



**Downtown Evanston Executive Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30AM
Creative Coworking, 922 Davis Street**

Board Members Present:

Angela Valavanis, Creative Coworking (*Chair*)
Nathan Kostant, Golub (*Vice Chair*)
Andrew McDonald, Rotary International (*Treasurer*)
Gretchen Brauer, Wheel & Sprocket, (*Secretary*)
Marty Cless, Core & Rind Hospitality
Jim Nash, Farnsworth Hill
Paul Zalmezak, City of Evanston

Not Present:

Sarita Kamat, Artem Pop Up Gallery

Staff: Andy Vick, Laura Brown

- I. Call to Order at 9:30AM (Angela)
- II. Approval of January Minutes (Angela) **[Vote]**
 - a. Marty moved to approve; Nathan seconded. Exec Board approved minutes unanimously.
- III. Treasurer's Report (Andrew & Andy)
 - a. January Financials
 - i. Not much to report—still early in the year
 - ii. Received \$9,000 Northwestern contribution for general operating support
 - iii. Largest expense is \$40,000 landscaping invoice (1 of 4) for annual contract

- b. 2025 Audit: Letter of Engagement has been signed, and all documents have been uploaded to a shared file for the auditor's use. Audit process should start shortly.
- c. Researching other IT providers because the new price for 2026 doubled. Andy is waiting to hear from a couple of local providers before making a final decision.

IV. Executive Director update (Andy)

- a. Downtown Summer Sounds bands are booked—still waiting for one last contract
- b. Let's Eat Challenge is launching next week to promote restaurants through May 15.
- c. Downtown Survey: working with Northwestern students to put together a survey for property owners, business operators, residents, visitors, etc. Survey will be distributed on Tuesday, 2/17 and will close on 2/28.
- d. 2026 event sponsorships are coming in from existing partners, but also a couple new businesses from outside of Evanston.
- e. Aggressive Panhandling Ordinance Repeal
 - i. City staff received letter from ACLU that current ordinance around panhandling/soliciting is in violation of right to free speech
 - ii. City staff recommended dismantling the ordinance entirely
 - iii. Downtown Evanston and others are advocating to just make modifications to the ordinance, so it still addresses issues like aggressive panhandling

V. Director of Marketing update (Laura)

- a. Communications Dashboard overview
- b. Upcoming Events
 - i. Love Local Chocolate Crawl on February 12
 - ii. S'mores on the Square on March 7
 - iii. Spring Forward: Health & Wellness Open House on April 25
- c. 2026 advertising plan: similar plan to last year with local media outlets and working with 1744 Marketing to manage digital/social advertising, photo/videos and other content related projects

VI. Economic Development Update (Paul)

- a. Pop-Up Incubator Program approved by City Council to move forward with identifying vacant spaces and coordinating entrepreneurs
- b. Lighting projects on Church and Davis overpasses still on track for 2026 installation
- c. Civic Plaza improvements starting in summer
- d. Toured Northlight Theatre which is slated to open in August

- e. Local Note Jazz Club approved by City Council

VII. Other Business (Angela)

- a. Proposed new Board member: Amanda Ault from FlowersFlowers **[Vote]**
 - i. Angela moved to add Amanda to the Board; Jim seconded. Board voted unanimously to approve Amanda Ault as a new board member.
- b. ECF's Board Leadership Training could be a source for future board candidates
- c. DTE Board member term limits and Exec Board Officer positions
 - i. Angela's term on the Executive Committee is ending in May 2026, so we need to select a new Board Chair, and invite a Full Board member to join the Executive Committee
 - ii. Discussion about Nathan moving up from Vice Chair to Chair
 - iii. Andy to send a list of board members with terms to Executive Committee to review and recommend new Executive Committee members
 - iv. **Action Item:**
 - 1. Review the list of current board and executive committee members and think about upcoming vacancies on Executive Board
 - 2. Think about how we might want to modify the bylaws re: term limits

VIII. Open Discussion (All)

- a. South plaza renovation expected to be completed by mid-June
- b. North plaza fountain renovation still in discussion at City Council

IX. Adjournment at 10:47AM (Angela)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Love Local Chocolate Crawl, Thursday, February 12, 4:30-7:30PM

S'mores on the Square, Saturday, March 7, 5-7PM

Next Exec Board meeting: Thursday, March 12, 9:30AM