

**CITY OF WALLED LAKE  
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
Tuesday, March 10, 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, Lublin, Marshall, McDonald

**ABSENT:** Raleigh

**OTHERS PRESENT:** City Manager Whitt, Council Member Ambrose, Council Member Woods, Public Safety Deputy Director Shakinas, 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.

**DDA 03-01-26 MOTION TO EXCUSE DDA BOARD MEMBER RALEIGH FROM TODAY'S MEETING**

Motion by Lublin, seconded by Johnston: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To excuse DDA Board Member Raleigh from today's meeting.

**REQUESTS FOR AGENDA CHANGES:** None

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:**

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

**DDA 03-02-26 APPROVAL OF THE MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 10, 2026 MEETING**

Motion by Lublin, seconded by Amin: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To approve the meeting minutes of February 10, 2026.

## PRESENTATION

### 1. Civic Fund – Drone Fireworks

DDA Board Member Johnston introduced representatives from Firefly Drone Shows. They provided a brief presentation on aerial nighttime displays. Mr. Matthew Sanker with Firefly Drone Shows explained their product is NDAA compliant with security, surveillance and telecommunications equipment. Mr. Sanker explained their parts are manufactured in Massachusetts and then sent to their facility in Auburn Hills, Michigan for assembly, all USA based.

DDA Chairman Blair asked how much space is required to have a proper display.

Mr. Sanker said 40 feet. Mr. Sanker explained that more drones provide more pixels for detail. For example, detail of the feathers on an American Bald Eagle verses just a picture of what some may think is an American Bald Eagle. He explained that multiple drones provide multiple views of the lake, a complete circumference of the lake can be provided.

The board discussed cost and different scenarios with quantity of drones.

DDA Board Member Amin said she wants to make sure there is liability insurance.

DDA Board Member Johnston explained if drones were to be utilized in the future, the fee would be split between the views with Walled Lake and views of the firework display.

DDA Board Member Amin said she spoke with downtown businesses, and the two said this event competes with them and their offerings of food and beer. She said the businesses don't feel the DDA or the city should be funding the event, it's the Civic Fund's event. She said this event takes away money from those city businesses and they do not like it.

DDA Board Member Johnston explained that the Civic Fund approached all the local businesses several times and there were only two that were opposed. Mr. Johnston explained the Tiki Bar and Barrels of Wine party store are the two businesses that have said no to the Civic Fund. Mr. Johnston explained these businesses have a front row seat to a free show which they promote as their firework show not the Civic Fund.

DDA Board Member McDonald said he does not see the objection to hosting the Civic Fund firework display, the businesses have more patrons down there than another day.

DDA Chairman Blair said the Tiki Bar is not a good corporate citizen, they have never contributed to the city.

Walled Lake Civic Fund Member Michael explained he joined the Civic Fund last year; this event downtown is something great. He said it was discussed to make the event centered downtown by the beach and a boundary will be created with fencing enclosing the beer tent and food trucks. He said it is a welcome event during day with a defined kid's area with bounce

houses. He said there will be a designated area for first aid, and they will have volunteer lifeguards at the beach. He said the Civic Fund wishes to co-mingle with other events and businesses in the area.

DDA Board Member Johnston said 4 to 5 o'clock seems to be when majority of people arrive for the firework show.

DDA Board Member Marshall said it is a great idea, bringing groups together, it is a win for everybody.

DDA Member Johnston asked what do the opposing businesses downtown want to do, they have drawn the line in the sand with the Civic Fund. He said the Civic Fund has reached out to them multiple times with no response.

DDA Board Member Langan explained the DDA can lease the recently required property to the Civic Fund for a nominal fee. He said the lease agreement will require the Civic fund to provide insurance and permits from liquor control. He said parking is a big problem, he is willing to provide access to his bowling alley parking lot if the Civic Fund offers a shuttle.

Mr. Johnston said the Civic Fund does have insurance. He said this event draws people in and what he hopes occurs is those outside visitors come and see the opportunities the city offers and possibly have their businesses here. Mr. Johnston explained the outline for the fundraising would be for those attendees arriving before 5pm entry is free, after 5pm there is a fee. He said the family areas have bounce houses. Mr. Johnston said the Civic Fund is wishing for sponsorship from the DDA, for example a bounce house rental. He said the drone show presentation today was for informational purposes. He said if the board decides to have drones next year, he will work on the costs. He said for now he will obtain fixed costs to present to the DDA for sponsorship opportunities.

DDA Board Member Lublin said this is what the DDA has done in the past.

City Manager Whitt said the city and DDA are covered with insurance, there is no event without insurance coverage. City Manager Whitt said the idea of this event taking away from the business' downtown is not true. He said there are thousands of folks who come downtown for this event, if anything those businesses prosper. City Manager Whitt said, however, there are businesses downtown who are not good corporate partners.

DDA Board Member Langan said he is not in favor of a drone show, but he is in favor of the plan to sponsor a bounce house.

**DDA 03-02-26        MOTION TO LEASE THE DDA PROPERTY TO THE WALLED LAKE CIVIC FUND FOR A NOMINAL FEE; CIVIC FUND PROVIDE SUFFICIENT INSURANCE LISTING THE CITY AND DDA AS ADDITIONALLY INSURED; LEASE SHOULD STIPULATE FOLLOWING NECESSARY STATE AND LOCAL LAWS, CITY ORDINANCES, POLICE AND FIRE REQUESTS,**

## **AND TO OBTAIN PROPER APPROVALS FROM THE MICHIGAN LIQUOR CONTROL**

Motion by Langan, seconded by Marshall: **CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY:** To lease the DDA property to the Walled Lake Civic Fund for a nominal fee; Civic Fund provide sufficient insurance listing the city and the DDA as additionally insured; lease to stipulate following necessary state and local laws, city ordinances, police and fire requests, and obtain proper approvals from the Michigan Liquor Control.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:** None

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

### **1. Sidewalks and downtown**

DDA Board Member Langan discussed the downtown sidewalk and streetscape improvements, including a June 2024 letter from the Federal Highway Administration and Department of Transportation identifying ADA accessibility concerns and voluntary compliance items. Mr. Langan summarized what he thought the letter outlined as immediate concern. They included sidewalk discontinuities exceeding ¼ inch, the absence of accessible on-street parking spaces within the block, a sidewalk cross-slope exceeding ADA standards at the northeast corner, and the placement of a pedestrian push button that may exceed allowable obstruction depth. He said the letter indicated these items were to be addressed within 90 days and questioned whether the corrections had been completed. Mr. Langan explained, based on his recent site visit, many of the identified issues appeared to be relatively minor and could potentially be addressed through targeted improvements rather than full reconstruction. He discussed simple remedies such as filling sidewalk gaps, creating accessible parking spaces at each end of the block, replacing a small section of sidewalk to correct the cross slope, and modifying the pedestrian push button installation. Mr. Lanagan explained lower-cost solutions compared to larger-scale roadway or drainage reconstruction.

DDA Board Member Lublin said he does not disagree, but this area has been an eye sore for so long, if only a minimal amount of funding, it is just like putting lipstick on pig. Mr. Lublin said the DDA has been saving over the years, the DDA has a \$2 million fund balance. He explained that being a DDA, the county is passing through these tax collected funds back to the DDA. He explained that the DDA by law can capture these tax dollars to be utilized for downtown development. He said to do a project of this magnitude, roads, sidewalks, curbs and landscaping, money has to be spent specifically on downtown developments.

Mayor Gunther said there is a compliance issue, ADA compliance must happen, he does not believe the city should jump off the cliff, let's fix the compliance problem right now. Mayor Gunther said at a minimum the ADA compliance must be addressed immediately. Mayor Gunther said then go after the bigger redevelopment, right now we are moving haphazardly.

DDA Board Member Lublin said this plan did not materialize months ago, the DDA has saved the funds, to do it right.

DDA Board Member Langan said he looked at the million-dollar proposal for sidewalks. He said Walled Lake is not a walkable downtown area yet. He asked if the board was going to do anything with these grand improvements to bring in additional business, no. He said the DDA just bought vacant lots, and recommended making that a public parking lot, forcing the parking downtown to be in a certain place and charge for it. He suggested eliminating the beach front parking and expanding the beach.

City Manager Whitt said this plan was not hap hazard, the prior council wanted to do this. It was discussed then, to do a complete project. City Manager Whitt said the game has changed with the new council; however, the ADA compliance is required. City Manager Whitt said the DDA has the funding; we do not have any other choice but to fix the ADA compliance issues.

DDA Board Member Amin said she has a lot of background in development multi-million-dollar projects from design to engineering. DDA Board Member Amin said if there are no policies in place, things fall through the cracks. Mrs. Amin discussed Boss Engineering's proposal and her dissatisfaction with it. She said the DDA had previously spent approximately \$20,000 on an earlier site plan and about \$30,000 on a subsequent proposal. She further stated that the work completed to date did not appear to provide a construction-ready plan addressing the specific ADA items cited in the federal correspondence. The proposal included conceptual phases and an engineering opinion of cost, rather than contractor bids or detailed construction drawings, and suggested that the project should first complete a compliant design and site plan review process before moving forward with bidding or construction. DDA Board Member Amin said she wants to make the downtown useful for the people using it. DDA Board Member Amin asked why this was assigned to the city engineer, she said this design should have gone to a sidewalk designer for downtown. DDA Board Member Amin said Boss Engineering should have provided construction plans.

DDA Board Member Lublin explained the Boss Engineering proposal was that a proposal of concept design of what could be done, it was not a construction plan. Mr. Lublin explained it was to provide ideas and all the items to be addressed and now the board is at the point of making decisions to develop a construction plan on what concept the board prefers.

Discussion was held on addressing the immediate ADA compliance or move forward with Phase 1 of downtown development.

DDA Board Member Amin said she disagrees and proposed reaching out to the colleges and universities who have urban planning and design programs. She said there are students who are seniors that are required to do cap stone projects. She suggested working with these students with to develop a plan for downtown. She said the DDA has a topography plan and survey to provide for the students. She said Boss Engineering needs to provide construction plans and much more which they did not.

**DDA 03-03-26            MOTION TO IMMEDIATELY ADDRESS ADA COMPLIANCE  
DOWNTOWN**

Motion by Johnston, seconded by Allen: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To immediately address ADA compliance downtown.

**DDA 03-04-26            AUTHORIZE DDA BOARD MEMBER AMIN TO ENGAGE WITH  
LOCAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES WHO HAVE URBAN  
PLANNING AND DESIGN PROGRAMS FOR PROPOSALS OF  
REDEVELOPMENT OF DOWNTOWN INCLUDING THE NEWLY  
ACQUIRED VACANT LOTS AT NO COST AND PRESENT AT  
NEXT DDA MTG**

Motion by Gunther, seconded by Lublin: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To authorize DDA Board Member Amin to engage with local community colleges who have urban planning and design programs for proposals for redevelopment of downtown including the newly acquired vacant lots at no cost and present at the next DDA meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS:            None**

**EXECUTIVE & MANAGING DIRECTOR REPORT:**

**1. Public Safety Activity Report**

City Manager Whitt explained provided an update regarding the recent regional water main break that impacted several communities. He explained that the disruption affected businesses and residents, with some restaurants unable to operate fully due to lack of water service. City staff and administration began coordinating early in the morning with regional agencies, including the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), the Water Resources Commissioner (WRC), and other system operators, to restore service as quickly as possible. City Manager Whitt explained there is a new water management company for Commerce Township who was not aware of a valve connection that allowed Walled Lake to receive water sooner than some surrounding municipalities. City Manager Whitt said city staff worked throughout the incident to coordinate response efforts, communicate updates, and assist residents, council even distributing water to those in need.

**WARRANT REPORT:**

**1. February 2026**

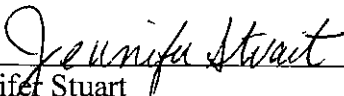
**DDA 03-05-26            APPROVAL TO RECEIVE AND FILE THE WARRANT FOR  
FEBRUARY 2026**

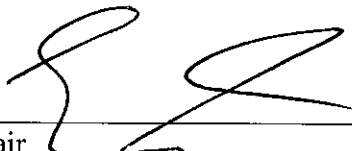
Motion by Lublin, seconded by Gunther: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To receive and file the warrant for February 2026.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**DDA 03-06-26      ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Gunther, seconded by Langan: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To adjourn the meeting at 5:45 P.M.

  
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Jennifer Stuart  
Recording Secretary

  
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Steve Blair  
DDA Chairman

*approved 4/14/26*