



**CITY OF MADISON HEIGHTS**

**CITY HALL - LINDELL ROSS EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM,  
300 W. 13 MILE RD.**

**ARTS BOARD MEETING AGENDA**

**MAY 06, 2026 AT 7:15 PM**

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**CALL TO ORDER AT 7:23 PM**

**ROLL CALL**

**Toya Aaron, Council Representative**

**Mark Bliss, Member**

**Michael Covert, Chair**

**Laurie Geraldts, Council Alternate (absent)**

**Mary Harp, Alternate (absent)**

**Susie King, Member (absent)**

**Harley Mordarski, Staff Liaison**

**Jennifer Nagle, Vice Chair / Social Media**

**Kimberly Oprins, Member (absent)**

**Vita Palazzolo, Member**

**Keaton Soto-Olson, Member (absent)**

**Thomas Wrona, Alternate**

**Sandie Young, Member (absent)**

**Motion by Bliss, seconded by Nagle, to excuse those who gave notice: Geraldts, Harp, King, Oprins, Soto-Olson.**

**Yea: All**

**Nay: None**

**Motion Carries**

**ADDITIONS/DELETIONS**

Aaron noted this was the third meeting affected by quorum issues and expressed interest in opening a discussion to better understand Board scheduling and attendance challenges.

**Motion by Aaron, seconded by Bliss, to add Attendance to the agenda under item number thirteen.**

**Yea: All**

**Nay: None**

**Motion Carries**

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

### **1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mordarski noted that Sandie Young and Kimberly Oprins were incorrectly listed as alternates in the minutes, though both are members, and recommended amending the minutes to reflect the correction.

**Motion by Aaron, seconded by Wrona, to approve the meeting minutes for April 16th, 2026, as amended.**

**Yea: All**

**Nay: None**

**Motion Carries**

## **MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

### **REPORTS**

#### **2. Treasurer Report**

Mordarski summarized the treasury report as presented, noting that recent financial activity primarily related to Arts in Pride. She reported that the Arts Board escrow account received over \$1,000 in sponsorship revenue, an additional \$500 check not yet reflected in the report, and \$537 in vendor and yard sign revenue. She also noted that postcards for the summer concerts totaled \$115; however, the invoice has not yet been received or paid.

Bliss stated that he may be able to secure a lower cost for postcards in the future through a vendor contact. He further recommended that Arts in Pride be separated into its own escrow account due to the level of financial activity and sponsorship involvement. Mordarski responded that staff have been working to reduce the number of escrow accounts, as they are administratively burdensome to maintain when not used consistently, and recommended that the board instead continue tracking finances within the existing structure. It was also noted that all financial activity must comply with city accounting policies, including ensuring that sponsorship funds are used for their intended purpose for the event. Bliss indicated that this matter may warrant further discussion in the future.

#### **3. Social Media Report (Nagle, Oprins)**

Nagle presented the Social Media Report, noting a significant spike in engagement following announcements related to Arts in Pride and the Arts Board Summer Concert/Activities programming. The report also highlighted a 318% increase in engagement over the past week, along with 25 new followers, attributed primarily to recently posted content.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### **4. Summer Concert Series (Aaron, Bliss, Covert, Oprins)**

During discussion of the Summer Concerts, Aaron noted that despite prior emails and conversations regarding indoor versus outdoor contingency planning, no official consensus had been reached. She stated that she is not in support of paying bands the full amount if a performance is canceled due to rain, and recommended prioritizing rescheduling the performance to the next available date, emphasizing the importance of preserving the outdoor bandshell experience and not compensating for a date not performed.

Mordarski asked whether the Board would consider Trail Tunes as a backup venue, but Aaron disagreed, noting it is a separate event and also raised concerns about equity given the difference in compensation between Trail Tunes bands (\$500) and Summer Concerts bands (\$650). Bliss suggested the Active Adult Center as a rain-day backup, noting its scheduling flexibility as a benefit. Covert asked for clarity on why the concert could not move from the bandshell to the AAC. Mordarski noted logistical challenges with last-minute indoor relocation, including staffing, custodial coordination, cleaning, public communication and marketing, facility access, equipment movement, and scheduling conflicts with City Hall, staff, and Arts Board members. She added that while indoor relocation is more feasible if planned in advance, making such a shift on short notice would be operationally difficult and could also undermine the integrity of an outdoor live music event.

Aaron reiterated her preference for designated rain-out dates for participating bands. Bliss noted that it is common practice to use deposits or partial guarantees to secure bands, and Covert proposed a 50% payment structure in the event of rain when no performance occurs, with the remaining 50% contingent upon a rescheduled performance date. This approach was discussed as a way to incentivize rescheduling while ensuring band availability. The subcommittee members who initially contacted the bands will be responsible for communicating rain-date arrangements.

Mordarski stated that City Manager Marsh would review the band agreement given this feedback.

**Motion by Bliss, seconded by Aaron, that in the event of rain, a band shall receive 50% of the total \$650 amount. Upon a rescheduled performance date, the band shall receive the remaining 50%. If a rain date cannot be accommodated, the band shall receive only 50% of the awarded amount.**

**Yea: All**

**Nay: None**

**Motion Carries**

#### **5. Arts and Pride (Wrona, Nagle, King)**

Nagle reviewed the Arts and Pride line-item budget and noted that major updates since the prior meeting include increases in signage and advertising. She also stated that advertising efforts have become more developed and structured compared to prior years. Nagle noted that the figures presented were estimates, as not all invoices had been received.

Mordarski asked about the distinction between “silent” and standard sponsors, as presented by Nagle. Nagle explained that silent sponsors are individuals or entities who wish to support the event financially but prefer not to be publicly acknowledged on marketing materials due to anticipated political backlash. Palazzolo expressed disappointment at what she viewed as a lack of fortitude by these businesses. Accepting money from the business is not something she supports.

Aaron highlighted that while subcommittees are great at planning events together, it is important to share updates and decisions with the rest of the board. Aaron noted that she doesn't recall an exact motion related to Arts and Pride spending. Bliss recalled a prior motion establishing authorization for spending up to a specified threshold, but further noted he was uncertain regarding the exact timing and scope of that motion – usually it is \$500 seed money each year in the past. He further explained that requiring Board approval for every individual expense would create operational challenges, given quorum/scheduling issues, and stated that the current practice is to approve a general budget while allowing subcommittees to manage line items and report back regularly. He referenced Trail Tunes as an example of how this structure allows flexibility in securing performers and programming based on available sponsorship funding.

Aaron raised questions about public perception of Arts and Pride programming, noting concerns she has heard about whether drag performances are appropriate for a family-friendly setting. She emphasized the importance of clear communication with families about the nature of the programming and clear expectations with the performers about “keeping it clean.” She made the point that while children may not see the drag performer as anything beyond someone in a costume, marketing should make the objective clear: this is not an explicit performance, which she understands could be a concern for families. She shared the importance of ensuring that the book selection, performer conduct, and overall intent of the programming are all consistent with a family-appropriate and respectful presentation.

Nagle responded that the programming is intended to be family-friendly and clarified that the performer involved is a K–12 educator, noting awareness of community sensitivity and the importance of appropriate content. She emphasized that the event is not intended to resemble adult-oriented drag performance formats that some members of the public may associate it with.

Covert raised the question of whether drag performers should volunteer their time in support of Pride events rather than be paid; Nagle responded by comparing this to other paid artistic services – such as painters painting a mural for free. Bliss recognized drag as a form of performance art within popular culture and emphasized its distinction from adult-oriented entertainment, noting that the performers at Arts and Pride would be more comparable to “Mrs. Doubtfire” than “Mr. Frank N. Furter.”

Palazzolo raised concerns about families using the public space who may not want to see drag performers. In response, the general discussion noted that the park is a public space used by a wide range of individuals and that art may naturally involve differing preferences and interpretations. Aaron noted that not everyone will like all the events in the park and, for example, mentioned that an R&B band might be playing at the bandshell as part of a summer concert, and that a family walking around might be exposed to music they dislike.

Bliss suggested the board adopt an agreement or set of expectations that performers would need to sign to adhere to appropriate presentation standards. Aaron agreed that it would be favorable to have performers sign something that ensures appropriateness at performances. She also remarked that this was a concern last year when hiring a comedian, and that the subcommittee decided against it for fear of mature content.

Bliss inquired about the event layout and the use of the bandshell and surrounding areas. Nagle confirmed the intended use of both the bandshell and shelter areas and noted that shade and designated activity zones may be needed depending on conditions and attendance. Nagle also confirmed that the HREC voted to contribute \$500 to the event.

Wrona stated that he believed the discussion highlighted differing perspectives on artistic expression and emphasized that, in his view, artists should be respected regardless of performance style or identity. He stated that artistic expression should not be subject to exclusion based on appearance or presentation and noted the broader value of supporting artists as members of an arts board.

Nagle concluded by reiterating that programming’s intent is to ensure a family-friendly environment.

## **6. Bandshell Utilization Subcommittee (Gerald, Covert, King, Wrona)**

Covert reported that planning is otherwise complete; however, the subcommittee is still working to identify a lead instructor for the “Dancing Under the Stars” event, which Mordarski shared was popular last year.

**7. Arts & Crafts Swap (Young, Nagle, King, Wrona)**

Nagle will follow up with the Library to establish a date.

**8. Arts Board Graphics (Bliss, Wrona, Young)**

Wrona reported that there were no updates at this time and recommended revisiting the Arts Board graphics initiative as a standalone project after the summer events have wrapped up.

**9. Civic Center Hopscotch (Gerals)**

Mordarski reported that the Department of Public Services would power wash the area prior to repainting the Civic Center hopscotch installation. Eve Sandoval will prepare an outline for the painting, and volunteers may be needed to assist with repainting. Bliss proposed coordinating a photo opportunity following completion of the sidewalk mural.

**10. Student Outreach (Wrona, Gerals, King, Nagle)**

Wrona reported that the Student Outreach Subcommittee has not undertaken any major activities since the previous meeting. Mordarski encouraged Arts Board members to promote the Michigan Municipal League student art contest and noted that information regarding the opportunity had already been forwarded to local schools.

**11. Trail Tunes (Palazzolo, Bliss, Aaron)**

No new developments have occurred since the last meeting. Bliss expressed that to be successful, the event requires a dedicated subcommittee and increased fundraising efforts. Bliss expressed concern about the current level of support and the available funding needed to successfully organize the event, particularly following the redistribution of Community Foundation grant funding to support other Arts Board projects, including the Summer Concerts program.

Mordarski clarified that \$700 from the Community Foundation grant application had been designated for Trail Tunes; however, because the summer bandshell events were new and required additional support, it shifted the overall allocation. Bliss raised concern that the funding application and allocation process may not have received sufficient Board discussion, particularly because Trail Tunes subcommittee members were absent when the grant application was discussed by the Board.

Covert added that securing additional sponsorships for the Summer Concert series could free up additional funding for Trail Tunes. Palazzolo expressed concern about the difficulty of securing additional grants and the sustainability of sponsorships. Since past Trail Tunes sponsors may have already committed to sponsoring other summer events, she worries about their support for Trail Tunes. Mordarski recommended incorporating financial strategies into the Board's annual work planning process, including identifying potential funding sources and a budget.

Bliss stated that leadership assistance is needed across several focus areas, including fundraising, band outreach, vendors, advertising, family programming, and food truck coordination. Aaron noted that food trucks should be booked early due to summer scheduling demand and referenced prior challenges related to vendor coordination, communication, and overall event planning. She requested that Nagle create a public post seeking volunteers for Trail Tunes. The Board also discussed opportunities to streamline

sponsorship and vendor recruitment by offering multi-event participation and annual sponsorship packages across multiple Arts Board events.

**12. USA 250th Anniversary Photography Exhibit in Library (Gerals, Young, Mordarski)**

The proposed theme of the exhibit focuses on nature and landscapes, including photographs taken both locally and throughout the United States. Mordarski stated that she could create an upload form on the City's website for the Board's review and feedback. She also recommended purchasing reusable panel display boards for the exhibit, estimated at \$70 each, that could be used for future Arts Board events to improve the presentation of the photographs.

**Motion by Aaron, seconded by Wrona, to purchase two grid panels at the current retail price to display art as part of the USA 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Photography Exhibit.**

**Yea: All**

**Nay: None**

**Motion Carries**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**13. Attendance**

Aaron stated that the Board has struggled to achieve quorum at the last three meetings, and emphasized the need for stricter attendance expectations. She noted that members who know in advance they will be out of town, working, or otherwise unavailable should provide greater notice, and suggested that last-minute absences should be considered unexcused, unless it is an emergency. Discussion also included implementing a standard that three unexcused absences within a year would trigger further action and establishing a general expectation of at least 24 hours' notice for absences unless an emergency arises.

Mordarski noted that while members often provide notice shortly before meetings, the Board has continued to excuse those absences, therefore the Board should amend their motions accordingly for the future. Covert stated that the only member he believed should currently receive ongoing excused absences is Keaton Soto-Olsen due to attendance at the firefighter academy.

Before the meeting concluded, Bliss made the following motion:

**Motion by Bliss, seconded by Aaron, to authorize the Trail Tunes Subcommittee to make decisions regarding the event lineup and the expenditure of funds held in the Trail Tunes escrow account between now and the next regularly scheduled meeting.**

**Yea: All**

**Nay: None**

**Motion Carries**

**NEXT MEETING – To be scheduled ahead of an upcoming summer concert, based on Board availability.**

**ADJOURNMENT 9:03**

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heights.org at least two working days in advance of the meeting. An attempt will be made to make reasonable accommodations.

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