

**VILLAGE OF PINCKNEY
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Friday, August 14, 2026 – 9:30 a.m.
Village Hall**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair **Michael Szafranski** called the meeting to order at **9:30 a.m.** He welcomed everyone back and thanked the Board for its patience during the pause in official DDA meetings.

ROLL CALL

Present:

- Michael Szafranski, Chair
- Jennifer Cooke, Vice Chair
- Julie Amy, Secretary
- Marie Butler
- Linda Seger
- Shadia Zamlut
- Steve DeBruyne
- Jeff Buerman, Village President

Absent:

- Jim Jensen
- Mike Carney
- Martina Fenech

Also Present:

- Jo Self, serving in a volunteer capacity as a community liaison, event coordinator, and economic development resource.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Marie Butler requested that **Keith LaRue** be added to the agenda to discuss beautification projects.

Motion by Marie Butler to add Keith LaRue to the agenda.

Second by Julie Amy.

Motion carried unanimously.

Linda Seger requested that discussion of the **DDA website** and the **DDA member contact list** also be added.

Motion by Jennifer Cooke to add the DDA website and the member contact list discussion.

Second by Marie Butler.

Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF JUNE 12, 2026 MINUTES

Motion by Julie Amy to approve the June 12, 2026 DDA meeting minutes.

Second by Jennifer Cooke.

Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC FORUM

Public Forum opened at **9:43 a.m.**

No members of the public requested to speak.

Public Forum closed at **9:43 a.m.**

BUDGET REVIEW

The Board reviewed the current DDA revenue and expenditure report.

Members agreed that **Budget Review will remain a standing item on the monthly DDA agenda** so the Board can regularly monitor revenue, expenditures, available balances, project commitments, and overall financial activity.

The discussion reinforced the importance of ensuring that DDA expenditures remain within the legal purposes and geographic limitations of the Authority.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – MICHAEL SZAFRANSKI

Chair Szafranski discussed the importance of communication, procedure, and Board authorization. He noted that DDA members and community partners are enthusiastic and frequently generate strong ideas through informal conversations. However, ideas involving DDA resources, projects, commitments, or implementation need to be **brought before the Board for presentation, discussion, and appropriate action before work proceeds.**

Members were encouraged to continue bringing ideas forward while maintaining clear Board processes and decision-making authority.

VILLAGE REPORT – JEFF BUERMAN

Village President Jeff Buerman emphasized the need for continued clarity about the legal role of the DDA, including what the Authority may and may not fund.

Discussion included questions arising from organizations such as the Friends of the Lakelands Trail and reinforced that DDA funds generally must be used for purposes benefiting the DDA district and within the Authority's statutory framework.

Buerman noted that it is important for the DDA to actively communicate and demonstrate the value of its work within the community. Marie Butler suggested continuing educational and promotional videos explaining the purpose and accomplishments of the DDA.

Buerman reported that **Surf Internet's fiber installation project is nearing completion.** There have been some challenges during installation, but the project is moving in a better direction.

He also reiterated Chair Szafranski's comments regarding procedure: ideas should move through the appropriate Board decision-making process and, when required, through Village Council.

Shadia Zamlut suggested development of a **DDA handbook or orientation resource** to help Board members understand the DDA's responsibilities, allowable activities, procedures, and opportunities for business owners to help communicate information to customers and the broader community. Mike agreed to get together with SHadia and Steve to bring them up to speed.

OLD BUSINESS

COMMUNITY GARDEN

Martina Fenech was absent.

It was reported that the garden beds and flowers are full and active. Some weed maintenance remains necessary.

Chair Szafranski indicated he would follow up regarding maintenance needs.

BEAUTIFICATION

Discussion continued regarding several beautification initiatives, including artistic trees, bike racks, wayfinding features, seasonal lighting, and possible building projection displays.

Keith LaRue – Artistic Metalwork

Local artist and fabricator **Keith LaRue** participated in the discussion.

LaRue explained that he enjoys creating and fabricating metalwork locally and is willing to donate a significant portion of his labor. He estimated that each artistic tree could require approximately **200 hours of fabrication time**.

The preliminary concept discussed included approximately **\$22,950** in total project costs, substantially below the amount previously budgeted for the overall concept.

Possible implementation would be phased, potentially beginning with one or more trees rather than completing all locations at once. Three potential tree locations were discussed along the area near the bakery, with another location near the pharmacy.

LaRue emphasized the need for a secure structural base and coordination with DPW regarding appropriate engineering and safe installation. The artistic trees would not be designed as climbing structures. Members discussed whether signage or plaques advising against climbing may be appropriate.

LaRue indicated that ordering materials together could reduce shipping costs.

He plans to return to the DDA to make a formal presentation on Sept 11 in preparation for presenting the concept to Village Council on Sept 16.

Bike Racks and Wayfinding

Discussion continued about upgrading or creating artistic bike racks that could serve both a functional purpose and as distinctive visual features or “Instagram moments” within downtown.

Jo Self discussed using bike racks and kinetic elements as recognizable wayfinding tools that help identify Pinckney and direct visitors through the community.

Members also discussed **“You Are Here” mapping/signage**, including potential support from the Greater Brighton Area Chamber of Commerce and interest from Schell Family Farm in creating visitor information that connects attractions throughout the area.

CHRISTMAS / SEASONAL BEAUTIFICATION

The Board revisited ideas for seasonal projection and lighting.

One concept discussed involved projected images or stories on downtown buildings, potentially creating a changing or “living Advent calendar” experience.

A professionally installed projection system was discussed at an estimated cost of approximately **\$40,000 as a one-time investment**, after which the Village could potentially create future content internally, including content for holidays other than Christmas.

Marie Butler will continue developing the concept and bring back additional information regarding logistics for the current holiday season.

Linda Seger recommended communicating with affected property and business owners before implementation to understand how projections on building façades might impact businesses, windows, or occupants.

Jo Self noted that beautification and activation also function as part of downtown marketing and tourism development.

SEMCOG / REGIONAL PROMOTION

Jo Self presented a recently produced promotional video depicting Pinckney and surrounding recreational assets.

Members responded positively to the video and its depiction of the qualities and experiences that make the Pinckney area distinctive.

RECAST CITY

Jo provided an update on **Recast City**, which focuses on strengthening local economies through small-scale manufacturing and maker-based businesses.

Linda Seger was welcomed into the related cohort.

Areas being explored include small manufacturing, commercial kitchens, food-business incubation, available property, ownership, and opportunities for new economic activity.

Marie Butler suggested that Kochen's Corner may warrant consideration during future property discussions.

REDEVELOPMENT READY COMMUNITIES / MASTER PLAN

Jo provided an update on **Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC)** and the Village Master Plan.

Work is proceeding through the RRC process, including the **Essentials** and **Site**

Readiness components. The Village is approximately halfway through portions of the required work connected with the Master Plan and RRC process.

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation provides technical assistance through the program, including review of development processes, community information, site readiness, and website usability.

A **Meet the Developers** event was discussed for **October 1 from 4:00–7:00 p.m. at Fire & Ice**. Jo indicated she planned to attend.

Creative approaches to housing and development occurring in Scio Township were also discussed.

COMMUNITY TOURISM ACTION PLAN – CTAP

The Board reviewed progress on the **Pinckney Area Community Tourism Action Plan (CTAP)**.

The plan was developed through workshops held May 5 and June 23, 2026, with participation from Village/Township officials, community and visitor-industry stakeholders, and Explore Brighton Howell Area leadership. Its purpose is to establish a consistent direction for tourism development, marketing, visitor experience, and future investment.

The CTAP identifies Pinckney's significant tourism assets, including its small-town atmosphere, lakes, trails, camping, fishing, kayaking, proximity to Pinckney Recreation Area and the Potawatomi Trail, the Lakelands Trail, regional attractions, and its strong outdoor-recreation identity.

The plan also identifies challenges including limited recognition of downtown as a destination, limited retail/dining/visitor amenities, insufficient wayfinding, difficulty connecting outdoor visitors to downtown businesses, financial constraints, and fragmented coordination between the Village and Township.

Key opportunities include connecting outdoor-recreation users with downtown businesses, expanding trail connectivity, improving gateway and wayfinding signage, positioning Pinckney as an outdoor recreation hub or basecamp, supporting small-scale local business, creating packaged visitor experiences, expanding recreation-oriented programming, and strengthening relationships between the Village, Putnam Township, and neighboring tourism destinations.

The plan specifically identifies the opportunity to move Pinckney from primarily a **“pass-through” location to a day-use and overnight destination**.

The CTAP also identifies stronger Village/Township cooperation and consistent wayfinding as critical factors for tourism success.

The long-term brand vision describes Pinckney as combining a downtown/hospitality experience with an outdoor-recreation environment of lakes, wetlands, trails, and forests.

CTAP “Gateway to Play” Grant Approval

The Board received notice that the **Pinckney “Gateway to Play” Visitor Infrastructure & Destination Connectivity Project** had been approved by the **Explore Brighton Howell Area Destination Development Task Force**.

An initial **\$5,000 payment** was approved, with another **\$5,000 available after required project documentation and itemized receipts are submitted**. Final documentation is due **November 1, 2026**.

The overall funding application identifies a proposed **\$20,000 project**, combining tourism grant funds, local cash contributions, and documented in-kind contributions.

The proposed components include:

- kinetic/artistic wayfinding;
- artistic bike-rack upgrades and additions; and
- expansion of downtown/Main Street holiday illumination.

The project seeks to physically connect existing tourism draws with downtown merchants and encourage visitors to spend more time in the Village.

Performance goals include attracting **4,500+ visitors**, with an estimated 50% or more originating outside Livingston County, increasing overnight stays and length of stay, increasing downtown foot traffic, and increasing merchant spending.

Partnerships identified include the Village of Pinckney, Putnam Township, Explore Brighton Howell Area, Hell Survivors Paintball, Terrorfied Forest, the Rails-to-Trails Campground, local businesses, DPW, volunteers, and local artist Keith LaRue.

The funding application identifies **\$2,000 in documented in-kind support**, including donated artist labor, DPW/community installation labor, and volunteer holiday-lighting labor.

The Board discussed using CTAP funding toward eligible wayfinding, bike-rack and Christmas-lighting improvements.

DEPOT PROJECT

Jo Self provided an update regarding the Depot revitalization effort.

It was clarified that **the Depot is not located within the DDA district and is not a DDA-funded project**.

However, the DDA may support the broader community effort by creating events and fundraising opportunities through which proceeds can be designated for the Depot project.

Approximately **\$3,600** has been raised for the project to date.

Jo discussed creating promotional window clings or similar recognition materials that sponsoring businesses could display after contributing.

Questions were raised about what would happen to funds if the Depot project ultimately does not proceed. Marie indicated her preference that donated funds be returned rather than automatically reassigned to another purpose.

MASTER PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Linda Seger and other members reviewed the **Village of Pinckney Master Plan Community Survey Executive Findings Packet**.

Members observed that the results generally aligned with issues and projects already being discussed or undertaken and did not present significant surprises.

Jennifer Cooke noted that many of the concerns identified in the survey correspond with work already underway and suggested that the results demonstrate a continuing need for **community education and communication regarding current Village and DDA initiatives**.

The survey received **83 responses**, with **75.3% of respondents reporting that they were satisfied or very satisfied with quality of life in Pinckney.**

The overall findings indicate strong community attachment to Pinckney's small-town identity while also showing support for practical improvements in downtown vitality, recreation, pedestrian safety, and local economic opportunity.

Community Ratings

Public safety received the highest rating at 8.06 out of 10.

Other positively rated areas included water/sewer, roads, parks, parking, traffic, environmental protection, and recreation.

Economic development received the lowest average rating at 4.92, followed by downtown, management, and sidewalks as areas where residents perceive greater room for improvement.

Growth

The strongest growth preference was **slow, managed growth**, selected by **50.6% of respondents**.

The survey's overall conclusion was that residents are **not broadly opposed to improvement or change**. Rather, respondents favor improvement that is carefully managed and protects Pinckney's small-town character.

The findings indicate broad support for preserving Pinckney's small-town character while making targeted improvements in downtown vitality, recreation, pedestrian safety, and local economic opportunity.

Downtown Priorities

The strongest downtown priorities included:

- Restaurants – **67.1%**
- Retail – **48.1%**
- Community events – **40.5%**
- Outdoor dining – **38%**
- Historic preservation – **30.4%**
- Business attraction – **30.4%**
- Streetscape improvements – **29.1%**

Members discussed how many of these priorities correspond directly with DDA economic-development, beautification, event, and tourism initiatives.

Parks and Recreation

Top priorities included:

- Youth recreation – **39.5%**
- River access – **38.3%**
- Playgrounds – **32.1%**
- Trails – **32.1%**
- Sports facilities
- Bicycle paths
- Improved maintenance

Transportation and Pedestrian Safety

The strongest transportation priority was **sidewalk improvement, selected by 55.6% of respondents**.

Crosswalk safety, bicycle accommodations, road repairs, traffic calming, public transit, accessibility, and parking were also identified.

Housing

Single-family housing received the strongest support, while the survey showed more limited but measurable interest in townhomes, mixed-use downtown housing, condominiums, apartments, senior housing, and workforce housing.

The overall housing finding was that any future housing strategy should be carefully framed to fit the Village context and community character.

Written Comments

Recurring positive themes included:

- Pinckney's small-town atmosphere and community identity;
- public safety and maintaining local police service;
- community events;
- historic character;
- parks, trails, and natural surroundings.

Repeated concerns included:

- limited restaurants and retail;
- limited youth and teen activities;
- sidewalk gaps and unsafe crossings;
- traffic and speeding; and
- concern that rapid growth could harm Village character.

The survey recommends using the findings to guide the Master Plan update, support grant and capital-improvement priorities, frame future public engagement, and establish an implementation matrix with timelines, responsible parties, and progress tracking.

NEW BUSINESS

JO SELF – DDA ROLE

Jo Self reported that she has resigned from her paid DDA position.

She intends to remain involved in a **volunteer capacity** while the Village and DDA determine the appropriate structure for continued participation.

The Board expressed appreciation for her continued willingness to assist with projects already underway.

WELCOME TO NEW/RETURNING MEMBERS

The Board formally welcomed **Shadia Zamlut** and **Steve DeBruyne**.

Shadia had attended one prior meeting before the pause in DDA meetings, and Steve was welcomed as an official new member.

RESOLUTION TO RATIFY, CONFIRM AND RE-ADOPT DDA ACTIONS, DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board reviewed a resolution prepared to address the administrative publication issue involving Ordinance No. 177 and formally reaffirm prior DDA actions.

The resolution states that Village Council adopted Ordinance No. 177 on January 27, 2025, creating the separate DDA Board, but that the ordinance was not timely published due to a clerical error.

Village Council subsequently ratified and re-approved the ordinance as **Ordinance No. 185** on July 13, 2026, thereby validating actions taken under Ordinance No. 177. Council also reappointed DDA Board members and expanded the Board to ten members on July 27, 2026.

The DDA resolution further ratifies, confirms, re-adopts, and approves the Board's actions, decisions, and recommendations from January 27, 2025 through August 14, 2026.

Motion by Marie Butler to approve the Resolution to Ratify, Confirm and Re-Adopt Downtown Development Authority Board of Directors Actions, Decisions and Recommendations.

Second: Jennifer Cooke seconded

Motion carried unanimously by members present.

DDA WEBSITE AND GOVERNANCE INFORMATION

Linda Seger asked members to review the DDA section of the Village website.

She identified corrections that may be necessary within the bylaws and/or website references, including a section reference that should be reviewed and corrected.

Discussion also included:

- updating information reflecting the DDA's separation from the Planning Commission;
- ensuring Board/member information is accurate;
- reviewing the bylaws regarding timing for distribution and posting of meeting agendas; and
- continued review of the website for accuracy and completeness.

Chair Szafranski indicated that the current agenda-posting process & timeline would continue as is at this time.

DDA BOARD MEMBER CONTACT LIST

The Board discussed maintaining an accurate master contact list.

Marie Butler requested that her phone number not be used for group text communications.

Julie Amy reported that a master contact list had previously been distributed in July.

It was discovered that **Martina Fenech's email address may have been incorrect**, which may have contributed to her not receiving meeting communication.

Action Item: Julie Amy will verify Martina Fenech's correct email address, update the master contact list, and redistribute the corrected list to Board members.

PINCKNEY BUSINESS OWNERS GROUP UPDATE

Julie Amy provided a brief recap of the recent Pinckney Business Owners Group meeting.

The **Small Business Development Center (SBDC)** presented information about free services available to local businesses, including business counseling, website review, financial preparedness, business-health assessment, banking readiness, and planning for business growth or scaling.

Marie Butler asked about attendance and whether participation was expanding beyond the same core group of businesses.

It was agreed that broader attendance and outreach deserved a separate discussion at a future appropriate time rather than being addressed during the meeting recap.

RECAP / UPCOMING EVENTS

RAILS TO REELS / MOVIE NIGHTS

Jo Self reviewed upcoming movie-night programming.

A double-feature movie night was planned for **August 29**.

The **September 26** event is being developed as a larger Community Day and movie event, with activities beginning around **4:00 p.m.**

Plans under discussion include:

- student and local performers;

- a local storyteller who normally charges approximately \$300 but has offered to waive the fee and donate his participation;
- food vendors;
- picnic opportunities;
- s'mores;
- warming barrels if appropriate;
- business donations;
- Community Day flyers and yard signs;
- a community scavenger hunt; and
- Depot fundraising and education.

Jo is working with Alayna Moricz on the Depot-related portions of the event.

Discussion included coordinating with other regional events occurring the same evening, including programming at Hell Survivors.

The Community Day concept includes opportunities to direct participants throughout the community and downtown businesses while raising awareness and funds for the Depot project.

FOOD TRUCK FRIDAY

The next **Food Truck Friday** is scheduled for **August 21, 2026**, from approximately **12:00 noon to 9:00 p.m.**

Music is scheduled from **6:00–9:00 p.m.**

PUBLIC FORUM

Public Forum reopened at **11:46 a.m.**

No additional public comments were recorded.

Public Forum closed at **11:47 a.m.**

MEMBER DISCUSSION

Village President Jeff Buerman thanked the Board for its patience, understanding, dedication, and continued service during the recent procedural pause.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Jennifer Cooke to adjourn the meeting.

Second by Marie Butler.

Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned.

APPROVAL / SIGNATURES

Michael Szafranski, Chair Signature: _____ Date: _____

Julie Amy, Secretary Signature: _____ Date: _____

Jeff Buerman, Village President Signature: _____ Date: _____

Minutes prepared by:

Julie Amy, Secretary

Village of Pinckney Downtown Development Authority