



Downtown Evanston Executive Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 11, 2025, 9:30AM
Creative Coworking, 922 Davis Street

Board Members Present:

Nathan Kostant, Golub (*Vice Chair*)
Andrew McDonald, Rotary (*Treasurer*)
Marty Cless, Core & Rind Hospitality
Sarita Kamat, Artem Pop Up Gallery
Jim Nash, Farnsworth Hill

Not Present:

Angela Valavanis, Creative Coworking (*Chair*)
Gretchen Brauer, Wheel & Sprocket (*Secretary*)

Staff: Andy Vick, Laura Brown

- I. Call to Order at 9:30AM (Nathan)
- II. Approval of July Minutes (Nathan) **[Vote]**
 - a. *No meeting in August due to lack of quorum*
 - b. Andrew motioned to approve minutes; Marty seconded. Board unanimously voted to approve minutes.
- II. Treasurer's Report (Andrew)
 - a. August Financials
 - i. Financials are in good shape
 - ii. 2025 Northwestern CBA funding received
 - iii. 2025 tax payment #2 delayed
 1. Andy reported that this payment will be delayed until December, so our financials will show deficit over the next couple of months until we receive the second tax payment
 2. Andy commented that our line of credit at Byline is still open if we need to access it, but we should have enough reserves

b. 2026 Proposed Budget **[Vote]**

i. Increase to SSA tax assessment to balance budget

1. Andy explained that City Council had previously authorized Downtown Evanston to increase the tax rate up to a maximum of 0.246% (currently, the tax rate is 0.112%)
2. With new quotes from Brightview for landscaping and garbage removal combined, with City of Evanston no longer providing funds for garbage removal, we have about a \$65,000 gap in anticipated funding
3. If we increase the tax rate slightly to 0.135%, we can cover the \$65,000 gap and not have to make changes/reductions to services or programming
4. Board Comments:
 - a. Marty suggested having a prepared response explaining to building owners and businesses about increase. Andy will draft a response for Exec approval
 - b. Marty proposed that we reach out to downtown condo associations to sponsor programming as an alternative (or in addition to) increasing the tax rate
 - c. Marty also noted that we could increase the tax at a higher rate to collect for future funding shortfalls
5. In the end, it was agreed that we should only increase the tax rate enough to cover the funding gap this year, and then revisit other strategies in subsequent years

ii. Proposed 2026 Northwestern CBA funding request

1. \$220,000 for garbage removal
2. \$30,000 for Downtown Summer Sounds

iii. **VOTE:** Nathan requested a motion to approve the proposed 2026 budget, including the increased tax rate and the 2026 Northwestern CBA funding request. Andrew motioned to approve; Jim seconded. The Board voted unanimously to approve the 2026 budget, the tax increase to 0.135%, and the \$250,000 CBA funding request.

III. Executive Director update (Andy)

a. Programming

- i. Downtown Summer Sounds series was a great success
- ii. Cars & Coffee was also successful, and we are planning to relocate the 2026 event to Sherman Ave. between Clark and Church Streets
- iii. Let's Eat Challenge: Andy presenting at IDA conference (Sept. 24-27)
- iv. Downtown Evanston History Tour: launched in late August in partnership with the Evanston History Center and Vibemap

- v. Ground Mural at 1603 Orrington Plaza was dedicated, and there was good local press, including an article in the *Chicago Tribune*
 - vi. Andy mentioned the Chamber's MashUp event on 10/14, and reminded everyone about the \$50 ticket discount available (via DTE's sponsorship) for the first 20 downtown businesses that request
- b. Other updates
 - i. DTE will be relocating its storage space to a room on the ground floor of the Sherman Plaza by the end of September
 - ii. Margarita Inn is managing a workforce development program which includes hiring residents to help clean/organize the tables at Fountain Square, and provide additional trash management services
 - iii. Chicago Stars game on 9/7 was a great success and they will be playing 16 games next year at Northwestern Medicine Field
 - iv. Fountain Square: south side plaza enhancement (extending the pavers) should be completed prior to July 2026 to accommodate the Downtown Summer Sounds concert series
- IV. Director of Marketing update (Laura)
 - a. Communications Dashboard
 - b. Advertising: Game Day Eats, History Tour, Holiday Events
 - c. Upcoming Events: Big Bite Night, Trick or Treat Stroll, Holiday Events
- V. Other Business (Nathan)
 - a. Northlight Theatre Welcome Event (*Tuesday, September 30, 4-6PM*) **[RSVP]**
 - b. November Full Board Meeting (*Tuesday, November 18, 4-5:30PM*)
 - c. Canceling the November 13 Exec Meeting is likely, but we will make a final determination at the October 9 Exec meeting
- VI. Open Discussion (All)
- VII. Adjournment (Nathan): Meeting adjourned at 10:27AM

UPCOMING DTE EVENTS

Big Bite Night, Sunday, October 5, 3-5PM
 Halloween Trick or Treat Stroll, Saturday, October 25, 2-4PM
 Evanston Rides, 9/27, 10/7, 10/25

Next Exec Committee meeting: Thursday, October 9, 9:30AM