



JOINT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE AUTHORITY (LDFA) / LANSING REGIONAL SMARTZONE (LRSZ) BOARD MEETING

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 22, 2026 | 8:30 a.m.

Suite 300 – Technology Innovation Center
325 E. Grand River Ave., East Lansing, MI 48823

Attendees: Irene Cahill, Jon Laing, Shay Manawar, Nicole Millsap, Christian Palasty, Heather Pope, Traci Riehl, Abigail Tykocki, Dave Washburn

Staff: Harrison Leffel-Jones, Casey Paskus, Laura Sumpter, Jillian Winn

Recorded by: Laura Sumpter, LEAP

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Tykocki called the meeting of the Lansing Regional SmartZone Joint Local Development Finance Authority (LDFA) to order at 8:32 a.m. The meeting was conducted in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

It was noted that Heather Pope has been appointed by the City of East Lansing and will be formally seated later in the meeting.

Director Winn conducted roll call.

Present: Jon Laing, Nicole Millsap, Christian Palasty, Traci Riehl, Abigail Tykocki, Dave Washburn

Absent: Ben Bakken, Mark Dobson, Charles Haseman, Mark Meadows

Vacant Seat: One seat appointed by the City of East Lansing (Heather Pope), not yet seated.

Result: Quorum was not present at the time of roll call (6 members present)

2. Adoption of Agenda

Motion: Washburn moved to adopt the agenda as presented.

Second: Laing

Vote: 6-0

Result: A quorum was not present at the time of this vote.

Board Member Shay Manawar arrived at 8:33 a.m.

A quorum was established at 8:33 a.m.

Board Member Irene Cahill arrived at 8:34 a.m.

3. Approval of the Minutes

3.1 January 21 Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion: Riehl moved to approve the January 21 Regular Meeting minutes as presented.

Second: Cahill

Vote: Motion Carried (8-0)

Result: Approved

3.2 April 13 Special Meeting Minutes

Motion: Washburn moved to approve the April 13, 2026 Special Meeting minutes as presented.

Second: Cahill

Vote: Motion Carried (8-0)

Result: Approved

4. Approval of the Financials

Treasurer Traci Riehl presented the financial statements through March 31, 2026.

Key highlights:

- FY2026 Amended Budget approved by both the City of East Lansing and City of Lansing
- Financials include third-quarter statements and projected year-end

- Revenue is primarily from TIF capture, which is received annually in late April and has now been received.

Motion: Washburn moved to approve the financials as presented.

Second: Cahill

Vote: Motion Carried (8-0)

Result: Approved

5. New Appointment

5.1 Appointment of Heather Pope, City of East Lansing

Chair Tykocki announced that Heather Pope was appointed by the City of East Lansing to the LDFA Board for a term expiring June 30, 2028.

Motion: Riehl moved to accept the appointment of Heather Pope to the LDFA Board.

Second: Cahill

Vote: Motion Carried (8-0)

Result: Approved

Following board approval, Heather Pope was seated as a member of the Board at 8:42 a.m.

6. Program Updates / Presentations (Information Only)

The following presentations were provided:

6.1 Sit Sense – Justin Scott

- Recliner with sensors to prevent pressure sores
- Targets hospitals and long-term care
- Transitioned from Michigan State University
- New model in development; demo May 6 (Detroit)

6.2 517 Entrepreneurship & Innovation Week – Harrison Leffel-Jones

Harrison Leffel-Jones presented on 517 Entrepreneurship and Innovation Week. It was April 5-10, 2026. There were 28 events across 5 days with over 2,000 attendees.

6.3 BRCE Update – Jillian Winn

BRCE is a student startup that the SmartZone supported through multiple resources. The SmartZone helped them get two rounds of Business Accelerator Funds for a total of \$44,000, as well as a \$3,900 TREK Acceleration Fund through LEAP's Small Business Support Hub.

"Through SmartZone programming, we were connected to early grant funding, commercialization support, and experienced mentors who helped us navigate intellectual property strategy, product development, and customer discovery. Without this support, we would not have been able to pursue or protect our core technology.

SmartZone-backed funding directly enabled us to file and secure our patent, which was approved in just 62 days—one of the fastest approvals in material science—and later recognized by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office as a top five undergraduate invention nationwide.

Beyond intellectual property, the SmartZone ecosystem helped us grow responsibly as a company. Their support enabled us to expand our team, create paid opportunities for Michigan State University students, and keep our operations rooted in the region while competing nationally and globally.

As student founders, having access to trusted guidance and infrastructure made the difference between an idea remaining in a classroom and becoming a Michigan-based business."

They were the first student startup to be on Shark Tank in the last 3 years and landed a \$300,000 deal for 20% of their company from sharks Daniel Lubetzky of Kind and Fawn Weaver of Uncle Nearest Premium Whiskey. They also recently participated in their last student pitch competition and won grand prize and over \$600,000 at the Rice Business Plan Competition.

6.4 TIC / Alliance Tenant Report – MSU Research Foundation

- Tick Alliance financials (mid-year):
 - Revenue ahead (Google sponsorship + high occupancy)
 - 2 new office + 3 virtual tenants; 1 vacancy
 - KJA Night Vision (student startup)
 - Redacted AI (relocated from Texas)
 - Virtual tenants in AI, chemistry, smart tech
 - ~\$5K deficit after cost control

6.5 MEDC Gateway Program Updates – Casey Paskus

Grants Manager Casey Paskus reported 3 approved BAFs since January. Recifix was awarded \$12,000, Sit Sense was awarded \$26,910, and Ollivate was awarded \$15,000. She also discussed 7 other BAF applications in process.

7. FYE 2027 LDFA Budget

7.1 Overview of the Budget Process

Director Winn presented an overview of the budget development process. Budget development began in November with input from the Program Committee and Real Estate Advisory Committee.

The Board is reviewing the proposed budget at this meeting for submission to the City Councils of East Lansing and Lansing. The Program Committee will continue to refine the detailed spending plan prior to final adoption in June.

7.2 FYE 2027 Proposed Budget

Director Winn presented an overview of the FYE 2027 Proposed Budget.

- Budget highlights:
 - TIF revenue: \$879,966 (+2.64%)
 - Increased legal expenses related to TIF renewal
 - Added: TIC additional sponsorship, MSUFCU Coworkerie, and other program support
 - Rising Tide Fund set at 10% of TIF capture, per operating agreement

7.3 FYE 2027 Program Committee Recommendations

Chair Tykocki presented recommendations from the program committee.

7.4 Budget Approval City Submission

Motion: Riehl moved to approve the Fiscal Year End 2027 LDFA Budget as presented and recommend it to the City Councils of East Lansing and Lansing for approval.

Second: Cahill

Vote: Motion Carried (9-0)

Result: Approved

8. Reports / Information

Updates were provided on:

8.1 TIF Extension Update

- Passed House committee; awaiting floor vote
- Next step: Senate

8.2 TIF Plan and Vision Sessions Update

- Required for TIF continuation (plan + agreement)
- Meridian Township invited
- Strategy: Prepare documents ahead of legislation (like Sterling Heights)

8.3 MSUFCU Coworkerie

- Working with MSUFCU to move forward.
- Expect a draft contract in the coming weeks.
- Meeting with the MSUFCU marketing team to discuss marketing plan.

9. Look Ahead: June 2026 Board Meeting

Director Winn outlined key topics anticipated for the June 2026 board meeting.

- Program reports
- Final funding plan
- Budget adoption

11. Public Comment

Chair Tykocki invited public comment.

Names / Organizations that gave public comment:

- **Rachel Ochylski** – MSU 4H Ingham County Program Coordinator
MSU Extension 4-H updates:
 - Mindful Mosaics (Refugee Development Center):
 - Focus: mindfulness + digital storytelling
 - Uses iPads; ends with showcase
 - Many participants new to technology; focus on skills + confidence
 - Digital storytelling (South Side Community Coalition)

- Integration with youth development programs
- **December Day** – 4H for EL
East Lansing 4-H programs:
 - Code Coaches (HS students teaching elementary)
 - Robotics clubs (high demand; fill quickly)
 - “Vibe Coding” at East Lansing Public Library
 - Teens using generative AI to build apps
 - Robotics Day: 150+ attendees
- **Irene Cahill** – LDFA Board Member and Ingham County Commissioner
 - Earth today is today. Arbor Day is Friday. Trees being planted at Pattengill at 1pm.

12. Adjournment

Motion: Pope moved to adjourn.

Second: Cahill

Vote: Motion Carried (9-0)

Result: Approved

Chair Tykocki adjourned the meeting at 9:53 a.m.

Chair Tykocki reminded the board of upcoming meetings, including two additional vision sessions scheduled for Wednesday, May 6 at the TIC 300 Room and Monday, June 8 at the Alliance Building. The next regular board meeting will be held on June 16, 2026.

SUBMITTED BY: Laura Sumpter, Recording Secretary

STATUS: APPROVED BY THE BOARD ON JUNE 17, 2026