CITY OF WALLED LAKE
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Tuesday, April 14, 2026

The Meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance led by DDA Chairman Blair

ROLL CALL: Allen, Amin, Blair, Gunther, Johnston, Langan, Langan, Lublin, Marshall, McDonald, Raleigh

ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: City Manager Whitt, Council Member Ambrose, Council Member Woods, Deputy Chief Kolke, Fire Chief Gonzalez, DPW Superintendent Ladd, Finance Director Pesta, City Attorney Vanerian, and City Clerk Stuart

There being a quorum present the meeting was declared in session.

City Manager Whitt explained the board nor city council received a written resignation letter Board Member Mechigian. He explained Mechigian' s term runs to February 1, 2027.

DDA Chairman Blair explained he received a phone call from Member Mechigian resigning then a week later rescinding it, nothing in writing and he is not here today. DDA Chairman Blair said he is unexcused from today's meeting.

DDA 04-01-26 MOTION TO REMOVE BOARD MEMBER MECHIGIAN DUE TO THREE UNEXCUSED ABSENCES IN A ROW

Motion by Langan, T, seconded by Lublin, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To remove Board Member Mechigian due to three unexcused absences in a row.

City Attorney Vanerian said he would let the board know if this removal was subject to council approval or not.

REQUEST FOR AGENDA CHANGES: None

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

1. **Regular DDA Meeting of March 10, 2026**

DDA 04-02-26 APPROVAL OF THE MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 10, 2026 MEETING

Motion by Gunther, seconded by Langan, T: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To approve the meeting minutes of March 10, 2026.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. **Civic Fund Fireworks**
   a. **MOU – Agreement with DDA & Civic Fund**
   b. **Discuss rentals/purchase for June 20th event**

DDA Board Member Johnston outlined the proposed event schedule and preliminary budget. The event is planned to begin at 10:00 a.m. and conclude at 11:00 p.m. He described the layout, including a designated social area. Chief Shakinas noted that no outside coolers will be permitted and that wristbands will be required for alcohol consumption. Mr. Johnston stated that the event will be free during the day, with a $5 tent access fee beginning at 5:00 p.m., which is intended to encourage attendance throughout the day. He explained that security requirements were reviewed in accordance with State of Michigan and City standards. These include staffing for beer tents (two per tent), servers (three per tent), personnel at entrances (two per entrance), and supervision of inflatable attractions (two attendants). The potential need for a lifeguard was also discussed. Mr. Johnston noted that a mobile surveillance trailer will be available at no cost for the day, with recording capability, providing an additional security measure. Mr. Johnston explained that a motion had previously been approved to fund the annual fireworks at $15,000. He indicated that additional event details and options, including tent purchase and rental, were included in the meeting packet. Suburban Party Rental provided a package rental quote of $1,200, which includes installation. A stage rental through Oakland County is available at a cost of $650 per day, which will be managed by the Civic Fund. Mr. Johnston also reviewed fencing estimates, noting quotes for both 3-foot and 6-foot fencing, with an estimated cost of $3,100 to be funded by the DDA. It was clarified that Civic Fund contributions will not be directly disbursed through the Civic Fund; rather, the DDA will invoice and pay vendors directly to ensure accurate accounting of funds.

DDA Board Member Johnston said he and city representatives met with the city's liability carrier. Mr. Johnston said there will be special agreements in place, not just additionally insured. He explained Civic Fund will hold special agreement with firework display company and the city. He said the firework company will also have their own special agreement between them and the city.

DDA Board Member Lublin asked what the Civic Fund has provided in the past for this event.

DDA Board Member Johnston explained they have supplied the personnel working that day, staffing for all the tents, bounce house, services, etc. The firework display cost is $32,000 this year and the Civic Fund is addressing this year. Mr. Johnston explained the Wolverine Lake display is funded by their 501c3, which raises 2/3 of the money for fireworks, which is what the Civic Fund plans on doing for the future.

DDA Board Member McDonald asked Mr. Johnston how much additional financial support the Civic Fund is seeking.

DDA Board Member Johnson said $15,000 was already approved an additional $15,000 for equipment rentals. Mr. Johnson said the Green House paid for most of this in years past.

Discussion was held on the specifics of total costs, hosting just the fireworks with no family events, staffing volunteer versus paid personnel for the day.

DDA Board Member Johnston said the Green House paid for the staff last year to host the beer tent. He said there is estimated 30,000 to 40,000 people in attendance for the firework display.

DDA Board Member Amin said to rent tents for beer, providing security and all those required things for it and if the civic fund is not raising much money that way, then she did not see the point of it, people can purchase from the local businesses and walk around.

DDA Board Member Johnston said no that cannot occur, Chief Shakinas placed a restriction in bringing in personal coolers. Alcohol is limited to the fenced social area that's why it is fenced. He said people cannot purchase from the local stores and open carry alcohol downtown.

DDA Board Member T. Langan explained the fireworks are great and reenergize the city for the summer. He said he does not think the amount of requested funding is that big of a deal. He explained we are now setting a precedent; there is much more control. He said the Walled Lake Tavern patrons can go on their patio; the Tiki Bar patrons have their patio. He said people cannot wonder around with alcohol.

DDA Board Member Lublin asked how much money the Civic Fund raises a year.

DDA Chairman Blair asked what the DDA wants to contribute.

DDA Board Member Johnston said the Civic Fund is seeking an additional $15,000.

DDA Board Member T. Langan asked City Attorney Vanerian if he was good with the drafted agreement for the use of the DDA property.

City Attorney Vanerian explained he is the one who drafted it and asked the Board to review the agreement between the City, Civic Fund and DDA. City Attorney Vanerian explained the information was in the draft is directly from the city's liability manager, MMRMA.

DDA Board member T. Lanagan said when the Board is prepared for motion, he would like to make sure it has language to address the invoices/bills that will be coming in from the event. He said the Board has already agreed to fund $15,000 and now another $15,000 is requested.

City Attorney Vanerian explained the Civic Fund is the event organizer and operator. He said the City and DDA are granting permission for use of downtown property for the event as indicated on the event map. He explained the Civic Fund agrees to obtain required insurances to meet the MMRMA requirements. He explained that the Civic Fund is hiring the vendors required to operate the show, can be structured for the City and or DDA to pay for these items but not to hire these vendors.

DDA Board Member Amin explained she would like to see the Board pick three items to pay for not just leaving open ended. She explained she would like copies of invoices and receipts of payment for the DDA to reimburse the Civic Fund.

Mayor Gunther explained his agreement with requiring receipts and invoices, if the city is giving money to the Civic Fund, it may look and cause accusations from people.

City Manager Whitt explained the city in the past provided support to the Civic Fund, what we are doing today is different, the DDA owns the property the Civic Fund will be utilizing the property. The use of DDA funds are going to be different, the motion must include language the DDA will reimburse the Civic Fund. City Manager Whitt the DDA or City cannot start paying bills, this is taxpayer money, the city will reimburse the Civic Fund.

DDA 04-03-26 MOTION TO REIMBURSE THE CIVIC FUND FOR SUBURBAN PARTY RENTAL, MUSIC VENDOR, AND THE STAGE RENTAL NOT TO EXCEED $15,000

Motion by Lublin, seconded by Gunther, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To reimburse the Civic Fund for Suburban Party Rental, music vendor, and the stage rental not to exceed $15,000.

DDA Board Member Johnston said as the bills come in the Civic Fund will issue the check and they will submit the receipt and invoice for the DDA to reimburse.

2. Discussion – Phase 1 ADA Improvements

City Manager Whitt explained he met with DPW Superintendent Ladd and city DPW will not be addressing the downtown ADA work. City Manager Whitt said engineering will be required on a smaller scale and services for the ADA work will be contracted out. He said he is confident his team can do it but to do it without an opportunity cost, does not exist. City Manager Whitt said this work is in the DDA district, however, he is no longer confident the Board is on the same design page.

DDA Board Member Lublin said he agrees we need to do it right, professionally. He said this two-block area has desired even longer than he has been on any board to be rehabilitated. He said the DDA Board has saved money to rehabilitate downtown, let's do it right.

Mayor Gunther said there is an ADA problem, we have not done anything. We need to get the ADA compliance issues out of the way, at the minimum.

City Manager Whitt said the DDA is going to address the ADA, there has never been a vote to stop it. He explained at the next meeting there will be an engineered plan presented.

NEW BUSINESS: None

EXECUTIVE & MANAGING DIRECTOR REPORT:

1. **Public Safety Activity Report**

City Manager Whitt said City Council directed a shift in traffic control on Leon Road, and more police have been assigned and written tickets to violators. City Manager Whitt said there has been good feedback from this effort. City Manager Whitt said the idea of letting people drink downtown outside the social area will be an issue open liquor is not allowed unless it is in the tent. We have had a good experience in the past with the beer tent, not a lot of big problems. City Manager Whitt said the Civic Fund will keep it contained.

DDA Board Member Amin asked if the DDA total commitment is $15,000 or $30,000.

Mayor Gunther said a total of $30,000

DDA Board Member Johnston said this amount of funding is not expected moving forward, this is a starting place, if it does not go well, we will reevaluate for next year. He said all these efforts are to bring more families down there for the day and he thanked the DDA bard for their support.

WARRANT REPORT:

1. **March 2026**

DDA 04-04-26 APPROVAL TO RECEIVE AND FILE THE WARRANT FOR MARCH 2026

Motion by Lublin, seconded by Raleigh: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To receive and file the warrant for March 2026.

DDA Board Member Lublin reported that Novi Village Square received a refund following proceedings before the tax tribunal.

Finance Director Pesta confirmed this information.

Mayor Pro Tem Gunther inquired about the status of discussions with DTE regarding downtown power lines. He asked about prior discussions of the potential involvement of college students.

DDA Board Member Amin explained that she has reached out to university contacts and explained that keystone or capstone projects typically occur at the end of the academic semester and must align with established university policies and requirements. She noted that projects must meet academic criteria, be coordinated with the Planning Commission, and ultimately be presented to the city. Amin further indicated that project parameters must be clearly defined, and she believes the city needs remain too vague. Additionally, students for the current academic year have already been assigned their capstone projects.

DDA Board Member Lublin commented that student involvement would only provide conceptual ideas and that the DDA Board has already been presented two different concepts.

DDA Board Member Amin added that students require real-world applications to fulfill capstone requirements.

Mayor Gunther expressed concern that the project timeline may not align with the academic schedule, indicating the project may not be feasible within the timeframe and the board got to get going on it.

ADJOURNMENT:

DDA 04-05-26 ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Lublin, seconded by Gunther: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To adjourn the meeting at 5:02 P.M.

Jennifer Stuart
Recording Secretary

Steve Blair
DDA Chairman