

Approved

Romeo Downtown Development Authority Informational Meeting

Monday, January 5, 2026– 7:00 p.m.

361 Morton Street, Romeo, MI 48065 South Meeting Room

MINUTES

1. Roll Call: 7:00 p.m.
Present – Hutnick, St. Laurent, Stephens, VanWormer, Lee, Osebold
Absent - Poznanski, Murdock

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by: Hutnick

Second by: St. Laurent

Discussion: None

All ayes.

Motion Passes: 6-0

4. New Business

A. 2025 Impact Report Presentation

Overview and Purpose

The DDA Director presented the 2025 Impact Report, noting it is used for:

- Reporting to the State and DDA Board
- Business recruitment
- Pursuit of future funding, grants, and donors

Board members were invited to provide suggestions for future editions of the report.

Report Content Summary

The Impact Report includes:

- DDA mission, history, five-year strategy, vision, and TIP plan
- Historic Downtown Romeo overview and boundary map
- Business recruitment strategy, including: Downtown assets, high-demand business types and “Why Romeo” positioning and target shoppers

Approved

Downtown Projects and Beautification

2024–2025 Highlights

- Two façade grants issued for signage
- Eight new or expanding businesses supported
- Three businesses assisted in securing external grant funding
- Two major infrastructure projects identified as shovel-ready
- One minor shovel-ready project (art mural)
- Three additional minor projects currently in development
- Continued seasonal beautification efforts, including flowers, fall décor, and holiday lighting

The Director reported high satisfaction with vendor performance.

Visitor Attraction and Marketing Strategy

Marketing and Advertising

- Visitor attraction strategy developed in partnership with Crimson
- Consistent branding story used across all advertising and publications
- Significant changes made to social media vendors and strategy
- Posting frequency increased to an average of 20 posts per month
- Marketing costs reduced by approximately 50%, saving nearly \$20,000 annually

Performance Metrics

- Social media engagement and views more than doubled year-over-year
- Paid social media advertising introduced:
 - Example: \$100 sidewalk sale ad resulted in 500 new followers
- Data will be shared with downtown businesses as a best-practice resource

Event Performance and ROI Analysis

Event Attendance and Insights

- Top-performing events included the Peach Festival and four of the top five events overall
- The new “Witches & Warlocks” event ranked fourth overall with zero paid advertising
- Out-of-market visitor data highlighted strong regional draw
- October 18 event strategy successfully leveraged Tilson Street traffic into downtown visitation

Approved

Baseline Visitation

- Average daily baseline visitation ranges between 3,200–3,700 visitors

ROI Findings

- Most DDA-supported events generated out-of-market visitors at a cost of under \$0.25 per visitor
- Strongest performers included:
 - Seasonal and themed events (holiday, Halloween)
 - Boutique and niche events (Ladies Night Out, Golden Girls Day, Art & Wine Walk)
 - Multi-day activations

Opportunities for improvement were identified, including increased paid promotion for Vintage Fest.

2025 Goals, Budget, and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Focus

- First half of 2025 focused on technology, systems, and processes
- Second half focused on visitor attraction and downtown activation

Goals and Results

- Two major shovel-ready projects completed
- Three minor projects in development
- Projected revenue increase: \$20,000
- Projected cost reductions: Over \$20,000
- Visitor increase: 4.9%
- Average visit duration increased from 60 minutes to 81 minutes

All stated 2025 goals were met or exceeded.

Future Direction (2026 Outlook)

- First half of 2026 will prioritize funding opportunities, including:
 - Grants
 - Private funding
 - Donations
- Continued preparation for the upcoming event season
- Strategy to double down on high-performing initiatives

Approved

8. Business Recruitment Discussion

- Focus on recruiting second locations of existing businesses identified as a “low-hanging fruit” opportunity
- Database of interested business owners is being developed
- Discussion included potential future focus on building owners and lease timing

Board process and Governance Improvements

Binders distributed to board members for ongoing use at meetings, containing:

- Master plan
- Strategy documents
- Policies and procedures
- Robert’s Rules of Order reference sheet

Future agendas and action items will clearly reference:

- Strategic alignment
- Master plan support
- Budget line items

10. Clarifications on Event Investments

- DDA investment figures vary depending on sponsorship type
- Witches & Warlocks T-shirt expense (\$1,800) categorized separately as community promotion, not event investment
- T-shirt sales generated revenue and increased branding visibility

11. Board Member Comments

The board likes comprehensive information and is a great tool for planning and keeping focused on objectives.

12. Adjournment: 7:22 p.m.

Motion by: St. Laurent

Second: VanWormer

All ayes.

Motion passes: 6-0