



Evert Downtown Development Authority

Chair, Alan Bengry
Treasurer, Lynn Salinas

Mark Sochocki
Dan Boyer

DDA Director, Todd Bruggema

Vice-Chair, Gary Hartsock
Secretary, Brian Youngs

Cory Juliano
Pepper Lockhart

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EVART DDA REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

February 10, 2026

Community Room at The Depot

200 S. Main St. Evert, MI 49631

1. In Attendance:

Present: Alan Bengry, Gary Hartsock, Lynn Salinas, Brian Youngs, Mark Sochocki, Cory Juliano, Pepper Lockhart

DDA Director - Todd Bruggema

Absent: Dan Boyer

2. Meeting called to order at 8:01am by Bengry

3. Introduction of Guests: Angela Hunter and Emma Maniez

4. Approval of Agenda – Moved by Hartsock, Supported by Sochocki

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Results: Carried

5. Approval of Minutes of the Jan. 10, 2026, regular meeting – Moved by Lockhart, Supported by Salinas

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Results: Carried

6. Approval of Vendor's List in the amount of \$1,297.07 for the DDA and \$0 for the farmer's market – Moved by Lockhart, Supported by Hartsock

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Results: Carried

7. Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Salinas had nothing to report.

8. President's Remarks: President Bengry reported that he and Todd recently met with Lee and Laura from Michigan Main Street to review the progress of the Evert DDA 5-year master plan. During their discussion, Lee and Laura asked whether the board was satisfied with the current draft and ready to submit the final document, or if further guidance was needed. They noted that other Michigan Main Street communities have requested support, and MMS is assisting those communities in finalizing their master plans. Lee and Laura expressed their willingness to provide assistance to Evert as well. Alan indicated that the board is nearing completion of the plan and requested that Todd distribute the master plan to all Evert DDA board members for a final review. Alan assured Lee and Laura that a finalized version would be submitted within the upcoming weeks.

9. Committee Updates

Economic Vitality and Design

- a. Farmer's Market - Angela Hunter reported to the group regarding her recent participation in the Fair Food Network (FFN) conference. During the conference, Angela learned that the FFN is encouraging all farmer's market vendors and exhibitors to begin accepting Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) payments. She indicated that this initiative may soon become a mandate for participants. Angela also noted that there may be some hesitation or resistance from vendors about implementing EBT usage. She assured the group that she will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates as further information becomes available or as developments occur.
- b. Pop-Up Building - Todd told the group that someone has rented the DDA's pop-up building and plans to sell baked goods there throughout the month of March. Cory mentioned that the building's 6-month listing had recently expired and asked if the board wanted to renew it. The group decided not to renew the listing until at least April, so they can assess how the upcoming rental arrangement goes.

Promotion and Organization

- a. DDA Board Recruiting – Todd reminded the group that there remains one open DDA board position. He asked the group to think of candidates who either own property or own a business within the DDA district.
- b. Volunteers – See New Business item below

10. Old Business:

- a. 101 S. Main Street project update – Mark Sochocki gave an update on where things stand on the 101 S. Main Street project. Mark also gave a brief overview of how the Brownfield Redevelopment process will play out regarding the 101 S. Main Street property. It is estimated that the Brownfield related costs will total \$1.375M of the project's total cost, estimated at \$4.1M. Mark also told the group that the Evert Housing Commission is planning to host an informational meeting on Feb.25th to discuss both large projects the EHC is currently embarking upon.

11. New Business:

- a. Members 1st Credit Union volunteers - Todd informed the group that Members 1st Credit Union has reached out to him and pledged employees to volunteer for Evert area events during 2026. Todd also stated that Evert Public Schools has pledged student volunteers for area clean-up activities in the coming year. Pepper informed the group that the Evert, Reed City and Pine River schools are also all planning to send students to Evert in the spring to do some work for the City.
- b. Summer music program – Todd informed the group that a website had been discovered with information on and links to local musical acts. He will do some research and let us know what he comes up with for possible acts in 2026. Todd also asked the group of their thoughts on possibly participating with Al and Deb Knowles, owners of the 6th & Main Bar and Grill, to host a musical event this summer on the former site of The Corner Store, directly across 6th Street from the Knowles' bar/restaurant. The group was in favor of having Todd look further into this coordinated effort.
- c. Brownfield Development update – Todd informed the group that Evert's City Council has approved the Evert Downtown Development Authority to serve as the Brownfield Development Authority for the City of Evert. Mark stated that the Evert Housing Commission is nearly ready to present their Brownfield Plan to the DDA for their consideration.

12. Director's Comments:

- a. Todd informed the group that he is planning to attend DDA Director training in Lansing on Feb. 25th.
- b. Todd informed the group that the new Director of the Reed City Chamber of Commerce recently came to Evert to meet with him. During her visit, Todd took her around the area to meet some of Evert's business owners and citizens. The new Reed City Director is hopeful that her outreach to Osceola County communities will spur some cooperation and collaboration on Osceola County projects going forward. She may also spearhead an effort to create a county-wide Chamber of Commerce, like how Mecosta County's Chamber of Commerce is currently structured. Todd informed the group that the Reed City Chamber of Commerce is planning a "lunch and learn" event to be held in Evert in coming months.
- c. Todd reported that he had sent out a memorandum to Evert businesses regarding their roles in snow/ice removal from sidewalks in front of their businesses.
- d. Todd reported that Teijin Wing has potentially identified a current Evert High School sophomore to replace him as a non-voting member of Evert DDA's board. Teijin is currently a high school senior, will graduate in the spring and attend college in the fall. Todd will contact this potential candidate in coming weeks.

13. City Manager Comments:

- a. Pepper Lockhart reported that the potential building beautification process is underway on the property located at 221 N. Main Street. Bruce Johnston is now involved in the process and an early target date of fall 2027 has been penciled in for work to begin on the building.
- b. Pepper informed the group that the City of Ewart has hired a new Department of Public Works (DPW) Director. The new DPW Director's name is Chad Thompson. Chad was born and raised in the Hersey area and previously served on the Mecosta County Sheriff's Department. Snow removal equipment breakdowns have been an immediate challenge for Chad, and she feels he has handled the unanticipated adversity well. In addition, Pepper & Chad recently met with the new Plant Manager at Ventra.
- c. Pepper reported that the downtown alleys are expected to be worked on this summer. She said that the alleys won't be entirely dug/torn up but instead boring and tunnelling under the alleys will be performed to work on water/sewer lines.
- d. Pepper informed the group that new strategies and goals are currently being discussed. A major project under consideration is the repaving of the airport runway.
- e. Pepper informed the group that a new Bigby Coffee drive-thru facility is planned directly to the east of the new Taco Bell restaurant. Construction will begin within a matter of weeks, and the owner hopes to be open as early as this spring.

14. Citizen Comments:

- a. Emma Maniez, from Middle Michigan Development Corporation (MMDC) was in attendance. She introduced herself, handed out some literature and explained that MMDC is involved in assisting business owners in the process of obtaining matching grants of up to \$5k for both interior and exterior improvements to their buildings. Todd planned to take Emma around Ewart following the DDA meeting to meet some Ewart business owners.

15. Adjournment – Moved by Salinas, Supported by Sochocki to adjourn

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Results: Carried

Meeting adjourned at 8:59am.

Respectfully submitted by Brian Youngs, Secretary