

**MEETING MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 5, 2025
GRAND RIVER CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY
JON GRANT - COMMUNITY CENTER
29260 GRAND RIVER AVENUE, FARMINGTON HILLS, MI 48336**

CALLED TO ORDER BY: MARY NEWLIN AT 8:05 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT: RICH, SMITH, PATROS, NEWLIN

MEMBERS ABSENT: MANN, ALKHAFI, PRICE

OTHERS PRESENT: Gary Mekjian, City Manager, Cristia Brockway, Economic Development Director, John Trafelet, Planning Commission Chair

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Motion by Rich, supported by Patros to approve the agenda as submitted.
Unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion by Smith, supported by Rich to approve the March 6, 2025, meeting minutes as submitted.
Unanimously approved.

BUSINESS:

Brockway gave an update on the hotel overview and analysis provided by Gibbs Planning Group. His investigation found that there is no market for them. Detroit is the only place in southeast Michigan that is experiencing an increase in hotel demand. Boutique hotels appear to be the only appropriate market type based on the corridor area demand.

In 2027, the NCAA Final Four is going to be coming to town, and an uptick of visitors is expected throughout Metro Detroit. Detroit landed that opportunity because they were able to increase their hotel space. Petros remarked that it was just announced on the news that the newly renovated train station is planning on building upscale accommodation.

Some have inquired if the Botsford Inn could be a boutique hotel or some type of food use for the hospital. There are considerable historical considerations needed for this location and would require discussions with the Historic District Commission for any type of repurposing. Trafelet remarked that the building has not been maintained over the last 2-3 years. The shutters and spindles up on top have been removed, the chimney needed tuck pointing, inside elevator shafts were built without the elevator, and roof repairs which all make up a cost of \$150,000. Brockway commented that this is a challenging site. If the building is to be used, it is going to need to share parking with the cancer center. Brockway commented that since the merger of Beaumont and Spectrum Health, Corewell Health has been reviewing their assets.

There has been an interest in the vacant Walgreens at 8 Mile and Grand River and is under contract with a user yet to be identified. The econ updates indicates that there is a slight demand for office spaces on Grand River due mainly to the hospital that exists within the city. The City of Southfield currently has a 29% office availability rate.

Gibbs is currently working on the zoning text amendments with Planning and Giffels Webster. Grand River is mostly commercial with small parcels. Flexibility is going to be key as it relates to a new zoning overlay district as well as acceptable design standards. There has been significant interest throughout the corridor which has been part of the market study findings.

Smith asked for the status of the gas station. Brockway remarked that plans have been submitted; however, the site will need some significant variances for the orientation and size of the site. The plans submitted were incomplete and will need to be resubmitted. Once a complete plan has been submitted and approved by Planning Commission, they will be deferred to Zoning Board of Appeals for any variances needed. They are looking at making significant improvements to the property, a mural on the back side of the building, and will include additional green space because the curb cut on Middlebelt is over 60 feet wide (City ordinance requirement is 30 feet), and the furthest approach on Grand River will need to be closed off. Rich asked who has the next step to make sure murals will be allowed. Mekjian commented that it is forthcoming and is part of the new zoning text amendments. Patros inquired about Sheetz status. Our attorney is communicating with their attorneys. Brockway commented that there has been a lot more interest in the corridors since we have the corridor market studies and data to present.

Brockway discussed the third item on the agenda regarding streetscape design and landscaping plan. Unlike the Vision Plan conducted years ago, the city will concentrate on the landscape design and art plan to make the corridor aesthetically pleasing. This will include median, pedestrian, placemaking, and right of way improvements such as lighting, irrigation and large-scale art. Patros asked for clarification of art within the corridor and what is the budget for it. Brockway explained this will be murals and large-scale art that people can stand next to and take photos. The initial budget will be \$40,000 for the design phase and the second phase is \$160,000 for first implementation that should occur in the 2026-2027 fiscal year. \$200,000 will come from the CIA budget yearly. Mekjian clarified that there will be many phases over multiple years. Smith commented that the south and north side of Grand River are two different worlds, and for a pedestrian to try to cross Grand River is difficult. Brockway commented that the art collaborative will be large-scale and will be rented out from a third party which will provide the maintenance and concrete pads for these are art displays. Many local communities are renting art. Newlin commented that the medians have never looked better. Brockway and Mekjian explained the Department of Public Works does some maintenance on medians along with an interagency agreement with MDOT to maintain them. Rich clarified the RFP will go out once the new budget is approved. Mekjian commented that once we have an attractive looking corridor, businesses start to move in, property taxes start to go up you then start to realize the tax increments of the investment. Patros requested that the committee be given a copy of the RFP when it gets submitted. Brockway and Mekjian agreed. Rich commented that Planning has an art funding ordinance currently underway which many cities around the country have going. There is a lot of flexibility to what is art, it could be architectural details, a fountain, etc.

Brockway observed how things have been moving forward, not just here but other areas in the city. It has been a great team effort not only with council and planning commission, but at the administrative level too. Brockway will pass along the compliments to the staff.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Petros, supported by Smith to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 AM
Unanimously approved.

Minutes drafted by: Cristia Brockway