

Minutes of Neenah Central City Business Improvement District Board
February 17, 2026 – 8:00 am
Hauser Room – Neenah City Hall0

PRESENT: Board Members: Umer Sheikh, Tori Dorn, Christine Rondeau, Bob Gillespie, Ald. Mark Ellis, Ben Ziemba and Alex Noskowiak. Also present: Jason Koslowski (Dairy Queen), Ald. Cari Lendrum, Ald. Flo Bruno, Zakary Sheikh (409 E. Wisconsin Avenue), Executive Director Brent Bowman (FNI), Assistant Executive Director Sara Hanneman (FNI), Mayor Jane Lang, and Community Development Specialist Samantha Jefferson (City of Neenah Community Development).

Approve minutes of January 20, 2026 meeting: MSC Gillespie/Ellis, the BID Board to approve the minutes of the January 20, 2026 BID Board meeting. All voting aye. Motion passed.

Public Appearances: Jason Koslowski (Dairy Queen – 450 S. Commercial Street) has been appointed to the BID Board. He will take the spot previously held by George Brownell.

Financials:

Bills for Approval: **MSC Dorn/Gillespie, the BID Board to approve the bill packet for \$21,977.51. All voting aye. Motion passed.**

The Budget Status Report shows some final 2025 expenditures and then expenditures moving into 2026.

Extra recycling pick ups were done during December to mitigate overflow and the cost is reflected on the report. As a reminder, recyclables should not be put in a bag as contamination fees are then charged.

Executive Committee:

Thank you of the Month: Thank you to the BID Board for their support of A Very Neenah Christmas and the Holiday Market. Also, the board would like to thank Tina from Red Door for sponsoring Warm Your Heart.

Board Member Status: Members Brownell and Bauer have completed their terms and have stepped down from the BID Board. The board thanks them for their service and contribution. Jason Koslowski (Dairy Queen – 450 S. Commercial Street) will be taking one spot. The additional open spot is the community-at-large position. They cannot have a stake in the downtown and there are no potential candidates at this time.

Annual Meeting: BID Bylaws require an annual meeting to be held in the first quarter of the year. Assistant Executive Director Hanneman would like feedback on format. Member Ellis suggested a roundtable in a relaxed atmosphere. Member Dorn says people seem to appreciate the drop in option. Member Sheikh suggested coordinating something outside of Neenah with other groups – maybe not for the annual meeting but potentially for another month. An informal breakfast was suggested – members like that downtown owners and employees can drop in.

Maintenance Committee:

Assistant Executive Director Hanneman presented an update on the proposed Everlast string lighting project for downtown tree bump-outs. The lighting system allows for programmable color changes and adjustable flashing patterns. The intent of the project is to highlight trees located in bump-out areas, with an initial focus on 11 trees. The lighting is designed to stretch and grow with the trees and has an estimated useful life of approximately five years.

The proposal includes both the light strings and installation services. Funding for the project will be cost-shared between the City, the BID, and Future Neenah. The anticipated installation timeframe is late summer.

The BID Board reported that funds for the project are currently budgeted. Historically, the BID expended approximately \$2,000 or more per year on LED strand lighting to cover all downtown trees, purchasing new lights every other year. Under the proposed approach, the BID contribution would be \$7,500. Staff noted that future budgets will need to account for this lighting method as a recurring expense.

The lights were described as visually impactful and would represent the first installation of this type in the Fox Cities.

During discussion, Member Sheikh asked how the additional downtown trees would be addressed. Staff responded that, at this time, the focus will remain on trees located in bump-out areas until a plan is developed. Member Gillespie noted that uplighting had been considered in prior years but was ultimately not pursued, as it was not the most effective solution. That previous option would have relied entirely on BID funding, whereas the current proposal utilizes a cost-sharing approach.

Special thanks were extended to Bob Akins of Memorial for assistance with the project.

MSC Ellis/Gillespie, the BID Board to approve the purchase of light strings and installation for Everlast string lighting in the amount of \$7,500. All voting aye. Motion passed.

Public Relations and Marketing Committee:

March 20-April 3 = Easter N Scavenger Hunt; April 11 = Love Local Saturday with Gift Certificate Rewards; May 16 = Wine Walk; July 16-18 = Summer Sale (new week this year)

A report was provided on the Warm Your Heart event, which was held the prior week. The event drew 358 attendees and included participation from 29 downtown businesses. Members of the public were permitted to vote for their favorite entries in multiple categories.

For the beverage category, the winning selection was the drinking chocolate from Wilmar's. In the savory category, the winning item was pulled pork sliders from Grainworks. The sweets category resulted in a tie between the cherry bourbon crumble from Elements Unleashed and the raspberry peach compote from Bill Paul.

Survey results indicated that 88 percent of attendees reported making a purchase at a participating business during the event. In addition, donations were collected for the Little Free Blessing Box, resulting in the collection of 15 boxes of donated items.

An update was provided on upcoming promotional programs and events. The Love Local campaign will feature Neenah-branded tote bags and gift certificate rewards, with the promotion scheduled for April 11. The Wine Walk event has been rescheduled to the spring season.

The downtown Summer Sale has been set for July 16–18 and has been moved back one week from the previously planned dates. Staff noted that the change was made due to scheduling conflicts experienced last year, particularly with overlapping regional events. Data from Placer AI was used to evaluate these impacts and supported the decision to adjust the timing.

An update was also provided regarding gift certificate sales. It was reported that the most recent year represented the second-highest gift certificate sales year on record, and the most recent holiday season was the best holiday year ever for gift certificate sales.

Staff further reported on the special sale event held at the end of January, which occurred during severe weather conditions. Despite the weather, 105 customers participated in the event, compared to 135 customers during the same event in the prior year.

Recruitment and Retention Committee:

Ambassador QQ Form: Suggestions on previous drafts of the form were taken into consideration and a new draft was given to the board. Suggestions should be sent to Assistant Executive Director Hanneman.

Survey: An update was provided regarding a national small business survey conducted by Main Street America. The organization exists to support small communities across the country in becoming economic powerhouses and maintaining long-term sustainability. A survey was conducted in the spring, receiving approximately 1,600 responses, which yielded valuable insights into the challenges facing small businesses. A follow-up survey was conducted in the fall to further understand how businesses in small communities are performing.

It was noted that for some small businesses, survival depends in part on unpaid assistance from family and friends. The spring and fall surveys have since been merged into a single instrument consisting of 30 questions that will be given to downtown Neenah businesses. The resulting data will be used to compare how Neenah aligns with other communities in terms of economic development performance. Staff indicated that the results will help the City and its partners identify trends and take a more proactive approach to supporting local businesses.

Reformat Grant: The group is looking to reformat the Recruitment and Retention grant. A group will be created to discuss and make changes.

City of Neenah Updates:

Mayor Lang provided information on the proposed housing development on South Commercial Street. A neighborhood meeting was held and was reported to be well received. She also discussed ongoing issues related to T2 parking enforcement equipment, specifically that printers have been overheating and malfunctioning. The City will continue working with the vendor to resolve these technical issues.

The City's Strategic Plan is in the final stages of development and was distributed to the Common Council earlier in the week. The Citizens Academy is scheduled to begin in March and will include departmental presentations providing an overview of the functions and responsibilities of each City

department. An update was also provided on the Friends of Neenah project, which will create additional opportunities for community members to volunteer.

The board acknowledged that Mayor Lang will be retiring at the end of her term. They thanked her for her service and continued support of Neenah.

Round Table and Information Sharing:

Member Ellis reported receiving numerous compliments from friends regarding the recent activity and improvements in the downtown area. Member Rondeau reported that she has hired a new staff member.

Member Shiekh reported that he provided a tour of the downtown to Jeff Mirkes, Executive Director of Downtown Green Bay Inc., who shared positive feedback and had many complimentary remarks about the downtown.

It was also noted that efforts are ongoing to secure a tenant for the property located at 206 Wisconsin Avenue.

Future Neenah Updates:

ThedaCare asked FNI to put together a tour for potential resident program students. They will be hosting tours on the last two Fridays in February.

Staff reported on proposed format changes to downtown programming, noting that in 2026 the Out to Lunch concert series will be reduced to one concert per month, with additional pop-up concerts planned to supplement the schedule.

Staff also referenced insights shared from the Revitalize or Die social media group, which focuses on best practices and challenges facing downtowns nationwide. It was noted that the group frequently emphasizes the importance of staying proactive and responsive to emerging issues.

Announcements and future agenda items:

Next meeting – March 17th.

The Board adjourned at 8:59 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Samantha Jefferson
Community Development Specialist, Community Development