BURLINGTON DOWNTOWN

Board of Management Meeting
Meeting Minutes

Wednesday October 7, 2026
8:00 – 10:30 a.m.
414 Locust Street, 2nd Floor BOARDROOM

Present: S. Bell, T. Wright, E. Vine, D. Kuchma, K. Nadherny, L. Kearns J. Folch
Regrets: L. Bouchard-Bain, N. Gardner, B. Glazier
Staff: B. Dean, J. Jones, A. Policicchio, J. McKay
Guests:

Meeting Chaired by Stephen Bell

1. Call to Order

Chair Stephen Bell called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m.

Quorum Confirmation:
Brian Dean confirmed quorum was achieved.

Staff Introductions:
Staff introductions were provided.

2. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

The Chair asked whether there were any declarations of conflict of interest regarding items on the agenda.

Declarations:

- No declarations of conflict of interest.

3. Approval of Minutes

Board Meeting Minutes, September 9, 2026

The Chair requested approval of the minutes from September 9, 2026, Board of Management meeting as presented.

Motion: Motion to approve the minutes from September 9, 2026, Board Meeting as presented.

Moved By: E. Vine

Seconded By: J. Folch

Discussion:

Motion Carried: Yes

4. Reserve Fund Report

Brian Dean introduced the item and provided an overview of the proposed Burlington Downtown Reserve Fund Policy.

Discussion:

Reserve funds are intended to support financial continuity, manage significant or anticipated expenditures, and enable the BDBA to undertake multi-year capital, placemaking, beautification and strategic initiatives without creating unnecessary fluctuations in the annual levy.

Reserve fund is funded through allocation of year-end operating surpluses or establishing a dedicated “Contribution to Reserve” expense line in the operating budget.

Reserve fund target is no less than 10% of the operating budget. Per Board approved target March 2025.

City of Burlington holds BDBA trust

$295,000 balance now with $135,000 designated for future placemaking

Suggestion for having two reserve funds – one for operational dollars and one for capital projects. Suggestion that 10% is not sufficient and BDBA should have 6 months operational budget set aside. Target over 6 years.

Concerns about increasing member fees by 10%. No knowledge of whether province will or will not do a reassessment. Suggestion that there isn’t a need to get to 50% budget in reserves as quickly.

Suggestion to go back to the drawing board and build not as quickly or aggressively.

Director will re-table at next meeting.

5. Update Report: Digital Engagement and Content

Presenter: Jessie McKay

Jessie McKay provided an update regarding digital engagement initiatives, content creation, and communications activities.

Discussion / Key Updates:

- Jessie's role: create, connect, activate, and measure
- Objective to make social media feel community based.
- 1.43 million – results are 100% organic with $0 ad spend
- 32.5k content interactions, +198% interaction growth, 51.1k accounts reached
- More than social media – business engagement, digital passports, content and creative, Happenings newsletter, Our Stories blog, photography and video, analytics and reporting
- Digital passports – a way to introduce people to businesses and experiences, turn promotions into interactive experiences, encourage exploration of downtown, and capture participation and campaign insights.
- 7 digital passports launched.
- Question about whether businesses have found the passports helpful. Feedback is requested from businesses and data is shared with them through an analytic report.
- Strengthening the BDBA Brand
- Goal of lighter, brighter, and more positive.
- Build audience, evolve digital passports, increase business visibility, connect digital to downtown, keep testing and learning.
- Positive feedback on the Falling for Burlington coverage on social media.
- Looking for upcoming events from now until January

6. Quarterly Update: Membership and Community Engagement and OBIAA Professional Development Day

Presenter: Jaclyn Jones

Jaclyn Jones provided a quarterly update regarding membership engagement, community outreach activities, and participation in the OBIAA Professional Development Day.

Discussion / Key Updates:

- Key metrics – 10+ new member onboarding meetings, ongoing outreach with existing businesses, new merchants added to the gift card program, 40%+ average e-newsletter open rates (industry average is 40%)
- Business mix at Bardo: key metric: 35 participants and 8 no shows
- International Downtowns Association (IDA) conference
- 2026 OBIAA professional development day
- The best attended OBIAA PD Day and organizers plan to use BDBA itinerary for future PD Days

7. Beautification & Placemaking Update

Presenter: Alison Policicchio

Alison Policicchio provided an update regarding beautification and placemaking initiatives.

The Chair noted that, at the request of the Board, Beautification & Placemaking will remain a standing item in future agendas.

Discussion / Key Updates:

- Overview of placemaking and beautification
- Wayfinding baubles on about 50% of the decorative black poles downtown
- Adirondack Chair expansion: 20 chairs to amplify seating options in the community.
- Green lanyard project: continued work with community partners.
- Music zoo: good relationship with BPAC – installation of musical instruments in BPAC flower beds. Create way for public to create their own music using the instruments provided
- Fall planting program
- Winter Lighting
- I Heart BURL DT updated lighting
- Question about whether the lighting will be up by Christmas
- Possibility to add lighting to existing bobbles if lighting can't be installed by Christmas
- Meetings have been cancelled by City staff and BDBA has been advocating for the importance of having lighting installed
- Can the tree colours and star bursts be aligned so they are consistent?
- Rotating murals: inspired by Kitchener downtown.
- Digital wayfinding kiosks – looking to get funding for three wayfinding kiosks in downtown. (active grant request FedDev)
- Introduction of a BIA street team: a proactive, visible and community focused approach to maintaining a clean, welcoming and safe downtown environment (for consideration 2027 budget)

New Business:

- Brian is requesting strong participation from the Board to sit down with City Staff in a roundtable regarding downtown events 2026, limited member uptake so far. Request is to step up and attend one of the two sessions. 12 people have signed up so far, goal for 20 people.
- Concerns about moving forward with the beautification moving forward after the Board motioned to pause them. Question about the wording of the motion from last month.
- Concerns will be tabled for the next meeting.

8. Final City Councillor's Update

Councillor Lisa Kearns provided a Council update and shared remarks as Council-appointed liaison to the Board.

Council Update Highlights and advice for going forward with a new Councillor:

- Be aware of the parking report coming in for the next budget.
- 8 businesses can't get their permits – need for advocacy to improve permit process.
- Strengthen relationship with Sabah, maybe start inviting her to meetings
- Continue to communicate with Ward 2 office regarding events happening downtown so construction nearby can be paused.
- Streetscape guidelines – sitting on about a million dollars in streetscaping
- Continue to ask for support from Ward 2 office (regional, community budgets)
- Street team, outreach, HRPS potential to work together locally downtown.
- Burlington occupancy numbers are good
- Don't let the food truck festival come back
- Concerns about how difficult it is to work with the city on projects/permissions/permits

9. Recognition and Appreciation

Councillor Lisa Kearns

The Board recognized Councillor Lisa Kearns for eight years of service as the Board's appointed liaison and presented flowers in appreciation of her contributions and support.

Dania Thurman

The Board recognized Dania Thurman and presented a gift in appreciation of her service and contributions to the Board.

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10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10.00 a.m.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, November 4, 2026