

**VILLAGE OF PINCKNEY
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Friday, September 11, 2026 – 9:30 a.m.
Village Hall**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair **Michael Szafranski** called the meeting to order at **9:32 a.m.**

ROLL CALL

Present:

- Michael Szafranski, Chair
- Julie Amy, Secretary
- Jim Jensen
- Marie Butler
- Shadia Zamlut
- Steve DeBruyne

Absent:

- Jennifer Cooke, Vice Chair
- Mike Carney
- Linda Seger
- Martina Fenech
- *JEFF Buerman*

Also Present:

- Lori, representing Village President Jeff Buerman
- Jo Self, Liaison/Event Coordinator/Economic Development Consultant

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / MOMENT OF SILENCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

A moment of silence was observed in remembrance of September 11, 2001.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Jim Jensen to approve the agenda.

Second by Marie Butler.

Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF AUGUST 14, 2026 MINUTES

Motion by Julie Amy to approve the August 14, 2026 DDA meeting minutes.

Second by Jim Jensen.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC FORUM

Public Forum opened at **9:34 a.m.**

Wreaths Across America – Linda Van Blaricum

Linda Van Blaricum provided an update regarding the local **Wreaths Across America** program. She thanked the DDA and community for their generosity and past support and reported that fundraising efforts are ahead of schedule this year.

The Pinckney program is entering its **13th year of remembering and honoring veterans**. The ceremony is scheduled for **Saturday, December 19, 2026, at noon** at the Pinckney Historical Cemetery, followed by wreath placement at both the Pinckney Historical Cemetery and St. Mary Cemetery.

Van Blaricum shared that all veteran graves at the Pinckney Historical Cemetery were covered with wreaths last year, with additional assistance from Stockbridge helping provide approximately 30 wreaths toward St. Mary Cemetery.

Jo Self invited Van Blaricum to participate in the upcoming **Community Day** to help promote Wreaths Across America and its fundraising efforts.

Public Forum closed at **9:39 a.m.**

BUDGET REVIEW

A current budget report was not available for review. Because the DDA had experienced a period of limited official activity, no significant budget items were identified for discussion.

Budget Review will remain a standing agenda item, and the Board will return to regular monthly review at the next meeting.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – MICHAEL SZAFRANSKI

In recognition of September 11, Chair Szafranski invited each person present to briefly share where they were and what they remembered about that day.

Approximately eight personal stories were shared, including the experience of one participant who had been living in Manhattan at the time. The exercise provided an opportunity for reflection and also helped members better understand one another's personal experiences of an extraordinary historical event.

VILLAGE REPORT

In Village President Jeff Buerman's absence, Chair Szafranski reviewed highlights from the **September 3 Village President's Update**.

Updates included continued progress on new and expanding Village businesses, private investment in downtown properties, redevelopment of underused properties, improved infrastructure, and outside funding being secured for community improvements.

Highlights included:

- Progress on new and expanding businesses in the Village.
- Sale of the Village property at 1600 Patterson Lake Road, where three new homes are anticipated.

- Continued private investment in Main Street and commercial properties.
- Funding through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority Community Development Block Grant program, which, following completion of remaining administrative requirements, could provide qualifying homeowners grants of up to \$24,999 for eligible home repairs.
- Receipt of the \$5,000 Community Tourism Action Plan award for Pinckney's "Gateway to Play" Visitor Infrastructure and Destination Connectivity Project.
- Continued Surf Internet fiber installation.
- Ongoing DDA work involving downtown beautification, bike racks, tree grates, streetlights, the Community Garden, Depot-related support, the Master Plan, and Redevelopment Ready Communities initiatives.

OLD BUSINESS

COMMUNITY GARDEN

Chair Szafranski provided the Community Garden update on behalf of Martina Fenech.

Martina's group will continue weeding and maintenance work associated with DDA beautification. The garden arch is ready, and Chair Szafranski requested that remaining cleanup around the walkway be completed. Damaged tent materials and other debris remaining in the area following weather-related damage also need to be addressed.

The Community Garden recently received mulch through assistance from the Department of Public Works. Members expressed appreciation to **Dustin and DPW** for their assistance.

Members also recognized former DDA Board member **Greg Strine** for continuing to volunteer at the garden, including weeding, weed-whacking, maintaining the area, and sharing vegetables with community members.

Chair Szafranski suggested exploring whether local metal artist **Keith LaRue** could create an identifying sign for the Community Garden near the arch. Marie Butler provided LaRue's contact information for follow-up.

BEAUTIFICATION

ARTISTIC BIKE RACKS AND WAYFINDING

Jo Self provided an update on beautification efforts. The current plan is to focus first on **artistic bike racks**, followed by additional wayfinding elements.

The working committee includes **Marie Butler, Jo Self, and Linda Seger**.

The objective is to create functional downtown amenities that reinforce Pinckney's identity while encouraging visitors and residents to move throughout the downtown area.

TREESCAPE BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT

Marie Butler presented additional information regarding the proposed **Village of Pinckney Treescape Beautification Project**, designed around the Village's "Gateway to Play" identity.

Several existing downtown treescape areas are due for updating. The proposed concept would replace traditional landscaping in selected locations with permanent artistic metal tree sculptures representing Pinckney throughout the four seasons.

The concept includes four seasonal sculptures:

- Spring – “The Season of New Growth”
- Summer – “The Season of Adventure”
- Fall – “The Season of Peace”
- Winter – “The Season of Warmth”

Coordinating landscape rock and pebble treatments were also proposed for each location.

Potential locations include existing treescape areas along Main Street and near the downtown intersections of **Main and Mill Streets and North and South Howell Streets**. The goal is to spread the installations throughout downtown, encouraging pedestrian movement and creating recognizable visual landmarks.

The sculptures are proposed at approximately **10 feet tall** and would be designed to extend upward and outward in a manner intended to avoid interference with pedestrians and vehicle traffic.

The first proposed project for 2026 is a **10-foot-tall winter metal oak tree sculpture**. The sculpture would be fabricated from structural steel tubing with a naturalistic branching design and durable powder-coated finish.

The winter tree has an estimated fabrication cost of approximately **\$3,900**. Including removal of the existing tree and landscaping, excavation, reinforced concrete foundation, anchoring, equipment, installation, stone, and related site work, the preliminary installed estimate is approximately **\$7,840–\$10,970**.

The proposed **Spring Tree** would be a 10-foot metal apple blossom sculpture featuring custom laser-cut blossom and foliage elements. Fabrication is estimated at approximately **\$6,350**. With removal, foundation, installation, landscaping, and associated site work included, the preliminary total project estimate is approximately **\$10,290–\$13,420**.

A **Summer Tree**, envisioned as a 10-foot metal dogwood sculpture, also carries an estimated fabrication cost of approximately **\$6,350**. It could potentially be completed in 2026 if funding permits or be considered during the next budget cycle.

The project would ultimately establish four distinct seasonal installations as funding and scheduling permit.

The presentation also identified work that would need to be coordinated with the **Department of Public Works**, including:

- obtaining the appropriate right-of-way permit;
- contacting MISS DIG;
- removing existing treescapes;
- preparing approximately four-foot-deep foundation areas;
- installing structural reinforcement;

- completing concrete and stone work; and
- applying stone binder/sealer where appropriate.

The Board discussed phasing the project based on available DDA funding, site requirements, and future fiscal-year budgets. The Treescape concept is intended to create distinctive visual features, reinforce the Village's **Gateway to Play** identity, and contribute to Pinckney's appeal as a year-round destination.

The proposal is scheduled to be presented to **Village Council on Monday, September 14, 2026**, for further consideration.

STREETLIGHTS

The Board continues to await action from DTE Energy on the streetlight project.

The item will remain on the agenda until completed.

DEVELOPMENT / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

SEMCOG

Jo Self provided an update regarding work connected with the **Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)**. We expect a more detailed version of the promotional/video materials to become available.

RECAST CITY

Jo reported continued work with Alayna and others toward development of an action plan related to **Recast City** and downtown economic-development initiatives.

Jo will participate on a panel with the **American Planning Association** in Kalamazoo in October and will discuss Pinckney's work and experience related to Recast City.

REDEVELOPMENT READY COMMUNITIES / MASTER PLAN

Work continues on **Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC)** with Village Planner Lucy and assistance from Linda Seger.

Julie Amy reported that she and Village President Jeff Buerman have also discussed the **RRC for Childcare toolkit** and possible planning and zoning adaptations related to childcare.

The discussion included research into approaches used by other Michigan communities, including Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, and how childcare considerations may be incorporated into broader economic-development and community-planning efforts.

COMMUNITY TOURISM ACTION PLAN – CTAP

The Board discussed implementation of the **Community Tourism Action Plan (CTAP)** and the previously awarded funding for the **Pinckney "Gateway to Play" Visitor Infrastructure & Destination Connectivity Project**.

The initial **\$5,000 grant award** is being directed toward early project implementation, including artistic bike racks, metal sculpture/wayfinding elements, and related destination-connectivity work.

Because grant funds must be utilized within the required project timeframe, work is moving forward with Keith LaRue and other project partners.

Jo also discussed ordering “**We Believe in Pinckney**” window clings or similar recognition materials for contributors and supporters.

DEPOT PROJECT / COMMUNITY DAY

Jo Self provided an update on the **First Annual Community Day**, scheduled for **Saturday, September 26, 2026**, as part of the Rails to Reels community programming.

The event is being promoted as a community-wide day featuring a **scavenger hunt, live music, food trucks, activities at Hell Survivors, storyteller Steve Daut, and an evening showing of Hocus Pocus.**

The event will also help support fundraising and awareness for the **Pinckney Depot project.**

Planning continues with **Alayna Moricz**, with the Community Day experience designed to encourage participants to move throughout the community, visit local businesses and attractions, and ultimately return to the Village for the evening movie.

A community scavenger hunt is planned from approximately **2:00–7:30 p.m.**, with participants collecting stickers at designated locations. Those completing the scavenger hunt will be entered into a gift-basket drawing.

Julie Amy / **For Kids’ Sake** is among the event sponsors and has also sponsored an ice cream truck that will serve as one of the scavenger-hunt stops.

Marie Butler raised the importance of making sure participants traveling to activities outside the immediate downtown area are intentionally directed back into the Village for the movie and evening activities. A comprehensive map showing participating businesses, event stops, attractions, and the scavenger-hunt route was discussed as a potential way to improve that connection.

Jo reported that the event flyer and digital event link will be shared with DDA members, local businesses, and through DDA communication channels.

MASTER PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Master Plan Community Survey discussion was **tabled** because Martina Fenech and Linda Seger were absent.

NEW BUSINESS

LIGHT UP THE PARK / HOLIDAY LIGHTING

The Board discussed plans for **Light Up the Park** and downtown holiday lighting.

Last year, lighting extended along buildings from the Dio area toward the University of Michigan medical building. The goal this year is to expand building illumination farther through downtown, potentially from the **Edward Jones area toward the new Exalt Fitness space.**

The Board also revisited the possibility of using projected digital or animated displays on downtown building façades.

Marie Butler reported that she had not yet completed the consultation with the projection company. She plans to use Google Earth imagery and property information to provide the company with an overview of the downtown area and request recommendations regarding equipment, placement, feasibility, timing, and lead time.

The Board discussed whether there is sufficient time to implement a projection component by the end of November for this year's Light Up the Park event.

Considerations discussed included:

- necessary approvals if projections cross or affect M-36;
- obtaining permission from affected property and business owners;
- considering residents living in upper-floor apartments;
- potentially operating projections nightly from approximately **5:00–10:00 p.m.**;
- an estimated overall equipment investment of approximately **\$40,000**; and
- the potential to reuse the equipment for multiple holidays and community events, with future digital content created internally.

Marie will gather additional information and report back to the group by email before our next meeting.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL

Chair Szafranski presented the **Economic Development Partnership Proposal** from the **Economic Development Council of Livingston County (EDCLC)**, staffed through the Howell Area Chamber of Commerce.

The proposal provides the Village with professional, fee-for-service economic-development support rather than employing a standalone Village employee.

The proposed agreement is **\$10,000 per year**, providing approximately **8–10 hours per month** of dedicated economic-development support under a renewable one-year agreement.

Areas of focus include:

- Recast City implementation;
- business retention and expansion;
- DDA business and event support;
- recruitment and support of new and prospective businesses;
- connections to workforce, financing, and expansion resources;
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation engagement; and
- completion and maintenance of Redevelopment Ready Communities certification.

The arrangement allows Jo Self to continue performing economic-development work through the partnership structure rather than as a direct Village/DDA employee.

It was noted that since resigning from her previous paid position and while the proposal moved through the review process, **Jo has continued contributing her time on a volunteer basis**. The Board expressed appreciation for her continued commitment during the transition.

The proposal is intended as a **one-year agreement**, after which its effectiveness, continued need, and appropriate structure can be reviewed.

Motion by Marie Butler to approve and accept the Economic Development Partnership Proposal.
Second by Julie Amy.

A roll-call vote was conducted.

Motion carried unanimously by all voting members present.

PINCKNEY BUSINESS OWNERS GROUP

Julie Amy provided an update on the **Pinckney Business Owners Group**.

There was no September meeting; however, the October meeting is already scheduled, and flyers were available.

Julie acknowledged that overall attendance has been varied but emphasized that the expertise, connections, and resources being brought into Pinckney through the **Greater Brighton Area Chamber of Commerce** have been valuable.

As an example, Julie shared the story of a young entrepreneur, **Rocky**, who saw a Business Owners Group meeting flyer on Facebook and attended a meeting while developing a surfboard and skateboard-related business.

Through those meetings, he received direct connections to the Greater Brighton Area Chamber, the **Small Business Development Center**, and **Michigan Works! Southeast**. Since making those connections, he has secured a physical business location and has also been connected with another business owner whose operation could potentially create a significant partnership or expansion opportunity.

The example was discussed as evidence of the value of the group even when attendance numbers are modest: a single well-timed connection can materially affect the path of a new business.

Shadia Zamlut suggested reconsidering the meeting time because evening meetings prevent some business owners, including herself, from attending.

Julie explained that the group had previously met during the daytime and encountered the same challenge with a different segment of business owners. She reported that the Chamber plans to conduct a survey to determine what meeting time may work best for the greatest number of participants.

Julie thanked **Jim Jensen and Putnam Township** for helping provide access to the Putnam Township Senior Center as a meeting location.

Board members and business owners were encouraged not only to attend but also to **bring another business owner**. Discussion emphasized that the group can be valuable both to people seeking support and to established business owners who can learn, mentor, connect, and encourage others.

RECAP / UPCOMING EVENTS

September 26 – First Annual Community Day / Rails to Reels Movie Night

The Board reviewed plans for the September 26 Community Day, scavenger hunt, Depot fundraiser, and evening showing of *Hocus Pocus*.

Jo distributed event flyers for business owners and community members to share.

Harvest Festival

There will **not be a Harvest Festival in September 2026**. Members discussed the possibility of revisiting the event in a future year.

Spooktacular

Spooktacular is scheduled for **Saturday, October 24, from 6:00–8:00 p.m.**

Light Up the Park

Light Up the Park is planned for the final Saturday in November.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT

Shadia Zamlut invited members to a **DJ Night at Bliss & Fish on September 22 from 4:00–9:00 p.m.**

The event will also celebrate her son's birthday, and she invited DDA members and members of the community to attend.

PUBLIC FORUM

Public Forum opened at **10:50 a.m.**

No members of the public were present to speak.

Public Forum closed at **10:50 a.m.**

MEMBER DISCUSSION

Marie Butler raised concerns regarding communication surrounding festivals and the proposed fall event.

She explained that she had hoped to participate in the fall festival planning and felt that she had been left out of portions of the process. She asked that her contributions and interest in participating in community events be better recognized and communicated.

Julie Amy acknowledged Marie's concern and noted that she had also expected to be involved in the fall-festival committee but had not received continued communication.

Julie expressed understanding of Marie's concern, including the amount of time Marie contributes and the importance of recognizing local people already doing the work before looking elsewhere for support.

Jim Jensen clarified that the individuals who had initially discussed presenting or organizing portions of the fall event ultimately withdrew because of business reconstruction and family obligations.

Marie explained that a fall event aligns naturally with her business and that, because a Village event did not move forward, she sought partnership outside the Village through the Chamber. She expressed disappointment that she had to look outside the immediate team for that support.

The discussion highlighted the need for **stronger communication and coordination around community events**, particularly to prevent competing events and to ensure volunteers, businesses, and partner organizations know what others are planning.

Members discussed bringing or reviewing a **community events calendar at each DDA meeting** so proposed events, business activities, and community programs can be identified early and coordinated where possible.

Julie also discussed the broader long-term goal of strengthening the Chamber relationship so that, as PPHH presence develops, more community events, business support, sponsorship administration, and related functions may eventually be managed through an established Chamber structure similar to other communities.

Discussion noted that current events are supported through a mixture of community organizations and volunteers, including Rotary's involvement with Spooktacular< PBO for parades and Village events and Regina Hamlett's leadership with Light Up the Park.

It was also discussed that Village financial procedures do not allow the Village to simply hold private fundraising or event monies as an informal pass-through account. Accordingly, the **Pinckney Business Owners Group may need to play a more defined role in fundraising and event-related financial administration** unless or until another appropriate organizational structure is developed.

Members acknowledged that the current Economic Development Partnership and Jo Self's role are part of an evolving structure. The long-term goal remains to build sustainable systems and partnerships so responsibilities can shift appropriately as community organizations mature.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Jim Jensen to adjourn the meeting.

Second by Shadia Zamlut.

Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned.

APPROVAL / SIGNATURES

Michael Szafranski, Chair Signature: _____

Date: 9/14/2026

Julie Amy, Secretary Signature: _____

Date: 9/14/26

Jeff Buerman, Village President Signature: _____

Date: 9/14/26

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Amy

Secretary

Village of Pinckney Downtown Development Authority