



Downtown Development Authority of Augusta
Board Meeting Minutes
February 21, 2026, at 1:00pm
1101 Greene Street

The Downtown Development Authority of Augusta held its monthly meeting on February 19, 2026, at 1:00 pm at its offices at 1101 Greene Street.

DDA Board members in attendance included Chairman Jack Evans, Vice Chairman James Heffner, Secretary-Treasurer Stephen King, Commissioner Jordan Johnson, and Pastor Anthony Booker. Also in attendance were DDA Executive Director Margaret Woodard, Director of Accelerate Augusta Shawn Andrews, Director of Community Development Tara Wood, and Retail Coordinator Corbin Freeman.

Chairman Evans called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm and asked Mr. King to present the consent agenda and the financial reports. The consent agenda, which included the January 2026 Board meeting minutes and financials, was introduced. Mr. King asked whether there were any comments or edits on the January minutes or on any of the financial reports approved through November 2025.

Mr. Evans then asked if there were any questions or discussion, and called for a motion to approve the financials. Mr. Heffner seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Ms. Woodard then presented the Director's report, highlighting the following:

Lamar Building: Financing closing by March 15. Ramada/Marriot demolition completed, and Marriott corporate reviewing model rooms.

First Baptist Church Property: This project is currently under contract, and construction costs are estimated at \$5 million.

Cotton Exchange Building: Planning is underway, and it will be an event/meeting space. We

will meet with Dr. Troy Akers to discuss low-interest loans.

Paquin Collaboration: Coordination with Paquin PR, city, and chamber on TIA projects, including public service announcements and expanded public parking with two new city-leased lots.

Demolition of 1140 Broad Street: Completed. This will serve as temporary parking until the TIA project is complete, which has been approved by the city for \$2 million to fast-track completion.

Jones Street Alley: The project drawings are complete and moving into procurement, aided by property owner cooperation and \$1.7 million in grant funding from Governor Kemp.

SPLOST 9: The project list was approved for the ballot, with strategy development ongoing, showing alignment with broader city infrastructure plans.

Ms. Woodard concluded her report. Mr. Evans moved to accept the Director's report as information. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

Fundraising & Sponsorship Strategy: The board is preparing a targeted fundraising campaign to address a \$40,000 budget shortfall amid city funding cuts, aiming to raise \$50,000 to \$100,000 through local business sponsorships. Board members acknowledged that the campaign requires dedicated effort and proposed engaging Tamara Toogood for professional fundraising support. The campaign messaging will focus on sustaining downtown momentum, citing seven new businesses since January as proof of success, and will avoid framing the campaign around city funding cuts. The campaign will also clearly separate DDA fundraising from Accelerate Augusta's efforts to avoid overlap and donor fatigue. To conclude this discussion, the Board decided to proceed with a voteable packet.

Mr. Evans moved to approve the voteable packet for the DDA Sponsorship Program. Mr. King seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

New Business

Accelerate Augusta Update: Mr. Andrews updated the Board on Accelerate Augusta's expansion of its entrepreneurial support, with a diverse portfolio of programs serving over 300

entrepreneurs and targeting multiple business stages. The focus is on capital readiness, teaching entrepreneurs to pitch and prepare for funding, and addressing common barriers such as a lack of initial capital. There will be an Accelerating Trades program designed to fill local workforce gaps in HVAC, electrical, and construction, linking certification with business development and employment. On top of launching an inventor accelerator with access to prototype development via a partnership with the cyber center, reducing costs from tens of thousands to a few hundred dollars. There will also be Youth Entrepreneur camps planned for summer, integrating literacy and math education to build foundational skills.

Operating Budget 2026: The proposed 2026 budget reflects reduced city funding and increased reliance on fundraising, resulting in a projected \$36,000 deficit despite efforts to trim costs. City funding decreased from approximately \$264,000 to \$238,000, the largest factor in the budget reduction from the prior year. The fundraising target was increased to \$50,000 to partially offset the funding cut, but total expenses remain about \$40,000 above projected income. Line items for facilities, maintenance, and marketing remained steady, indicating limited scope for further expense reductions. The board directed urgent action to finalize the blight ordinance to enable drawing down American Relief funds, with assigned responsibility to Jordan Johnson to engage city officials.

Co-Chairman Mr. Heffner called for a motion to approve DDA's operating budget for 2026. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

Mr. Heffner wrapped up the meeting, thanking everyone for their attendance and hard work on behalf of the DDA.

The meeting adjourned at 1:55 pm.