



**Downtown Evanston Full Board of Directors  
Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, November 18, 2025, 4PM  
909 Davis Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor**

**Board Members Present:**

Carole Bass, Downtown Resident  
Marty Cless, Core & Rind Hospitality  
Angelica D'Costa, Madison Grace  
Brianna Gray, Evanston Chamber of Commerce  
Warwick Johnson, ULRI/ULSE  
Peter Kelly, Downtown Resident  
Ben Kadish, Evanston Athletic Club  
Sarita Kamat, Artem Pop Up Gallery  
Evan Meador, Continuum Capital  
Andrew McDonald, Rotary (*Treasurer*)  
Jim Nash, Farnsworth Hill  
Gina Prokopeak, Hyatt House  
Wade Rodgers, Lincoln Property Company  
John Rohrbach, Hilton Garden Inn  
Luke Stowe, City of Evanston  
Angela Valavanis, Creative Coworking (*Chair*)  
Paul Zalmezak, City of Evanston

**Board Members Absent:**

Gretchen Brauer, Wheel & Sprocket (*Secretary*)  
Anthony Espinoza, Evanston Place Apartments  
Will Flatt, John Buck Company  
Vivian Killebrew, Stepping Out on Faith  
Nathan Kostant, Golub (*Vice Chair*)  
Izzy Libmann, TruFit Personal Training  
Jake Samuels, Resident

**Staff:** Andy Vick, Laura Brown

**Guests:** Amy Ceisel, Claritus Accounting Group (Downtown Evanston's accountant)

- I. Call to Order (Angela) 4:04PM
  - a. Welcome from Wade Rodgers, Lincoln Property Company
  - b. Board member introductions
  - c. Overview of DTE Full Board composition
- II. Approval of Executive Committee's new Board member appointments (Angela)
  - a. New Board members: John Rohrbach, Brianna Gray, Evan Meador
  - b. **VOTES:**
    - i. Angela motioned to add John to the board; Marty seconded; board approved unanimously.
    - ii. Sarita motioned to add Brianna to the board; Jim seconded; board approved unanimously.
    - iii. Angela moved to add Evan to the board; Ben seconded; board approved unanimously.
- III. Approval of October Minutes (Angela)
  - a. **VOTE:** Andrew motioned to approve; Jim seconded; board approved unanimously.
- IV. Treasurer's Report (Amy, Andrew, Andy)
  - a. Presentation of October Financials
    - i. 1<sup>st</sup> tax installment was \$67,326 lower than expected due to delayed refunds from previous years
    - ii. 2<sup>nd</sup> tax installment delayed due to issues at Cook County, but expecting payment(s) between December & February. Final amount TBD
      - 1. Currently drawing down on reserves: about \$155,000 to date and monthly burn rate is about \$71,000/month. which would cover us through February. However, we expect 2<sup>nd</sup> installment before then.
      - 2. 2025 interest income will be negatively impacted by the draw down
      - 3. Holding off (for now) on renewing our line of credit with Byline Bank but that is an option if necessary.
    - iii. Community Support revenue is up in 2025
    - iv. No Public Art expenses in 2025
    - v. Most line items on/under budget
  - b. Approval of 2026 Budget
    - i. Budget submitted to City in September and approved by City Council.
    - ii. Exec Board approved a SSA tax increase from 0.112% to 0.135% for 2026 (adds approximately \$65,000)

- iii. 2026 Northwestern Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) funding will again be \$250,000. Paul Z. recently had a conversation with Dave Davis, who said we should expect payment sometime in Q1.
  - 1. \$220K: Trash & Maintenance (Brightview)
  - 2. \$30K: Downtown Summer Sounds concert series
- iv. Full year of trash & maintenance contract in 2026: only paid for 2/3 of trash in 2025 since we took over contract from City on May 1, 2025
- v. Increase in annual contracted services from Brightview
- vi. 18.3% increase in health insurance costs. After conversations with Exec Board Officers, staff and our insurance rep, a decision was made to maintain the same health insurance coverage in 2026. DTE will continue to pay 70% of premium, and staff will pay the remaining 30% of premium.
- vii. Comments:
  - 1. Marty brought up the idea of residential property owners paying into the SSA. Andy noted that it was discussed in 2019 when the SSA was reauthorized, but was not pursued at that time. Rental apartment buildings (Avidor, Albion, etc.) pay into the SSA because they are a commercial ownership entity, but individual condo owners are not included in the tax assessment. DTE will revisit this topic at future Exec. Committee meetings as we get closer to the next reauthorization of our SSA in 2029
  - 2. John asked about the decrease in CBA funding for Downtown Summer Sounds from \$40K (2025) to \$30K (2026). Andy noted that we are trying to move away from using CBA funds for programming and instead grow the sponsorship base for DTE programming.
- viii. **VOTE:** Andrew moved to approve the 2026 budget as reviewed at the meeting. Angela seconded. Board unanimously approved the 2026 budget.

#### V. Executive Director Update (Andy)

- a. Landscaping/Trash Removal:
  - i. Downtown Evanston and the City have worked with Brightview Landscaping to replant the above ground planters and improve the quality of seasonal plantings.
  - ii. Downtown Evanston took over the trash removal contract from the City in May 2025 and will continue to manage that responsibility going forward.
  - iii. City purchased/installed new trash & recycling cans with ARPA funds.

- iv. Downtown Evanston initially hired residents from Margarita Inn to maintain the tables and chairs at Fountain Square and to do additional trash collection around Downtown. Now, the residents are paid for these services through a Connections for the Homeless workforce development grant.
- v. Peter commented that several residents in his building have noted the cleanliness and improved plantings throughout Downtown.
- b. Events & Programming
  - i. Downtown Evanston hosted a variety of events throughout the year and has three remaining holiday events in 2025.
  - ii. We have raised sponsorship dollars from an extensive list of companies and organizations in Evanston.
  - iii. We have collaborated with many nonprofit organizations in Evanston and continue to build strong connections in the community.
- c. Placemaking: Making spaces in Downtown Evanston more inviting, human-focused and vibrant
  - i. Installed Downtown Evanston signage in Sherman Plaza windows
  - ii. Coordinated with Roycemore to install student art in windows at former Affordable Portables
  - iii. Worked with several local partners to help fund and select the new ground mural at Orrington Plaza
  - iv. Hired Brightview to install a fall harvest backdrop at Fountain Square for our annual Trick or Treat event
  - v. Ongoing maintenance and installation of 10 additional Downtown Evanston street pole banners
- d. Community Engagement: review of boards and committees that Andy is a part of
- e. Advocacy Efforts: overview of projects that Downtown Evanston is supporting

#### VI. Director of Marketing Update (Laura)

- a. Upcoming DTE events from November 2025 to April 2026
- b. Overview of digital marketing and promotional strategies
- c. Social media, website, and eblast engagement graphs all trending upwards
- d. Highlights of recently opened businesses and future development projects

#### VII. City of Evanston Update (Paul)

- a. Evanston Thrives is ongoing guide for City economic development initiatives
- b. Civic Plaza renovation status update
- c. Public transit overpass lighting projects at Davis and Church Streets

- d. South Plaza upgrades with pavers, lights and trees (spring 2026)
- e. Chicago Avenue streetscape: replacing sidewalks and new spaces for outdoor dining (spring 2026)
- f. Residential development projects
  - i. The Legacy (1621 Chicago Ave.): demolition in November 2025 and construction starts in January 2026
  - ii. 605 Davis St: construction to start in Q2 2026, occupancy in 2028
  - iii. 907 Church St.: 358 residential units, 27-story tower (timeline TBD)
    - 1. Gina asked about demand for apartments with these new developments coming online. Evan Meador commented that there is a 99.5% occupied rate in Evanston for multi-family residential
  - iv. Northlight Theatre: on target to open Fall of 2026

VIII. Other Business (Angela)

- a. Board Member Questions & Open Discussion
- b. Andy offered his appreciation to the Board and Executive Committee for their ongoing support and service to the organization

IX. Adjournment (Angela) 5:27PM

**UPCOMING DTE EVENTS**

Small Business Saturday: Saturday, November 29, 11AM-5PM  
Holiday Light Celebration: Saturday, December 6, 4:30-7PM  
Warm Bevvv Walk: Thursday, December 11, 4-7PM

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**Next Exec Board meeting: Thursday, December 11, 9:30AM**