licensing — more to follow.
- e. Add'l parking notes: New pay by plate, McMinn tower, Amanda suggests marketing dollars around the parking switch. Discussion around grants for parking.

XIII. Other Business / Public Comment

- a. Heather – brainstorming and prioritizing exercises with community outreach group and then carrying it into the bid board.
- b. G – operating agreement updates. Amanda updates from the mayor – add two people, Malik needs to be a voting member. *Action:* Kelly should send to the mayor's office. Cc Jim Sullivan.
- c. *Action:* consider re-ordering agenda to prioritize points where Walt should be involved.
- d. Bike race – there are some contracts and invoices coming up. Cari is working with Kelly to secure some grant funds. Godfrey will pay other bills. Grant for marketing may pay 70% of the bill. Kelly recommends it goes through the BID and then the grant money comes through to pay back the BID. Godfrey will be billed for the difference.
- e. Godfrey – spoke with city atty and Kathleen Fisher, what kind of entity are we? They suggest we become a non-profit. What will that look like? Or are we a city entity? Kathleen reached out to Baker Tilly and all the BIDs in Milwaukee are non-profit. The federal id we use for the banking docs are with the DRCs information. Godfrey wanted the ID for the BID. Kelly will talk to Erin Wilde at WEDC to get more info.
- f. Next meeting date: April 15th, 530pm, at the Hotel Verdant

XIV. Adjournment

- a. Heather motion to close meeting, Godfrey seconded, 8:30pm