

# City of Hamtramck Downtown Development Authority Board Of Directors Meeting Agenda

Thursday, March 16, 2023 • 6:05pm  
City Hall Conference Room (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, City Hall) • Hamtramck City Hall, 3401 Evaline St.

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**Mission Statement:** The City of Hamtramck's Downtown Development Authority supports people, projects, and partnerships that further the economic growth and stability of a thriving Hamtramck.

1. **Call to order** 6:12 quorum was met
2. **Roll call** (X in attendance)  
XMayor Ghalib / XAhmad Al-Hasan / X Milo Madole / Andrew Kopietz / XShamiran Golani / XJoan Bittner / Anwar Hassan / Karen Majewski / Andrew Dow
3. **Pledge of allegiance to the flag**

1. **Public comment & introduction of the public** (3 minutes per person limited to DDA issues)

**Lynn**, flowers in flower boxes are flowering and tulips are coming out. Planter boxes between Holbrook and Caniff. Year 3 of 5 for sustainable planter boxes. New growth and great future ahead. Discussion regarding trees and history of treescape / planting in the DDA. Working with John DeAngelis to coordinate with construction schedule. Grant timelines will allow for various trees and locations. Focus is on trees rather than flowers for now. Discussion continues.

**Tim**, announcing Hamtronic, same weekend as Movement Festival in Detroit. Tim was part of initial team building Movement, and now trying to involve Hamtramck to be part of the great audience attending. Air BnB's and other people staying in the city will be able to be part of and invest in Hamtramck. There are roundtable meetings at Planet Ant to be part of the planning.

2. **Approval of agenda**  
Joan motions to approve, Dr Golani seconds the agenda. Motion carries.
  3. **Approval of minutes from 02/16 meeting**  
Joan motions to approve, Mayor seconds. Note: spell Paczki correctly in minutes.
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## SECTION I: AGENDA ITEMS – For Discussion/Action/Information

### Merchant Meeting Update

**Alessandro** gives overview and update of the event. We have confirmed Featherstone, ProsperUS, Global Detroit, and ACCESS. They have all paid their fee to the museum and are good to go for the event. He explains the process of how it will go with the Museum, and Greg is on board to host and has stage, sound, etc ready for the vent.

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Floor opens up for discussion regarding the Merchant meeting.

Discussion gears toward inviting/involving a Bengali organization to be part of the event, and tangentially one of the board members reaching out to the owner of Bengal Auto to recruit him to be part of DDA Board.

Discussion shifts to discuss main guest speaker for the Merchant Meeting. Ahmad suggests someone from MEDC, and there is unison for Dominic Romano, who is the Hamtramck's assigned CAT Specialist from MEDC. There is also suggestion to invite other communities that have received the Michigan Main Street (i.e. North End, Mexicantown), to involve them in our process and learn from them.

**Alessandro** brings up the topic of how does the DDA want this event to be advertised – whether advertising only to the DDA, or open it up to other businesses in the City. Discussion goes back and forth, but overall agreement where we will go door to door in the DDA, and if CED can handle going to Conant / Holbrook/Caniff, they will do so advertising this event to businesses, but it won't be the priority. The event will be announced in 2 City Council meetings prior to the Merchant Meeting, so will have to prepare announcement for Max to do. **Ahmad** volunteers to make the announcement at one of the meetings.

**Tim** suggests that the flyer will/should match the annual report. He will work with Alessandro and Andy to get it done.

Discussion geared toward food – and DDA board members must talk to Anwar (Remas) and Amicci's to decide and confirm food for the event.

**Joan** brings up topic of banks, and perhaps having a bank at the Merchant's meeting. Conversation then shifts to talking about local banks, and where small businesses go to bank. Locally there is Huntington and PNC, and key contact at PNC is Lawrence. Alessandro will follow up with him and see if he and PNC have interest in attending Merchant Meeting (not presenting). There is also mention of the local credit unions, including Ukrainian Self-Reliance and the Polish Credit Union. These are suggested, but there are doubts as credit unions can make their own rules on who to open accounts with (based on religion, etc). Ahmad and Dr. Golani discuss where they bank for their own businesses, and topic of small business banking and how it has evolved is brought up extensively.  
Historical commission is at PNC

**Tim** and **Alessandro** confirm to working with Andy Kopietz to get flyer ready.

Presentation conclusions on reaching out to Yemeni Chamber of Commerce and finding a Bengali org to join with booths at the Merchant Meeting. Alessandro will take this forward.

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### Social Media and Marketing Update

Tim goes on to present about social media, and how we will have a dedicated Event page on FB for the merchant meeting for easily sharing and growing the event. He explains the great activation our social media channels had with Paczki run. Annual report is close to being completed. He requests for all board members to be in a video together that we will use on social.

### SECTION II: OTHER ITEMS

#### 1. Public comment & introduction of the public (3 minutes per person limited to DDA issues)

There was no public comment.

#### Chairman's Report (2 minutes)

Ahmad brings up a post on a Hamtramck Facebook group, showing an example of a street in New York with Ramadan decoration. The post is pressuring DDA to have Ramadan decorations, as Hamtramck is a Muslim-majority city and most of the city's population will be celebrating this holiday season. Ahmad suggests that we should consider for next year, and lays it out to other Board members to discuss and figure out what DDA Board wants to do.

Conversation then begins regarding this topic, with statements made by all board members. There is a talk about what kind of signage, and a Crescent with star lights is suggested. Joan and Dr. Golani strongly disagree, suggesting that the DDA shouldn't outright support a religious holiday. They call for a symbol that isn't religious but that could still observe this holiday.

Board then becomes in agreement stating that DDA needs a marketing tool, and this would be one. It suggests that it must support busy business holiday time, which Ramadan is the busiest time for many Muslim-owned businesses.

Question is brought up if the city should have free parking for/before Ramadan, as there is free parking during December Christmas/Holiday time. Mayor Ghalib intersects the conversation stating that the Parking Meter company was consulted for an estimate for removing parking all of Ramadan, yet the price was too high for city budget. The contract allows for 4 weeks of no parking, which are all allotted in December. And it is suggested to same amount off time (2 weeks) in December instead of full month, share that remaining 2 weeks for Ramadan/Eid.

Conversation routes back to finding the focus and purpose of the DDA and seeing how the board can best we improve shopping experience.

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Suggestion of a “Happy Holidays Banner”.

There is back and forth between Mayor Ghalib and Joan. Joan is strongly opposed to Ramadan decoration, stating that if there is such thing there should be decorations for all other religions’ main holidays. Mayor Ghalib defends the support for acknowledgement of Ramadan on behalf of DDA, and feels that Ramadan is not receiving the same kind of treatment/respect as Christian holidays. There is consensus regarding a “Merry Christmas” holiday acknowledgement in DDA district is not offensive to other religions, as Joan and other board members thought it was.

Agreement to ask a lawyer to see our options and any issues DDA could face with this contentious topic.

## 2. Member’ Report (5 minutes)

**Dr. Golani** announces that the Chamber of Commerce of City of Inkster has a mixer for Kentucky Derby, a party involving the theme of gambling. She invites other DDA members, and inquires to if we can promote it on social media. The other board members present, as well as Tim and Alessandro strongly discourage the City’s involvement in this event, as it doesn’t see a reason to participate.

**Tim** – gives a St Patrick’s day overview and significance of the holiday. **Mayor Ghalib** explains significance of Ramadan kareem – generous ramadan. Ramadan Mubarak – happy ramadan. **Ahmad** adds that in Islam it’s a season of charity.

**Joan** – DDA had sponsorship in the Paczki run, and acknowledges DDA is getting the money from the run, and suggests that DDA should pay for the sponsorship, which had been waved.

**Mayor** – announces that the City was approved for a grant for \$300,000 to appoint full time CED staff member. If we have enough staff, we can get grants. Invites DDA members to spread word to find great candidate.

**Ahmad** – talks about his experience at an event in the Southfield chamber of commerce meeting with Governor Whitmer, and summarizes that the State wants to focus on immigrant businesses and is looking to address the way it could do so. He then talks about population increases and income tax increase, etc. Milo intersects to explain property taxes and how Prop A caps people’s property taxes on inflation. Frozen at low rate, and then business turn over will go behind.

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### 3. ADJOURNMENT: 7:45pm ET

Joan motions.

Dr Golani seconds

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**PLEASE NOTE:** This notice is posted in compliance with PA 267 of 1976 as amended (Open Meetings Act), MCLA 41.71 a (2)(3), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The city of Hamtramck will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audiotapes of printed materials being considered at the meeting to individuals with disabilities at the Meeting or Public Hearing upon 10 days notice to the City Clerk's Office. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the Hamtramck City Clerk by writing or calling the Clerk's Office at (313) 870-0343.